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## Thirsty *Affirmation*

*Life is a cup to be filled, not drained.*

Unknown

*Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.*

Psalm 107:8-9

“What’s happening, Mom?” a white-faced Peyton yelled, bounding into our bedroom, her eyes big as swimming pools.

“Mommy! Mommy!” cried Morgan, who had also bolted from her bed, panicked. She sprinted toward me, arms outstretched.

*What is happening? Is there an Army helicopter hovering over our house? I wondered. Is it World War III?*

### **[DESIGNER: Insert Callout]**

“Among coffee drinkers, the average consumption in the United States is 3.2 cups of coffee per day.” —*E-Imports*<sup>1</sup>

### **[END Callout]**

The house seemed to be shaking like a football stadium with the opponent on fourth and goal; like a go-cart cranking at 100 miles per hour; like the washer on spin with a lopsided load. The echoing high-pitched whine was deafening. Our daughters were terrified. My husband and I looked at each other, bewildered. Then he smiled.

“It’s the new coffeemaker,” he said.

Hard to believe, but true. We’d just purchased one of those newfangled, high-tech, grind-and-brew machines — the kind that offers the “freshest” cup you’ll ever taste. It was supposed to “click on” before we awoke, producing a steaming pot of fresh

java, ready to greet us at the prescribed early morning hour. What it hadn't promised was hearing loss and six months of post-traumatic stress therapy.

"I can't believe this coffee pot makes so much noise," I said, after reassuring the girls, tucking them back into bed and joining my husband in the kitchen.

"Me neither," said Pete. "What a disappointment."

What a disappointment. What had looked beautiful in the box turned out to be a whole lot different than I'd envisioned. Like a lot of things in life.

## Becoming a Mom

Honestly, before becoming a mom, I had no idea what it would be like. As a confident young professional, I believed I could do it all—maintain romance in my marriage, keep a beautiful home, climb the corporate ladder *and* raise perfect children without a hitch or hiccup. Then I actually had children, and the evidence shows that I am not the mom I "expected" I'd be. I'm more like someone my younger self might have secretly judged to be subpar.

After the birth of my first child, it was all I could do to brush my teeth before two in the afternoon. I took Peyton to the grocery store in her jammies. I gave up on exercise and craved sleep like an addict. It didn't take long to see that I just couldn't—and still can't—do it all. If I cook dinner, the laundry piles up. If I wash clothes, the house stays a mess. If I spend time cleaning, I lose the opportunity to go to the park with my kids. Like a jigsaw puzzle purchased at a garage sale, my life as a mom always seems to be missing the few pieces that would make it complete.

"I never knew why you couldn't get it together," my sister-in-law told me once, reflecting on when she lived with our family just after Peyton was born. "Now that I'm a mom, I totally understand."

Until you are a mom, it is hard to really comprehend just how wonderful and precious and overwhelming and fatiguing parenting can be. The young, organized, professional me had no point of reference; my expectation for my mom-self was the high-gloss magazine version, lacking the reality of what is attainable—or even healthy.

According to Salary.com, the average mom works a 90-hour week.<sup>2</sup> *Ninety hours*. That is something my 55-hour "workaholic" younger self never dreamed of. (*Who's the slacker now?*) And though I am a good mom, sometimes the vision of what I thought I'd be haunts me like a phantom limb holding a bar I will never reach. Contrasting my

expectations of what might have been with reality is a toxic cocktail that leaves a bitter taste and robs me of the joy of being a mom.

Life is different for moms today. We are busier than previous generations, and our kids are busier too. Life often throws us more than we can hit, like machine-launched to-do tennis balls coming at us in rapid succession. We keep swinging our “Perfect Mom” racquet, running ourselves to the brink of collapse, trying to hit (or juggle?) all the balls. Then we feel like a failure when we miss, wondering despite all our effort if what we do even makes a difference.

### **He Satisfies the Thirsty**

Well, moms do make a difference. Career moms, stay-at-home-working moms, single moms, married moms – we all do. And despite fatigue and frustration, we are always accountable for our actions and example. We rise early and retire late, busy with menial tasks forgotten by day’s end, even with all the high-tech helps of today’s consumer culture (jet-engine coffee maker, case in point). The depth and breadth of the difference we make may never be completely affirmed. We do it anyway. We do it because that’s what love does.

Still, in the hustle and bustle of the day, subsisting on vanilla lattes, it is easy to forget about love and feel unappreciated and fragile, and even a little cranky. Considering my 90-hour workweek, it is not uncommon for me to have a latte in the morning and then forget (or not take time) to eat until I feel shaky and queasy in the afternoon. Once the caffeine and sugar are metabolized and there is still a mountain of laundry to tackle – what do you and I need to do? Where do we turn?

We turn to God.

Looking to God for our value and worth gives us a truer perspective of what matters. Most of us have chosen to be wives and mothers. We love our families and want the best for them – so we do the work. Feeling unappreciated and less than perfect, chased by ghost expectations, is not what God wants for us.

#### **[DESIGNER: Insert Callout]**

Good moms are not defined by folded laundry, clean toilets, gourmet meals or dust-free bookcases.

#### **[END Callout]**

Though I definitely have my “woe is me” moments when I hoard the Red Vines and grumble like Eeyore, when I am centered on Jesus, my daily frustrations don’t bother me as much. In fact, when I am rooted in God’s truth, I feel affirmed in all I do. He whispers the truth that good moms are not defined by folded laundry, clean toilets, gourmet meals or dust-free bookcases. He reminds me that loving moms may not always have perfectly coiffed (or even clean) hair, shiny manicures or smooth legs; but they are marked by happy, healthy children, a solid sense of purpose and their calling to the job of motherhood and its fundamental, inherent value. When I am walking by faith, I am a better mom; I am more apt to be uplifting to others; I am honoring to my husband; and I am a fun-filled, all-around happy person.

### **A Cup of Affirmation**

God loves us and says in His Word, the Bible, that He has a plan for each of us. Before we were born, He knew we would be mothers. He tells us, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart” (Jeremiah 1:5). We were each created for a unique purpose, and a big part of that is our calling as mothers.

This is a huge thought. On days when I feel run down, I can hardly imagine God creating me for this job description. I feel like a clueless hopeful on *American Idol*, someone who can’t sing but still wants to win the contest. Yet, despite my failings, God has grace for me – and for us all. “But to each one of us grace has been given” (Ephesians 4:7). God’s grace is simply the ability to do what we can’t accomplish in our own strength.

Jesus tells us to “let [our] light shine before men, that they may see [our] good deeds and praise [our] Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). We have the opportunity to show God’s love to our children every day. We can be His eyes in seeing the best in them, His ears in listening with attentiveness, His voice in praise. We can be God’s hands in molding, His arms in holding, His heart in loving our children. God’s light shines through us even, and especially, when we are with our children. When I have my arms around the warmth of this truth, I am confident that what I do makes a difference, that my contribution is eternally significant. As a mom, I have come to intrinsically understand something the “confident young professional” didn’t see: that I matter, because I matter to God.

## Questions to STIR

1. What are your biggest frustrations? What triggers throw you off balance, and how can you avoid them?
2. How do you know that you matter? To what or to whom do you look for your value, affirmation and worth?
3. As moms, God's light shines in and through us. How does this truth change your perspective on the day-to-day details?

## Soul Sip Solutions

1. Take a moment to remember (and appreciate!) the value you bring as a mom. List the blessings you bring to your family. These can be as simple as "Makes a fabulous meatloaf" or "Gives great hugs!"
2. One day this week, go for a walk in lieu of a "pick-me-up" latte. Breathe deeply. Find refreshment in the crisp air, and check in with God.
3. If you feel overwhelmed and discouraged, consider a simple prayer like this: "Dear God, I need You. Please show me that I matter as a mom – and that I matter to You. Amen." God hears your prayers.

## Reflection and Challenge

How did it go? What did you learn? Record your thoughts. If you didn't get to it, take heart. We all have those times. Pray and seek God's next step for you in this area.

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