

When God Helps a Single Mom of 5 Kids

You know that old saying about getting your ducks in a row? My ducks aren't in a row. In fact, I'm sure my ducks aren't even in the same pond.

I really want them to be—at least in the same pond. Golly, I don't care about lines. I was never particularly fond of staying in the lines anyway.

But as a single mama, I think I might need some lines drawn—some boundaries established.

Lately I'm recognizing a decidedly annoying trend with my children: stepping—no, make that leaping—across boundaries. My room, my bathroom, my closet, my clothes, my makeup, my socks, my shoes, my jewelry, my papers, my pens, my desk, my computer, my drinks, my snacks, my stuff—it all seems to be fair game. No one bothers to ask, no one bothers to put back, no one bothers to thank, but it all sure bothers me!

I got myself into this particular pond. I jumped in when my husband left. I allowed my children to sleep on my floor, my oldest daughter to share my bathroom, and my kids to use whatever they needed out of my stuff. I didn't do much more than request that they take care of the things they borrowed and put them back properly, but I didn't really offer consistent consequences—unless you count my exasperated nagging as a viable consequence. (I wouldn't, because it was a clearly ineffective consequence.)

Unfortunately, it isn't just the little things like borrowing without asking; it's the big stuff like irresponsibility, disrespect and laziness that I need to address more diligently too. This is my opportunity to show my children that I take my responsibility as mom seriously, that I desire to respect the

Lord by raising His children well, and that I will be persistent in my efforts to train them.

Being a single mom, it's easy to make excuses for letting little things slide. But those silly little things become scary big things quite quickly. I've been experiencing that lately. By not training my children well in the little things, I have not equipped them well to deal with the big things.

So here I am, frustrated and a little bit fearful but ready to make some changes. Ready to jump into an altogether different pond and push all my kids in too—whether they want to or not. A friend of mine keeps reminding me that sometimes the best things we can do for our children are the things they least want to do. Amen to that.

Praise God that He is the God of second chances—in life and parenting. I'm praying more diligently, seeking wise counsel more conscientiously, and holding to my convictions more solidly. But I also know that my strength to do those things is totally and completely rooted in Christ.

I know myself, and I'm tired, weak and exhausted. That's why God tells me, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

Ahhh ... rest, easy yoke, light burden. Why would I not accept that offer?

With God I know I can make changes in my life and the lives of my children. With God I know we can become a family that treats the blessing of each other and the material blessings we have with respect. I believe God is going to do great things in my family. I know He has faithfully shown me things that need to be dealt with, not because He wants to crush me

with regret but because He wants to show me His love and grace as He restores our family.

That new pond? It's beautiful. There's even a Lifeguard who delights in watching us splash around together—in a line or not!

Lord, please give me the ability to lay my burden down and pick up Yours. I know I will be challenged daily and I will struggle, but Lord, You are faithful and loving and You will provide all that I need to meet each day with peace and joy. I'm thankful that You show me what I need to work on, what needs to be done, but Lord I'm even more thankful that because of You, I am not measured or valued by what I accomplish in a day or how well I do anything.

I am Your daughter, and I am loved because You made me. Father, please help me raise my children well. Please enable me to be strong, consistent, gentle, loving and graceful with my children. Just like you are with me! In Jesus' name, amen.

Sue Birdseye is an author and single mom of five kids that range from 4 years old to 17 years old. This article is adapted from her blog, .