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Rehash Happiness

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Have you ever wondered how home life turned into such a hurry, such a mad dash of daunting to dos and tendencies to pounce rather than pardon?

Oh, this is so revealing and ultimately ugly of me to announce. But, I have to believe the Oldham's are not the only ones! (….right?….)

We were stuck in a slump. It started with me. I'll take full responsibility and call it a 'single-mom-go-e-sassy slump' since I AM the adult setting the tone.

You see, as parents we are all ***'bell sheep'***, the head sheep wearing the bell that sounds when we walk ahead. It leads our little ones towards the stability of home, towards safe pastures, guiding them on the path towards the ways of our Shepherd.

So, it's my job to lead my little girls in a direction with God as my guide. I ring the bell, create the

boundaries and pave the path. It's much more than making logistical, day to day decisions for them. It's instilling an attitude of gratitude and anchoring their souls in a life of love, faith and generosity.

But my bell had become a little too loud, my boundaries a bit too tight and my path, well, wavy.

I was letting the loud noises of the outside world blur my own motherly mantra [1].

The world's stress weighed on me and my mind raced away from the more pressing matter: How much of me were my girls were getting? And of what quality was what they received?

More specifically, ***what is letting my stress sway me to the ways of the world really teaching them?***

Up until then, I truly thought I was on a roll. You know, the kind when life's sailing along smoothly with a song and a sense of contentment. I finally felt like little old me mattered and my mothering made sense. I possessed a certain sense of purpose in my work and at home. It was a relief to feel like I'd entered a new season after a worn and torn one had me on my knees. I was finally standing with God by my side!

Then, just as it all seemed to be coming together, this bell sheep's gate slammed shut!

The old adage held true, when it rains, it pours! And this rainstorm ran me right out of our pasture onto paved ground where not just me, but all three of us slipped, skidded and skinned our knees. Issues with insurance, technical trip ups with the website, car problems costing too much money and some other personal matters nagging hard and fast at my heart.

All at once my new season went stale as I entered a realm of restlessness by night and heightened anxiety by day. ***I held an empty cup of patience when it came to parenting.*** Oh, and on top of it all, I was experiencing my very first case of real writers block causing me to question why in the world I am doing all this [2]!

It's sad, really, how weak my faith is when I'm so hastily taken off track as temptation to worry too much tantalizes my human senses. ***If only staying still in the seat of my soul, where unwavering purpose resides, came more naturally for my easily distracted mind.***

Is it that way for you, too? Do you shift your gaze too easily from what's in your core only to concentrate on worldly worries more?

That's what happened to me! I let life's petty problems prevent me from seeing the big picture.

I was losing grips on my faith while my flock of two little lambs looked for leadership. What they found instead were ways to reflect my restlessness. Children reflect what they witness in us. So my stresses stared right back at me in the faces and actions of my girls.

M*y anxious attitude bounced back at me in their behavior*. Whining, bickering and disregard for my directions. My cute, fuzzy little lambs now all ruffled and testing their boundaries.

Together we strayed from the pasture and spiraled into a family funk.

Until it all came to a screeching halt as I looked into my littlest lamb's face one morning. Nothing huge or out of the ordinary. ***But it felt like nothing short of a force of nature in the form of my Godly Father speaking to me.*** As if He sweetly murmured into my mommy's ear through the look on her fresh morning face, *'Enough is enough…You're not leaning on your faith, my Love….I know you*

have stress but only I know what's best. Listen up and look at that little face. Pick up your bell and lead.'

With that sweet smile, my night-gowned four year old ran to me, 'Mama, is it Mother's Day?! I love you! I'm going to make a card for you right now.' I don't know what gave her the idea because Mother's Day was no where near! But she showed such joy in celebrating me, her sassy-stressed-o-t-single-mom I'd been becoming!

I melted at the sound of her words. I remembered my words to her in the midst of a recent sibling squabble, 'God gave us voices to use them with kindness and to share love with one another.' She'd given me a dose of my own motherly medicine!

I stood there looking at her, in love with her. I turned my attention back to heaven: *'Yes, Father. You've reopened the gates and I'm ready to ring soft and slow again THANK YOU for showing me her same sweet face in a new light this morning.'*

That was a Saturday morning. I smiled at her and scooped her up into my arms saying, 'I'm so sorry, Sweet Pea. Let's go get your sister and take some time to rehash happiness.' My apology confused her, I'm sure, but I had an idea!

In that moment, I decided to rekindle the love in our little family, to lean into my Lord and to take up my Shepherd's bell once again. We cooked waffles together, sat and ate while I asked them to list things that make them happy at home. We all took turns sharing silly antics and special recent memories of life together as a faith-filled family.



Guess what topped their lists of what makes them happy at home?

Mommy. ME! What?! How humbling after my recent pitiful performance. The unconditional love of my lambs proved to me that no matter what stress and struggle I feel, I am their source to stability. ***I am their bell sheep.***

We rehashed happiness. Simple. It was a way to ***count blessings*** I'd been ignoring, a way to reboot our attitudes.

Our list was long and we've decided to keep adding to it. When we feel happy about something at

home or notice a blessing (big or small), we write it on a simple torn piece of construction paper and put it into pottery containers the girls painted. It was this re-hashing of happiness, remembering what's good and right in our little world, that put us back on the right path.

The stress in my life is not all solved. It never will be. God never promised this life would be stress-free. But, He sure did grant us gifts of love and lessons of living with a peaceful purpose. He is always there to sustain even in the midst of a messy world around us.

So, always look for ways to rehash happiness in your life. Lean on Him and remember no matter what's happening in our adult worlds, we set the tone and offer stability... **we are their world** and must lead them to the tune of our bells.

I know I won't be perfect, but I plan to remember this particular lesson on perspective and parenting…every time the weight of the world feels too heavy, it might be time to count my blessings and rehash the happiness.

Living the Life of a Bell Sheep,

Katie

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