

GENERATION CLAIMED
EMILY ASSELL

WHEREVER
YOU ARE

DEVOTIONS AND
DECLARATIONS
FOR MOMS



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Wherever You Are: Devotions and Declarations for Moms

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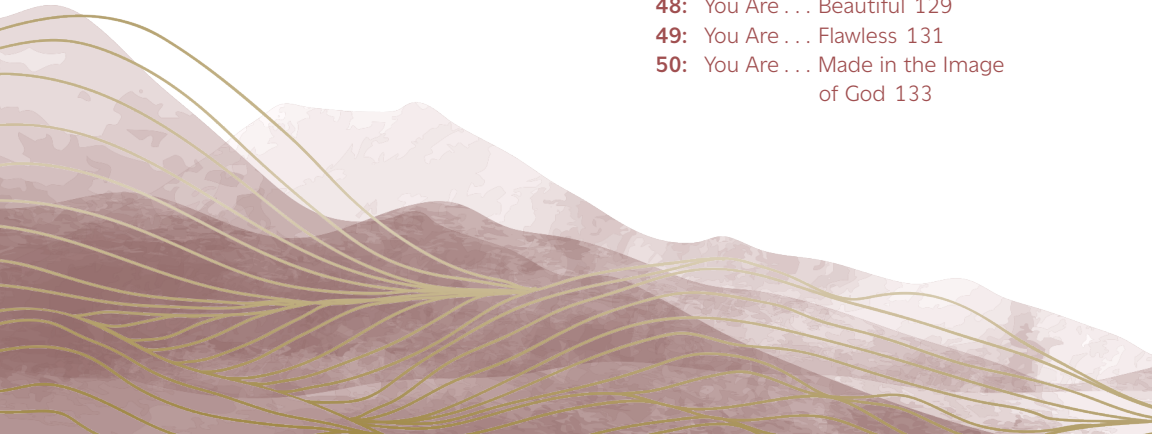
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THERE ARE SEASONS IN
MOM-ING (AND OTHER
AREAS OF LIFE) WHEN
TWO MINUTES IS ALL
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JESUS SEES OUR SMALL
OFFERING—OUR
FEW MINUTES—AND
RECOGNIZES IT FOR
WHAT IT IS: ALL THAT
WE HAVE, GIVEN TO HIM.

INTRODUCTION

“EMILY, I CAN BARELY TAKE A SHOWER THESE DAYS, much less have time alone with God,” my friend Megan admitted as we sat on my back porch, watching our kids run and play. “And when I do, it’s only a few minutes, and I just end up playing Bible roulette—quickly flipping through the pages trying to figure out what to read.”

“Yes!” my sister-in-law Katie agreed. “And I almost always show up feeling guilty and spend most of my time apologizing to God for not being consistent or not having much time.”

This conversation with two close friends hit something deep within me. And the next morning as I pondered it with the Lord, he gave me the idea for this book. Long before the publishers contacted me, proposing a book for moms, I wrote these devotions and declarations for my two sister-friends—and so many like them, daughters whom the heavenly Father longs to draw into his embrace. His heart for them, for you, is why this book exists.

In Luke 21:1-4 (and Mark 12:41-44) Jesus was observing people’s offerings at the Temple. There were many wealthy people who put in large amounts. But that is not what impressed Jesus. Instead, he pointed out a poor widow, who gave only two small coins. Jesus recognized her gift for what it was—all that she had. “She gave extravagantly what she

couldn't afford—she gave her all!” (Luke 21:4, MSG). And despite the small amount, he said she had given the most.

There are seasons in mom-ing (and other areas of life) when two minutes is all that we have. But Jesus sees our small offering—our few minutes—and recognizes it for what it is: all that we have, given to him. And, Sister-friend, he is overwhelmed by the amount of our gift.

That is where this book started: the knowledge that our few minutes are precious to God and also that, especially as mamas, our words are powerful. What we say is important. Proverbs 18:21 tells us that the power of life and death are in our tongues, and we will “reap the consequences” of what we say.

Throughout the Bible our faith and our words are linked together. Romans 10:9-10 says that we are saved by believing in our hearts *and* declaring with our mouths. In Matthew 21:21, Jesus says that if we have faith, we can “*say* to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen” (emphasis added). These are just two of the many examples found in Scripture.

You see, our words actually overflow from our hearts (Matthew 12:34). The Father, the Word, and the Spirit cause belief to be born. And if we feed that belief, allow it to grow and fill our hearts, and then let it overflow into what we say, those words have the power to do almost anything. I pray that through this book, you experience the fruit of speaking God's Word out loud over yourself and your family. (More on that in the “Starting Wherever You Are” section.)

I've broken up the hundred devotions into four sections of similar verses. As you read and declare multiple promises and different angles of the same truths, I believe that your heart will be filled and your faith will grow by becoming deeply rooted in his Word. (Another reason for

this approach is that repetition is key in neuroplasticity—aka reprogramming your mind.) At the beginning of each section, I'll also share a little more in depth about how that area has personally impacted my life and can impact yours. The daily devotions are short, meant to take only a few minutes. We will make the most of your precious time with our Father, covering Scripture, words of encouragement, declarations for you and your family, and prompts for praise, thanksgiving, and prayer.

I want to emphasize: *This is not meant to be one more thing added to your to-do list.* Jesus is still calling, “Come to me, all of you [*mothers and daughters*] who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke [*my way of doing things*] upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). His ways make things easier for us, not harder. He is not requiring us to do or give more (like the wealthy people at the Temple), but instead he wants to transform our little bit to bring life for ourselves, our families, and our world.

Just this morning, my youngest came sleepy-eyed down the stairs. Already feeling behind, I just kept chugging along, trying to fold her into the pace and tasks of the day. But she stubbornly refused—this was *not* our usual routine. “You know I need to start the day with cuddles.” So I stopped what I was doing and invited her to come climb up on my lap. We sat in silence for a while as I held her. She slowly melted into me, and I began to whisper into the top of her head how much I love her. Her sweet voice echoed back, “I love you too.” Secure in my arms, she talked with me a little more, and then she jumped down and ran off to face the day.

What if we saw our time with our Father the same way? Not as another thing to do, not as penance for failing to show up earlier, not as time to earn or prove love, or to pick up a new fact or technique. But as a moment to pause and be loved.

My prayer is that you view this book as climbing up next to your heavenly Father. May your breath slow as you melt into him. May you hear him whisper his love over you, and may you share a conversation in the security of his adoration and embrace.

STARTING WHEREVER YOU ARE

I WISH WE WERE TOGETHER RIGHT NOW, Sister-friend, and we could laugh and cry and encourage each other on my back porch as our kids run around in the sunshine. But for now, this will do.

I want to start by saying that this book is truly meant to meet you *wherever you are*.

If you are reading this while nursing in your rocker, at the kitchen table with cartoons playing in the background, or on your couch surrounded by a sea of toys and laundry—this book is for you. If you're here and not sure how you feel about God, if you're ready to go all in and declare his promises for your family, or if you're just so tired that you had to read this sentence twice—this book is for you. Wherever you are is right where your heavenly Father wants to spend time with you. And I'm praying his promise that as you seek him, you will find him (Matthew 7:7).

This starting section will take you a little deeper and answer any questions you may have about how the hundred devotions are set up.

SCRIPTURE VERSES

Motherhood seems like the season in which we need God the most but have the least amount of time to spend with him. I know that you

don't have an abundance of time to search Scripture for what to read or pray over yourself and your family. So the verses in this book are the ones that have changed me. They are the ones written out and taped to the window over my kitchen sink, saved as my phone's lock screen, and imprinted on my heart. But more than that, I believe they are the ones God chose especially for you. After the main Bible verse is a prompt for a longer passage to read if you have more time. Some of the longer passages are found more than once throughout the book; think of it as a favorite song playing on the radio and believe that the repetition of God's truth is growing your faith.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

My words will never be as powerful as the Word, but I hope that sharing some of my thoughts will help grow and change some of yours to match his. May these words encourage you to slow down and see what God wants to speak specifically to you and your heart.

IMPORTANCE OF DECLARING THE WORD

There is power in our words. In James 3:1-6, we are told that our tongues (what we say) are the main mechanism for controlling the direction of our lives. Our tongues are compared to a rudder turning a huge ship in the midst of strong winds and a bridle bit directing the path of a large horse. Even with all the other forces that can affect which way a ship or a horse or a life goes, the ultimate course is determined by the steering device. And we are told that ours is the tongue.

What we say is even more powerful when we use our words to echo God's words. We are told that when his Word is sent out, it will *always* produce fruit, and it will *always* accomplish what God intended it for

(Isaiah 55:11). In Jeremiah 1:9-10, God asks Jeremiah to overthrow some nations and build up others. And how is he to do this? Through God's words: "Look, I have put my words in your mouth!" (verse 9).

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that "the word of God is alive and powerful." We are instructed in Isaiah 62:6-7 to remind the Lord of his promises. Jesus resisted temptation and defeated Satan by quoting Scripture. The Word of God is called "the sword of the Spirit," making it the only weapon of attack in the armor of God (Ephesians 6:17). Again and again, God's will is accomplished by his words being spoken out loud in faith.

I believe you want to speak God's Word and promises over yourself and your family. I believe this because you have bought (and continue to buy) thousands of copies of my book *You Are*—a book that declares Scripture over your children, affirming who God says they are. I have been blessed by stories of you reading this over your children and yourselves, sending it off to college with your older children, using it for Bible studies, and bringing it to the hardest of times and places: psychiatric wards, NICUs, and even grave sites. And those stories always end with our faithful God doing what he said he would do.

Our spoken words overflowing out of the faith in our hearts can produce miracles. Just like Jeremiah, we have things (in our lives and our families' lives) that need to be uprooted, overthrown, and destroyed, and other things that need to be planted and built up. So I encourage you to say these declarations out loud. (Whisper them if you have a little one sleeping.) Because your words, joined with God's, are alive and full of power (Hebrews 4:12).

I have left a blank for you to speak your specific child's name into the declarations. If you have multiple children, please use and adapt the declarations as necessary.

CONNECT WITH YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

If I'm being honest, it's not always easy for me to come close to God or to perceive him coming close to me. But the Bible gives us a starting place in Psalm 100:4: "Enter his gates with *thanksgiving*; go into his courts with *praise*. Give thanks to him and praise his name" (emphasis added).

After reading each devotion, I invite you to draw near to him by considering two questions based on this Scripture:

1. *What is one (or more) thing(s) you're thankful for?*

A simple definition for thanksgiving is to express gratitude and celebration for what God has done and provided for you.

2. *What is something you appreciate about who God is?*

Praise means to appreciate and admire God for his virtues and character.

Set a timer for one minute. Wherever you are, pause and rest in his presence.

I encourage you to set a timer so you won't be anxious about how long this will take (that sounds opposite, right?). Like a party invite without an end time, a lack of clear expectations can cause stress—*Is this going to take up my whole day? How much time do I really have available right now? Have I been here too long or not long enough?* If your timer goes off and you want to stay longer, then of course, feel free to stick around and party all night. But if at the end of a minute, that is all you have to give, know that your heavenly Father is so blessed by the time that you spent with him.

This space is meant for you to take a moment and just be with him wherever you are—physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Take a few deep breaths and lay your head on his shoulder. If you need to be held,

if you need to cry, if you need to be quiet or be loud or anything in between—just *be* with him. Some of my sweetest moments with the Lord have been when I have simply lingered with him and allowed him to love me. Just like cuddling up with my daughter on the couch, words don't always need to be said.

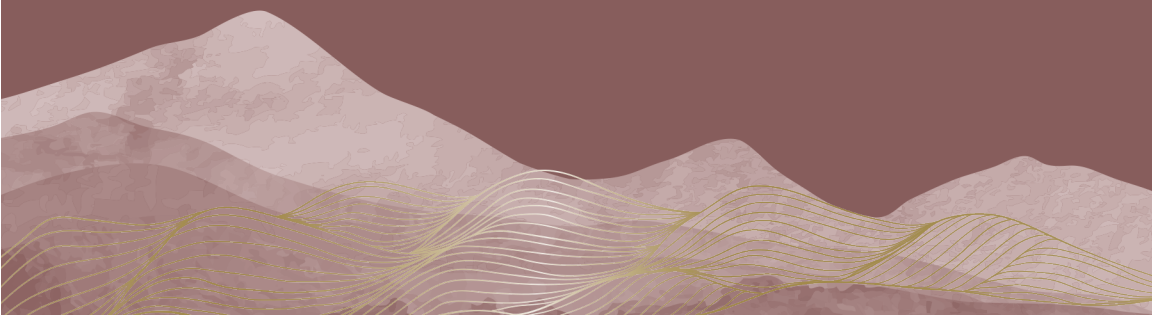
As an aside: This is not meant to be the final word on prayer. As a young mom, talking to God throughout the day was the most effective way for me to pray. I would ask for wisdom, help, or resources as the needs or thoughts came up, following the Bible's encouragement to “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17, NIV). Think of it as an on-going conversation that will change and grow as you do. And know that wherever you are and whatever you have to give, your heavenly Father is overjoyed.

HOLDING ON
TO THE GUILT
AND SHAME
DIDN'T KEEP
ME FROM
SINNING—
IT JUST KEPT
ME FROM
GOD.

1



**FULLY
FORGIVEN**



"I'M SORRY. GABE, I'M SO SORRY." I had let my anger get out of control. I yelled rough things at him. I hurt him with my words. His face dropped, and his sister Natalie looked at me with eyes wide and scared. Despite my apology and their quiet murmurs of forgiveness, I felt shame descend on me as my children quickly headed to a different room to avoid being screamed at once more.

I was still in the middle of carrying out a victory over anger. With God's help, I had overcome its stronghold in my life. That didn't mean I never messed up. It meant anger no longer controlled me. But I had to make the decision to use the strategies and truths I had learned. My eruptions were becoming less and less frequent, but I still yelled and failed more than I wanted—especially with the stress of a new baby and minimal sleep.

I repented, but I continued to feel ashamed. I knew better. *Can I really ask forgiveness for the same thing I did last week and might do again tomorrow?* I also worried I was causing more damage to Gabe's heart than just the sad face and broken spirit in the moment. The consequences of my actions were not mine alone to bear.

It wasn't only the anger. There were so many times throughout the day when I did, thought, or said the wrong thing, no matter how hard I tried. I considered myself a complete failure as a mom and couldn't reconcile the words of God's promises with the sin and shortcomings I was still struggling with. *How could I believe I was holy and live in the reality of my failures at the same time?*



As a child in Sunday school, I loved singing a song based on Titus 3:5. "He [God our Savior] saved us, not because of the righteous things we

had done, but because of his mercy.” I grew up hearing that we don’t earn our salvation. And in school, I had memorized Bible verses about how our faith is what counts as righteousness. But I also knew the verses about how we were supposed to live and act.

All of this led me to inadvertently create my own twisted version of the truth that went like this: I still believed that when I messed up, God forgave me and continued to call me his child. But I also began to suspect that *God was low-key annoyed with me*. That he rolled his eyes (or whatever the divine equivalent would be) when I asked his forgiveness. I imagined a God who was required to forgive me but secretly whispered, “Really? Again?” to his Son, who laid down everything just to see me trip up and stumble repeatedly over the same things. In my mind, God only listened to my prayers, granted me his help, and blessed me when I had sufficiently groveled and apologized for how I had previously wronged him or others.

And even after I had repented, I couldn’t be joyful. Surely being penitent and downtrodden for the rest of the day was a much better sign of true repentance than joy. *How could I be joyful when I had caused pain to God and others I loved?*

At night, instead of sleeping, I would review what I had done wrong that day, always vowing to myself and to God to do better. I unconsciously believed that holding on to my shame and punishing myself would keep me from messing up again.

Not surprisingly, this wasn’t working well. Who wants to talk to someone they think is disappointed and angry with them? Who wants to dream with someone they believe will remind them of their failures every time they misstep? And *I* definitely didn’t want to have my morning coffee with someone I thought required self-abasement before he would extend his love or true forgiveness.

As my relationship with God grew more and more distant, my sin seemed to move closer and closer. *Holding on to the guilt and shame didn't keep me from sinning—it just kept me from God.*

Ironically, the very thing that I thought would condemn me actually freed me. I started reading through the Bible in a different translation that made it harder to skip over verses I had memorized and sang songs about but had not really ever “heard.” Jesus is the Word (John 1:1), and he is also the Truth (John 14:6). So the more time I spent with the Word, the more time I spent with the Truth. And that Truth began to set me free (John 8:32).

One of the first passages that caught my heart was Matthew 6:9-13. In these verses, Jesus taught his disciples (and us) how to pray. That prayer, known as the Lord’s Prayer, starts with the words “Our Father.” Jesus emphasized that before anything else—before we confess our sin, before we praise God’s very worthy name, before we call for his Kingdom to come, strategize about our to-do list, or ask for all we need—before all of those important and very good things—he wants us to know him as Father.

Immediately, I thought of my own kids and how my whole being overflowed with joy when I lifted my daughter out of her crib in the morning. I would cover her face with kisses and snuggle her close. And even with my older teenage son, I am thrilled beyond measure when he plops down on the couch next to me. I shoulder up next to him, listening and laughing, encouraging him when needed.

Spending time with my children is a priceless blessing that makes me glad. All my children’s failures don’t come rushing to mind. I don’t require them to apologize or listen to a lecture before I can love them or

listen to their dreams and concerns. Yes, just as a parent wants the best for their child, God knows, addresses, and deals with our shortcomings and failures. He desires that we learn from them and course-correct when needed—for our own good and for the good of his Kingdom, not to satisfy his justice. Jesus already did that.

The more I read, the more my eyes were opened. I cried out with Paul, “I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway” (Romans 7:18-19). But then I continued on to the next chapter: “So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

And in Galatians I read, “When I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God” (2:19). Book after book, verse after verse, I heard the same message echoing throughout the entire New Testament.

The truth was that Jesus’ blood had already purchased my freedom and my forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7). What pleased God was my faith and my relationship with him, not my perfection. I was wrong about so many things, especially the heart of my Father. So I set out to relearn the truth and then to live it out.



I remember one of the first times this new understanding was tested. It had been a bit since I had lost my temper, but my patience had been stretched thin during homeschooling that morning. Then later in the day, Gabe and Natalie’s playing turned into fighting, and the noise woke up the baby I had just put down for a nap. I erupted with my “scary



scream.” As my children trudged away, the Holy Spirit quickly convicted me. I repented to God and asked for forgiveness and help to change.

But when I apologized to my children, my son said, “I don’t forgive you. I’m still angry at you. You said you were going to try and not yell at us anymore. You lied.” I apologized again and explained as best I could that overcoming and changing is a process, not an overnight fix. But he was unmoved. I was heartbroken. My old familiar script rushed to my mind. *He’s right. I am a liar and a bad mom. I’ll remember this and not do it again.*

As I continued to embrace the pain and punishment of Gabe’s words, the Holy Spirit cut in and said, “Who do you believe?”

“But . . . but I hurt him.”

“Yes. And God said you were forgiven. Who do you believe?”

Long pause.

The words I had been reading came to mind, and I declared out loud, “I am forgiven by God. It’s okay to be upset by the hurt I cause but not to punish myself with it. Jesus’ sacrifice does not require my pain or misery in order to make it complete. I can move forward right now in joy and peace. I will not give away the rest of my day to defeat. I am loved, accepted, and holy right now. I choose to believe you.”

Gabe did eventually forgive me. And as I continued to defiantly reject condemnation and shame, I saw an unexpected result: The mercy I accepted from God began to more easily overflow out of me to my children and family. I was slower to anger and quicker to listen and forgive. God, the Word, and the Spirit changed me by changing the way that I thought (Romans 12:2).

All our striving and self-shaming cannot bring us victory. I love how Romans 8:3-4 reads in *The Message*:

God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. . . . The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

I don't mean that we should ignore the Holy Spirit's call to freedom or his power that allows us to overcome. But don't misunderstand what Jesus died to give you. When he cried out from the cross, "It is finished!" (John 19:30) and gave up his spirit, Jesus "finished" all the requirements for your salvation and for your identity as God's child.

Father God, as we spend time with you and your Word, transform the way we think. May your Word find good soil in our hearts and minds. May your truth multiply and produce a large harvest in our lives and in the lives of those we love. Thank you, Jesus, for making us holy. Thank you for your sacrifice that allows us to come boldly before the Father's throne. In the precious name of Jesus, we pray all of this. Amen.

WHY STAY
CHAINED TO
WHAT GOD
HAS ALREADY
BROKEN?

1

YOU ARE . . . FREE FROM SHAME

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

ROMANS 8:1-2

(If you have more time: Romans 8:1-15.)

Mama, you don't have to be controlled or manipulated by the bullies of sin and shame. They will guilt and blackmail you into giving up your freedom. But through Jesus, God liberated us from sin's control and rescued us from its consequences of death. Why stay chained to what God has already broken? You are free. So refuse to listen to the voice of condemnation any longer. Remind yourself that you are accepted by your Father and freed by the power of the Spirit.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOURSELF

I live by the power of the life-giving Spirit and am no longer manipulated by sin and shame. They have no authority over me.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOUR CHILD

[Child's name] lives by the power of the life-giving Spirit and is no longer manipulated by sin and shame. They have no authority over [name].

CONNECT WITH YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

What is one (or more) thing(s) you're thankful for? What is something you appreciate about who God is? Set a timer for one minute. Wherever you are, pause and rest in his presence.

2

YOU ARE . . . PARDONED

He has removed our sins
as far from us as the east is from the west.

PSALM 103:12

(If you have more time: Psalm 103:1-22.)

Let go of your guilt. Holding on to what God has released will not help you. Punishing yourself with the memory won't make you less likely to repeat the offense or more deserving of forgiveness. Jesus has already paid for your wrongs. We don't need to add anything to make the sacrifice complete. We can accept his forgiveness and start over *right now*. Don't wait until you think you have suffered, mourned, or repented enough. God has already removed your sins from you. It was his joy to do it.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOURSELF

My sins are removed. I will not hold on to what God has released.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOUR CHILD

[Child's name]'s sins are removed. We will not hold on to what God has released.

CONNECT WITH YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

What is one (or more) thing(s) you're thankful for? What is something you appreciate about who God is? Set a timer for one minute. Wherever you are, pause and rest in his presence.

YOU ARE . . . RIGHTEOUS

For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

ROMANS 10:4

(If you have more time: Romans 9:30–10:4.)

Mama, shout “Hallelujah!” Jesus Christ has already accomplished the purpose of the law on our behalf. He met all the requirements and avoided all the temptations. He did all the work, and you don’t have to add anything else. Your failures and shortcomings cannot take away what Jesus already did. Only he could achieve God’s goal, not us. But we *do* get to share in his victory celebration and prize. You are righteous—right now. You are accepted—right now. You are holy—right now. Jesus took on and completed the job for us all.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOURSELF

Glory to Jesus who has made me righteous and welcomed me before the throne of God.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOUR CHILD

Glory to Jesus who has made [child’s name] righteous and welcomed them before the throne of God.

CONNECT WITH YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

What is one (or more) thing(s) you’re thankful for? What is something you appreciate about who God is? Set a timer for one minute. Wherever you are, pause and rest in his presence.

4

YOU ARE . . . FAULTLESS

Even before he made the world,
God loved us and chose us in Christ
to be holy and without fault in his eyes.

EPHESIANS 1:4

(If you have more time: Ephesians 1:3-11.)

Precious Daughter, due to Jesus you are without fault before God. He made a way for us to be holy so that he could make a way for us to be his daughters. Your Father loved you and chose you before the world was even created. He decided to make you holy not based on your own perfection or what you could do for him but because he loved you. From the very beginning, God's plan didn't rest on you or your actions, but on Jesus.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOURSELF

Because I was chosen and loved by God before the world was even created, he sent Jesus to make me holy and faultless.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOUR CHILD

Because [child's name] was chosen and loved by God before the world was even created, he sent Jesus to make them holy and faultless.

CONNECT WITH YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

What is one (or more) thing(s) you're thankful for? What is something you appreciate about who God is? Set a timer for one minute. Wherever you are, pause and rest in his presence.

YOU ARE . . . SET RIGHT

We know very well that we are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. How do we know? We tried it—and we had the best system of rules the world has ever seen! Convinced that no human being can please God by self-improvement, we believed in Jesus as the Messiah so that we might be set right before God by trusting in the Messiah, not by trying to be good.

GALATIANS 2:16, MSG

(If you have more time: Galatians 2:16-21.)

Sister-friend, you are accepted and on good terms with God—right now. It doesn't matter if you get the laundry done today, lose your temper with your kids, or let them watch too much TV. Neither your failures nor your accomplishments have any effect on God's approval of you. He is not waiting for you to "do better" before he considers you right with him. Choose, right now, to live with the faith that you are righteous because you have loved and accepted his Son.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOURSELF

No matter what I do or don't do today, I am accepted by God because of Jesus Christ.

DECLARE OUT LOUD OVER YOUR CHILD

No matter what [child's name] does or doesn't do today, they are accepted by God because of Jesus Christ.

CONNECT WITH YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

What is one (or more) thing(s) you're thankful for? What is something you appreciate about who God is? Set a timer for one minute. Wherever you are, pause and rest in his presence.