

**Just a Mom- Draft**

# Book Thesis

Motherhood today is shaped by cultural lies that distort a woman's identity, whether by shrinking it to "just a mom" or inflating it into "do it all." Both extremes steal joy and create pressure because they hinge identity on performance. But God tells a better story. From the very beginning, He defined women as image bearers first, and only then gave them purpose. By returning to the creation story, exposing the lies that echo from the garden into modern motherhood, and rediscovering God's pursuit and redemption, mothers can finally live from a secure identity rather than striving to earn one.

## Introduction

"Just a Mom"

I still remember the first time someone asked me what I did after my daughter was born.

It was an innocent question. One I've asked a million times. The kind of small-talk line people toss out to get to know you or to fill a gap in conversation. But for me, it dropped a new weight on top of the already heavy load pressing down on my shoulders. I opened my mouth to answer and realized I wasn't entirely sure what to say.

What *did* I do?

I could have answered honestly.

"Well... today I changed about twenty diapers, battled for several naps, folded tiny clothes, cleaned spit-up off the couch, and produced enough milk to make me feel like a dairy cow."

But that felt... weird.

Not because it wasn't true, it was very true, but because it didn't feel like an answer that counted. I will say, referring to yourself as a "dairy cow" is probably not going to make any friends.

I could have reached back to the version of myself I once knew.

"I have an engineering degree," I could say. "I've traveled the world, served overseas, mentored young adults leaving the comfort of home to share the gospel abroad."

But that also felt strange. Like I'd pulled up an old résumé from a life I used to live. Trying to prove my worth and value through all these accomplishments. To try and fit in them like squeezing your post-partum body into your highschool jeans.

I swallowed, blinked and before (I hoped) the silence stretched too long, I said the words with a half-chuckle as if to let the hearer know I knew how little value they carried.

"I'm just a mom."

Just a mom.

It's wild how a three-word sentence can feel both true and entirely wrong at the same time. How it can shrink something as monumental as raising a human into something that feels small and slightly apologetic. As if caring for an image-bearer of God is somehow insignificant unless you add a title or a paycheck or something more "productive" to go with it.

I walked away from that conversation feeling unsettled.

Why did saying "just a mom" feel like a confession?

Why did I feel like I needed to justify myself or offer a footnote about who I used to be and what I used to contribute? Why did motherhood, in all its exhaustion and glory, feel invisible? And underneath those questions was the deeper one I hadn't yet dared to articulate:

Who am I now?

## The Whiplash of Modern Motherhood

Motherhood is a pendulum swing these days.

On one end, we're told we're "just a mom." Our work is taken for granted. Our time is seen as endlessly flexible. Our days are treated like filler until we return to "real" work or reclaim a more socially acceptable identity.

On the other end, we are elevated to near-deity status. I'm sure you've heard this before:

Hey Mama,

You are powerful.

You are magic.

You are enough.

You are the center of the home and the glue holding everything together.

You deserve rest, rewards, and recognition because you are a queen.

The whiplash is dizzying.

In one breath, motherhood is undervalued, at its worst, scorned.

In the next, it's romanticized and packaged with perfectly matching outfits and laughing over ice cream.

Caught in the middle, real moms are quietly wondering:

Am I allowed to struggle?

Am I allowed to admit I'm overwhelmed?

Am I doing enough?

Am I enough?  
Is this all I am now?

At my lowest, I found myself scrolling Indeed job listings during nap time, searching for something, anything, that might give me a sense of purpose or identity again. Maybe a part-time job. Maybe a new degree program. Maybe something that offered validation or even just a break from the relentless cycle of diapers, snacks, laundry, and emotional intensity of getting a toddler to poop on the potty and not in their pants.

Motherhood is beautiful. But it is also disorienting.

It shakes the identity you once knew.  
It disrupts the rhythms that used to define your days.  
It uncovers questions you didn't know you were carrying.

And if we're honest, it exposes a fragile foundation that we are terrified of crumbling because at the end of the day, who is going to take care of me?

## **What Does God Say About Who We Are?**

Whether or not you grew up in the church, whether you have a deep faith or are just exploring it, I could argue that this is the most important question anyone can ask:

### **How does God define you?**

If God is the Creator, the One who breathed out the heavens and the earth, then He has the authority to define His creation.

Think about your child bringing you a drawing from preschool. You have no idea what it is. It looks like a scribble-tree-unicorn-meteor explosion. And even though the proper parenting phrase is "Tell me about it," sometimes you're tired and you just say the first thing that comes to mind:

"Wow! What a beautiful tree!"

Your child stares at you, horrified.  
"MOM. It's a unicorn."

And because they made it, they get to define it. (And apparently never ever throw it away... has anyone made that mistake?)

How much more does God get to define us?

So before we rush to cultural definitions, personal feelings, or the shifting expectations of modern motherhood, we need to go back, all the way back, to the beginning. To the story that

tells us who we are, what we were made for, why motherhood feels both beautiful and hard, and how our identity can be restored.

Genesis doesn't just tell us how the world was created, it tells us why we exist.

And what Genesis reveals is this:

**You were created in the image of God.**

**You were given purpose before you ever performed.**

**Your identity is older than motherhood.**

**Older than marriage.**

**Older than titles, jobs, achievements, or roles.**

Motherhood doesn't erase your identity, but it does expose it. It reveals what we believe about ourselves and most importantly, what we're anchoring our worth to.

## Why We Need This Story

We don't have to look far to see that something is off in our cultural understanding of motherhood. We've been fed lies that sound empowering but leave us exhausted.

We've absorbed half-truths that feel comforting for a moment, but eventually crack under pressure. We've listened to voices louder than God's, and it's no wonder we feel overwhelmed.

Modern motherhood is loud, but the gospel is steady.

And the story of Scripture, from Eve in the garden to Jesus redeeming what was lost, tells us something far more beautiful than "You are more than enough" or "You're just a mom." It reveals the identity that cannot be taken from us.

This book is an invitation:

To step out of the noise and to see your story in God's story.

To understand why motherhood feels both divine and difficult.

To rediscover or be reminded of who you are, not according to culture, but according to the One who created you.

You are not "just a mom." But you are not the savior of your home, either.

You are an image-bearer. A woman formed with purpose. A mother shaped by both the beauty and the brokenness of the world. A daughter invited into redemption, restoration, and rest.

This is where the story begins.

# **Chapter 1: The Identity Crisis of Modern Motherhood**

Motherhood has changed.

When my youngest, Elliana, was turning one, I figured it was time we took family photos. So we chose the date and the dreamy outdoor location in early spring when the leaves were at their fullest and the grass was lush and green. I agonized over outfits, asked for advice and borrowed dresses and shirts to get it just right.

The day arrived and we hustled the family over to the site in the post nap grogginess where all your children want to do is snuggle or scream at you. Matt and I got into an argument on the way over about who-knows-what. Ellie refused to smile, Emma (5 years old, who I thought I could count on) waffled between tears and being held by dad. Turns out she had a tummy bug and threw up as soon as we got home (let's take a moment to be grateful it wasn't in the car...) It is a true miracle we were able to get any photos at all, let alone some that I treasure to this day.

My mom was not worried about family photos. She has a grand total of five that were taken from my birth through high school graduation.

She did not stress about matching outfits.

She did not agonize over golden hour lighting.

She did not request multiple poses of us laughing at each other as we walked through a field of roses.

No, these photos were free. Taken for the church bulletin.

Motherhood has changed.

With the rise of social media and these devices that we carry around in our pockets, there has been a great cultural shift where we no longer call mom to ask what she did with a colicky baby. We Google. Or scroll Instagram. Or take advice from an absolute stranger who says they are a “nurse”.

We read one post insisting sleep training is essential for healthy attachment, and before we can take our next breath, another warns that it will ruin our child’s emotional wellbeing. Avoid sugar until two, but also let them eat as much Halloween candy as they want or else they will see food as the enemy.

Sleep has been a struggle for all of my kids at one point or another, which means it has been a struggle for me. It feels like walking a tightrope where falling to the left means overtired

meltdowns and falling to the right means undertired battles. Are they too tired? Not tired enough? Do I wake them early? Put them down early?

And on we go, tiptoeing this line. Navigating that balancing act of too much or not enough until we find ourselves frozen. We are desperate for an equation. Surely in a world of information at our finger tips, someone knows the exact solution for how to get my child to sleep through the night. Or to grow up to be a reasonable adult.

It's polarizing. You are in one camp or the other. You are a crunchy mom who homeschools and buys raw milk from the farm lady or you feed your children dino nuggets for dinner on the regular and close out the night with a movie and ice cream.

Somewhere in between these expectations, most of us lean toward one of these caricatures, or ping-pong between them depending on the day.

### **The “Just a Mom”**

She is the glue that holds her family together, even though no one notices the glue. During the morning hustle she is doing multiple tasks at once: washing dishes, packing lunches, gathering laundry from the dryer, hunting down missing socks, all while forgetting to eat her own breakfast. She hasn't showered in days but doesn't want to inconvenience anyone, so she mentally adds dry shampoo to the grocery list. Nap time is spent researching toddler activities and meal-planning ideas that will never actually happen because the baby wakes up forty minutes early.

Days blur together. She had passions once, hobbies, a self, but they've all been buried under diapers and schedules. She dreams of the day her kids will be in school so she can finally shower, clean her house, or simply sit in silence. She remembers what it felt like to be praised in her old profession and wonders when she will ever feel successful again. She feels worn thin and stretched in every direction, yet somehow still convinced she is not doing enough. Maybe she isn't enough.

### **The Boss Mom**

This mom doesn't know the meaning of mediocre. When she is in, she is all in. Her home is spotless. Her children wear matching outfits in the colors of the season. If you drop by unexpectedly, there is freshly baked sourdough cooling by the oven, and she hands you a mug that says, “Fueled by Jesus and caffeine.” She has several side hustles, chairs the PTA, shows up at every event with homemade snacks, and volunteers before anyone else can raise a hand. She can nurse a baby, send an email, plan a birthday party, and sign up for a Bible study before you can find your car keys. Nothing seems to ruffle her feathers.

Beneath the calm and seemingly perfect life, she's exhausted. Every time she says yes, part of her crumbles but she just can't stop moving. So she continues to carry the weight of perfection, the praise from culture giving her small sips of fuel that last only for a moment before she's

running on fumes once again. She's terrified of stopping because what will she discover in the silence? Who is she if she can't do it all?

Two identities. Both exhausting. Both are built on the same lie: that who we are depends on what we do. I have found myself waffling between the two, sometimes on the same day.

Nothing changes you like meeting your baby for the first time. Whether in a delivery room or through adoption, something unexplainable shifts when your title becomes Mom. It is beautiful and raw and overwhelming, sending us into a roller coaster of emotions we have never experienced before.

Modern motherhood puts a huge emphasis on "finding ourselves" again, as if something essential has been lost. And in a way, something has. You do lose a part of yourself in motherhood. The question is whether we allow ourselves to grieve that loss and embrace the transformation, or whether we resist it, trying to fit back into an old season we were never meant to stay in.

Culture tells women they can be anything: a CEO, a surgeon, a politician, an entrepreneur. We cheer on our daughters with "You can be whatever you want!" Yet motherhood is rarely presented as one of the meaningful options. It is the invisible choice, the option that seems small, old-fashioned, or not quite enough.

My daughter has a book called ABC What Can I Be. It lists every possible occupation: astronaut, ballerina, chef, nurse. M is for Mechanic. Nothing wrong with that, I have an engineering degree myself, but where is Mother? If a little girl dreams of becoming a mom, we smile politely and ask, "But what else do you want to be?" We have been conditioned to believe that motherhood alone is not enough.

The identity crisis of motherhood did not begin the day we brought our babies home. It began long before, woven into the cultural messages we absorbed about what gives us value and what makes a life meaningful. And somewhere along the way, we started to wonder, "Why does it feel like I am never doing enough?"

If you have ever felt this way, you are not alone. We wrestle with this back and forth because we are trying to attach our identities to something that was never meant to hold them. When motherhood becomes the measuring stick of who we are and how much we are worth, we will always come up short. Your toddler throws a tantrum in aisle 5, and you are a bad mom. Your home looks like a tornado went through, and suddenly you are lazy.

We might have some good days, when our kids behave perfectly in the checkout line, they even try that organic home cooked meal you made or your baby sleeps through the night. But then you see a post on Instagram of someone who rotates out sensory bins daily and all of a sudden the score board changes.

Underneath it all we find ourselves wondering: Who have I become?

Am I still me?  
Do my desires still matter?  
Do I have any value outside of motherhood?

Never have I related more to a song than Surface Pressure from Encanto:

*Pressure like a drip, drip, drip that'll never stop, whoa  
Pressure that'll tip, tip, tip 'til you just go pop, whoa, oh, oh  
Give it to your sister, it doesn't hurt, and  
See if she can handle every family burden  
Watch as she buckles and bends but never breaks, no mistakes*

No wonder we are exhausted. We are buried under the weight of carrying our own identities. Trying to daily live up to a sliding scale of what qualifies as a “good mom”. The drip of cultural noise telling us what our kids should be like and what we should be doing as a mother continues to weigh on our hearts and our minds until we just can’t take the pressure any more.

But what if the problem is not motherhood?  
What if the problem is the story we have been handed about who we are?

To understand why motherhood feels both beautiful and heavy, we have to go back. Back to before culture defined us. Before the lies. Before the pressure. Before sin. Before shame. Back to the moment when God created us and said who we were.

That is where identity begins.

## Chapter 2: Image Bearers

I signed up to run a Ragnar soon after Elliana turned one. Now, for those of you who have no idea what that is (that was me prior) it is an intense mountain relay you run in a team of 8 people. Everyone runs 3 different loops ranging from 3-7 miles which results in late night mountain running. You sold yet?

My best friends from college convinced me to join (which, if I am honest, didn’t take much convincing). I left the kids behind and headed off on an adventure. It was like I got transported back to my college days where I basically lived outdoors on the mountain with friends who were more like family.

And then it was over.

I flew back to Colorado, so excited to see my family again and after the initial greeting wore off, I felt oddly sad. Grieving. It was like I was reminded of a person I once was that was no longer a

reality. One who went on adventures, slept wherever I could find a bed and rolled with whatever the day happened to hold.

This was a sharp contrast from the rigid schedule follower I had become. Too nervous to break from routine and spent my days making sure the stars aligned so my kids would sleep at night. Was this really who I had become?

Naturally, I started to blame. Pointing the finger at my husband for not being more excited about getting out camping or spur of the moment road trips. It was easy to assume my kids were holding me back. Ultimately, I blamed myself for losing myself. Losing my identity.

Standing in my kitchen that evening, surrounded by the familiar chaos of home, I felt the question rise in my chest: Who am I?

The problem was, motherhood didn't all of a sudden erase my identity, it simply exposed where it was rooted. I realized something: it wasn't just that I had lost myself, it was that I had rooted myself in the wrong things.

In my adult life, I have tried numerous times to grow plants from seeds. Let me tell you, they rarely make it out of their little seed starter pots because 9 times out of 10, they die. There are a million reasons for this, the top one being I am either too distracted or too cheap to spring for the good soil. It's typically always a problem with the roots. They didn't grow because there was not enough light, or the soil lacked nutrients or I forgot to water them, or I watered them too much.

Just like the soil I attempt to plant my seeds in, what (or who) we plant our identity in matters. Ephesians says it this way, *For he [God] chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

Ephesians goes on to say, *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

He chose us. Not for what we would become, but because He loved us. We have been chosen from the very beginning. I love how it says, *before the creation of the world*. God prepared good works *in advance* for us to do.

Before you took your first breath, before someone told you who to be, before you decided who you want to be or felt like you lost a part of yourself, you had already been chosen.

I've tried on so many identities over the years, the shy kid, the baby sister, the adventurer, the missionary, the mom. But none of those were ever the truest thing about me, even if I didn't realize it at the time.

The book of John opens with words that take us back to the creation story. John reminds us, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.* (John 1:1-3).

Long before I was anyone's mom, long before I was anyone at all, God was already speaking identity over His creation. Genesis tells us that we were created in his own image. God gave us our identity in the very beginning right when He made us. Our identity comes before our purpose.

You might be wondering, what does that even mean... to be an image bearer. I feel ya. Clearly I can't even take care of plants let alone be someone who looks like God. The good news is, that being an image bearer of God is not rooted in what we can do or how good we are. In fact, scripture uses two different Hebrew words for "image": tselem which emphasizes representation and demut which speaks to resemblance.

We were made to represent God. To be His ambassadors here on earth and to point everyone to Him. We were made to resemble him. To look like Him. To walk in His ways and live out His plan and purpose. These are "being" words, not "doing". Simply by being in this world you are an image bearer.

Modern motherhood wants to fit us in a box and break us out all at the same time. It says, I'm a crunchy mom, I'm a homeschool mom, I'm a working mom. It also says, be whoever you want to be! You can homeschool and work and eat organic while covering yourself in plastic!

Culture hands us an identity we have to earn. God hands us an identity we simply receive. Culture ties your worth to performance, productivity, and how well your children behave at the grocery store. God ties your worth to His love. Culture says your identity changes with your circumstances. God says your identity is anchored in who He is.

When we sit back and think about all the mixed messages swirling around us, no wonder it is so easy to forget who we are. We see a mom waking up at 5am to workout and then prepare a hot breakfast for her 3 kids and we think, "I am not enough". Another mom is backpacking with her baby and toddler and we wonder, "Wasn't I supposed to be like that mom?". The stay at home mom sees the working mom drive off solo in the morning and longs for a minute of peace. The working mom envies how much time the stay at home mom spends with her kids.

When we forget, we feel resentment, shame, comparison and just plain exhaustion.

And maybe you feel like you're thriving in motherhood right now, strong, confident, and in a really good season. I'm so glad. But even the best seasons can't define us, because seasons change. Identity rooted in God stays steady whether life feels full or fragile because He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Identity shapes how we walk through every part of motherhood. Whether we are riding that high of baby snuggles or reading an email from the teacher saying our child has been acting out again. Until our identity is anchored in the One who created us, we will keep feeling tossed between expectations, seasons, and emotions.

What if identity is not something you lost in motherhood, but something you were never meant to root in motherhood at all? Before God entrusted us with purpose, He spoke identity over us. If this is who you are - chosen, loved, created in His image - then what were you made to do? For that answer, we get to go back to the beginning of our story.

## Chapter 3: A Calling, Not a Consequence

It was a casual interview. I had a good relationship with the pediatrician office and loved the environment they offered for my children. I had seen the flier in passing while I was wrangling my toddler in for a check-up. They were looking for a part-time front desk person and I was immediately interested. It felt like an easy shoo-in, a way for me to feel like myself again. Maybe even have a lunch break in which I was not surrounded by tiny humans needing something from me at all times. I sat there, hand resting on my 8-month pregnant belly, answering questions about my past job experience, when the elephant in the room was finally addressed: "With two young kids at home and another one coming, why are you interested in this job?"

I answered honestly, something I had been wrestling with for a while but had never really voiced, "I just feel like I would be a better mom if I wasn't around my kids all the time."

I could taste the bitterness of the words as they came tumbling out of my mouth. The tendril of resentment I was feeling that had sprung up from seeds of lies and exhaustion. What I really was saying beneath those words was, "I don't think I was meant for motherhood".

Surely God's design for me was different from this? After all, I have been told I was going to do great things! Change lives! Live for the kingdom of God! Motherhood felt like a side bar, a soul-crushing monotony of constant pouring out, before I could get back to my real purpose. I found myself wrestling with this conflict daily. I felt like I had gifts that would be put to better use outside the home where I could actually make a difference.

I needed clarity. I needed to know if I had misunderstood my purpose entirely. Where else better to look than back to the beginning... and I mean way back to our very creation story. Genesis begins with the creation of everything we know. Genesis 1:1 says, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

God created. In His wisdom and in His power, He created. People have many theories about how the world began, but Scripture begins simply: God created.

As God continues to create, He starts naming His creation and giving it purpose. He said, "Let there be light!" And He calls the light, day and the dark, night. He said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear". And he called the dry ground, land and the water, seas.

Plants and trees, stars, moon and sun, He created. He gave them a purpose and called all of them good.

But God isn't done yet. Not until He makes his piece de resistance (you are required to say that in a french accent), man and woman.

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it...'*

Before God ever gave Adam and Eve a purpose, He gave them an identity. They were image bearers of the living God. Created with dignity, worth, and a reflection of His nature. This identity came before marriage, before motherhood, before work, before calling. Their value was not rooted in what they produced but in the fact that they were created by God and for God. Everything that came next, including the command to be fruitful, flowed out of who they already were. Our identity has always preceded our purpose. When we enter into conversation about purpose or calling, we must remember this foundational truth. Without it, everything else can be confusing and conflicting at best, hurtful and divisive at worst. When we forget we are image bearers of God, we start living for our purpose instead of for our Creator.

This earth was perfect. It was filled with all the plants and animals you could ever want or imagine. Fruit that was sweet and filling. We're certainly not worried about pesticides, lack of minerals in our soil or carb content. God blessed it. He blessed man and woman and then said, ok now go be fruitful and fill the earth. Aka go make babies. The very first commandment to the man and woman was to make a family. For the woman to become a mother. Of course, in a fallen world this calling is lived out differently for every woman, and sometimes with deep longing or grief. But the heart behind it remains rooted in the goodness of God's original design. Whether you desperately long to be a mom, you are a foster mom, adoptive mom, spiritual mom, we are all designed in one way or another to mother, to nurture, and to cultivate life.

Just as God gave the light the purpose of being the day and darkness the purpose of being the night. Just as he gave the expanse the purpose of being the sky and the land the purpose of separating the waters, He then entrusted humanity with the purpose of being fruitful. Of raising babies and teaching them to walk with God.

This might feel uncomfortable to hear. It even feels a little uncomfortable to write because I know how easily it can be misunderstood. You may wonder, "Are you saying motherhood is the only thing I am meant for?"

No. Not at all. But motherhood was one of the first callings God entrusted to humanity, and somewhere along the way, we lost sight of its significance. This does not mean your gifts, passions, or work outside the home are unimportant, only that motherhood was never meant to be pushed to the margins. In a world obsessed with measurable impact, raising children often feels small. When your days are full of feeding, burping, changing, and rocking a baby who offers nothing measurable in return, it can be difficult to remember that this work matters.

Instead of being seen as little image bearers of God, kids are seen as a burden. Thanksgiving break is approaching as I write this. Yesterday in my inbox, I received an email that (I kid you not) had the headline: **WARNING! Children will be in your house all next week!** I laughed at first, but the email kept gnawing at me. Something felt off.

It is subtle, but the message is clear: children disrupt adult life. And that message does not stay on screens. It spills into real moments in real places. I felt it again while waiting to board a flight with my toddler. I was standing behind a woman and her 6-year old son. For those of you who like to rack up the travel points, you know that A list boarding always goes before the family boarding. Yes, family boarding is wonderful, but also, I do not need to try to contain my toddler in a tight space longer than absolutely necessary. As I'm making all the last minute preparations (snacks? water?) trying to settle her and also my nerves, I hear the woman in front of me speaking to her son. She says, "If you weren't with me, I'd have gotten to board with group A, but instead they made me wait to board in family boarding with you."

My heart dropped for this kid who was at no fault in this scenario except for the fact that he was purely existing.

And this my friends, is where our original purpose has gotten so twisted. Instead of motherhood being a blessing that we can rejoice in carrying out the purpose that our very bodies and souls were designed to do, our kids have become a burden. The internet is filled with memes of how our children have ruined our bodies, stolen our precious time and inhibited us from becoming the woman we were supposed to be.

We live for the "me time" found during naps. We count down the years and days until school starts. We look forward to that nightly glass of wine because we "deserve it". We allow the resentment to grow as our lives are being poured into this tiny human who doesn't give us much back in return. They just make us late. They are disrespectful, loud and have the potential to bring us down. No wonder so many of us feel lost. We are swimming upstream against a culture that no longer sees what God declared good.

Motherhood was never intended to be a burden. It was not supposed to be a consequence or a side bar of our lives. It sure might feel like it sometimes when we are trapped in an endless cycle of looking after everyone's needs but our own. But its original intention was pure and holy. It was God's perfect design for humanity back before sin entered the world. Before death and pain and bitterness sprung up. When we were completely whole, in constant communion with

God and carried no shame or regret, we were made for motherhood. And what God called good in the very beginning, He has not changed His mind about.

## **Chapter 4: The First Lie: Identity Theft in the Garden**

One morning, I was enjoying a rare quiet breakfast with my 3-year old son, Cooper. He is the middle child and only boy, so between the verbal tornado his sisters run in, I love these small moments I get with him.

He put down his fork, sighed, and said, "Mom, I need a wife".

Now, I'm not sure what you expect to hear from your 3-year old at the breakfast table, but let me assure you, that was not it.

I responded with curiosity, "A wife? Buddy, why do you need a wife?"

"To cut my waffle".

Right. Now that we have that straightened out, I do what any self-respecting toddler mom would do given the situation. I spiral.

A wife? To cut his waffle?

Does he think that's all women are good for?

I can't believe he is internalizing gender roles already.

Do I need to make him cut his food more?

I am SO not qualified to be a mom.

Cooper eventually grows tired of waiting on his mom who looks like she is frozen in time. A picture of shock plastered across her face. Clearly keeping it neutral wasn't in the cards for me that morning.

He sighs again, rolls off his chair like only a 3-year old can and wanders to the kitchen drawer only to pull out... a knife.

"A wife, mom".

A knife. Of course it was. He is three and apparently cultured enough to want to cut his waffle instead of ripping it apart with his fingers and shoving it in his mouth. His mispronunciation of the word almost sent me into a full-blown existential crisis.

It was a funny moment, but when I sit back and unpack where my mind went, it is shocking how I could take something so innocent and turn it into an attack on my own identity.

Matt and I never really planned on having more than two kids. Cooper was about seven months old when Matt even had a vasectomy consult. I still remember the Urologist telling him, "You seem like a really good dad. We need more kids in good families." That simple line planted a seed we didn't expect, and after months of back and forth, two little lines appeared on a pregnancy test.

Elliana was born nine months later. Her name means "God has answered," and that is exactly how it felt. She was a breeze... until she wasn't. Between breath-holding spells, a slight milk allergy, and a refusal to nap longer than thirty minutes, I was barely hanging on. Add in a potty-training toddler, a major house move plus remodel, and job changes for Matt, and I was drowning.

I remember one afternoon taking the two big kids out and leaving Ellie with Matt. It felt so easy to hop in and out of the car without the extra car seat, without the baby gear, without struggling with the mom math of when we needed to leave for a nap. And in the quiet of that moment, the lie slid in: "How could God have allowed us to have a third? I regret this."

I'd like to say that I refuted that lie immediately, but I didn't. It sat there for too long, rooting down so deep that I even believed it to be true.

It wasn't a logistical problem.

It was an identity one.

It questioned my value as a mother and whether or not I had any worth. Ultimately, it questioned God's sovereignty and whether or not He actually knew what was best for me.

These lies we hear are not novel. These are not brand new and creative. Satan has been whispering the same lie into our ears from the beginning. Lies that question our identity, our value and our worth.

Just two chapters after God's perfect creation of the earth and the lush garden where Adam and Eve live, Satan shows up in the form of a serpent.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

(Genesis 3:1).

How crafty is that Satan. He sees this perfect creation that God has made. Filled with purpose and holy communion and he plants seeds of doubt into our minds. "Did God really say?" And notice how he gives a half truth. He twists it. 'You must not eat from *any* tree in the garden.'

We see this everywhere in our culture. It takes something true and then manipulates it slightly to make it a half-truth. It sounds wonderful and looks refreshing and inviting but it is all a mirage.

You don't need to choose between career and family, you can have it all!

You deserve some "me-time".

You'd be a better mom if you weren't around your kids so much.

You'd feel valuable if you had a "real job".

Now, we must give credit to the woman, because she was on it. She responds to Satan, not skipping a beat.

*The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "* (Genesis 3:2-3).

She knew the command the Lord had given them and she was not fooled by Satan's trickery, but in her zeal to combat the lie, she added one of her own.

*And you must not touch it...*

God said don't eat it, so I'm not gonna look at it, not going to touch it, not even going to get close. How often do we do this?

I don't have to have it all, so I'm not going to even try and pursue what I'm passionate about.  
The Lord is my strength so I'm not going to ask for help.  
My kids need me to be there every second of every hour of every day.  
My value will be determined by how well my kids behave.

See how the pendulum swings? We go from one extreme to the next and instead of finding peace and resting in Truth of what God says, we set up walls of our own. Caught in the tension of wanting to perfectly obey, but this doesn't feel like what God intended either.

So Satan continues to weave his web of lies and the woman is caught wondering what God really said in the first place. All the lies start swirling mixed in with truth and all of a sudden it is just so exhausting to keep questioning and digging for what is good and true. So she takes and eats and gives some to her husband as well.

I wonder what that first bite was like. I always picture Eve expecting sweetness, only to taste bitterness. Isn't that how lies work? They promise delight, but deliver disappointment and shame. The moment they ate, their eyes were opened, not to joy or freedom like Satan had promised, but to their own nakedness.

Genesis 3:1 says that their eyes were opened and they realized that they were naked. Ashamed, they sewed together fig leaves to cover their nakedness. As soon as they ate, the lie was exposed.

Shame is the evidence that the lie worked.

They believed the lie. They had one command and they couldn't even keep that one. Have you felt this? The one thing I know I am not supposed to do, and I did it.

The apostle Paul gets it. He writes in Romans 7:15 *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.*

All of this shame weighs so heavily that it drives us into hiding. And we are so good at hiding. We know how to dry our tears quickly and say, “I’m fine!” We stall texting back and then shoot off, “I’m so sorry, I’m really bad at texting!” (Yeah, right). We keep the conversation surface level, we convince ourselves that it’s just a small thing, no need to worry anyone. After all, there are people who have it MUCH worse.

But, like a beach ball that you are trying to shove down to the bottom of the pool it always resurfaces and looks a lot like,

Blame  
Apathy  
Defensiveness  
Bitterness

But God. God reveals a part of His character in the next few verses that get reiterated over and over and over again throughout scripture. He comes to the garden. He walks near us and He calls out to us.

He is not shocked or confused or ashamed of us. He is already aware of our weaknesses. He knows our tendencies and our struggles. At this moment in the garden when He calls out to His creation He delights in, “Where are you?” He knows exactly where they are. Not only that, but He knows exactly how the story will go. His redemption plan, not yet revealed on the pages of scripture is still playing out this very day as He continues to seek us out. He asked the very first man and woman, and He asks us the very same question.

*Where are you?*

Satan’s lie stole a piece of our identity in the garden. It planted seeds of doubt into our minds that continue to weave throughout our culture, in social media, and modern motherhood. Doubts of who God is and who we are. And the same God who sought out the man and woman in the garden, seeks us out too. Before He confronts, He calls. Before He corrects, He comes close. His first question was not, ‘What have you done?’ but ‘Where are you?’ and He still asks us that today. Not because He does not know, but because He longs for us to respond to Him.

## **Chapter 7: Why the Noise is So loud:**

\*\*Talk about being induced 3 times- the various opinions I received about this.

# **Chapter 11: A New Way to Live: Confident, rooted and free**

The microwave above our stove broke.

Nothing dramatic, no sparks, we just woke up in the morning and it wasn't working. We first did what I typically like to do with all problems: ignore. Put it off. Maybe my husband would come up with a grand plan. But the days ticked by, and the number of times I threw something in there only to remember it was broken finally got annoying enough that it was time.

You know how some tasks you delay for days, end up only taking 5 minutes? Not this one. This was not your typical just-buy-a-new-one-and-throw-it-in-there situation. The specific size was no longer manufactured and anything else would be too big or leave those gaping holes on either side. (Yes, they sold fillers... that were somehow more expensive than the microwave itself.) On and on we spiraled until we found ourselves standing in the kitchen with a designer all set to draw up a remodel. Well that sure snowballed quickly.

We never went through with the remodel. We coughed up the money for the outrageously priced fillers and bought a new microwave. Ironically, we ended up moving a little while later into a home that does not have a microwave at all, and now we've been free of it for several years.

It's wild how quickly something small can convince you that everything needs to change. We live in a world that throws so much information at us that it's no wonder we find ourselves overwhelmed. One area in our lives feels slightly off-kilter and suddenly it seems like everything is breaking down. We assume we must need a full-life overhaul if we ever want to feel like ourselves again.

It doesn't take much. Maybe one melt down in the store or a kid waking up multiple nights in a row and all of a sudden we feel our whole foundation is crumbling. A hard day can spiral into "I'm failing at everything". One crack and we are convinced our entire house needs to be rebuilt. I am so guilty of this. It is so easy for me to be convinced that this hard moment, this feeling, this struggle will define my life forever.

But this pressure does not come from God. His voice is steady, gentle, and often hard to hear between the noise telling us all the ways we are falling short. Most of the time, we don't need a remodel, we just need clarity about what's actually broken and trust that He, the One who made us, knows exactly how to restore us. When our identity is rooted in Him, we can withstand the storms that threaten to pull us back and forth.

Culture says to pull yourself up by your bootstraps and fix yourself.  
God says it is only by His grace that we are renewed day by day.

Culture tells us that if we feel lost or sad or overwhelmed, we must reinvent ourselves completely.

God reminds us He has already created us in His image and prepared good works for us to walk in.

Culture urges us to do more, be better, hustle harder.  
God quietly whispers, come to Me, and I will give you rest.

Where we are weak, He is strong.  
Where we are scattered, He is steady.  
Where we feel not enough, He is always enough.

Motherhood doesn't need a renovation. Your identity doesn't either. What God spoke over you in Genesis still stands.

Living rooted in Christ might not look like a massive shift on the surface. After all, we rarely see what happens beneath the soil, yet the health of the roots is what enables a plant to grow.  
Rooted identity often begins not with a big change, but with a small, quiet shift of perspective.

What if instead of seeing our children as a burden, we saw them as a gift entrusted to us?  
What if every failure was not a measure of our worth, but an invitation to grow?  
What if the stretch of motherhood became evidence of God strengthening us where we feel weak?  
What if we learned to parent from security instead of pressure, from identity instead of insecurity?

Being rooted is not about fixing your life. It is about remembering who you are.

It is about letting God define you, steady you, and restore you. God is making you new-  
Scripture is clear about that. But He does this work through His Spirit, not through your self-improvement projects or your attempts to become "better." Motherhood offers more than enough moments that reveal where we need His grace and growth, and those moments become invitations into the quiet remodeling He is already doing in our hearts. His work is the transformation. Our work is the surrender.

# Chapter Template

# 1. CHAPTER TEMPLATE (Simple + Flexible)

## CHAPTER TITLE

*Optional short tagline here, if helpful*

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### 1. Opening Story (2–4 paragraphs)

**Goal:** emotionally connect the reader, reveal vulnerability, introduce a tension/question.

**Prompts:**

- When was a time this chapter's theme became real in your life?
- What moment is universal enough for moms to connect with?
- What emotion do you want to evoke? (confusion, hope, longing, identity struggle)

Example transitions:

- “I didn’t know it at the time, but...”
  - “Looking back, I can see...”
  - “That moment made me ask a question I’d been avoiding...”
- 

### 2. The Question or Theme (1–2 paragraphs)

**Goal:** pivot from story to the main idea.

**Prompts:**

- What problem is this chapter addressing?
- What lie or confusion does this topic expose?
- Why does this matter in motherhood?

Example transitions:

- “But I didn’t realize I had misunderstood something fundamental.”
  - “That moment revealed a deeper question...”
- 

### **3. Biblical Foundation (Scripture section) (3–6 paragraphs)**

**Goal:** introduce the passage, teach clearly, connect to identity.

**Prompts:**

- What does Genesis 1–2 (or Genesis 3 for Ch 4) show?
- What does this reveal about God? About us?
- What cultural messages contradict this?

Example transitions:

- “To understand this tension, we need to go back to the beginning...”
  - “Scripture gives us a very different story...”
- 

### **4. Connection to Motherhood (3–5 paragraphs)**

**Goal:** take the biblical truth and apply it gently to modern motherhood.

**Prompts:**

- How do moms live this out daily?
- What emotions surface around this issue?
- What pressures from culture contradict God's truth?
- Where do moms hide, strive, or internalize lies?

Example transitions:

- "And here's where this meets our everyday lives..."
  - "If you've ever felt \_\_\_\_\_, you're not alone."
- 

## 5. A Moment of Clarity (the 'aha' section) (1–3 paragraphs)

**Goal:** highlight the core truth of the chapter.

**Prompts:**

- What is God inviting moms to see differently?
- What identity shift does this chapter offer?
- How does this truth challenge modern narratives?

Example transitions:

- "This changes everything, because..."
  - "In light of this, motherhood is..."
- 

## 6. Closing Reflection (2–3 paragraphs)

**Goal:** end warm, hopeful, and Jesus-centered.

**Prompts:**

- What encouragement does a weary mom need right now?
- How does this truth point to Christ?
- What simple next step can she take?

Example transitions:

- “Maybe today you can rest in this...”
- “Take a deep breath — you were made for this, but not alone.”

# Chapter Check List

## **STRUCTURE CHECK**

- Does the chapter open with a concrete, emotional story?
  - Does it pivot cleanly to the theme?
  - Does it teach Scripture clearly but simply?
  - Does it connect deeply to motherhood today?
  - Does it end warmly and with hope?
- 

## **VOICE CHECK**

- Is it conversational? (sounds like you speaking)
  - Is there vulnerability (not perfection)?
  - Does it feel sisterly rather than preachy?
  - Are your sentences clean and clear?
- 

## **THEOLOGY CHECK**

- Is Scripture used accurately?
  - Are interpretations sound and humble?
  - Is Jesus the anchor, not self-help?
- 

## **EMOTIONAL IMPACT CHECK**

- Does a mom reading this feel seen?
  - Did you name the real pressures she faces?
  - Is there a place where she might underline a sentence?
- 

## **WRITING QUALITY CHECK**

- Did you read it out loud for flow?
  - Did you remove repeated words or filler?
  - Are paragraphs a good mix of long and short?
  - Is there at least one vivid image or memorable line?
- 

## **DISTINCTIVENESS CHECK**

- Did you highlight at least one part of your Genesis-based identity framework?
  - Does the chapter show why this book is different from others?
- 

## **FINAL POLISH**

- Does the chapter feel complete, not scattered?
- Have you avoided clichés?
- Have you left the reader with hope?
- Does it feel like YOU?

# Pre-writing ritual

# YOUR 10-MINUTE PRE-WRITING RITUAL

This helps you write from your truest, clearest voice — not perfectionistic mode.

Use this every time you sit down to draft.

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## Minute 1–2: Deep breath + prayer

Lord, help me put myself aside and hear your voice. What do you want to say to moms everywhere? Help me write as your daughter and not as someone trying to achieve. May this book be an offering to you.

This shifts you out of performance mode.

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## Minute 3–4: Re-read your chapter purpose

Ask yourself:

“What ONE idea am I trying to say in this chapter?”

Write it on a sticky note.

It helps keep your writing focused.

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## Minute 5–6: Visualize one reader

Imagine her:

- tired
- overwhelmed
- kids napping
- craving identity and peace

- scrolling Instagram and feeling inadequate

Write *to her*, not to an audience.

Your chapters will come out warmer and clearer.

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## Minute 7–8: Skim one Scripture passage

Let the living Word stir your clarity.

For Chapter 3: Genesis 1:26–28

For Chapter 4: Genesis 3:1–13

You're not trying to exegete — just get the text into your spirit before writing.

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## Minute 9–10: Free-write the first scene

150 words. No editing.

Just:

- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- What question did it raise?

This “breaks the seal” so the real writing flows naturally.

It's exhausting going back and forth like this. So easy to let my mind wander to simpler times. To look at another family and think— maybe they know the secret to being content. Motherhood saps our strength. Makes us question everything we knew about ourselves. I thought I was more fun, more flexible. I didn't think I was angry or bitter.