

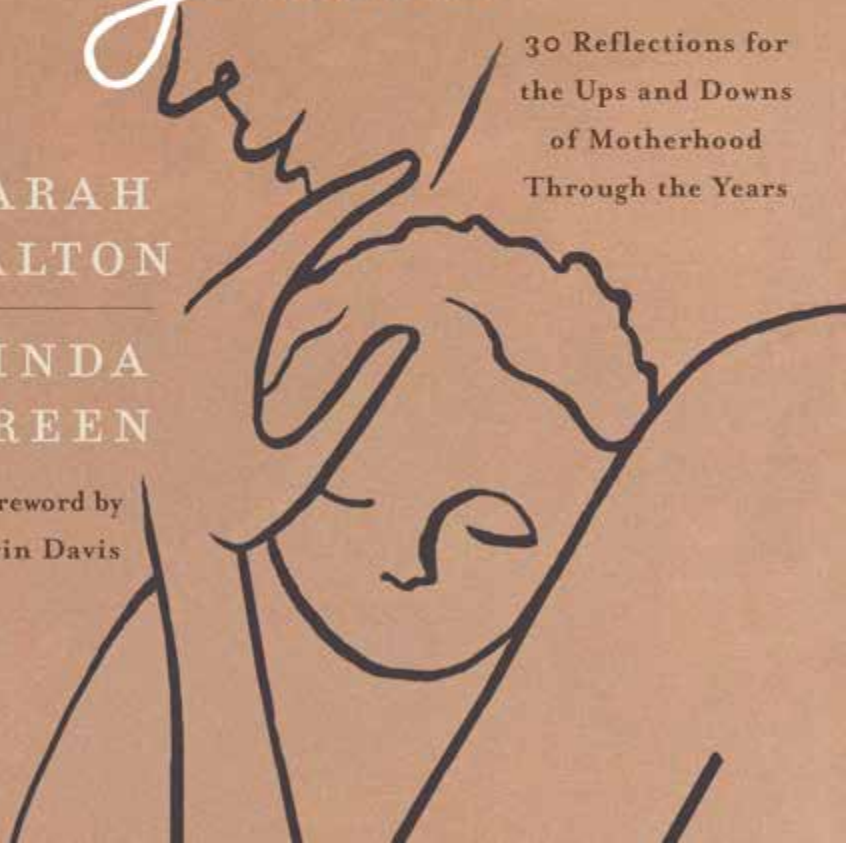
He Gives More Grace

30 Reflections for
the Ups and Downs
of Motherhood
Through the Years

SARAH
WALTON

LINDA
GREEN

Foreword by
Erin Davis



“This is not a how-to manual or a book full of pithy advice. This is 30 days of sweet truth drawn from the deep well of Scripture. Sarah and Linda repeatedly offer the water of life for the thirsty mom’s soul. I found myself reading and rereading entries because of the robust grace they contain. This devotion will be a friend and a mentor to every mom who draws near.”

Jen Oshman, Author; Podcaster; Women’s Ministry Leader

“I loved this! Honest stories, practical help and big grace for real mums, from real mums. This book is like a chat and a cup of coffee with a loving friend. It’s warm, honest, practical and filled with real-life stories that set us free from the burden of trying to be supermum by continually pointing us to God’s generous grace.”

Amy Smith, Podcast Host and Resource Writer, Faith in Kids

“Finding a good devotional book is harder than you think, and finding a thoughtful, hope-filled devotional for moms is even harder. That’s why we are happy to commend these reflections. The writing is accessible, the stories are honest, and the gospel encouragement can be felt on every page. What a needed reminder for moms (and all of us) that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Kevin and Trisha DeYoung, Christ Covenant Church,
Matthews, NC

“I wish I had had this devotional when my children were little! This will be a wonderful companion for every mom who has ever felt exasperated or exhausted in parenting and is looking for wisdom and encouragement—which truly is all of us. Sarah and Linda beautifully show us that God uses trials and weaknesses to mold us and our children, inspiring us to trust in God’s endless grace.”

Vaneetha Risner, Author, *Desperate for Hope* and
Walking through Fire

“*He Gives More Grace* is for every mom living in the daily delights and challenges of motherhood. This book is not a formula for parenting but a respite of joy, written from voices of experience. Sarah and her mom, Linda, know what it is to cling to God’s grace—and they will show you how to do the same. If you wish you could have two wise and experienced friends come alongside you and lift your eyes to see more of the grace of God for you and for your children, this book is for you.”

Courtney Doctor, Director of Women’s Initiatives,
The Gospel Coalition; Author, *From Garden to Glory*

“Linda’s time-tested wisdom and Sarah’s trial-trying perspective make reading this devotional feel like sitting down with trusted mentors. They somehow not only know exactly what you need to hear but deliver it in a way that is astonishingly relatable, easily digestible, practically applicable, and miraculously memorable (even for the overcrowded brain of this mom of little kids). It’s not often that what feels like an easy read turns out to be a life-altering one, but that’s what you’ll find in this book: profound truths presented in a way that will make an immediate and beautiful impact on your motherhood journey.”

Abbey Wedgworth, Author, the Training Young Hearts kids’ series

“At the heart of this book is a prayer and a poem. Need I say more? The short, simple chapters ooze grace and wisdom while being gritty and real about the complexities of parenting. I particularly appreciated the inclusion of discussing chronic illness and children with additional needs, and the value the authors placed on diversity of parenting styles and temperaments.”

Linda Allcock, Author, *Deeper Still* and
Head, Heart, Hands Bible notes

He
Gives
More
Grace

SARAH WALTON | LINDA GREEN

the goodbook
COMPANY

Linda

*To my husband Ray and our children Michael,
Stephen, and Sarah, whom God has used as instruments
of his grace in my life.*

Sarah

*To my husband, Jeff. Thank you for faithfully standing
by my side on the best and hardest of days.*

*And to my children, Ben, Hannah, Haley, and Eli—
it's a true joy and privilege to be your mom. May you
come to know the grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ as
your one and only true hope.*

He Gives More Grace

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Foreword

There is a sign that hangs on the wall in our kitchen. It says, “Just Enough Grace for Today.” Ours is a busy house, thanks to all that comes with raising four boys who, as I write these words, span the stages of childhood from toddlers to teenagers. Several times a week I find that sign cockeyed and hanging from a single nail, likely dislodged by a rambunctious child. It’s a reality of my life as a mother but also, I think, a metaphor.

Few things expose our need for grace more profoundly than parenting. There’s not a single one of us who thinks we’re getting it right all the time. And... we’re right. There are no perfect parents. While we might be comfortable with a margin of error in other endeavors, when it comes to raising our kids, the stakes simply seem too high. We’ve seen how a word spoken in anger can crush a tiny spirit. We’ve heard our children express their desire for more of our time and energy, and we’ve felt guilty when we couldn’t give it to them. We’ve watched as our own sin patterns are passed down to the next generation. We’ve looked into the little faces that sit around our dining-room table and wished we could be the hero they need.

It’s true: parenting provides ample reminders that we are finite and sinful; but, praise God, that’s not the end of the

story. Christian parenting is a master class in grace. When you fail your children, you need grace. When they fail you, they need grace.

God's word declares that where sin abounds, grace super-abounds (Romans 5:20). In other words...

- ~ where there are tantrums, there is abounding grace.
- ~ where there is explosive anger, there is abounding grace.
- ~ where there is selfishness, there is abounding grace.
- ~ where there is bitterness, there is abounding grace.

The gospel means there is grace for every sin you and your child will ever commit. No wonder it's called the good news! Because of Jesus, our families need not be caught on the hamster wheel of fail, try harder, fail again. Instead, we can welcome the very real challenges of family life as opportunities to seek grace and to give it out.

Through the lens of grace, nothing is wasted. God uses your imperfect moments to draw your heart—and your child's—toward his perfect love. This is a paradigm worth flipping.

My own momma was a master grace-giver. I have a treasured memory of her lavishing grace on my oldest son, Eli. He was little—a bundle of blond hair and chunky arms and legs—but that didn't keep him from having BIG feelings. He was mid-meltdown and I was D-O-N-E dealing with the drama. (Been there? Done that?) I barked out a command and expected immediate compliance. Mom chose a grace-infused approach. She dropped to her knees and looked my little boy right in his big, blue eyes and she

said, “Eli, I love you. Your momma loves you. Jesus loves you.” She followed those simple words with a generous grandma hug.

There it was, on display for us all to see: grace. That was the moment I realized that grace is a gift we pass back and forth in our families. It was the tug that started to unravel my unrealistic notion that the best way to showcase the gospel to my children was by being a perfect parent. While I still hate my sin and the ways it puts shrapnel into the hearts of my children, I am also able to see that what God’s word says is true (of course!). Where my sin wounds, grace heals. Where my selfishness separates, grace draws together. Where my parenting falls short, grace fills in the gaps. When my children sin, I seek to hand them the gift of grace. When I sin, they are learning to hand the gift back to me. Grace is the gift that keeps on giving. What a gorgeous gift it is!

Like my own momma did, in this book Linda and Sarah will drop down to eye-level and lovingly speak words of grace to you. As moms themselves, they know the challenges of parenting—but this is not a commiserating book. No, they will lovingly lift your eyes as you read through these pages. Not because they have parenting all figured out but because their identity is not primarily wrapped up in raising kids. They are first and foremost followers of Jesus, fiercely committed to knowing his word and applying it in the spilled-milk places of life. They are the wise friends you need for every heartache and hiccup of parenting. They will point you to the one who longs to lavish his grace on you and your family.

When it comes to parenting, I am fond of saying, “I’m a cracked pot, raising cracked pots.” It’s true! On our best

day, we are nothing more than a family of sinners, desperate for grace. Though yours is a family of cracked pots too, you don't have to live enslaved to guilt. Instead run to the one who longs to lavish you with his grace (Ephesians 1:7-8). In him, your family is sure to find everything you long for. Even if it's just enough grace for today.

*Eli, Noble, Judah, and Ezra's mom
(also known as Erin Davis)*



LINDA GREEN has three grown children (including Sarah) and ten grandchildren. She's married to Ray and lives in Colorado. Linda served as women's ministry director at a large church in Chicago for 23 years.



SARAH WALTON is the author of several books including the award-winning *Hope When It Hurts*. She and her husband Jeff have four children and live in Colorado Springs. She blogs at setapart.net. Find her on instagram @sarahpwalton.

Introduction

Motherhood is one of life's most precious gifts and privileges. And motherhood is also hard.

Giving birth or adopting a child will fill your heart with an unimaginable love that has no end... and, at the same time, it can overwhelm you with the sheer weight of responsibility for the life you've been entrusted with. Motherhood will make you smile, laugh until you cry, and cry until you have no tears left (sometimes all in the same day!). It will make you proud and humble you. Just as you work out how to parent your kids, they'll grow and change, and you'll start working it out all over again. Some days will drag, but the years will fly.

There are a million (literally) "how-to" books on motherhood, to go along with no shortage of advice from parents, in-laws, friends, and women standing behind you in the line at the grocery store when your child starts whining.

We really don't want to add to all that. We just want to remind you, and reassure you, that whatever stage you're at, the thing you most need for the adventure of mothering is the thing you always have: grace.

It is God's grace—his abundant, overflowing, undeserved kindness—that is our greatest treasure even on the best days,

and our anchor and hope also on the hardest ones. So this book is simply an invitation to embrace the grace that God purchased for you at the cross through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ. His grace cannot be earned; it can only be received by those who recognize their helplessness apart from Jesus. Like the nursing baby at our breast, the child who finds refuge on our lap, or the teen who pours out their fears late at night—when we run to, depend on, and cry out to our Father in heaven, he lavishes us with his all-sufficient, endless grace.

That's what we've both learned along the journey of motherhood—that grace makes all the difference.

LINDA'S STORY

I met my husband, Ray, on a blind date. Seven months later we were married; five weeks after that, we were unexpectedly transferred from the Chicago area to New Jersey, where I experienced one of the loneliest years of my life. One month before our first anniversary, after a difficult delivery, I gave birth to a son. Though my recovery was long, nothing could overshadow the joy of becoming a mom! After two years we moved back “home” and added another son and a daughter to our family. I loved everything about being a mom but, increasingly, fear of the “what if’s” plagued me. What if something happened to my child? What if he rejected Christ? What if I failed to equip him to live in this world? It was as I read God’s word in that season that I began to experience the peace and freedom of putting the full weight of my confidence in Christ.

I loved being the mother of boys, but I was also thankful when God blessed me with a daughter. I prayed that, one day, we would be close friends and sisters in Christ. So it was hard when, as a teenager, Sarah began to struggle with the

pressures of a socially aggressive school culture and to rebel against us as her parents. Honestly, I was at a loss. I had just been hired by our church as co-director of the children's ministry, which ruled out homeschool options. We were unaware that she had contracted Lyme disease, which was taking a toll on her mental and physical health.

I can look back now and see that, behind the scenes, God was faithfully at work, answering prayers in ways we couldn't see at the time. In fact it was in what felt like our darkest night that Sarah, in a juvenile psychiatric hospital, surrendered her will and life to Christ.

As the last of our three children left home, I humbly marveled at God's grace through all the joys and sorrows of parenting. What I couldn't see then was how much I would need to continue to lean on God's grace in the season ahead. For when our first grandchild came along several years later, we entered what was to us the unfamiliar world of special needs.

In God's kindness, 45 years of marriage have blessed us with three children, two beautiful daughters-in-law, a faithful son-in-law, and ten precious grandchildren ranging from age two to 16. Two of our grandchildren have special needs, and all are a good gift from our loving Father. We love doing life with our loved ones, always praying that God will continue the good work of grace he has begun in each of us. This book is the fruit of that grace, reminding me that whatever comes, God gives more grace.

SARAH'S STORY

As much as it's truly a privilege to write this book alongside my own mother, our relationship hasn't always been sunshine and roses. As I navigated my middle-school and high-school years,

I spiraled downwards, often lashing out at the very one who loved, fought for, and sacrificed for me the most—my mom. But those years, though painful, didn't have the last word. The Lord brought me through that painful season and restored the relationship between my mom and me, which has blossomed into one of the relationships I cherish most today. Only a few years after the Lord set my feet on a new path, I met my husband, Jeff, and we've now been married for 19 years.

We've been blessed with four children, aged 16 and under. In many ways, motherhood has been far different than I expected, bringing both blessings and challenges beyond what I ever could have imagined. We've navigated special needs in one child, chronic illness in myself and all four children, financial woes and job loss, and countless challenges in between. And the story isn't yet finished. But mixed within all the difficulties, the years have also been filled with milestones, laughter, memories, celebrations, deep conversations, and countless lessons learned. Motherhood has truly been both the best and hardest thing I've ever done.

GRACE IN MOTHERHOOD

If you're picking up this book, we assume you're somewhere along the path of this wonderful, crazy, always-changing journey of motherhood. And we want one thing to be clear—we don't have all the answers! However, with over 60 years combined of navigating motherhood from infancy to adulthood, we have come to find God's grace to be a central theme throughout every season—and so it is the central theme of this book. Sister, whether you're in the throes of sleepless nights with an infant or navigating the complexities of the teen years or somewhere in between, we pray this book will

meet you there in a tangible and practical way. We don't sugarcoat the realities of motherhood but enter into them honestly, because that is where God's grace meets us.

Because motherhood is as unpredictable as the weather, these 30 chapters are short and accessible, and you can read them in any order, on your own or with a group of other moms. And in each chapter we've summed it up in a single, short sentence—"Grace in a Line." Hopefully, you can carry that into your day and put it to use to point yourself to the love of Jesus as you seek to love your family.

And just to say, if you are reading this outside of North America, we appreciate that the way we abbreviate mother to "mom" looks odd to you. Thank you in advance for silently and graciously switching the "o" for a "u" every time you see it.

So curl up on your sofa with a cup of coffee or tea (or, if necessary, grab a few moments of solitude in the place moms often find to be the only place where they can find it—the bathroom) and let God's grace wash over you as you read the pages of this book. Wherever you find those few moments of quiet, we're grateful for the privilege of sharing in this journey of motherhood with you.

Whatever joys and sorrows, questions and insecurities, excitement and burdens you may be carrying today, know that you're not carrying them alone. You have a Savior who not only sees you but who knows exactly what you need to care for the children he's entrusted to you. Because, when all is said and done, you can be assured of this: he gives more grace (James 4:6).

With love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Sarah". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop on the "L" and a long, sweeping tail on the "h".

O N E

Why Grace Is Such Good News

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8

GRACE IN A LINE

I am God’s beloved daughter, and he will
be enough for me today, all day.

A young mother recently asked me what I would say to the younger version of myself if I had the chance. Without hesitation I knew what I would say: “Don’t be so hard on yourself; God gives grace.” She sighed and replied, “How do you do that?”

Her question prompted me to think of how often I have underestimated and failed to rely on the grace of God in my parenting. Grace is one of those words Christians use all the time, but it needs to be understood before we can start to appreciate the gift that it is. Biblically, grace is God’s favor bestowed on undeserving sinners without any basis of merit. God’s gifts of spiritual and earthly blessings are all grace. We

have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and we are being sanctified by grace through faith as well. Every breath we breathe comes through grace until we are in our eternal home, which itself will be a gift of grace. In the Christian life, everything is of grace.

GRACE APPLIED

When my kids were young, I knew God had saved me by grace apart from my own works; what I didn't understand was the importance of preaching grace to myself, kneading it into my life every day. Without realizing it, I was still living according to law: I was trying to please God and live his way by using my natural strengths and abilities to be a good wife, mother, and friend. But in all my striving and busyness, I was becoming overwhelmed with all the good things I was trying to do, until, one day, I collapsed on my bed and cried, "Lord, I can't do it all!" And in that moment God's grace was there to meet me as I sensed the Spirit whisper to my heart, I never asked you to.

God began to show me ways that I was focusing more on what I was doing for him than on what Jesus had accomplished for me! I didn't have to do it all because Jesus had done it all for me and continued to pour his grace out onto my life day by day. Of course we are called to do good works and to live holy lives, but we can only do that in a God-glorifying way by keeping the glorious truths of the gospel front and center in our lives. So I began to ask God to show me how I could experience the joy, freedom, and fruitfulness that were available by his grace.

God taught me first to remember that our salvation is in Christ (it's all about grace) and that the way we continue in

the Christian life is to “work out our salvation” (Philippians 2:12). We are saved by grace, and we live by grace, “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (v 13). Even the power to obey God is through his Spirit—a gift, a grace. The same grace through which God saved us continues to flow to us each day in countless ways that bless us and show his benevolence towards us. God gives us gracious gifts of family and friends, provides for our needs, strengthens us in weakness, and equips us with all that we need for the work he calls us to do. From his good hand come gifts of laughter, tears, restful sleep, beautiful sunsets, restored health, protection, and comfort in our griefs. Everything we have been given is an undeserved grace from our generous Father.

The second thing we need to remember is that grace, not goodness, defines who we are. What’s the first thing you think of when you read Ephesians 5:1: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children”? Were you more struck by the command in that verse or the statement of your identity? Often our eyes fall on what we should do rather than on who we are: here, the staggering reminder that we have been chosen and adopted as God’s beloved daughters. Take this in, sister. You are loved, and you are loved not because you are a perfect mom who is always patient with her children or keeps a spotless, organized home but because God set his affection upon you and chose you to be his daughter before the world was created, and sent his Son to redeem your life so that one day you can live forever in his presence. That is amazing grace.

This means that, when you have lost your temper and feel like a horrible mom, God draws near to you with tenderness

and love. When you turn to him, he is quick to forgive you because your debt was fully paid by Jesus at the cross. Your Father sustains you in your weakness and is at work redeeming the moments when everything seems to have gone wrong. God's grace teaches us to run to him on our good days and our bad days, because he loves us.

So, whether you are fumbling your way through the exhausting newborn season with a colicky baby, attempting to patiently help a teenager navigate their wildly fluctuating emotions, or running children from activity to activity, this life-giving truth remains the same: "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

How do you experience God's grace each day? Here is my answer:

- ~ Continue to grow in the knowledge and understanding of the grace Jesus purchased for you on the cross (2 Peter 3:18).
- ~ Take hold of the truth that "sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14).
- ~ Set your mind on the hope and riches of God's glorious inheritance, to which we have been called, and "the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe" in Christ's resurrection (Ephesians 1:18-20).
- ~ Trust and rest in the finished work of God in Christ—read Hebrews 4:3.

- ~ Trust that God's sovereign plan is wiser and better than your plan (regardless of what a day might bring) because his plan is an eternal one—read Romans 8:28-29.
- ~ Keep watch for God's daily gifts of kindness, such as a friend taking your children for an hour or a day so that you can have some time to yourself, or the sun shining after a string of rainy days, or a child's snuggles on your lap. God's gifts of grace are all around us!

Being a mom who strives after a standard set by herself or others is exhausting. Instead, take long and frequent breaths of gospel grace, trusting that God is able to make all grace abound to you so that you may abound in every good work he calls you to for his glory. Because, after all and most of all, you are his beloved daughter.

REFLECT

- ~ Are there ways in which you struggle to apply the good news of God's grace in your motherhood?
- ~ What's one way you can rest in his grace today?

