

A photograph of three children sitting on a wooden deck outdoors. On the left is a young boy with blonde hair, wearing a grey t-shirt with a dark blue pocket and light blue jeans. In the middle is a young girl with blonde curly hair, wearing a white tank top and white sandals. On the right is an older boy with blonde hair, wearing a grey polo shirt and pink shorts, looking towards the girl. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a blue sky and a chain hanging from above.

# Hands Full

Thirty days of  
encouragement  
for busy moms

BROOKE ELLEN FRICK

“Filled with tender encouragement and practical God-centered hope, *Hands Full* is written by a momma who understands. I wish I would have had Brooke’s book when my kids were small!”

— JOANNA WEAVER, best-selling author of  
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“In these pages, you’ll find relatable stories that will help you feel less alone and point your heart back to our only unshakable hope—Jesus Christ. If you love your children and want to embrace the gift of motherhood but sometimes feel like you also want to escape from it, Brooke is the tender and uplifting voice you need on your journey.”

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Thirty days of encouragement for busy moms

BROOKE ELLEN FRICK



ST JOSEPH, MISSOURI USA

## **HANDS FULL**

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To my Father in Heaven  
and to my family here on earth.  
Forever grateful for you both.

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## Introduction

If you are reading this book right now, it's a miracle. It's a miracle it was published. It's a miracle it was written. And I'm guessing in a smallish sort of way, it's a miracle that you are sitting down reading a book.

Because if there is one thing I know as a mom with my hands full, it is that time is precious and we don't get a lot of it. So, thank you. Thank you for taking some of your valuable time and sharing it with me. As someone who struggles to finish the books I start reading, I do not take that lightly.

The following pages contain a piece of my heart and soul, because they contain my struggles, my failures, my sin, and the grace I keep finding in Jesus Christ. As you will read, I am not a perfect mom. But I'm beyond grateful that I am a forgiven one. And every day, I have a chance to start new with Jesus and my children. I can't ask for anything more.

This little devotional, as I sometimes refer to it, is really not little at all. To me—or to God. It is a dream come true. It is an act of obedience. It has been a process. This book is two-fold evidence to me that first, “God chose the lowly things of this



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world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him,” and secondly, that He “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (1 Corinthians 1:28–29, Ephesians 3:20).

I am amazed at His desire to use an ordinary run-of-the-mill mom like me and do more than I could have ever asked. But that is, after all, who He is and what He does. For each of His beloved children.

The stories in this book cover a span of two years because apparently it takes that long for a mom to write a book. I started writing them not knowing they would actually become a book. I just started writing. Writing the things God was revealing to me through some of the hard lessons of living life with my hands overflowing.

So, without further ado, welcome. I am so glad you're here. Pull up a chair, pick up your mug of steaming something, draw the blanket up and be encouraged. You're not the only one with your hands full and your heart in desperate need of Jesus. I hope you find that truth here. I hope you laugh, even if it's very little, because laughter truly is the best medicine, and a happy heart is better than a fine wine or a hot cup of coffee. Mostly, however, I hope you are drawn a little deeper into the depth and breadth of Jesus' love for you. And I pray “you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God” (Ephesians 3:18–19 NLT). May we remember that while our hands may be full, the life inside of us can be even fuller because of the One who loves us, redeems us, and resides in us.

## Full Hands or Open Ones

*“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 4:16*

**I**f I had a dollar for every time I have gotten the comment, “You’ve got your hands full,” I could probably take our family to Disney World.

It’s possible I’ve gotten this comment so much that it has almost become my life motto (if that’s even possible) second to my other life motto, “better late than never.” Because, seriously, better late than never, right? I’m pretty sure that’s even biblical.

Yesterday, I got the hands-full comment from an elderly woman observing us as we strolled around a neighborhood lake: me, an empty double stroller, three tow-headed boys running up ahead and two little girls toddling behind. Today, it was from a dad in the back section of Chick-fil-A by the play area. Same kids, same empty double stroller.

## HANDS FULL

Yes, I've got my hands full, I know. I have five children and two hands. By mathematics alone, my hands are full. I own it. I say yes and smile and carry on as if the entire Chick-fil-A isn't watching, part in wonder, and part in disbelief.

But it isn't easy. Full hands can get heavy. Full hands can feel more than full. They can feel overloaded, overdone, and overwhelmed. It's like comedian Jim Gaffigan said about having four kids. "Just imagine you're drowning—and then someone hands you a baby." I can't think of a better way to describe it.

Drowning. Yes. Life isn't just full; it's like the curbside trash can after Memorial Day weekend: overflowing.

One afternoon a few months ago, I sat in the yellow glider in my girls' room while they pulled torn board books off the shelves and grabbed toys from burlap baskets. I was tired, like usual, and they were happily playing.

They had recently discovered a glass jar on the top shelf filled with little wooden blocks friends had given me at the girls' baby shower. My friends had written sweet little notes in pink and magenta, scribbled designs, and drawn the letters *H* and *R* on them (for my girls' names). They were cute blocks and more for decoration than use, hence the glass jar in a nursery.

But they *loved* pulling these blocks out of this glass jar, and so sometimes I let them. They would stick their plump little hands in, pull them out, and stuff them back in.

That day was a day I let them. They were entertained. For some reason, they began bringing the blocks over to me. I cupped my hands and they started filling them with blocks. With two times the trips, it didn't take long for my hands to become full. With each new load of two or three more blocks, I didn't think I was going to be able to hold any more.

"Uh-oh, my hands are full," I'd say in my exaggerated playful voice. But that didn't deter them. They smiled and kept on

bringing the blocks. And so, not wanting to disappoint, I kept trying to hold them. And the amazing thing was I could.

Just when I thought the last block was about to topple, I'd flatten my hands just a little and the blocks would settle in and make room for more. And more. Each time, I'd spread wide my hands and room would be made. I was truly amazed at this anomaly.

I can't count how many times in my motherhood journey I have screamed inside my head, "I can't handle this! No, not the stomach flu while my husband is gone! No, not another sleepless night! No, not lice on Christmas!" (Yep, it happened, and we survived.) My insides are shouting, "There's too much whining, too much bickering, and way more needs than the capacity I have to meet them."

Sometimes I feel like I am a washing machine on a "jumbo wash" cycle and people keep trying to throw more clothes in. "It doesn't fit; I don't have room!" I want to yell.

That's the life of a mother. Maybe that's life in general. Things or people happen that are beyond our control, and what options do we have but to carry on or surrender? Mothers must carry on. But how?

As I sat in my yellow glider that afternoon, God showed me that even when I was sure I couldn't handle any more blocks, I'd stretch out my hands and I would.

By God's magnificent grace, we can handle much much more than we think. And it isn't because we are so strong, or wonderful, or holy, or wise. It's because He is. And when we open wide our hearts, flatten out our expectations, agendas, and perfection, we can say with peace that surpasses understanding, "Okay, Lord, I can't handle this. But you can."

The key is in the letting go, the flattening. In letting Him take over and take the burden.

That day I realized full hands were first open ones. And

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when we stretch those hands full of blocks or diapers, keys, groceries, and shoes a little wider, with His all-sufficient love and power, we can hold more than we ever thought possible.

### PRAYER

Oh God, our lives are full. Our hands overflow with work and life and blessing and so many to-dos. Father, let us come confidently before Your throne of grace to find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need. We bring these burdens to You, these feelings of drowning in a sea of little people and their needs. But You stand ready to help. You are with us and You never forsake us. May we have eyes to see You with. May we lift these full hands to You, flattening our hearts before You, and lay down these things at Your throne, knowing that You will take our burdens upon You. We are not alone. And with Your mercy, grace, and help, You will make a way for us. Amen.

## In my Mom Skin

*“Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else. For we are each responsible for our own conduct.” Galatians 6:4–5 NLT*

He sat at a low gray table in his tiny navy-blue plastic chair, eating his prepackaged sandwich. Five other little brown, blonde, and black heads sat neatly around his table munching on their lunches, too. More little heads sat at the next table. The room was large and spacious and every wall was covered with an array of bulletin boards, chalkboards, letters of the alphabet, days of the week, colors, numbers, and pre-school artwork.

I had gone to school to pick up my son early because grandma was visiting. I hadn’t meant to stay for lunch. But realizing they had just begun, I pulled up my chair to enjoy a rare lunch date with my middle child. It was a sweet gift to be able to watch

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his cute chubby self quietly eating lunch with his friends. He never eats this quietly at home. He looked so grown up.

He picked up his Uncrustable sandwich and took another bite. Just then I felt a stab of remorse. I hadn't made him a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Smucker's had. I looked over at the girl seated across from him. She took a bite of her whole wheat pita and dipped it in hummus. She had one of those plastic lunch boxes with the compartments for food like all the healthy people use. Sigh. She had a good mom.

I looked back at Lee's lunch. There was the sandwich, of course, a pre-packaged bag of fishy crackers, a juice box (Honest brand at least) and a piece of saltwater taffy. Hm. The mom guilt started to creep up my blue plastic chair and tingle up my spine. My son's entire lunch was prepackaged and there were no fruits or vegetables in sight—just taffy.

I was quick to rationalize. It was a busy week and grandma and grandpa were in town. I don't always pack his lunch this way. We have those plastic lunch boxes too—we just haven't used them yet. And I thought my way back to confirming that I am in fact, still a good mom, even if I sent him to school with vacuum-packed bags of food.

It's true, it's not just a rationalization. I am a good mom. Sometimes I am even a great mom! (Of course, other times not so great.) Nobody kisses my kids like I do. Nobody reads to them like me. Nobody else trims their nails or asks about their bowel movements like I do. Nope, nobody loves them like I do.

So why does the mom guilt creep in? Why do we look around and compare our job, or our lunch, to someone else's?

At some point I have to get comfortable in my own skin, mothering like I do, without having to explain it to someone else (or rationalize it in my head at a preschool lunch table). I need to be comfortable with what kind of mom I am, without having

to give a list of things I do or don't do trying to prove to some invisible panel of snarky parents, who may or may not even exist, that I actually *am* doing the right things to raise my children.

Galatians 6 reminds us, "to pay careful attention to our own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and *you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else*" (emphasis mine).

If we focus on doing our best, mothering the children God has given us, we will receive the contentment that comes with doing just that. We will have peace knowing we did what we could, and we won't feel the need to compare ourselves to the mom next door. But only if we focus on God and pay attention to our own work.

It's like the "stay in your own lane" and "run at your own pace" things people say. When we look around at what others are doing, it's easy to get sidetracked from what God has called us to do. And when we are sidetracked, we are not doing our best.

Sometimes our best may not feel like it is anywhere in the neighborhood of some kind of good. But if it is all we can do at the moment, then it's okay. Grace upon grace, my friend. If our kids are alive and still love us at the end of the day, then I'd say it was a good one.

Because here's some more good news. There is no clean room, no toothpaste-smear-free sink (for more than one day anyway) and no crumbless car seat (ever). If your hands are full like mine, there is always a Lego stuck in the couch, a sock on the floor, or a crayon in your pocket.

There is no perfect house. No perfect lunch. No perfect mom.

The other day, my second-grade son wore a dirty shirt to school, *and I knew it*. It was too late to change, and frankly, if he wanted to wear a dirty shirt to school then—okay. Sometimes I make him change, and sometimes, whatever. Eventually, he will learn, right?



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Maybe some people would think I am a bad mom if they saw my son wearing a dirty shirt to school. But I'm more certain most people wouldn't even notice. And if they do, oh well. At least I'm not the one wearing it. (On second thought, I am probably wearing one, too—with two two-year-olds, my shirts are rarely stainless.)

It is a good feeling getting comfortable in my mom-skin. I pray we all can get here and stay. Because there is never a reason to doubt your mom-ness. I know I don't know you, but I know this: you love your kids and you are doing your very best! You are. Accept it. Own it. Drink it down deep because you and I need to know this.

If we love our kids and try our very best to teach them about Jesus's love for them, then we are good moms--Uncrustable sandwiches and all.

### PRAYER

Dear Lord, take away the need we have to compare and contrast ourselves with the moms we know, or the moms we see walking to school and shopping at Target. Help us to fix our eyes on You, who You say we are, and the job You have set before us. Help us to see ourselves as You do: loved and beloved works in progress. Remind us today of Your great love for us and the unique purpose You have given us in raising our little ones. You have entrusted them to us; may we entrust the whole process to You. In Your holy and loving name, we pray. Amen.

## In the Strength We Have

*“The LORD turned to him and said, ‘Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?’” Judges 6:14*

Go in the strength you have.”

This is the story of Gideon. And I. Love. This. Story.

I love how God works in this story. I love how Gideon responds. I love the outcome. I love the drama. I love it all. So, if it has been a while since you’ve read the story of Gideon, you really need to read it. The whole thing. Beginning to end. Because it is just that good. God is just that good. It’s good. Did I already say that? You can find it in Judges 6–7. In fact, I encourage you to put this book down, pull your Bible up on your lap, and read it now. I said, now, (using my mom voice).

(I’ll wait while you read...)

Okay, amazing, right? So good.

But in case you’re a heathen and didn’t read it (just kidding,

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moms), I will give you a really quick inferior synopsis. Good? Here goes...God calls Gideon to defeat the Midianites, an enemy of Israel who had been raiding and pillaging them. Gideon says, "who, me?" And God says, "Yes, you." (And then they all guess who stole the cookie from the cookie jar). Okay, not really. This is getting out of hand.

Anyway, Gideon is weak and insignificant and sure that God can't be calling him. He questions God. He tests God with fleeces, (I'm sure you have heard about these) and after God "passes" Gideon's tests, Gideon finally believes God is behind him, so he gathers a large army to defeat the Midianites, just like God told him to do. But God thinks Gideon's army is too big, and if this big army defeats the Midianites, God knows they will boast in their own strength and not His. So God shrinks the Israelite army. By *a lot*. And so, with their shrunken army and their unrestricted, ample, all-knowing God, Israel defeats their enemy! Hooray!!

Although there are many amazing take-aways from this story, (that is why you should read it) the thing that has grabbed ahold of me recently is that God didn't fill Gideon with His Spirit when He called him. He filled Gideon once he obeyed and gathered the army to battle the Midianites (Judges 6:34).

When God called Gideon, He told him to "go in the strength" he had. That was it. He didn't tell him to wait until he felt strong enough. He just told him to go. Obey. And even though Gideon had lots of questions and asked for signs (which God graciously provided), Gideon listened. He obeyed.

God is teaching me that it is not about getting the strength we need before we head out on the journey. It's about trusting God and going on it anyway. It's about going in the strength we have now, today, at this moment, not waiting for some supernatural power before we attempt the "impossible."

God wants us to obey Him when He calls, knowing that even though our resources are so very limited, God's are so very not.

But like Gideon, I question God. "Pardon me, my Lord," but do You know who I am? Did You really call me? Did You really open the door for me to write a devotional? Remember me, the dreamer, not the doer? Did You really mean to give me twins? Remember me, the neat freak, the one who loves order? Me, the fearful one, have You really called me to step out in faith?

The answer is a resounding "Yes!" God is telling me, and He is telling you, dear sister with your hands overflowing to—Go in the strength you have now, because I am going to show you *My* strength.

Go in your strength, because I have infinite strength. Because the fact that you lack strength, actually brings Me more glory. Because when you are weak, I am strong.

I love these lines from Paul, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (2 Corinthians 12: 9).

Our insecurities, weaknesses, and faults do not stop God from calling us. In fact, they may qualify us even more. As Christain pastor and author Mark Batterson so wonderfully puts it, "God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called."

The story of Gideon is certainly one of God qualifying the called. Of God coming through in a ridiculous way to bring His Name ridiculous glory and save His ridiculous people. It's a story of God showing His strength in our weakness.

In short, God gets all the glory when we aren't enough and we do it anyway.

And that, my friends, is why He calls the small and insignificant people like you and me to do great things. That is why He tells us, "Go in the strength you have" because it was never

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about our strength anyway.

So, I want to ask you, what is God calling you to? Where are you feeling weak? Where are you being called but feeling inadequate? Where are you holding back because you “lack the strength”?

You and me, friend, we cannot sit around and wait for God to show up mightily in our lives. (Unless of course this is what God has told you to do). We have to take God at His word when He tells us things. We have to go in faith. In the strength we have, knowing He will do what He said He will. Even when we don’t see how.

So my encouragement to you today is to take Gideon as an example and “Go—” because God will most definitely take care of whatever it is He is calling you to, if you will only let Him.

### PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the examples in the Bible of how You use Your people and work on their behalf. You are so holy and so wise. I thank You that Your power is infinite, so we need not worry. We only need to trust and obey. You take care of the rest. As we go forth today and tomorrow, may we not be afraid of the things You are calling us to do, but may we simply obey. And as we take these simple steps of faith, as we act in obedience to Your call, may Your name be glorified both now and forevermore. Amen.

# Hands Full

A photograph of three children sitting on a wooden swing set with white cushions. On the left, a young boy with blonde hair and bangs, wearing a grey t-shirt with a dark blue pocket and light blue jeans, looks towards the camera. In the middle, a young girl with blonde curly hair, wearing a white tank top and white sandals, is laughing and looking towards the boy on the right. On the right, an older boy with blonde hair, wearing a grey polo shirt and pink shorts, is laughing with his mouth open, looking towards the girl. The background is a bright, slightly blurred outdoor setting with a blue sky and a wooden deck.

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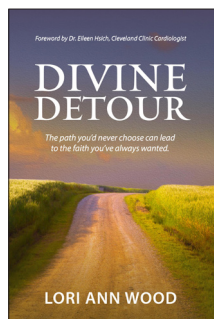
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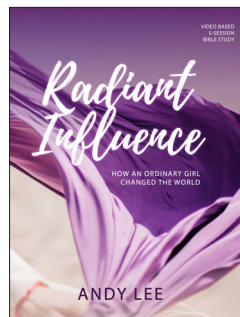


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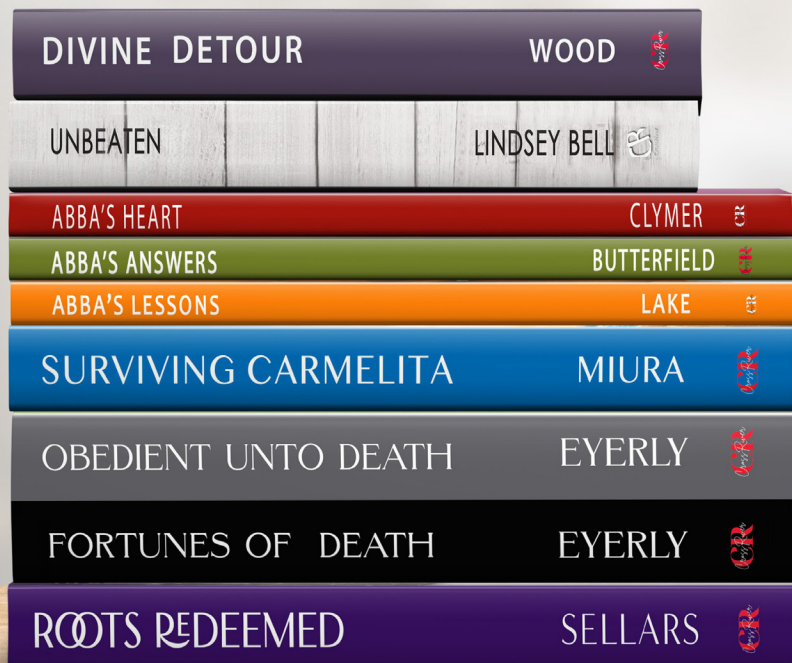
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