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MAKE LEMONADE

STAY PRESENT MAMAS
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Introduction:

When Life Gives You Lemons

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Make Lemonade

This section is titled “When Life Gives You Lemons”

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Make Lemonade: Resist Crisis Mode, Redeem Stress, and Reclaim Your Joy

When Life Gives You Lemons

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When my twins were 10 months old, my husband gave them each a lemon slice to suck on. You could have paused time as the other friendly diners at Perkins all tuned in to watch the spectacle of scrunched up faces.

To all of our amazement, my son sucked on his lemon like it was a lollipop. No sour reaction, no squeals of surprise, no pursed lips whatsoever. He then gnawed on the bitter rind like it was a teething ring, completely refusing to give us the satisfaction of a chuckle.

Not sure whether to be disappointed or impressed, we tried with his twin sister. No hilarious video captured there either. She tasted it, looked at her dad as though he had betrayed her, and burst into tears. The entire restaurant had to endure her on-and-off wailing for the next hour, until we shuffled out of there with our meal in to-go boxes and our tails between our legs.

In retrospect, perhaps we should not have treated our infants like a party trick for the Perkins dinner crowd. Although we didn't get the funny memory we expected, that moment has stuck with me for other reasons.

Sometimes it feels like God is handing out lemons just to see how we will react to them. Every time I face a disappointing or challenging circumstance, I wish I could handle it more like my son: unfazed and carrying on with my life. In reality though, I end up reacting more like my daughter. I melt into a mess of stress, anxiety, and frustration. I feel personally betrayed by my Heavenly Father. And I unknowingly force any nearby people to suffer with me in the crisis.

While it is true that we will face sour circumstances in life, it is not because God is in heaven looking for a laugh (aren't you glad God is not a parent like us!?). In fact, His Word promises otherwise:

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11 ESV

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“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 ESV

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10 ESV

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11 ESV

Our good, good Father created us for a fulfilling, fun, and fruitful life! But, thanks to our fallen human nature (side-eyeing you, Eve), life can feel like it's got a cannon full of lemons, locked and loaded and aimed at your forehead.

The good news is, Jesus died and rose again to redeem us so we could experience deep and fulfilling contentment. As great as eternal peace will be, you need to know that contentment—a satisfied joy and confidence—is available today! Jesus has provided a way—not to make your life easy-peasy lemon squeezy, but to make something beautiful and edifying from every challenge you face. Like the old saying “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade”, we can see every crisis as an opportunity to experience contentment.

So get your blue glass tumbler ready for an outpouring of grace that might just overflow your cup!

How to read this book:

This book is divided into 2 sections. In Part 1 we will unpack the fundamentals of contentment. These are the macro-truths you must learn to free your life from the choke-hold of crisis mode. Confession time: I am a habitual skipper of Part 1 in the books I read. I prefer application to foundation. Get me to the part I can control. Perhaps this is why I get stuck in crisis mode—I am not willing to do the inner-work of soul change. Give me charts and checklists of Part 2 please! If you relate, please join me in slowing down, opening up, and receiving heart transformation. Without it, you and I will keep boomeranging right back into the bondage of never-ending stress-management.

Once we can agree with the macro-truths about contentment, then we can get into the micro-tools of practicing our defiance against crisis mode. Part 2 is your application tool box, curated from my own mishaps, science-backed research, and historical accounts from Scripture. Each chapter focuses on an area in which you may be tempted to sink into crisis-mode. You may not relate to every story, but the tools and aha-moments are timeless.

At the end of every chapter are your weapons for resistance. Use these to help you fight your way out of survival mode. That is what this book is all about: helping you find freedom and contentment that lasts. However, it cannot replace a few things. So, before we continue, a few disclaimers:

First of all, **this book should not replace real therapy.** I cannot emphasize enough the role of a certified therapist to help you manage stress and burn out. More importantly, you may be facing a true and genuine crisis such as cancer, the death of a child or spouse, loss of your home due to a natural disaster, etc. This book is not qualified to walk you through these very real and very devastating events. Please seek professional help and enfold yourself into Christian community.

As a reminder, here are 3 things that therapy isn't:

1. Therapy is not self-help. Good authors will activate your motivation to make necessary changes. Thus books and podcasts are wonderful tools (and I hope you keep this and other

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books handy). However, an author cannot peer back into your actual life to provide specific insight like a qualified therapist can.

2. Therapy is not meeting with a friend for a one sided conversation. That is a sad and frustrating misuse of friendship. Keep your friends close by practicing two-sided, reciprocal conversations *and* by seeing a counselor for the one-sided stuff you need to process.

3. Therapy is not finding someone who agrees with you all the time. A good therapist avoids letting you self-justify or indulge because you are the victim. If you are seeing a counselor or therapist who does this, you have permission to quit. You can rebel against the broken parts of the system without knocking the whole process altogether. Find a new therapist—ideally a state-certified, professionally trained, Bible-based counselor. (By the way, our world needs more of these. So if you reach a point in your journey where you can pursue higher education and greater dependence on the Lord, I urge you to go for a degree in this area!)

I truly believe counseling will make a difference in your journey toward contentment in motherhood. To help, I have recruited my own counselor to help me develop prompts at the end of every chapter. Unpack these honestly with your therapist, mentor, or spiritual director.

Second disclaimer: **This book should not replace authentic community.** I hope every chapter feels like a friend in your living room, keeping you company while you fold laundry. I will be transparent about my struggles and hopefully help you feel a little less alone in some areas. However, because I cannot hear *your* stories, this book will not be able to meet that very real need that all of us have for in-person community.

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encourage you to find a support group or play-group for moms in your church or community center. If you cannot find one, start one! A friend of mine built a huge community by just inviting moms to walk with her on the city paths on Wednesdays. Start a group and see where it leads. Remember, connecting in real life doesn't have to be all or nothing. You don't have to

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be best friends with people right away and stay close forever. The friendships can come and go person-to-person, but keeping yourself in community should be a non-negotiable.

A book club is a great place to start! Find 2 or 3 other mamas who might like to shake their fists at crisis mode with you. There are group discussion questions in the back of this book for every chapter.

Third, **this book should not replace time spent in God's Word**. I have seen the power of God move in my life when I read His Word directly for myself. The Bible is both ancient and timeless, living and active. I have never regretted time spent reading and re-reading its truth. To help you prioritize time in God's Word, I have included Bible reading prompts and study guides for every chapter. Remember, you don't need a pastor, teacher, or author to spoon-feed the hope of God's Word to you. Show up to feast with God by opening your own Bible (or read it on the Youversion app). You will also find prayer postures and moving meditation prompts throughout this book. These tools have helped me digest and absorb the truths I study in God's Word. Stretching, breath-work, and meditation have also been proven to help regulate the nervous system—a change we all desperately need when attempting to conquer stress!

Friend, it is time to make some lemonade.

Let's raise our glasses together, brave mama. Take a deep breath with me—your biggest inhale of the day. Receive strength and power for the next step. Now exhale and let it all go: your misgivings, worries, and frustrations. Joy is on the horizon, sister. Onward and upward we go. Cheers!