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MAKE LEMONADE

STAY PRESENT MAMAS
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Chapter 1:

Resist Crisis Mode

By Becky Rosty

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This section is titled “Chapter 1: Resist Crisis Mode”

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

Chapter 1: Resist Crisis Mode

FOMO is a dirty liar. This singular phrase, written in my friend's flowing handwriting, surprised me. It was another midnight feeding with my 4th baby, and my phone was dead again. So instead of my usual routine (scrolling through TikTok), I filed through the stack of cards I'd saved from my baby shower. Most said the same thing: "you are a strong, capable mother", or "children are a blessing." But this note, scribbled on a torn corner of notebook paper, was like therapy.

At this late night juncture in my 10th year of motherhood, I was tired of rosy platitudes. Being a mama had given me some incredible mountaintops: the birth of my twins, the adoption of my son, and now the gracious gift of this baby girl. But it had also trudged me through some mucky valleys: miscarriage, foster-care anxieties, isolation, and chronic back pain. That night I was snuggling the baby I thought I'd never get to have; it should have been a moment of overwhelming gratitude. Instead, I was battling resentment for the unshakable *stuck-ness* I felt in postpartum depression.

The well-meaning scripts of encouragement just didn't cut it anymore. That's why the phrase *FOMO is Dirty Liar* caught me off guard. I laughed, thinking, "fear of missing out is the least of my worries." But the phrase stuck with me. After all, even though I was living the life I had always dreamed of, there were still pangs of discontentment that threatened my joy. That year left me feeling beat down, too weary to rise up. But saying that phrase out loud made me feel stronger than my soul bullies. Maybe I could be the one pushing back.

When Life Gives You Crisis Mode:

Turns out, there are lots of mamas who struggle with the same thing. And not just mothers either. As the world marches toward progress, we seem to collectively *digress* away from

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contentment and satisfaction. Anxiety ratchets up generation by generation¹. As young adults, we were blasted with promises of a good life, only to be overwhelmed by the flaming hoops we had to jump through to attain it. The cost of higher education, housing, medical bills, and even vacations have skyrocketed². It's a recipe for frustration and our society keeps stirring the pot.

Discontentment affects us in parenthood too. History tells us that motherhood is one of the most natural, normal things a woman can do. Yet in recent generations, it has become one of the most challenging. Not only do more and more women struggle to *become* mothers³, but the daily act of motherhood has become more stressful in recent years than for the generations before us⁴. Have you noticed how often you devolve from confident mama into constant crisis-mode management?

The thing about discontentment is that it's an equal opportunity offender. Take, for instance, two women that sit in the same row at church: one is a single woman in her late 50's. She has a thriving career and has more wealth than she ever expected. However, she's never been married and wrestles with bitterness toward God for not making her dream of having a family come true. The other woman is in her mid-20's. Married with kids, she thought she was living the dream. Yet she also struggles with bitterness and is tempted to trade the minutia of family life for more years of untethered singleness. "After all," she says, "I just got married too young."

¹ Research by Goodwin, Weinberger, Kim, Wu, and Galea. 2020 Elsevier Ltd., <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7441973/>

² Janet Nguyen, 2022, <https://www.marketplace.org/story/2022/08/17/money-and-millennials-the-cost-of-living-in-2022-vs-1972>

³ Global female infertility rates surge, hitting women in their late 30s hardest, by Priyanjana Pramanik, MSc. 2025, <https://www.news-medical.net/news/20250522/Global-female-infertility-rates-surge-hitting-women-in-their-late-30s-hardest.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/overwhelmed-and-stressed-mothers-open-up-about-worrying-decline-in-mental-health>

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The crisis of discontentment doesn't just look like fear-of-missing-out either. There's not a message in my instagram DM's from someone who isn't currently facing one of these personal stressors:

- Identity-crisis
- Decision Paralysis
- Marriage Problems
- Friend Drama
- Crisis of Faith
- Hormonal Imbalance
- Financial Pressure
- A Stalling Career
- Crippling Loneliness
- Chronic Pain
- Compromised Mental Health
- Emotional Exhaustion

Not to mention the very real *GLOBAL* crises we all must navigate, like pandemics, economy crashes, national conflict, and war.

The odds are stacked against us, sisters. How is a mama supposed to raise capable, confident children while facing all of this? Forget building friendships, growing intellectually, and claiming fulfillment. At this point, the mere act of surviving the next crisis feels like the best one can hope for!

The Ugly Truth:

If you're like me, you might think *it is not that bad*. You call it "brain-fog" or "just a couple of bad days". Then you look back on the last month and see hints that you are, in fact, in constant crisis mode. Here are a few to start:

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1. **It feels like all or nothing.** The stress you face demands all of your time, energy, and mental capacity. You think *if this specific issue would just be resolved*, then everything would feel ok again.
2. **There's no end in sight.** You fear this frustrating moment will inevitably lead to another one down the road. And *that* one will probably be even harder to deal with. You will never experience relief.
3. **You need to fix it now!** You feel like your window is closing, and if you don't act now, you will lose your chance.
4. **It is all on you. No one can help.** It seems foolish and frustrating to outsource your stress management. This moment goes beyond the phrase “if you want something done right, do it yourself”. You feel more like “if you want it to get *worse*, ask for help.”

If any of these ring true, you are not alone. Sadly, the ugly truth about crisis mode gets even uglier. Like the queen bee in a group of mean girls, crisis mode has a team of recruits cheering against you:

First, there is a spiritual Enemy who has written your name in His burn book. Jesus told us the Devil came to “steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10). When Satan deceives you to believe you are in constant crisis-mode, he is effectively stealing your joy, killing your contentment, and destroying your effectiveness for this season of life.

Secondly, the world loves to see you in crisis-mode too because there is money involved. In other words, the world is more likely to make a profit (\$\$) when you are at the end of your rope. Who wouldn't want to purchase more rope, after all, when you are clinging to the fringes? So the world sells you mantras and meal plans, organizing bins and Britbox. Eagerly, you click “subscribe” in a desperate effort to relieve or escape your stress. Don't believe me? Did you know the Wellness Industry is set to reach nearly \$9 trillion in 2028⁵ (nearly double

⁵ The Global Wellness Economy Reaches a New Peak of \$6.3 Trillion—And Is Forecast to Hit \$9 Trillion by 2028, <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/press-room/press-releases/the-global-wellness-economy-reaches-a-new-peak-of-6-3-trillion-and-is-forecast-to-hit-9-trillion-by-2028/#>

what its net worth for 2019)?! As an ever-expanding business, this industry counts on you having recurring breakdowns.

Lastly, *you* are the final factor that wants to keep you in constant crisis mode. Ironically, being ultra-stressed-out can actually stroke your ego. Identifying as a victim can make you feel important. This can lead to attention-seeking, self-justification, and over-compensating (when you go from zero to “she-ro” and save the day!). These can all feel good, even though the crisis you face does *not* feel good. Thus, many of us become addicted to crisis mode, finding a new intense stressor within days of resolving our last one.

But what if these constant pie-in-the-face stressors were a just elaborate pranks, orchestrated by a big fat bully? What if all the mammoth frustrations were, in fact, dirty liars just out to steal your joy? Imagine what could change for children and families if mothers traded survival mode for something supernatural!? Peace, contentment, and beauty are not Instagram filters—they can be a reality when a generation of mamas finally rebels against constant crisis-mode.

The Secret Code to Contentment

Thankfully, we aren’t left to form a resistance on our own. God has provided a battle plan to free us (and our families) from the vicious cycle of crisis mode.

In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul shares the secret code. He says,

“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:11-13 ESV

I like to think of Paul as “the guy in the chair” for those of us on the field. He sees the big picture, and he’s giving us the secret to how we can accomplish our mission of living to the

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fullest for the glory of God. Paul is saying the secret is Jesus. We don't need new circumstances or stronger inner-grit to handle them. We just need to stay close to the team leader, Christ. That's the secret to turning lemons into lemonade, or resisting crisis mode and choosing contentment. "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13 NLT)

As any decent spy movie tells you, a good agent listens to the guy in the chair. Sadly, most of us tend to go rogue when it comes to following the secret code. We hear what we want to hear and re-write the code to fit our perceived reality. Instead of "I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13 NLT), we say it like:

"I have learned the secret of being content... I can do all things through *me* who strengthens in me."

"I have learned the secret of being content... I can do all things through *my community / my person* who strengthens me."

"I have learned the secret of being content... *I avoid doing anything that requires strength.*"

"I have learned the secret of being content... I mirror all things in the people around me."

Psychologists call these reactions *fight, flight, freeze, and fawn*. These are normal reactions to stress that every human on the planet resort to when faced with crisis mode. Here's how I see them in my own life:

My first reaction to stress is to fight. I try to overcome the lemons in my life through my own strength. "I've got this!" If I just try harder, I could *achieve* contentment. In all my trying, I always spiral back into self-doubt and frustration. Impostor syndrome is waiting to knock me down at the next failure (or success!).

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The same is true when I fly to others for strength. We often think of “flight” response as an escape mechanism: Netflix bingeing and doom scrolling. I would argue that the escape habit is actually a freeze response. *Flight*, however, is much more about what I am flying *to* than what I am getting away from. This looks like posting about my crisis mode on Facebook or complaining about it in small groups, hoping to gain sympathy or sometimes even advice or help. In reality, though, my community can’t strengthen me in all the ways I expect. When I feel ignored or left out, I lose my motivation and zest for life.

Understandably after all that, the message of “do less” appeals to me. Just freeze; put a pause on everything. Drop out of commitments. Link up to the screen and numb away. This way, I don’t have to rely on myself, God, or anyone else! However, I’ve learned when I reject anything that requires strength, I end up growing more callous than content.

Fawning is similar. I can be a die-hard affirmation-seeker. I live for the next “attagirl”, comment on social media, or real-life pat on the back. So, instead of handling my stress, I ignore it and focus my energy in gaining approval or affection. Sometimes I mirror my kids, matching their mood or emotions to feel a sense of connection. This backfires terribly, giving the children too much power to set the tone in the home. Other times I subconsciously fawn my husband, my mom-friends, or even my own mother. This also backfires when the other person doesn’t mirror me back or ignores my need for approval. I end up feeling small, foolish, and insecure.

Even though coping mechanisms are natural, they end up keeping us trapped in the cycle of crisis mode management. Thankfully, God’s Word gives us the lasting solution. The source code for contentment isn’t a mechanism, it’s a Messiah. In our own strength, we resort to fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. In Christ, we can react to stress with *faith* instead.

I see you, mama, sick of living in crisis mode and ready to resist the soul bullies. If you want to turn lemons into lemonade and live with fulfillment in motherhood (or any circumstance!)—Jesus is the answer!

Today is the day

I don't remember the date I became a child of God, but I do remember laying in bed, for several nights in a row, wondering why the God of the universe would be happy to just hang out in my heart. As I child, I was told I needed a Savior; since I really didn't want to go to hell, I gleefully asked Jesus into my heart. As I grew, I figured my life was still my own: I was the master of my destiny and (lucky me) Jesus was the best-friend in my heart cheering me on. Years later, this perspective of my salvation started to taste funky—like a pink lemonade with too much red food dye. That's when I found myself lying in bed, staring at the ceiling and questioning whether Jesus really was "in my heart".

Many people have a similar belief about Christianity⁶. They think "Jesus saved me, I'm good to go". However, the Bible is clear that Jesus doesn't just want to be your Savior, he also deserves to be your *Lord*. To have lordship in your life means *He* get's to be in charge. There is no other way to be right with God in this life or eternity:

"If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation." Romans 10:9-10

There in my bed I gave my life to Jesus. I said, "Lord, I want to be in *Your* heart. I want to cheer *You* on. I want to go where *You* want to go. I give you the Lordship of my life."

I pray the Holy Spirit awakens your understanding about salvation the way he did for me. If this concept of salvation is new to you, take some time to pray, read God's Word, and talk with a friend whom you know has an evident and thriving relationship with Jesus. Here are some Bible verses to start: Romans 6:23, Philippians 2:12–13, John 14:6, Romans 1:16, John 1:12–13, Ephesians 1:13–14, John 3:3–6, John 3:16–18.

⁶ for more on this, read *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart: How to Know for Sure You Are Saved* by J.D. Greear.

Inner Strength

For the longest time after surrendering my life to Jesus as Lord, I was very passionate against the phrase “Jesus in your heart”. I didn’t want anyone to get the wrong idea like I had. Thankfully, God is kind and patient with me. Eventually He helped me understand it is both/and. Jesus is both the Lord and master of my life (I am in his heart) and He lives in me (He is in my heart):

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20 ESV

“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Romans 8:10 ESV

This is how believers can have ultimate strength to be content in all circumstances. You are both “hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3) and “Christ lives in you” (Colossians 1:27). You have both strength on the inside (not your own, but the resurrection power of Jesus!) and the outside (Christ all around you). In this scenario, contentment is not just possible—it is guaranteed! Some of us just need to remember our divine status in Christ.

“The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1

Did you know the Greek word for “strengthen” also means *to enable* or *to give a headstrong boldness*? Reading and believing “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” is like chugging a pre-workout supplement—it’s going to hype up your rebellious

energy to resist crisis mode and it will enhance your ability to choose contentment in this season of motherhood.

Why so Secret?

Don't you wish all of this was more obvious? Like, why are mothers running around with acute stress reactions if the Bible says we can live like lemonade mamas, content and full of joy? I think that's why Paul calls it a secret: "I have learned the *secret* to contentment." It's not because God was trying to hide it, or because Paul doesn't want anyone else to know it.

I think the word "secret" is the indicator of how easy it is to forget this kind of confidence exists. Which makes sense when you see Christian men and women everywhere struggling to live with contentment. This word also speaks to the mysterious nature of contentment found in Christ. John Piper puts it this way:

"When Paul speaks of the mysterious, secret "contentment" or gladness or rejoicing, he is not speaking of the perfectly natural, unmysterious human pleasure that is based on pleasant circumstances. He is speaking of contentment based on Christ. Gladness grounded in Christ. Joy resting on Christ. And that is why contentment in plenty and abundance have to be learned. It is not natural. It is supernatural."⁷

This supernatural ability to turn lemons into lemonade is a free gift from God, but like any good gift, there's some mystery involved. In a way, it's gift wrapped. It is secret, but not inaccessible. Because it is subliminal—not obvious like the 4 stress reactions mentioned earlier—it requires a greater devotion of your attention. To access this secret ability, you need to focus.

⁷ (2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-secret-of-christ-magnifying-contentment-as-the-path-to-costly-love>)

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That's what this whole course is all about. Let's not forget, mama, this is an assault on the enemy. For too long our soul bullies have kept us in a constant crisis mode cycle, robbing our joy and distorting our purpose. But no longer! It is time to take back the territory stolen from motherhood. Are you ready to gloat over your enemies (including your own pride) with a glass of lemonade in hand? I'll pour the first round.

Squeeze the Day

Personal Reflection:

1. What prompted you to read this book?
2. Where in your own life do you see yourself trapped by crisis mode?
3. Which of the three “soul bullies” are you most frustrated by?

Scripture:

Do you know the context of John 10:10? Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (ESV) Read the entire 9th chapter of the book of John, all the way through chapter 10 (or at least to John 10:30). Notice how various characters in the story sink into crisis-mode themselves. What does Jesus do?

Group discussion:

1. Share about a time someone cut through the rosy platitudes of motherhood and really made you feel seen (for me, it was the phrase “FOMO is a dirty liar”)
2. At the beginning of the chapter, I listed the types of crises moms are facing. Which one or two do you relate to most?
3. Read 1 John 2:15-17. How does this affect your understanding of the world’s desire to keep you in crisis-mode for its own profit?