

screaming. I dragged myself out of bed and got him some milk. That helped for a good five minutes and then he started at it again. I let him cry for another ten or fifteen minutes and then I went down to comfort him. Of course, two fears ruled my mind. First of all, what if he has an ear infection? Secondly, what if I can't get back to sleep? After thirty minutes or so of cuddling him and singing "Jesus Loves Me," I put him back down. Another thirty minutes or so and I was free to go back to sleep. That was several hours ago, and instead of lying in bed I'm writing all of you. (Maybe that's that whole thing about mommies wanting some adult companionship.) Anyway, of course the discouraging part of it all is that they're all going to start waking up in two hours. I've got a whole day ahead of me with very little rest. (That should really help my irritability issues, huh?)

The verse that comes to mind is Matthew 6:34. It says, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." I don't need to worry about tomorrow (or is it today now?). God will give me grace. He gave me grace to get through yesterday, and the day before, and the 14,000 and some days before that. There has never been a day that was too much. Sure, I might be a little sleepy, but maybe I'll get a nap, or Kath will come home early, or God will just help me minute by minute to keep faithfully serving Him right in the midst of my exhaustion. That's my hope. Somehow, someday, God is going to get me through today, and tomorrow, and the next 14,000 days after that. God is good.

A Perspective of Thankfulness

A Mike Lester cartoon pictured a housewife who was speaking to her husband who had evidently just returned home from the office. She said, "The water heater burst, the basement's flooded, the dishwasher overflowed, the dog has been "going" everywhere, the kids are tracking mud all over the house and yet...I feel like the luckiest woman on earth."

She was holding a mop and on the table next to her was a newspaper with the headlines 'EARTHQUAKE TRIGGERS MASSIVE TSUNAMI KILLING THOUSANDS'.

This mommy's one-of-those days was grabbed by the reality that even on one-of-those-days we don't necessarily have it all that bad. God has been kind to us – to all of us – in more ways than we can count.

I prefer modern music, but this reminds me of the old hymn that says, "Count your many blessings; name them one by one; count your blessings; see what God has done." Each of us would have a different list, but God has blessed us all: some with children, some with spouses, some with riches, some with health, some with friends, some with good looks, some with wisdom, and some with talents. None of us has been blessed in every realm, or maybe as much as we would desire, but we are still blessed. At a bare minimum we have

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Winning Ways

been blessed with the gift of eternal life which is available for the taking by merely believing in Jesus. Even if that was all we had, that alone would be worth more than all the riches in the world!

Parenting can be hard. We all know that. But God wants us to maintain a spirit of thankfulness, not of resentment or regret. Enjoy your children and the difficulties that come with them. What fool after winning the lottery would resent all the shopping he has to do? God has blessed you immensely! Be thankful for how good you have it and remember all that God has done for you.

Psalms 127:3 Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

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Give Them Something to Live For

In the teen years many Christian kids turn from the ways of their parents because they simply don't want to be like their parents. They have not seen a version of Christianity that is attractive and inspiring.

Kids today face a barrage of media influence. Millions are spent to capture your kids' hearts. Commercials constantly present their products as exciting and fulfilling. Drive our SUV and you can experience life on the edge! Movies present life as

Premeditated Parenting

romance interspersed with thrilling car chases. Sports capture a desire we have to conquer and achieve. The message is loud and clear: if you want it all, it's yours for the taking. This can all have a pull on teens' hearts as they consider what kind of lifestyle they want to pursue.

Of course, there is the other option. You could get married and be true to just one person and have 1.8 children, a dog, and a white picket fence. You can work 50-60 hours a week, and maybe you'll earn enough to pay the bills. You can honor God by dressing out of style. Every Sunday you could go to church—twice. Don't forget Wednesday night prayer meetings! Each morning you could pray and read the Bible for 30 minutes. The message is loud and clear to many teens: run!

This is one of the problems with Christian families today. The kids don't want what we have. They don't want our families, lifestyles, churches, or our God.

I'm not saying we should throw all our energy into trying to compete with the media. I don't think we can win that battle with that approach. But we do need to give our kids something to live for. Even before their teen years kids need to understand that life is full of purpose.

One of the greatest purposes to live for is called the Great Commission. It was a call to action that Jesus gave to His followers repeatedly while here on the earth for 40 days after His resurrection. Given this context, it was obviously crucially important to Christ.

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."