

“This book is for moms who aren’t who they thought they’d be, and who finally see that they can’t just get their act together. Liz understands the heart of the struggling mom, but she also understands where true hope is found. *The End of Me* points moms to the gospel of Jesus Christ, where grace is received, identity is restored, and true obedience begins.”

EMILY JENSEN, Co-author, *Risen Motherhood: Gospel Hope for Everyday Moments*; Co-founder, Risen Motherhood ministry

“Two things ring true for most moms. One is that we often enter into motherhood with confident excitement and hopeful expectations. The second is that reality always hits. Although motherhood is a blessing and a gift, sooner or later challenges, stresses, and the unexpected begin to shake our confidence and bring us to the end of ourselves. And we wonder, ‘Am I the only one?’ For that reason, I’m thankful that Liz Wann has written *The End of Me* for every mom who feels they fall short of the mom that they desire to be. With a fresh and honest perspective, Liz not only acknowledges the realities of motherhood, but she also shows us how the weakness and insecurities we face may be the very things that lead us to a strength beyond ourselves—a strength that comes only through Jesus.”

SARAH WALTON, Author, *Hope When It Hurts* and *Together Through the Storms*

“We all learn by experience that life’s most rewarding things are often also life’s most difficult things. Parenting is certainly no exception, and part of what makes it so tough is the sense of failure that so often accompanies it. If you’re a parent, and specifically a mother, who is aware of your failings, aware of your shortcomings, aware that you aren’t exactly the mother you thought you’d be, then this book is for you. Its promise is not that it will make mothering easy, but that it will point you to the hope and confidence God offers you through the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

TIM CHALLIES, challies.com

“A breath of fresh air, *The End of Me* gives a realistic, Christ-centred view of motherhood, with all of its ups and downs. I am confident that Liz’s honesty about her own struggles will help women not just to survive but to grow closer to Christ through the joyful privilege of parenting a child.”

LINDA ALLCOCK, Author, *Head, Heart, Hands and Deeper Still*

“Motherhood is the hardest job I’ve ever had. It’s revealed the depths of my sin, my profound weakness, and my great need for Christ. That’s why I was so encouraged by Liz Wann’s book, *The End of Me*. This book is gospel-centered encouragement for all moms who struggle with the hard days of motherhood. Liz directs our eyes to see how Christ is formed in us as we die to ourselves and rise to life in him.”

CHRISTINA FOX, Counselor; Speaker; Author, *Idols of a Mother’s Heart and Sufficient Hope: Gospel Meditations and Prayers for Moms*

“We all enter motherhood with idealistic hopes and dreams. But the reality of sleepless nights, sick children, and temper tantrums can lead us to despair. Liz Wann’s honest look at motherhood will encourage you to find resurrection hope and joy through the very trials that bring us to the end of ourselves.”

STACY REAOCH, Author, *Wilderness Wanderings*; regular blogger at Desiring God, TGC, Revive Our Hearts

Liz Wann

The End
of Me



the goodbook
COMPANY

*To my husband, Josh, because I couldn't have done
any of this without your help and support.*

*To my beautiful children, Simon, Eli, and Chloe,
for teaching me how to live and love.*

The End of Me
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Published by:
The Good Book Company



thegoodbook.com | thegoodbook.co.uk
thegoodbook.com.au | thegoodbook.co.nz | thegoodbook.co.in

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ISBN: 9781784985752 | Printed in the UK

Design by André Parker

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Foreword

by Blair Linne

Before I had my first child, I remember several people telling me, “Blair, you’re going to be a great mother.” They said this because they knew I’d been a nanny for years and that I loved children. So imagine my shock when I learned that not only was labor hard, but life after delivery wasn’t any easier! In those first weeks and months, I faced the challenge of nursing, watched my husband drive off for meetings while I felt stuck at home with the baby blues, and cluster-fed my infant while covered in spit-up. It was a challenge. When I needed a shower, my baby would cry. When he was hungry, he would cry. When he was overly tired, he would cry. Eventually, I started to cry too.

Those days were filled with tears, fears, and questions for God. I wondered why the blessing of a child felt like a trial. I wondered if I was just profoundly sinful to feel this way. I look back on those days and I can see how the Lord was seeking to work his gospel in me through it all. He wanted me to know

that he was bottling every one of my tears. And he wanted me to reach the end of myself so that I could be a *reflector*. Reflectors are those small squares on the back of bikes that catch light and alert onlookers so that they can avoid a crash. I realized that God wanted me, in a similar way, to reflect his light to my children so that they might be warned and awakened to God's light—and, Lord willing, be kept from harm on life's highway.

The good works that God has called us to as mothers cannot be accomplished apart from the good news of Christ. Yet we are often tempted to believe that the more we do in our own strength, the better mothers we will be. In this book, Liz reminds us that instead of placing our confidence in what *we* do, we must redirect our attention toward what our Savior has done. Only then can we do the good works he desires to do through us.

Liz was raised in a Christian home; I was not. She was raised by both parents; I was raised in a single-parent home. We grew up on opposite coasts—she's from Florida, and I'm from California. But despite these different experiences growing up, today we share similar struggles as mothers. We both currently live in Philadelphia, we were married in the same year, and we each have three precious children—two boys and a girl. Even if you don't share as much in common as Liz and I do, I think that most mothers can relate to the common struggle and challenge of motherhood. No matter what your background is, where you live, or how many children you have, motherhood can be hard.

The temptation to find our identity in what we do as mothers—rather than resting in the work that Jesus accomplished on

our behalf—is a common one. His death and resurrection have eternally transformed our position before God, and that should change how we live. We should be driven by grace, yet we can easily be tempted toward the pursuit of perfectionism. We want things to work out just right in our marriage and with our children so that we can boast in our accomplishments, even if just a little. It's this secret pride that the Lord continues to crucify so that our confidence is not in anything but him. Perfectionism is not the goal of motherhood—*faith* is.

In order to purify our faith and make us more Christ-like, God uses trials and suffering. It is rare these days to hear this message of death to self. Instead, we are surrounded by the world, the flesh, and the devil telling us to live for ourselves, not to die to ourselves. That's why I'm so thankful for Liz's book, which provides practical wisdom rooted in Scripture on how to deny ourselves each day so that we may truly live out the gospel in the context of motherhood.

We die to ourselves and live unto God when we pick up LEGOs, train little hearts, make meals, repeat Scriptures, redirect tantrums, fold endless loads of laundry, and keep giving to others out of the abundant reserve that only comes through the Spirit. Our righteousness is secured through Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection, not through being perfect at motherhood—and that truth, when daily remembered and embraced, is freeing.

May God be glorified in our daily crucifixions as we do the holy work of mothering through the strength of our generous Father.

Blair Linne, January 2021

Introduction:

Mama, You Got This?



During my first few years as a mom, I began to see that I wasn't who I thought I was.

I wasn't as patient as I thought.

I expressed anger I didn't know I was capable of.

I didn't have the capacity I thought I had.

I wasn't able to be *that* mom: the one who could get it all done and never feel tired or take time for herself.

I was not the kind of mom who could say, "I got this." All too often, in fact, I hadn't "got this" at all.

As a young mom, I had devoured books on motherhood. And while they were all encouraging and gospel-centered, they seemed to neglect some of what I was experiencing. They didn't really talk about motherhood's darkest struggles—topics like postpartum depression or birth trauma. Though the books I read cast a high vision of hope and calling, they only felt relatable on a surface level. The conversations I was

having with other moms were the same—most women keep silent about these deeply challenging aspects of motherhood. The truth is, none of us have “got this”—not on our own.

On a superficial level, I kept up appearances (most of the time). But beneath the surface, I was struggling. Motherhood felt harder and more sacrificial than I'd expected from anything I had read or heard. Motherhood felt as if I was coming to the end of me. Some days I wasn't quite sure who I was anymore, or what had happened to the woman who first held that positive pregnancy test—and that was scary.

And then I realized: this is how it is, and that's ok. And more than that—this is where I meet Jesus.

What I eventually figured out was that all those daily “deaths” of motherhood were producing the life of Christ in me. I had to come to the end of myself and of the self-sufficient idea that I was able to do it all. When I submitted to the truth that I wasn't enough, that I couldn't do it all, and that I was limited, that's when I felt free to embrace motherhood's daily struggles as a means of growth in godliness. Coming to the end of who I was, and seeing what motherhood was stripping me of, was a good thing because it drove me to Christ and to the power that he supplies in every failure and weakness of motherhood.

God works in and through our weaknesses. He is in the business of making all things new. It's a process of turning back the decay of the fall and laying new seed for harvest. He's killing the old—purging, refining—to bring back life. The Lord will keep doing this in us until we see him face to face, when he'll do it finally once and for all with the whole of creation.

Jesus put it this way: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12 v 24). Jesus was speaking of his own crucifixion and resurrection (v 23), *and* about the life his followers would experience (v 25). This dying and burying was a one-time act for our salvation, but it’s also a continual act for the Christian. We continue to put to death that which is death in us (sin), and as we do that, God promises us new life in him.

The struggles and sacrifices of motherhood can lead to life. We’re taking up our “cross”, as Jesus took up his, because of the joy set before us. We’re laying down the expectations we had of motherhood; we’re admitting our weakness and bringing it to God as he uses it to show us more of his power and strength.

Everyone’s experience of motherhood is different. But I’ve never yet met a mom who didn’t, if she was being honest, find it hard—and, at times, *too* hard. I’ve never yet met a Christian mom who didn’t feel she was failing and flailing. So if you’re in that place right now, well, welcome to motherhood! And welcome to this book. I wrote this book for you, and I hope that as you read, you’ll find that those moments we all tend to try to avoid—when we come to the end of ourselves—are actually moments to press into, to find hope in, and to seek Jesus through. This book won’t make mothering easier, but it will offer you life in the moments and places when and where it feels as if you just gave yours up.

More often than not, I can’t say to myself, “Mama, you got this!” And that’s ok—because I know someone who has got this: someone who knew what it meant to be weary and

tired, someone who needed some “me time,” someone who sacrificed himself (even his own body) for others, and someone who died and rose again.

You’ve got this, mama, because you’ve got *Jesus*.

CHAPTER 1

Jesus Meets Us in the Hard Moments



When I was pregnant with my first child, I had a carefully crafted birth plan, and that plan did *not* involve an induction. I was supposed to do most of my labor at home, but instead all of my labor was spent in a hospital room for twenty-four hours. I was trying my best to keep everything natural when it came to induction and avoiding a c-section, but the pressure was on us with doctors and nurses who had their own time schedule. My labor crept on, and my fears heightened. Maybe I'll need to have a c-section? Will this baby ever come? His heart rate was an issue from the beginning, so there was always that lingering fear in my mind too. Would my baby be ok? I cried from all the fear, stress, and weariness. I was physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted.

Most stories of childbirth I'd heard before sounded magical. "The baby comes out, and the instant love you feel is