

“Just what the doctor ordered! Filled with stories from April’s life as well as her readers’ lives, *The Peaceful Mom* brings wisdom and peace to the table during times of potential stress for any mom with kids in the house. Be prepared for many hard questions that will facilitate growth for you. This book is especially powerful for moms who struggle with living vicariously through their children’s lives.”

—NINA ROESNER, executive director of Greater Impact Ministries,
and coauthor of *With All Due Respect*

“As moms, we often feel like it’s all up to us to take control and make everything turn out ‘right’ for our children. But this only creates stress, anxiety, perfectionism, anger, and turmoil. With calming wisdom, April invites us to find what she has found—the peace that only comes from knowing Jesus and laying control before His throne. This book is rooted in God’s Word and filled with practical help for finding balance as a responsible and peaceful mom.”

—SHANNON POPKIN, author of *Control Girl*

PRAISE FOR *THE PEACEFUL WIFE*

“April knows what it’s like to struggle in her marriage with frustration and anger toward her spouse. Her journey to becoming a peaceful wife will resonate with any reader who wants new peace in her own marriage. I love that this book walks each of us through the reality checks we need in order to have the marriage we want!”

—SHAUNTI FELDHAHN, social researcher, and best-selling
author of *For Women Only*

“April Cassidy has written an excellent book! I endorse her heart and message. In fact, I asked my daughter-in-law to read it and she reported to me, ‘April does an excellent job of placing a mirror in front of readers so that they may see the ways they have been disrespectful, but she also provides a comforting hug as she explains how the disrespect can end

and a life of respecting one's husband can move into place. She provides great insight into her own struggles and a wonderful chapter where her own husband gives his thoughts on her transformation. April challenges, encourages, and breathes hope for all wives.”

—EMERSON EGGERICHS, author of *Love and Respect*

APRIL CASSIDY

*The
Peaceful
Mom*

Building a healthy foundation with

Christ AS Lord

The Peaceful Mom: Building a Healthy Foundation with Christ as Lord
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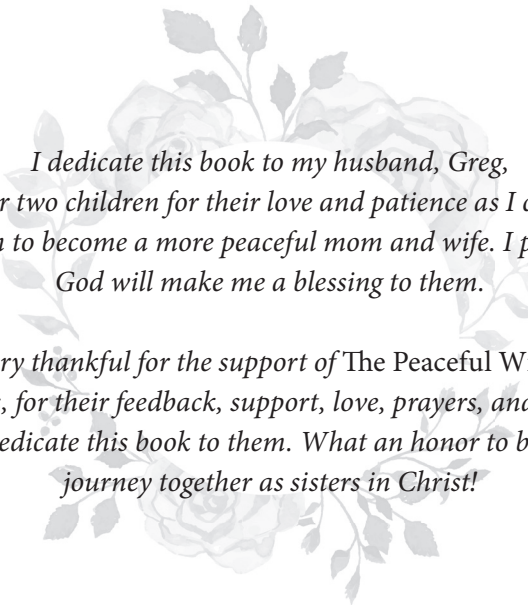
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*I dedicate this book to my husband, Greg,
and our two children for their love and patience as I continue
to learn to become a more peaceful mom and wife. I pray that
God will make me a blessing to them.*

*I'm very thankful for the support of The Peaceful Wife blog
readers, for their feedback, support, love, prayers, and stories.
I also dedicate this book to them. What an honor to be on this
journey together as sisters in Christ!*

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Introduction

Every mother I know wants to be a great mom. We want to model healthy ways of relating and living for our children in every area of our lives. We want to live in tranquility, harmony, and joy in our families. But sometimes our dreams for our families and ourselves don't match our everyday lives very well. Many of us beat ourselves up over our failures and struggle to find direction for the next step.

God has provided for those who belong to Christ to live in spiritual abundance, but many of us are missing out on His treasures. Thankfully, we don't have to live our lives in turmoil. God has provided a path for us, and if we follow it and receive all that the Lord has for us, we will be peaceful moms.

A peaceful mom knows God intimately and follows Him wholeheartedly. Her heart is increasingly filled to overflowing with the spiritual treasures of Christ.

A peaceful mom has peace with all the following:

God	Her circumstances
Her thoughts	Her future
Her heart	Death
Others	Her eternal destiny

Doesn't that sound lovely? God makes His peace available to anyone who wants to wholeheartedly love and know Him. My prayer is that we might each see how good God is and choose to respect His gracious terms. There are countless spiritual riches to be had when we truly grasp that Jesus is the greatest treasure there is.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. (Matt. 13:44)

If only you had paid attention to my commands,
your peace would have been like a river,
your well-being like the waves of the sea. (Isa. 48:18)

THE PATH TO BECOMING A PEACEFUL MOM

In God's great wisdom, He created everything that exists. He had good purposes for every planet, star, plant, and animal—with the primary purpose being to bring glory to Himself.

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge. (Ps. 19:1–2)

So regardless of life circumstances, the journey to becoming peaceful moms starts with our relationship with God, with His purpose for us. He tells us that we were created as individuals and as families to bring glory to our Creator. God gave people a unique position in creation. The other creatures and things He made have no choice. They cannot choose to rebel against Him or love Him. But God has given this powerful choice to each of us.

This is what the LORD says:

“Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16)

What will we do with this incredible gift of choice? Will we seek God’s will and exalt Him in our lives, or will we seek glory for ourselves and go our own way?

How we live out the answer to that question directly relates to how much peace we have in our lives. Jesus, who is God in the flesh, is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). To know Him intimately and to be one in spirit with Him is peace. There is no other source of genuine peace, tranquility, and spiritual rest for anyone. In a world where fears constantly bombard us and few people experience genuine peace, we have the opportunity to take a better path. When we take that path, we can introduce our children to that way as well. It’s a “narrow” and unpopular path that not many find, but God has made it readily available to each of us.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matt. 7:13–14)

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

I never really experienced peace until 2009. For all my life up until that point, my head was always spinning with worry and fear. I spent every waking moment trying to figure out how I was going to make everything turn out right. I felt so much pressure, believing that everything depended totally on me.

When I began to truly yield to Christ as Lord for the first time and to trust Him, I was not prepared for what would happen. One day I realized that my mind was not spinning like crazy. The tightness was gone from my chest. I felt like I could breathe. My heart felt light. My mind was clear and free. I was not worried or stressed.

There is only one source of genuine
peace: the Lord Jesus Christ.

At first, I was confused. *What is all this open space in my mind and heart?* I wondered. And then it hit me. *Oh! This is peace! Wow. What a beautiful thing! I want to live like this for the rest of my life!* Now my prayer is that you will also experience this most addictive, supernatural gift from God as you get to know Him yourself.

Thankfully, any of us can be a peaceful mom. That is such great news to many exhausted, stressed-out, worried moms everywhere!

OVERFLOWING PEACE

As we allow God to transform us, not only do we benefit, but His peace also begins to permeate our homes and families. After we've looked at how to grow in our relationship with God, we'll explore how His goodness spills out into our relationships with others, blessing them too and gently calling them to find His peace and rest for their souls.

I invite you to join me on the adventure of a lifetime. Let's look together at the little baby steps we can take to move from fear, worry, anxiety, and exhaustion to peace, joy, and fulfillment, which are available to us in Jesus.

This book is meant to be digested slowly. Take your time. Allow God to speak to your heart. Be willing to dig as deeply as necessary. You may even want to reread portions over again later to really let God's truth and power sink in. I'd love for us to walk this road together. That

is the beauty of being part of the body of Christ. We don't have to do this alone!

A PEACEFUL MOM'S PRAYER

Lord,

Thank You that You alone are God and there is no other. Thank You for Jesus and for the cross and the life You have provided for us if we will receive it. Thank You for marriage, family, and children. We praise You for Your love for us. Thank You for Your good design for families and for strong, loving relationships. Thank You that You have incredible wisdom to share with each of us. Help us to slow down and rest at Your feet so that we might absorb the blessings You have for us in Your Word and in relationship with You. Please give us ears that are sensitive to Your voice, which speaks to us softly today. We thank You for Your promise to those who belong to You: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isa. 30:21).

In the name and power of Christ, amen.



Part One

God and Me



Examining the Throne of My Heart

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" (Luke 4:8)

Many people grew up in churches believing that if they only prayed a few sentences of a prayer after a pastor at church or a rally that they were “saved.” They thought if they just believed that Jesus died and was raised to life again and they said the words of a particular spoken prayer, they had their golden ticket to heaven!

Perhaps they believed there was nothing else involved in following Christ. Or maybe some thought that after they prayed that prayer, they needed to figure out how to be the perfect Christian in their own strength. If they just tried hard enough, they could be good enough in God’s eyes.

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:3)

I can remember thinking, as a child, that Jesus didn’t do a very good job of explaining the gospel. I mean, He never talked about inviting

Him into my heart. He never talked about praying a certain kind of prayer to be saved or about coming forward during an invitation time after the church service.

He said things like this:

- “Come, follow me” (Matt. 4:19).
- “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24).
- “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34–35).
- “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching” (John 14:23–24).

It turns out that Jesus knew how to explain the gospel. I was the one who was confused. Jesus wants me to know Him deeply. He wants me to be one in Spirit with Him. He wants me to follow Him spiritually every day for the rest of my life. This is not a distant head-knowledge. It’s not like, “I know who the president of the United States is, but I have never met him.” This is a profoundly life-changing kind of “knowing” that He is talking about. The demons know about Jesus and tremble, but they do not belong to Him! Jesus invites me to be adopted into God’s family, to become God’s child. What an incredible offer!

If I want to truly know God and belong to Him as His daughter, there is radical commitment involved on my part. I must be willing to live with God on a daily basis and to invite Him into every area of my life. He is now my Father and Lord, so anything that is my business is now His business and I am now under His loving authority.

The first step in becoming a peaceful mom is to decide to give Jesus control of my life from now on. Peace comes when Jesus is Lord of

absolutely every area of life. There is no genuine peace apart from me living in surrender to His lordship. (For more on how to become a Christian, please check out appendix A.)

You will keep in perfect peace
those whose minds are steadfast,
because they trust in you. (Isa. 26:3)

Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31–32)

A COMMITTED FOLLOWER

Of course, surrendering all *sounds* easy, but putting it into practice is considerably more difficult. For many years, I thought I was a pretty amazing Christian woman, wife, and mom. I knew the Bible inside and out and read it daily. I could quote many verses from memory, and I prayed daily during my quiet time. Then I also prayed throughout the rest of the day. I only listened to Christian music. I said I trusted God, and I thought I really did trust God.

But there was a disconnect. The fruit of my life didn’t match what I said I believed. I was perfectionistic and worried almost constantly. Fear and “what-ifs” fueled my thinking and motives. People pleasing seemed like a godly thing even though it left me empty, stressed, and lonely. I was impatient when my children took too long to do things and would often snap at them in frustration. Yet somehow, I didn’t see that anything was wrong.

My mind-set included things like these:

- “Worry is love. If I’m not worried about someone, it must only mean that I don’t love them.”
- “I have to figure everything out. If I don’t, this will all end in

disaster! I am the only one who can prevent total chaos from happening.”

- “I need to try to control everything in my children’s lives to try to protect them and keep them safe.”
- “Of course I have a lot of fear. There are so many things to be afraid of. Have you seen the news today?”
- “I can’t ever let anything bad happen to my kids, or I am a complete failure as a mom!”
- “Of course I trust God, *but* I have to make sure my kids turn out right. And I feel the pressure on my shoulders to get this done properly.”
- “I am always right, and if someone disagrees with me, that person is wrong.”
- “People need to do what I want them to do, and things will be great.”
- “I need to take charge, or nothing will get done right.”
- “Other people don’t know God’s will like I do. They need my wisdom and direction.”

The whole time, I was reading God’s Word and His promises and singing about trusting Him completely and surrendering all to Him. I was doing so many right things, but still somehow I had it all wrong. I had deceived myself about my deepest motives. There were a lot of areas where I did not really trust God. My faith was in myself more than God, and I was miserable because of it.

“The real test of my faith . . .
is the fruit of my life.”

The real test of my faith is not what I think or say I believe—but rather, it is the fruit of my life. If I am living in the power of God, His Spirit will so fill me and radically transform me to be more and more

like Him that I will exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit on a daily basis. It will be noticeable to everyone around me.

I will love all people with the very love of God. I will think with His mind, love with His heart, and see with His eyes. I will respond with His character. He will literally live through me because He will be in control, not me.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:22–23)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Cor. 13:4–8)

This is not about me trying really hard or about total sinless perfection. It is not about any goodness in myself. It is about me resting in the work and power of Christ and allowing Him to have full control as Lord of *all* in my life. He is worthy to sit on the throne of my heart with nothing else above or beside Him. I have to guard my heart about this because it is so easy to let something slip ahead of Him in my priorities and not even realize it.

OUR DESTRUCTIVE IDOLS

I find it helpful to do a “throne check” often. I might pray, “Lord, are each of these things from Galatians 5:22–23 and 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 true in my life right now? Show me where I am missing the mark so I can turn away from anything that displeases You. I want to hate what You hate and love what You love. I want to tear out every wrong way

of thinking and make any changes You want me to make. I am fully Yours!”

I need to ask God to help me examine myself, inviting Him to shine His holy light on the deepest, most hidden places in my heart and mind. Then I can accurately see my true motives and recognize any lies I may have embraced or wrong fixed beliefs upon which I may have built my faith or my life.

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps. 139:23–24)

These “throne checks” are especially important when I find myself lacking peace and feeling overwhelmed, afraid, worried, angry, disappointed, or upset. These negative emotions are a gift from God. I like to think of them as an alarm that something may be wrong—similar to an indicator light flashing a warning on my car’s dashboard.

Sometimes negative feelings are simply a signal that I am exhausted, hungry, hormonal, or sick. If there is a physical need my body has, I want to try to take care of that need first, and then I will be able to more accurately assess if there are other problems going on spiritually as well.

Beyond physical needs, my negative feelings might indicate that someone is sinning against me or someone else. If that is the case, I may have righteous anger against sin that I need to deal with in a constructive way (which we will discuss later in chapter 4).

Negative feelings could be a signal that there has been a misunderstanding or simply differing expectations that need to be addressed in a relationship. Perhaps I need to humbly speak with the person with whom I am upset and ask some gentle questions to better understand that person’s perspective. When I can understand someone else’s thought processes, I may find that I don’t have negative feelings anymore.

But there are also times that negative feelings are a sign that I am cherishing sin in my heart. If I allow something in my life to take precedence over God, it becomes a sin. At that point, I've broken my spiritual intimacy and fellowship with God—not my relationship with Him, but our spiritual and emotional connection. Our “fellowship.” He has healthy boundaries with me. He can't let me be close to Him when I am covered in something nasty and repulsive to His holiness. This results in me feeling pain because I miss His goodness, His peace, and His presence. That pain should gently remind me to trash the sinful thing in my life and humbly run back to Jesus in my heart and mind.

“Negative feelings often let me know I need to examine my heart.”

Those negative feelings often let me know I need to examine my heart. I can check my heart's throne by prayerfully asking some probing questions about my motives and priorities during my prayer time with God:

- What are my greatest fears?
- Why am I feeling so upset right now? What is the root issue?
- What do I believe I need in order to be content?
- What are my most precious dreams?
- What do I complain about the most?
- Can I be content if I do not get what I want?
- If I am feeling disappointed, is it possible that I am trusting a person or thing more than I am trusting God?
- If I am feeling worried, is there some area where I believe God could “get it wrong”?
- On what things (other than God) do I depend for my contentment, fulfillment, and security?
- In what areas do I take pride in a sinful way?

- How am I seeking self, self-will, or self-exaltation?
- How am I humbly seeking God, His will, and His glory alone?
- What things, people, or circumstances do I refuse to give up for whatever He wants?
- How can I work toward releasing those things I may be holding back from God?
- Do my thoughts, words, tone of voice, body language, and actions match what I say I believe about God?
- How am I doing at freely laying down everything and everyone in my life before God? Am I trusting Him completely with all of it, not knowing what the future may hold?

When I ask myself these kinds of questions and invite God's Spirit to search my heart, He can illuminate my hidden motives. My greatest fears often are that I will lose my idols. Fear and idolatry work hand in hand. Idolatry happens when I desire something or someone more than I desire Jesus. Because I don't have my trust in something that is unshakable, and I know I may not receive or keep the things I desire so strongly, I have great fear. I don't trust God and His wisdom to know what is best. Whenever I notice big fear, it is a good idea for me to ask God to help me evaluate if I may have a related desire as an idol in my heart.

An idol is often something I
think I can't live without.

The Greatest Commandment, according to Jesus, is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). If I love something or someone else with all my heart, soul, and mind, I am putting that other thing or person in God's rightful place in my life. The thing I want may be good. It may even be a gift from God. But if I want it more than I want Jesus, I am

dealing with an idol. An idol is anything I look to for my greatest sense of peace, security, hope, identity, contentment, and happiness. I can make anything or anyone in my life into an idol.

Idols always destroy me, robbing me of peace. They are worthless to help or save me. They don't have God's power. They are not God. They cannot meet the deepest needs of my heart. Idolatry has been the downfall of God's people throughout history. An idol is an addiction. It is something—even something good—that I love so much more than anything else, I am willing to do anything to have it. I might be willing to sin to get it. I may even desperately think, "I can't live without this! I *have* to have it!"

These are some of the common idols in our culture:

Self	Children
Happiness	Money
Being right	Luxury
Love	Fame
Romance	The American dream
Youth	Power
Beauty	Security
Pleasure	Worldly success
Having control	Health
Marriage	Education
Husband/Wife	Career
Parents	Politics

What I may not realize is that when self or anything/anyone else is on the throne of my life, I am actually living as an enemy of God. Idols are all about self and doing things my way rather than God's way. They are about putting my faith in things other than the Lord. The paycheck that I earn from living for self is pretty horrific. According to the Bible, my wage for this approach is separation from God (Rom.

6:23). Trusting self is the path to being an anxious, fearful, lonely, angry mom . . . far from being a peaceful mom. When I am living in the power of self, the results are predictably bad in this life and (if I don't know Christ) in the next—eternal separation from God and from everything that is good.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19–21)

The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin [as a habit], because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. (1 John 3:7–9)

GRATEFUL SUBMISSION

When I yield the throne of my life to the lordship of Christ, I can live in thankfulness, peace with God, and joy. I no longer am a slave to sin. Now I have been set free to live a new kind of life for God!

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Cor. 5:17)

When I read about confessing Him as Savior and Lord, it is easy to gloss over the word *Lord* without much thought about the staggering implications of making Christ the Lord of my life. This will dramatically impact every motive of my heart, every thought in my mind, and every decision I make.

If I choose to follow Jesus as Lord, God will change my heart so that I will hate sin like He does. God gives me a new Spirit, His Spirit, that changes my heart and desires to match His own. I will want to do God's will. I will have a spiritual appetite for God's presence, His will, and His Word. I will want to hear God's voice of correction and ask God to show me my blind spots, even if it is painful. I will want to follow and obey Him. I will want to grow in Him. The moment I see sin in my life, I will beg God to help me get rid of it and be restored back to right fellowship with Him. If I profess Christ but am content to live in habitual sin, something is terribly wrong.

“When Jesus is my Lord, I am willing to bend to His will no matter what the cost may be.”

When Jesus is my Lord, I am willing to bend to His will no matter what the cost may be to me. I may have to wrestle at times to get to that point, but this will be my goal. He is the only one worthy of this level of sacrifice. I give all of myself for Him. Not begrudgingly or with any resentment, but I surrender myself with overflowing joy and gratitude because I realize the depth of the price He paid for my sins on the cross. How can I do anything but want to please Him now?

Jesus has given me all of His goodness and right standing with God. He has given me constant and immediate access to the Holy of Holies that even the high priests didn't have in Israel before Christ came. No mere human had this kind of access to God before Jesus made it all available to believers through the cross. What a priceless gift!

He has provided thousands of promises in Scripture that no one can steal from me. He took away my hopelessness and helplessness and replaced it with His overwhelming holiness and power to obey God. Jesus's lordship in my life is not a burden but the most divine gift and calling there is!

I lay down these aspects of my life:

Career	Past
Trust	Health
Will	Money
Wisdom	Greatest fears
Marriage	Priorities
Children	Desires
Most precious dreams	Energy
Emotions	Fixed beliefs
Future	Possessions

I have no way to have peace with God in my own power. I have no ability to impress God. I owe a massive debt to God that I cannot pay. I deserve God's condemnation and separation from God in hell, according to the Bible. What incredible love God has for me that Jesus made it possible for me to have peace with God if I will receive His gift of His death and resurrection for me. Peace with God is the greatest peace there is. It is the source from which all other peace flows. The first key to being a peaceful mom is to invite the Prince of Peace to rule my heart.

LETTING GO OF MY WILL —NANCY'S STORY

I discovered more than once that the Lord was *not* on the throne when I came to the point of despair of ever getting God's will right in my life. I could see His will. Or so I thought. I believed I would

have to do specific things to see that will accomplished. I thought my will was what He wanted, but, it turns out, it wasn't at all. My will was in the way of His will every time.

After I spent so much time praying for His will to be done, but not seeing it get done, the Lord always brought me back to the cross, where I realized that I can do nothing. I can't bring about His will. I realized that if it was His will, if He wanted anything done or accomplished, *He* must do it in and through me! The only way that He would come in with His Spirit and power was if I yielded all personal self-interest to the cross.

I had to recognize and acknowledge that my desires for other things were really lord in my life at that time. I would have to let go of my will in order to give God His rightful place as Lord over every area of my life. Then I could see Him work out His own will and purposes in my life!

It always comes down to the cross and back to the starting place of "I can do nothing in myself!" I also must come to the place where I am sifted of all self-interests and I have an undivided heart for the Lord. When He alone has become the sole object of my desire, the way is opened for the Lord to come in with His Spirit and power to do what only He can do for His own purposes and glory. True peace and rest flood my heart when I yield all that is personal to the cross and become one with Him in His purpose of bringing Christ as Lord into every area of life.

Ironically, when I come to this place in spirit and in truth, I find that He works it all for my good. I gain a blessing in having let go of my will, my desires, and even what I mistakenly thought the Lord wanted. When He has truly come into His place as Lord in my heart, my marriage, my parenting, my job, etc. . . . I find that my own heart is satisfied. There is joy, there is peace, and most importantly, the Lord is satisfied and I find His presence.

A PEACEFUL MOM'S PRAYER

Lord,

From this day on, I want to keep You squarely on the throne of my life. I know I have been tempted to put myself and other things or people in that place that only belongs rightfully to You. Help me to recognize when I begin to allow other things to creep in and push You out. Help me to consciously set You on the throne daily and to seek to exalt, obey, and honor You as Lord. I submit my whole life to You and all that I am. I am Yours, and You are my God! Take my life and do what You want to do with it. I trust You. I no longer trust myself.

Amen.