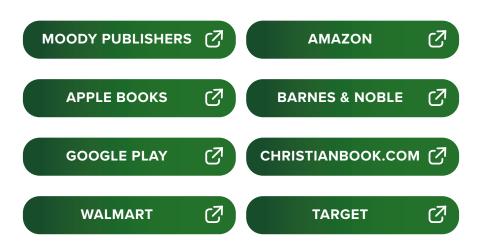


This devotional touches on heart issues like releasing comparison with other moms, becoming a results-free mom, resisting comparison of children, embracing the gift of motherhood, and more. Your heavenly Father parents you with tenderness and patience. We can grow to be like Him. You can experience transformation and become untriggered.

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## the next 60 days

All I ever wanted was to be a mom. On cold winter nights in Southern California where I grew up, I'd snuggle under the covers of my bed and, before drifting off to sleep, pray for my future children while still a child myself. The church community where I grew up placed a high value on motherhood. Many of the homes of my friends from church felt harmonious and happy. My own childhood was filled with plenty of warmth and nurture, but also a fair share of chaos and dysfunction. I pictured my future home encapsulating all of the good, none of the bad.

And then I had children!

Along with the blessings, my deep frustrations and even anger *comingled*. To say I felt overwhelmed is an understatement. I wanted to be a triumphant mom, but too often I was triggered. I swore I'd never raise my voice or roll my eyes, but there I was, head hanging low after doing the things I said I'd never do. So, on top of my frustration with my kids, I could barely face my frustration with myself. I wondered, *What must my heavenly Father think of me?* 

Can you relate? Are you weary and frustrated with your kids... with yourself? Do you want to draw closer to God but feel that because you're an angry and overwhelmed parent, He must be angry with you too?

Marriage and family came much later in life than I anticipated, but with great joy. Perhaps, like me, you can relate to those feelings of wonder as you marvel at the plus sign on a pregnancy test, or when you answer the phone with nervous excitement and hear that the baby you have prayed for is waiting for you at the hospital, ready to meet you and join your forever home. For me, knowing I was going to be a mom was a dream come true! An answer to decades of prayers, the fruition of girlish hopes and longings realized.

When my firstborn son, Oliver, was born, I knew I'd be a great mom. As a capable former nanny and accomplished teacher for nearly a decade, I knew how to run a tight ship with grace and love. I wasn't prepared for the sleepless nights, the colic, the unknowns that turned this woman who likes stability into a fragile worrier. So much of parenting felt confusing and hard. I wondered how in the world anybody in their right mind let us take this beautiful newborn boy home with us in the first place. I second-guessed most of my decisions in those early years and I've learned—now that I have been a mom for seventeen years and counting—that every age and stage of parenting will bring with it new triggers and frustrations, uncertain waters that seem to have no nautical chart to lead the way. Yet, parenting opens up a sea of opportunities for deep spiritual growth and oceans of joy.

When the uncertainties of parenting trouble our hearts, we can allow the sureties of God's Word to soothe them. Psalm 127:3–5a says:

Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him. Children born to a young man are like arrows in a warrior's hands. How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them!

As my young children approach adulthood, I'm certain that being a mom is a gift and that the foundation for every transformation is allowing God's Word to soak into our souls—for every good and perfect gift is from above (James 1:17). Many years ago, God met me at the foot of the cross where I laid my triggered heart down at His feet, and He set me free from

the generational curse of anger that is no match for the God of all generations. *Overwhelm* became a choice, not a condition I had to live with. It changed me. My home. My legacy.

Over the next 60 days, lay down the guilt and shame you may feel over your angry reactions. Approach each day's reading with an open heart, ready to receive God's grace. Feel the comfort of reading the words from someone who has stood in your shoes and walk with me toward hope and renewal.

# peaceful *mind*

## slow to anger

Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city.

PROVERBS 16:32

Anger is in a hurry, demanding immediate attention. The wise mom doesn't get pushed around by it. She stands as a sentinel, guarding against unrighteous urgency to gather her wits about her and make way for calm. Being slow to anger puts us on the fast track to becoming the godly moms we long to be.

It's not that we never have a temper. I found great freedom and release from guilt when I understood the difference between righteous anger and unrighteous anger. When my child sins, I can feel the pain of it without personalizing it. Their sin is not an offense against me. It's an offense against God, and that should grieve me on behalf of Him, but it does not have to wound my heart or make me a victim. Jesus paid the price for their sin and for mine, and so my righteous anger is directed at our mutual enemy: Satan. He would have us misdirect it toward our child and spew and stew—but today, he will be disappointed!

Instead, we make room for empathy in our hearts and see our children with compassion. We can retrain our minds to think, "How sad that sin is having its way with him!" or "What a struggle she must endure in her immaturity and youthful fragility, unable to cope with the temptations she faces!" We are moms ready to use the Word of God delicately to lance hardened hearts, not as a dagger to wound. Our words are sweet with

godly and gentle corrections. Our anger draws us closer to sanctification instead of being used against us as a temptation to sin. We don't yell or narrow our eyes in anger. Nor do we say things we'd later regret. What a paradox! Our righteous anger becomes an opportunity for good and one more blessing of stewardship in the high honor of being a mother. Greater than a warrior, indeed. Untriggered and unapologetic—yes, unhurried and unharried—strong in self-control and sanctified in the process.

Lord, it's so easy to take my child's sin or immaturity personally. I know that they don't always have the spiritual maturity to manage their emotions well. Help me model it for them because I love them. I long for them to grow spiritually and to be an example to them. Forgive me for being quick to anger. Help me have compassion on my child when they are rebellious or disobedient. I want to be like that warrior, protecting the walls of my child's heart, not breaking them down with my own hurtful daggers. Thank You, Lord, for empowering me with the ability to direct my anger toward our real enemy and to be the self-controlled mom I long to be. In Jesus' name, amen.

#### PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Even grown women struggle to learn a lesson if we are in a state of high emotion. It's unreasonable for us to think our immature child can either. The next time you are triggered, take a "holy pause" and get your emotions under control. Not everything has to be dealt with right away. Stop. Breathe. Challenge your urgency, and then make a calm and kind choice to speak the truth in love. Do so at a later time when both parent and child are more receptive.

## overwhelm is a *choice*

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?
ROMANS 8:32 NIV

It is utterly remarkable that God didn't wait for us to be worthy of His best gifts before giving them to us. In His sacrificial love, He gives us unconditional and limitless supernatural blessings for our human condition. That's good news for triggered moms!

When my first three sons were under four years old, I didn't know how other moms did it. It felt like they had an unspoken guidebook they were following and that somewhere along the way, I wasn't given a copy. My two-year-old was spreading sticky diaper cream all over my one decent armchair when I was busy nursing his baby brother. I couldn't figure out what type of early learning classes were best for my preschooler, and I often felt like crying when I walked the neighborhood with my double stroller, lonely and praying I'd run into someone—anyone—who would engage me in adult conversation. Years later, I felt guilty for letting my teens have too much screen time, or for not making a better effort to schedule time for driving lessons.

Overwhelm has been an unwelcome but constant companion. I felt inferior and ashamed that I wasn't living up to my expectations of the kind of mom I thought I would be. I knew the Bible says that God would never leave me nor forsake me (Hebrews 13:5), but I allowed the demands of my duties to drown out the delights of my devotion to Him. That's when I recommitted to daily devotional time with Jesus: confessing, connecting,

and conditioning my heart to receive new mercies. God used lonely parenting seasons where I felt disconnected from others to connect more deeply with Him.

Momma, overwhelm is a choice. Decide that you will not allow it to sabotage your good intentions to meditate on God's Word.

If we truly knew the breadth of His willingness to bless us, we *would* be overwhelmed. Reading our Bibles and devoting this time to Him awakens us to living life to the full—especially when our hands are full! If you choose to be overwhelmed today, choose wisely. Let's be overwhelmed by God's love, not our triggers. God's grace. Not our responsibilities. God's abundance. Not our scarcity. God's strength. Not our weaknesses. Not our failures. *Certainly not our anger*. Let's be overwhelmed in all the best ways.

Lord, I don't want to be overwhelmed by my kids or my triggers. I want to be overwhelmed by the love You offer me. You are generous! Help me receive Your grace. I know that it would be easy for me to feel deep shame and guilt, but if I hold on to those things, Your great sacrifice would be for nothing. I don't want that! I open my heart to Your unconditional love and forgiveness. Thank You, Jesus, for giving Your life for me on the cross. Wash me and cleanse my heart and mind so that I can live my life for You. You tell me that if I believe in You, I will be saved. I believe. Help me to pass on that same love to my children. In Jesus' name, amen.

#### **PUT IT INTO PRACTICE**

Write down three things that overwhelm you in this season of parenting. Next to each one, write a short prayer, asking God for what you need. Now choose a graphic, meme, or a Bible verse that will help you to remember God's overwhelming love and willingness to give you good gifts. Position it where you can see it often. Use it as a screensaver or write it on your bathroom mirror, for example.

## one trigger at a time

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom.

Matthew 13:43

Parenting sometimes feels like sludging through mud. Progress can come so very slowly when we're working on behavior issues with our children. Each step takes great effort, and even though we are headed in the right direction, as soon as we are freed from one sticky situation, we get sucked into another. We long for high ideals, stepping fluidly from one steady stone of progress to another as we help our kids mature. We aim for the stars, imagining our ideal home as we foster a Christ-centered environment—but the reality is we can barely get our teen out of bed on the weekend. All our lofty ideals are bruised as they run up against our triggers.

Don't lose heart, Momma. You don't have to figure it all out today. There may be several areas you want to work on with your kids. Maybe you are triggered by running late everywhere you go. Perhaps you have a houseful of "collectors" and you long for a simplified space free from clutter. Or maybe the overarching tone in your home is grumpy and everyone needs an attitude adjustment. There's no need to tackle it all at once. Pick one trigger that frustrates you the most and set to work, little by little, prayer by earnest prayer, and trust that God will begin to set your feet on a solid path toward progress. Let it take as long as it takes but be consistent—especially in hope!

It's a great comfort to know that this life is a journey, not our final destination. We are sojourners passing through. God promises that there

will come a day when those who believe in Him will "shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom." He's at work *in you*. He's at work *in your child*. There may be only the tiniest spark of optimism, but with the oxygen of wise and loving words in your home, the ember of hope grows. The day you shine like the sun is in your future! Even now, it is reflected in our lives and through the small victories of today. That's a comfort when we can't see through our clouded emotions. Do what you can today and look forward to the completion of the good work that God is starting in you and your home.

Lord, I know that one day my angry reactions to my triggers will be a thing of the past. I don't want my frustrations to cloud the hope available to me. I trust You to help me shine, in my own small way, in the halls of my home as You renew the halls of my heart with Your power and love. I trust You to complete the good work You have begun. I choose to focus on the next right thing, one trigger at a time. Thank You for giving me hope! In Jesus' name, amen.

#### **PUT IT INTO PRACTICE**

Make a list of the top three things that trigger anger or frustration for you. Now arrange them in order of importance. Beside the #1 trigger, write a verse that will encourage you to be persistent in exchanging your angry reactions for more Christ-centered responses. Next, consider a practical way you can work on this change when you are triggered and practice it daily.



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