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CHAPTER 1:

Welcome to the World, Mom!

Your baby probably won't survive the pregnancy. I suggest you abort him."

These words plunged me deep into the waters of motherhood. I was flailing. I couldn't see the surface. I feared that the swirl of emotions and responsibilities that come with being a mom would swallow me and I had no idea where to look for a life raft.

I was twelve weeks pregnant with my first child. At that point in the pregnancy I hadn't felt much beyond fear, anxiety, and a lot of nausea. My husband and I had planned to start our family, but when the stick turned pink sooner than we expected, I couldn't stop thinking about all the ways my life would change. I broke the news to my husband that a baby was on the way by sitting on our bed in a bathrobe and sobbing.

I didn't have time to be a mom.

Now doctors were telling me my baby wasn't well. Deciding not to abort our tiny son was easy. But I didn't know God would

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use that decision to teach me His passion for motherhood and to totally remake my heart.

If you are still holding your breath, relax. My son Elisha was born perfectly healthy—miraculously healed from a condition that could have taken him from us. But that healing didn't occur until the day of his birth. For seven long months we waited to find out if our baby would survive.

In that context, motherhood ceases to be about tiny clothes and cuddly blankets. When you don't know if you will even bring your baby home, you spend less time painting the nursery and more time on your knees.

Skipping the warm fuzzies of pregnancy brought me face-to-face with the reality of motherhood. I couldn't imagine how having a child would fit into my routine, my marriage, my hopes for my life, my definition of ministry, and my dreams for the future.

I was simultaneously desperate to hold my baby and terrified of the nuclear bomb that seemed pointed toward my life. When that bomb hit in the form of a healthy baby boy who demanded every second of my time, energy, and emotions, the shock was almost too much for me.



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Welcome to the World, Mom!

Having It All and Gaining Nothing

My life before baby looked exactly like our culture told me it should. I had multiple degrees from good colleges. I was married to a wonderful man who supported my professional and academic goals. I had a rewarding career as a writer and speaker. My time was my own. My priorities were in line with what I wanted from life. I was a woman of the new millennium.

I had followed the script that had been written for me in a world where women were supposed to “have it all.” But it wasn’t the fairy tale I’d been promised.

I discovered quickly that academic and vocational success didn’t bring lasting fulfillment. I was the center of my universe and my best efforts were directed outside of my home, but most days I felt more exhausted than fulfilled.

This isn’t the part in the story where I tell you that I became a Christian and everything changed. I had passionately served Jesus since I was fifteen years old. In fact, my husband and I had initially chosen childlessness because we wanted to serve Christ. We saw children as a burden. We believed that our careers and ministry and marriage were too important to risk the strain children would bring. We didn’t feel called to become parents nor did we see parenting as potential ministry.

We had been lied to. It’s a lie that has been whispered into many ears.

More and more women are choosing childlessness. Others resent their husbands and children because they see them as burdens, a stumbling block to achieving a higher calling. Motherhood is not revered as a sacred role. Career is king. The modern equation leaves little room for children.

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I believe this is one of the greatest tragedies of our time.

It isn't that motherhood is the hidden secret to fulfillment. I didn't hold Elisha for the first time and suddenly decide nothing else mattered. I did discover that my attitude about motherhood pointed to a bigger problem that exists in women's hearts everywhere. We've lost touch with living out our unique design as women. We don't know how to function as we've been created to function.

The Bible shows us that God esteems the roles of wife and mother. Eve's name means "life." The Proverbs 31 woman worked diligently to provide for her household. Jesus opted not to appear on earth as an adult ready to rule. He came through the womb of a mother and was tenderly cared for by His mom throughout His life. God's Word says much about the ministry of motherhood and the value of bearing and nurturing life.

But the issue of motherhood isn't theological. It isn't best explored in the political arena or defined by the talking heads of our culture. The value of motherhood is most important in the heart of every woman.



{ *More WISE Words* }

YEARS AGO, BEFORE this generation of mothers was even born, our society decided where children rank in the list of important things. When abortion was legalized, we wrote it into

Welcome to the World, Mom!

law. Children rank way below college. Below world travel for sure. Below the ability to go out at night at your leisure. Below honing your body at the gym. Below any job you may have or hope to get. In fact, children rate below your desire to sit around and pick your toes, if that is what you want to do. Below everything. Children are the last thing you should ever spend your time doing. If you grew up in this culture, it is very hard to get a biblical perspective on motherhood, to think like a free Christian woman about your life, your children. How much have we listened to partial truths and half lies? Do we believe that we want children because there is some biological urge, or the phantom “baby itch”? Are we really in this because of cute little clothes and photo opportunities? Is motherhood a rock-bottom job for those who can’t do more, or those who are satisfied with drudgery? If so, what were we thinking?

—RACHEL JANKOVIC¹



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Where are you in the journey of motherhood? Are you a new mom struggling to redefine the boundaries of your life among a sea of diapers, feedings, and sleepless nights? Have you been a mom so long that you've lost yourself along the way and you long to know your reach goes beyond car pools and chore charts? Do you understand it's your job to teach your children about spiritual principles but struggle to know how to connect in the chaos? Are you a young woman who's not sure you want children but secretly suspect that the world's not telling the whole truth as it teaches that womanhood is about living like it's all about you?

I'm looking for a few good moms. Moms who will dare to hold on to a view that seems out-of-date and search for God's heart on the issue of motherhood; moms who are willing to see past the endless list of mothering responsibilities to see a bigger, more eternal picture. I'm looking for women who will stand up to the culture and reclaim motherhood as a high and holy calling.

I'm looking for you.

Connecting the Dots

Now it's your turn, my friend! At the end of each chapter we'll have some thought-provoking questions for you to respond to and connect these thoughts to your life. You might consider keeping a journal to jot the answers to these questions and notes on how God is speaking to you about your own journey. Or use these questions as discussion starters as you go through this book with a group of momma friends.

Welcome to the World, Mom!

- 1.** How did you feel when you first learned you were going to have a child? Take a few moments to relive the memory.
- 2.** Did those feelings change as you went through the pregnancy?
- 3.** How did your views of motherhood change after you got that little bundle in your arms?
- 4.** What do you feel are your strengths as a mom? Your weaknesses?