



CHERISHED
GIFTS

DEVOTIONS FOR MOMS BY A MOM

KATIE MARTIN

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With love and thanks

to my parents for a lifetime of support.

to my children for providing humor and a reason to write.

to my husband for his encouragement and patience.

CONTENTS

A Cherished Gift	I
Don't Be Anxious About Anything?!	4
Fearless Evangelist	7
Missing the Point	10
Must Be Nice	14
One Heart, One Mouth	17
Scribbles Into a Masterpiece	21
Security Blanket	24
Silence Is Golden	27
Lasting Gifts	30
The Fish Squisher	34
The Gone 'Tump	38
A Glimpse of Heaven	42
I'm Turning Into My Mother!	46
Chewed-Up Crackers	50
Don't Make Me Come Over There!	54
Endless Questions	58
Fill 'Er Up, Please!	62
The Little Voice of Wisdom	66
Gifts From Above	70

Growing Up Big and Strong ~~~~~	74
He Carries Us ~~~~~	77
No Fear ~~~~~	81
A Little Lamb Among Wolves ~~~~~	85
Welcome Home ~~~~~	89
To Forgive and Forget ~~~~~	93
Things Too Wonderful for Me ~~~~~	97
A Simple Misunderstanding ~~~~~	101
A Woman of Contradictions ~~~~~	105
Gifts of Service ~~~~~	109
The Blanket Is Big Enough ~~~~~	113
Inches Away ~~~~~	117
The Icicle ~~~~~	121
Realigned Priorities ~~~~~	125
Today, I Am Not ~~~~~	129
No Pain, No Gain ~~~~~	133
A Moment of Glory ~~~~~	137
Now What, Lord? ~~~~~	141
Equipped for the Journey ~~~~~	145

Cherished Gifts was written by a mom for moms. Katie Martin knows the challenges, frustrations, and joys you experience each day as a mother. Katie cherishes the spiritual guidance in God's Word that her parents gave her, and she continues to pass on that guidance to her children. Knowing that God's Word has comforted her during struggles as a parent, she hopes to encourage you with God's Word as you carry out your job as a mother.



A picture of a gift is next to the opening message and also next to three devotions interspersed within this book. When you come to each of these pictures, take a breath, pause, and think about the gifts of God, including the gift of children. Katie knows that especially on tough days, moms need to do that!

The first message is Katie's letter *to you* and her hopes *for you*.

Lynn A. Groth
Editor



A CHERISHED GIFT

The package came wrapped in plain brown paper and encased in layers of thick tape. Dirt and debris clung to the sticky residue where the packing tape had begun to peel away. Although the exterior of the package was tattered and unsightly, inside was the most beautiful gift—a necklace of alternating pearls and crystal beads carefully restrung from my grandmother’s jewelry. The crystal beads trapped the sunlight and then let it loose again in tiny pinpricks of dazzling light. The necklace may have looked extremely valuable in my hand, but its true worth could never be converted to dollars and cents. The box arrived only weeks after my grandmother went home to heaven. The necklace is a physical remembrance of her, and it is an heirloom that I can pass on to my daughter. It is a gift to cherish.

From the first moment we hold our newborn children, we realize the magnitude of the blessings we have received. A tiny baby is a beautiful gift from a loving God. But even though precious newborns seem innocent, they come to us

in tattered packages. Growing children pitch full-fledged temper tantrums and defy us at every turn. Through sleep-deprived eyes, we see that our children are exactly like us—sinners in need of a Savior.

Even though the Holy Spirit works faith in their tiny hearts through Baptism, a staggering responsibility still remains for us. Our charge as Christian mothers is to tell these little ones about the great love of Jesus and that he died on a cross to earn heaven for them. And this task has an impending deadline. These children are not ours to keep but, rather, are on loan from God to train and prepare to go back to him. Children are one of the few blessings that can go to heaven with us.

Caring for children can seem like an insurmountable challenge, but we find comfort in knowing that motherhood is not a solo journey. The support of a spouse, family, and friends is great, but far more important is the support of our loving and almighty God. As we walk the path of motherhood, he is beside us through triumphs and sorrows alike.

He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. (Isaiah 40:11)

These beautiful words of Isaiah remind us that God holds our children close to his heart. But his loving care extends beyond our children. He also leads the ones who have the young, namely, mothers. Our Good Shepherd cares for us as well!

It is my prayer that this book and the Scriptures within it strengthen you and me in our role as Christian mothers. As we grow in our faith and delight in the peace that Jesus brings, let's pass the pearls of this peace on to our children. On days that threaten our sanity and challenge our senses, we can be assured that our loving Shepherd stands by our side with his guidance and love. On those few and far between days on which all things go well, let's praise the One responsible.

Through the grit of hardship, the monotony of daily tasks, and both the smooth and bumpy roads of life, God gives us joy beyond measure. He gives us children. Let's cherish each moment with them, remembering that our God helps us bear the responsibility of leading our little lambs to him.

Your sister in Christ,

Katie Martin



DON'T BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING?!

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)

Find your happy place is a phrase used by some mental health professionals. They say that finding one's happy place will help combat stress and foster positive emotional well-being. Some magazine articles and online blogs promote the idea that having a happy place can release tension and separate an individual from the pressures of day-to-day living.

What is your happy place? A nap in a hammock near the beach or a hike to a craggy summit may provide a temporary happy place. But even in relaxing places, worry soon roots

itself in our hearts. We stress about kids, confrontations with coworkers, or never-ending to-do lists.

We can try to escape trials in pursuit of a happy place, but Satan is there too. He drives the spike of anxiety between joy in Christ and us. Walls of worry surround us, keeping us from putting complete confidence in the rock-solid promises of God. Even while reading the words of comfort Paul wrote to the Philippians, the voice of sinfulness persists in our minds.

Do not be anxious about anything. (Philippians 4:6)

Don't be anxious about anything? You've got to be kidding! My child's fever is almost off the charts, and I'm not supposed to worry?

Paul knew anxiety. As he wrote his letter to the Philippians, he was under house arrest, awaiting trial before the Roman government. He was restricted in his preaching. However, Paul knew that his true source of joy was not found in his earthly circumstances, but in Christ. He urged the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord *always*.

How does a Christian rejoice even in the face of devastating circumstances? Like Paul, we know that the true source of joy comes only through Christ Jesus. We have the knowledge that Christ has completed our salvation and has promised to be with us through thick and thin. This enables true joy to spill over and to shine light on even the darkest moments.

We cannot escape the temporary troubles we face on earth. Fortunately, neither can we escape the all-encompassing,

never-ending love of our Savior. The arms of our loving Savior are wrapped around us and allow us to look forward to our true happy place—heaven. The next time you and I feel a surge of anxiety about to crash over us, let's take a deep breath and retreat to this happy place. Let's imagine standing in heaven with the angels praising Jesus for all eternity with no more crying, pain, or worry. Now that's a reason to rejoice! That's a most happy place!

Dear Lord, be with me today and help me to rejoice in all circumstances, praising your name in both good times and bad. Take away my anxiety, and deliver me from the worries that plague my mind. Reassure me of the peace that surpasses all understanding that I possess through Jesus. I pray in his name. Amen.

Strength from God's Word: Read I Peter 1:8,9. What is the source of our inexpressible joy? Read I Peter 4:12-19. Why can Christians rejoice even in the face of persecution?