

CHAPTER TWELVE



**MOTHERHOOD IS  
WORTH IT**

The Power of Moments

by Shawni Pothier



Shawni grew up with stars in her eyes about motherhood. She pined away for the day she would have dozens of perfectly primped children lined up in a row . . . all with names beginning with “M.”

Shawni grew up and married her college sweetheart, Dave, who gave her those children she dreamed of having. Although she didn’t get her dozens (and only one of their names starts with an “M”), she feels blessed beyond blessed to have five of her favorite people as her children . . . even when they are complete ragamuffins (which is often). Shawni has found so much joy in the journey of motherhood and loves to share that joy with others through her blog at [71toes.com](http://71toes.com).

Shawni’s youngest child, Lucy, was born with a rare genetic syndrome that causes blindness. Although this diagnosis has been heart-wrenching in so many ways, Lucy has been an amazing blessing and has taught their family to appreciate the small things.

With writing as one of her biggest passions, Shawni and her mother co-authored a book called “A Mother’s Book of Secrets.” In 2011 she had the honor of being named the National Young Mother of the Year by American Mothers.

Life is made up of moments, big and small.

There are the grand ones, like the moment your sweetheart slips that ring on your finger or when you hear that glorious newborn cry following the struggle of birth.

There are the awful ones, like when you hear your son's arm-bone crack when he falls off his bike.

And there are the heart-wrenching ones that make time stop sharp as the doctor tells you your daughter has a rare syndrome that will change her life. As you try to take in the awful news, you wonder how you can stay standing as the world starts to spin around you.

There are the thankless moments that encompass the minutia of motherhood:

- Listening to our children bluntly report that what we've painstakingly made for dinner is gross.
- Wiping up throw up.
- Picking up hundreds of random objects strewn about the house over, and over, and over again.
- Scrubbing ballpoint pen off couches.
- Wiping fingerprints from walls.
- Having teenagers talk back.

But that's not what this chapter is about.

This chapter is about the moments of motherhood that make it great. It's about those magical moments that swell in your heart and somehow make all the other tough and worrisome moments shrink in their wake. I'm talking about the moments where the air turns thick with love and your heart turns to mush.

Now, please note that the moments I'm talking about are not the perfect ones where everyone is dressed and clean with good manners abounding. They aren't usually the ones that are planned out or even anticipated. Instead, they are those moments that tend to hit unexpectedly. They are the ones that make you wish you had a camera attached to your hip, but since you don't, you try to memorize the details.

I am a photographer, which means I have pictures of practically every moment of my children's lives. But some of my most vivid "moments" are cataloged only in my heart: My son calling from his friend's house to tell me to look at the sunset. The entire-face-encompassing smile stretched across my daughter's face as we raced our bikes through the neighborhood one day in the fall . . . crunchy leaves swirling around as a backdrop. Sitting at a fast-food picnic table on a road trip and noticing how the sun slant makes my ragamuffin children appear to have halos.

Yes, some moments you can only capture with your heart.

Those are the moments that make up the magic of motherhood. Those are the ones we must let seep into our hearts and wash over the inevitable frustrations that also come along with the job.

The problem is that we have to stop long enough to notice these moments. Sometimes they tend to be embedded in the day-to-day chaos.

Sometimes they quite simply *are* the chaos.

There was a day a couple months ago where I actually started writing down the "moments" as they rolled on in front of me because my "moment" was realizing that wow, life is nuts.

Let's start by setting the stage:

All five of my children are home from school . . . all of them with at least one friend traipsing through the kitchen while I cook dinner for us and for a sick pregnant friend to whom I offered to bring dinner two nights ago but forgot.

The phone is ringing off the hook.

Even if I wanted to answer the phone (which I don't), I would never be able to find the darn thing because our family has a knack for leaving those cordless things in the wackiest places. (The freezer? The pantry? Yep, I've found it there . . . and the sad thing is that I'm just as guilty as the rest of them.)

My six-year-old is a broken record begging me to help her scrounge up some old fabric scraps so she can decorate a turkey drawing she's supposed to glam up for a school project. I keep promising I'll do it as soon as I get dinner in the oven.

I find my cell phone when it alerts me to a text, followed by some sort of important phone call, and as soon as I answer, I have three children suction-cupped to my side thinking that NOW is the time to talk to me about their day.

My twelve-year-old is getting ready for tennis and needs something to eat before she goes but is teary-eyed because she's in so much pain from her new elastics the orthodontist stuck on today. I stop and pull out the blender frantically throwing together a smoothie before her carpool comes.

The volleyball carpool has just called saying they have pneumonia and can't drive tonight when I'm supposed to be at book club.

My husband's 40th birthday is coming up, and my mind is partially wrapped around the phone conversation I had earlier with my friend who's husband is also turning 40 and the surprise party we need to get out invites for as soon as possible.

My thirteen-year-old is plunking hard on the piano because he's mad (again) that I won't let him quit piano lessons. And he can NOT seem to get that section of that

song he's playing right. My heart sinks because I need to be in there helping him, but I need to be in here too or the sauce will burn, (and I need to be three other places too).

The seven-year-old and her friend (having given up on decorating the turkey) run in from the trampoline screaming because they have found there is a dead bee, of all things, in my daughter's hair.

All this is set to the music of my feisty four-year-old in one of her awful moods screaming for milk every time I turn around.

And just as the chaos reaches the peak of it's cacophony of noise my phone dings politely with a text from my dear husband reminding me I need to go vote. Let's note here that the voting booth closes in ten minutes.

Sometimes it takes a single moment like that to make you stop and realize how silly it is to be frantically chasing your tail and not really accomplishing anything. For some reason, that text on that day last fall amid the swirl of activity was my "moment." I don't know why, but it made me stop and almost laugh at the prospect of loading up all the kids in the car and rushing over to vote, picturing the guy there closing up the booth saying, "Sorry ma'am, you just missed your chance."

For some reason it made me stop and soak in the fact that I was there. Right where I needed to be. Not necessarily getting to everything I wanted to, but I was there, corralling chaos. My list of "to dos" would get done eventually. The world would go on if I didn't get my son to volleyball for one night. It would be okay even if I did burn the sauce and had to throw some Top Ramen on the stove instead. What was important was that I was *there*. And I was trying my best. I stopped right there to memorize everything around me because it hit me that my lists and "to dos" will always be there. But this precious afternoon with my children would disappear and meld slowly into another day . . . another set of worries and things to do.

Yes, sometimes the moments that fill up a mother's day don't seem to be so sweet. But if we step back and stop taking it all quite so seriously, we realize that life is good. So very good. And that brings the sweetness into the memories of even the craziest of moments.

I love this quote about interruptions:

*"When you are exasperated by interruptions, try to remember that their very frequency may indicate the value of your life. Only people who are full of help and strength are burdened by other persons' needs. The interruptions which we chafe at are the credentials of our indispensability. The greatest condemnation that anybody could incur—and it is a danger to guard against—is to be so independent, so unhelpful, that nobody ever interrupts us, and we are left comfortably alone." - Anonymous (from The Anglican Digest)*

I guess those interruptions to what could otherwise be sweet moments can *be* our "moments" as well. And it all works together to make up the beautiful tapestry of motherhood we are weaving day-by-day, crazy minute by crazy minute.

### **Stop Long Enough to Notice the Moments**

A few weeks ago I read an interesting article about how tiring and burdensome motherhood is. Other mothers had made comments on the article in full accord. They complained of the mundane, dreary parts of motherhood.

I felt sorry for those mothers. Have I not felt the same way? Sure, motherhood is tough, there's no doubt about that. There are moments of pure mayhem when you think you just might explode if one more person needs your attention or one more "thing" is strewn around the house. But I felt sorry for those mothers because I realized in order to feel the way they were feeling, they must have forgotten to stop for long enough to soak in the moments. I know those moments were inevitably there . . . they always are in motherhood. But these complaining moms simply hadn't noticed them. They hadn't let those velvet moments wash away the abrasiveness of it all. They had forgotten to pause in the eye of their storms.

We all forget at times.

But if we can just train ourselves to stop and remember, how much happier we will be!

I love these thoughts:

*"Being There [is] an emotional and spiritual shift, of succumbing to Being Where You Are When You Are, and Being There as much as possible. Its about crouching on the floor and getting delirious over the praying mantis your son just caught instead of perusing a fax or filling the dishwasher while he is yelling for your attention and you distractedly say over your shoulder: 'Oh, honey, isn't that a pretty bug.' It's about being attuned enough to notice when your kid's eyes shine so you can make your eyes shine back." - Iris Krasnow*

This is all good in theory. I mean, "being there" has been my mantra for years. I continually tell myself to slow down and make my eyes shine back at my children when theirs are sparkling at me. But just having good intentions doesn't necessarily do the trick, especially when driving five carpools, trying to help with four sets of homework, and still getting kids in bed at a decent hour. We must train ourselves to stop every now and then and soak in what is ours.

Sometimes I tend to think, "As soon as I'm done with \_\_\_\_\_, then things will run smoothly. As soon as I finish my responsibilities doing \_\_\_\_\_, then I'll be happy. Then I'll have time to skip off into the sunset enjoying my family."

But you know what? Life doesn't work like that. Things are never going to be "done." I'll never be all the way caught up. Sure, I can get more organized. I can implement new

systems. But even after my big house-clean-out-mind-organization, there will still be another deadline. There will always be papers that need filing and emails that need replies. Fingernails will still need to be clipped. The toilets will still need scrubbing. All my children will still try to talk to me at the same time, inevitably while I'm on the phone, and there will still be forty-five things pulling me in every direction.

But if we just remember that it's okay to stop and notice the "moments," we will really begin to enjoy this journey of Motherhood.

All these thoughts were brought into focus by an incident I had a little while ago.

It was an ordinary evening at our house and I was putting the girls to bed.

I was bugged.

It had been a long day. I was tired. I was achy. And I was ready for my children to drift off into sweet slumber.

I told them to brush their teeth.

They giggled and wrestled.

I begged them to put their pajamas on.

They formed a dog-pile on my nine-year-old's bed.

I knelt down for prayers in a huff, ready to launch into a lecture about how late it was and how we MUST get to bed.

But as I looked over at them all in a huddle of laughter and smiles—feet, arms, and straggly hair going every which way—something clicked inside me.

I forgot my achy tired-ness and filled up with still-ness and love for that moment in time—those three sweet girls froze time still for just a moment, all bunched up on the bed together. And I stood still long enough to memorize them in my mind.

Sometimes I forget to cherish the "doing," and instead I worry too much about the "getting it done." I wanted another thing on my mile-long list checked off. Of course, there were things that needed to be done. But what was five extra minutes going to hurt?

So I joined them. My smile joining theirs.

I love the journey of motherhood itself. Life is about more than just getting to that summit at the end of the road. All the accomplishments in the world won't give us much joy if we don't appreciate and soak in all the minutia that got us there.

I just need to stop and remind myself of that every once in a while.

In my mind, there is nothing quite so good as to be a Mother (except to be a wife, but that is a chapter for another book). And I must cherish those moments that make up my Motherhood—the good ones, the wild and crazy ones, and the heart-melting ones—while they last. Because before I know it these children will grow up and go off to create their own stories, and I'll be left with just the memories of all those life-enriching “interruptions” echoing through my house. How I hope that by then I'll look back and feel that I cherished the moments enough!

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## **Drinking Life**

They tumbled out of the car, ice cream cones in hand, and raced down the hill to the playground. When sticky fingers were licked clean, the games began. Freeze tag, up and down the slide, on the swings, then off again.

Up above, under sprawling branches, we watched them play, smiling as their laughter wound its way up the hill. The sunset behind the trees and a cool night breeze ruffled the leaves and the wisps of hair falling out of my ponytail.

Later, we joined them, kicking off our shoes and racing through the grass until the darkness nearly swallowed us all. Our laughter joined with theirs as we darted here and there, just out of reach, then intentionally into each other's arms.

Drinking life.

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Just past midnight, I settled onto the couch, just me and the baby. I hushed her hungry cries, stroking her cheek and reveled in the divine harmony of mother and child. It's magical, really, this life giving. For a brief moment, her eyes looked into mine—tired, but bright, and our souls spoke, forging our connection just a little tighter than before.

Together, she and me. Drinking life.

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I live for them, these moments. When the heavens open up and I catch little glimpses of the bigger picture, the bigger purpose of all this that we do. Not always extraordinary, but profound in the impression they give, the imprints they leave on my heart. Would that I were never too busy, too plugged into the mundane, the unnecessary, to breathe, to revel, to drink of this, my life.

**- Jenny Proctor**

## **Memories Made in the Moment**

One morning, my kids were acting crazy, running around the house while I finished the breakfast dishes. Their noise increased, so I went to find out what they were doing. I approached my bedroom and heard giggling in my closet. The door was shut, lights turned off, with the vacuum blaring inside. The frustrated mother in me would have yelled at them, scolded them for turning the vacuum on when they weren't using it, and forcing them out of my room. With the thought to live in the moment, I opened the door and surprisingly found myself laughing. My kids were huddled around the vacuum, making pictures with their hands on the ceiling. The light from the vacuum was helping them create shadows. They asked me to join them, so I sat down for a few minutes to play and made a memory with my kids.

You see mothers, *Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass . . . it's about learning to dance in the rain.* So, let's enjoy life and "dance in the rain" with our children. Turn up the music and dance in the living room together. Cuddle on the couch with blankets and books to read family favorites. Dress up and make funny faces. Laugh and play games. Go for a walk and see the world through our children's eyes. Remember, the dishes and laundry can wait. The phone can take a message. The computer screen will still be there when we get back. However, childhood is fleeting and moments with our children are to be made now.

- **Mindy Henry**

## **Tuesday Was One of the Good Days**

Tuesday was one of the good days. You know the ones? The days where you feel the magic of being a mom. Where for just a little while the laundry and dishes don't matter and the feel of your baby in your arms and the sunshine on your face stops time.

It was a beautiful day, the sun shining and birds chirping. I took Em outside for some fresh air and playtime. We wandered around the cul-de-sac while she discovered bugs and rocks, all the while jabbering in her little toddler voice.

We continued our walk and a moment later she stopped me rather urgently in front of the neighbor's lawn, handing me her egg-shaped purple sidewalk chalk that had hitched a ride in her little fist, and I drew a heart and a kitty because those are the shapes that always make her smile. Eventually we found our way back to our driveway where she ran across the grass toward the trampoline. I hoisted her up and was rewarded with one of her trademark grins that lit her face. We bounced and bounced while she laughed and squealed.

Then I lay back, and she climbed onto my stomach, laying her head on my chest. Soon, in her little binkie-hindered toddler voice, she started to sing "Tink-o . . . tink-o . . . tink-o . . ." I joined her and we sang "Twinkle Star" and "Itsy-bitsy Spider" over and over. Soon she had quieted to just humming, and then silence. In that moment, with my baby girl on my chest, both of us bouncing softly with the sun warming us, I wanted time to stop. I complain. I

whine. I get tired of it all. But I do realize that this time is fleeting. My last baby is growing and I can't stop her. Too soon the moment was gone. She needed some lunch and a nap. The day moved on with chores, making dinner, bath time, etc. But that one moment has stayed with me ever since. I need to create more moments like it on a daily basis so that when the more mundane moments of motherhood start to crowd in, I can remember *that* magical moment in the sunshine and the feel of my baby in my arms.

- **Misty Pidcock**

## **Peace**

If you would have happened by a moment ago, you would have found me soaking in silence and feeling amazement. I was making my nightly rounds, kissing little sleeping heads, lingering and watching them sleep. Turning off lights and locking doors . . . but then instead of locking, I opened the last one and stepped outside into the cool, still night. Enjoying the feel of the air on my bare arms, neck, and face, I lay down on the driveway and turned my face to the moon. I marveled at it and the stars twinkling across that big, black night. As I lay there looking up, I felt a warm tear make its way down my cheek. Not because I was sad or overwhelmed or even afraid . . . but because I was at peace. Total and complete peace. My gratitude and joy was so full, I could not hold it back.

In a world with so much turmoil, I've never felt so far away from it within the walls of my own home. Life is crazy, kids scream, dishes build up, schedules are full, but it is my oasis.

As I looked out into that big, black sky tonight, instead of feeling small, I felt as if peace itself was filtering down through those moonbeams. What more can any of us ask for?

- **Sarah Young**

## **Saving the Fish**

My husband and I arrived home from a viewing one evening, dressed in our "Sunday Best." Our seven-year-old son, Luke, greeted us in the garage. With his big toothless grin, he proudly showed us a five-gallon bucket containing six tiny fish that he had just caught during a fishing class.

Outside the garage, the skies were darkening, the wind was blowing, rain was coming, and lightning could be seen in the distance. All Luke wanted was to put the fish in his "Secret Fishing Spot." It is only a short ride on the trail behind our house, but carrying a five-gallon bucket full of water and trying to avoid lightening strikes, I knew we had a quick decision to make. My husband and I knew the fish would not survive in the bucket until morning.

Personally, I had no cares about the fish, but I didn't want to see the excited, toothless grin disappear. As I walked into the house, I heard my husband suggest keeping the fish in the bathtub for the night. I'm sure the toothless grin got even bigger at that point, but I very quickly, volunteered to go change my clothes and ride our bikes together over to the "Secret Fishing Spot."

Luke and I jumped on our bikes, with me balancing the five-gallon bucket filled with water and six fish. As I began pedaling fast, I hoped the lightning would subside for just a while. With the wind blowing the hood from my head and rain falling on us, Toothless Grin and I set out to save the fish.

There are no photographs to capture the memory. I wish there were. But perhaps instead, the Toothless Grin excitement will be a treasured 'picture' I will see forever in my mind. As my son and I pedaled as fast as we could to get back home, the wind and rain howled around us. It was fitting, that above the sound of the falling rain, I heard a little voice coming from the Toothless Grin pedaling quickly behind me say, "You're the best mom in the whole wide world."

It was a fleeting, inconsequential moment in the grand scheme of things. Yet it was a precious moment I hope neither of us ever forgets. I ignored the rain and imminent lightening; I ignored all the rational, safety concerns mothers typically have because of six fish. I didn't do it because the six fish mattered to me. I did it because they mattered to my son.

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**- Tiffany Sowby**