The message we hear, as women and moms, from the culture around us is that we are "enough." But that's a lie. None of us could ever be enough to meet the difficulties and demands of motherhood. That's why we need to hear the good news Christina Fox has packed into *Sufficient Hope*. We are not enough—but Christ is sufficient! Each short chapter in this book is long on good news—good news of grace to be thought through, chewed on, and rested in.

—**Nancy Guthrie**, Bible Teacher; Author, *The One Year Praying through the Bible for Your Kids*

Motherhood often brings us to an end of ourselves. The sink overflows with dishes, the longed-for naptime doesn't happen, and the hearts of our children reveal fresh complexities every single day. Behind every trip to the playground and hand-print art project is a woman who knows her own frailty. But, as Christina Fox so helpfully reminds us, our weakness is simply an opportunity for us to cast ourselves on the One who is unfailingly strong. With its practical examples, helpful prayers, and rich biblical truth, *Sufficient Hope* is a gift to mothers. In these pages, both new and experienced moms will find themselves reoriented away from their own shortcomings and toward Christ's sufficiency. Moms, take heart!

—**Megan Hill**, Author, *Contentment: Seeing God's Goodness*; Editor, The Gospel Coalition

Sufficient Hope offers the life-giving refreshment of the gospel for the real struggles and "not enoughness" of motherhood. Its promises and prayers lift our eyes to behold Christ's sufficient "enoughness" for this sacred calling of motherhood.

—**Karen Hodge**, Coordinator of Women's Ministries, Presbyterian Church in America; Coauthor, *Transformed: Life-taker to Life-giver* and *Life-giving Leadership*

I love the theological richness and practical wisdom in this book. As a grandmother, my first thought on reading it was, "I needed this book when our kids were young." Then I realized I still need this book now, to instruct and inspire me to live covenantally by praying for and encouraging young moms.

—**Susan Hunt**, Former Director of Women's Ministry, Presbyterian Church in America; Author, *Spiritual Mothering: The Titus 2 Model for Women Mentoring Women*

This is for the weary mom who needs a friend to point her to Jesus! Complete with guided prayers and thoughtful questions, this book provides accessible meditations that are full of lasting hope.

—**Emily Jensen**, Cofounder, Risen Motherhood

Motherhood is one of life's greatest blessings—and also one of life's greatest challenges. Many books for moms tell us what we need to do to succeed at motherhood. In contrast, Christina consistently points us to the hope we have in who Jesus is and what he has done for us. If you're exhausted from your efforts to be a better mom, come and find rest in Jesus.

—**Rachel Green Miller**, Author, *Beyond Authority and Submission: Women and Men in Marriage, Church, and Society*; Blogger, *A Daughter of the Reformation*

I have found that the greatest struggle I face in the Christian life is the struggle to find my joy in Christ rather than in the things of this world (such as my health, my accomplishments, my wife and children, my bank account, and so on). Mothers face this same struggle in unique ways, and that is why I am so excited about Christina Fox's new book, *Sufficient Hope*. With great humility, honesty, and humor, Christina looks at many of the struggles that mothers share in common and, in each case, points mothers

to Christ as the only source of real and lasting joy. If you are a mother or would like to be a mother one day, you will want to read this book.

—**Guy Richard**, Executive Director and Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta

Motherhood doesn't afford much alone time, but it is so important to squeeze a few moments out of each day to refuel. Beautifully written, *Sufficient Hope* is just what the busy mom needs! Take a few minutes and fill your soul with these thoughtful and refreshing truths today!

—**Ruth Schwenk**, Founder, TheBetterMom.com; Author, *The Better Mom Devotional: Shaping Our Hearts as We Shape Our Homes*

Christina has become one of my favorite Christian authors. *Sufficient Hope* is full of encouragement for moms of all ages and in different seasons of parenting. This book offers us constant reminders to look to Christ, the Word of God, and the gospel throughout the joys and sometimes more difficult days of motherhood.

—**Coleen Sharp**, Co-host, *Theology Gals* Podcast

Christina Fox's *Sufficient Hope* appears at first glance to be wholly oriented to wives and mothers whose experiences have pushed them to the limit—and beyond. Yet husbands and fathers who sample this book will not only learn to empathize but also find that, just as for their wives, the promise that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13) points the way forward for them, too, as they face the demands of family life.

—**Kenneth J. Stewart**, Professor of Theological Studies, Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia

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Sufficient Hope

Gospel Meditations and Prayers for Moms

CHRISTINA FOX

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To my sister, Sabrina:

May Jesus be your all-sufficient hope
in every season of motherhood

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To my readers, thank you for reading! You encourage me every day with your comments and messages. Many times, one of them comes just when I need it most—a gracious reminder that the Lord uses my jumbled, mixed-up, and sometimes even grammatically incorrect strings of words for his glory.

And above all, thanks to the Lord for the ever-humbling privilege to tell of his wonder through the written word! May he use the words in this book for his glory and fame.

Introduction

Have you ever wished you could take back something that you said in a particular moment? I've had plenty of such moments—but the one that stands out to me the most is a conversation I had with my midwife.

I went to see her after the birth of my first child. Like many first deliveries, mine was particularly complicated. I had numerous health problems afterward, and I arrived at the appointment hoping my midwife would help me to resolve them. I can still picture the room where I sat, with my son asleep in his carrier on the floor. I remember my midwife's kind eyes and gentle tone as she said, "I wonder if you might be suffering from postpartum depression."

Surprised, I dismissed the idea at once. I thought, *This is not depression. I know depression. I've diagnosed it and treated people for it. This is fatigue and stress from having a newborn and from being so sick.*

I shook my head. "I'm just exhausted. And stressed. I need to get my health problems under control. That's all." (There it is. That's the moment I wish I had said something like "You know, you might be right.")

Almost ten months later, I watched a show on television

in which a woman described her experience with postpartum depression. With tears streaming down my face, I whispered aloud, "That's me." I called my doctor the next day and got the help I needed.

When I had my second child, the postpartum depression returned. In many ways, I was prepared. I received medical care right away and implemented coping strategies that I knew would help. But I still struggled. Something was still missing. I couldn't quite put my finger on it, but I knew that I needed more. I arranged to meet with my pastor for counseling.

My pastor listened to me as I recounted everything I had done to make my life work: the coping skills I had used, the strategies I had implemented to improve my circumstances, and all the external solutions I had tried.

Then he looked me in the eyes and said, "But I haven't heard you tell me how you are trusting in what Christ already did for you."

I didn't say anything, because I was so confused. I had come to him looking for a way to make my life better—to make my life work. What he was giving me wasn't a solution.

He said it again. And then he went on to talk with me about what it means that Jesus lived a perfect life for me, died for me, and rose from the grave for me. He showed me how the gospel applied to my life as a mom—to my hard days, to my struggles to manage my life. This discussion was not based on some earth-shattering new concept. I already knew these things, but I had failed to live them out. My pastor reminded me that my hope and joy are found not in what I can do but in what Jesus has already done.

While I didn't leave my pastor's office that day cured and with all my problems solved, I did leave with a seed of hope. What he said to me about the gospel lingered. It burrowed into my heart and began to grow. As the months went on, I continued to return

to that conversation in my mind, and hope continued to grow. Its roots dug deep and, over time, started to bear fruit. I began to look at all the circumstances and situations in my life through the lens of the gospel—through the truth of what Jesus had done for me.

And do you know what I learned? The gospel is sufficient. It is sufficient to give us help and hope.

Needless to say, I had a difficult start to motherhood. It did not begin the way I expected. Though there were certainly joys, an overall cloud followed me through those early years. Thankfully, the depression did go away, but the lessons I had learned from my pastor stayed with me. The truths of who Jesus is and what he came to do anchored me in my motherhood.

We each have our own challenges and difficulties in motherhood. You may have a child with a unique need. You may have your own health problems. Perhaps there are days when you just don't know what to do. You lack the wisdom that you need. Some days, you feel overwhelmed and don't have the strength to do what must be done. You feel stretched and pulled in multiple directions. You may have days when you feel weak and insufficient. And there are days when motherhood is downright hard.

No matter our stories or experiences, one thing is the same for all of us: *our need for Jesus*.

Hope for Moms

If you are reading this, I assume you are a mom. I'm a mom too. And, as moms, we often share our motherhood stories with one another. If we got together for a girls' night out or sat watching our kids play at a playdate, we'd likely exchange tales of hilarious things our children have said or done. You might share an embarrassing story of something that your child said (or yelled) while you were using a public restroom, and we'd share a laugh.

I might tell you about how I never corrected my youngest when he called lemonade "mellalade" because I thought it was so cute and how sad I was when he finally learned to say it correctly.

We'd also have stories to share of challenges we've faced as moms. Perhaps I'd tell you about the time one of my kids wandered off at the San Diego Zoo and how hard I cried when I finally found him. You might tell me about a chronic health problem that your daughter has and how desperate you are to learn its cause.

And then there are the hard and painful stories—the ones that break our hearts and keep us up at night. We might share concerns over our children's wandering hearts and temptations to sin or the special-needs issues one of our children battles with every day. Together, we'd lament each other's sorrows and fears.

Such stories vary from mom to mom, but we all have them. The truth is that, as moms, we will all experience both good times and hard times with our children. We will all laugh at our children's antics and smile over their unique idiosyncrasies. We will relish the joy of their hugs and kisses and enjoy reading them the same story at bedtime. Every. Single. Night.

Yet we will also weep over our children. We'll worry for our children. We will often be frustrated and probably even angry with our children. We'll face hardships with our children. Some of us may experience particularly hard times—such as disabilities or illnesses, behavioral challenges or limitations, relational barriers or conflicts.

Whatever experiences we face in motherhood, we all need Jesus—and he is sufficient. That's what this book is about: our need for the gospel of Jesus Christ. In every moment, in every season, and whatever our circumstances, the gospel is sufficient to give us hope.

Throughout this book, you'll find examples of challenges or difficulties that we all face in motherhood, such as fearing for our children, feeling weary and worn, being concerned over our

children's sin, struggling with the identity issues we feel as moms, or wondering if our labors even matter. The gospel has something to say to these and to all the rest of our challenges.

The first two chapters lay the foundation for the book, and the following chapters look at specific aspects of motherhood through the lens of the gospel. Each chapter shows us our need for Jesus and his gospel. In addition, each chapter has a prayer to aid us in rehearsing the gospel, as well as a passage to read and reflect on.

Amazing growth happens in the context of community. Consider meeting together with other moms to read this book and learn from one another. The book can also be used in the context of discipleship relationships between older and younger women. No matter the season of motherhood we are in, we all need encouragement in the gospel.

It is my hope that this book would encourage you to turn to the truth of who Jesus is, and what he came to do, in every circumstance you face throughout motherhood. May you find your help and hope in him. And may your love for him grow as you consider all that he is for you.

Your sister in Christ,
Christina Fox

1

Jesus Is All-Sufficient

How blessed are we to enjoy this invaluable treasure, the love of Christ; . . . Christ is our all, all other things are nothing.

Samuel Rutherford

Have you ever spent weeks, or maybe even months, planning for something . . . only to have it fall flat? Something unexpected cut into your perfectly laid plans, revealing just how little control you had over it all. You were left helpless and powerless. That happened to me during a recent holiday.

We rented a cabin in the mountains where our family could gather together and celebrate Thanksgiving. It was a beautiful stacked log cabin with a stone fireplace and a big front porch providing a clear view of mountains. The weather was cold and crisp, but also sunny and clear. Family drove in from hours away to celebrate with us.

In the weeks before the trip, I planned menus, carefully considering everyone's unique dietary needs and preferences. I thought through places to go and things that everyone, no matter their age or ability, could do. There were hikes I wanted to take, restaurants I wanted to try, and cute little gift shops I wanted

to explore. Above all, I was excited to spend time with family who I don't often get to see.

Guess what happened? One person after another got sick—including me. I spent the final days of our trip in bed. And I completely missed one of the activities I had planned for us all to do. The holiday that I worked so hard to plan and prepare for will likely go down in the family history books as "the Thanksgiving when we all got so sick," rather than the trip I planned it to be.

We Need Jesus

It often takes an interruption like that for me to remember that I am not in control. That I don't have it all together. That I am dependent on another. This is a truth I have had to face countless times in motherhood, as well. In fact, if there's one thing that motherhood has taught me, it's that I can't do it on my own. I need help from outside myself. This is a humbling reality for me, as I have always been an independent sort. When I have a goal, I work hard and pursue it. I may seek advice or assistance along the way, but ultimately I know that if I want to get where I'm headed, I have to do the work that's required.

I faced motherhood the same way. I'm not a fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants kind of person; I like to be prepared. So I bought all the books, studied all the methods, and read all the research. I applied myself to motherhood the same way that I did to a project or paper in college. I put everything into it the same way as I did my work. But unlike other things in my life, motherhood did not fit so neatly into a box. My children did not always conform to what the books said. The methods often failed. The research often turned out meaningless.

As a result, I was humbled. Like the stretch marks that are forever etched in my skin, motherhood stretched me farther than I was capable of stretching on my own. I learned that I was

weak and insufficient and couldn't rely on my own resources or strength. I couldn't depend on my own wisdom. I couldn't find help and hope by studying methods. I couldn't make life work for me.

I needed Jesus. Of course, I had always needed Jesus; all of us need him in every stage of life. It's just that God often uses motherhood, with all its challenges and difficulties, to put that need front and center before us.

Motherhood reveals our need for a Savior. No matter the season our children are in—infancy and early childhood, adolescence, and beyond—we need Jesus to carry us through. We need Jesus to be our strength and wisdom. We need Jesus to redeem and rescue us from ourselves. We need Jesus to be our constant through the ups and downs of motherhood. In all the seasons of motherhood, the gospel becomes more beautiful to us in richer and deeper ways than ever before.

As we move through this book, I want to point you to Jesus, to your need for him, and to his sufficiency for you in your motherhood. No matter what your story is, no matter what circumstances you are going through, no matter what challenges your children face, Jesus is all-sufficient. You have hope in him, because of who he is and what he has done.

Our Preeminent Savior

It's fitting that we begin by focusing on Jesus and on who he is. In the book of Colossians, Paul described Jesus in near poetic terms. Some think that perhaps he used the words from an early hymn.

> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or

> authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col. 1:15–20)

In my ESV Bible, the heading that precedes this passage reads "The Preeminence of Christ." The word *preeminence* is not one that we use every day (probably because there is little we could use it for!). *Preeminence* means superiority. It comes from the Greek word *proteuo*, which means to be first in rank or influence.[1] From it we get words like *protagonist*, the lead character in a story, or *prototype*, which is the first model of something.

Paul wrote that Christ is "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." In describing Christ this way, he tells us something important. Christ is to be first and foremost in our lives. He is to have exalted status. He should be far and above everything else. He should be supreme in our thoughts, desires, loyalties, motivations, and actions.

In this passage, Paul tells us why: Christ is the second person of the Trinity—he is God. He existed before time began. Through him all things were created. Everything was created for him. He rules over all—both the seen and the unseen—including all those who rule in power. He also sustains all things; he keeps creation working and functioning as it should.

In the same way that he is first over creation, he is also first over the church. He created her. Through the blood that he shed on the

1. See James Strong, *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), Strong's number 4409.

cross, he formed the church. He is her head, and she is his body. Because of his atoning work on the cross, we receive redemption from sin and peace with God. He reconciles us with God.

To sum up this passage, *Christ is Lord of all.*

This same Jesus—the one who flung the stars across the sky, the one whose hands were pierced for your sins—is the one who is sufficient for you in your motherhood. He carries, strengthens, and sustains you. He is your wisdom. He is your redemption. He is your peace.

As my pastor so helpfully reminded me when I struggled with depression, who Jesus is, and what he came to do, are sufficient to give us help and hope. Will you join me in praying the prayer on the following page?

For a Mom's Heart

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4. How is Christ exalted in Paul's life? How does Paul view his weaknesses? What is the "treasure in jars of clay"?
2. What would it look like for Jesus to be preeminent in your life as a mom?
3. Turn to God in prayer, exalting Jesus for who he is for you.

A Gospel Prayer on Christ's Sufficiency

. . . that in everything he might be preeminent. (Col. 1:18)

Dear Father in heaven,

I come before you, today, overwhelmed by life. The challenge of juggling motherhood and other responsibilities is often more than I can carry. As I read this passage about Christ's preeminence, I am reminded that while I am not sufficient in myself, he is sufficient for me. He rules over all things, from creation to the church—including my motherhood. I can trust him to be for me what I am not.

Forgive me for failing to exalt Jesus for who he is. Forgive me for thinking that I can do life apart from him. Forgive me for seeking strength and wisdom outside of him. Forgive me for not making Christ supreme in my life.

Help me to turn to Christ and keep him first and foremost in my life. May he have the preeminence in my thoughts, goals, and plans. May he be preeminent in my motherhood. May he be Lord of all.

Because of Jesus, and in his name, I pray. Amen.