

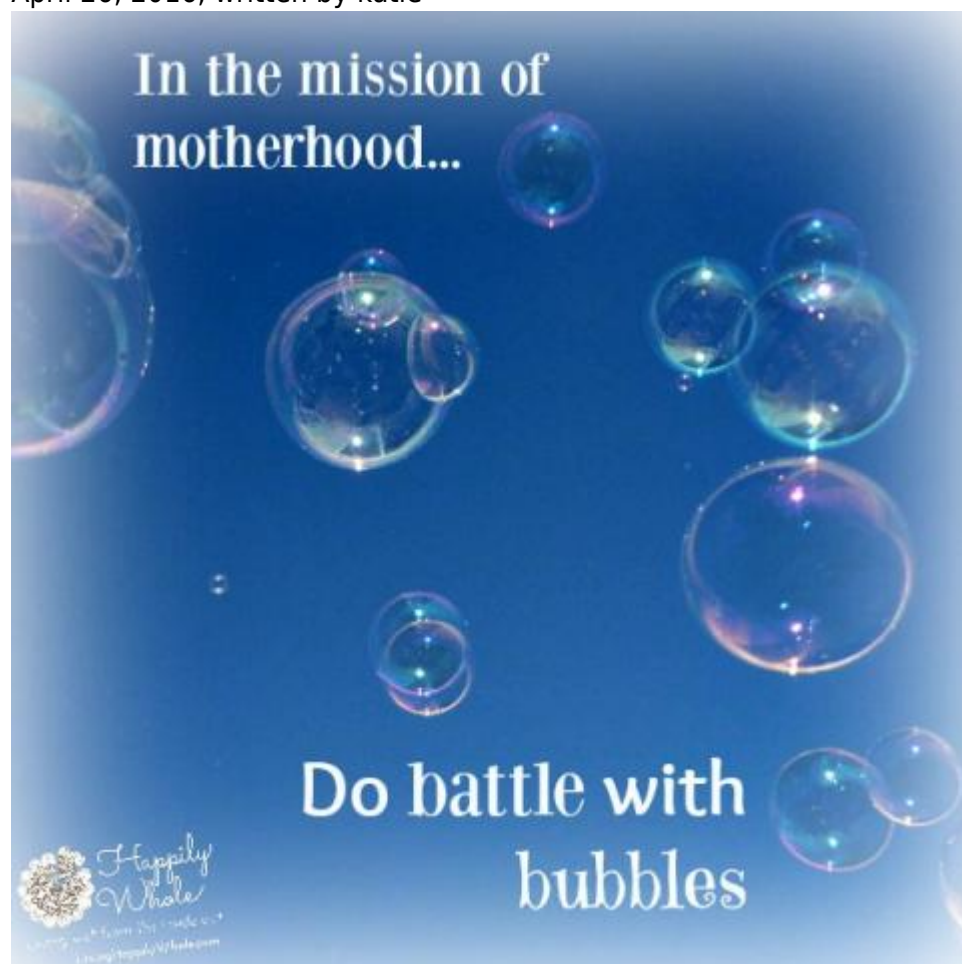


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A Parenthood Battle Between Toothpaste and Bubbles

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You ever have 'one of those days'? Well, I've had one of those months when it comes to mothering. You know, the kind when parenting almost paralyzes you and you feel like you might just fall off the sane wagon into the crazy cart? Oh, how I hope you can relate...but, either way, I'm going to live this out loud because I think all us moms are wading through the wreckage and doing uphill battles against the world. The details of our scenario don't really matter because all moms already know the

beautiful pain of purposeful parenting and the scars we suffer from when we stay the course.

And, I was there—exhausted and scarred, weary of trying my every day training tactics. It was time to step my mama game up a notch and parent our problems with purpose. It had reached sink or swim time!

Right when I thought I'd just wave my white flag, instead of catapulting my half insane self out a window, I claimed quietness by retreating to the bathroom (children still pursuing me from outside my only shield, a locked door). As a hot shower poured over me prayers for perseverance, wisdom and peace poured out. When I emerged, dripping wet but no longer defeated, I resolved to mobilize into full mama-battle mode. No type of trouble was going to take me out of my mission field: motherhood.

I was ready for combat of a different kind, the kind when we lead our families to Christ at all costs. And I had a plan...

The next day, unannounced and unexpected, I arrived at her school suited up as prosecuting parent but camouflaged as compassionate mommy. It's the sneaky part we play when the rubber's met the rocky road of childhood rebellion and it's time to take them down. It's when we have to remind them of the ground rules and honor our parenting call to demand ***respect over love and allow failure instead of subconsciously pursuing friendship.***

But wait. Allow me to digress so you see my soft heart in what seems like a strict position. I adhere to the idea of 'parenting with Biblical purpose'. ***It makes motherhood a mission and not a blind missile.*** I'm sure my family rolls their eyes at my enthusiastic attempts to creatively train these girls up with godly character, underlining disciplinary action with life lessons and relentlessly weaving the Word of the Lord into every issue. But they can roll their eyes all they want because I believe leading them towards Christ is our single most significant mission as mothers.

To me, discipline is less about offering a hard hand and more about holding their hands with intent to train, teach and mold. It's instilling ***a lifelong pursuit of allowing God to chisel us into more of who He wants us to be according to Biblical values in the midst of a sea of broken moral boundaries!*** It's instilling a longing for sanctification when we're surrounded by sin.

I want my family to take the high, narrow road. I want us to walk between the canyons of ***cowardly complacency and unconcealed corruption.*** I pray we can balance on a tightrope avoiding a fall into ***silencing our souls and boldly breaking God's boundaries.*** A parent's loving discipline helps their child balance when worldly ground shakes beneath them.

A reminder from the Word makes it clear: *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."* Romans 12:2

So poised in purposeful parenting, I set out to pay a surprise visit to my most recent 'squeaky wheel'. She met me right where I wanted her, with pleasant surprise yet cautious curiosity. She knew she'd been stepping out of line and butting up hard against boundaries for quite some time. She may have also witnessed my meltdown....

I was prepared to act as corporal to God, my commander, and lead her back on course. Armed with scripture, a few props and some special treats, I led her out to my car to enjoy lunch together.

After eating, I handed her a tube of toothpaste and a paper plate. I asked her to squeeze all the toothpaste on to the plate. Delighted at the opportunity to make a gooeey mess, she quizzically complied.

I proceeded to request that she put all the toothpaste back into the tube. Amused, she attempted it but, of course, failed.

I explained. Sometimes we make messes that can't be cleaned up. While they may seem harmless, the things we say and do can cause hurt, pain and cover a nice clean surface with selfishness and pride (the roots of her recent issues). I reassured her of my deep love for her and my desire to overlook the messes she'd been squeezing out all over. But, I felt a little like that plate lately!

Her eyes searched mine as I encouraged her to search her heart.

Next, I opened a bottle of bubbles and the window. We blew some into the beautiful blue sky. It was lovely! Bubbles shimmer, casting light and catching our eyes. They spread beauty and mesmerize us. I observed out loud how those bubbles are opposite of the slimy, messy toothpaste. Like acts of love, kindness, respect and obedience, they draw our attention to their beauty. She has the ability to draw our hearts closer together and to honor Christ through her acts of beauty! She can bless others as she shines His shimmering light through her good choices. She understood.

Without expecting an answer, I asked her, "What'll it be? Toothpaste or bubbles? You're choice"

One battle won...not by me, not by her. But by Him. But a surprise lunch with a lesson isn't the end of this mama's mission. There's always more to come with kids and purposeful parenting! I'll be sharing what came next....

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