

When Life Is a Mess

This single parenting thing is so difficult. I get confused by all the different situations, personalities, struggles and issues of my children. I can't seem to get my feet under me on any of them!

And then there's me.

I think I might actually be more confused by **my** issues, struggles, emotions and stresses than I am by any of my children's.

I'm a mess.

Sometimes people are offended when I say that. They want to correct me and say I shouldn't say that.

That I shouldn't be that.

That I should get my act together.

That I should be past the will be a God-sized task!

That I should get out of the pit, but I'm not in a is just challenging right now.

That I should just put my big-girl pants on , my big-girl pants are on, believe me.

They don't fit are sometimes too tight, sometimes too loose, sometimes too itchy, sometimes too stiff, sometimes too soft, sometimes the tag rubs wrong, sometimes they are on backward, and sometimes they are inside-out. But they are on. Dang it.

I think I'd like to say OK TO BE A LITTLE BIT OF A MESS!!!

God didn't say that I'd be perfect didn't say that life would be all neat and didn't say that people would act properly and not be didn't say that everything would work out if I followed

a certain set of rules or God said kinda the opposite...

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

I looked up trials, tribulation and trouble in the back of my Bible and they pretty much seem like a given. BUT God does not leave us in these troubles.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling (Psalm 46:1-3).

And these trials have a purpose. A good purpose...

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).

Perfect, complete, lacking pretty good. Perfect is a pretty daunting word, but in this verse it does not mean being sinless. It refers to our spiritual maturity.

"The testing of our faith drives believers to deeper communion and great trust in Christ—qualities that in turn produce a stable, godly, and righteous character." (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*)

That's totally who I want to be, godly, righteous, not wobbly, messy and self-centered.

And then I read about who suffered mightily on this earth and begged God to take away his thorn, shared openly about his struggles, who had a passion for the Lord that I long for, shared how he wrestled with sin and circumstances that were by no means

ideal.

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that swells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin (Rom. 7:19-25).

BUT THE NEXT VERSE IS AWESOME!!!

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

After Paul shares of his struggles with sin, he reminds us and himself that because of Jesus, we are not condemned! How beautiful!

When I share my struggles, like Paul I want to point me (and you) back to Jesus. Because let's face it, we all struggle with something. How much better if we could share our struggles and our victories in order to encourage and bless one another without receiving any condemnation!

It would be such a monumental thing if we as the body of Christ could be open and share without condemnation. If we could choose to walk alongside one another through our struggles and the battles we fight in order to share the victories!

And there will be victories because the battle is the Lord's!

Although I'm OK with sharing it, I'd really like to not be a

mess. I'd really like to get my act together.

But God is showing me that getting my act together isn't really what I think it is.

I tend to think if I could just get a full night's sleep that would help, maybe some exercise, a well-ordered house, some children who actually do what I ask/tell them to know, basically the perfect I wouldn't be a mess.

But life is messy. And people are messy. And relationships are messy. And circumstances are messy.

And God tells us we will have trouble in this He also says that we aren't to fear it.

He has never been nor will he ever be surprised or overwhelmed by trouble, trials or messiness.

He isn't done with me because I'm a mess. He loves me always, completely, relentlessly.

When God looks at me He doesn't see my mess (thankfully!), He sees Jesus' perfection.

And maybe something positive we could do is remind ourselves again of who we are in Christ. I've not done this before, but I'm going to share a bit from my book. This morning I prayed and asked God to show me what to write is so much I long to share. And He has laid it heavily on my heart to share:

"Next, I want you to really take a look at yourself, your amazing survivor self. Remind yourself of who you are or can be in Christ. When my oldest was a little boy, I taught his Sunday school class, and we memorized this verse: "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!" (1 John 3:1).

I always thought that was one of the best verses to memorize.

That word lavished is such a wonderful description of how God pours His love on us. It isn't a small amount, just enough to get us through the day. It isn't a decent amount that comforts us when things go badly. He gives us limitless love. There is no end to His love for us.

The chapter goes on to say that we know this is love because "Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (verse 16). My friend, God doesn't just say He loves you; He demonstrated that love when, on the cross, He rescued you from your sin: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" Rom. 5:8, ESV). How valuable you are in His sight!

God knows you and loves you. "Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. [So] fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7 ESV). To all of us who believe in His name, "he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). You are chosen, rescued, and forgiven because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:9-10).

I long for all of us to understand what Jesus has done for us. We didn't do anything worthy of His good opinion. And yet Christ still died for us. He knew our tendencies, our temptations, and our sins, and He still loved us enough to die for us. He still loves us enough to die for us. And He didn't choose us just because we were all cute and adorable. He chose us when we were all dirty, smelly, and rebellious. He loves us even when we feel unlovable.

Allow Him to "quiet you with his love" (Zeph. 3:17), to calm your anxious thought, and to assure you that regardless of how you're feeling or what you're going through at this moment, you are dearly loved.

(When Happily Ever After Shatters: Seeing God in the Midst of Divorce and Single Parenting, pp. 112-113)

We might feel like messes, but when God looks at us He sees

His precious child. We might be uncomfortable with our mess, our children's messes and the messes of others, but God isn't.

He is willing and able to walk us through the mess. He will stick with us. All that He asks is that we trust Him.

Trust Him with our hurting, exhausted selves. Trust Him with our children. Trust Him with our circumstances. Trust Him with our messiness.

I have known God to be faithful. Another quote (sorry):

"Practically speaking, God obviously wasn't doing my dishes for me or dealing with my sticky counters, but His presence gave me strength to face each task, whether tedious or terrifying."

There are particularly difficult times in our lives when we completely understand that God is our strength. We realize that it isn't about coping with a situation; it's about living in God's strength. It's a surprisingly exquisite and painful place to be." (p. 24)

Dearest, trust God to take care of you. You will be amazed at what wonderful stuff He can bring out of our messes!

Sue Birdseye is an author and single mom of five kids who range from 4- to 17-years-old. Her book, *When Happily Ever After Shatters* (Tyndale House) is in bookstores. This is adapted from her blog, .