



A
Handful
OF
Hope

25 Truths to Anchor Your Stepmom Journey

*Stepmom
Sanity* 

Help for Your Home and Hope for Your Heart

C H E R Y L S H U M A K E

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A Handful of Hope

25 Truths about Stepmom Life to Help You Cultivate Compassion ... For You

Ebook

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Well my dear stepmom sisters. I can't tell you how happy I am that you downloaded, and are now reading, A Handful of Hope. The Bible has a lot to say about God's lavish love, provision and care for us, in addition to who we have become now that we belong to Him. It took a great deal of effort to limit the list to a mere 25. ☺



I am praying for each and every one of you as I type. My prayer is that, first and foremost, you will know how deep and high and wide God's love is for you. It encompasses all space and time. His love *for* you existed before you did and it will wash over you fresh and anew each morning. I pray the knowledge of His unconditional love and acceptance will heal every wound, and infuse every dream with His purpose.

It is also my hope that the truth you read here will make you free from the snares of lies we have too long believed about this stepmom role in our lives. Lies are dogmatic in their tyranny and relentless in their attack on our liberty in Jesus. The fruit which "lies" produce; guilt, condemnation, insecurity, doubt, uncertainty, mistrust and lack of resolve, will leave us with un-lived lives and unrealized hopes. Beloved sister, ***Jesus died to give you an abundant life filled with assurance, acceptance, ability and wholeness, in every area.*** That includes your stepmothering too! The truth is you can do this and do this well ... you were born-*again* for it! In order to help you incorporate the truths listed here more easily into your life I have included them in first person singular text. I encourage you to read them out loud...repeatedly. God bless you in your stepmom journey.

5 Truths That Protect Your “You”



One of the first places lies attack us is in our identity in Christ. I don't know about you but those lies whisper loudest in my ear after I come away from tense encounters. Especially when I haven't responded wisely. I often end up feeling like there is something so wrong with me I have somehow become disqualified for the life God wants for me. Bah on that! Time for truth!

- I don't have to perform to be loved. No matter how often I mess up, lose my temper, lose my way or lose my “want to”, **God loves me lavishly and without restriction.** There is nothing I did to earn His love and nothing I can do to ever lose His love. *“For I am convinced [and continue to be convinced—beyond any doubt] that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present and threatening, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the [unlimited] love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Romans 8:38-39
- Sometimes it can feel like our lives are haphazard and we ended up in our new families by anything BUT the will of God. Here is the truth you need to tell yourself: **I am right where I am supposed to be.** *“A man's mind plans his way [as he journeys through life], but the Lord directs his steps and establishes them.”* Proverbs 16:9
- When we are hanging out with our spouse and “his” children or at special events with our spouse, his ex and “their” children, it can often feel as if we are outsiders. We are, in one sense. There is a chunk of their shared history of which we are not a part. However, remember you are creating your own shared history which will become part of your conversations, AND, irrespective of that, the truth is, I belong: **I am chosen and well-beloved.** *“So, as God's own chosen people, who are holy [set apart, sanctified for His purpose] and well-beloved [by God Himself], put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience [which has the power to endure whatever injustice or unpleasantness comes, with good temper]”* Colossians 3:12
- New and seasoned stepmoms alike spend an inordinate amount of time protecting our self-image against the onslaught of negative stepmom stereotypes. Every now and then we need to remind ourselves we are not a statistic. We are daughters who can say: **I am a handmade expression of the perfect artistry of God.** *“For we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us].”* Ephesians 2:10
- At times I just need an “atta girl” or “way to go Cheryl”. Stepmoms often, and most times gladly, I might add, do the work of a bio mom without all of the benefits of love and connection a bio mom receives. Early on I would ask myself, “Do I matter? Does what I do count?” Then I grabbed on to the truth: I am a significant. **What I do has eternal impact.** *“Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord [always doing your best and doing more than is needed], being continually aware that your labor [even to the point of exhaustion] in the Lord is not futile nor wasted [it is never without purpose].”* 1 Corinthians 15:58

5 Truths That Protect Your Heart



The heart comprises our mind, will and emotions. It is the seat of our soul, the place where the battle rages hottest and where the contest for control of our lives is decided. The Bible encourages us to guard many things; our ears, eyes, etc. but, above anything else, make sure we guard our hearts, for everything we do flows from it. (Proverbs 4:23) Here are 5 truths which will help you protect your heart.

- Guilt and shame have free course in some families, especially stepfamilies. As we walk across a veritable emotional mine field, the slightest misstep causes hurt feelings, bruised egos and misunderstanding. This dynamic leaves both the sulky offended and the “guilty” offender in its wake. We all make mistakes so we have to learn to extend compassion to others *and* ourselves. The truth is guilt and shame have no real power over us. Say this with me: **I am holy and blameless.** “...just as [in His love] He chose us in Christ [actually selected us for Himself as His own] before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy [that is, consecrated, set apart for Him, purpose-driven] and blameless in His sight.” Ephesians 1:4
- I fell into the trap of looking to my husband and our children to validate me in my parenting and when they couldn’t, or didn’t, I felt disappointed, disjointed, and discouraged. Then I realized, if I allow it, my emotional needs can be fully met by an inexhaustible supply in Christ. Because, **I am completed by God.** “...and [that you may come] to know [practically, through personal experience] the love of Christ which far surpasses [mere] knowledge [without experience], that you may be filled up [throughout your being] to all the fullness of God [so that you may have the richest experience of God’s presence in your lives, completely filled and flooded with God Himself].” Ephesians 3:19
- There is a lot of truth made available to us, yet our hearts can still be wounded. At those times we may feel it’s up to us to right the wrong. That’s exactly when we need to turn our eyes to the Lord and remember we don’t have to protect our own hearts: **My heart and mind are protected by God’s peace.** “And the peace of God [that peace which reassures the heart, that peace] which transcends all understanding, [that peace which] stands guard over your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [is yours].” Philippians 4:7
- Dear sister, if you get nothing else from reading this, please get this. God is excited about you! You are a delight to His heart! Right now. Today. Without changing a thing. Everyone else may be out of sorts with you but say this to yourself: **I make God leap for joy.** “The Lord your God is in your midst, A Warrior who saves. He will rejoice over you with joy; He will be quiet in His love [making no mention of your past sins]. He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.” Zephaniah 3:17
- Life “in step” can feel a little shaky but I can live from a place of security because: **God extends His infinite mercy** (keeping from me the horrible consequences I rightfully deserve) **and grace** (showering me with goodness I don’t deserve) **to me.** “But You, O Lord, are a God [who protects and is] merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.” Psalm 86:15

5 Truths That Protect Your Peace



I remember my father once telling me, “You can’t buy peace of mind so when you have it don’t trade it for anything.” It appears my father knew a little something about the importance of peace. Biblical peace, or “shalom”, implies way more than a lack of conflict. It actually means soundness, wholeness, completeness. That definition gives wings to Proverbs 14:30 “A heart at peace gives life to the body...” In other words, a whole heart, a sound mind, a feeling of completeness, is like a deep-breath on a crisp spring morning or a sunset at the ocean shore or a baby laughing in your arms ... there’s life in peace.

- One thing that threatens our peace is pain. And, though all pain takes its toll, senseless pain, hurts that come as a result of the unprovoked, thoughtless actions or words of others, seems especially harsh. Here, the truth that helps us maintain our peace is: **There is a purpose for my suffering** “*And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan and purpose.*” Romans 8:28
- I know this one may be a hard one to swallow for some of you, but your spouse’s ex-wife is not the issue. She may be a problem but she is not *the* issue. We have a very real enemy who uses people, circumstances and more to rob us of our life in God. It is *that* enemy we should pray and act against while praying *for* the people involved. In order to preserve your peace, keep this in mind: **My husband’s ex-wife is not my enemy.** “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this [present] darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) places.*” Ephesians 6:12
- When we don’t get what we want, aren’t given the stamp of approval or feel threatened in any way, it is very easy to fall into trying to control the outcome of our interactions through manipulation and other protective coping mechanisms. But here’s the truth you can use to relate to others: **I don’t have to follow my own agenda.** I can trust God, “*For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown for His name in ministering to [the needs of] the saints (God’s people), as you do.*” Hebrews 6:10
- You’ve heard it said that harboring un-forgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. God has a better way for us, one that will leave us free from the burden of grudges, and the stranglehold of conflict. As long as we refuse to forgive others they maintain a position of authority over us. The truth is: **I can forgive others because Christ has forgiven me. I am free from the poison of grudges.** “*Be kind and helpful to one another, tender-hearted [compassionate, understanding], forgiving one another [readily and freely], just as God in Christ also forgave [a]you.*” Ephesians 4:32
- When all else fails and I feel at the end of my rope, as if no one sees the struggle, no one cares, I need to remind myself: **Jesus intercedes for me** “*Therefore He is able also to save forever (completely, perfectly, for eternity) those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede and intervene on their behalf [with God].*” Hebrews 7:25

5 Truths That Protect Your Ability



“I can’t do this!” “It’s too hard!” “I’m not able!” “I give up!” I can’t begin to tell you how many parents and stepparents I’ve heard lamenting at least one of these statements. Ladies, we have a tough job, made tougher by virtue of living in step. Even the most optimistic stepmoms in the most supportive environments with top-notch relationship skills have been tempted to throw in the towel a time or two. The truths below will motivate and encourage you to keep going when you feel least capable.

- My husband, our kids, and I went through pre-marital counseling before marrying. We had adult sessions and kid sessions so we felt somewhat prepared but I knew I was going to need ongoing support. Unfortunately, it is sparse. Especially faith-based support. My search for “others” left me discouraged at how little assistance is made available for stepmoms (*and prompted me to do something about it*). However, no matter how isolated I may have felt from time to time, the truth was: **I am not alone.** “...for He has said, “I will never [under any circumstances] desert you [nor give you up nor leave you without support, nor will I in any degree leave you helpless], nor will I forsake or let you down or relax My hold on you [assuredly not]!” Hebrews 13:5b
- “...and I don’t want to hear another word about it!” Cue the slammed doors, huffing teens and exasperated parents. Reject the lie that says difficult encounters with our children (bio and step) will always dissolve into a battle of wills. They can be handled with patience and decorum. Believe this truth based on the Word: **I can parent my children with composure.** “*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to the point of resentment with demands that are trivial or unreasonable or humiliating or abusive; nor by showing favoritism or indifference to any of them], but bring them up [tenderly, with lovingkindness] in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” Ephesians 6:4
- There are times the challenge I am facing in my family is beyond my current ability to navigate well. I love that God makes up the difference and *that* makes all the difference in the world. **God’s ability offsets any deficiency my inability may cause** so I don’t have to rely on me to get it right all the time. “*For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure.*” Philippians 2:13
- Feeling overwhelmed is a pretty common emotion in a stepmom’s life and relatively easy to own up to. But, what about the times you are afraid? I mean, when you have a sense of trepidation about your marriage or dread dealing with the ex or feel awkward with the kids? Can you easily admit to feelings of intimidation? When you do admit these feelings, you loosen the grip fear has on you and are freed to grab hold to this truth: **I am empowered.** “*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline [abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind and self-control].*” 2 Timothy 1:7
- The crux of this section can be found in this truth here: **I have wisdom to know how to live “in step” because I’m relying on God’s wisdom and not my own.** “*Trust in and rely confidently on the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. In all your ways know and acknowledge and recognize Him, And He will make your paths straight and smooth [removing obstacles that block your way].*” Proverbs 3:5-6

5 Truths That Protect Your Future



Since stepfamilies are typically born on the heels of loss, we can feel unsure about our futures. Below are five truths to help us recall we do not live on shifting sands. Our future is so sure it's firmly, stably (yes, I just made that up), affixed because it's anchored upon the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. Here are 5 truths that protect your future.

- You will hear me say this repeatedly. A stepfamily is one of the clearest pictures we have of the restorative and redemptive power of God. God adopted us into His family and never once makes us feel as if we were tolerated add-ons. The truth we can glean from this is: **A step-family is an intact family.** Certainly a family with interesting dynamics, multiple sub-systems and fluid priorities but still a family. *“He predestined and lovingly planned for us to be adopted to Himself as [His own] children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the kind intention and good pleasure of His will.”* Ephesians 1:5
- As Christians, we can sometimes think that any subsequent marriage we have is undeserving of the care and attention of God. That's not the truth. God was not surprised by your remarriage. It is important to Him. Say this: **God is rooting for my marriage.** *“He replied, ‘Have you never read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined inseparably to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”* Matthew 19:4-6
- I know it may not seem like it when your stepdaughter has ignored you for the eleventh-hundred time or when your husband just doesn't get it for the fiftieth! But the truth is: **What God is doing in me will fulfill His purpose for me.** How do I know? Because God brings everything He starts to flawless completion. *“I am convinced and confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect and complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return].”* Philippians 1:6
- One of the most helpful realizations I've ever come to on this stepmom journey is that the grace needed to be the stepmom you want to be can sometimes play hide and seek with you. That realization led me to lean more heavily on the Lord. Now I understand: **I will never run out of the grace needed to be a step-mom.** *“And God is able to make **all** grace [every favor and earthly blessing] come in **abundance** to you, so that you may **always** [under all circumstances, regardless of the need] have complete sufficiency in **everything** [being completely self-sufficient in Him], and have an abundance for every good work and act of charity.”* 2 Corinthians 9:8;
- This is the best truth ever. No preamble needed. Rest your entire life in this truth sister: **No matter what, my future is secure in Christ** *“I assure you and most solemnly say to you, he who believes [in Me as Savior—whoever adheres to, trusts in, relies on, and has faith in Me—already] has eternal life [that is, now possesses it].”* John 6:47

Bonus Truth!

Now you know I could not leave you without an extra truth to grapple with and by which your soul is nourished.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”* As we all know, yet it bears repeating, stepfamilies are formed on the ashes of a previous life which had dreams, hopes and profound expectations for a wonderful future...none of which came to pass. The people in it may be shell-shocked, are definitely wounded and walking on egg-shells. The enemy would have you believe this is your destiny. Not so! Not only will God comfort you with His hope but He has equipped you to comfort the wounded in your family so you can ease them out of their troubled feelings. You have an awesome testimony that is being formed even as you read these truths. That testimony will bless your family, stun those watching you (and you are definitely being watched), and strengthen those whom the Lord will send to you for encouragement!

May God’s richest and best always be yours. To your step-Mothing success.

Cheryl