

Taste

CONVERSATIONS



The Prince's Table

JUST FOR MOM

I'm constantly reminded that being a mom, and being anxious are often synonymous. Worry over what tomorrow will bring for me and my kids, and my fear of being crushed by it, is ever weighing me down. I know I'm not alone because Philippians 4:6-7 is the most searched for passage in the Bible. I love the simplicity of the New Living Translation, which says,

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Anxiety is promoted by our focus on what might happen in the future. God's remedy, according to Paul, is not to plan ahead, but to pray ahead and look back in gratitude.

Sometimes it takes a little digging to discover the root cause of our anxiety. I recently discovered that an underlying fear of failure was fueling my anxious pursuit of accomplishment as a wife, mom, writer, and even follower of Christ. Other times, it's not so complicated to figure out. In any case, we can all look forward with confident prayer because of who God is and what he has done for us in the past. How has God carried you through difficulty before? How has he demonstrated his care for you previously? I'd love to hear your stories about what God has done for you specifically, and praise God with you in thanksgiving.

The one thing he's done for each of us is given us the gift of his son, the Prince of Peace. Jesus proved his ability to carry us through anything we'll face because he triumphantly faced death and rose again. Whatever comes our way, Jesus paved the way with his own blood. Jesus is the Way. You and I can look back with gratitude because of what he's done on our behalf. We can all move forward with peace because of God's remarkable gift, knowing our Prince of Peace is with us every step of the way. And we can rest our weary, anxious minds because, as Deuteronomy 31:8 reminds us, God goes before us and will never abandon us. I love how Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it.

"At the threshold of the new day, stands the Lord who made it."

CONVERSATION TIP

Tonight's conversation will focus on two weapons God gives us to help fight all the things that make us anxious. As moms, we like to fix our kids' problems, but guiding our kids to Jesus when they're anxious is one of the most valuable things we can do for them.

Recipe: NO STRESS CHICKEN PESTO PASTA

We all need a few recipes in our back pockets that eliminate the stress of what to cook tonight that will make everyone happy. I'm not sure about your family, but it would be easy to become a short order cook in my house and make 3 different meals a night. Well friends, let me introduce my no stress dish that pleases everyone around my table. This chicken pesto pasta dish is easy, delicious and nutritious. The pesto can be made ahead of time, just make sure to store it with a little olive oil on top to prevent browning in an airtight container. I also like to slice up some raw veggies on the side for a wellrounded meal.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup pine nuts*
- 1 teaspoon salt*
- 2 cloves garlic*
- 3/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese*
- 4 cups packed fresh basil leaves*
- 1/2 cup Olive Oil*
- 1 package (16 oz) pasta*
- 1 rotisserie chicken (diced)*

Instructions:

1. Place the pine nuts, salt, garlic, cheese, basil leaves and olive oil in a food processor. Blend until combined (about 30 seconds), scrape down the sides if needed.
2. Cook pasta and drain when done. Stir pesto and chicken with cooked pasta.



FOR THE FAMILY

If you could be a superhero, what would your name and special talents be?

One name for Jesus, the ultimate hero, is the Prince of Peace. Maybe not what you would choose to call yourself if you wanted to show how strong and powerful you are. But that is how a man named Isaiah described Jesus hundreds of years before he was born, and that is exactly who Jesus is today.

Jesus is our Prince of Peace because he alone was strong enough to win the battle over sin and death. He alone can fix everything that's broken and chaotic in the world. And he wants to give you his peace to have in your heart.

What's going on in your life that makes you nervous or anxious?

One of the weapons Jesus gives us to help you when we feel anxious or afraid is his Word - the Bible. Maybe you were hoping for a tank or fighter jet. But God's Word is actually a very strong weapon. In fact, the Bible describes it as a sword. It's full of God's promises, like his promise to strengthen you and help you (Isaiah 41:10), to never leave you (Deut. 31:8), and to work out everything in your life for your good (Romans 8:28). These promises are great weapons against anything that makes us anxious.

Another weapon he gives us is prayer. We can pray about anything and everything: what we're happy about and what we're anxious about. We can ask God to help us trust him when we're nervous. The Bible tells us that when we're anxious, we can pray about it, thank God for all he's done for us, and he will guard our heart and mind with his peace.

How does God standing guard over your heart and mind make you feel? What has God done for you that makes you grateful?

There are battles we'll face in our lives that can definitely make us anxious, but the Prince of Peace is with us, and he's already won the war.

"Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in you."

Psalm 53:1

Pray together

Dear Lord, we thank you for being our Prince of Peace, for loving us, and guarding us. Please help us to trust in you, no matter what we face in the future. Amen.

The Victor's Table

JUST FOR MOM

A last minute, thrown together lunch gets shoved into my 2nd grader's school lunch box. Important flyers that came home yesterday are crumpled at the bottom of her backpack. The tooth fairy forgot to come last night. And speaking of teeth, I've got to do a better job of making sure my daughter brushes and flosses her teeth well enough to satisfy her dentist at next week's appointment.

Amidst the chaos, and in our failures, it's easy to doubt our worth. I tend to believe that what I do, how well I do it (and what outfit I'm wearing as I do it), and what others think of me, reflects my true value. It's volatile, and as a result, so is the pep in my step.

But the Bible has something refreshingly different to say. Our value isn't based on what we do, it's based on what Christ did for us. Christ's victory on our behalf means we don't have to live to prove our value, we can live out our value. Romans 5:8 reflects this beautifully. Paul reminds us, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God valued us so much, he gave his son to be our victor, and cover our failure with his victory.

This simple truth, that the value God placed upon us isn't conditional to what we do, means we can live in freedom in a performance based culture. Responding to this means we're able to serve the God who loves us with our whole heart, knowing our value isn't based on the outcome or our shortcomings.

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul says "We're God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works." Notice, we're not masterpieces because of our works, we're cherished works of God's hands. He values us so much, he uses us to carry out his amazing plans. We get to participate in his eternal work. This means not only are we valuable, so is all we do for him. He sees it all: he notices every late night, every meal made, every sock folded and even when it's done imperfectly, he says, "Well done!"

I know how easy it is to get discouraged on this rocky road of mothering. But Christ's victory is a sure thing and it means we don't have to fight to prove our worth, or the worth of our work. That battle's been won.

CONVERSATION TIP

Getting excited over what excites your kids goes a long way. Celebrate the little wins!

Recipe: TORTILLA SOUP FOR THE WIN

There's a delicious restaurant in Santa Barbara with "famous" Tortilla Soup. For years I tried to recreate the recipe at home. It took numerous tries and a lot of perseverance, but the failures made it all the sweeter when I finally got it just right. Sometimes as moms we know it's time to give up and move on and sometimes it's time to press on. This was a press on situation and I am so glad I did, because I get to share it with you! This is a crowd pleaser and a win on many levels for me and my family.

Quick tip to avoid a messy situation: never overfill your blender when blending. Especially if you are blending hot liquid. There's a "fill to" line for a reason. Imagine that. Work in batches to blend this soup! (Unless you own an immersion blender, then you can just keep it in the pot to blend).

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup butter*
- 1 white or yellow onion*
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic*
- 1 14oz can fire roasted diced tomatoes*
- 1 14oz can stewed tomatoes*
- 1 14oz can diced tomatoes with green chilis*
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin*
- 8 cups chicken broth*
- 6 corn tortillas*
- 1 rotisserie chicken*
- Salt to taste*

Optional toppings:

- Corn chips*
- Tortilla chips*
- Cheese*
- Avocado*

Instructions:

1. Dice the onion, mince the garlic.
2. Melt the butter in a large pot over medium heat. Saute the onions in the butter until soft and translucent.
3. Add the garlic and saute for 60 seconds until fragrant.
4. Add the tomatoes, cumin and chicken broth to the pot. Tear the tortillas up into smaller pieces and add to the pot. Simmer for 30 - 45 minutes.
5. Puree soup with an immersion blender or in your countertop blender. Work in batches if you're using a countertop blender.
6. Stir in diced chicken and re-heat soup before serving. Add salt and pepper to taste.



FOR THE FAMILY

What was the best thing that happened today? Even if it was the worst day ever, what is one thing you can celebrate?

It can be easy to get distracted by all the lows in our lives. When friends treat us poorly, a test didn't go so well, or we fall down during recess, it can seem like life really is the pits. I'm sure you're familiar with the Bible hero Joseph, who really was thrown into a pit by his brothers, then sold as a slave. If you remember, Joseph was even thrown in jail for something he didn't even do.

Honestly, how would you have reacted if you were put in jail for something you didn't do?

The lows in life can get us so discouraged, can't they? But the Bible tells us that God always wins. It may not feel like it in the moment, but God's victory is promised. We can count on it.

When is it hard for you to have faith, or believe, that God always wins?

It can be hard to believe that when life isn't going our way, or when the world seems crazy. But the reason we can be so sure of God's future victory is because of what Jesus already did. Jesus is the Son of God, but he was also a real human being. He really died on a cross. And he really came back to life. This isn't a made up story to make us feel better when life is hard. Jesus really has won the victory over sin, death, and brokenness. And no matter what is going on in our lives, we can always celebrate Jesus's victory.

What is your favorite way to celebrate? A special dessert? A fun event? Gifts?

When life is the pits, you can remember, Jesus always wins.

"But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 15:57

Pray Together

Dear Lord, we thank you for your promise of future victory. And we thank you for what you have already done for us. Please help us to live victoriously, even when we don't feel like it, because you always win. Amen.

The Provider's Table

JUST FOR MOM

I'm in a season of life right now where every day, often multiple times a day, I'm seeing just how insufficient I am. I do not have the wisdom, energy, talent, or natural disposition to do nearly any of what God has called me to this year. And I'm really not a fan of being in this position. I certainly couldn't describe myself as "in the zone."

There are a few Biblical passages that have touched my heart recently, and they all focus on God's love for widows. Some of the neediest members of society in biblical times were widows. Without a husband to provide for and protect them, widows were often overlooked, mistreated, and left to fend for themselves. I don't think they could ever describe themselves as being in the zone. Yet throughout scripture, God speaks loudly and acts boldly on their behalf, and shows us his provision is more than sufficient. He makes up for what we lack when we trust in him.

Let's briefly focus on one widow and grieving mother found in 2 Kings 4. This widow isn't named, but we're told her husband died and she was left with a debt she could not pay. All she had in her possession was a small jar of olive oil. As a result, her creditor was on his way to take her two sons as slaves. Without a miracle, she'd lose all she held dear.

Oddly, Elisha instructed her to pour out the very little oil she had into any and all empty jars she could gather from her neighbors. Even more oddly, the widow did so without any recorded objection. She relinquished the insufficient out of faith in God's provision. As a result, she filled more than enough jars of oil to sell and pay off her debt.

While I don't believe scripture teaches every financial debt we'll have will be miraculously paid off, it does teach us that God is more than sufficient to provide for all we lack. This is what Paul was getting at when he said,

"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

2 Corinthians 12:9-11

Whether that's in our jobs, our homes, our relationships, or our health, we are at our strongest when we're fully reliant on God's strength. We're wisest when we're fully reliant on God's wisdom. We're on top of our game when we're completely humble before the Lord, confessing our insufficiency, and placing our faith in God's sufficiency. It may not feel like it, but that's when we're truly in the zone.

CONVERSATION TIP

You don't need to have all the answers. Just provide an environment where your kids feel comfortable asking the tough questions, and you can pray about the answers together.

Recipe: EASY LASAGNA WITH ENOUGH FOR LEFTOVERS

I love meals that serve a double purpose. This recipe is easy, full of flavor, and is made in one pot. It's also an easy one to double if you want leftovers, to pack in lunches, or make a batch to bless your neighbor or friend. Or even to serve two nights in a row if you've resumed your evening role as chauffeur driving to and from all those sports practices and don't have time to make yet another hot meal. This recipe reheats well and is good cold too.

Ingredients:

- 1.5 pounds Italian Sausage, casing removed*
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced*
- 1 tsp dried oregano*
- 3/4 tsp chopped fennel seeds*
- Pinch of red pepper flakes*
- 2 28oz cans whole peeled tomatoes with their juices*
- 2 bay leaves*
- 2 tsp salt*
- 16oz dried small pasta (small shells, fusili, etc.)*
- 8oz fresh mozzarella*
- 2/3 cup whole milk ricotta*
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan*

(Optional to add shredded zucchini or diced mushrooms. If using, add them in when you add the tomatoes.)

Instructions:

1. Heat oven to 425. Remove the casing from the sausage if using links. In a large ovenproof pot cook the sausage over medium/high, break into small pieces until it starts to brown. Stir in garlic, oregano, fennel seeds and red pepper flakes; cook for 1 to 2 minutes.
2. Stir in both cans of tomatoes, break up the large ones with your spoon or use scissors to cut them open. Add bay leaves and salt. (add veggies if desired). Simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Stir in dry pasta and 1 cup of water. Return to simmer for 2 minutes, stirring frequently so pasta doesn't stick to the bottom of the pan. Remove from heat, remove bay leaves, fold in about 1/2 of the mozzarella.
4. Top pasta with the remaining mozzarella and spoonfulls of ricotta. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese.
5. Bake for 22 - 25 minutes until pasta is al dente.

If you'd like a deeper browned top, place under the broiler for a minute or two at the end.



FOR THE FAMILY

If you could trade places with a Bible story character for one day, who would you choose and why?

One interesting Bible character was a man named Gideon. He was just a regular guy, doing regular work when the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said,

"The Lord is with you, mighty warrior."

Gideon? A mighty warrior? He wasn't strong. He wasn't clever. Definitely not a mighty warrior. Still, the Angel of the Lord told Gideon to lead an army and fight against the enemy.

When have you felt like you had to do something you weren't prepared for?

Gideon obeyed, and with an army of 32,000 soldiers, he prepared to fight the enemy. But God didn't want an army of 32,000 soldiers. All he wanted was a small army of 300 men.

How would you feel if God told you to get rid of almost all your soldiers right before a big battle?

Gideon was afraid, but he also trusted and obeyed God. With a tiny army of only 300, Gideon attacked and defeated the enemy.

Why do you think God would want Gideon to attack the enemy with only 300 men and not a full army?

There will be moments in our lives when we don't think we have all it takes. We'll feel like we don't have enough or we're not equipped to do what God wants us to do. But the truth is, God is strong. God is enough. And he wants us to depend on him and his strength.

How can you depend on God in your life?

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak."

Isaiah 40:29

Pray Together

Dear Lord, Thank you for strengthening us and equipping us to obey you. Help us to trust in your strength and not our own. Amen.

The Shepherd's Table

JUST FOR MOM

Years ago, when my oldest was just four, I served him a dinner he absolutely did not want to eat. He protested for several minutes, but I stood firm and insisted he eat what I made. With a glare, he picked up his fork... then proceeded to etch "I hate mom" into our kitchen table.

Feeling utterly discouraged, I called my own mom and asked (referencing Proverbs 31:28), "When will my children 'rise up and call me blessed'?" Her response... "At your funeral."

I'm glad to say, my son (now 17) has developed an adventurous appetite, we can both laugh over the "engraving" incident, and our family has replaced the table. I'm still waiting for him to call me blessed.

As moms we constantly care for others, often with little gratitude in return, and I know how easy it is to feel burnt out from it all. I think that's one reason why Psalm 23 is one of my favorites. The beautiful shepherd imagery David uses, beginning with "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing," reveals just how much God cares for us. This passage alludes to safety and protection, rescuing and comfort, food and water.

But then, David switches up the imagery a bit and says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (v. 5). An interesting picture, isn't it? Here's a little context. In middle eastern culture at that time, families would show off their wealth with abundant amounts of food. Typically, the man of the family would provide the food, but the woman or a servant would prepare it. Guests would boast about the various tables they'd dined at.

In this passage, God is the one who prepares the table for David. It's costly. It's lavish. David's enemies are looking on and saying he doesn't deserve such treatment, but still God holds nothing back to show him how loved and cherished he is. He anoints David's head with oil and David's cup is never empty.. Only the best treatment an honored guest would receive. Sounds amazing!

But the same is true for you and for me. God lavishes his love on us, even when others look on and say we don't deserve it. He cares for us. He holds nothing back. He gives us the very best because we are his beloved daughters. When we struggle to believe this truth, we can look back to that last table Jesus ate at before his death, when our Sacrificial Lamb broke bread and told his disciples, "this is my body given for you" (Luke 22:19).

CONVERSATION TIP

Tonight's conversation will focus on how God leads us on a good, but narrow path. Sharing an appropriate story about a time you didn't stay on it can help kids understand God loves us even when we fail.

Recipe: **FIX IT AND FORGET IT GREEN CHICKEN ENCHILADAS**

I can't promise that this recipe will get your kids to call you blessed or stop them from etching things into the table, but I can help with a make ahead of time, fix it and forget it recipe to help with the evening chaos. I can also tell you that these are the most delicious green enchiladas I've ever had. This is the recipe I reach for when I'm feeling burnt out but still want to put a hot meal on the table for the family. You can prep this anytime during the day. Just pop it in the fridge until you're ready to bake it. Add a few minutes to the bake time if it's coming from the fridge. You can use any type of chicken. I like a rotisserie to keep it simple but all chicken works.

Ingredients:

- 1 whole rotisserie chicken, shredded*
- 1/2 tsp salt*
- 1/2 tsp cumin*
- 1/2 tsp paprika*
- 3/4 tsp chili powder*
- 3 cups cheddar cheese, shredded*
- 3/4 cup sour cream*
- 10 corn tortillas*
- 1 15oz can green enchilada sauce*

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. Set out a 9"x13" baking dish.
2. Pull meat off rotisserie chicken and shred it. Easiest way to do this is to place the chicken meat in your KitchenAid mixer with the paddle attachment. Or simply use 2 forks to shred the chicken in a large bowl.
3. Add salt, cumin, paprika, chili powder, 1 cup cheddar cheese, and sour cream to the chicken. Mix together. Reserve remaining 2 cups of cheese for topping.
4. Wrap the tortillas in a paper towel and microwave for 60 seconds.
5. Pour 1/3 of the enchilada sauce into a small bowl.
6. Dip the warm tortilla in the enchilada sauce to coat. Add the chicken mixture to the tortilla. Roll it up and place it in a 9"x13" dish. Repeat with remaining tortillas.
7. Pour the remaining enchilada sauce from the bowl and can on top of the enchiladas. Sprinkle the remaining 2 cups of cheese on top.
8. Bake for 30 minutes or until the cheese is bubbling.



FOR THE FAMILY

What's your favorite thing to do with your family? Why?

If you've ever been bowling, you know that the goal is to get a heavy ball down a long lane so it will knock over all the pins on the other end. On each side of the narrow lane is a gutter. If the ball lands in the gutter, it will get to the other side of the lane, but it won't knock over any pins. How sad!

In order to help us keep the ball out of the gutter, we can use guardrails or bumpers. If a ball is heading toward the gutter, the bumper will push the ball back into the lane.

The Bible is kind of like those bumpers. God wants to lead us on a good path. He wants to take us to a good place. But we tend to drift off to the side when we see something that looks like it will be more fun or make our lives easier. God gives us his Word to bump us back onto that good path. Like a fish in a bowl, we flourish when we remain within God's boundaries for us, rather than trying to get out.

What examples of "biblical bumpers" come to mind?

Not only does God's Word help us, God himself helps us. The Bible tells us he "leads us in paths of righteousness" (Psalm 23:3), or he guides in right living. He doesn't yank us or pull us. He doesn't push us or drag us. He guides us with love and wisdom, with gentleness and kindness because he wants the best for us.

Share a time you allowed God to lead you even when you wanted to go in a different direction, or a time you didn't and wish you had!

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you." Psalm 32:8

Pray Together

Dear Lord, thank you for guiding us and loving us. Please help us to follow you even when it's hard. Amen.

The Potter's Table

JUST FOR MOM

I think daily life can feel a bit like a merry go round sometimes. There are ups and downs, we're always in motion, and just after one day ends, we get to start from the beginning and do it all over again. All this whirling around just to check off the basics of mothering leaves little energy for the big things like spiritual training, character development, and showering. I'm not sure how it's possible, but I often feel like I'm going crazy doing it all and yet also never doing enough. Am I truly making a difference when it comes to the important stuff?

With motherhood comes tremendous pressure. I worry about how my kids are going to turn out, and fret over how I'm shaping and molding them. One biblical image that helps me in this area is that of the potter and clay. In a plea for mercy, Isaiah the prophet confesses that God is the potter, and his people are the clay, the work of his hands. This reminds me that as we go round and round the merry go round of life, God is holding us, molding us, and shaping us, like clay on a potter's wheel. And this comforts me because I know he's doing the exact same thing with my kids. I'm not alone in shaping who they become.

This becomes extremely apparent in the life of Paul. In the book of Acts, we see a man named Saul, a persecutor of Christians, undergo an amazing transformation. After an encounter with Jesus himself, not only is Saul's name changed to Paul, so too is his life's mission. This persecutor of Christians is transformed into God's "chosen vessel", shaped and equipped to proclaim the name of Jesus to "Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15, NKJV). God was working on Paul's heart long after his mother was.

There's no denying we have incredible influence over our kids. Our words, our actions, our faith in Jesus all help to shape these precious lives. But God is also at work. He loves our children even more than we do. His hands are ever upon them. He is molding them to be his chosen vessels, giving them a specific shape and purpose according to his perfect will. We can trust the Potter.

CONVERSATION TIP

Share with your family how God is using your everyday life to shape and mold you.

Recipe: ONE POT SMOKY CHILI

This the perfect one pot meal for those whirlwind days when you barely have it in you to cook dinner, let alone do a zillion dishes. All you need is one large pot, about 25 minutes of active cooking time, and then let it simmer for 45 minutes. If you're feeling like you have a little extra energy, I like to use a boxed cornbread mix from Trader Joes and serve alongside the chili.

Ingredients:

- 6 slices bacon*
- 1/2 yellow onion diced*
- 2 cloves of garlic minced*
- 1 lb ground beef*
- 1 teaspoon salt*
- 2 tablespoons chili powder*
- 1 teaspoon cumin*
- 1 teaspoon paprika*
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano*
- 1.5 tablespoons tomato paste*
- 8 oz dark beer (I like Guinness or Negra Modelo)*
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder*
- 14 oz can diced tomatoes*
- 1 cup beef broth (chicken or veggie works too)*
- 1 15 oz can beans (black or pinto work great!)*

Optional toppings:

- Grated cheddar cheese*
- Sour cream*
- Avocado*
- Corn chips/Tortilla chips*
- Scallions*

Instructions:

1. Dice bacon into bite size pieces. Cook bacon over medium heat on the stovetop until crispy. Remove and set aside. Drain excess oil from pot, keep about 1 tablespoon oil in the pot.
2. Add diced onion to pot and sauté until soft, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for 60 seconds. Add ground beef and cook through. Add salt, chili powder, cumin, paprika, oregano, tomato paste and cook for 1 - 2 minutes. Add the beer and simmer until almost reduced, about 4-5 minutes. Stir in the cocoa powder, can of tomatoes, beef broth, can of beans and cooked bacon. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 45 minutes.



FOR THE FAMILY

If you could invent something, what would it be?

Inventing something takes time and care, precision and detailed knowledge. The Bible tells us that we are God's workmanship, or creation. He invented us! And just like every invention has a specific purpose, so do you. You were created on purpose for a purpose.

How does that make you feel?

God isn't done shaping and making us when we're born. He is constantly working in our lives and molding our character. Like a potter shapes clay on a wheel, God is transforming each of us into something useful and beautiful. The funny thing about clay is it starts out looking like a blob. Left alone, it's not very useful or beautiful. It only becomes those things when the potter works on it and transforms it. With the final product in mind, the potter guides the clay.

What does this tell you about who God is and what he thinks about you?

God knows every detail about you - your fears, your wishes, what you want to be when you grow up, and he has a plan for you. He is molding you into the person he wants you to become. Sometimes it can feel like God is stretching us. Sometimes we might wonder what he's doing. Sometimes we might feel like the change is too intense. But he is always there, holding you in his hands.

Describe a time you didn't understand what God was doing in your life?

One of the most amazing things about God is his patience. Even when we make mistakes or resist his work in our lives, he continues to hold us and work on us. He never gives up on us. Like a potter, he knows change takes time. With the beautiful goal in mind, he never lets go.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Pray Together

Lord, You are the Creator, our Creator! Thank you for making us and shaping us for your good purposes. Help us to trust and cooperate with your work in our lives, even when we don't understand it. Amen.