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For Every Season

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TIPS

The Dressing – Something Dressy – by Marcy Lytle

Spring is officially here, and most likely we have spring and summer weddings, celebrations, parties, and picnics to attend with others, where a pretty dress might just be the thing we want to wear! Shopping for dresses is time consuming, so we've done the shopping for you, to at least inspire you for a little something dressy for your wardrobe this season! After all, who doesn't love a new dress or two, to make us feel pretty and springy and all things fun?

Floral midi dress – I love the options of fabric for this cute dress from Old Navy! And look at the cute sandals, too! It's sleeveless, for those that love that style. And for those of us that don't, a simple cardigan or even a tshirt under can make this dress perfect for an outdoor event this season!

https://oldnavy.gap.com/browse/product.do?pid=551785022&vid=2&tid=onpl000000&kwid=1&ap=7&qclid=EAlaIqobChMI7NKY5PT75wIVA77ACh1URgEREakYBiABEgKydvD_BwE&qclsrc=aw.ds#pdp-page-content

Printed and belted – I love a dress with a pretty belt! This printed one from Zara is so elegant with the belt added (and you could totally change the belt for a scarf or a different color!) and the sandals to match. Such a pretty dress and length!

<https://www.zara.com/us/en/printed-midi-dress-p09006052.html?v1=42487629&v2=1445651>

Geometric – Did you know that World Market has some pretty dresses? I bought one last season and love it. This geometric black and white design can be so versatile with pops of color, or check out those clear straps on the sandals in the photo! This dress looks comfy AND cute – a great combo!

<https://www.worldmarket.com/product/black+and+white+abstract+geometric+mira+kaftan+dress.do?sortby=ourPicks&from=fn>

Flouncy sleeves and slits – I love this pretty yellow floral dress from Target, and it too comes in a choice of patterns! Wouldn't it be great for a wedding or a shower? The high sandals make it stunning for spring! Because it's 100% polyester, it's great for packing for trips, as well!

<https://www.target.com/p/women-s-short-sleeve-dress-who-what-wear/-/A-78761778?preselect=78412390#ink=sametab>

Linen blend in blue – Check out this dress from Old Navy, especially the view of the back! That elastic in the back makes the dress fitted and yet comfortable. And the linen blue – so pretty! Add a scarf, a light sweater, or simple yet elegant jewelry for your outdoor events this season!

https://oldnavy.gap.com/browse/product.do?pid=551928002&cid=1140468&pcid=15292&vid=1&grid=pds_6_547_1#pdp-page-content

V-neck and stripes – I love the Universal Thread brand at Target! Look at this dress that, paired with a straw bag, makes a beautiful ensemble! Have you seen the straw bags out there? What a pretty dress. I want this one!

<https://www.target.com/p/women-s-striped-long-sleeve-v-neck-midi-dress-universal-thread-gray/-/A-79185296?preselect=78306014#lnk=sametab>

Simple Boho vibes – I love this blue, again. Blue skies make me want to wear blue! This is simple, yet so pretty, and would be great for any outing. It can be left alone, or you can add a statement bag, or these pretty leather mules, as pictured! It's from Old Navy.

https://oldnavy.gap.com/browse/product.do?pid=551873022&cid=1078677&pcid=15292&vid=1&grid=pds_128_543_1#pdp-page-content

Seven for You - Tidy Up – by Marcy Lytle

This month we asked our panel of contributing women to share with us their organizing tips for their cars. Interestingly enough, many said they don't really organize their car! A few did, and even more said they'd like to be better at having a tidy car, so below are some ideas from us and from what we'd like to use! Some have routines that work for them, others have gadgets and bags and pouches that work, so well!

Just last Christmas I received these hard pouches that fit snugly between the front seats and the console – that black hole where keys disappear way too often. They are great and even move with you, when you move your seat forward and backward. I like to place my phone and my keys there, or a small pack of Kleenex. They're quite affordable on Amazon!

https://www.amazon.com/GCARTOUR-Pockets-Leather-Organizer-Non-Slip/dp/B07XCVQVMH/ref=asc_df_B07XCVQVMH/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=385250076956&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=18070922536107053779&hvpon=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmid=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9028263&hvtargid=pla-851787653473&psc=1&tag=&ref=&adgrpid=79334632260&hvpon=&hvptwo=&hvadid=385250076956&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=18070922536107053779&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmid=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9028263&hvtargid=pla-851787653473

I keep a zipper bag in my glove compartment with the following items inside it: straw, plastic fork/spoon, small pack of Tylenol, clippers, tape, scissors, bandaids, etc. – then I refill as necessary. It's been a lifesaver! I call it a JIC bag – “just in case!”

My mom gave these to me years ago, and I've loved them ever since! Cylinder Kleenex boxes that fit in your cup holder! Genius!

We have a car gap organizer that fills the space between the seat and console. The main thing I love about it is that it keeps stuff from falling into that crack, which is super handy for me since I used to constantly drop things down in there and then not be able to reach them. It also has the perfect spot to rest your phone, and some other cool features like a coin box and 2 USB ports which comes in handy for charging extra phones. Here's a pic and the link to purchase it on Walmart's website:

<http://www.walmart.com/ip/Car-Gap-Organizer-Center-Console-Organizer-Seat-Side-Pocket-With-Coin-Box-And-2-USB-Charging-Hub-For-Cellphones/404362082>

The organization of my car is completely dependent on a little spaces and cubbyholes the car itself has. I adapt my stuff to fit in those spaces. I use the compartment on the door as my trashcan and I clean it out every week when I fill up my car with gas. The backseat is the home for far too many reusable grocery bags. That's about it.

If you have kiddos, these back seat pouches are great for keeping their stuff off the floor, like books, shoes, snacks, extra clothes, etc.

<https://www.amazon.com/KNGUVTH-Backseat-Organizer-Protectors-Accessories/dp/B07GZP1FMN>

Those little small garbage bags are great for keeping in the door of your car, for a cleanout. When you arrive home just empty every door and floorboard of trash and place in the bag, then in your trash can. I hate carrying a bunch of little pieces of trash, so these bags are great to have on hand. They're great for putting muddy shoes in too, if it rains and everyone's shoes are a mess!

https://www.amazon.com/Topgalaxy-Z-Handle-Tie-Garbage-Bathroom-Wastebasket/dp/B077SLSZPT/ref=asc_df_B077SLSZPT/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=242021929341&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=12453632574075375360&hvppone=&hvtwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmld=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9028263&hvtargid=pla-397626183591&psc=1

This trunk or back-of-the-car box is wonderful for corralling balls and sports equipment, or for setting groceries in, so they don't fall over. You can just leave it back there, and nothing rolls around and drives you crazy while you're driving! And there are pockets for everything!

https://www.amazon.com/Honey-Can-Do-Folding-Trunk-Organizer-Black/dp/B004ZVN78C/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=organizer+for+car&qid=1583268454&s=home-garden&sr=1-2

I love the book bags from Barnes & Noble and buy one often, after Christmas, because they go on sale. Each year they come out with a new design. I keep one in the car at all times with books to read, magazines, any mail or other reading material. Or sometimes I just use as a tote bag when I have several things to carry to and from the car! They're cute and work great.

I keep my grocery bags in the "trunk" part of my little SUV and I have started keeping hand sanitizer - hopefully I will remember to use it. I normally have a towel in the car in case something spills.

I use back-of-seat organizers for two reasons, organizing and keeping little feet from marring my seat backs. I use zipper pouches in the glove box and console to contain little things that might get lost. I also use a small tub in the back of the car to hold shopping bags, an umbrella, a tire gauge, a squeegee, and a few things like that I don't want to be without, in case of an emergency situation. I take trash out every time I leave the car. I do struggle to keep the dust and pollen off the dash area!! Clean it today and it's back tomorrow.

My car is small and I am usually alone when I'm driving. The cup holders are small. So, one day I acquired this carry-out box from Starbucks. It can easily hold 2 insulated, travel mugs, or water containers with enough support to keep them from turning over and spilling. It sits in the passenger seat. I also have a small container of anti-bacterial wipes that sits in the small cup holder. It was a sample item that my husband got when re-enrolling for insurance at work. Finally, I once received a gift of a tin of popcorn from Chicago. After the popcorn was finished I cleaned it out and put a plastic bag inside it. It travels with me in case I have some wet or sticky

trash to throw away while in the car. It's only 7 inches tall so it doesn't take up too much leg room. Plus, it's always a fond reminder of the friend who first gave it to me.

My husband gave me a coin sorter box that just sits in the space in front of the shift handle. It's great for finding change to pay for drive-thru food, vacuuming the car, or paying for metered parking!

https://www.amazon.com/Topseller-Holder-Change-Storage-Wallet/dp/B01MSL9L1Y/ref=asc_df_B01MSL9L1Y/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=167139376298&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=18016408082813802239&hvpo ne=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcm dl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9028263&hvtargid=pla-313073317900&p sc=1

The main area of my car that I keep organized is the middle seat. That's where my grandkids car seats are and the essentials I have for them. I keep books and small toys for them in the door pockets. I have to admit my car is not on the top of my list to keep organized but I do try to keep it clean.

Selah's Style – Eli and Wyatt

Eli - We waiting very impatiently and patiently for him for many years. When we found out we were pregnant we were so excited and scared at the same time. Eli is very sweet, caring, loving, artistic, quite, but funny. He will do anything to help someone is a heartbeat. Over the years, he has built an amazing confidence that has surprised my husband and myself. He's an amazing big brother and is always watching out for little brother at school, parks, and anywhere they go together.

Wyatt – Wyatt, oh Wyatt- he is just as amazing as his big brother, but is so very different and we wouldn't have it any other way. If anyone meets Wyatt, he will make them smile within seconds and he will start a conversation right away. He is so energetic, loving, caring, funny, and LOVES to dance and sing. If a song comes on the radio he knows, he will sing as loud as he can and sing it like no other, even if he doesn't know all the words. Wyatt has had so much confidence since he came into this world, and he is always ready to go and try new things.

Eli and Wyatt love to play with Legos together

Eli reading- Eli enjoying reading books, he is currently reading about a husky dog. His favorite shirt right now is anything from Preston Merch.

Wyatt reading- Wyatt enjoying picking out his "snap" words from books and also at this time his favorite shirt is from Preston Merch

Wyatt Spiderman- Wyatt likes Spiderman a lot and when he has on his shirt, he feels like he's Spiderman. His shirt is from Walmart

Eli strip shirt- this is Eli's favorite long sleeve shirt from Target- it's part of their Cat and Jack collection. He is very proud of himself being able to build this lego by himself

AVFC shirts- These shirts are very special and came all the way from England when their grandma and Yeah Yeah went over the summer. They love hanging out on Eli's bed, since it's the top bunk.

Eli- floss like a boss shirt- He wore this shirt on the first day of school and we went to go get snow cones at Bahama Bucks, his grandma got this shirt from England since he loves doing the Floss dance.

Wyatt dino- This was taken after the first day of Kindergarten at Bahama Bucks. Wyatt loves being silly.

The bond these two boys have is amazing, they butt heads, but what siblings don't? They have not started playing baseball this year and are so excited to see what that holds. My husband and I have gone into their room and have found them sleeping in the same bed all cuddled up together. We are truly blessing with them.

In the Kitchen – Something New – by Marcy Lytle

April is the month for spring, showers and showy flowers! How's that for a rhyme? It's also a great time to try something new in the kitchen, something tasty, and something fun! These are new recipes to me, ones that I really love, so I thought I'd share them with you! If you've never made homemade granola, it's time! And homemade flatbread is to die for! New is good, when life is crazy...so hopefully you can find these ingredients and celebrate and give thanks.

Granola

I've made several recipes of homemade granola before, but this one is seriously SO GOOD, mainly because I love cashews! It's so easy to make. It takes about an hour and a half, because of the stirring, but I made it as I was getting ready for bed, and just kept checking it as time clicked away.

- 3 c rolled oats
- 1 cup slivered almonds
- 1 cup cashews (unsalted)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ shredded sweet coconut
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c plus 2 T dark brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c plus 2 T maple syrup
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c veg oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt
- 1 cup raisins

Preheat oven to 250 degrees. In a large bowl combine oats, nuts, coconut and brown sugar. In another bowl, combine syrup, oil, and salt. Combine both mixtures and pour onto 2 sheet pans. Cook for 1 hour 15 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes to achieve an even color. Remove from oven and transfer to bowl and mix in raisins. That's it!

We keep this in a sealed glass jar and eat it daily with breakfast, by the handful or whenever!

Everything Spiced Flatbread

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ c flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ c whole milk yogurt

2 t everything but the bagel seasoning

1 tsp baking powder

1 tsp kosher salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp baking soda

Mix all of the above with a fork. Cover and let rest 20 minutes. With floured hands, pat onto a 10X12 inch rectangle on floured parchment paper. Bake on the parchment on a hot pizza

stone at 475 until the bottom is browned (I don't have a pizza stone so I oiled a baking sheet and got it hot before placing dough on it). Bake about 8 minutes. Top with melted butter and more seasoning!

Swiss Chard Dip

We ate this with the above flatbread, after I sliced it into chips. We enjoyed it as we watched a movie at home. It's a great snack and very filling.

- 1 cup green or red swiss chard, stemmed and finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove
- ¼ tsp coarse salt
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- 1 T olive oil
- 1 T fresh lemon juice
- 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
- Flatbread or pita chips

Prepare an ice bath in a bowl and set aside. Bring a saucepan of water to a boil and add chard, cook til tender, about 3 minutes. Drain. Immediately plunge into ice bath to stop the cooking, and drain.

Mash the garlic clove and salt together into a paste. Stir in chard, yogurt, garlic paste, oil, lemon juice, and cayenne in a medium bowl, and serve!

Cornbread Pie

I saw this recipe in our local newspaper and everything about it looked SO GOOD. I didn't have corn, so I used frozen asparagus tips (recently discovered these!) instead. And it took a speck longer in the oven than the recipe says. But it tastes wonderful warm...or even cold...packed in a lunch box!

- 1 8.5oz package cornbread mix (I used Jiffy)
- 2/3 cup whole milk (or buttermilk)
- 1 large egg
- 1 ½ c shredded cheese (I used a mix of pepper jack and Colby)
- 1 cup packed baby spinach, chopped
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 1 15oz can pinto beans rinsed and drained
- 1 med tomato, thinly sliced

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a large bowl, whisk cornbread mix, milk and egg til combined. Stir in 1 cup of the cheese, the spinach, corn and beans. Pour into a well-seasoned cast iron skillet. Arrange tomatoes and remaining ½ cup cheese on top. Bake until puffed and golden brown, about 30 minutes.

Brussels and Apple Salad (tasted great with above pie!)

This salad was so easy and quick to put together. It made a lot! And brussels actually hold up longer than lettuce...so cool! We had this with the cornbread pie, as a side. It's so tasty.

- 3 T olive oil
- 3 T fresh lemon juice
- 1 ½ tsp pure honey
- Salt and pepper
- 1 lb brussels sprouts trimmed and sliced (I bought this pre-done in a package)
- 1 large Gala apple cut into matchsticks
- 1 small shallot (I used red onion – less than ¼ cup)
- ¼ cup toasted hazelnuts (I used walnuts)
- 1 oz Pecorino cheese, shaved (I used Parmesan)

Whisk together oil, lemon juice and honey for the dressing, in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Add the rest, except the cheese. Toss. Fold in the cheese.

Tried and True – A Bathroom Redo – by Marcy Lytle

Every new season, I like to change out a few things in my guest bathroom. For Christmas and through February, it was full of snowmen, pine cones, scented candles and all things woody and cozy. But when March arrived, I wanted to usher in the new season of all things bright, lively and fresh! I wasn't sure what I wanted this time, but I thought about it before I went out to shop...

One way to get inspiration is to browse the internet. I typed in "brown and white bathroom décor" so I could see some images and pick out a few ideas I might like. I noticed that with that background (and I had a sand hue, as well) lots of greenery made the bathroom pop! I also noticed the use of a bunch of cute shelves I'd seen while out shopping. And I made notes before I left the house.

Instead of going with colorful hues of yellows, pinks and blues for spring, I was opting for ONLY green.

Here's what I wanted:

- Wall décor
- Greenery
- Back of toilet plant
- New candle
- Shelf
- Art pieces for the shelf

And I didn't want to spend much! My choice was Kirklands and Ross, as they were both in a shopping center near me!

Above my toilet I had hung a clock that had been there a good while. At Ross (and Marshalls has several, as well) I found a cute triangular shelf to hang there, and browsed for décor. But...I thought and realized I probably had some items at home for the shelves!

For the back of the toilet, just under the new shelf, I wanted a planter box and I found one – so cute. The wooden boxes would look great with my décor.

Moving over to the counter by the sink, I found a cute boxwood type plant in a pot, and a wreath with the same greenery. These were perfect as a duo there!

I always put out a new nightlight, and kept it with the same theme of browns, and added a candle with a honeycomb on the jar, to blend in, as well.

After a bit of rearranging, and discovering three little items perfect for the shelves, I was done.

So pleased now, the bathroom looks completely updated and fresh, and I spent maybe \$75.

It's always helpful to have an idea BEFORE you shop, of what you want to do, and pictures in your head or on your phone, too. This helps give you guidelines. Measurements of heights and spaces are great to take with you as well. And have a budget in mind.

Then just enjoy browsing the discount stores and the home goods stores. Look for sales. Use coupons.

Then decorate away...



HOME

PRACTICAL PARENTING – The Game and the Win – by Marcy Lytle

“Mom, can I play football?”

It’s a question that’s posed in families everywhere, along with kids asking to take gymnastics classes, be on a soccer team, or any other sport that requires lots of time at practices, the purchase of protective gear, and then game after game – where some will be won and some will be lost. And if parents have the money and time, the answer is usually,

“Yes, we can make that happen.”

After that, we parents show up to watch our kids play, knowing full well that injuries happen in the game, players on the other team are going to rough up our kids, and grueling early morning practices just might be the death of us all.

And yet, we still sign up our kids year after year, to play these sports!

Let’s switch topics now and consider the game of life. We definitely want to play, but we often ask God, maybe not verbally but internally or in our thoughts,

“God, can I live a good life?”

And what we mean by that is we want to play in the game, enjoy all the things life has to offer, but we do NOT want the discipline and hard work that comes with day to day living, and we certainly don’t want any defeats or injuries along the way. That’s called pain and suffering, and we want no part of that.

He gives us all this armor we are to wear, like faith, salvation, truth, righteousness, etc. but we find all of that labor intensive and heavy at times, and we’d rather run carefree through life on a jet plane from one thrill to another without having to strap on that belt, or breastplate, or helmet.

And yet, we still sign up our kids year after year, to play sports!

I was thinking on this very thing, about how we think it’s good for our kids to practice and stretch and work hard, and then come home with a few cuts and scrapes – and even losses. It builds character, and makes them into team players, not snotty brats that scream and get what they want all the time.

We even tell them, when they lose a game and come off the field crying, that they played well and we encourage them to get up and try again. We remind them that maybe they’ll get a win next time. And when they win, we congratulate them, but we hope they don’t become proud and then take a fall...

Placing our kids on sports teams and watching them train and fall, and train and win, and work together with others, and even fail and watch others get the position they wanted, and all that comes with playing and we say,

“It’s good for them.”

And yet, when we have the same parallel experiences in life of ups and downs, scrapes and bruises, and huge losses...we shake a fist and say,

“Why, God?”

I’m right up there with those of us that would prefer a cushioned life of bliss and bling and zing – where fun is to be had day after day with no diagnosis, no losses, no threats and no disappointments. That sounds like a great way to live, doesn’t it? No fear, because nothing bad would ever come our way.

And then there’s that verse,

“Consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds...”

So, if we as parents think it’s a good thing to sign up our kids for games that we know they won’t always win, and where they are sure to fall and get hurt, because it’s good for them...

Why can’t we trust in God that has placed us on this earth, offered us a full set of armor, and promised to be with us for a SURE win at the end of the game?

I don’t know the answer to that question...

I Don't Do Teens – Those Lyrics – by Marcy Lytle

Teens and music, do we know what they're listening to? Does it even matter? I'm thinking that it does. I know that I'm affected by music in big ways. The lyrics to a good song can completely alter my mood, so when I want to feel encouraged or hopeful, I look up songs that remind me of who God is and how much he loves me. And when I walk in a store and hear lyrics that are demeaning and hateful, those too alter my mood, in a bad way...

How much more, then, does music affect our teens?

Take a look at a few lyrics from top songs currently, ones that our teens are listening to:

*Say the word, on my way
Yeah babe, yeah babe, yeah babe
Any night, any day
Say the word, on my way
Yeah babe, yeah babe, yeah babe
In the morning or late
Say the word, on my way*

(Justin Bieber)

*So come on, come on, come on
Let's get physical
Lights out and follow the noise*

(Dua Lipa)

*Now I got her in my room (ah)
Legs wrapped around my beard
Got the fastest car, it zoom (skrrt)
Hope we make it outta here (ah)*

(Travis Scott)

*You're poison I'm ivy
Together we're perfectly bad
You're venomous eyes could blink one time
And keep me attached*

Make a promise that...
(Ally Brooke)

*I'm that bad type
Make your mama sad type
Make your girlfriend mad tight
Might seduce your dad type
I'm the bad guy, duh*

(Billie Eilish)

Those lyrics above are really pretty mild, compared to others that talk about suicide and all sorts of pain and drugs and abuse, etc.

I never was a parent that kept my kids from listening to secular music. Not all secular music is bad; in fact, many songs are absolutely wonderful – including some songs by the above same artists!

The root of the problem is why our teens choose the lyrics they do, and that's the question and answers that we need. Why does he want to listen to songs about having sex, and why does she hide her room to sway to depressive songs about killing herself? And how do we, as parents, even know what our kids are listening to? Teens listen to music for hours...each day.

Lyrics are ways that we relate, because often lyrics say what we're feeling. So it's quite understandable why we all choose the music and lyrics to which we listen...Music totally affects our behavior, our self-esteem, and our feelings. Music has the power to reinforce positive OR negative behavior in teens.

What can we as parents do, to influence our teens to choose good lyrics?

- We can sit down with them and share playlists (try it). Share one of your songs and let him share one of his and listen, then discuss. What a great parenting activity to try! It might open up a world of conversation and healing.
- We can help them search for artists with good lyrics and messages, in a genre of music they like.
- We can pray. Never discount the power of prayer, asking God to give us insight and wisdom in this area...and provision. Who knows, maybe our teen will write new music!
- We can stay on top of what's popular and what our kids are listening to, instead of hoping "they'll be okay," as we go days without interaction.
- We can set an example by playing only good music aloud in the house, where all can hear – songs that uplift and encourage and speak truth – and let each person in the family take turns choosing.

Often it's said that "Christian" music doesn't compare to the secular skill levels and sounds. There's a lot of bad music out there in all genres, but there's a huge amount of good, as well. Search together, talk and communicate, and share with your kids...while you still have a little more time.

An Adage A Day – Prank or Practice? - By Carole Gilbert

When I think of April, I think of “April showers bring May flowers.” And, of course, one of my favorite holidays is April Fool’s Day.

My last big April fool prank was about thirteen years ago to my son who was away at college. It was his freshman year and this prank crossed the line into bad and sad. I had always done pranks on this day but this one was cruel, I admit. My husband and I didn’t think so at the time, and we didn’t mean for it to be, but after that one I vowed never to do something like that again. It’s taken me lots of practice to not prank on April Fool’s Day. And that leads to this month’s proverb, “Practice makes perfect.”

I had perfected my skills of falling, acting hurt, and keeping a straight face, just long enough to receive the concern of those around me. Then I would come out with the beloved, “April Fools!” I even sent my husband to the grocery store one year for the vegetable red longneck butter tomato squash, or some crazy name like that. I only felt bad when he called saying he couldn’t find it anywhere and neither could the store produce worker!?! I still laugh over that one!

I always heard growing up, “Figure out what you do best, and do your best with it.” “Practice makes perfect.” The more you do something, the better at it you will become. I learned it, I lived it, it’s true, and I love it, so I passed it on to my kids, A LOT!

The proverb, “Practice makes perfect,” originated in the 1500’s. It started in the Latin version of “Uses promptos facit,” or “Use makes perfect.” It was thought to be first said in the English form we know by John Adams and written in *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams* by Gregory Titelman. John Adams wrote on page 31 of his diary from 1761, “I was too incautious, and unartful in my Proceeding, but Practice makes perfect. I should have first taken all the summonses, into my own Hand, or Powers of attorney from the Defendants.” I love how he’s applying this phrase to his work.

Interestingly, when I researched the phrase, “Figure out what you do best and do your best with it,” I came up empty handed. I don’t believe this is original to my family so I’m curious, have you heard this one before? The closest I could find was “Do what you can with all you have, wherever you are,” by Theodore Roosevelt.

Back in February I got the opportunity to keep my granddaughters for a week while my daughter was on a trip. I took my oldest granddaughter to soccer practice. How I longed for those April showers. It had been raining but, of course, it stopped just in time for practice. There we were on a hill, it was cloudy, and 43 degrees! But all that aside, I got to share with her about practice makes perfect. I also told her, “Run like you want to run at the mall!” You moms can relate. The places you want them to run they don’t and the places they aren’t to run, they do. And practice she did. She’s figuring out what she does best and learning it takes practice. Like her mother, like daughter. Even Paul talks of running the race as to win the race in 1 Corinthians 9:24. We can’t all be the winner but if we try our best, we are winners to God, 1 Corinthians 15:57.

I think those girls would've practiced even in the rain. My kids did and there I would sit. We moms are diehards like another profession we know, "Come rain or shine, sleet or snow..." And in case you're wondering about that last big April Fools prank we did to our son those thirteen years ago, it involved my husband having a wreck but being alright. He really didn't have a wreck and why my son didn't think about it being April Fools Day, I don't know. All I know is as we talked the story just kept growing, and unknowing to his dad and I, he was packing his bag to come home. He even had some friends at his dorm helping him. That April Fools disclosure went sour. All my kids were used to me pulling some form of prank or joke, and even expected it. But this one, as they say, was an "epic mom fail." At least Dad was in on it, too.

I ask you, which do you prefer? Prank or practice? I don't recommend you practicing pranks. Take it from me who learned the hard way. Practice instead, running the race as to win the imperishable prize and then pass it on. And through all the showers of your life, let God's light shine.

Tiny Living – On the Go – by Leyanne Enterline

From one end of the country to the next, five states, visiting three times zones in one day, late nights, early mornings, go, go, go! I thought the rock star life would be amazing, but I do not know how one keeps up! After almost a month of travel, we are finally home and I can barely keep my eyes open!

As a family, we decided to go on the road with my husband while he worked. Not on the road with our travel trailer and driving all over, but from airport to airport with each state he traveled to. The lifestyle seemed glamorous at first, but once we lived it firsthand, it was beyond exhausting! I am super grateful for the amazing experiences for sure, but a little over three straight weeks of constant going is more than a little rough!

However...

The glamour, the benefits, and the fun definitely outweighed the exhaustion! We got to travel to many states and see some awesome theaters where my husband works. We even experienced the paparazzi up close and felt like we were a part of this “worldly royalty.” We dined in fancy restaurants and flew on a private jet. We spoke with the rich and famous and admired all of their worldly possessions; all the things that come with a price.

We are beyond lucky that we were able to all travel together and have a wonderful family take care of our pups. And our tiny home was just the same as when we left, not much we really had to have cared for while we were on the go.

As we spoke with the other individuals on the road with us, they told of their families they left to come on this trip and the amount of stress it was on all of them. No rest and eating out constantly left them feeling tired and unhealthy. No time for exercise, or just time to themselves to think or just do what they wanted to do, was hard.

Being constantly on the go has its pros and cons for sure. Luckily for my husband, he can pick and choose the amount of travel he wants to take on, but it definitely makes me think and pray for those that have a constant life on the road.

I’m thankful for our tiny space to come home to, and for the quality family time we get to have when we are on the road together.

Remember, loves grows best in tiny spaces!

A Night to Remember – The Walking Dead – by Marcy Lytle

Little kids like zombies, the walking dead, don't they? There's a popular Disney movie about zombies and how they are ostracized from society, but are befriended by some kids. The movie shows how when differences are embraced...community takes place. Zombies are a popular breed today, from kids to teens, from lighthearted and warm stories to horror and gore. And since Easter is in the month of April, why not talk about the walking dead?

By definition a zombie is a corpse revived through witchcraft. Did you know that? What if we talked to our kiddos about zombies and what Jesus did when he rose from the dead? Was he a zombie, a hero, or a Savior?

Preparation: You'll need 10 or so toothpicks for kids to manipulate, and then a snack to eat with those toothpicks at the end of the lesson - maybe olives or grapes or cheese – whatever your kids like.

The Easter Story, you can tell to kids again and again:

Jesus had a group of friends with which he was dining on the night before his crucifixion. A crucifixion is when a criminal is hung on a cross to die. Only Jesus wasn't a criminal. People treated him like one, because he claimed to be the Son of God – and he really was – but they didn't believe it! In this group of friends was Judas, and he squealed on Jesus to the soldiers who then came and took Jesus away.

Have you ever had a friend or sibling tattle on you? Or have you tattled on someone? How did you feel afterwards? Judas told where Jesus was so he could get some money, and he then he felt so bad later that he killed himself. No zombie resurrection for Judas!

Lay out the toothpicks in a row like friends, then let one kid pick one to jab the other toothpicks and send them into disorder.

Jesus took his friends into a garden to pray with him, before it was his time to die on the cross. He asked them to pray with him, for strength. However, his friends fell asleep. In Jesus' biggest time of need, his friends left him and forgot to help him.

Have you ever invited friends to a party but they didn't come, or have you ever needed a friend to care about you, but they didn't? It hurt, didn't it? Those sleeping friends of Jesus could have awakened and helped Jesus pray, but instead they stayed asleep...like zombies before their awakening.

Take one toothpick and place it aside, to depict Jesus praying. Ask the other toothpicks to join, but have them all lay sideways instead, like they're sleeping.

Jesus was taken away by Roman soldiers and nailed to a cross, because his purpose in coming to earth was to save sinners (those who disobey God) from their sins and offer them eternal life! Dying a selfless death in love was the only way to do this.

Can you imagine the pain Jesus must have felt as he was nailed to the cross for our sins? Do you think he looked like a zombie?

Take two toothpicks and lay them like a cross, then two more sets and lay beside those, to depict the three crosses on the hill.

Two thieves were hanging by Jesus, guys that really did something wrong. Jesus had done nothing wrong except love people. Jesus turned to the one that asked for help and forgave him, offering him eternal life. Not a zombie life of a walking dead person, but a beautiful life free of pain and suffering!

Thunder roared, and Jesus died, and was dead for three days. Then up from the dead he arose! It was because Jesus is life and death could not hold him down – and neither can death hold us! We will never be zombies, walking around dead, but we will be living forever with Jesus and all others that believe. All because of Jesus' death and resurrection!

What Jesus did for us rocked the world! No more fear of death, the grave, and that place called hell. Jesus did for us what we couldn't do. Jesus is the Savior of the world – for all have sinned – and we all need a Savior. There are no “real” zombies among us, they're only in the movies, but there are lots of people that will die in their sin unless they believe!

Scatter the toothpicks around on the table...as if each is lost and has no place to belong.

Jesus lives! Up from the dead! Not a bloody gory image, but a glorified beautiful Savior that is with us, loves us, and always forgives us and will keep us forever and ever in His hands – safe and secure.

Sin scatters us, makes us feel alone and lost, hurts our hearts and ultimately causes death and separation, but then...Jesus! Because he rose up from the dead, he gathers each one of us in his hands and gives us purpose and life!

Gather the toothpicks into your hand, then give a toothpick to each person, stating that they belong to Jesus when they believe, and he uses them on this earth to bless Him and bless others.

Enjoy your snack with each toothpick, giving thanks for Jesus' death and giving us purpose on this earth to live – not as zombies or living among zombies – but as living beings that breathe and show the love of Jesus by our actions and our love for all.



YOU

Strengthening Your Core – An Idle Mind – by Marcy Lytle

Mom often told me that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. I get what she was saying, that if we're not filling our minds with good things, then bad thoughts can enter in and take up residence and cause us harm. However, as I've grown older, I've come to wish I had an idle mind...

Let me explain.

Often our minds become cluttered with so many things like:

- Our to-do list
- Gifts we need to buy and wrap
- Food we need to shop for and prepare
- Friends we need to call
- Parents we need to visit
- Trips we must plan now
- Worries about tomorrow
- Doctor's visits we don't want to make
- Questions we wish He'd answer

I could write a longer list, but you get the picture. An active mind, in my opinion, is a den of chaos! There are some days I'd actually pay for an idle mind!

Isn't it interesting how we can wake up in the morning and within an hour, our minds can be full to running over of ideas and worries and things we must do just in that one day! There's no time for breakfast, definitely no time to squeeze in morning prayer or time with Him, and barely time to brush our teeth – because that's a must – before we run out the door! Our minds are completely stopped up and full, until we sink back into our pillows at night, exhausted from the heaviness of a full mind.

So how in the world can we put our minds in idle phase, empty them out, and allow his peace to seep in?

We can declutter our minds, one item at a time by:

- Delegating that to-do list to friends and family, or crossing something off
- Releasing expectations that we have to attend or buy a gift for every invitation to do so
- Ordering grocery delivery or buying prepared foods, or asking for help
- Setting aside perhaps one hour a week for calls, and letting that responsibility go the rest of the week
- Visiting our parents as we can, can letting go of the guilt when we cannot
- Enjoying spontaneous trips without a schedule – how about that?
- Emptying our worries into his hands and resting at his feet
- Inviting a friend to go with us to the doctor, or cancelling if we're only going out of fear
- Sighing and smiling, knowing he's aware of our questions and will answer in due time

I'm the world's worst at having a full mind. Maybe it's because my mom warned me of an idle one, but most likely it's because I just run like an energizer battery so I won't become bored! However, I know that an idle mind is good for me, because it means I've emptied, poured, trusted, and rested for a while at his feet and breathed.

I hope you can do the same, if your mind is in high gear and revving to go all the time...

Life Right Now – Peace in the Middle – by Bethany Gomez

I'm not musically inclined in any way. I don't even think I have a decent singing voice, however much I think I sound amazing while singing in the car. I can't play any instrument, although I wish I could. I don't even think I could play the triangle. Well, maybe. But I love music. I listen to my worship playlist every morning when I'm getting ready for the day. I'm even listening to music right now as I write.

Music has a way of making me feel less alone when I am at home by myself. God has used songs to speak to me and encourage me. Music has a way of making moments so much more memorable. Certain worship songs have brought me to tears by the way they convey God's immense love for not only me, but everyone on this earth. Worship songs cause me to remember God's promises, and this strengthens my faith. Even still, in times like these, singing and worshipping in the midst of hardships can bring peace and declare to the enemy that no matter what is going on -I will still sing and trust that God is in control.

To be honest, this article was going to be about something else entirely, but I changed it last minute because I didn't feel right talking about anything other than what is occurring in the world right now and how it is affecting me.

Since I am a teacher, I am a little worried about my school shutting down to help slow the spread of this virus. This could cause a financial loss for me since I am an hourly employee. There are just so many unknowns happening in all our lives. Even as a believer I am not immune to fear and worry, but as a believer I trust that God will provide for not only my needs but the needs of others that are struggling more than I am.

I pray that God's perfect love will cast out fear. That he will protect the most vulnerable.

I will continue to trust, pray and sing to God.

With that, here are a few songs that are seeing me through right now:

"Peace Be Still" by The Belonging featuring Lauren Daigle

"Highs and Lows" by Hillsong Young and Free

"Not Afraid" by Mosaic MSC

"Raise A Hallelujah" by Bethel

In this time of social distancing, where we feel helpless because we are limited to going out to help, let us not distance ourselves from sharing encouragement via phone calls, text messages, video chat, and even sending of cards. And let us not forget the power of sharing and listening to uplifting music that will hopefully bring peace in the middle of the storms of life.

Psalm 59:16

But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love;

for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.

The Upper Quadrant – Eyes Shut – by Marcy Lytle

I was praying for my dad this morning and trying to picture giving my concerns about him to God, as I prayed. I often think about placing my cares in a safety deposit box, locking it and handing Him the key. Or I visualize that verse about casting our cares on Him, like a real fisherman, casting my cares out to the far places in the water and letting them go...

However, this morning I decided to be quiet and still as I just listened and “saw” in my mind’s eye. You see, my mind is usually super active as I spill out all of the worries about getting older, watching my dad decline, and concerns about my kids, and the pain I see others suffering, and so on... I often pour out all of those things in a big pile, morning after morning, because by evening I’ve usually picked them all up once again to carry. Not a great habit, I confess.

Sitting still in His presence is hard for me, as I sit and listen. I want to speak. I want to explain. And I want to plead.

So here I sat, as I just thought of those on my list, and here’s what I saw:

- I saw my dad cradled in the palm of His hand.
- I saw myself and my husband lying down on God’s heart.
- I saw my kids soaring in a hot air balloon with fire fueling their ride.
- I saw God hovering over my extended family tending to everything that concerned them.

The point of sitting still and saying nothing is to listen to His voice and to be able to see with our mind’s eye how He’s got it all there under His watchful eye.

I thought of creation and how the Word says He hovered over the face of the earth, in the darkness, as He began to create light, design animals, fill the seas, and more. He never stops creating light in the darkness, and order out of chaos. He is who He is, from the beginning of time and forever and ever.

I know that I’m going to need to sit quietly morning after morning and be still and watch in my mind’s eye as He shows me how he’s present and moving and working and powerful. I know that I’m weak and that during the day I will once again flirt with worry and care, and end up tired and exhausted as the sun sets. He knows I’m weak, but He’s so strong...

And just like the sun rises each morning and will do so until the end of time, He is faithful to awaken me and call me to sit alone with Him, eyes shut and heart wide open, as He shows me how He’s at work creating order, sending light, and making all things GOOD.

YOU – Healthy Habits – Dance Away – by Marcy Lytle

I wasn't allowed to boy/girl dance growing up, but I was allowed to dance on a team of girls in high school. I love dancing! I love moving to the music, because it feels like I'm having fun while getting in exercise, as well! However, I feel like many of us don't dance unless we're on a dance floor at a wedding, because we just don't think of it! This month, I want you to think of dancing as cardio, and something you can do at home, without having to sign up for a class!

First, here are a few benefits of dancing, and how it's good for your health:

It can improve mental health, because it's something that's fun and happy

It can increase stamina, as we dance the day away...

It's a cardio workout, for sure.

So, maybe you haven't thought of this, but you can totally dance when you're at home, super busy, or out with your kids, or wherever...to get into the habit of dancing for fun AND good health:

1. Put on music while you clean the house, and dance and skip from room to room.
2. Put on music when you and your husband are bored, and dance together – any sort of moves – for at least 30 minutes.
3. Put on music when the kids are bored, and have a family jam session while showing off your latest moves. You're sure to laugh, which is also good for your health!
4. Put on music and pretend your large area rug or den floor is your performance space, and spin and leap and dance and move like no one is watching!
5. Put on music while you sit at your computer and twist, reach, clap and shout for a 15 minute break.
6. Put on music while you're folding towels and putting away clothes, and actually skip and dance to the closet/bathroom and back.
7. Put on music when you're out on a date, park way out in the lot, and dance as the sun sets...
8. Put on music while you're relaxing and just move your legs to the beat, for a good while.
9. Put on music by searching you tube for dance videos and just do what you can!
10. Put on music when you're the lowest of the low, and dance until your mood is breathless and bold.

I seriously love to dance on my area rug. Sometimes I do it alone, and sometimes I convince him to dance with me. We often watch YouTube videos, just play a Spotify list, or just pick three songs that we love and we move – together and separately – until we're laughing and a little bit tired.

Dancing is definitely a workout and a mood lifter, and it's something we can all do, whether we're "good" at it or not. It's just moving like we're happy and we know it!

Created for Life - His Embrace is Our Calling – by Ginny Hurley

Right now, as I sit in my backyard listening to the tinkling of our water fountain and the trilling of the birds that have recently returned from journeys south, I am in awe of God's goodness and patience with me. I am convicted of the busyness of life and the constant moving about that happens everyday when I get up. I realize the value of quietness, a soaking of heaven's breath, which truly changes the way I think. Loved ones come to mind, and as I pray for them, I'm released from worry, doubt, and vain imagination. Focus is clearer and the idea of a problem just fades in this atmosphere.

His love has me. He has me.

My thoughts, my heart, and my body were given long ago to Someone bigger than me, the One who holds my hand every minute and brings joy to my spirit in every situation. In the twinkling of an eye, He is with me as I sit outside and listen for Him. Knowing that even as I enter the house, He remains with me, and that fact is most endearing to me. His presence draws me and makes me hungry for more.

I am entrenched in the love of a good Father and I recognize that my part in the relationship is to steward all that He has given me. So from the place of friendship and honor, my desire is to carry His heart to every place. Stewarding is not about money, although it can be. I see it as a lifestyle, a way of waking up everyday with a heart of generosity and passion, sacrifice and honor. It's a way of going about my day with an expectancy of Him moving. Believing that He truly did create me for something I can't necessarily see brings me peace and stabilizes my mind when I want to compare or look at all the wonderful things others are doing that I am not.

It is impossible for Him to leave me or forget about my personal life, the things I care about. His word is true and He will never forsake me no matter what. That is a fact that remains! Nothing can change it! His perfect love has been poured out for everyone forever. Our response is YES! The One who heals our wounds and binds up our broken hearts calls us to trust Him. The Lion of Judah is roaring right now. He is ready to bring justice and hope to our nation and the world. The Lamb has paid the price, and He is our only true Champion.

As I gaze on His beauty, I am captivated with the way He loves me. I am caught up in a vision of His magnificence and I never want to leave. His embrace is our calling. It's as simple as that. Resting in the quietness of His love, He carries us to the place of His heart, right in the center. Circumstances and trials seem to disappear. My worries have vanished in the essence of His presence. There is no place I would rather be!



MARRIAGE

In This Together – Stop Apologizing – by Bekah Holland

You know, sometimes, I wonder how I got here. And by sometimes, I mean right now. And by here, I mean writing this article. About marriage? Really?

Let's be honest. I'm not a shiny, sparkly newlywed who is floating in on a dopamine rush imagining this exciting new journey with this beautiful human who looked very handsome in a tux. I'm also not tried and true, stood the test of time, finally not doing everyone else's laundry, sitting on the back porch watching the sun go down place in my marriage either. My husband and I are somewhere in the middle.

We're essentially the couple equivalent of the awkward teenage phase. This summer we'll celebrate 14 years of wedded (sometimes) bliss. So, all the newness has worn off. We've seen each other at our very best I'm-out-in-public-and-I-need-to-appear-fabulous selves. We've also seen each other in whatever level is approximately six miles below rock bottom. Both as individuals and together. So thinking about writing something that makes it sound like I have a clue what I'm doing makes me feel like a fraud.

Just in case anyone hasn't actually read any of my stories about messes and mistakes, I'll sum it up for you....I've had plenty of "don't do this" moments. I've done and said some incredibly stupid things that not only hurt my husband, but also hurt me. I think as women, we are taught to make ourselves smaller, more quiet, gentle and invisible to make room for everyone else. I'm no exception. But as I've gotten older, and my marriage more solid, I've realized that my husband didn't marry a woman who just put her head down, apologized for other people's transgressions and silenced her own dreams to make room for the dreams of others.

The woman he married was bright, witty and ready to challenge anyone who tried to tell her she didn't deserve a seat at the table. That woman was brave, sensitive and compassionate, full of enough light to touch those around her. But somehow, I lost sight of her. I thought that to be a wife and mother, I needed to be quiet and be less. I thought I needed to silence myself and my hopes and dreams. It was what I heard around me. It was what I saw in churches who used the "women should be silent" in blatantly wrong contexts, but used it nonetheless.

I spent much of my early married life trying to shrink down to some version of myself that fit in the tiny space I thought was allowed for me. Small enough to stay out of the way, quiet enough to not be noticed, gentle enough to stay under the radar. Why? I have no idea. Actually, I have some idea, but what I know is that there was never one moment in time that my partner wanted this kind of life for me. He always managed to see me for who I really was and who I was meant to be, past all the limitations I weighed myself down with. He saw my ability and my strength and reminded me that my voice not only matters, but is necessary. And not just in theory. That while our kids and the people in our circles deserve to experience the me I was created to be, but that I deserve it more. And not the tiny version I've been. But the me that takes up space, and speaks her truth. The me that snorts when she laughs and doesn't hide her fears and dreams. The me that chooses kindness over promotion and love over all else.

So maybe that's how I got here, writing about marriage. I definitely didn't get here by doing it all right and having it all together. Maybe I got here by trying to make the next right choice and take the next hard step. Maybe I got here by continuing to throw off the weight of who I thought

I was supposed to be and fight to be more of who I was created by God to be. And if I trust that God is perfection and he makes no mistakes, then I have to trust that I'm not one. That he created me to be brave and kind and strong and gentle and that I don't have to fit in a box, but that He designed me to break out of it. And just in case you don't know me, I still don't have it all together or much of anything figured out. I mostly just wing it every day, and try to do better than I did yesterday. Sometimes that works, and sometimes my husband has to remind me to stop apologizing for merely existing. Sometimes I stand strong and fight and then go home and cry on the kitchen floor. Sometimes I do that backwards. But I'm learning.

It's not because I'm figuring this all out on my own. It's because I'm doing this life beside a person who, despite his own battle, won't stop fighting for me to live my best life and stop apologizing for living it.

All through the Bible we see how God created us with community in mind...from the very beginning to the very end. No one, not even Jesus, was an island. Those folks all grew and moved and lived and changed the world through relationship, and we will too.

I don't always know what I'm doing (obviously) and I don't have some how-to formula for a better marriage (most definitely not). But maybe, just maybe, my husband and I are figuring out how to do this thing, we can walk together, pushing each other forward and learning with each bump and bruise and even from our dumpster fire mistakes. Maybe together we really can be better.

"If you feel something calling you to dance or write or paint or sing, please refuse to worry about whether you're good enough. Just do it. Be generous. Offer a gift to the world that no one else can offer: YOURSELF." Glennon Doyle

Date Night Fun – A Little Comedy – by Marcy Lytle

It's the month for paying taxes, filing them, reporting our income, gathering paperwork and more – and I know so many dread April 15 and sigh when it's over...or if they have to file an extension...they cry! And thankfully, this crazy year there's an extension for all. But why not make April date night a time to laugh and smile at all things funny! I'm not one to laugh easily, but when I do it's often over silly or sarcastic things and I cannot stop! Once, in a funeral of a person I didn't know well, I could see just the tip of their nose from where I was sitting (as they were laying in the casket). For some reason, I got so overcome with laughter, I had to leave...

Okay, that's weird. But here are some funny dates to take this month when life is not so funny:

Joke's on You – Head to Barnes and Noble online and buy a joke book, or a Reader's Digest (there are lots of jokes in there). Read them aloud, as you sip on a drink and enjoy a snack. In the kitchen, make pancakes together, with "decorations" from your pantry like chocolate chips, strawberries, syrup and more – to make funny faces on the cakes before you eat them. Squirt a little whipping cream into each other's mouths and laugh out loud.

Comedy Central – Check out some comedies on Netflix and stay home to watch a couple, while you make some funny drinks and flavored popcorn. See a few recipes over on the TIPS page under "In the Kitchen." *Late Night*, starring Emma Thompson, is funny and great movie – if you haven't seen it.

Tickle Your Fancy – this means something fascinates you and you want to try it! Browse YouTube for dance tutorials, or DIY projects that are unique and use things you have at home. Whatever you fancy, now's the time to search it out and try it, in your yard or in your car or bathroom – try an up-do or a re-do! Do these things TOGETHER – and get tickled doing them!

Laugh with Friends – We are all in isolation, but pick a time to gather with friends on FB or via text or emails and spend an hour sending each other jokes, relaying funny stories, or making each other smile. Have each couple all make the same drink/snack to enjoy while you're connecting for laughs and love.

Amusement Park – I know, we can't go to the real amusement parks, but we can park our car and enjoy amusements! Pack up your car with all the things – a picnic, puzzle books, games, etc. – and head to a park! Get out of the house, but still away from others, and spend a few hours sitting on the hood of your car, resting in the car, and opening up the back for your meal – and make a whole day of it!

Purpose to make the best of your time together, not apart and reading or working in your own corners all day, but together laughing and loving and rediscovering the love you both have for Him and each other.

After 40 Years – Road Rage – by Marcy Lytle

Traveling with your spouse, especially navigating on a road trip, can be trying on a marriage! Believe me, there have been trips we've been on where the map app steered us wrong and we ended up lost – only to start blaming each other for “not listening” or to ask, “What did you do?” And those comments and questions never ended well, as we pulled over and argued about what when wrong with his driving and my navigation.

We had a big talk about this, once. I expressed how I feel when I'm guiding him according to the app and he remarks as if I've steered him wrong. He expressed how he's just releasing his frustration not at me, but at the situation. We talked and talked, and we finally are doing better mapping and driving and actually having fun!

Here's what I've learned and he's learned, and how we now know what's triggering frustration and how to avoid it:

- We plan ahead...together...before we go. This helps so much, because he sees and I do too, exactly where we're going.
- We pull over. This is a life saver! When we're turned around or miss an exit or become confused, there's this place called a parking lot where we whip into, we look at the map, then go again. Genius.
- We've become more kind. If he veers off the path to see something unplanned, I go with the flow (this is hard for me!) If I'm waiting on the phone because service is bad, or I've accidentally typed in something incorrectly, he waits and pauses and smiles.
- We've worked on patience. When we're in a parking lot and twisting around turns, our app navigator often starts talking and then switches directions abruptly. We just laugh and say, “Oh, she's getting her bearings...just wait a minute.”
- We quit thinking the worst of the other one. This is huge! If I'm a bit snappy, he lets me know and I stop and think about why. Maybe I'm tired and we need to pull over and rest a bit. We really aren't out to make the other one have a bad time! Sometimes we just need rest, a breather, or that thing called grace...

Traveling with our spouses can be one of the best times of refueling EVER, as we escape the routine and the work, and enjoy the views and the ride. But only if we learn how the other one works and thinks, and we communicate. We spent years ruining a perfectly good few hours of sightseeing by arguing over navigation!

This last trip – there wasn't an argument at all! And yes, we made wrong turns, got tired, and missed exits. But somehow, after all these years of talking it out and realizing how we make the other one feel when we growl...we grew up and enjoyed ourselves.

How about that?



ENCOURAGEMENT

Rooted in Love – Mamas Unite - By Kaelin Scott

Being a stay-at-home mama sometimes feels like being a zookeeper. Constantly cleaning up messes, animal-like growling noises (coming from me, not the kids), always wiping somebody's nose or bottom, and feeling filthy by the end of the day - even though I haven't gone anywhere. Face-to-face interaction with people other than my family is often lacking for several days straight. I feel like a lazy slob, but there's no real point in getting dressed most of the time. And I can't exercise or go for a walk without a monkey – or, you know, a child – hanging off some limb of mine. My life is a cyclical pattern of cooking, cleaning, coloring, changing diapers, getting snacks, and trying to make a dent in the overwhelming clutter. *It's hard work, and it's tiring.*

But I've also been on the flipside of the coin, and I know that life as a working mom is no walk in the park either. Your days start early, too early, and it's always a mad rush to make it out the door in time. You spend all day away from your family, surrounded by people with demands for what your day should look like. Squeezing time into your busy day to pump for your nursing baby is stressful and sometimes infeasible, but you do it anyway, oftentimes sacrificing your own lunchtime to make sure it gets done. By the time you pick up your kids and get home, you've got to make dinner, clean up the kitchen, prep lunches for the next day, bathe everyone, and then it's bedtime. And you feel like you barely even got to see your kids amid all the preparing and necessary tasks. You live for the weekend when you'll get to spend time together, but then Saturday rolls around and you've got a mountain of chores to catch up on. *It can feel like you're trying to stay above water, struggling to catch your breath.*

Whether you work, stay home, or do a combination of the two, being a mom is never easy. It's a wonderful, amazing journey, but it can be exhausting and frustrating. That's why we all need each other! Instead of criticizing or judging each other's parenting styles, all of us mamas need to stick together...to support each other, love each other, and remind each other just how beautiful and valuable each of us are.

Next time you see a woman at the grocery store with a wailing toddler in the cart and a fussy baby on her hip, instead of thinking "if that were my kid" or feeling glad it's not you, ask her if she could use an extra hand. If your friend has had a long week and you know she could use some time alone, offer to take her kids to the park with you for a couple hours. Or simply just be there to talk, or cry, or LISTEN. Pray for your mama friends. And remember that we all have struggles no one sees, and none of our lives are perfect. Enjoy your family and the time you have with them, and soak up the memories as much as you can. The days may be long, but the years are short. One day these little munchkins won't need us the way they do now, and we're going to miss all the sleepless nights and restless days.

Motherhood is a beautiful gift, especially when we focus on the positive and build each other up. Friendship is important at any season of life, and that includes mamas.

Find a friend, be a friend, and remember that you always have a friend in Jesus.

FIRMLY PLANTED – THE TREES IN MY GARDEN – BY DINA CAVAZOS

In the beginning...

There were no trees. Well, practically. There were two: one fairly small cedar elm and a half-dead chinkapin oak planted too close together by the previous owner. My south-facing back yard got the full benefit of the sun going across the big sky all day long. The sun was relentless, and the one tiny bit of shade from the cedar elm made no difference.

This “beginning” was before the idea of a prayer garden was even planted in my soul. This beginning was a blank slate—a bare back yard waiting for its destiny. At the time, all I wanted was **shade**. It couldn’t come fast enough, but you know how trees grow....slowly. There is no instant shade tree.

After a couple of years I decided to cut down the chinkapin because it wasn’t doing well. Even if it recovered, it was planted too close to the healthy cedar elm, so both would suffer. I had no patio and the small elm was off to the side. I was desperate. An ad for cheap trees a few miles away lured me to drive over and take a look. A limited selection of pathetic looking specimens didn’t look very promising, but the price was right for my small budget. I saw a stick with a tiny leaf labeled “Chinese pistache.” With a price of only \$20, I claimed it because I had read it was a good choice for our area. Trying to make the most of its future shade, I studied the backyard for the most strategic place to plant it. My helper planted it. Then I thought, “*Why did I do that? That was the wrong spot!*” I paid him (again) to move it a few yards over. Then I realized it was in the right spot the first time. Crazy! Too bad and oh well.

During that same low-budget, take-what-I-can-get tree hunting trip I also bought a few small stick-plants that were simply labeled crape myrtle (no variety) for \$5 each. This was risky because there are so many kinds—you just don’t know what you’re going to end up with. I have one of those still growing, to gargantuan heights with lavender flowers. By chance, I planted it in a good spot for its size and I really like it, but it’s not what I would have chosen had I known better.

A couple of more years passed and the prayer garden seed sprouted in my soul. Shade and privacy were required for a useable, prayerful setting. I considered ways to camouflage the view of roofs and create the edges of my sanctuary. If money and city codes were no object, I would have built a beautiful privacy fence with tall metal structures to cover with vines. My imagination ran wild, but trees and shrubs were my best option. After much research and thought, I planted tough native wax myrtles because they grow fast. Over time, I added a tall narrow conifer and a Blue Ice Arizona cypress (bluish color and supposedly not too wide). A viburnum, anacacho orchid, Texas mountain laurel, a Texas redbud that I really didn’t have room for (I gave in to their early spring beauty), one tall Natchez crape myrtle in the corner, and, finally, a Monterey oak pretty much maxed out the space for trees.

It’s been nine years since I first obeyed an inner calling to create a backyard prayer garden. The trees in my garden have been prayed over—prayed over to grow fast, to be healed when sick, and to be the right choice for what God wants the garden to be. These trees define my garden—

not only in terms of their visual and functional effects, but the work that results from their various peculiarities. Once planted, they become a permanent part of the landscape and impact everything else.

The trees in my garden remind me of major decisions and landmarks in my life. Choices and events have largely determined my life path and now form the structure I've built my life around...because that's what was there. As with my trees, I would make some different choices had I known what I know now. We say that a lot...*if only I knew then what I know now*. But I made the best decisions I could at the time, knowing what I knew at the time.

Some decisions are made in ignorance, in poverty, in sickness, in desperation or out of necessity...the imperfect mess that follows seems to be the norm rather than the exception. But messiness and imperfection are perfect opportunities for God to reveal his faithfulness and love. He has woven my mess-ups into the big picture and made them an integral part of the scenery. Like the Chinese pistache "stick" I took a chance on—it's now a beautiful shady tree in the summer. Over and beyond my stumbling efforts, he knows a heart that loves him and I believe he values this above all.

This is great news....for me, for you, and for my garden.

Moving Forward – Ask Him – by Pam Charro

Isn't God amazing? We are so blessed by all that he provides, from friendships and family to income and shelter, easily accessible food and medical care, fun experiences, health, the list goes on and on!

But if you're like me, you can probably think of at least a few areas you would like to see improvement in your life. If you aren't asking him, why aren't you? He is very interested and wants to hear from you. Don't believe the lie that he just wants you to let him decide what is good for you. That's not even a relationship!

Years ago, I sat down and wrote a list of 31 things I wanted to see him do in my life (no, I wasn't thinking of Baskin-Robbins at the time, it just happened to be all of the items I could come up with). Within a year or two, I was able to check off all 31 requests. Would he have been on trial if I hadn't received all 31 things? No, of course not! But it was a great opportunity for me to see him as the loving and generous father that he is, and he showed off for me!

And last year, I took a brief hiatus from much socializing because I had gone through a difficult season and was focused on being alone with God and healing my heart. But in January I started asking for lots of friendships and to be socially busy with all kinds of new friends. In only two months, I have already met dozens of new people that I enjoy quality time with and I'm having so much fun again! I also asked for either a new job or for my work situation to improve, and he has already answered that prayer as well. I enjoy my job now and can see how blessed I, along with many others, am because he put me there. Life is so much better than it was just a few short months ago, but I'm not sure how much would have improved if I hadn't asked for the change.

I know we have all heard stories about how God has graciously blessed others, but he wants all of us to have those stories about our own lives! He loves to give us the desires of our hearts. Life is so exciting because we can know and trust that he hears our prayers, he cares about what we think and want, and, with him, all things are possible!

Simple Truths – Captivity – by Erica Simmons

Over the last several months, I have been on a reading binge. In the midst of it I read a two book series that had a profound impact on me. Even as I write this story, the tears start to flow. Nothing I have ever read has impacted me so profoundly; and for the sake of transparency, I will confess it has thrown me into a season of my life that I have never experienced and it has not been an easy one. It for this reason I am compelled to write this article this month. I will start by sharing a brief synopsis of the story.

The story is about Claire. Claire was from a loving and close family. When Claire was 14 years old she was abducted and held captive for 10 years. I don't have to (nor will I share) what she endured, because you already know. I will share that early on Claire fought her captor and many times tried to escape. On her last attempt, her captor did not punish her for the attempt, but showed up the next day with a young woman and took her life in front of Claire. You see, Claire had come to the conclusion there was nothing she would not endure to get away, but the burden of being the cause of someone else's death and the fear of more deaths was enough to make her stop her attempts to escape. Her captor then used this fear, even going so far as to include her family over the years, to keep her obedient. As time went by, her captor brought someone else home and Claire was given more freedom. It was during these moments over the years she would find a random man and spend the night with him. But instead of telling him directly who she was, she left her real name and the address to her parents' home. During one of these encounters she met Connor Parks, a police detective. Although there was an immediate connection and attraction he only held her for the night. When Connor awoke the next morning she was gone, but she again left her real name and her parents' address. Needless to say, he was determined to find her, but before he could do so, Claire found out her captor had taken another girl and was determined not to have her suffer the same fate - and therefore escapes with the young girl.

I will be the first to say that this synopsis is dry and not all that inspiring, and would not be one that I would use if writing a review of the book. The synopsis is utilitarian for this article, and the book is written powerfully and beautifully. Even though I have shared some key points, if you are a reader of good books - I don't want to give everything away. *Now back to the article.* As I finished reading the book, the next morning as I was getting ready for work I was struck by an overwhelming wave of emotions. I just stood there and sobbed uncontrollably and deeply for reasons unknown. As I was sitting at work with this heavy burden on my heart, I opened my email and wrote the following paragraph. One that I knew I was going to use to write this article.

The enemy wants to strip away our innocence in the most horrific way possible. He wants to trap us and he uses fear to terrorize us and keep us his prisoner. He wants to blind us to the truth about our freedom. He wants to break us in ways that destroy our will. He wants to strip away our identity, but we are in Christ. He wants to take our name and give a new name, names like 'shame' and 'unworthy.' He wants to brutalize us. His hate is so complete and so deep he wants to make us believe there is no way to overcome it, to escape it. There is only one thing that will defeat it. That one thing is God's love. God's love is stronger, it is our strength, and it waits for us to surrender all of our brokenness. It patiently waits for us to give it all to Him.

This amazingly simple and yet powerful truth overwhelmed me to the point of tears, and Claire's fictitious story depicts it perfectly. Not everyone's story is as dramatic and traumatic as Claire's and not every attempt of the enemy is successful, but his game plan is the same. The enemy wants to tear us away from God's love, he wants to take away our true identity, and he tries to do that with fear. If successful, he tries to make us believe that God could not possibly love us because of what we have done.

Separating us from God's love

In the book, Claire was from a loving and close family and her captor used deceit to abduct her away from that loving family. Earlier this week, in our church life group we were reading and discussing Psalm 139 when a group member shared her attempt to share the word with a young woman who had been abused and hurt by her family. She asked that if our God KNEW she was going to suffer how can we consider Him a loving God? This is an example of how the enemy works to rip us away from God's love. This hurt this young lady that suffered and served to separate her from God's love.

Taking away our name

In Claire's life, and in so many abducted women's cases, once she was taken she was given a new name. In Claire's case it was Lyn. The significance of that name becomes apparent later in the book and it also explains why her captor did not kill her once she was too old. Like Claire, our name identifies who we are and taking that identity is paramount in cases of abducted women so that they start to disassociate with that name and learn to live their new life. Our identity is more than our flesh and blood and our earthly family. We have an identity in Christ and the enemy does not want us to settle into that identity, so he comes like a thief in the night to attempt to steal it and give us a new name; *unworthy*. The author does such a great job of showing how the abuse, abduction and suffering paint a new picture of who the captive "think" they are.

Instilling fear

We all suffer with the *not good enough* syndrome. My son Jordan is now taking courses online. He is in his third course and the first two classes he completed, he received an A. He called me from work one day so excited about the grade he had received on the draft of his final project for his second class. He told me how teachers used to tell him that he could be doing so much better in classes if he gave more effort. He then shared with me how afraid he was they were wrong. He stated that if he did not try but failed, he always had the excuse of he was not trying hard. Even in this simple example, we can see how fear can keep us from trying. This fear is what kept Claire in captivity long after her chains were no longer holding her. *What fear are we letting hold us back?*

No one will love us

This is our biggest fear and the enemy's greatest lie. Again, I applaud the author for her in-depth dive into the aftermath of being abducted, after the captive has escaped or been rescued. She did a great job depicting this in Claire's story. She describes how Claire felt – that she would be rejected or judged because of what she had gone through. The scenes in the book are heartbreaking. This is the precipice that we shamefully spend too much time standing on these days. This is the reason for my

current season. With the boys now graduated, and a lifetime of days, weeks, months and years ahead of me, I think about and ask, "How do I want to fill those days?" As I finish this article, I am no closer to deciding than I was months ago when I first tried to face it and went into a freefall of reading, in my efforts to fill my time and not think about it.

Captivity is not an all or nothing venture, meaning we can freely live parts of our lives in the freedom afforded it to us when Christ died on the cross and live parts of our lives in captivity from the enemy's lies. I am there in the area I just shared. I am right now afraid to face it. I know that and now you do, as well.

I will leave you with this: In the story, Claire escaped for two reasons. One was her connection to Connor and the desire to keep him safe, and two was her determination to keep someone else from enduring what she endured. The same things happen for us. We experience a connection with our God that is greater than the fear we have for ourselves and we want to pursue it, which breaks our bonds of captivity. That can also be the same when we meet someone who is struggling and we have the courage to share our own struggle, and that too brings freedom.

Maybe that is what sharing part of my struggle will do for me and for someone else who reads this story...you.

Books by Lisa Reagan

Finding Claire Fletcher

Losing Leah Holloway

The story of Claire's healing continues in the second book.

Unearthly Thing - A Practical Guide – by Angela Dolbear

...for surviving (and thriving through) most everything in life...including the COVID-19 Quarantine

I could feel it rising up. Thick, dark and foul fear, bubbling and boiling over in the pit of my stomach. The more I listened to the national news, the more this fear crawled up my spine and started to take root in my mind. A deadly world-wide virus forcing people to shelter themselves in their homes for weeks, in hopes of not contracting or spreading the virus.

I could stop watching the news, but I believe it wise to stay informed, especially to learn about areas and people who need prayer.

But wait. This fear is not at home in me, a daughter of the Most High God. Nope. Nada.

Fear is a lie. I recognize this effective lie that originates from the father of lies. I became acquainted with his tactics while researching and writing my latest novel, [A Tormentor's Tale](#) (unintended shameless plug...but it really is a great story about spiritual warfare) which reveals the strategies of demons and the ways in which God's people can thwart their invisible flaming missiles.

Be anxious for nothing... I say to myself as I head down stairs away from the television, to retrieve nothing in particular, repeating one of my favorite verses from God's Word in my mind.

Yes! The fear dissipates like smoke from a blown-out birthday cake candle. My mind clears. I begin to pray for those closest to me, and for myself, and for this virus to be gone. Such power in God's words.

So what is a realistic and pragmatic way to cope in this situation? I can't be leaving the room and running up and down the stairs all day. I have work to do, a new novel to work on, new songs that need their lyrics completed, and a Sunday morning worship set to prepare. I can't be suffocated or burdened with fear.

Ah, yes...this:

A Practical Guide for surviving (and thriving through) most everything in life:

1. **Read (and memorize) God's Word** – Read a good Scripture-based devotional, first thing in the morning. The home page on my computer boots to [Greg Laurie's devotional](#), the pastor of my old church back in Southern California. It is there before I open Gmail, or anything else. I read it while sipping a freshly brewed cup of low acid coffee before proceeding with the day. I also have a daily verse from a Bible app that pops up on my cell phone every day. So many times these verses perfectly addressed my needs at the moment, and fortified my soul.
2. **Prayer** – I have discovered over the past 20+ years as a believer in Christ that prayer is as important as food and water to not only exist, but to thrive and flourish.
3. **Seek First the Kingdom of God** – Of course this point stems from the first point of staying in God's Word, but it is a crazy powerful attitude to adopt. If my reaction to all things is to seek God's will before and above everything else, knowing for certain that He will handle everything, then I am on solid ground, firm in my faith, and then I am able and willing to help others.

4. **Gratitude** – “...In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” A sure-fire way to eradicate anxiety and fear is to start thanking God specifically for all the good He has done, is doing, and will do. After about three *Thank You Father's*, not only is the torch of fear going out, but an attitude of gratitude is growing, so then I can't help but...
5. **REJOICE!** – Again I say, rejoice! And tell others about God, and what He has done for you.
6. **Rinse and repeat** – The gates of Hell shall NOT prevail. Nope. Never.

Remember, we fight from victory – the victory that was completed for us on Christ's Cross. So breathe – and read, pray, and the rest will follow.

Grace, and peace beyond comprehension to you.



FRESH THYME

FRESH THYME – Always Something

We were headed to a wedding and had a flat, and we missed the ceremony

Always something

We had an hour to mow the yard and the mower wouldn't start – it had water in the tank

Always something

I was hoping to visit her in the hospital this weekend, but I was called into work

Always something

I was planning to clean my house today but I came down with a nasty cold

Always something

Have you heard yourself or someone else comment with these two words? I say them often, in response to an interruption or a snafu that occurs when good plans are made. I'm always planning and hoping for a good time or a fun outing, but there are times with downpours spoil outside plans, a machine breaks, our bodies suffer, or work calls. There's definitely "always something."

However, recently I realized that I only use those two words in reference to bad interruptions and disappointments. Aren't there equally times when something always happens to surprise us, in the best of ways? I think so, but we just have to purpose to notice. So in purposing to notice, I'm going to list below twice as many good interruptions as I did bad ones above!

They were going to build a new home, when an unexpected gift of cash fell into their hands

Always something

They were driving up to the window to pay, when they were told the car behind already paid

Always something

We showed up to dinner with friends, when they said they were paying the bill

Always something

We were running so late and there it was – a parking spot right up front

Always something

I was feeling a bit down when I heard a "ding" and an encouraging text popped up from her

Always something

I was afraid of tomorrow and tomorrow came, and it was awesome

Always something

He was feeling so sick the morning of a flight home, but by evening was fine

Always something

She was wondering how she'd pay for kids' new clothes when a friend shared a huge box with her

Always something

I'm a firm believer that discovery is in the eye of the looker, and sometimes I'm only looking for the interruptions that disappoint. When I start to look for the surprises that bless, I start to see them everywhere in every day, from sunrise to sunset. And I'm thinking that if I look often enough, pretty soon those other interruptions will fade behind the clouds and my only focus will be the sun...

FRESH THYME – For Now – by Marcy Lytle

I get it. I want it too. It would be great if there was a cure-all for every ailment in life.

For example, apple cider vinegar is known to cure lots of things. So is drinking lemon with water. Taking vitamins or supplements can ensure better health. What about those green smoothies with “all” the nutrients blended in? It seems we are a society on the hunt for a pill, a drink, a diet, a form of exercise, or just some answer to cure all of our woes!

If there was just one secret that is yet to be revealed that would enable us all to be thin, healthy, live a long and prosperous life, we’d all pay big bucks to get it! And we even want that one leader to fix America so it can be what it once was...and even better. My husband just found out recently that drinking pomegranate juice daily lowers blood pressure. But that doesn’t mean he can otherwise eat junk and sit on the sofa.

I was thinking about this the other day because I have fearful thoughts that just swoop by my mind’s window daily that I wish would just disappear for good. I want them to be gone and never show up, and I’m constantly searching for the root, fighting them with scripture, praying and asking others to pray, etc. for them to disappear for good. And all of those efforts are good, but I’m wondering...

Is my search for a once and for all cure-all a futile one?

Let’s look at alcoholism. I know so many former alcoholics who cannot take a sip. They have to be on guard daily, to avoid slipping back into the addiction. Even though they’ve been “cured” or “sober” for years, it’s a daily grind of making good choices.

I think one of my biggest frustrations has been that I cannot find a reason or a once-and-for-all cure for my negative thoughts. They just surface at random times, and I then have this choice. I can let them sit there and take root, or I can use the tools I’ve been given to fight them.

I know God can do anything and he does sometimes offer a cure-all for illnesses and problems in this life. He can do it, I know he can! But more often than not, he seems to offer us lots of good advice in the big book of his Word about a daily relationship with him.

When I thought longer on this and decided to stop the search for the answer to end my fearful thoughts, somehow I settled near a little oasis in the desert. Think with me about someone traveling through the desert constantly frustrated that it’s dry and long and hot, trying to figure out why the desert exists. He might miss the ponds and the pop-up shade trees and the occasional showers because of his exhaustion of demanding to know the answer why.

I don’t want to miss God’s daily presence each morning that calms those fears that surface. And if he erases them with a magic wand I might not even seek him at all. No, he’s not a mean God that keeps pins in our sides to make us seek him, but he is a wise God that knows that all we need in life comes from time in his presence. Transformation, and transfer, takes place.

I'm still thinking on this one. There's not really a cure-all in life for our ailments, but rather there are healthy choices we must choose to make daily, in order to feel good and prosper. And even when we do all the "right things" storms still blow in that snap off the roof of our cozy little houses into which we've settled in, away from the world. And we then have to rebuild, reconnect and smile again at the goodness of God in the storm, in the still, in the desert and in the real...

Frustrated at your own thorn that pricks you way too often? Don't keep searching for a way to end it or the answer to why it's there in the first place. Just seek Him, and sit in his presence, and see if the pain of the thorn doesn't subside.

I have no answers to every question in life, as far as a routine or a method or a pill. I can even get anxious listening to everyone else tell me what they do that works for them and how I ought to do it, as well.

But I do know that God is good, he's my father, and he is my provider of all good things. Every good and perfect gift comes from above. And he has lots of these good gifts in every sunrise and every sunset, and in every cloud and raindrop of each day...if I choose to notice.

Yes, I had a few fearful thoughts this morning and I tried to dismiss them, and they've subsided for now. I just looked up and started giving thanks. Tomorrow I may read a verse. And the next day I may sit with a friend and glean from her garden.

But for now, I've quit asking why. And that, my friend, feels good.

FRESH THYME – Just a Mention – by Marcy Lytle

I recently saw a Facebook post by a friend that was so excited because her sister's farm was mentioned in an article. Another friend posted how they got on the news and wanted us all to watch! Still others have posted often how their name was honored in some way, or an elderly parent that served in the military had their name mentioned in a ceremony. Apparently, having our names mentioned is a big thing.

What about those awards ceremonies where our kids' names are called to receive a certificate of honor? We will sit through an hour long session just to hear the one second of our kid's name called out loud and to see his smiling face beam as his eyes search to see if we're looking and applauding. Mentioning names is a big deal.

I've noticed how the name of Jesus' gets mentioned a lot...in movies...as a curse word. It's interesting isn't it, how other names for false gods are never used in cursing, but the name of our Lord Jesus is. I still cringe when an actor says, "Jesus Christ!" as he slams down his fist in anger. What a horrid misuse of a holy name.

So just what is the importance and the correct and wonderful way to use the name of Jesus Christ, the Savior of our Souls?

There are so many mentions of his name, that it's a great thing to be reminded of the power, authority and beauty of His name:

1. Acts 4:12 says there is no other name by which we can be saved other than the name of Jesus
2. Philippians 2 reminds us that every knee will bow at the name of Jesus and confess his name
3. John 14 tells us to ask in the name of Jesus and our Father will hear and answer us.
4. Isaiah 9:6 calls our Lord the wonderful counselor, the prince of peace, and the mighty God!
5. Matthew 28 eases our souls as we read that all authority has been given to Jesus, on this earth.
6. Jeremiah 10:6 says there is no one else like our Lord, no one compares to him.
7. Acts 3:6 shows us that by his name, the lame can walk.
8. Proverbs 18:10 says that the name of the Lord is a strong tower.
9. John 11:25 says he is the resurrection and the life and we only have to believe in his name to have both!
10. Revelation 22 says that Jesus is the bright morning star.

There is great power, beauty, healing, and peace when we just mention the name of Jesus.

When we mention the name of someone in a ceremony or a meeting or a service, we are calling attention to their deeds or their character, so that those listening can hear and give honor.

Often, a crowd stands with thunderous applause when just the name of the next guest is mentioned, even before that person appears on the stage.

I want to be found among the masses that applaud, worship, shout and praise the name of Jesus while he's with us, in us, and among us, at work to do all of those things mentioned above. I want to be seen standing in recognition of his grace and mercy and love. And I want to always have his name on the tip of my lips, ready to pray, bless and not curse...ever.

Jesus. Just the mention of his name...