

STRESSED, TIRED, & OVERCOMMITTED

How Jesus helps make better mothers, Luke 10:38-42

Even though mothers generally hold a cherished, respected place in our culture, we understand that being a mother carries very real challenges. In 2014 the Barna Group, a California-based research company focused on identifying trends in Christian beliefs and practices in the United States, conducted a survey that pointed out some of those challenges¹. The survey assessed American women and their commitments to family, church, career and community and indicated that, while 76% of the women surveyed reported feeling satisfied with their lives, they also reported feeling stressed, tired, and overcommitted. The survey revealed something else – a higher percentage of mothers reported those negative feelings than women who were not mothers. The report noted that:

- 62% of mothers reported feeling dissatisfied with the balance between work and home (compared to 59% of all women).
- 80% of mothers reported feeling stressed (compared to 72% of all women).
- 70% of mothers reported feeling tired (compared to 58% of all women).
- 56% of mothers reported feeling overcommitted (compared to 48% of all women).

While you may not have known the percentages in the Barna report, the report's findings probably do not tell you something you did not already know. We want to do more, however, than merely evidence something we already know; we want to see what Jesus offers to mothers (and the rest of us) that addresses feelings of being stressed, tired, and overcommitted.

Jesus and stressed, tired, and overcommitted mothers

- The percentages of mothers feeling stressed, tired, and overcommitted reminds us that those experiences present very real, very challenging problems.
- Those problems are not, however, unique to mothers - they are symptoms of living in a broken world that all people experience to varying degrees (*cf. John 3:19-21; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:17*).
- Jesus came into the world to resolve the problem of our fallenness and, consequently, offers to mothers (and to all of us) a way to deal with the problems created by living in a broken world (*cf. John 10:10*).
- Consider, for example, Jesus' answer to Martha's complaint about her sister Mary in Luke 10; he responded to Martha's stressed complaint about her sister by mentioning that Mary

¹ <https://www.barna.com/research/tired-stressed-but-satisfied-moms-juggle-kids-career-identity/>

chose “the good portion”² rather than the obligations – no matter how good they might be – that Martha placed upon herself (*Luke 10:38-42*).

- “The good portion” Jesus referred to focused on him and his teachings, a focus that marks out the abundant life he came to offer people (*John 10:10*). That focus includes things like:
 - Loving God in a way that motivates one to love and serve others rather than serve one’s self (*Matthew 22:34-40; 7:12; 20:20-28; John 13:3-17, 33-34*).
 - Trusting in God rather than in one’s self or resources, which frees one to pursue God’s will rather than their own will (*Matthew 6:25-34*).
 - Focusing on God and His concerns rather than on one’s own concerns (*Matthew 6:1-18*).
- While love, trust, and focus offer essential expectations for following Jesus, they prove far easier to talk about than to practice. The challenge they present reminds us that:
 - Love, trust, and focus inseparably connect to one another; we must have them all and have them in proper balance with one another.
 - Developing our love, trust, and focus requires an active relationship with God through which we come to know Him and experience Him.
 - We experience a relationship with God through activities like prayer, study, and fellowship with other God-focused people.
 - Embracing “the good portion” offered by Jesus involves reordering the way we see the world around us and our relationship to it. It can mean that even good things like a career, a clean home, a well-prepared meal, or other concerns like those embraced by Martha should sometimes be devalued in favor of other things (*Luke 10:38-42*).
 - Embracing “the good portion” will sometimes create tensions between the world and us because the world will not join us in our pursuit of Jesus.

Even though following Jesus in a broken world proves challenging, the Barna report offered another telling statistic – 77% of mothers reported feeling satisfaction with their lives despite, at the same time, feeling stressed, tired, and overcommitted. The statistic reminds us that *real satisfaction exists in our broken world in spite of the various factors seeking to undermine it*. That real, abiding satisfaction, however, can only be found in fully embracing Jesus way of living. So, for our mothers (and the rest of us), does your life reveal a commitment to choosing “the good portion” or does it reveal commitments to other, lesser things?

² All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.