

“I thought this would be a serious tome about mothering. I was right and oh so wrong. Funny, relatable, and to the point, Shontell Brewer brings levity to this weighty conversation. Do yourself a favor and do not skip the marginal notes. My eyes happily skipped to the side of the page every time I saw one!

“Invite your mom friends to buy this book, then discuss it over coffee, even if you have to ignore the piled-up laundry or finally clear the dining room table to have them over.”

Anna LeBaron, author of *The Polygamist's Daughter: A Memoir*

“*Missionary Mom* serves as both a rallying cry and a battle plan in the fight for our children. Packed with practical advice, woven with Scripture, and seasoned with belly laugh-inducing humor, this book is a delight to read. And yet it is so much more than an easy read. It is a foundational book for those who have the noble task of raising children, influencing children, or simply living on a planet full of children. This is a book I will recommend and refer to often in the years to come. I am so grateful for this invaluable resource.”

Jennifer Marshall Bleakley, author of *Joey: How a Blind Rescue Horse Helped Others Learn to See*

“If you are looking for an engaging and intensely practical guide to what on earth you’re supposed to do to raise kids who love one another and God, this is the book for you. I have watched Shontell walk this out and I am changed as a result.”

Emily Thomas, host of the *Mom Struggling Well* podcast

“As moms, we sometimes feel as if our daily work of mothering is rather mundane and lacking in importance. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. As Shontell so beautifully points out, motherhood is actually one of our greatest mission fields. What I especially love is that she doesn’t merely leave us with that lovely concept—she

also provides us with truly practical ideas, wisdom, and inspiration (and let's face it, a great sense of humor!) for how to go about being intentional missionaries as moms. We have the tools at our disposal, and Shontell teaches us how to use them. I highly recommend this book!"

Rebekah Hargraves, blogger and host of the
Home and Hearth podcast

"No matter how you slice it, parenting is hard. So often we feel unqualified, certain we're falling short and doing it all wrong. But in the pages of this book, I've found encouragement to parent my kids regardless of my imperfections and misguided attempts. Brewer reminds us that 'nothing you do will screw up your kids so much that God cannot intervene.' This is the kind of freedom every mom needs. It reminds us that he is capable of our impossible. This is the best parenting book I've read in a long time, and a resource I will keep within reach."

Carey Scott, author of *Unafraid: Be You, Be Authentic, Find the Grit and Grace to Shine*

Missionary MOM

Embracing the Mission Field
Right Under Your Roof

SHONTELL
BREWER

 Kregel
Publications

Missionary Mom: Embracing the Mission Field Right Under Your Roof

© 2018 by Shontell Brewer

Published by Kregel Publications, a division of Kregel Inc., 2450 Oak Industrial Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations in reviews.

Distribution of digital editions of this book in any format via the internet or any other means without the publisher’s written permission or by license agreement is a violation of copyright law and is subject to substantial fines and penalties. Thank you for supporting the author’s rights by purchasing only authorized editions.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked *ESV* are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked *NIV* are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

The persons and events portrayed in this book have been used with permission. To protect the privacy of these individuals, names and identifying details have been changed in some cases.

ISBN 978-0-8254-4538-5

Printed in the United States of America

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 / 5 4 3 2 1



Dedicated to HH Brewer.
Thank you for raising babies with me.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	9
1. What Is a Missionary Mom?	11
2. What Can We Do, What Can't We Do?	19
3. Mom Guilt	28
4. This Job Probably Won't Kill You: The Truth About Martyrs	37
5. Hungry for Some Fruit?	45
6. Power in Prayer	54
7. Lead by Example	65
8. Discipline . . . on Purpose	73
9. Loud Parenting Is Not Discipline	81
10. Join the Club: Mom's Oxygen Mask	91
11. It Takes a Villager	99
12. Who Are Your Villagers?	106
13. Who Are Your Kids' Village People?	113
14. Your Kids' Testimony	123
15. Partners in Crime	134
16. Parenting on Purpose: I Meant to Do That	141
17. Loving Others: Stateside Missions	148
18. Am I Too Late?	155
<i>Notes</i>	163
<i>About the Author</i>	165

Acknowledgments

*M*y village of mamas: Mel, Erin, Marie, Newbs, Jess, and Joelle.
My kids would be different humans without you.

Chris and Morgan Lienhard: My kids would be different humans without you.

My mama: Thank you for giving me Jesus and showing me that I have more than I realize.

Jessica Kirkland: Thanks. For all of this.



What Is a Missionary Mom?

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

—MATTHEW 28:18–20

I hate how easily guilt sets in for me. I heap it on myself and don't intentionally blame others. But every time I am at church and the missionaries are talking about upcoming trips and sharing pictures of their recent journeys, or our pastor is talking about how each of us can make a difference on a mission team, I feel like a bucket of guilt has been dumped on my head. In my vision of it all, the guilt is in the form of green slime, and it takes forever to ooze down to my toes—just as, I am sure, the devil intends.

After years of helping my brother pack for mission trips, donating money to friends to help them fund their outreaches, and listening to countless tales of my own mother's life changing experiences, I just *knew* I should join them in the field. I decided to talk to my husband about it right after church.

*Seriously, even
my mother?
How could she?*

Missionary Mom

Fired up to serve, I looked down and beheld my five little children seated quietly in their chairs and tried to picture them sleeping in a floorless hut, taking their gigantic pills for who-knows-what disease, and sharing Jesus by way of large hand gestures because, of course, we don't speak anything other than English. At that moment, I realized God was not calling me to another part of the world.

My shoulders went a little droopy with disappointment. I began feeling as if my season of mothering small children was going to be something to suffer through. You know? Until I got to the *real* work God has planned for me.

What Am I Doing Here?

Do you ever feel like you cannot remember your purpose? I mean, maybe you know some of it, but you cannot quite find that big, glowing path some of those other joy-filled mothers claim to be following. At the end of the day, you have worked a full day, washed some laundry, dried some dishes, cooked some food for people living in your house, and swept a floor. Still, you are left thinking, "That can't really be all I am meant to do, right?"

Picture Goldie Hawn after her first day of playing "mother" in the movie Overboard. Remember how the kids just kept throwing grapes at her while she mumbled, "Buh buh buh"?

Maybe you find yourself pursuing so many paths that between keeping up with your kids' hectic schedules, your husband's business dinners, and an ongoing list of ministries, you end each day staring at the wall, mouth agape, fully exhausted, and wondering what in the world you accomplished. And, please, don't get me started on giving back to the community, because most days I think showering is about as giving as I can be to others. Unless you count how many diapers I contribute to the dump each year, the number of children I have added to the earth, or how

What Is a Missionary Mom?

knowledgeable I am about getting lip gloss out of my favorite T-shirt once it's gone through the dryer.

Of course, after I am done with this line of thinking, I start feeling guilty for seeming so useless. Isn't our thought process relentless? Am I alone in this? One minute I am overwhelmed by my calling and the next I'm just confused by it. I have proof that I am not alone in this—all I have to do is spend a few minutes with other moms to know we all need a little clarity at times. (I've added some of their thoughts, and their kids' thoughts, throughout the book.)

Luckily, God subtly dropped a message in my brain: maybe my mission field is closer than I thought. I don't think God meant it to be so convoluted.

Before I was even pregnant, I knew that being a mom was my calling. —Laura, Missionary Mom of two

No Place Like Home

If you are a mother, your purpose is clear. You may or may not be called to a foreign country, but you are certainly called to be a missionary. I repeat—you *are* called to be a missionary.

Take a minute and look around. What do you see? *Who* do you see? My friend, you are looking at your mission field. Your mission field is your home, and your mission is to share Jesus with those little people who call you Mommy.

Think about it: If you don't teach your kids to live for God, who will? Their teachers? Maybe, but not likely. Their Sunday school leaders? I suppose they add something, but you cannot reasonably expect your kids to become the men and women God intends by having them sit through an hour of lessons and icebreaker games on Sunday. The neighbors? It could happen—I pray it happens—but many times my

Missionary Mom

son comes home sharing the special words the neighbors taught him, and they never sound like descriptors of God.

“Mama, what is a lazy layabout?”

“Um, why?”

“Ava’s mom said her dad is a lazy layabout and he only works hard at baseball and beer.”

Let’s agree that we can’t leave this to chance.

In fact, much of the responsibility of teaching children to live fully for Christ falls on the parents’ shoulders. So, now you can stop wondering and start doing! *But wait, what do I do?* (I can almost hear you.) You begin your mission where God has you.

Right here.

Right now.

With these people.

(See me pointing?)

Your mission field is the place where you live right now—
the children you have right now,
the husband you have right now,
the home you have right now,
the friends and neighbors you have right now,
the body you have right now,
the widows and orphans you know right now,
the church members you see right now,
and the job you have right now, even if you hate it.

*Why do I feel like
one of the Goonies
down in the well?
“Down here, it’s
our time. It’s our
time down here.
That’s all over the
second we ride up
Troy’s bucket.”*

Don’t get caught up with where you will be tomorrow.

Be purposeful *right now*.

Missionary work is not for the faint of heart. We have a calling. Moms, we are called to the mission field.

What Is a Missionary Mom?

A missionary . . .	A godly mother . . .
Lives to love God and others.	Lives to love her children.
Is eager for everyone she meets to know God truly and personally.	Wants most for her children to know God.
Is teachable and willing to teach.	Teaches her children everything she can to make them as wise as possible.
Puts others first and is willing to look at the world through another's eyes.	Puts her children's needs over her own, often, to allow for as much snuggling as possible.
Is willing to learn a foreign language.	Can interpret Baby Talk, Teenage Gibberish, and the ever-confusing Subtly Rude Body Language.
Does not always get to follow the path she wants but is willing to follow the path God puts before her.	Is willing to follow after God's plan.
Is willing to sacrifice sleep, comfort, time, and toilets for the tiny chance of making the difference of heaven or hell in a person's life.	Pretty much has no choice but to sacrifice sleep, comfort, time, and toilets for the sake of raising children.
Leaves a legacy.	Leaves a legacy.

Does this sound like the kind of mom you want to be? Sound like any moms you know? Uh, hello. I think you're getting my point. These are some very clear ways a missionary and a godly mom converge to become a *Missionary Mom*.

Your Legacy Lived Out

As we step further into our role as Missionary Moms, we see evidence of change in our children as they grow and make bigger and more meaningful life choices. We see it in the way our kids chase Jesus down their own path and in their own way. And we see change in ourselves as all we've been working toward moves from words on a page to our legacy lived out. A missionary is only as effective as the legacy she leaves behind. Your legacy is reflected in your everyday choices to love in the small ways.

Jesus named one woman who lived like this. One woman whose legacy would be “preached throughout the world.” And “what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Mark 14:9 NIV). Jesus said that.

Jesus, God, made in flesh, pointed out this woman who once sat at his feet while her sister cooked up a storm in the kitchen and passive-aggressively called her lazy (Luke 10:38–42). This same woman who told Jesus she knew her brother Lazarus would still be living if Jesus had arrived earlier (John 11:32). Mary of Bethany chose to love Jesus at any cost, and he honored her for it with a promise (Mark 14).

Picture it.

Less than a week before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Jesus has finished dinner at the house of Simon the Leper. The disciples are there, lounging around the table. Jesus is reclining a few pillows over as Mary enters holding an incredibly expensive bottle of perfume. She cracks the top and pours the contents out over Jesus's hair and ends by rubbing the perfume on his feet in a foreshadowing of Jesus washing the disciples' feet—the ultimate service to a person in that day.

“Why this waste of perfume?” (Mark 14:4 NIV). Conversation breaks out in mumbles across the room, started by none other than Judas Iscariot. He is offended. He's mostly concerned with the fact that he now has to miss out on his piece of the pie (or perfume) because if this

What Is a Missionary Mom?

oil is used to honor Jesus, Judas cannot sell it and pretend to give that money to the poor. He is indignant.

“‘It could have been sold for a year’s wages and the money given to the poor!’ So they scolded her harshly” (Mark 14:5).

Jesus knows Judas’s heart, but more importantly, he knows Mary’s heart. She is more focused on making her moments with Jesus count than she is with helping the poor right now. She focuses on showing Jesus she adores him; she is not focused on the snide remarks seeping from the group of men at the end of the dinner table.

Maybe she knows these same guys were recently reprimanded for begging to be Jesus’s right-hand men because of their misguided self-worth. Maybe she simply does not care. She does not need to defend herself. Jesus speaks up, “Leave her alone. . . . She has done what she could” (Mark 14:6, 8).

He doesn’t list her accolades or talk about the hardships she has recently experienced. And there were many. He says, “She did what she could.”

Do What You Can

I don’t know about you, but I want my Savior to say of me, “She did what she could.” Too many days go by when I lay my head on my pillow, and I cannot honestly say I did what I could.

I could have.

I should have.

But, most days, I choose not to.

Did I just admit that? This is why Mary’s legacy reads, “Wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman’s deed will be remembered and discussed” (Mark 14:9).

Wherever the gospel is preached! Isn’t that pretty much *everywhere*? Everyone everywhere will know that “she did what she could.” I don’t need that level of recognition, but I sure do want this phrase to come to Jesus’s mind when we meet face to face for the first time. When my

Missionary Mom

children think of me. When my husband considers the job I did as a wife and mother. This will not occur by happenstance. I have to choose my priorities and, like the Scripture says, do what I can.

Chances are, you are a mom like the rest of us: hectic, harried, and probably hairier than you would like to be because you don't have time to take care of that regularly. Chances are, you are a mother like Mary of Bethany who has company to cook for and some family drama and a sister who thinks you could be doing better and isn't afraid to tell you so. The difference I see between women of our generation and those of Mary's day is how willing those first-century women were to stop whatever they were doing and handle what was important. We, in contrast, are typically too busy to even notice there is something to deal with.

We aren't told whether Mary knew her time with Jesus was limited. She probably didn't know Jesus was about to be handed over to the Jewish Pharisees, but she was not a girl who put things off for tomorrow. She did what she could *when* she could. One commentary said, "If she had not done it now, she could not have done it at all."¹

Missing the chance to love like this feels like a punch in my gut. I don't want to miss windows of opportunity. I want to live like Mary of Bethany and say with confidence that I did what I could *when* I could. Our mission field awaits. Let's do what we can, right now.

Who knows, maybe you really will end up traveling across the globe as part of your missionary journey. Nevertheless, for now, God may be calling you to be a Missionary Mom.