

Loving the Little Years

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MOTHERHOOD IN THE TRENCHES

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Rachel Jankovic

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To Luke
on whose shoulders we all ride

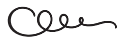
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Foreword

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Cee' or similar, centered below the title.

Sometimes all we really need is a fresh perspective on our circumstances. We need someone to open a window and let a breeze blow into the room that we didn't realize had gotten so stuffy. This book is about opening the windows.

Mothers of little people have the most challenging and important job on earth. But it is a humble job. And it takes the eye of faith to see the fruit of a coming generation of faithfulness. This book is about hardship and humor, sacrifice and satisfaction.

Rachel Jankovic is a woman who lives out her story with humility, grace, and a houseful of humor. With five exuberant children, ages five and under, she knows what she is talking about. She keeps her windows open.

She called me just the other day when she was writing like crazy to meet the deadline for this book. Having been careful to not shortchange the kids while writing

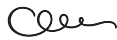
a book on loving them, she was squeezing her writing into the nooks and tight crannies of her days. On this particular day, she had opened the windows. The kids were wheeling around their small house, happily whooping it up while she was writing, and she was close to finishing. But a couple of flies had gotten into the house, much to her distraction.

“Mom,” she said, “I need three things to make everything all right: a fly-swatter, a pumpkin candle, and a babysitter!”

I had to laugh! What a funny gift bag that would make (especially since Rachel isn’t a big fan of scented candles). So, open the window, get out a fly-swatter, light a pumpkin candle, and sorry about the babysitter. I’m over at Rachel’s.

Nancy Wilson

Welcome to My Circus



If there is anything I have learned in the course of my fast and furious mothering journey, it is that there is only one thing in my entire life that must be organized. The kids can be running like a bunch of hooligans through a house that appears to be at the bottom of a toaster, and yet, if organization and order can still be found in my attitude, we are doing well. But if my attitude falters, even in the midst of external order, so does everything else.

It is one thing to state this casually, another to believe it, and yet quite another to keep it in sight when you most need to. And if you have small children like I do, you need to keep it in mind all the time.

The following is a loose collection of thoughts on mothering young children—for when you are motivated, for when you are discouraged, for the times when discipline seems fruitless, and for when you are just plain

old tired. Think of this as organizational tools for a mother's attitude. A lot of the time all you need is a good old perspective adjustment and a label.

This is not a tender reminiscence from someone who had children so long ago that she only remembers the sweet parts. I do not have a foggy, precious perspective on mothering little ones. My children do not sit on monogrammed picnic blankets in coordinated outfits while I bring them nutritious snacks on a silver tray. You are more likely to find me putting an end to them pulling each other around at breakneck speeds on a tablecloth tied to a jump rope, or seriously counseling someone who has part of a toilet paper tube taped to their nose. At the time of writing this, I have three children in diapers, and I can recognize the sound of hundreds of toothpicks being dumped out in the hall. Sure, I am looking back in retrospect on nursing the twins in the park with a blanket between my teeth, but it wasn't so long ago that I have forgotten about the overheated kind of specialness of it.

I didn't write this book because mothering little ones is easy for me. I wrote it because it isn't. I know that this is a hard job, because I am right here in the middle of it. I know you need encouragement every day, because I do too.