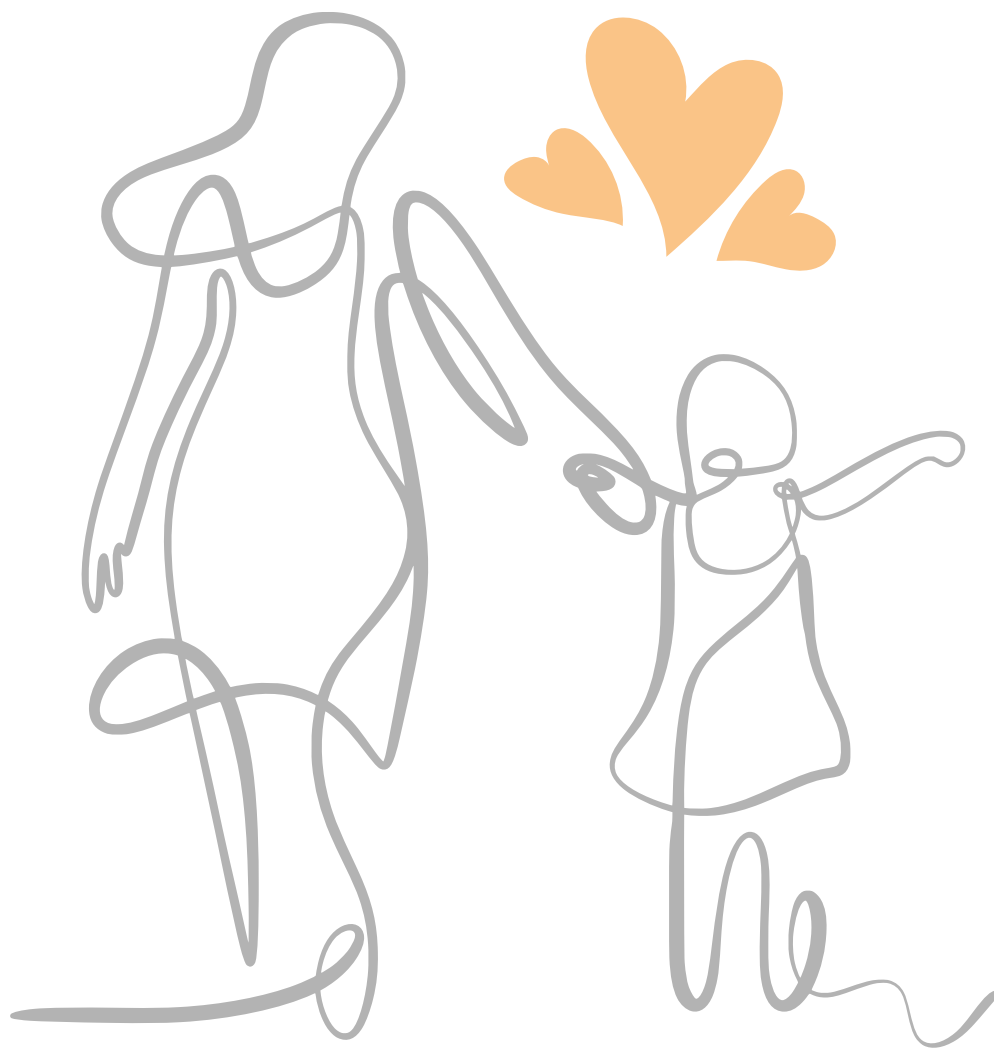




A Mother's Guide

TO GUARDING HER MENTAL HEALTH



BY PEYTON GARLAND

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Introduction

Nothing opened my eyes to God's goodness and joy like motherhood, but nothing revealed my selfishness, impatience, and temper, either. Motherhood is an unbiased, 360-degree mirror of the soul, showcasing our best and our worst in all things.

As a woman with diagnosed Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), I often struggle with my maternal identity—if I need a pill to keep my brain emotionally regulated, how good of a mother can I actually be? Chemically speaking, it's easy for my brain to dip into intense bouts of anxiety and depression, which doesn't make for a great resume for thriving in motherhood.

Nonetheless, God granted me a sweet little boy almost three years ago, and with another little boy kicking in my belly, I must believe that God has gifted me His mercy, grace, and goodness for this role.

encouragement for weary mothers and a reminder of God's ongoing work in their story.



Perhaps you don't have a mental health disorder like me, but the weight of motherhood has challenged your body, mind, and soul. That's only normal, sweet mama. Your whole body devoted nearly a year to pouring nutrients from you to your baby, and once the baby arrived, you surrendered sleep and your basic needs for this wrinkly, precious gift. The relentless sacrificing doesn't stop, won't stop, no matter your mothering season. The "hard parts" don't disappear; they simply change.

This can feel like an impossible load to carry. **JAMA Internal Medicine conducted a survey** that found a drastic decline in maternal mental health from 2016–2023. The "excellent" mental health record plummeted from 38% to 26%. Meanwhile, the statistics for mothers claiming fair or poor mental health increased by 3%.



As disheartening as the facts are, we must remain devoted to the hope we have in this truth: God granted mothers this hard, but holy and beautiful role. Thus, we don't have to surrender ourselves to a mental undoing. We can confess when we've had enough or need a break, but we don't have to be controlled by a looming sense of defeat. In fact, we can bear our God-ordained responsibilities with the freedom, joy, and sense of purpose we are gifted as mothers.

Let's consider five of the biggest mental health stressors placed on modern mamas and discover how biblical mothers faced and overcame similar challenges through the strength of Jesus.

stop ...

Take a moment to pause. Sit still, close your eyes, and focus on breathing. Come back to this in 60 seconds.

Complete the following quiz.

1: How Is Motherhood Going?

Rate each statement from 1 (Rarely true) to 5 (Very true):

I feel overwhelmed by the weight of motherhood.

1 2 3 4 5

I notice impatience or frustration rising more than I expected.

1 2 3 4 5

I struggle with feelings of inadequacy as a mom.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel emotionally drained or mentally exhausted.

1 2 3 4 5



I find it difficult to extend grace to myself.

1 2 3 4 5

I compare myself to other mothers and feel like I fall short.

1 2 3 4 5

I question whether I'm "enough" for my children.

1 2 3 4 5

2: Reflecting On My Mental and Emotional State

How would you describe your current mental and emotional health?

- ☐ Flourishing
- ☐ Stable
- ☐ Struggling
- ☐ Overwhelmed

What has been the hardest part of motherhood for you lately?

What thoughts tend to repeat in your mind during hard moments?

3: Embracing Truth & Exposing Lies

Which of these thoughts have you believed recently?

- ☐ I'm not a good enough mom.
- ☐ I should be handling this better.
- ☐ Other moms have it together more than I do.
- ☐ I'm failing my children.
- ☐ I'll never get ahead of this.



4: Recognizing God's Grace

Where have you seen God's goodness in your motherhood recently?

In what area do you most need God's grace right now?

What would it look like to receive that grace today?

5: Asking for Help

Today, I need:

- ☐ Rest
- ☐ Encouragement
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Perspective
- ☐ Prayer
- ☐ Surrender

A Prayer of Encouragement for Moms

Father,

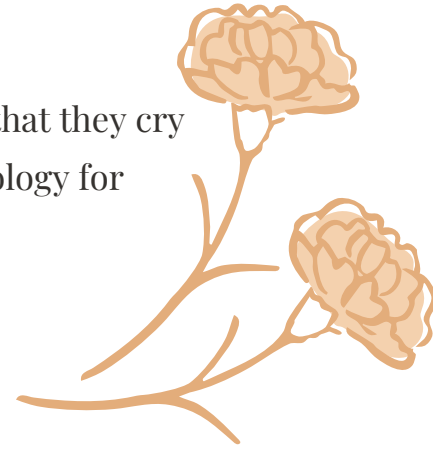
Thank you for pulling me out of my thoughts and stopping me in my tracks so that I can reflect on how I am doing, remember who you say I am, and lean on you to help me learn how to guard my mental health in a godly way that allows my life to bring glory to you. Help me to learn and grow closer to you through this guide. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



1. ISOLATION

Motherly reported that 82% of mothers feel lonely, 50% confess that they cry weekly from a lack of support, and almost 90% depend on technology for communication/support rather than anything face-to-face.

Eunice & LOIS



I wonder if Eunice and Lois felt the same, the mother and grandmother of Paul's mentee, Timothy. ²

Timothy 1:5 (NIV) says that these women had "sincere faith." Though Jewish, they had converted to Christianity and had raised Timothy in the truth. So if Eunice had Lois' help in raising Timothy, why might she feel alone?

Well, it's important to note that as a Jewish convert, Eunice was likely scorned by Jews who didn't believe in Jesus. In addition, Acts 16:1-3 makes a strong case that Timothy's father, a Greek, was not a believer. Thus, the spiritual support this new believing woman needed, especially as she raised a tiny disciple, was lacking, both in the traditional religious community and within her own home.

Where in your motherhood journey do you feel most alone, and how might God be inviting you to seek or receive support in this season?



In this life, we can't force people to show up, to be present, involved, and willing to pour into our little ones. However, it's crucial for our mental health as mothers that we work hard to cultivate as much of a community as possible, seeking godly, honorable people from places like church and local mom groups to come alongside us and offer love and support in our motherhood journey.

On days when this is impossible, though, when the village you're fighting so hard to create doesn't show, just know that my heart prays this prayer over you:



Father, whether the village burned down or simply didn't show, please comfort the mother who is doing it all on her own. For the days laden with tantrums and hormones, grant her your patience. When the nights are long and sleepless, grant her your peace. Remind her of your nearness, and let her know that her work never goes unnoticed. From each diaper changed to dish washed to uniform hung to dry, may she feel your favor and find the worth you created for her, even in the ordinary chores. Though she doesn't have a village, may she recall the King of the world fills every crack and cranny of her home and heart. Amen.

"I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you."

- 2 Timothy 1:5



pause & reflect

Eunice and Lois had a “sincere faith,” yet likely still experienced isolation—how can your own faith remain sincere and steady even in seasons when support feels lacking?

Eunice navigated motherhood with limited spiritual support at home—where might you be lacking support in your own life, and how is God inviting you to depend on Him in that gap?

In what areas of your motherhood do you feel most alone right now, and what would it look like to both seek godly community and rest in God’s presence when others don’t show up?



2 COMPARISON

Ready Nest Counseling reports, “According to recent studies, approximately 90% of moms use social media regularly, and nearly 50% report feeling inadequate or less than worthy after comparing themselves to other mothers online.”

Jesus' Mother, MARY



Not only that, but I certainly didn't look as put together as they did. My hair wasn't curled (or even washed, for that matter), and my kitchen certainly wasn't that tidy. Was I doing any of this mom/homemaking thing right? It certainly didn't seem like it.

Clearly, Jesus' mother, Mary, didn't have an Instagram or Facebook. She never knew anything of carousel photos and hashtags. But I'm certain she was far too familiar with comparison, wondering if she would ever measure up in raising the Messiah. Her Baby was perfect.

Her Baby was God. So I can only imagine the impossible feelings of inadequacy she felt as she did her best to nurture and raise Him in her limited capacity.

Of course, God wasn't judging her, and Jesus adored His mother, which we see when, amid being crucified, He told John to look after her (John 19:26-27). Nonetheless, I'm sure Mary didn't feel worthy. I'm sure she wondered countless times if there wasn't a better woman for the job.





When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, “Dear woman, here is your son.” And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from then on this disciple took her into his home. - John 19: 26-27

Roughly four months into my motherhood journey, I had to step away from Instagram. Reel after reel, post after post, bombarded me with the unsustainable weight of always doing more. Whether it was doing more tummy time exercises, trying extra sleep-training tactics, making organic homemade babyfood, or implementing the correct number of brain development games, I was never doing as much as those moms, the ones in all the videos.

Not only that, but I certainly didn’t look as put together as they did. My hair wasn’t curled (or even washed, for that matter), and my kitchen certainly wasn’t that tidy. Was I doing any of this mom/homemaking thing right? It certainly didn’t seem like it.

If comparison has stolen your joy as a mother, leaving you with feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness, this prayer is for you:



Lord,

In a world filled with content that demands mothers be more, whether more patient or more fun, whether a better chef or more creative crafter, silence the noise for the woman crushed by the weight of comparison. Give her the discernment she needs to mute, unfollow, or deactivate any digital platform that lets the enemy take hold of her mind. Encourage her with the truth that there is no better mom for her babies than her. May she take this to heart as she remains vigilant in protecting the little souls in her home and growing in your grace. Forever, Jesus, Amen.



pause & reflect

Even in His final moments, Jesus honored and cared for His mother—how does this remind you of your value and role, even when you feel like you're not measuring up?

If Jesus entrusted Mary with purpose and dignity despite her limitations, how might He be affirming your calling as a mother right now?

What comparisons are currently stealing your joy, and what would it look like to replace those thoughts with the truth that God intentionally chose you to be your child's mother?



3 CRITISISM

The New York Post released a survey that revealed one of the many concerns for today's parents is managing the expectations others have placed on them.

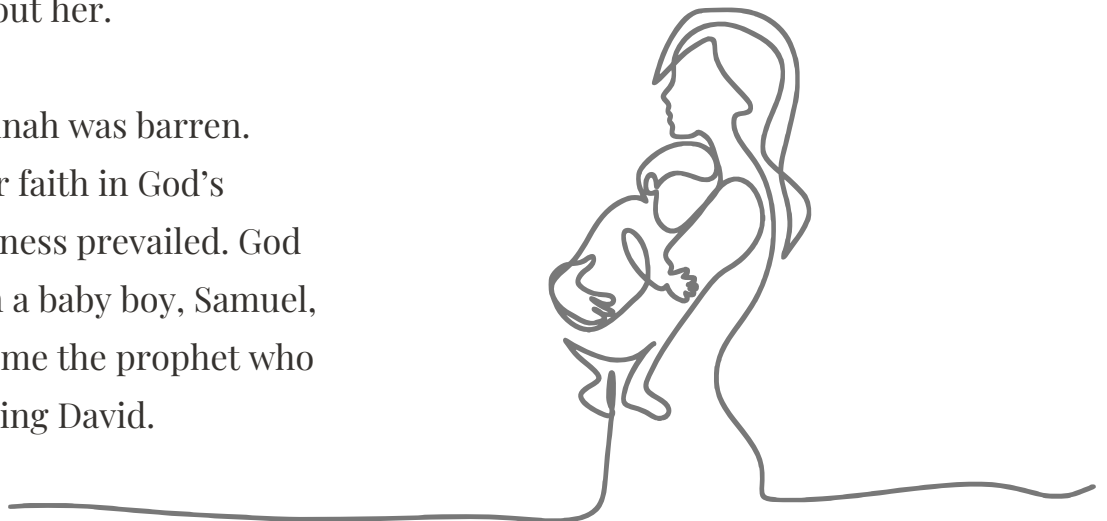
Sometimes, the pressure comes from grandparents who want you to repeat their methods for everything from sleep training to discipline. Other times, it's the stranger at the store who has no patience for your toddler and grows crabby, even rude, when your little one sprints by.

Samuel's Mother, HANNAH

These chaotic moments in public are the very definition of embarrassing, especially when no one is gracious or sympathetic, and I'm sure Hannah, Samuel's mother, was all too familiar with others making assumptions about her.

Remember, Hannah was barren. Nonetheless, her faith in God's power and goodness prevailed. God blessed her with a baby boy, Samuel, who would become the prophet who would mentor King David.

But do you remember when Hannah was in the temple begging God for a child? Her prayers seemed so strange, so intense, so wild, that Eli, the high priest and judge, thought she was drunk (1 Samuel 1:12-17).



As she was praying to the Lord, Eli watched her. Seeing her lips moving but hearing no sound, he thought she had been drinking. "Must you come here drunk?" he demanded. "Throw away your wine!" "Oh no, sir!" she replied. "I haven't been drinking wine or anything stronger.

But I am very discouraged, and I was pouring out my heart to the Lord. Don't think I am a wicked woman! For I have been praying out of great anguish and sorrow." "In that case," Eli said, "go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him."

-1 Samuel 1:12-17



Motherhood often appears as madness and might cause social embarrassment, but we must ensure our priorities stay rooted in Christ by showcasing His grace, love, and discipline to our little ones. If we are mothering our children to the best of our God-given abilities, everyone else's opinions simply don't matter.

Let them judge you if your teen won't look up from his/her phone. Let them judge you if you show up to the event with spit-up staining your shoulder. Let their pride be their downfall, and let the knowledge that you are actively seeking God's guidance and praying His grace over your babies, even in their rebellious season, be what raises you up.



If you feel the constant pressure to be a “more normal,” conformed mom, don’t allow outside voices to crowd your headspace. Meanwhile, I hope you find comfort, support, and new stamina in this prayer:

Jesus,

You know better than anyone how unkind the world is. It’s laden with bitterness and self-seeking individuals whose pride has convinced them that their ways are best. Be with the mothers who are trying so hard but feel constant shame and judgment from others, whether strangers in the grocery store or family members they thought would offer better support. If it’s a toddler’s meltdown or a teen’s wayward decisions, grant these mamas the freedom to realize that you are sovereign, working in and through them for their children’s sake, even when others can’t see it. Even when they can’t feel it. In your almighty name, I pray, Jesus, Amen.



pause & reflect

Hannah was misunderstood and judged in one of her most vulnerable moments—how do you typically respond when others misjudge your motherhood, and what might it look like to bring that hurt honestly before God instead?

Despite being wrongly perceived, Hannah remained focused on pouring out her heart to the Lord—how can you stay rooted in God’s presence and truth when outside voices feel critical or condemning?

Whose expectations or opinions are weighing on you most right now, and what would it look like to release those pressures and anchor your identity in God’s calling instead?



4 EXHAUSTION

Minimal sleep plagues mothers, affecting not only their physical bodies, but their minds, too. The NIH's **National Library of Medicine reports** a special case studying a correlation between a woman's lack of sleep and her increased chances of postpartum depression. A woman's body endures so much, simply during pregnancy and labor, that she is already sleep-deprived. Couple this deprivation with the lack of sleep in the newborn season, and her emotional well-being can't keep up.

Isaac's Mother, SARAH

Can you imagine the toll that pregnancy took on Sarah's body? Sure, people in the Old Testament lived longer lives, but Sarah was over ninety and clearly in her menopause years. Talk about an emotional roller coaster! Her body was spent, all physical resources exhausted, yet in her desperation for a son, she fought her disbelief, endured the lack of sleep, and gave birth to Isaac. Her endurance, though messy and worn, was rewarded.

"She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would."

Genesis 21:2



No matter which season of motherhood you're in, I have no doubt that something concerning your baby keeps you up at night. When the nights are dark and long, and sleep feels forever out of reach, I have this prayer for your anxious, weary mind:



*Lord,
Whether it's a mama waking for another midnight feeding, a mama waiting up until her teen gets home, or a mama anxious about her adult baby's first day on the job tomorrow, give her heavenly peace, the steadiness of your presence, that's so loud that it silences her worst nightmares. Relieve her of the burden that was never hers to bear, the (false) idea of perfectly sustaining each of her babies all day and all night. May she know that perfection was never her calling, and in that freedom, may her heart find rest. In your great name, Lord,
Amen.*



pause & reflect

Sarah endured physical exhaustion, emotional strain, and seasons of disbelief—how does her story encourage you when your body feels depleted and your strength is running low?

Even in her weakness, God remained faithful to Sarah—where is God inviting you to trust Him more deeply in your exhaustion and limitations?

What worries or responsibilities are keeping your mind awake at night, and what would it look like to surrender those burdens to God and receive His peace instead?



5 SHAME

Today shared that 94% of mothers battle mom guilt. Clearly, this is an emotional and mental weight that plagues us all. We keep a mental tab of all the things we do wrong, second-guess each decision we make, and never give ourselves the space to accept grace when we don't master motherhood's endless demands.

The First Mother, EVE

I'm the queen of mom guilt. In fact, I feel guilty if I don't feel guilty about certain maternal decisions.

Shouldn't I be angry with myself for letting my toddler watch a show so I can just sit down and cry somewhere? Shouldn't I scold myself for letting him have one or two of my Chick-fil-A fries so I can have a peaceful ride home?

Guilt always finds us as moms, and if it doesn't, we go looking for it. It's as though we are slaves to self-loathing.

Can you imagine the guilt Eve must have felt? Her actions birthed her boys into a world of sin and death. Her actions birthed her boys into a world where one would kill the other. Can you imagine the guilt this mama carried?

Even still, God's grace sustained her. Redemption was already writing a new story. The empty tomb was already part of the plan. Eve's failures, though cataclysmic, couldn't undo God's goodness, mercy, and love for His children.

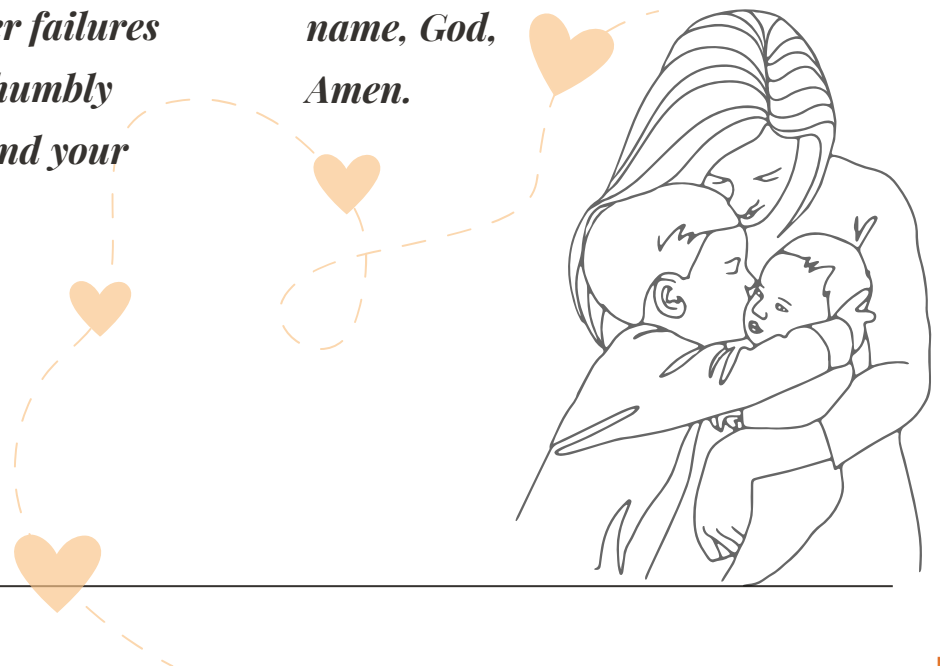


"I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you." - Genesis 3:16

When mom guilt overwhelms your heart and mind, whisper this prayer for yourself:

***God,
Mom guilt is fierce. It's relentless, plaguing her mind day in and day out. The victories feel crushed by the weight of all the mistakes, leaving her defeated, wondering if she's doing any of this mom thing right. Please wrap your arms around her, hold her heart, and remind her that it's in her failures that she can graciously, humbly point her babies to you and your unfailing love.***

May she be faithful to apologize when she is wrong, but faithful to embrace the freedom of your forgiveness. May she break free of the lies that she was meant to do it all, and in this freedom, may she find a joy so radiant and beautiful that her children know she walks faithfully with you. In your holy name, God, Amen.



pause & reflect

Eve's choices had painful consequences, yet God's redemptive plan was already unfolding—how does this truth reshape the way you view your own mistakes as a mother?

Even after failure entered the world, God did not abandon Eve—where might God be inviting you to receive His forgiveness and grace instead of holding onto guilt?

What specific moments or decisions are currently fueling your mom guilt, and what would it look like to replace self-condemnation with the truth of God's mercy today?



Conclusion

Motherhood is a constant refinement, a process that pushes us to the end of ourselves. But I pray on days when your mind wants to give up, your heart and soul long to throw in the towel, that you remember the women who have gone before us, the messy, ordinary, mistake-making mamas, whom God used to write His story.

(PS - Mama, He's still writing that story. And it includes imperfect, beautiful you, too.)

Save this duplicate of the quiz from the beginning of this guide, or take it again, now, to see how your perspective has changed now that you have spent time meditating on what God says about the kind of mother you are.

1: How Is Motherhood Going?

Rate each statement from 1 (Rarely true) to 5 (Very true):

I feel overwhelmed by the weight of motherhood.

1 2 3 4 5

I notice impatience or frustration rising more than I expected.

1 2 3 4 5

I struggle with feelings of inadequacy as a mom.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel emotionally drained or mentally exhausted.

1 2 3 4 5



I find it difficult to extend grace to myself.

1 2 3 4 5

I compare myself to other mothers and feel like I fall short.

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I question whether I'm "enough" for my children.

1 2 3 4 5

2: Reflecting On My Mental and Emotional State

How would you describe your current mental and emotional health?

- ☐ Flourishing
- ☐ Stable
- ☐ Struggling
- ☐ Overwhelmed

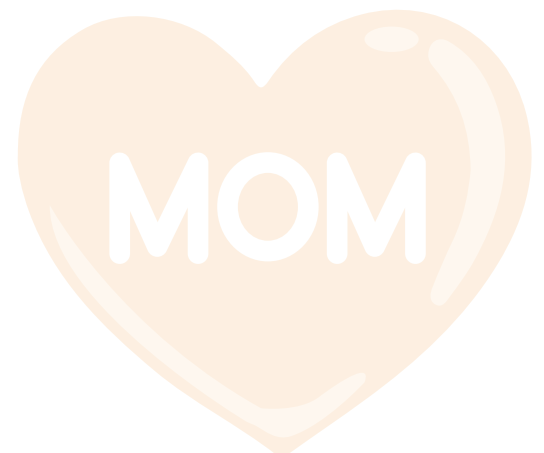
What has been the hardest part of motherhood for you lately?

What thoughts tend to repeat in your mind during hard moments?

3: Embracing Truth & Exposing Lies

Which of these thoughts have you believed recently?

- ☐ I'm not a good enough mom.
- ☐ I should be handling this better.
- ☐ Other moms have it together more than I do.
- ☐ I'm failing my children.
- ☐ I'll never get ahead of this.



4: Recognizing God's Grace

Where have you seen God's goodness in your motherhood recently?

In what area do you most need God's grace right now?

What would it look like to receive that grace today?

5: Asking for Help

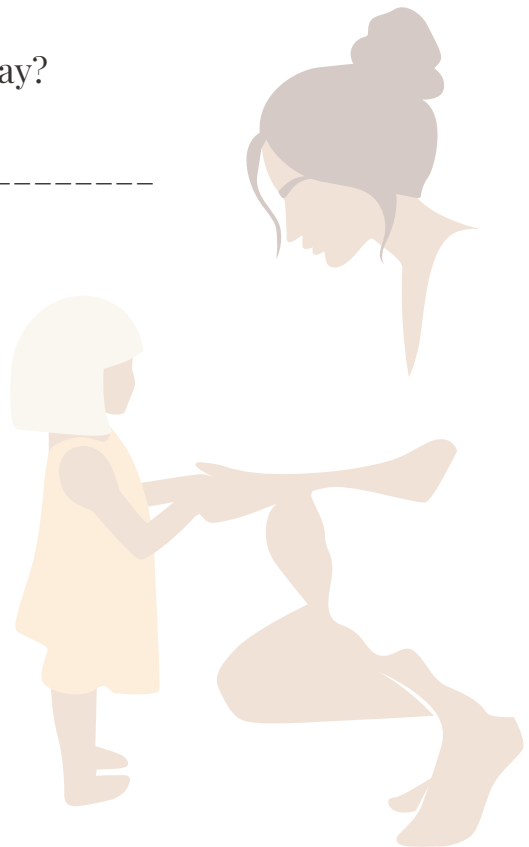
Today, I need:

- ☐ Rest
- ☐ Encouragement
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Perspective
- ☐ Prayer
- ☐ Surrender

A Prayer of Encouragement for Moms

Father,

Thank you for pulling me out of my thoughts and stopping me in my tracks so that I can reflect on how I am doing, remember who you say I am, and lean on you to help me learn how to guard my mental health in a godly way that allows my life to bring glory to you. Help me to learn and grow closer to you through this guide. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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