

The Mad Mom

I saw Angry Mom the other day in the refrigerated-foods section at Walmart.

I was heading for the juice, and she and her two children were already standing there. As she stood there weighing the merits of different brands, her daughter stood near the cart. Her son, about 10 years old, rolled around nearby on those roller-sneakers—you know, those tennis shoes that have little wheels in the soles. He wasn't really getting in anybody's way or causing a nuisance, until...

"Ouch!" Angry Mom shouted. "Watch out! Those things hurt!"

I don't remember whether the boy mumbled some sort of apology. I think he did. What I do remember next is how after that, the boy couldn't do anything right. In the less than 60 seconds that I was standing there choosing two kinds of juice to buy, she snapped at him two or three more times. It looked to me like it wasn't a matter of him really doing anything wrong, but rather of her still being mad that he ran into her with his sneaker-skates. Now, everything he did made her mad.

The tone of her voice was harsh and disgusted. Demeaning. Standing there staring at the juice, trying to pretend that I wasn't listening (I couldn't help but hear her), I cringed inside. I knew her words, her tone, and her attitude that now-nothing-you-do-is-right had to be wounding his spirit. And inside, I cringed for the tender boy that surely still lived inside a 10-year-old body.

Then it hit me, like a punch to my stomach. Her voice was mine. Her child was mine. Her words, tone, and attitude were mine.

You see, I've been there.

I've been her.

I've wounded my child with my responses to childish mistakes or accidents. I've indicated with my tone of voice that I was disgusted with my child. I've shown by my words that my child had screwed up so badly, nothing they could do would be right for awhile.

I felt sick.

Soon, the mom and her children wheeled their cart away, and I was alone by the juice with my thoughts and my guilt. I realized that for a few moments, I had condemned the mother's actions (rightly so) without realizing that they were my own.

As I pushed my cart down the side aisle, I encountered the family again. I first noticed them because the mother was raising her voice. "Isabel!"

Isabel was coming in my direction, while the mother and son were farther away from me.

"Isabel!"

You know, I thought, I bet she chose the name 'Isabel' because she thought it was the most beautiful name she could think of. Yet listen to how she calls it now. "Isabel!" No beauty. She's shouting that name like it's an ugly name. Yet once she spoke it because it was beautiful.

Oh, friends, have you been there, too? Not in the side aisle at Walmart, but in the same situation that mother was in, where maybe you were having a bad day anyway, and one of your children pushed one of your buttons, and you snapped? And after that, you couldn't get yourself back under control? And you heard the ugliness and unfairness in your voice, but it felt like you couldn't stop yourself?

If you have, take a minute right now and confess your sins to God. Confess the way you've treated your children. You may

even need to confess the way you've judged other mothers for things that you have done yourself.

Ask your children to forgive you, too. Humbly asking forgiveness can go a long way toward healing a child's wounded spirit.

Then, spend some time meditating on how God treats you. When you run into Him with your sneaker-skates, does He yell at you and then pick disgustedly on everything you do? Does He call your name as if it's devoid of all the beauty He used to think it had?

Of course not. Our God is amazingly, perfectly loving. He loves us even when we've messed up. Even when we have done something wrong, he always treats us with love and dignity.

Determine that you will do the same. That you won't become Angry Mom just because your child has annoyed you. Remember their delicate little spirits. Thank God for His love, and show the same love to your children.

Matt. 7:3-5—Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

1 John 3:1—How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

Adapted from Megan Breedlove's blog, Manna for Moms. Megan is the author of Well Done, Good and Faithful Mommy and Manna for Moms: God's Provision for Your Hair-Raising, Miracle-Filled Mothering Adventure (Regal Books.) She is also a blogger and a stay-at-home mom with five children.