

# **What Every Mom Needs Article Series**

(Adapted from What Every Moms Needs: Balancing your Life)

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## **The 9 Needs of Every MOM**

### **Need #1: Significance**

**“Sometimes I wonder if mothering matters.”**

Have you ever felt like the day has just slipped away and you have accomplished nothing? Picking up toys, doing laundry, making PB & J sandwiches... Does mothering matter? We may wonder about this. Negative feelings pierce our confidence...“What I do isn’t very important”... “I never finish anything”... “I feel out of control”.

The impact of our lives on those of our children is not always clear. Instead we see how mothering makes a difference in the development of our children after time. Studies show that secure attachment with mother form’s the foundation for the child’s entire self-structure and identity, that this relationship is the basis for all others our child will have. When we invest ourselves in the formative years, we will reap the benefits later in life with the joy of living with a more secure child. We’ll make a better child for our world. You are the mother of your children because God has chosen you for them. Mothering matters because today makes a difference for tomorrow. God values mothers!

#### **Review the circumstances of these Bible mothers:**

Eve ( Genesis 4 )  
Sarah ( Genesis 16-18 )  
Hannah ( 1 Samuel 1 )  
Elizabeth ( Luke 1 )

Do you think any of these women ever questioned their value as mothers?  
How does God value these and all mothers?

#### **Practice the memory verse below:**

Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6

## **Need #2: Identity**

### **“ Sometimes I’m not sure who I am.”**

Have you ever looked into the mirror only to see your mother looking back at you? As a mother of young children the question “Who am I?” can seem threatening. The answer seems elusive in these ever changing days. We need to find definition that will sustain us during this season when we are pulled and stretched and sometimes overwhelmed by the responsibility of taking care of others.

In the past it was easy to say what I am and what I am not::

- I am what I do
- I am what others need me to be
- I am what I accomplish
- I am what I experienced

We may even try to measure our worth against other women or even our mother. But the answers can still leave us feeling incomplete or leave an inaccurate picture of ourselves.

So who is that looking back in the mirror at you? If we really want to find our true identity, we need to look into a different mirror: Heaven’s mirror. God created us to reflect His glory to those around us. Through our relationship with God we begin to understand and accept ourselves. (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Here are the things God wants us to know about ourselves:

- I am unique (for His unique purposes)
- I am imperfect (God knows it and it’s okay with Him!)
- I am loved ( ‘ For God so loved [ put your name here ] that He gave is one and only Son...’ John 3:16).

If we know ourselves - recognizing our uniqueness and our imperfections - and know that God loves us, we are set free to see ourselves in God’s mirror and accept what we see.

Acceptance is a need of most moms. Answer these questions:

- Do you accept yourself?
- Do you believe that God accepts you?
- Does God really love you?

In John 3:16, the Bible tells us that God gave His Son, Jesus, to die for payment of our sins, yours and mine. His death means we have a way to God when we accept Jesus as our personal Savior. What does this mean? The word ‘savior’ is defined as “one who rescues another from harm, danger or loss.” By believing Jesus died for you, you believe he has rescued you from losing your way to God. If you want to receive Jesus into your life, talk to him in prayer. Confess that you know you are a sinner and you need a Savior, a Rescuer. Turn away from you sin now and surrender to Him so he will be the Lord of your life everyday. Thank Him for forgiving you, for your new eternal Life in Christ and setting you free to accept you. Tell a Christian friend or group leader about your decision!

### **Practice the memory verse below:**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

### **Need #3: Growth** **“Sometimes I long to develop who I am.”**

In this season of life, moms often make time for everyone and everything except themselves. Yet, we have a built-in longing for self-improvement. Although mothering is a season of self-sacrifice, it doesn't mean you need to ignore yourself during this time. The "you" that has been growing since your own birth doesn't cease to exist because you've given birth to another. In nurturing your own growth your family will benefit by watching you as an example of balancing how to take care of yourself as well as others. Most importantly God desires our growth and directs us to "grow in grace and knowledge" in 2 Peter 3:18. He has bestowed each of us with gifts that we are responsible for developing. God gave us these gifts and what we become is our gift to God.

Growth may not always be easy. It may be slow and hard to measure. Sometimes we may have to pay a cost - stepping out of our comfort zone or making tough choices about our time. At the same time, growth doesn't have to center around a career - it could be a character quality you'd like to change or enhance, mothering skills or even relationship challenges you face. Whatever it is it all begins by daring to dream and then organizing your dreams into a timeline: "what I can do when my child is a preschooler, school-aged, left the nest". Write down some of your interests, your gifts, your dreams and your character qualities and then develop some growth goals for you.

Brenda Hunter writes "When God gives you a dream, He will help you to reach it. It may take a year or half a lifetime, but God planted that dream in your consciousness for a reason."

Make your growth goals and timeline in your journal and re-write it as it progresses.

Place this memory verse next to it:

"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6

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Chapter 3 Alternate ending (starting after "yourself")

Brenda Hunter writes "When God gives you a dream, He will help you to reach it. It may take a year or half a lifetime, but God planted that dream in your consciousness for a reason." Nurture your need to grow. We were created by God to grow and change and develop.

#### Journaling Corner

How is your journaling going? Are you having trouble getting started? If so, here is an idea you can start your journal with.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What are my hobbies - now and before children?
- What are my gifts and talents?
- What did I daydream of in my childhood?
- What new skill have I learned in the past 3-5 years?
- Read the memory verse. What is God's promise to us even when growth seems to take a very long time?

Write your growth goals and a timeline (see above) in your journal and re-write it as it progresses. Place this memory verse next to it:

**"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."  
Philippians 1:6**

## **Need #4: Intimacy**

### **“Sometimes I long to be understood.”**

Intimacy? Isn't that what got us to motherhood in the first place? Intimacy can be that sexual, romantic relationship with your husband but intimacy is much more. It is being understood by family or friends - not being judged for what you did wrong or told what to do differently next time.

Mothers of preschoolers report that their greatest struggle is with loneliness, a feeling of being isolated, disconnected. Our need for connection is a need created within us by God. He created us to be in relationships with others. But how do we overcome stumbling blocks that might keep us from being in community with others? Being too tired, fearing that our transient society will lead to a move, or just not having enough time are some things keeping us from being in community.

By going to places, like MOPS, where there are other women in similar circumstances you are more likely to meet and make new friends. Friends may come and go during different seasons of life so realizing that not every friend will be our best friend will give us the freedom to enjoy our friendships with other women without added strain. Intimacy is spread out over several relationships. It may even occur between total strangers who share a moment of understanding over Happy Meals at McDonalds.

Intimacy is anywhere feelings are shared and respected. Even in marriage, intimacy is constantly challenged by the changing face of the relationship. Listening, adjusting, acting out intimacy with a wink or holding hands, and forgiving are all factors in keeping intimacy alive in our marriage. But when you grow old and look back, we hope you will be able to say that the truest Friend you've had is Jesus. Your relationship with Him is the only one that will span into eternity so doesn't it make sense to develop that relationship with Him now?

### **Journaling Corner**

Are you keeping up with your journal? Answer these questions to get you back on track or to keep going.

- Are you feeling lonely or connected these days?
- How do you get connected? Call someone? Make plans with a friend? Write a note? Get on the internet?
- How can you increase the chance for couple intimacy at home? Date night? Put kids to bed early?
- How am I growing my friendship with Jesus? Prayer? Bible reading? Service? Sharing my faith? Obedience?

Add one of these goals to your growth goals: Be spontaneous; Stay in touch; Read the Bible regularly; Volunteer & meet new people. Write about your experience. Place this memory verse next to it:

"We love because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19

## **Need #5: Instruction**

### **"Sometimes I don't know what to do."**

Your child stands on his chair, screaming "No!" Your husband and your in-laws are looking at you and you know your child is just about to break into a tantrum at the dinner table. "He's tired," you say, searching for an excuse. But the fact is you don't know why he's acting this way. Was it the long car ride? Was it the Cola he had earlier? After the feelings of panic subside and the situation under control, the fact remains that you may be tired of all the questions. How were you supposed to know anyway? You've never been a mom before. There was no instruction manual on this specific situation or others like it.

Before motherhood, life was easier. You may have been confident in your job. But mothering is not like that. A study of moms found that their confidence declined as their children aged. You could learn how to diaper a baby or make a bottle, but what about potty training? spanking? sibling rivalry? home schooling? TV? The list goes on.

The fact is moms need to rely on new skills and libraries. The libraries of maternal instinct and knowledge work together along with heart values that you communicate by being your child's model. As well, expert advice from books on every parenting subject imaginable cover the shelves at the library and book stores. But some of the most sage advice may come from a mothering mentor, someone who has been through this stage of life and survived, as well as your own peers.

The fact remains that an informed mother knows best. Our mission is not only to teach manners or hygiene, but to train our children in knowing and doing the will of God. To this end, God "will equip you with everything good for doing his will" (Hebrews 13:21). While we desire to mother the right way, we learn we must also relax and trust God for direction.

### **Journaling Corner**

"Lord, show me how to be a good parent. Teach me to correct without crushing, help without hanging on, listen without laughing, surround without smothering and love without limit - the way You love me." -Susan Lenzkes 1981

Do you know God can help you with all of these? Do you know, as your Heavenly Father, he is parent to many toddlers and infants. Write about being God's child.

Place this memory verse next to it:

"Teach me your way Lord and I will walk in your truth." Psalm 86:11

## **Need #6 : Help**

**"Sometimes I need to share the load."**

If "many hands make little work" then why do "little hands make many work?" If you've ever had a day when it ends with you yelling "Am I the only one in this house who can clean the bathroom?" then you're not alone. Many of us sigh frequently in hopes that someone will notice our weariness and step in to help.

But when it comes to asking for help, many of us won't. Why? We may feel like it's a sign of weakness or, more often, we feel guilty.

But we don't have to feel guilt about this normal need. Help is available, we just have to learn to ask for it directly, using words.

Who can we ask? Friends are a great resource. It takes more than one woman against the world to raise a child. When you do ask, you can opt for trading babysitting or errand-running with your friend if it helps you to feel a balance.

The other most obvious person to ask for help is your husband. There may be several reasons why you don't ask him now - he works so hard already, he doesn't understand, you get no response - but he is a parent, too. As a team you two can decide where he can help. As a wife, you can make sure you are letting him help and not critiquing his work. When you need help, ask clearly and calmly and live with the results.

Let's not forget those little hands. Making a game or singing while doing tasks helps the little ones to begin on their road that eventually leads to independence. Check our website for a list of tasks for 2&3 year olds and 4&5 year olds. Go to [www.faithall.org](http://www.faithall.org) and click on the MOPS logo.

But our best resource is free for the asking. God is always present, ready to offer us the most consistent help we can find. When we turn to Him in prayer, He hears and responds with love and care.

### **Journaling Corner**

Read the memory verse below several times.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." Psalm 46:1

Try to recall a time when you needed help, but didn't ask for it.

What happened? Was there a time when you asked God for help? What were the results?

Think of three specific tasks that your husband could help you with. If applicable, pick three new tasks from the list at our website, [www.faithall.org](http://www.faithall.org), that your child could help with. Write the names of three friends that you could ask for help.

## **Need #7 : Recreation**

### **“Sometimes I need a break.”**

When asked what starts a breakdown, most moms answered it was not a single major crisis, rather the constant accumulation of every day hassles with no breaks. Face it, moms are always “on duty”. Even if we do find a few minutes for a breather, we often feel guilty or selfish. Why? From childhood we’ve been told “cleanliness is next to Godliness”, or we’ve been trained to be self-sacrificing. In other words, don’t play until the work is done. But sometimes, we end up breaking down before taking a break.

The word recreation tells us what we need: to re-create ourselves. We need to invest time in renewing and restoring our minds, bodies and spirits. At the end of a busy day, do you feel “sucked dry”, like an empty juice box? Irritable, tired and unhappy, are you really able to meet the needs of your family? By taking the time to take a break, and meet our own needs, we can refill that juice box.

We’re not being selfish, but self-preserving when we carve out five minutes, an hour, or a night devoted to restoring ourselves. To get started, try small breaks that you can build into your day. They learning to laugh out loud again, lightening up when it comes to a spotless house and slowing down to play with your child. What’s more important? Tucking a happy, grubby child into bed or a clean, cranky one?

Outside of our daily routines, we can schedule time alone rediscovering fun! Starting up an old hobby or finding a new one is a good way to begin. Even scheduling a walk in the evening or time with a workout tape can rejuvenate. Our own bodies can be barometers of how little time we spend on ourselves. Physical fitness not only includes exercise, but sleep and nutrition as well.

On top of that a spirit that’s well fed and watered with time with God is one equipped to walk strongly through the day. Ten minutes in prayer each morning is as easy as having a cup of coffee with a friend. Invite God into your home and your hear and you’ll find your burdens much lighter.

### **Journaling Corner**

Read the memory verse below several times.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

Are you weary and burdened? What does Jesus promise to give you? Do you sometimes feel like you are hauling a cart full of rocks all by yourself? Are you ‘gentle and humble’ when you feel this way?

Write down four ways you could take a break for: 15 minutes, one hour, one evening and a weekend. Write down who could help you accomplish these breaks and a way to ask them.

## **Need #8 : Perspective**

### **"Sometimes I lose my focus."**

"Not now, honey. Maybe later." This familiar answer could be from any mom when asked to play blocks instead of cleaning. But what happens when it comes from your toddler who is pretending with his teddy bear. "I have too much work to do and look at this mess!" he says to his fuzzy friend. Role-play like this can bring pangs of guilt to moms, but this isn't about guilt. It's about a larger struggle to cope with our busyness and find focus, or perspective.

Perspective is the ability to stand between yesterday and tomorrow and understand how and where today fits in. This is difficult at any stage in life but for moms with young ones, mothering myths make gaining perspective difficult. Here are some examples:

- Myth: Control everything. Reality: You can't! Go with the flow and relinquish control.
- Myth: Do it all and do it all right now. Reality: I can't do it all, but I can do what's important. Define and focus on your main mission as a mom.
- Myth: Grin and bear it. Reality: Enjoy today and savor the moments of this season.
- Myth: Mothering is serious. Reality: Lighten up and forgive yourself and your child.

One of the most challenging aspects of mothering is making choices. From medication at delivery to which day-care is best, our perspective for these choices is usually based on priorities and striking a balance. But from the seasonal perspective, choices can be made knowing that this is the time when our children need us the most and this season will pass. Other seasons will come when we'll have time to focus on ourselves, along with the seasons of letting go.

If we keep our perspective on the whole of life, we know we're making a difference when we put a bit of ourselves on the shelf for a while. Better yet, when we keep our focus on our Creator we can invest in eternal things and place our treasures - time, talent and resources - where they cannot be stolen away... heaven.

### **Journaling Corner**

Write down your fears and frustrations of being a mom. Go back through the list and circle those that you can control. Write down a task you have today. Write down what would happen if you didn't do it. Write the memory verse. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33. Next to it write how you can seek God when doing the laundry, playing with your kids and talking with your husband. Check out the Stress Sack ideas below. Assemble or doodle your own Stress Sack!

### **Stress Sack**

Make your own Stress Sack with tangible reminders to let go of what's unimportant. Include items such as the ones you read below and others you find meaningful.

- A piece of chalk to use when something unpleasant happens, so you can 'chalk it up' to experience
- A tissue to remind you to dry someone's tears with a kind word, a note or a hug
- An eraser to remind you to wipe your slate clean
- A thumbtack to remind you not to just sit on your problems, 'a-tack' them one by one
- A favorite cartoon, bumper sticker or greeting card to remind you to laugh... often
- A small stone to remind you God is your rock
- A nail to remind you that Jesus coped with some pretty heavy stress, too.

In the daily grind of mothering little ones, moms need to remember the bigger picture. Make the most of life's irreplaceable moments. Every day is priceless and will never return. Decide now that you won't waste a single one.

## **Need #9 : Hope**

### **"Sometimes I wonder if there is more to life."**

A mother secludes herself in the bathroom for a few minutes of peace. A deep sigh of exhaustion is followed by a little knock at the door. "Mommy?" "In a minute," she calls back. "But Mommy..." "Not now, Hon." A pause. "Mommy, I need you, nowwww!" "Go AWAY!"

The mother catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror and sees her tired eyes, ponytail-ed hair and spit up stained sweats. She'd been up for hours and on the other side of the door the house is strewn with toys. "I can't do this," she thinks. "I don't have anything left. I never dreamed I'd lose it like this with my kids. Is there any hope for me?"

Is this you? Your situation may be different: your husband lost his job, your child has been diagnosed with a disorder you don't understand, your marriage is stale or your best friend is moving away. Life isn't turning out how you expected and you can't handle it. You look for hope anywhere. You might change your circumstances, be optimistic, rely on people or try self-help techniques to look inside yourself for the strength and comfort only to find fears and insecurities.

When we reach the "end of ourselves" we seek to fill our emptiness with things. But that emptiness is a God shaped emptiness and can only be filled by God himself. He knows and understands you and your needs. How? He is God. He lived what you are living. He sent his son, Jesus, who endured poverty, rejection, misjudgment, pain and, yes, even sleep deprivation. God is looking for you and wants to have a relationship with you. He forgives us even though we don't deserve it (that's called grace) and he'll help us if we ask him.

Think about some of the other needs we've covered and how He can meet these needs in a relationship with you: Identity: Who am I? We are precious to God; Intimacy: I long to be understood. He knows us best and loves us the most; Instruction: I don't know what to do. The Bible contains practical principles and truths to make good choices. Help: I need to share the load. Trust him to control the uncontrollable.

A relationship with God starts just as any other. After accepting Jesus, slowly we begin to know him by reading the Bible, being in community with other Christians and by talking and listening to Him. Our faith, or trust, builds and slowly changes begin in us. Slowly that emptiness is filled and joy abounds.

Is there hope for you? You bet. Trust God. He knows what you need and he can meet them better than you can alone.

### **Journaling Corner**

Write the memory verse. Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. Psalm 42:5.

Next to it write three needs you have that can't seem to fulfill.

For a month pray about these needs each day and listen for God's responses. At the end of the month return and make notes how He has begun to meet these needs. Try this each month with new ideas.