

100
WORDS
OF
affirmation
YOUR
SON

NEEDS TO HEAR

MATT & LISA JACOBSON

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The title is rendered in a mix of fonts and styles. '100' is in a large, bold, textured font. 'WORDS' is in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font inside a dark banner. 'OF' is in a small, bold, sans-serif font. 'affirmation' is in a large, flowing, cursive script. 'YOUR' is in a small, bold, sans-serif font. 'SON' is in a large, bold, textured font. 'NEEDS TO HEAR' is in a bold, sans-serif font inside a dark banner. The entire design is decorated with several small, light-colored stars scattered around the text.

Also by Matt and Lisa Jacobson

100 Ways to Love Your Husband

100 Ways to Love Your Wife

100 Ways to Love Your Daughter

100 Ways to Love Your Son

100 Words of Affirmation Your Husband Needs to Hear

100 Words of Affirmation Your Wife Needs to Hear

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and
Lisa Jacobson

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Introduction

You love your son, right? But do you *like* your son? And more important, does he *know* you like him? What have you done to communicate that to your son?

You might have deep feelings for him, but that's not enough. He doesn't necessarily know what you know or how keenly you feel. When was the last time you spoke words of affirmation directly to him? Have you regularly found the goodness in the moments of your son's life and commented, even raved, about them?

He needs to hear from you, and *100 Words of Affirmation Your Son Needs to Hear* is a resource to spark your thinking and help you look for those times when you can speak positive words of encouragement, success, and destiny into his heart.

This book will encourage you to find everyday wins in your son's life and celebrate those wins in real time. The world will tear him down, but you have the gift to lift him up. Use your powerful voice as a parent to speak words of affirmation into his heart and begin building your relationship on a positive, unshakable foundation.

I have great *confidence* in your future.

Our son was busy with his usual morning chore of collecting eggs from the nests in the chicken coop, carrying a few dozen into the house, and then washing them in the laundry room sink. Maybe it felt special when he first took over “Farm Boy Fresh Eggs,” but such jobs quickly lose their glamour and become mundane to a young kid like him, whose eyes are on the horizon, ready to take on the world.

He grew up with a father who encouraged diligence and endurance, but on that morning, I watched from a short distance away with a mother’s eye, perceiving things he was blind to in that moment. I spotted big stuff in his little faithfulness. And I told him so.

“Son, God has great things planned for your future.”

He looked up at me, eyes wide with surprise, nearly cracking an egg in the process. He was amazed to have been noticed and was startled by my morning prophecy.

But, of course, I meant it. From where he stood, he was simply washing dried chicken poop from eggshells. But from where I stood, he was a young man going places, one speckled brown egg at a time.

Many days in a son’s life involve simply putting one foot in front of the other—being diligent and faithful to finish the job at hand. And it’s times like these when you, as his parent, have the opportunity to instill a vision for his future. You will often see more than your son has the maturity or capacity to comprehend. Life may seem mundane or even bleak at times, but your confidence in his future is strong, isn’t it? Show him how his diligence and faithfulness are connected to the future God already has planned for him.

You're the kind of friend I wanted when I was your age.

There may come a time in your son's life when finding genuine friends proves difficult. People are often fickle and self-interested. True friends are hard to come by. Faithfulness, loyalty, and selflessness are too often in short supply.

If your son finds himself going through a lonely season, the messages from the enemy can be very discouraging: *You're not worth it. You're not cool enough. Nobody wants to be your friend.* But you're nearby, and when the world tells him he has little value, you can tell him the truth—he's an awesome friend, and one you would have loved to have had when you were his age. Tell him you're not just his dad or mom; you're his friend and confidant.

Also, be sure to point him to Jesus, who knew what it meant to be betrayed by His closest companions until He was utterly alone. Jesus understands. He was attacked by friends who pretended they didn't know Him in order to save themselves. But He will never abandon us. He's forever faithful, and that's important to know when you have to spend a night or two—or a season—in life's lonely valley.

God *blessed* me by bringing you into the world.

Some people might have considered me too old to be having a baby. I was forty, after all, when I had our youngest. And I wouldn't be sharing honestly if I didn't say that I'd occasionally had the thought during that pregnancy, *What am I doing having a baby at this age?*

But then he was born. Our handsome blue-eyed boy with the sweetest temperament you can imagine. How could I have ever doubted?

So I tell him. I want him to know what a gift he is and how his hugs and silly antics bring me such cheer. If I don't tell him, how will he know?

If you think back to when you were young, you'll probably remember how insignificant kids can feel. Sometimes they believe they don't really matter all that much. But the truth is, they mean the world!

Tell your child how much he means to you and how thankful you are that God brought him into your life.

You offer such comfort with your *gentle strength*.

Sunday was an unusually hard day. Right in the middle of prayer time at church, our daughter with special needs suffered a grand mal seizure, and suddenly everything came to a standstill. Everyone watched helplessly while she cried out loudly in pain and her body trembled with the violence of an earthquake.

Matt is typically at her side in an instant, but he was traveling that weekend. Because my eyes had been closed in prayer, it took me a few moments to get my bearings before jumping up and rushing to reach her wheelchair at the end of our row. But I was second to arrive, as her younger brother was already by her side, wrapping her tightly in strong, loving arms to calm her convulsions. I joined him, and the two of us held on to her for a long minute and a half until the tremors subsided.

When the seizure was over at last, he disappeared. Was he alright? I was worried, but then he returned with a tissue to wipe the tears from her eyes and the drool from her face. At that point I could no longer keep it together, so he made another trip to the bathroom—this time to get more tissues for me.

He's only a young teen, but he somehow knew just what to do right then. His gentle strength in that sad and difficult situation brought both his sister and me such comfort.

Perhaps your son won't have to step into such a challenging moment, or maybe he deals with even greater trauma. But there will be times in your son's life when he rises to offer himself in difficult moments. It's unlikely he will understand how much comfort he brings you and the rest of his family with his thoughtfulness, gentle strength, or kindness, which is why he needs to hear from you what an awesome blessing he really is!

You faced a big challenge, yet you *refused* to give up.

His freshman year of high school, our son decided to join the local Christian school's basketball team. He went to every practice, every drill, and every game. And if you know anything about playing for a small school, you know this means driving for hours and hours to remote, faraway tournaments. It's a monumental time commitment.

Despite all of that time and effort, he spent virtually the entire season sitting on the bench, playing only a few minutes—and only when it didn't matter.

As his dad, I held my peace but found myself getting a little frustrated that the coaches didn't play him more (like every dad on the planet!). And Lisa got a little emotional. We believe in perseverance and encouraged him to endure when other boys in the same situation were quitting, but we both began to wonder how this continuing negative experience would affect him.

Then one day at the end of the season, on the way home from another game that he spent on the bench, he said to me, "Dad, I don't want to keep sitting on the bench. I want to play."

"Well, son, you don't have to. You have what it takes to succeed. The question is, are you willing to do the work and discipline yourself enough to achieve your goal? The opportunity is there and you can have it, but are you willing to do what it takes?"

"Yes, I am!" he answered with resolution.

"Okay, then here's what you have to do. We'll get you with a coach who will truly teach you, and then the rest is up to you. Incidentally, what is your specific goal?"

"I want to start every game."

So he practiced and practiced. When I was heading to bed at

11:00 p.m., I'd walk past him sitting on the stairs, lacing up his shoes. Another night the rain beat down, but it couldn't drown out the *thump, thump* of his dribbling the basketball through hazard cones as he drove to the basket.

Sheer determination.

Did his perseverance pay off? Yes, it did. The next season he became a top-three starter!

Perhaps your son is too young to be on a sports team, or maybe his interests lie elsewhere. The "what" isn't important. Encourage him to be his best, and help him see a pathway to pursue his goals. And don't be hesitant to start young. Did he put away all his blocks? That's fantastic! Tell him how much you appreciate his tenacity, and then whisper how such commitment leads to bigger things later in life.

I love hearing your *ideas* and *dreams* for the future.

Life has a way of beating dreams out of young men. That's why your son needs to know you're genuinely interested in his ideas, aspirations, and thoughts about impossible deeds. When I was young, I thought I would be a policeman, a cowboy, a boxer, then . . . you name it and I thought about being it. Kids have all kinds of wonderful, wild, crazy thoughts. Then they become teenagers and still have them. Don't be the parent with all the reasons "why not." Be the parent who invites conversation about the possibilities.

I still remember talking with my mother when I was eighteen about my "plans"—my big plans to become a professional boxer. Inside, she was probably thinking, *I don't want my son to have his brains bashed in!* But she just sat there smiling and listening with enrapt interest as I told her all about my intentions. (It's Sugar Ray Leonard's fault.) The only problem was . . . well, just about everything. But that didn't make her stomp on my thoughts. If I was excited about it, she was excited to hear about it. And to this day, I have an untarnished record as a boxer! Zero wins, zero losses. Ha ha. Thanks, Mom!

No, I didn't get into the ring, ever, and that dream floated into thin air along with so many others. Your son was also created with a dream. Perhaps it is to become a hero, fight a battle, climb a mountain, be a world-class musician, win first prize at 4-H, or cross the sea into uncharted waters. Whatever his dream is, let him know that you love hearing about it and believe he can achieve it.

Son, that was a *kind* thing to do.

I'm sure I'm not the only mom who, at times, has trouble finding her tweenage sons! Today was one of those days. I walked through the house searching for our son but didn't see him in his usual spots. He was supposed to be finishing up his school-work, but I could hear him laughing and finally found him in the kitchen. And it's not as though he was busy eating a midmorning snack either. Instead, he was sitting at the kitchen table playing a rousing game of Uno with his sister.

It sounds irresponsible, I know, except he was playing with his sister with special needs who's in a wheelchair. She doesn't necessarily have many opportunities for fun, and his heart went out to her, so he thought it might be a nice break to suggest they play a card game together.

I quietly watched the two from across the room. She'd laugh as she laid down some penalty card for him, and then he'd draw a fistful of cards, moaning loudly to make her laugh even harder. It was a regular circus. He was (purposefully) losing badly—and she couldn't have been more tickled about it.

I thought about what his report card might look like at the end of the year. Would he get good grades? Probably, since he was doing reasonably well in his academics. But I also wondered why we're so ready to recognize grades and wins but easily overlook the important things like love and kindness.

I suggest that if you catch your son doing something sacrificial or kind, quickly acknowledge it. In a world that strongly commends strength and achievement, don't lose sight of the immense value of loving another person.

I believe the hand of God is on your life.

Life will offer your son many opportunities to doubt that God is involved in his world, is watching over him, or even cares. When he is young, his doubts will be few, but life has a way of increasing them as he gets older.

You don't have to wait for a magic moment, a special occasion, or some great tragedy or challenge to speak words of destiny and hope into your son's heart. The ordinary, everyday moments are the best times to remind him of what he'll need to hang on to at some point: God is present, God has a plan, and God has a purpose in everything.

It's an important truth to have settled in his mind before life throws him a curveball. And it is a truth to know—something the Bible is crystal clear about. God is at work in every aspect of our lives, shaping us (if we let Him), refining us, and molding us into the people He wants us to be.

If you regularly speak this kind of vision into your son's heart, he will be better equipped to handle the highs and lows he will be sure to encounter.

You have a *terrific* sense of humor.

It's settled! Our youngest son's mission in life is to make us laugh. And if one of his antics succeeds, it's guaranteed that we'll get whatever it was he did on repeat for several weeks (if not months) to come!

For instance, we made the terrible mistake of giggling at his rendition of "My Baby Elf"—one of those Silly Songs with Larry. Admittedly, it's an amusing song, but honestly, by the fifth time he gets to the "my elfity, babity, babity, babity, babity, babity, babity elf" part (in his best thirteen-year-old Elvis impersonation), our sanity comes into question. Yet, even so, we can hardly help laughing.

But do you want to know what we've learned about these silly moments? They aren't nearly so much about amusement; they're about love. Our laughing at his jokes and juvenile comedy routine is just another way of saying "I think you're wonderful."

Delight in your son's jokes and wit. Tell him you think he's funny, clever, hilarious . . . or whatever fits. It's a small, easy way to build his confidence and express appreciation for his unique sense of humor. It also builds something else deeply important as he progresses into young adulthood: friendship.

What you decide to do today is building the future you will enjoy.

Much of life is about putting one foot in front of the other—being faithful in the little things. Whether it's taking out the trash for the thousandth time or completing some other mundane chore, wise parents help their sons see the connection between faithfulness today and a bright future tomorrow, between the unremarkable and the destiny God has planned for them.

Speak purpose, meaning, and a hopeful future into your son's day. It's difficult for a child to understand the value of doing simple, everyday tasks with excellence; that's where vision comes in. Show him the connection today has to the journey he's on and the exciting destination it may lead to.

You might start by saying, "Hey, son, that's a boring job, isn't it?" There's nothing wrong with honesty! But then you can give him a picture of what it means to provide an example for others—his brothers and sisters, and then, how about those future employees he might have one day?

Every effective leader leads by example.

Explain to your son that even—*especially*—when no one is looking (except God), the way he disciplines himself is how he will lead others. And because everything we do is open to God's appraisal, although we might not plan to lead others in a business endeavor someday, we should remember that we are instructed to work "as to the Lord," as it says in Colossians 3:23–24: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (KJV).

I admire the kind of man you're becoming.

Our fifteen-year-old was in the middle of a project when the phone rang. It was Matt's dad, who was in hospice care but living next door to us on our property. Matt was his primary caregiver but could step away to take care of other business for short periods of time. And sometimes all the different needs clashed with one another. That phone call was Dad telling us he needed help with another severe nosebleed (they often lasted four hours or more), but Matt couldn't get there for at least a half hour. I stood up to run next door and see what I could do when our son stopped me. "I can take care of this, Mom," he said firmly. "Let me go over."

I hesitated, knowing he was in the middle of schoolwork, and, besides, it would likely be a messy job. But he insisted.

Later his grandpa told us what a champion his grandson had been, and my heart soared. The first chance I got, I passed on to our son what a blessing he'd been to his grandfather and added what a blessing he'd been to me as well.

"Son, I admire the kind of man you are becoming."

This is just an example of our son in a specific situation. It will be different with yours, but surely you've noticed something about him you can call attention to: his kindness, thoughtfulness, or dependability?

Focus on the character quality he's growing in or has demonstrated, and then make the most of it. Point it out to him. Applaud him for it. Admire the man he's becoming.