

CHAPTER 1
CHAOS

We have all been in that place sitting and playing with the kids when all of a sudden you get a whiff of something that makes your nose burn and your gag reflex kick in. Yup, you guessed it, someone has a dirty diaper! The last thing you want to do is stop the sweet moment you are having to stick your nose near each kids' diaper to figure out who it is. You don't want to drag them kicking and screaming up the stairs and get even closer to that foul stench by opening up and removing the only barrier protecting you from the mess that awaits inside. Above all else, you really don't want to dig in that diaper while your kid is kicking and wiggling, risking accidentally getting it on the changing table or even worse your hand. Instead of ignoring it though, what do you do? You go through the unwelcome routine of cleaning the mess away so everyone can once again enjoy breathing fresh air.

Just like that dirty diaper we want to avoid, there are areas of

Dirty Diapers, Messy Minds

our lives we want to avoid as well. We don't want to be confronted with or deal with the mess of that area. We try to ignore those areas at all cost and act like everything is fine. The problem with avoiding changing a dirty diaper though, is that if we leave it long enough the mess just gets bigger and becomes harder to clean. If our kid sits in it long enough, the entire room will start to smell worse until the stench is so bad that everyone is gagging. If we don't clean it right away, the mess smears and in the occasional unfortunate event, will escape the diaper altogether or become finger paint (been there, dealt with that). If the mess is not cleaned soon enough it can even cause irritation or rashes that are painful, and take even longer to treat. Likewise, if we don't take care of the dirt in our lives and acknowledge the messy areas of our minds and hearts, those places will start to stink. If we don't take the time to do the hard and dirty work of cleaning those areas, we will have to deal with the long-term consequences and the pain that results later.

Cleaning these areas can be difficult however, because there is something called chaos that constantly surrounds us. Chaos is unavoidable and by definition is random and unpredictable and can often cause a state of confusion. Chaos is an agent that gets in the way and can often prevent us from even trying to clear the dirty areas of our minds. It is important to know what chaos looks like and how to navigate through it.

[chaos: complete disorder and confusion.]

The two main ways to describe chaos are external and internal. The external chaos is anything in our lives that is outside of us. This chaos is created by things around us and is often out of our control. There is no way around it. No matter how much you

want to control or run from these things, no matter how many vacations you take, or changes you make to your life, there will still be some level of this kind of chaos. As a mom trying to manage the day-to-day responsibility of raising kids to be well-rounded functioning human beings, chaos will most certainly follow. When your house is a mess and the kids are yelling and fighting, there is chaos. When you are trying to cook dinner and your kids need something from you every two seconds there is chaos. When the decibel level is so loud you can't think straight, there is chaos. Our busy schedules, situations, and the circumstances that surround raising kids create external chaos in our lives.

Contrary to what you might think, it is not the external chaos that usually gets the better of us though. It is usually the chaos of our minds, the internal chaos that overtakes us.

Internal chaos is the kind that is produced within ourselves. These are the doubting thoughts that can consume and control our minds. The views we have of ourselves and the world, how we process and handle everything. This is where the battle for our mind and attention takes place.

The internal chaos is what produces our foul-smelling, stinking thinking.

Personally, my journey of motherhood has been a rollercoaster ride of sickening twists, turns, and loop de loops, as I try to discover who I am, what kind of mom I am, and where my life is going beyond being a mom. As a new mom I was completely content where I was and yet so empty and longing for more. I was

extremely dichotic in my thinking and emotions.

The disconnect between who I was created to be and my current emotions and circumstances seemed like a chasm too wide to cross.

I tried to run from the external chaos first. I tried hitting all the buttons to put my life on “pause” so I could wrap my head around things. I thought if I could just get away and fully relax, all the chaos would magically go away and I would somehow be able to handle it all because I had rested. This approach only produced failed attempts. I never managed to completely escape the external chaos and therefore never got around to dealing with the internal chaos that needed my attention. Left unchecked, the battle of negative thoughts and emotions in my mind raged on. This only brought about more worry, fear, and questions of “Am I doing this right?” and “I have no idea what the heck I am doing here!”.

Unfortunately, life and motherhood don't stop for you to figure out who you are.....you have to find joy, truth, and purpose in the midst of the chaos.

To produce true change and freedom from our stinking thinking we have to first make the conscious decision to dive into our mess and do some deep cleaning. Sometimes the only way to get past all of the muck is to go right through the thick of the filth.

It may not seem like it now, but internal chaos is actually the chaos that we can control and change if we choose to do so. The internal chaos usually comes from doubting what God says about us is true and allowing lies that are contrary to the truth to rule in our hearts. The truth is, we were created by God in His image and likeness. Genesis 1:26 states “...And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness:”.

God wants us to be strong, confident, and do mighty things for His Kingdom and glory. He wants us to change the world through expressing the love of Christ to everyone we meet, to raise a truly Godly family, and live a life of Godly example. Anything contrary to these statements, anything that pulls us away from what the Word of God says about us, is a lie.

We are the ones that have the power to choose what we believe, the truths or the lies.

When our thoughts are continually negative it causes us to be in a constant battle-like state. Those thoughts are conflicting with and fighting against the very nature and way in which we were created and intended to think. Our true nature, the way God created us to be, comes into conflict with the lies we are told from the world. The two opposites cannot live in a state of coexistence. Because of this, there is a battle that begins to rage within us. The way we view ourselves and the world around us depends on which thoughts we let reign in our mind. When we choose to believe the lies, we often feel isolated and alone in our thinking. We use an unfair measuring stick to prove to ourselves that we are not good enough as a mom or an individual. This produces a foul smell, similar to that dirty diaper we have all had to endure.

As you journey through this book, I hope you begin to remember who God created you to be. You are strong and can overcome the battles of your mind.

You were made to not just survive but also thrive as a mom and as an individual.

Dirty Diapers, Messy Minds

You can find joy regardless of what surrounds you. It is possible to clean up the mess in your mind.

During the next few chapters, I want to look at some of the common struggles of motherhood that stink up our thinking. I want to focus on some of the areas that might be keeping you from being the woman and mother you are supposed to be. These are some of the most common areas in which many women have chosen to believe lies. We need to spend time cleaning out these areas. I hope that you take the time to recognize those areas in your life that you may be struggling with and start cleaning away the muck. By the end of this book, I hope we are all well on our way to becoming cleaner, brighter, and more joyful moms.

WHAT GOD SAYS

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” Ephesians 2:4-5

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39

“Because you are precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you....” Isaiah 43:4

“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His prized possession, above all peoples on the face of the earth.” Deuteronomy 7:6

REFLECTION

After hearing the truth in Genesis 1:26 that we are made in His image and likeness, what are some of the lies you have been believing about yourself? What dirty diaper is causing a messy mind for you?

Write down three truths that God says about you after reading this chapter and its scripture verses.

Take time to write down an area of your thinking that you hope to change while reading this book, a lie you have believed about yourself. Write down a manageable goal and action step you can take to start cleaning up this area of your thinking? (maybe it looks like praying over this area of your life or maybe it looks like confessing to a close friend that you are struggling in this area.)
