

# *More Stories!*

## **Forum**

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## Bewildered

by **Kelly Reale**

Motherhood is the loneliest job I've ever had. It requires so much change; so much soul searching. And, these are lonely pursuits.

In the immortalized words of Carly Simon, having children is "...So good on paper, so romantic, so bewildering." But as any parent will tell you, it's also so wonderful.

The birth of my first child was, for me, confirmation once and for all that there really is a God out there somewhere. I'm pretty sure that I don't believe in the God that I was taught about in any particular brand of church, but I'm dead certain that the miracle of life happens in spite of man's best intentions and is in no way accidental. The way nature blends resemblances and individuality into an un-repeatable little soul is simply stunning to me.

My firstborn's arrival heralded a change in my thinking that took me by surprise. Where I had been liberal, I sometimes became suddenly conservative. Where I had previously been certain about how I would raise this child, I quickly learned that it wasn't completely up to me...this daughter of mine did and still does have a plan all her own. I know now (but sometimes need reminding) that she is her own little self. My second daughter is equally unique and so very opposite. From her I've learned that almost nothing I figured out with my first daughter will work on the second.

The questions are un-ending. My oldest asked me last week if God had died. I explained that

God did not die; he's in heaven, looking over us. In the clear logic of a 5-year old, she responded, "But Mommy, everyone goes to heaven when they die - so God must be dead." Truly, this is easy stuff compared to the questions I ask myself. How do I get them to try broccoli when I hate it? How do I instill in them a sense that their bodies are beautiful, but keep them from running out the back door naked? How do I encourage them to be free-spirited and find their own path, while at the same time learn what society expects of them - and why that actually matters? And for God's sake, how do I get them to take a bath without actually drinking the bathwater?

And then, there has been the question of my self-identity. Everything I thought I knew about myself is seen in a new, shifting light. How am I supposed to set an example of the kind of women that I want them to grow up to be when I myself am still "becoming"? How do I make room for all of the parts of me that sometimes compete, along with my kids, for my time and attention? In this aspect I am completely alone. Husbands, girlfriend heart-to-hearts and various support groups play a crucial role, but none of them can replace the voice of my soul. When I listen to it, I sometimes hear that it's time to take care of myself for a change. Sometimes I heed its advice. And, it often reminds me that I've been granted the gift of being a mother to these two little girls. It tells me that I don't have to be perfect and that I should enjoy these crazy, hectic, wonderful moments.

I doubt my daughters will take the time to notice who their mother is until they are mothers themselves - I surely didn't. When they get around to it, I hope they see a confident woman who isn't afraid to take chances. I hope they see a woman who loves to laugh and does so often. I hope they see a mother who did the very best she could for them and who loves them with all her heart and soul.

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