

Out of the Spin Cycle

Devotions to Lighten
Your Mother Load

Jen Hatmaker



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Jen Hatmaker, *Out of the Spin Cycle*

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This book is dedicated to the remarkable company of mamas I have in my life. I've never known women who work so hard, love so deeply, and care so genuinely. I cannot imagine one day of motherhood without you next to me.

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Acknowledgments

So much love to my kids—Gavin, Sydney, and Caleb—and my husband, Brandon. Without you, I'd have nothing to say. Thanks for being hysterical and filling my notebook with stories. You are the family of my dreams. (But kids? Daddy and I are moving downtown when you go to college, so no one is moving home. K-thanks-bye.)

Endless gratitude to my mom, my grandmas, and my mother-in-law (who has known me almost half my life). You are my mothers. I learned everything important from you: sending a high school graduation gift to someone in her sophomore year of college can be passed off as “quirky,” more butter and salt are the cure for every recipe, and it is possible to raise a “spirited” son in such a way that someone will actually want to marry him someday (nice work, Jacki).

Much appreciation to Jean Blackmer with MOPS, who fetched me for this project for reasons that are still fuzzy, but thanks. And to Andrea Doering with Revell, who simply laughed when I joined a conference call an hour late (I have a college degree but can't master time zones). Thanks for letting me be me, but also adding your sensitivity and discernment to the mix (“Dear Jen, we love this book! It's fantastic! There were just a few places we needed to tone it down. . . .”).

Acknowledgments

Finally, thank you, Jesus, for being amazing and astonishing and brilliant and perfect. All the Scriptures and stories in this book are from the Gospels; our story is weaved into yours. You are wise in every way. You are the standard to which we all aspire. As mothers, teach us to love, to lead, to trust, and to obey.

Prologue

A (Fairly Lame) Ode to Mothers

An ode to the marvelous woman called “Mother”
Though not one of us is exactly like another.
From the second we’re born to the minute we die
Our preferences are as limitless as stars in the sky.

We might have been perfectly gracious before
But childbirth entered us in the Mommy War.
Rather than letting everyone else be
We criticize parenting that isn’t exactly like . . . me.

So once and for all let me put this to rest
None of us owns the title of “best.”
Natural childbirth does not make you a hippy
Epidurals are not just for women who want to feel
trippy.
In a bathtub with a doula or in a hospital bed
We all got a baby with limbs and a head.

Nursing is great if nothing goes wrong
But some nipples turn inward and refuse to play
along.
This is a choice for each mom—it’s *her* route
So it’s just A + B and everyone else can C their way
out.

Schedules and timers do not make you cruel
Feeding on demand does not make you a fool.
In the nursery with a monitor or in the family bed
Every chick gets to pick where her baby lays his head.

If I see one more mom roll her eyes at “organic . . .”
“Partially hydrogenated” throws some of us into
panic.
But neither judge Sonic burgers and fries
Some of us just want to enjoy food before we die.

Preschool, home school, public, or Montessori
Listen, my friends, and I’ll tell you a story:
Two moms differed on favorite school trends
Their kids turned out pretty much the same. The
end.

If a girl gets the title of “mom” accidentally
The worst thing we can do is treat her judgmentally.
How about some love, some help, some advice?
She needs our love and we shouldn’t think twice.

Discipline through various methods will prevail
Look, we’re all just trying to keep our kids out of
jail.
These things are just preferences, not right or wrong
What matters more is teaching our kids to get
along—
To love and to share, to speak gently and kind,
To obey so that mom won’t go out of her mind.

Showing them Jesus is our common ground
Teaching them how he can always be found.
He’s in public school and Waldorf (so trendy)
He’s over at Whole Foods but also at Wendy’s.
Jesus never cared about these sorts of things
It’s our hearts that he wants and the worship we
bring.

Prologue

It's time for us moms to declare a truce
Regardless if we buy Capri Sun or 100 percent juice.
My way is not your way, and your way isn't mine
But both of our kids will turn out just fine.

Rather than judging and looking down our noses
Let's enjoy the common ground motherhood poses.
As believers, we all love the same good Lord
We all have children who tell us "I'm bored."

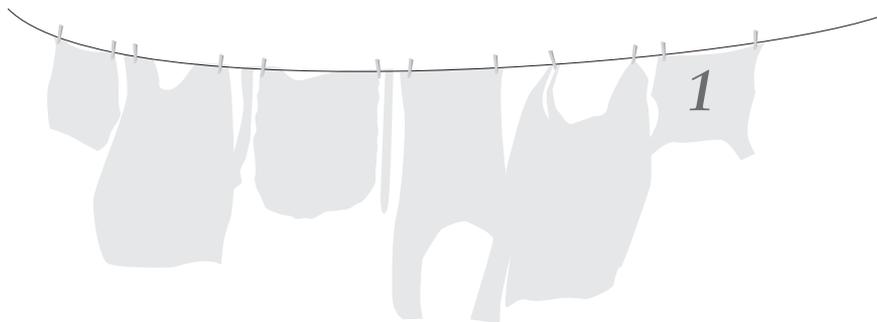
We all need more sleep than these tiny five hours
Most of us struggle to find time for a shower.
We haven't been to the bathroom alone in an age
Our mothers have all told us, "Relax, this is just a
stage."

We all love our babies so much we could die
We'd take a bullet for each one without batting an
eye.
Though we are different, we're in the same tribe
Motherhood requires a similar vibe—
Love and affection, sacrifice and grace
Laughter, which keeps the whole mechanism in place.

Though different, by the grace of God, I suspect:
ALL our children will rise up and call us . . . collect.

She looks well to how things go in her household. . . . Her
children rise up and call her blessed.

Proverbs 31:27–28 AMP



I'm Perfect and My Kids Never Fight

Everything [the Pharisees] do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them “Rabbi.”

Matthew 23:5–7

My youngest son Caleb is what we like to call a “pistol.” He is a constant challenge to harness, but his hilarious antics inspired my husband to dub him “our family mascot.” Any time he talks to an adult without me there to monitor the discussion, I’m terribly nervous, and Caleb’s first grade teacher has given me much ammunition to support that paranoia. Evidently, when she recently asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, Caleb raised his eager little hand and replied, “When I grow up, I want to be a missionary and tell

people about God, even though my mom told me all missionaries get murdered.”

Note to self: When talking to my kids about the freedom to go to church whenever and however we want, exercise caution when elaborating on how *some* people in other countries can't go to church and—wait for it—even die for their faith, because the six-year-old will tweak that factoid and make me sound like a dimwit during the retelling.

Insert the sound of me babbling like an idiot to her, defending my discussion with my six-year-old while simultaneously throwing him under the bus for butchering the teaching moment I thought I was handling so beautifully. For some reason, it mattered to me that this young teacher did not think I was a psycho, lest I become the fodder for Teachers' Lounge Stories, which I think we can all safely assume I already am.

Motherhood triggers something that went dormant about the time we left middle school. We're seeded with this desire to be thought well of, to be admired, to be affirmed in our hard work as moms. We tend to report our babies as sleeping longer than they do, our discipline as working more often than it does, and our systems as creating some efficient home that doesn't exist. We are masters at propping up our lives, spinning a thread of truth into an elaborate tapestry of grandeur—when in fact, during young motherhood most of us live in what my girlfriend Loren calls a “poop storm.”

I'm just saying.

Jesus understood this tendency, as the religious leaders during his day were characterized by their constant preening and posturing, presenting an image that had precious little to do with reality. What other people thought of them and how they were perceived became supreme, and they sacrificed greatly to maintain their image.

Wait, what? The *Pharisees* sacrificed? That's right. They gave up genuine relationships, first and foremost. They never operated like real humans, so no one could relate to them honestly. They created paranoia in everyone they spoke to.

Consequently, people pretended around the Pharisees as much as the Pharisees pretended around other people. They must have been the loneliest people on earth.

This principle holds true today. When we operate from the central concern of being seen a certain way, we can't develop healthy relationships in the messy soil of reality—the only place they'll grow. Presenting a perfect, fake life to others generates fear in our own hearts and intimidation in everyone else's, and creates nice, fake relationships—with our friends, with our family members, even with our own children.

The tight hold the religious leaders had on principles, theology, and image lost them their chance to become friends of Jesus, whose inner circle was made up of prostitutes, liars, cowards, and nobodies. Not only did Jesus *not* require perfection, those who pretended they'd attained it disgusted him.

Authenticity ranks terribly high on Jesus's list of required attributes. It's not how good we are that counts, but how truthful we are about how good we're not. Only then can Jesus get busy developing us into the redeemed daughters we already are in him.

Can we just let the posturing go? Can we speak truth to each other and reach out for help when we need it? Can we admit our failures and stop worrying about what someone might think? Can we allow others to be the same people on the outside as they are on the inside? Can we live real lives in front of each other, imperfect in our humanity but reclaimed through Jesus?

I will if you will.

If you and I do, others can.

If we all do, everyone might.



- Do you have a struggle, doubt, temptation, or crisis no one knows about—big or small?
- What is the primary reason you haven't told anyone?

STEP OUT OF THE SPIN CYCLE

Take a step toward authenticity today. With whom can you lay your pretense down and speak the truth? Call, write, or email that person today. Invite them into your life in a genuine way.

Perhaps that person is Jesus . . .