

# POSSIBILITIES NEWSLETTER

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## WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE?

Awhile back I had the opportunity to research what “experts” were saying about motherhood. I recently rediscovered some of this research and various thoughts and wanted to share it in this month’s newsletter. While each one of us has our own individual idea of what motherhood is like, there is a cultural idea of what motherhood should be that is portrayed all around us in a variety of forms. So, this small excerpt from research I have done in the past (followed by a conclusion I wrote for this newsletter) is meant to serve as a “let’s step back and look at a general trend that is happening” and not meant to insult/negate/ignore the overwhelming joy that motherhood truly is.

Look through the over-stuffed shelves of any bookstore and it will become clear quite fast: motherhood is a hot topic. Between memoirs, self-help literature and women’s studies, publishers have identified this area as a profitable subject. There may be several reasons for this phenomenon, but one stands out above the rest: the expectations on mothers are extensive. It is not far-fetched to think that this seemingly overwhelming number of responsibilities has created a wind tunnel of pressure, confusion and guilt for many mothers.

A sense of balance and life satisfaction seem to be missing from many mothers’ lives, and many times I can personally relate to this. Judith Warner addresses this in her book, *Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the age of anxiety*:

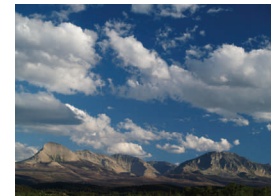
There is a web of beliefs, so close to the bone as to be indiscernible, that blocks women from thinking their way out of the culture of motherhood that so fatigues them. These beliefs form the psychological weight that makes mother-

hood in America so arduous. I call this web of beliefs the Mommy Mystique because I think that, like Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique*, it is, above all, a form of self-blinding. It rests on an almost religious adherence to ideas about child-rearing, about marriage and sex roles and society that supports the status quo even as mothers denounce it, even as children complain about it, even as “the experts” warn that our way of doing things is stressing children to the core (p. 32).

The road to opportunity for women has been a long, but progressively successful one. Motherhood is no longer the only career choice for women with children. In 2005, 70.5 percent of all American mothers were employed. A total of 68.2 percent of married mothers were in the workforce and 53.8 percent of mothers with children under a year old held a job (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006). These changes have restructured many family dynamics and introduced new tensions between work and home.

The anxiety levels of women are also on the rise. Douglas and Michaels, in their book, *The Mommy Myth*, write that many women believe it is much more difficult to be a mother in the present day than it was in the past. They believe that the vast amount of opportunities, along with the traditional expectations that seem to remain attached to “wife” and “mother,” have created a nightmare to-do list that has trapped women into feeling inadequate, guilt-ridden and anxious.

(Continued on page 2)



### QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH:

- Who do you want to be? (If there were no limits, no failure, no impossibilities: Who would “you” be? How would your passions mold/fit into your life?)
- What has God called you to do?
- In what areas are you living in the “just-in-case” mentality?

Dialogue about your thoughts on these questions at:

[www.momswithpassion.com](http://www.momswithpassion.com)

Click on “Monthly Q’s” and then hit “Sign our Guestbook”

Type your thoughts and add it to the board—we’d love to hear from you!

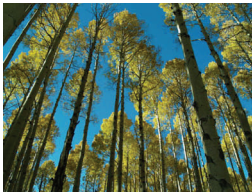
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## WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE? (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

~Eleanor Roosevelt



“Wonderful things happen to us when we live expectantly, believe confidently, and pray affirmatively.”

~Anonymous

In *Perfect Madness*, Warner writes about the conflict between having choices and lacking the support of society to pursue certain options due to having children. “As young women, we had choices—endless choices. But motherhood made it often impossible to act on our choices. Or gave us choices in the order of: You can continue to pursue your dreams at the cost of abandoning your children to long hours of inadequate child care. These were choices that didn’t feel like choices at all” (p. 52).

The challenges of pursuing both without receiving criticism from family, friends, and society is difficult. On the same note, stay-at-home mothers also receive criticism in regards to not pursuing their own potential, and lacking ambition. This no-win situation has led to mothers pitted against other mothers in a clash of who is pursuing the right course.

Hays (2003) has named this clash “The Mommy Wars,” and discusses the seemingly paradoxical nature of work-family tensions for mothers today:

If a woman voluntarily remains childless, some will say that she is cold, heartless, and unfulfilled as a woman. If she is a mother who works too hard at her job or career, some will accuse her of neglecting the kids. If she does not work hard enough, some will surely place her on the “mommy track” and her career advancement will be permanently slowed by the claim that her commitment to her children interferes with her workplace efficiency (Schwartz, 1989). And if she stays at home with her children, some will call her unproductive and useless. A woman, in other words, can never fully do it right (p. 41).

This no-win situation puts pressure on those who are making choices regarding careers and motherhood. In *The Mommy Wars*, Hays interviewed several women about motherhood and careers—examining their choices and their feelings about their choices. She found that whether women are working for pay or choosing to be stay-at-home mothers, there is a common sense of guilt and inadequacy regarding their roles.

So what do we do with this information (and pages upon pages more that I could not fit into this article)? I think it comes down to one question that the Christian music group, Switchfoot, asks so poignantly in one of their songs: Are you who you want to be? I do not believe for one minute that God puts incredible passion in our hearts for a cause, a profession, an ability, a *whatever* and then expects us to ignore it. No, I think it is imperative that we, as Christians, recognize what is going on in our culture and then counter it by supporting each other to pursue, not what history or others dictate we should do, but what God desires us to do.

Perhaps I will make waves by saying this next statement but I believe it needs to be said: I do not believe that once a woman becomes a mother God wants her to hang her “other” ambitions on the wall as a memorial for “back in the day.” Raising children is most definitely one of the greatest and amazing responsibilities of this lifetime, but I do not think for a minute that God wants me to forget about the other things he has given me excitement to pursue. I don’t even think that God wants me to wait until our kids are all grown up to pursue them. I know He is saying: *Now is the time*. Many moments it doesn’t make sense, but then again, when has God limited himself to my own understanding of the way life is working? Sometimes the greatest opportunities, the greatest moments, are what happens because we let go and trust God.

So, again, as Switchfoot sings, “This is your life, is it everything you dreamed that it would be when the world was younger, and you had everything to lose...Yesterday is dead and over. This is your life, are you who you want to be?”

Let’s (and I’m talking strongly to myself) take this month to reflect on these questions. And if the answer to Switchfoot’s question is “No” then continue asking, “Who do you want to be?”

Because as George Eliot said so long ago, “It’s never too late to be who you might have been.”

## LET US BOW DOWN AND WORSHIP

*“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’  
For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.”*

*~Matthew 6:31-32*

*“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”*

*~Hebrews 10:23*

I read a convicting concept a couple of weeks ago in an article by Martha Beck, a life coach. She talked about the need to switch from a “just-in-case” mentality to a “just-in-time” way of thinking. For instance, rather than buying loads and loads of sale items to sit on the shelf “just-in-case” you need them it is better to wait until you actually need the items and then schedule a trip to the store to buy them. Sounds simple enough.

The convicting part about this article occurred in the days after I read it. I began to note how many times my mind goes to “just-in-case” mode over food, toiletry items, other general supplies and even extends into packing (for day trips or overnight), to do lists and relationships. I realized very quickly how much of a mantra “just-in-case” is in my mind. The fact is that very seldom do I actually need or use whatever it was I was prepping against. And as for those supplies that are essential, I was shocked to discover how long something lasted beyond when I would normally run out to get a refill (normally to Target which is literally 2 miles down the road).

I realized that my mentality is causing unnecessary worry and anxiety, and feeding a mindset that relies on me only—not on God. Of course, we need to take action ourselves (it is not God’s role to do grocery shopping or refill the bathroom soap dispenser), but to worry and be living in a “just-in-case” world in many ways takes God out of the picture. We do not need to hoard whether that be supplies, food, clothing, time with others, activities, opportunities, and on and on. Rather, to live by faith is trusting God to provide for our needs “just-in-time.” We can practice this by using what we have and passing on what we do not need to those who could use it. We can practice this by trusting God with our time—if He is calling us to use the time in front of us a certain way then do it, whatever “it” is. This is a hard one for me. Often times, I push the desire to write or read or pursue a creative venture aside to clean or organize or do something else “just-in-case” I don’t have time later or “just-in-case” someone knocks at the door and (gasp!) sees dirty dishes or dust or toys lying around. I have found, since actively trying to go against the “just-in-case” mindset that 1) There is almost *always* time later to do a chore and 2) Rarely does someone unexpectedly stop by and the times that this has happened it has been someone who does not intend to come into our apartment or is the maintenance guy we had requested to come fix something (I do realize those of you in the friendly state of Texas may have the “drop-by” visitor more often—at least I’ve heard this may be a more common occurrence down there, but if the house truly is a mess you may give the other person freedom to feel less pressure when you stop by their house...).

So my call to you and myself for this month is to recognize when we are living in the “just-in-case” mindset versus the “just-in-time” way of thinking. For us, as Christians, “just-in-time” translates to “God’s time” and that is definitely something worth trusting.

*In what areas can you trust God this month?*

*In what areas are you living in the “just-in-case” mentality?*

*How and when has God already provided for your needs?*

*(Making a list for this one helps to see that “just-in-time” and “God’s time” is sufficient)*



VERSES OF THE  
MONTH:

MATTHEW 6:31-32

HEBREWS 10:23



## BOOK REVIEW:

*A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS* BY KHALED HOSSEINI

This book was one of the best works of fiction I have read in awhile. I did not want to put it down, and when I did I thought about it until I could read it again. I would strongly, strongly recommend anyone who is looking for a powerful, riveting, page turning work of fiction to start reading *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as soon as you can. The story follows two Afghani women and how they come to meet and overcome a seemingly impossible set of life circumstances. The writing is eloquent and beautiful. The storyline is heart-wrenching and inspirational. It left me a changed woman: deeply moved and committed to live life to the fullest. I can't say enough wonderful things about it. I would also highly recommend his first novel, *The Kite Runner*, if you have not read it yet (another page turner).



8							1	
				4	7			
		9	2	3		5		
				6	3			
7	2						8	
3	4							5
			5	8				1
	8			9				7
5		2	4					

### TIME FOR THE MIND: SUDOKU

Sudoku is a puzzle with a grid containing nine large blocks. Each block is divided into its own matrix of nine cells. The rules for solving Sudoku puzzles are very simple: each row, column and block must contain one of the numbers from "1" to "9". No number may appear more than once in any row, column, or block. When you've filled the entire grid, the puzzle is solved. The answers are to the right (try not to peak until you're done!).

9	6	8	1	3	4	2	7	5
7	3	5	2	6	9	1	8	4
1	4	2	7	8	5	3	6	9
5	2	9	8	7	1	6	4	3
4	8	1	6	5	3	9	2	7
9	7	3	9	4	2	8	5	1
8	5	4	3	2	9	7	1	6
3	9	7	4	1	8	5	6	2
2	1	6	5	9	4	7	3	8



## MOMS WITH PASSION

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[www.momswithpassion.com](http://www.momswithpassion.com)

Do you have a *Recipe, Personal Story, Book Review, Poem, Puzzle* or *Devotional* to share?

Email it to:

[momswithpassion@gmail.com](mailto:momswithpassion@gmail.com)

## SHARING THE GOODS: AVOCADO SALAD W/LIME DRESSING

### Ingredients:

2 1/4 oz mixed red and green lettuce leaves  
2 1/4 oz wild arugula  
4 scallions, finely diced  
5 tomatoes, sliced  
1/4 cup walnuts, toasted and chopped  
2 avocados  
1 tbsp lemon juice

### Lime Dressing:

1 tbsp lime juice  
1 tsp French mustard  
1 tbsp sour cream  
1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley or cilantro  
3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
pinch of sugar  
salt and pepper

Wash and drain the lettuce and arugula, if necessary. Shred all the leaves and arrange in the bottom of a large salad bowl. Add the scallions, tomatoes, and walnuts.

Peel, pit, and thinly slice or dice the avocados. Brush with the lemon juice to prevent discoloration, then transfer to the salad bowl. Gently mix together.

To make the dressing, put all the dressing ingredients into a screw-top jar and shake well. Drizzle over the salad and serve immediately.

\*This recipe taken from *The Vegetarian Cookbook* edited by Nicola Graimes (page 165)\*