





# Contents

From Angela .....	7
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## **Kids Need Their Mom...**

1. To Pray in Secret with the Door Open .....	9
2. To Never Stop Touching Them .....	13
3. To Hang Hearts of Love over Their Lives .....	17
4. To Watch Them Go Out of Sight .....	21
5. To Keep a Date Night with Dad .....	25
6. To Make Them Sit Around the Table...and Linger .....	29
7. To Let Her Yes Be Yes and Her No Be No .....	33
8. To Be Delayed, Rerouted, and Canceled with Poise .....	37
9. To Make Them Wait to Take a Bite .....	41
10. To Take Christmas to People Who Have Nothing .....	45
11. To Miss a Few Things They Do Wrong .....	49
12. To Put Down the Phone .....	53
13. To Learn Their Unique Love Language .....	57
14. To Occasionally Be a Supermom .....	61
15. To Turn Their Beds Down at Night .....	65
16. To Ride a Roller Coaster...for the First Time .....	69
17. To Talk to Them like They Are Fascinating .....	73
18. To Treat Their Friends like Family .....	77
19. To Cheer Wildly from the Stands .....	81
20. To Give Grace-Filled Consequences .....	85
21. To Be a Passionate, Alive, Spiritual Lover of God .....	89
22. To Indulge Their Silly .....	93
23. To Have a Hallelujah Party .....	97
24. To Keep a Family Blog .....	101
25. To Become Physically and Emotionally Healthy .....	105
26. To Become Spiritually Healthy .....	109
27. To Believe They Will Not Grunt Forever .....	113
28. To Make a Big Deal Out of God .....	117
29. To Keep Her Promise .....	121
30. To Wait on Them Hand and Foot...When They Are Sick .....	125

31. To Tell Them to Buy Another Token and Keep Swinging .....	129
32. To Pray Them Home and for the Will of God .....	133
33. To Be a “Groovy” Mom .....	137
34. To Teach Them How to Know the Voice of God .....	141
35. To Believe in Their Strengths and Speak Life into Their Gifts .....	145
36. To Make a Home Where Grace Lives .....	149
37. To Throw Down the “MOM Card” .....	153
38. To Tell Them What She’d Do Differently .....	157
39. To Make a Big Deal Out of Grandparents and Extended Family .....	161
40. To Teach Them How to Keep Their Money Straight, in Order, Facing the Same Direction .....	165
41. To Be Patient About Things like Thumb-Sucking and Pacifiers .....	169
42. To Let Them Make Really Dumb Mistakes Without Condemnation ...	173
43. To Introduce Them to Her Friend Named Jesus .....	177
44. To Set the Tone for the Family .....	181
45. To Teach Them to Genuinely Respect All People, Cultures, Denominations, and Creeds .....	185
46. To Teach the Boys How to Love a Wife .....	189
47. To Teach the Girls How to Love a Husband .....	193
48. To Identify the Characteristics of a Fool and Tell Them What to Do When They Meet One .....	197
49. To Train Them to Listen to Her .....	201
50. To Teach Them to Not Be Easily Offended .....	205
51. To Live as Single Moms with Amazing Lives .....	209
52. To Teach Them a Gracious and Generous Hospitality .....	213

Kids Need Their Mom...

## To Pray in Secret with the Door Open

In my first years as a mom, I desperately wanted to keep a passionate spiritual life with God. I wanted to read the Bible. Sit quietly and pray. Maybe even write a few things in my journal. It's just that my little people would not cooperate. I had four babies in seven years, and not one of them was willing to go along with my plan. My heart kept longing to go back and have a spiritual life the way I'd always had. Alone. It took me a while to realize that being a mom means you might never be alone again.

Frustrated. Probably even mad sometimes. I remember shaking my head and just fussing on the inside about my crazy, chaotic predicament. *I am trying to be with God so that I can be a better mom. Anybody with me here?* As you can imagine, being alone rarely happened. And I'd feel guilty about my crumbling spiritual life. And the only ones I knew to blame were *them*, the ones I loved so dearly, who needed me every minute.

I'd love to tell you that the answer for my struggle came to me in a moment of brilliance. But I was too tired to be brilliant. There was just an afternoon. I think I put on a video for the kids to watch and went upstairs to my bedroom. For some reason I kept the door open and sat down on the floor to read my Bible for a minute, and then I stretched out, facedown, on my carpet to pray. I guess I had been praying for one whole minute, and then they came.

I could hear them coming down the hall, but that day, instead of stopping what I was doing, I just kept lying there, praying. Of course, they

walked right in, and I'm sure you can guess what they did. They crawled on top of me. And they played with my hair. And they wiggled their little faces up to mine.

"Hey, mama," one whispered.

"Hey, honey," a gentle, not frustrated, voice spoke from inside of me.

"Watcha doin'?" they said in unison.

"Praying."

"Oh...it looked like you were sleeping," an honest observer said.

*It's been known to happen*, I admitted to myself.

Do you know what they did next? Those little toddling children lay down beside me and mostly of on top of me and prayed too. Oh, they prayed squirrely prayers that lasted for only a couple of minutes, but they prayed. My babies were praying because they had seen their mama praying. After a few minutes they were done, but I just kept lying there while they ran in and out. Back to the video. Then back to check on praying mom. And God settled something inside of me that afternoon. The days of being a college coed with lots of time to be alone to pray were over. That chapter was closed. And honestly, I didn't want to go back. I just longed for the sweetness of how I used to spend time with God.

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I heard God speaking to me, "I want your kids to see you being with Me."

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But lying on my bedroom floor that day, I knew I heard Him speaking to me:

This is how I want you to pray now. Pray in secret—with the door open. I want them to see you being with Me. I want them to catch you turning to your heavenly Father for guidance. I want them to learn from you how to walk with Me. No dramatic presentation needed. No fanfare required. Angela, this is a new season with a new way. And this new way for your heart pleases Me.

I remember being so very humbled. And grateful. My uptight, "everything must be right" personality could have kept me away from God for years. Trying to get it all together. Trying to be just right before I could spend time with Him. But that day God so tenderly walked me step-by-step through one of the most powerful lessons about grace I have ever known.

*Come to Me messy.  
Come when you're tired.  
Let the children lie on top of you.  
Let them interrupt you.  
You do not have to be perfect...just come to Me and let them see.*

A woman stopped me last night. She said she'd heard me tell this story a few years ago and it completely changed her as a mom. She too had been trying to keep the rules and do things neatly, in order, the way she always had. She told me, "I do my Bible study sitting on the bathroom floor while my kids are in the tub. Most of the pages are warped by splashes of water, and some of my notes written in ink run, but those messy, imperfect books are treasures to me now."

My kids are older now, but the lesson remains. They still need to catch me praying. They should walk past my room and know I'm reading my Bible. They need to find the notes I've taken lying on the counter in the kitchen. They need to overhear me praying with a friend on the phone.

I bet your kids do too.

It seems that the lessons we so want to teach our kids are transferred—and not because we sit them down in the living room, pass out ten pages about being spiritual, and then give them a long-winded lecture about how our family is going to follow God. The thing that shapes them more deeply is that you and I pursue God in the everyday of living—that our spiritual lives become the backdrop for their childhood. Bibles left open are normal. A kneeling, praying mom is an ordinary sight. Bibles studies done at bath time, routine.

### **Reaching Their Hearts**

One afternoon I had gone to pray in secret, but God so beautifully taught me that my "secret" needed to be seen. Jesus said in Matthew 6 that we are supposed to keep a secret life. To give in secret, pray in secret, and fast in secret. But I think that when we become moms, for a season those sets of eyes sent from heaven to watch you need to see what you do with God in your "unseen" moments.

May it be so for you and me. And may the children who witness our prayers learn to pray more powerfully because they catch us being with God.