

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair and a young girl with blonde hair sitting together outdoors. They are both smiling and looking at a large red book that the woman is holding. The book has a floral design on its cover. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and flowers.

FOREWORD BY TRACEY EYSTER

Founder, MomLifeToday.com, a ministry of FamilyLife

Practical Help for **Purposeful** Parenting

THE MAKING OF A Mom

STEPHANIE SHOTT

MOMS: WE NEED EACH OTHER

Twenty-five-plus years ago, Stephanie Shott was a single teen mom working two jobs just to make ends meet. In her words, she “muddled through motherhood.” What she really needed was a mentor—another mom a little bit further down the road of life and faith who would share her hard-won wisdom and open, compassionate heart.

The Making of a Mom is the book Stephanie wishes she’d had back then, full of heartfelt encouragement and practical advice for parenting wisely. But it’s more than a guide for young moms. It’s also a comprehensive toolkit for older moms and moms’ groups who are ready to answer God’s call to mentor the next generation of young mothers.

Moms, mentors, small-group leaders and women’s ministers:

Lock your hearts and hands to raise the next generation for the glory of God!

This heartfelt written journey with Stephanie will guide and equip you to be the mom God intended with grace and confidence, and to share that grace with other moms who can benefit from what you have learned.

TRACEY EYSTER

Author, *Be the Mom*, and Founder, MomLifeToday.com

The Making of a Mom will help you evaluate how you parent and how you want to parent. Full of wisdom, moms can find real answers for the challenges they face today in these pages.

ARLENE PELLICANE

Author, *31 Days to Becoming a Happy Wife*



Stephanie Shott is a Bible teacher, conference speaker, author and mentor who has ministered to women for more than 20 years. She has shared with numerous TV and radio audiences her story of a decade of child abuse and her conception as a result of rape. Stephanie is the founder of The M.O.M. Initiative, a ministry to moms and mentors.

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FOREWORD



BY TRACEY EYSTER



If little girls are made of sugar and spice and everything nice, what might loving moms be made of? Moms are sweet and spicy, with lots of nice and a bit of sassy—but those descriptors don't provide a clear picture. Let's face it, every facet of being a mom is far more complicated than mere words can capture. Mom, you are God's one of kind masterpiece!

The grand assignment of motherhood is a noble, mandated role and moms need encouragement and a better understanding of God's design and desire for their lives.

What a breath of fresh air to have a seasoned mom, full of wisdom openly and candidly share her good, bad . . . and worst. In *The Making of a Mom* Stephanie Shott vulnerably shares what she has learned through motherhood—she cheers the rest of us on in our travels and encourages us to do the same for others. There are few like her who are willing to open up their lives to offer a well-laid-out map to those coming along the narrow path behind them. But that's exactly what Stephanie does as she shares valuable experiences in her life, and the lives of those she has been called to minister to for over two decades.

Stephanie challenges moms to have a clear understanding of who their kids are and provides practical suggestions on how to train them up in the way they should go. More importantly she reminds us all *whose* our kids are and that we are to passionately, intentionally and selflessly pour into their lives and launch them confidently into the forever care of their heavenly Father.

The blessing of motherhood brings with it a complex intertwining of joy and angst—as we revel in the gift of molding a life and tremble at the prospect of getting it wrong. A mother's body, mind and heart gets pulled and tugged in many directions and in the tussling we, sadly, are sometimes far too hard on ourselves.

Stephanie has some great news for you, the truth that an abiding relationship with the One who knows you like no other can calm the tumult.

Only the One, who chose you to be the mom to those He entrusted to you, can keep you content and filled with peace. This heartfelt written journey with Stephanie will guide and equip you to be the mom God intended with grace and confidence, and to share that grace with other moms who can benefit from what you have learned.

Enjoy the journey.

Living for Him,
Tracey Eyster

Founder MomLifeToday.com and MomLifeBootCamp.com

Author, *Be the Mom* and Coauthor, *Beautiful Mess*

Cohost, Encouragement Cafe



INTRODUCTION



I saw her walking across the parking lot. She looked to be about 16 years old. Young in years, but great with child, she waddled past our car.

Memories of my own teen pregnancy flashed through my mind and I couldn't help but wonder if she was ready for the long road of motherhood ahead. Did she grasp the greatness of her new-found role in life? Did she understand how everything she had ever known in life was about to change? Did she have someone who would help her along the way or was this a journey she was going to travel alone?

She hesitated for just a quick second, turned her head away from me, lit a cigarette and then battled the wind, hair whipping around her face, as she continued to walk away.

My heart sank. "Lord, does she understand that her actions no longer affect just her body? Does she realize that her choices affect that little life within? Would she be willing to quit smoking if she knew the damage it could do to her baby? Lord, why doesn't she understand?"

And then it happened. The voice. Oh, it wasn't audible, but it was just as real as if it were. It was loud. It was clear. And it was powerful: "Because you're not teaching her!"

Perhaps it was a combination of things that had culminated in my calling—I'm not sure—but by the time my husband got back to the car, *The Making of a Mom* and the M.O.M. Initiative had been conceived in my heart and I had jotted down the outline for the book you are now holding in your hands. At a gas station. Such a strange place for the birth of a ministry, but that's exactly where this book and The M.O.M. Initiative were born.

When I was a young mom, I longed for a mentor, yet wondered why I could never seem to find one. I had just turned 18 when my son was born and I didn't have a clue what it meant to be a mom.

Oh, I thought I did. In fact, I thought the whole mom thing was going to be a breeze. I quickly learned that my dream of motherhood was very different than the reality of motherhood.

I was young, without Christ, without a mentor and without a clue. I thought I was going to be the mom who did the right things, said the right things, never yelled at her kids, and loved playing Legos with them. I would bake my own bread and we would spend hours on end creating crafts and playing games together.

But that's not what happened. I soon became a divorced teen mom who felt the weight of the world on her shoulders. Somehow, the mom I wanted to be—the mom I thought I was going to be—got lost in the never-ending realities of motherhood as I worked two jobs to keep a roof over our heads and food on the table. It's pretty hard to be all and do all when you're really just overwhelmed by it all.

As the years passed, I married again, and not long after that I became a Christian. Everything changed, except that I still didn't have a mentor and I barely had a clue.

Motherhood was pretty messy for me. Everything seemed like an experiment and my kids were the guinea pigs. I tried a hodgepodge of parenting techniques touted by experts to be the solution to all my parenting faux pas. Some were helpful. Others left me wondering if those experts had children of their own.

That was 25 years ago and as I reflect back on the seasons of my life and the way I muddled through motherhood, I can't help but wonder where all the mentors were. I remember looking up to several women in the church, but for some reason I was never able to wiggle my way under their wings.

It shouldn't have been that hard. After all, mentoring is what we're called to do. It's a God-given way to leave a legacy of faith for those who come behind us, and it's also a powerful tool to help us reach our communities and this culture for the Lord Jesus Christ. I asked myself, *Could God possibly be calling me to minister to young mothers whose mom journey was much like mine? Could I really develop a dual-purpose resource that would help those moms outside the church navigate the difficult waters of motherhood, and could that same resource still be used as a tool to mentor moms within the church?* I didn't want to write the kind of book that makes a mom feel as if there was no way she could ever be a perfect mom. I wanted the book to be written by a

mom who knows what it's like to blow it and then feel that she's one step away from messing up her kids for life.

Could I create a mentoring ministry that was also missional? A ministry that would reach out to moms beyond the four walls of the local church with the goal of leading them to Christ and at the same time minister to the hearts of moms who already know Him? Could this ministry help weave mentoring into the fabric of the local church and connect these churches with other ministries as well as with the community? Wow! What an impact we could have on our communities and this culture for Christ through the power of missional mentoring! I didn't know how, when or where, but I knew God was calling me to something much bigger than myself, and the thought of it left me shaking in my shoes!

It sounds a bit crazy, I know, but that's how it began—in the parking lot of a gas station when a young pregnant girl, who reminded me of myself, walked past me and lit up a cigarette. It was there that the Lord led me to minister to moms, to write *The Making of a Mom* and eventually to write a series of books uniquely designed with carefully crafted questions at the end of each chapter that would serve as a catalyst for conversation between group leaders and mentees. What if I could develop something that would enable women to have the confidence and courage to enter into a mentor/mentee relationship? What if I could provide a resource that would answer the questions every would-be mentor and small-group leader asks herself: *What do I say? What do I do? What do I use?*

That's when the Lord led me to launch a comprehensive ministry to help the Body of Christ make mentoring missional.

Sweet mom, I know we have never met, but I feel we were introduced that day at the gas station when *The Making of a Mom* was conceived and The M.O.M. Initiative was born. So, this is for all of you. Whether you're a new mom, a mom to teens, or a mom-to-be, *The Making of a Mom* is for those who feel alone in their journey, for those who wonder why the mother they thought they'd be doesn't look anything like the mother they've become in real life. It's a book for the mom who is afraid she's messing up her kids and doesn't have a clue what to do next. It's for the mom who feels she can't measure up and wonders if she'll ever be the perfect mom. It's for the courageous mom who is ready to take her motherhood journey

to the next level. It's for those who are looking for a fresh biblical perspective on motherhood from someone who is willing to share her flaws and failures. It's from someone who knows how hard your journey is and who doesn't gloss over it and make you feel like being a mother is easy. It's for the new or expecting mom who really wants to become grounded in her understanding of what a mother is and what a mother does from a biblical perspective. This is for you, sweet mom. The one who loves her kids like crazy but is weary, worn out, and overwhelmed. The one who thinks she has to do it alone, yet knows there's no way she can.

And this book is for you, sweet mentor and ministry leader—those of you who have longed to weave mentoring into the fabric of your church or ministry but have felt you lacked the resources and support to get started. It's for those who are looking for a way to connect with moms in your church or your ministry and begin making a difference in their lives through mentoring. It's for those who want to start a ministry or small group for single moms, and for those who are ready to impact your community and this culture for the Lord Jesus Christ through the power of mentoring. It's for those of you who long to help women step into their Titus 2 shoes and fulfill their calling—who have been looking for tools to eliminate the awkwardness a mentor often feels when she isn't sure where to begin or what to say. It's for those of you who realize that we are at a crossroads in our culture and that if we reach the moms of this generation, then we will reach the heart of the next generation—but if we don't, we might lose them all.

In the back of this book, you will find Planning Guides for a variety of venues to help you start a M.O.M. Group and be on your way to making mentoring missional. There are also resources online at www.themominitiative.com to help you on your journey.

The Making of a Mom is not just a book to help moms know they are not alone; it's also a resource for the church so that moms won't have to be alone. As you open the pages of *The Making of a Mom*, you are about to venture into some familiar and maybe not-so-familiar territory—the deep places of a mother's heart where we discover there's so much more to us than we ever realized. There, in a mother's heart, is the place where we long for our children to become all God created them to be. But because we are plagued with all our

own flaws and failures, we wonder if we are *enough* to get them there. We know God calls us to build character in our kids, but we struggle with how defective our own character is. There, in the deep places of a mom's heart, is where we know we love our children like crazy, but we're not even sure we love them well. We are mothers who try so hard to be strong yet realize the mom journey is the one journey we don't want to mess up. So, we rise from the rubble of our own insecurities and quietly confess, "I can't do this alone."

This book is for you, sweet mom! You're a heart molder—a world changer. You are more courageous than you ever thought you were and stronger than you give yourself credit for. You can do this mom thing, but you don't have to do it alone. I have been there and done that and I know *alone* makes motherhood even more difficult than it already is.

So, let's do this thing together—you, the mentors, the small-group leaders, the mentees and me. Let us lock our hearts and hands to raise the next generation for the glory of God. He has gifted us moms with extraordinary influence and we are definitely better together.

Oh, and by the way, I thought you should know that you have been the object of my prayers for a very long time. You still are. I pray that you will know the height and depth of God's love for you and your children. I pray that your heart will be encouraged as you realize that God partners with you in parenting your children. I pray that you will embrace the truth and the beauty of knowing that God has uniquely created and called you to be the mother of your children. I pray that the Lord does exceedingly abundantly above all you could ask or think. I pray that your entire family will come to know Christ and embrace His plan and purpose for their lives. And I pray that you will find a mentor to help you make the most of every minute of your mom journey, to embrace your God-given role and to inspire you to grasp the power of your influence, not only in your children's lives, but also for generations to come. 🌸

Eternally His!
Stephanie Shott

NOT ALONE

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

PROVERBS 27:17

Alone. It is one of the biggest struggles busy mothers face. But we don't have to do the mom thing alone. In fact, we weren't meant to do any part of life alone. In "Not Alone," you will discover why other mothers feel the same way you do and how you can find freedom in the beauty of community with other moms. Some are modern-day moms, and others have already blazed the motherhood trail before us.

A Familiar Look

There she was, inching her way forward in the grocery line, clinging to the back side of her baby's pacifier with her teeth as she plunged her hand back and forth between her purse and her diaper bag. She was frantically searching for her wallet while trying to quiet one very loud and discontented toddler and at the same time attend to her crying infant.

I know the look. I've worn it too. I saw it in her eyes that day. Weary. Worn out. Frazzled. Unsure if she would ever get the mom thing down. Uncertain about how to handle her cranky kids. Wondering if one day she might be able to use the bathroom without

interruptions. And then there was the fear that she might fall asleep in church because her toddler pulled an all night cry-a-thon.

She was one of so many moms who find themselves getting lost somewhere between the mounting pile of laundry and the dried spaghetti sauce in the carpet. She was like you. She was like me. She was like every mom on the planet—trying to figure it all out and wondering if she ever will. Look around, sweet mom, they are everywhere—moms just like you.

You may be a single mom who feels the weight of the world is on your shoulders. Or you may be married, but still feel as if you are sinking under the tidal wave of mommy-hood. You may be a widow who has lost the love of your life and is parenting alone, or you may be married to a husband who, for some reason or another, is completely out of the parenting picture.

You may be struggling to put the next meal on the table, or you may be a mother who has never had to suffer financial need. You may be escaping an abusive situation, or perhaps you're a mother who is still held captive by it. Maybe you are a mom who deals daily with a chronic, life-threatening or terminal illness, or perhaps you are caught up in the cycle of continually trying to figure out how to mother a child with special needs.

Moms, there are lots of them and they are everywhere. Yet, so often they feel isolated . . . alone . . . lonely, even in a house brimming with kids.

Kim's Story

Kim is happily married with four boys under the age of five. She is a stay-at-home mom whose house is full, whose days are hectic, and who struggles with feeling alone. Every trip to the store is a chore and a day at the park is impossible. She loves her children and she loves being a mom, but that doesn't make it easy. Being a mom seldom is.

As Kim makes her way through church on the way to the nursery, she scans the room. She can't help but notice the other moms. Their daughters are neatly dressed with matching ribbons in their hair. Their sons are quiet and well-behaved with what appears to be halos hovering above their heads.

Kim wonders if she could ever be *that* kind of a mom. You know, the mom who has all the right answers, doesn't raise her voice and never has to count to three. Would her boys ever promenade calmly through church, marching in a row like little soldiers? Could she possibly ever hold a conversation without being interrupted and feeling she must apologize for her children?

She feels alone—as if she is the only mom who struggles with shrieking boys, temper tantrums in the candy aisle, and random burping contests in the waiting room at the doctor's office. Comparing herself to the moms who seem to have it all together often leaves her feeling she can never measure up.

Her husband is a pastor and certain expectations come with being a pastor's wife. She's supposed to be the one who has it all together. Her kids are supposed to be the ones who wear halos. Kim's life doesn't look much like she thought it would. Oh, perhaps from the outside it seems to be a Pinterest-perfect home and Pinterest-perfect life. There is the adorably adorned house with the double car garage. There is the godly husband, the wife who loves her man. And, to top it off, there are two parents who cherish their children and work hard trying to raise them well.

Kim is a mom just like you and me. Feeling alone, inadequate, invisible and intimidated. She is afraid she won't parent her kids well—that she won't always do or say the right things and that her children will be messed up by her inadequacies. She fears for her sons' futures and wonders if they will turn out okay. Will they grow up to be men of character—men who love God and their wives? Will they raise their children well? Expectations run pretty high for a pastor's family.

What about their education? Kim's heart is telling her to homeschool her boys, yet etched deep within her soul are the words, "I'm not enough."

And their safety? What about their safety? It's a dangerous world out there and four boys in one household is a recipe for skinned knees, broken bones and a plethora of trips to the emergency room. She shudders at the thought of how many times she will have to pull an all-nighter at the E.R. while raising these rambunctious boys.

Like you, Kim is a mom who wishes she had a few more arms and a few more hours in her day. She longs for adult conversation,

enough money to go out to eat, a full night's sleep and a long, hot, uninterrupted bath. With four boys tugging at her heart, she knows hers is a 24/7 gig that will often leave her weary, worn out and overwhelmed—but Kim wouldn't trade her life as a mom for all the world, even on the days she feels she isn't worthy to be a mom and is blowing it with her boys.

Today, as you are reading this, remember that there are millions of moms around the world. Their circumstances may be different from yours, but their hearts are the same. You're not alone! There are a myriad of moms whose hearts are overwhelmed and whose lives are filled with sticky Nutella fingertips and teens who think it's cool to talk back. They're moms just like you. Yet, like Kim, they wouldn't trade any of it for the world. And neither would you.

Community of Women

It doesn't have to be as hard as we make it sometimes. We weren't meant to make the mom journey alone. We don't have to trudge through motherhood on our own when help is only a phone call or text message away.

Threaded throughout Scripture is the concept of community among women—a sisterhood of sorts. Tucked oh so sweetly in the pages of Scripture, we find women who walked through life together. Some were friends, others were relatives; all needed each other.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (*NIV*) tells us, “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”

Naomi and Ruth

We look at stories like that of Naomi and Ruth and we find an unusual relationship of community. Both were widowed. Both loved and respected each other. Naomi was not only Ruth's mother-in-law, but also she was her mentor and friend.

Let's take a minute and pull back the curtain on this timeless relationship as we look at the discourse between Naomi, Orpah

and Ruth after the loss of their husbands. Keep in mind that Orpah and Ruth may have lost their men, but Naomi had lost her husband and both of her sons:

When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.” Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, “We will go back with you to your people.” But Naomi said, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD’s hand has turned against me!” At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.” But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her (Ruth 1:6-18, *NIV*).

It's a story that grips your heart. Such great loss. Such a huge decision to make—to go with Naomi or stay where life was familiar and a future husband would be more probable. Orpah stayed; Ruth went. She loved her mother-in-law too much to remain in the only land she had ever called home. Ruth clung to Naomi and to a future that held little promise. They had a powerful relationship that was strengthened by Ruth's devotion to her mother-in-law and solidified by both women's devotion to God.

After making the treacherous trip to Bethlehem, they entered the land of hope with very little hope of their own. They were widows with nothing but each other. Many of the people recognized Naomi. After all, Bethlehem was her hometown. When she overheard them whispering to one another, "Is this Naomi?" she was quick to let them know she wasn't the same woman who had left years ago. "Naomi" means "delight," but now, coming home empty-handed and broken-hearted left her feeling anything but delightful.

"Don't call me Naomi," she responded. "Instead, call me Mara [bitter], for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the Lord has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?" (Ruth 1:20-21, *NLT*).

As a grieving widow who was also grieving the loss of both of her sons, Naomi wasn't exactly in the best state of mind to be good mentor material. Ruth, however, looked beyond her pain and recognized a faith that even Naomi had struggled to find. Naomi didn't always get it right. Her deep sorrow certainly didn't make her the most pleasant woman on the planet. Yet somehow, somewhere along the way, Naomi must have left a trail of faith worth following. Why else would Ruth be so determined not only to follow her, but also to follow her God? Somewhere, beyond the written Word, was a life worth following—a life of faith in a God who is faithful even when circumstances are difficult.

When Ruth married Naomi's son, she may not have been able to choose her mother-in-law, but when she lost him, she was able to choose her mentor. She chose Naomi. Perhaps Naomi had been mentoring Ruth all along. Maybe Ruth clung to Naomi because years at Naomi's side had taught her what life, love and everything in between was all about. Maybe she overheard Naomi's prayers

as she sought God's face for her sons. Could it have been that Naomi shared how wonderful her God was while they were baking bread and making meals together? Perhaps she unfolded stories of Yahweh's faithfulness while they sat side by side folding clothes.

We don't really know much about their lives before they took this journey together, but we know that while they may have felt they had lost it all, they still had each other, and that made all the difference in the world. The road ahead would definitely be a rough one, but a tough journey together is always a bit easier than a bumpy ride alone.

So much has changed since the days when women surrounded themselves with other women. We live very independent lives, nestled in the four walls of our homes and isolated from the very ones who are willing and able to make this mom journey with us. In Ruth and Naomi's day, families often lived on the same property and even in the same house. In many countries today that still is true.

When my husband, our youngest son and I lived in Costa Rica, we were often invited to a precious family's home. We affectionately called the patriarch of the home "Papa Juan." The matriarch was Momma Profidia. Situated in their home was a small dining area on the left just inside the door. On the right was an open doorway to the outdoor kitchen where a tin roof shielded the area from the rain. The hall seemed long for such a small home, but as we made our way to the end, we noticed there were no walls. Sheets separated the padded beds that lined the floor one after the other on both sides.

At any given time, 24 family members lived in that tiny 1,000-square-foot block home with concrete floors and a tin roof. It wasn't a decorating diva's idea of beautiful, but it was a beautiful thing, nonetheless. Most of the 24 lived under one roof in the main house. Others built small houses on a nearby plot of the family-owned land—just steps away from the ones they loved.

Papa Juan and Mama Profidia's home is one where traditions are passed down daily and young girls grow up knowing that the words "For better or worse; for richer or poorer; 'til death do us part" are much more than words recited from the lips of a beautiful young woman wearing a white wedding dress. They know because they live among married couples who are in the trenches of what

marriage is all about, and they see them make it work through the good, the bad and the ugly. They are strengthened by other women in their family: women who walk through difficult times and come out on the other side stronger and even more dedicated to the God to whom they have surrendered and the husband to whom they are committed.

They know what it means to manage their homes well because their mommas did. They cook together, clean together, laugh and cry together. They even fuss and fight with one another. They do life together and all are better for it.

A young momma learns what a good mom is not only by watching those who have gone before her but also because they hold her hand along the way. She doesn't feel the total weight of every decision because other moms help her in times of need.

When her baby won't stop crying and she doesn't know what to do, those moms are there. When he throws a temper tantrum and she's at her wits end, they are there. When he goes through the terrible twos and the tumultuous threes, and she feels ready to scream, they are there.

Through thick and thin, through every season, they are there and each generation is better because the women who came before them are willing to walk through life with them.

A Different World

In the land of the free and the home of the brave, we don't live like that. We live in a different world. We don't commune as they did in the days of Ruth and Naomi, and we certainly don't dwell with 24 other family members in a 1,000-square-foot home. We don't ask for help because we've got it—we can do it ourselves. So we struggle and our families suffer because we pull into the driveway, enter our homes, close our doors and shut everyone else out. Life, however, isn't meant to be lived alone. We *can't* get it all done by ourselves and we *don't* have all the answers. We're human—we need each other, and that's okay.

Sweet mom, there are other mothers all around you. Some who are in your shoes, some who have walked the path of mommy-hood before you. They are the family, friends, coworkers and mentoring

mommas whose lives teach us what it looks like to do this mom thing well. They form a community of mothers who stand ready to lend a listening ear and a helping hand.

They don't always get it right either. They aren't Pinterest-perfect moms who know how to make every meal from scratch and craft their way to an award-winning decor. But they can help you navigate the uncharted waters of parenting because they've set sail through those parental seas before.

You don't have to feel alone, inadequate or ill-equipped. Your 24/7 gig called motherhood is a joint journey, and there are women who are willing to walk with you along the way. In order to take one step of your journey with another mom, you will need to take the first step of the journey by intentionally meeting her.

Kim is surrounded by children all day long, yet she often feels very alone. Many moms feel the same way, but they don't have to—and neither do you. There is a resurgence of mentoring mammas who are ready and willing to step into their Titus 2 shoes and love you through your journey. Yes . . . mentoring. “Mentoring” may be an old-fashioned word, but in our modern day, there is great need for it. In fact, mentoring is not an archaic concept; it's just a dated word for community.

A Fresh Look at an Age-Old Word

Tragically lost in a generation that gravitates to innovative words and chic phrases, mentoring has not only lost its name, but also it has lost its place. But that is changing, and women are stepping into their mentoring shoes like never before. The online presence of mentoring ministries and Titus 2 websites is growing rapidly, and many churches are implementing mentoring ministries for the first time. Like an army of women linking hearts and hands to change the world, a new breed of women is taking on an old role to create a new culture of community. These are women who live next door and who you see at the malls and in grocery stores. You may find them sitting in churches and sensing that they are to make a difference in this world full of mothers who feel alone and lonely in their journeys as moms. They understand that the silence of the mothers of their generation has hurt those who are

coming behind them, and they are standing together to become a community who helps others do motherhood well.

Dear mom, it is how we do life best. Together. It's happening all around us. Many of us see the need to not only be a mentor but to consistently be mentored as well. When you think about it, Titus 2 calls us to live on both sides of the mentoring equation: the mentor and the mentee. It's the way it is supposed to be. Every time you go to lunch with a friend and talk about what you are going through and she shares a word of wisdom, you have just been mentored. Every time you walk with a friend who is going through a difficult time and you encourage her heart, you have just mentored her.

We may be independent, but we don't have to remain isolated. We were created for community; but in our culture, living in community with one another has to be intentional if it is to be at all. Perhaps you feel alone somewhere between the crayon-colored walls, car pools, and the roll of toilet paper your little one just dropped into the toilet. Maybe you feel the world expects you to live life with a cape, a lasso, or a tiara on your head like some kind of Wonder Mom. But moms who have been there and done that know that the real "mom life" isn't easy. They know that moms are better together, and that *alone* is a very lonely place to be.

While your children are home, your window of influence and the opportunity to mold their hearts is wide open—but one day your nest will be empty and you will only be given limited access to speak truth and life into your children's lives. When they are young are the days when you want to make your impact as a mother count. Let someone who has been where you are listen to your heart as you maneuver your way through motherhood. Allow yourself the blessing of soaking in some words of wisdom from a mom who is willing to share her own fears, failures and successes.

Your precious children are looking to you to be a living example they can follow. They will do what you do and trust what you say. They will look up to their father and seek his approval, but you are the one who nurtures their heart through life. *You* are their primary mentor.

While ministering to moms, I've often quoted the following words uttered by Abraham Lincoln about his mother:

All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.

I couldn't help but wonder how Abraham Lincoln's mamma ended up being such a bright light in his life when she only had nine short years to spend with him. What wisdom did she glean at the feet of her own parents who were Quakers? Was she just a naturally inspiring mom or did a family member or friend leave deep imprints on her heart that made her the momma Abraham Lincoln admired so deeply? Perhaps someone planted seeds in her heart as she was growing up and someone else came along and fertilized those seeds while she was raising her child.

We don't really know, but we do know that her son, Abraham, echoed the heart of almost every child on the planet: "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother." For good or bad, our children learn from their mommas. Mothers mold the heart of the next generation. But to do it well, we need each other. We're not alone in this wide world of motherhood. We have each other. We just need to be willing to step outside our own lives to find each other.

Iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend (Prov. 27:17, *NLT*).

A Prayer for Mom

Lord, I have to confess that being a mom is hard. I don't have all the answers and I don't want to try to do motherhood alone. I ask You not only to join me in this journey but I also ask You to lead the way. You tell us in Your Word that "two are better than one" (Eccles. 4:9), that "in a multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 24:6), and that "iron sharpens iron" (Prov. 27:17). Please surround me with godly mothers who have been where I am and who will speak truth, encouragement and wisdom into my life so that I can be the best mom I can possibly be. Precious heavenly Father, please help me point my children to You, not only by what I say, but also by the way I parent my children and live my life.



More for Mom

A Familiar Look

1. Have you ever noticed that overwhelmed momma look on another mother?
2. How do you handle it when you feel overwhelmed?

Kim's Story

3. How can you relate to Kim's story of feeling alone?
4. Have you ever felt you and your children didn't live up to others' expectations?

Naomi and Ruth

5. When you read through the story of Naomi and Ruth, you can't help but wonder what it is that would make Ruth cling to Naomi. What is it in a friend that would make you stick with her through thick and thin?
6. What is it that you would look for in a mentor? And would you prefer her to be Pinterest perfect or would you be glad that she wasn't?

A Different World

7. Do you think our independence hinders our aptness to foster relationships with other women, and what can you do personally to assure that you enjoy the community of moms?

A Fresh Look at an Age-Old Word

8. Do you feel that mentoring is old-fashioned, or is it still important?
9. How could mentoring minister to your need now?