

Mended will show you how to create an incredible, God-honoring legacy for your family. This is an amazing resource for anyone who desires to deepen their mother-daughter relationship in a Biblical, healthy, and healed way.

Lysa TerKeurst, *New York Times* bestselling author and president of Proverbs 31 Ministries

If you're ready to deepen and strengthen your relationship with your mother, your daughter, your mother-in-law, your daughter-in-law, *Mended* offers the practical, biblical guidance and wise, heartfelt encouragement you're looking for. Whether you struggle with past hurts or present disappointments, Helen and Blythe make it clear that, "No one and no relationship is beyond hope." Each suggestion is supported with Scripture and wrapped in real-life examples drawn from two different generations. So helpful, so hope-filled, so healing!

Liz Curtis Higgs, bestselling author of *Bad Girls of the Bible*

Helen and Blythe have bared their souls and brightened our relational paths with their writing of this soul-searching, life-instructing book. They walked through fire as they wrote, and the results have emerged as pure gold.

Jan Silvius, author of *Courage for the Unknown Season* and *Fool-Proofing Your Life*

Blythe and Helen weave godly, practical suggestions to move the relationship with your mother or daughter from harmful to healed. In a beautiful conversation, the duo teaches the reader how to sow seeds of peace rather than discord by pointing her to the Author of reconciliation, Jesus."

Wendy Pope, Proverbs 31 Ministries speaker and author of *Wait and See*

The mother-daughter relationship can be both a place where we are most comfortable and vulnerable and yet, at times, feel as though we are walking a tight rope. This practical guide gives us the tools to navigate nurturing and restoring this most important relationship. It will be a resource that I will refer to over and over again.

Lynn Cowell, Proverbs 31 Ministries speaker and
author of *Make Your Move*

I cannot think of two women who embody transparency, courage, strength, and wisdom more than Blythe Daniel and Helen McIntosh. As you read this book, you'll surely be soaked in their special kind of wonderful, and your own mother-daughter relationships will be saturated in the love of Jesus—the mender of our souls.

LaTan Roland Murphy, author of *Courageous Women of the Bible*

I vacillated back and forth between mother and daughter as I read *Mended*—learning as a mother, absorbing as a daughter. These words can unlock those of us who have felt stuck within either role, unsure of how to find a new way out of old patterns. God's heart for healing families lies within these pages.

Sara Hagerty, author of *Every Bitter Thing Is Sweet* and *Unseen*

Whether your desire is to mend a strained and broken relationship or simply to make a strong and healthy one even better, you will find yourself enlightened, encouraged, and expectant about the future through the pages of *Mended*. I highly encourage mothers and daughters to enjoy this beautiful book together.

Jeannie Cunnion, author of *Mom Set Free*

As the mother of five daughters, I know firsthand how important the mother-daughter relationship is and how much cultivating is necessary to keep good lines of communication open—the prerequisite for a healthy relationship. In my experience hurts and wounds are inevitable between mothers and daughters. But alienation is not. In *Mended*, we are given a proven path to repair the brokenness and build upon the beauty that is present.

Gail Hyatt, wife of Michael Hyatt, *New York Times*
bestselling author of *Platform*

Blythe McIntosh Daniel and Helen McIntosh gently move us through the mending process by sharing practical tips steeped in grace and compassion. This book will equip you with the tools you need to heal the relationship with your mother or daughter as you look to Jesus for wisdom and discernment. Blythe and Helen paint a beautiful picture of hope and help for mending your relationships.

Connie Albers, author of *Parenting Beyond the Rules*

If you have ever thought, “I wish I knew how to really talk to my mom, to my daughter,” this book will be a gift. So often we allow years to pass, stuck in misunderstanding and brokenness simply because we don’t know what to do or what to say. *Mended* will give you a place to begin.

Sheila Walsh, author of *It’s Okay Not to Be Okay*

The mother-daughter relationship is one of the most sacred and yet often one of the most complicated. In *Mended*, you’ll find hope and the tools of conversation that you need to repair your broken relationship. Written beautifully and tenderly, this book is a must read. I highly recommend it!

Becky Harling, author of *How to Listen So People Will Talk*

Mended is a delicate yet powerful glimpse into the lives of two women who have done the hard work of restoration, producing a relationship characterized by bridges rather than walls. The practical insights they offer make their book as practical as it is poignant, a gift that mothers and daughters will cherish for generations to come.

John Hambrick, author of *Move Toward the Mess*

MENDED

BLYTHE DANIEL
and
HELEN MCINTOSH



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Disclaimer

This book is not intended as a substitute for counseling or therapy. It is meant to encourage you in your relationship with your mother or daughter—to equip you with language, ideas, and principles to bring about needed repairs, growth, and healing.

Mended

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*We dedicate this book to the mothers and daughters
before us and after in our family tree:*

Emma Jean Bryan Brown

Maris

Calyn

Lynn

Sarah

Ann

And to the wonderful sons and fathers who stood with them:

James

Art

William

Bryan

*May you always know how much we love your hearts
and how very dearly they have impacted ours!*

Contents

Foreword by Stasi Eldredge	9
Introduction	13
1. I See You, You See Me: The Layering of Us	23
2. Being Right or Being Closer: Relationship Above Differences	35
3. Saying What When: Words to Love and Live By	53
4. It's My Part: Responsibly Reacting	67
5. Forgiveness Finder: Aiming for God and Each Other Over Offense	89
6. Words That Can Bring You Back Together	107
7. With No Permission Comes No Advice	117
8. Resisting the Cs: Changing and Controlling Your Mother or Daughter	133
9. A New Generation: Setting Things Differently	151
10. Restoring Your Heart	167
11. Doing Hard Things Together	181
Afterword	195
Appendix A	197
Appendix B	199
Notes	204



Foreword

Stasi Eldredge

When I go to a mechanic, I go to one who absolutely loves being a mechanic. I want a person who has spent time under the hood, someone who has experience and expertise. If I need to go to anyone, really, for anything, I want that person to be passionate about his or her work. To be trustworthy. To be drawing upon a deep well of experience. To that end, if I want to learn about the relationship between a mother and daughter—the possibilities for healing, the goodness and holiness and intimacy that can be attained—I go to Blythe Daniel and Helen McIntosh. So you, lucky reader, are in the right place.

I've had the pleasure of being in the company of these two many times. Their mutual delight in one another, coupled with their mutual respect, is alluring. Both are fully themselves in each other's company, with no hint of the strained facial expressions prevalent in too many daughters in the presence of their mothers, and vice versa. In them, I don't see what I shared with my own mother for too many years before she passed, but I do see what can be possible. I also see what I want to know between myself and the daughters given to me through the marriages of my sons.

The mother-daughter relationship is a holy one. It can be marked by years fraught with the messy angst of needed separation. There can be seasons of appropriate or displaced anger. Certainly, there are many moments when emotions run high. And there is the other side too. The

beauty of the shared experience of femininity. The knowing of navigating this life as a girl and then as a woman. The possibility of having an advocate in your mother through the transition from child to adult. The potential future of a deepening friendship built upon a shared history and a mutual love. I believe in her heart of hearts every mother longs to mother well. And every mother needs help doing it. I believe every daughter would love a healthy and life-giving relationship with her mother. And every daughter needs help with that too.

Which you already know and is probably what led you to pick up this book. Well done.

No matter where you are currently in your relationship with your mother or your daughter, there is hope for a better one. It may feel impossible, but nothing is impossible for our God.

When Gabriel told Mary she was to bear the Son of God, she asked, “How will this be?” and the angel told her, “Nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37). And when the disciples asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God” (Luke 18:26-27). Ecclesiastes 9:4 says, “Where there’s life there is hope” but with God, there is hope even when there appears to be no life at all (Ezekiel 37). There is hope for your relationship, dear one, and nothing is out of the realm of possibility for our Jesus.

Because of Jesus, we don’t have to live this life alone or figure out how to live it well all by ourselves. We have a Guide. We have a Helper. We have a Counselor. We have one another. And now we have this book.

Blythe and Helen possess a shared wisdom won by plumbing the depths of God’s heart in the good seasons and the hard. They share what they have learned with a winsome, wise, and generous hand. This book is filled with tangible counsel written by women who follow hard after Jesus and who, with compassionate hearts, understand the struggles we all face.

Mended is an invitation to follow Jesus into the heart realms of desire, brokenness, hope, and healing. It is a journey worth taking, and one on which God will guide you with gentleness and mercy. Ultimately, this book is a call to love. It is a call we are all meant to answer.

God bless you as you do. Such goodness awaits.



Introduction

Blythe

We were just a few days into summer break and catching our breath from all the end-of-school excitement. The pace of the slower days was so appealing to both me and my children. We had started to dream about what the summer would hold, days when we could get away from the tasks that persistently called our names for attention. The phone rang, and when I cheerfully answered the call, her words gripped me in ways I didn't have a response to. I heard the words "may have lymphoma," and I couldn't connect the sentence with the person who was saying it.

I had spent time with Mom the week prior, and there was nothing in her appearance or words then that would have made me think something new was about to impact her life and our family. She always had a healthy glow, a spirit that filled a room, a heart that—unlike the Grinch's, which was two sizes too small—was three times a normal size, I was convinced.

In the moments that followed, there were words and feelings that seemed suspended in the ceiling above me. I had a difficult time processing what I'd just heard. No! We were writing a book together; we had so many things to do this year. This was not something that was on my radar *at all* that would be a part of my story with my mom. Thankfully, I didn't then, or in the days after, go to a place of "Why my mom?" For we don't really get to ask that question, do we?

I do remember asking a few questions of Mom and Dad about how and when they would know for sure—and then I prayed with them. I remember holding back tears so as not to cave in to the dark thoughts that wanted to take over. In that moment, what mattered most was that Mom would continue to know life and I would know life with her.

Mothers and daughters. There is something about the way we feel toward each other. Many mothers and daughters can sense the chasm between them. Maybe that's why you picked up this book. We're so glad you are thinking about your relationship with your mother or daughter.

In a sense, I felt a chasm occur the moment Mom shared with me that she wasn't healthy. It was as if something huge divided us—her health and the future in front of us.

While our love was intact (we had worked hard to get it there), there was something we had to address between us that now called us deeper to each other. And it was a matter of choosing life over the darkness of walking into an unknown path with each other.

Some daughters have not experienced the feeling of “What if I lose my mom?” with the sense that life would alter dramatically for them in a negative way. Some mothers and daughters, and maybe you are one of them, have felt they have already lost their daughter or mom in their relationship, and they live each day with the chasm in their hearts. They wonder if they will ever gain her back.

And then there are daughters and mothers who have wondered, *What if my daughter never calls me again? What if my mom doesn't want to come see my family? How will I feel if I never get to repair the relationship I have with my mom?*

This is the purpose of our book. It's to ask these hard questions and address them with hopeful expectation for you. No mom or daughter wants to walk a dark path of uncertainty, a strained relationship, or a gulf between you that feels too difficult for you to cross.

The most beautiful and the most volatile relationships are often between a mother and daughter. Why is that? We believe it is because we are formed in our mother's womb and we are carried by our moms to give us life (and not just life inside the womb but also *for* life, meaning over the years). This bond can either impact us for the better or leave us hurting pretty deeply. Many daughters do not feel accepted or even wanted. And that is something we will address in this book since it's part of our story as well. Forgiveness is one of the biggest issues between a mother and daughter, and bitterness can grow when one or both are expecting the other to ask for forgiveness and they can't let go.

One thing we want to get out right up front: You are loved by God and you have purpose and worth. God formed you and fashioned you, and you have great value:

You created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully
made (Psalm 139:13-14 NIV).

You may have a rocky relationship with your mom or daughter. But it does not mean you are any less loved and valued because of it.

And two, there is no fear or shame you need to carry in your life. None. Zip. We bear the souls of our Maker. And in Him, there is only love and acceptance. There is no shame or fear.

A couple of months before the phone call with Mom about her diagnosis of lymphoma, which brought my relationship with her in sharper focus, my pastor shared these words: "God will take you into the cave you fear most to show you there's nothing to fear." And I truly felt no fear during the entire season that followed with Mom. I let go of fear's power over me, and that's what we do when the enemy of our souls, Satan, tries to bring a judgment on us that's not ours to take.

As mother and daughter, we see what we mean to each other more clearly now. We look for the signs of our relationship with more

eagerness than before. We see how God shows us the truths that point to His good character even in harder times, and we know He sees us in our relationship as mom and daughter and He is visible to us. And the same is true of you and your mother or daughter. He does not leave where He is asked to dwell.

God provided instruction for all relationships through one of the wisest men who ever lived: King Solomon. His words in Proverbs 20:7 are, “The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them” (NIV), and verse 11 says, “Even small children are known by their actions, so is their conduct really pure and right?” (NIV). The passage goes on in verse 20 to say, “If someone curses their father or mother, their lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness” (NIV) and verse 22: “Do not say, ‘I’ll pay you back for this wrong!’ Wait for the LORD, and he will avenge you” (NIV).

That’s some pretty strong language about how we are to look at our individual actions toward our father and mother and even our children. Are our actions to each other out of a pure motive? Verse 7 says the righteous one who leads a blameless life has blessed children after him. We aren’t blameless, but we are righteous in Christ! It’s clear in this passage and in other verses in Proverbs that man’s steps should be directed by the Lord, and when we try to activate our own justice, we are attempting to short-circuit God. Throughout Proverbs the author frames wisdom and understanding over hasty decisions, trying to acquire the wrong things, and pride. All of these affect our relationship with our mom and/or daughter.

Here’s the good news. God knows our hearts (He made us, right?), and He is strengthening them in every relationship we have if we let Him. He knows what you are up against, and He wants you to have the tools to honor your mom or daughter and live wisely with her. The Lord can and will deliver you both!

As mother and daughter, we hope there is nothing to fear in your relationship with your mom or daughter, but if there is, peace can be

experienced now, not just on some future day when you hope to be reunited. Restoring what God created between you is what we want to offer you. Mothers and daughters are often linked in our culture in both positive and negative ways. When women think about who they are, it's possible they think about how they are similar to their mother or how they don't want to be like her at all. But no matter where your paths have taken you, there is a path you can both take to bring yourselves back to each other. Yes, now. Not later, but now.

The Bible has a lot to say about restoring relationships. We believe God's design is for families to pursue Him even when their families are messed up. And messed up they are!

The book of Isaiah has become a favorite passage for both of us. Mom introduced me to its life-giving words before I could memorize them for myself. She pointed out to me the foundation for the words we will share with you. Her favorite words, which she has taught me and my children, are *rebuild*, *restore*, and *repair*. Notice how they come up in these two passages:

.....

Isaiah 58:12: "Those from among you will *rebuild* the ancient ruins; you will raise up the age-old foundations; and you will be called the *repairer* of the breach, the *restorer* of the streets in which to dwell" (emphasis added).

Isaiah 61:4: "Then they will *rebuild* the ancient ruins, they will raise up the former devastations; and they will *repair* the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations" (emphasis added).

.....

Rebuild, yes. Repair, check. Restore, yes. Don't these words speak life to you?

Is your heart longing to mend or make better part of your relationship with your mother or your daughter? Maybe you are a mentor of spiritual daughters and you want to show them a picture of what mothers and daughters can look like. Perhaps you are a daughter without a mentor or a mom you can say was a good role model, and you desperately want to get it right with your daughter. Or perhaps you are a mom who wants to get it right with your daughter before life takes you too far apart from each other. You want to experience the goodness a mother and daughter can have and operate more freely in your homes and with each other.

And we know operating in our homes with each other brings our relationships into full light, doesn't it?

Many of us walk in the authority of our own home as mothers. Some daughters are not yet mothers but long to be so they can do things differently than they experienced. They want to *rebuild*. Rebuilding what you want to have with your mother or daughter is a gift worth seeking. In fractured times with your family, specifically with a mother or daughter, you want to be able to *repair* what's between you. We get it! We know there are mothers and daughters who have broken dreams, broken conversations, and broken relationships that need repair. We have done that too.

Women have the heart to help mend. Traditionally that's been their role. They're the ones to speak the hard things that have not yet been said and to quiet the disturbing words going back and forth between children. Women know how to mend their children's scrapes and deal with the illnesses of a parent, but why do they feel so inadequate to mend hearts between mothers and daughters?

So many mothers have abandoned their role. There is a splintered modeling of mothering. This is where the *restorer* comes in. The restorer is the one who seeks to bring life out of the ruins. To restore means not to ignore but to choose to make things new. Restoration: to give you the gift of mothering and of being mothered.

Restoring the heart is a spiritual journey. As you go to God, He restores you, and you gain a restored heart. The heart before God is key to the heart before your mother or daughter. If your heart is not fully toward God, it will be difficult to navigate the relationship with your mother or daughter.

We understand that sometimes it can feel as though God could have changed things between you, and it's difficult to recognize God as a restorer. We can often build walls around our hearts toward God and toward our mother or daughter. But these walls won't edify us—they often will destroy us. We know ancient cities had walls to fortify them. The city was the metropolis that needed protecting, and often a city had many villages. Walls were meant to keep out the enemy. But the walls we build between a mother and daughter don't hold back an enemy—they hold back a relationship.

In this book we want to help you awaken your heart to God as the restorer of all things, including your relationships. We want to show you how to build bridges between a mother and daughter, not walls.

Bridges allow you to gain entry to an area—you can walk from one side to the other without interference. A mother and a daughter may not walk completely to the other's side (although our hope is that they would!), but they can walk closer toward each other and meet in the middle.

Jesus was the ultimate bridge builder. He bridged relationships with mothers, daughters, fathers, and sons through His words, His healing touch, and His interactions with them. The prophet Isaiah looked at the generation before him and at the ruins that were rebuilt and proclaimed to the people how their refusal of God and His covenants kept them in captivity by the Babylonians. And he foretold of the coming King Jesus, who would ultimately be the bridge builder between all the not-so-good things we've done in our lives—known as sin—and a just God.

All those who are willing to stand in the breach (Isaiah 58:12) and

become willing to repair their own life and then help rebuild the relationship with their mother or daughter will experience new life that comes from restoring, repairing, and rebuilding.

Women have gotten lost in their roles as mothers and daughters, sometimes not knowing what to say or do. And they particularly don't know what to do when they see or experience brokenness.

How do you mend a broken heart or a broken relationship? The culture doesn't have the answer, but we want to give you the tools you need to navigate the relationship with your mother or daughter that has caused you pain and maybe even threatened to pull you apart.

This book will help you become a better mother or daughter, and we will share with you how you can reclaim the role you want to have as a mother or daughter. Many mothers don't know how to be a mother who is both strong and sensitive, and they don't have a role model of healthy mothering. We often hear mothers and daughters acknowledge that their relationship is not what they want it to be or thought it would be. But we believe daughters can learn to mother their children and have a relationship with their mother that is exceedingly better than what we see or hear from mothers and daughters today.

We are built for relationships with each other. And when there has been a chasm or there seems to be difficulty even talking with one another without defensiveness or hurt, it hurts more than just the two of you. Generations are affected by how you and your mother or daughter relate and interact with each other. And if the relationship doesn't even exist anymore, further hurt can divide families. As a first step, we invite you to acknowledge that you want a different future. Don't focus on how yet. Just tell God you want to make things better between you and you need His power to do so.

He has done that for our family and the generations represented in our family. And we know He can do that for you as you trust Him even with a small seed of faith. It's not up to us to fix a person—only Jesus Christ can do that. But we can move toward restoring what's been

lost because He specializes in that for us and will give us what we need to do this well.

And we invite you to dream with us about what your relationship can be restored to and how this will impact your family and generations to come. You hold a powerful tool—the words that can bring life—and those words are needed more now than ever. It's your season to rebuild and repair, and we are expectant and hopeful with you about what this can look like. Let's jump in together!



I See You, You See Me: The Layering of Us

Blythe

Our family loves chocolate. A more perfect food than this delicious taste of heaven does not exist. So when my daughter Calyn was seven, she asked me if she could put chocolate milk in her cereal. I paused. Bit my lip. Because who wouldn't want chocolate milk in her cereal? I quickly thought, *More sugar, less nutritious than white milk... Hmm... Probably not.* With that, I told her, "No, honey, you can't have chocolate milk in your cereal." Her mind is constantly processing ideas and good comebacks. I'm told she is a lot like me at that age, and I'm not one to argue with truth.

So using her quick wit and memory, she came back with, "Nannie puts it in her cereal. Did you know that?" Wait, what? How did she remember that? She'd cracked our code of chocolateness. And she came back with an argument I didn't even know how to respond to. My girl had gotten me.

Four months earlier, my mom and dad had come to visit us. One morning, as is typical in our bustling household, we didn't have enough white milk (do you know how often I go to the grocery store? It's pretty

much daily because we constantly run out of milk and other important things) so Mom used the chocolate milk we had in her cereal, and Calyn remembered that. She saw my mom. Then she looked at me.

She knows the common ground between us is chocolate. Her grandmother gives her a certain kind of chocolate treat each Christmas, and their love of chocolate is one of the things that bonds them together. I have sat on the couch with her eating M&Ms while we watched a movie. But life is more than chocolate, isn't it? I mean, it's a great part of life. But what's most important is finding the common ground between you and your mother, or you and your daughter or granddaughter. And at the heart of what you are building between you and your mother or daughter is this: I see you, and you see me.

But as we get older and words have been said between us as mothers and daughters and grandmothers, the chocolate melts and the things that held you together are no longer strong enough. Our hearts hurt as we think about the words or moments between us that have left us feeling like our relationship cannot be mended.

Maybe you feel like you've blown it with your daughter or mother and you wonder how to get back what you once had. Or maybe you never had the relationship you longed for and the wounds have created a scar in your heart that hasn't healed over time. She didn't stand up for you when you needed it. Her words hurt you. Her actions showed you anything but love. And when you tried to talk with her about it, the conversation escalated into an overwhelming argument. And it's still awkward today to spend time together. You don't know your place or how you can be in her presence without bringing up your hurt feelings and exploding.

And it may not even seem possible that you can have a relationship with your mother or daughter because of the life lived between you. You may be in a season where one of you has detached from the other and there is little hope of reconciling. Or there's been an offense so great you don't feel like your relationship can ever be restored.

There's the fact that she no longer calls. Or that you have cut off communication with her because of your anger, and silence has come between you. It could be she is no longer on this earth, and you want to reconcile your heart with what you have experienced as a mother or daughter but you don't know how to do that with someone who is gone. Or you have a sense that your relationship isn't how it could be or should be, and you are weary from carrying this load to yet another destination in your heart and closing her off from you or your children.

Relationships can become toxic with buried emotions and unspoken words. You might have to be the initiator of healing, and doing this for your heart will be worth it. Healing may take some time, and what we are about to suggest is not to make a quick gesture and then quickly scoot away (we do this when we aren't sure of the other's reaction, right?), but over a period of time we hope you will see this as a thread of investment in the other.

Find the common ground between you and celebrate it. We believe there is always at least one thing you can find that is common ground with your mother or daughter. It may be as trivial as chocolate. It may be a fun location you like to go to. It could be a food or a memory from school. But the key is to find it, to accentuate it, and to invest in it with her. Find something that can draw you together rather than tear apart the fabric between you.

This builds your relationship even if it is the only thing you have in common. Building your relationship is what can give you hope that you will move out of the season you have lived in pain, expecting that things would just stay the same and you would adjust and live life without the other person rather than live in fullness of the relationship you'd so dearly love to have. We want more than that for you, and if we had to guess, we believe you do too! In finding common ground, one of the things you are doing is sharing the individual thoughts and desires you both have in neutral territory. What comes next is putting the other first. Okay, exhale. There is great reward in this. Stay with us!

Putting the Relationship First

Blythe

If the bottom layer is finding common ground, the next layer is putting the relationship between you first. The relationship between you can be so much better, and learning ways to put the relationship first above the different interests or beliefs you have is key.

My mother didn't have the luxury of a lot of great, shared moments with her mother. My grandmother was battling the effects of anger, alcoholism, and anxiety that were present due to her mother's choices of how she lived life. Her mom operated out of a brokenness that had come to her from a previous generation. And no one taught her mom how to fight for the things she loved rather than fall into the trap of past sins and heartbreak.

Mom had to help run a household, take care of a sick mom, care for the needs of her younger brother, and help her dad who was a busy air force commander. The family moved a lot and was often in places that family couldn't get to them and come to the aide of my mom. I often marvel at what she was doing at nine years old when I look at my nine-year-old daughter now.

As painful as I can only imagine that was for my mom, I like to think there were things she and my grandmother had in common. And that my grandmother did love my mom and showed her as best she could in the brokenness she was living out of.

I do remember my grandmother loving to shop, and I have heard how she would take my mom to nice places to shop on occasion and let her enjoy a tasty treat at their favorite store. I imagine, based on what I know of what Mom heard as a young girl, it was probably accompanied by comments such as, "Are you sure you're wearing that?" "You look too plain," and other statements that were hurtful to a little girl just wanting to enjoy a day with her mom. But there was common ground.

As Mom got older, she put the relationship with her mother first rather than just focusing on the common ground. She looked at how she could come alongside and help her mom. And Mom has continued to live this way, putting the relationship first as a mom and grandmother, and she has done this well. She loves taking my children shopping. It is their thing, especially the girls. They look forward to it, and they revel in how she loves them and wants to give them good gifts. But this couldn't have come about just by simply doing life as she has always done it. Mom had to rebuild from what she experienced.

Living your present like you did your past is often limiting the joy and freedom that is yours through the work of Jesus Christ. We aren't supposed to just muscle through, but we receive the ability to love outside our own means by taking hold of what Jesus gives us—the ability to deeply care for another because of how He cares for us.

Somewhere along the way an intentional shift has to take place if you want to invest in your relationship with your mom or daughter and in future generations. It won't come without some choices to lay down what did or didn't happen, how it was expressed to you, and how it left you feeling.

Our good friend and wise woman Stasi Eldredge puts it this way:

Not a one of us is a perfect mother, and none of us had one. God alone is perfect... The role of a mother is profound, and the role *your* mother has played and continues to play in your life is utterly central to shaping the woman you are today... As a woman, your mother is your most potent role model. How she felt, what she thought, and what she believed had a direct effect on you.¹

God woke me up early today. I thought I heard pitter-patter, and my daughter Calyn had come into our room and made a little place for herself on the floor. I picked her up and put her in our bed. She said she couldn't sleep. I laid there kissing on her like my mom used to do on

me. Mom intentionally set a pattern for caring for me this way, which I then repeated to my daughter. This goodness is possible because God has helped us *a lot* to love as He loves. Mom and I have let Him mend us personally and also mend any unraveling in the mother-daughter relationship over the years. Mom and I want you to know our story so that you will be deeply encouraged as we share not just successes but the many repairs that brought us here.

Helen

The driving force behind this book is to share that we believe “we can only do what we can do.” You can only work on your own half of the relationship. We are not calling you to single-handedly repair or enrich your relationship with your mother or your daughter (the whole enchilada, as we say) . . . just your part! You are only responsible for your own words, actions, thoughts, hopes, and dreams.

You are not responsible for the other person or their issues, but we will share how those are clues in navigating the relationship. You are not responsible for the other party’s response to you or to your efforts. When the subject of responsibility comes up, I almost always think of the visual of two cups bumping, with a picture of a heart drawn on each cup and numerous arrows spilling out of each cup. The heart, of course, represents our individual heart. The arrows represent the “issues” of our lives that spill from our heart, as shown in Proverbs 4:23: “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.” I like to replace the word *springs* with *issues* because that’s what comes up and out. We are responsible for bumping someone’s cup by what we say or do, but not for what comes out of their cup. But we are very responsible for what comes out of our own cups/hearts!

Should your mom or daughter not respond well because of a relational mistake you have made, I will discuss some ways you can own it and do damage control. The focus is on your heart, your words, your actions, and your choices. I hope you have just said to yourself,

“Whew!” and your shoulders are more relaxed. We are not asking you to climb a mountain in the dead of winter with no equipment.

Along with continually asking yourself, “What am I responsible for, and what am I *not* responsible for in a difficult relationship?” it is helpful to think of the mother-daughter relationship as a living organism. You may ask yourself, “What do I need to do to pour into this relationship?” “What needs protecting?” “What needs shoring up?” “What do I build into the relationship today?” “What do I need to do to make things better?” And then the most intentional question of all: “What do I need to do to better honor my mother/daughter whether deserved or not?” Could it be an investment of unconditional love? Does that sound like the way God treats us? Let’s look at this more closely.

How Can You Help?

Do you ever feel like trying to help might hinder or make things harder in your relationship with your mother or daughter? Perhaps instead of trying to do many things, you can focus on finding common ground, putting the other person first, and investing in the relationship. There are three specific things you can do to help improve your relationship with your mother or daughter:

1. Invest in your relationship with God.
2. Pray for your mom or daughter.
3. Plan something for your mom or daughter that doesn’t require more of you than you can offer.

These things will put equity in your own bank and in the other person’s—even if they don’t respond the way you hope they will. It will be healing for your heart to do these things so that you know you have done all you can do and are not living in the land of “I could have tried something different” or “I’m not sure if I’ve done my part.” We want you to be equipped to do what you know you can do and not have room for any regrets.

Blythe

Let's dive into these more closely. First, investing in your relationship may be an investment of seeing your daughter or mother more. It might mean making a sacrifice to drive to see them or an investment of time to Facetime or Skype with them or use a video conferencing service. If you live close, it might be suggesting you want to do something for her while she is at work (because you both have a job and you know how much this would mean to you in reverse), or you could offer to help with a specific chore or prepare some food while she is there, and it would provide a time for you to talk while an activity is going on. If these things aren't an option, perhaps your investment would be something you can provide to meet a need and show her you care about her. It might be a monthly subscription service for meals, a vitamin or supplement plan you pay for, a laundry service, or a babysitter to come once a week. But whatever it is, you want her to see how you are invested in her. My mom has done this in practical and helpful ways. She sends us restaurant gift cards so we can enjoy a night out, and she sent us supplements when the kids were young because she wanted us to be able to ward off sickness since we were picking up germs about as often as I picked up their toys!

One way I made a relational investment with my daughter Maris was by coming to her class to talk about how to get a book published since that is part of my job. She raised her hand with an answer almost each time I asked the class a question. Her shy spirit came flooding open with words and responses when I was there. I hope she saw my presence as an investment of time. Hopefully I can continue to find ways to build into my daughters the truth that I want to be a part of what they do and bridge my world to theirs.

Second, pray for your mom or daughter. This sounds matter-of-fact, but it's so important. One of the things I remember about my mom when I was growing up was that she prayed for us each day before school. And that has continued. She prays for me every day

and often sends me a text reminding me of what she is praying for that day.

We can't take this for granted. We need to grab hold of the need to pray for one another and make it a priority. Even if you don't know how to pray or what to pray for the other, holding her up to the Lord is one of the greatest blessings you can offer. I have heard, and I bet you have too, of people who felt they were beyond receiving prayer. But the other kept on praying and things shifted, and they are a different person today because of prayer! Let us be women who pray more often than we complain or try to figure things out on our own. Prayer is important to us and to God. Help from heaven shifts things for us on earth!

And third, plan something for you and your mother or daughter that doesn't require more of you than you can give. Plan for where you are, not where you want to be. It might be a simple outing to return something to a store and grab coffee near the store. It might be a shared activity that allows you to spend a brief time together. Don't feel guilty if you aren't ready for an all-day shopping trip. Be where you are and who you are. Time will help overcome obstacles as you talk more freely, and we want to help you know what to say in these times together.

So what follows in these pages is a menu of ideas, prayers, and principles that can repair generations of poor patterns, shatter years of bad memories, and make things new for the present and future. The fact that you have chosen to read this book, to invite us into your life, is something we value tremendously. We hope you see transformations in the fragmented places of your heart and mind.

Mending Thread

What concerns do you have with your mom or daughter? What's difficult in your relationship or what are the things you don't feel comfortable talking about? What is the difficulty and how would you like it to be restored?

Focus on looking up at what God is doing in your relationship as you pour into and invest in your relationship. What does the common ground between you look like? It's a new day. We want you to see this as a new beginning.

Behold, I will do something new,
Now it will spring forth;
Will you not be aware of it?
I will even make a roadway in the wilderness,
Rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43:19).

What is the new thing you would like to see God do in your relationship?

When you are tempted to think you continually live in the old ways and old patterns with your mom or daughter, either journal or write out your thoughts on your phone—anywhere you can see it, write what God is doing in your life and in your relationship with your mother or daughter that is *new*. Remember what these good moments feel like so you can repeat them again and again. As you see the fruit of your efforts, be sure to share with your mother or daughter at least one thing God is doing that is producing something new between you. It will encourage you both!

Making It Personal: Craft a Phrase

Blythe

We'd like to invite you to either paint, scrapbook, or craft something that could show a phrase you want to adopt for yourself. My younger daughter said some words of encouragement to me when I told her I wasn't sure how I was going to do something I needed to do with Mom. She said, "Just go with it. You've got this." I love that and have made those words mine. They are a reminder of what I want to see happen in our relationship.

What is the phrase you want to place as a mantle over your

relationship? It should be something that prompts you to think about putting your mom or daughter first. Something that causes you to think of and really *see* them before focusing on yourself.

Use this as an opportunity to tap into your creativity to make something that will be a reminder to you of what you are investing in and, each time you see it, will say to you, *My investment is worth it.*

It may be a piece of artwork that you later share with your mother or daughter. We often love what our daughters or our mothers make. What can you gain by creating something with her? A chance to build a bridge closer to her. Restoring through creating. You've got this!

