

LINDA RUTH REEB



MOMS

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A GUIDE FOR BUILDING  
YOUR HOME ON CHRIST



Nashville, Tennessee



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*Wise Moms*

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To Lloyd. Without you this book would only be an idea.

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Going way back, my mom and dad prayed as they worked their way through sixty-two years of marriage, raising a family along the way. Dad loved the Bible, and Mom loved the Lord, which was a good combination. No family is perfect, but I'm grateful for mine and their constant love.

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From my extended family to my life group and church buddies, thank you for believing in this project. Please continue to pray that God will use it to bless many families.

And finally, to all you moms who have attended MomsMentoring groups locally during the last fifteen years and inspired me to take this topic seriously—thank you. I’ve loved all the great times we’ve had together so far, learning about things that matter in our marriages and parenting. Here’s to you for all the ways you’ve shared your hearts and lives with me!

# INTRODUCTION

**F**ifteen years ago, four of my friends went through the pain of divorce. As I encountered the fallout—the pain of the adults and children involved—I could feel sadness and anger welling up. A passion to come alongside families in the early years—to support and encourage them in their marriages and parenting—began to grow in me. Around the same time, many people at my church were becoming Jesus-followers and wanted to develop faith-based marriages and families. There were gaps between what these new believers desired and their knowledge of how to implement a new way of living. As someone who grew up in a faith-filled home, I felt a growing desire to come alongside and support young parents step by step on the adventure of being Christians in today’s world. Maybe, just maybe, we could be part of helping families build something strong on the front end that would still be standing many years down the road.

## **The Wise Woman**

My friend Beth and I decided to meet with young moms who had lots of questions. We made two lists: one titled “What’s Working” and the other “What’s Not Working.” From those lists a discussion-based curriculum developed, built on what was relevant to the moms. Together, we met to learn and wrestle with what the Bible says about marriage and parenting. Eventually we named our group “MomsMentoring” to reflect the importance of

what these moms were doing and to applaud and encourage their efforts. Our theme verse at MomsMentoring became “The wise woman builds her house” (Prov. 14:1, NIV), the keynote verse for this book.

The goal of this book is to extend what we have been learning over the past fifteen years to even more women. As you grow to become a wise mom, working alongside God with intentionality, we cheer you on as you engage in fashioning a home built on Christ—one that is strong and lasting.

## **Builds Her House**

“The wise woman builds her house.” Every house has a foundation, walls, an interior, a roof, windows, and doors. Each are important for the house to function well. Unlike building a physical house, we get to practice as we go, learning together how a strong foundation built on God’s love and wisdom supports the marriage relationship and the formation of the children under your roof. Like windows and doors give us access to the world outside our homes, our interactions with others provide us access to the broader culture we live in.

I’m going to assume that you are building your home based on the wisdom of the Bible, a living relationship with Jesus, and good-sized doses of Holy Spirit help. I believe that God wants to bless families, and while building a home requires effort and intentionality, God is the Master Builder, and we get to partner with him. Others will join us in this endeavor too: friends from our local churches, online encouragers, like-minded friends who are in the same season of life, and older mentors who can love, cheer, and pray for us—all of these will be worth their weight in gold.

No two moms are the same, which makes this world an interesting place. While our parenting styles and life circumstances



vary, God wants to work with each of us to build a strong home. If you're a single mom, please know that my heart is for you, and I don't presume to understand all the aspects of your journey. But I am anticipating that God's grace will show up and meet your needs along the way. If you are married, know that your husband will benefit from the discussions that ensue as you read through each chapter.

As you'll see, I'm not writing as an expert. After all, I've only walked this path once myself! But I have been blessed to journey alongside many other women as we have discussed marriage and parenting roles together. So you will get the fruit of what I've learned from them as well.

This is a get-you-started kind of book. It will inspire you to pray, have lively conversations, dig into research, and get even more curious about your life as you decide how to deploy the agency God has given you. Whether you're new to the faith or a veteran, the few minutes or hours it will take you to read this book could change outcomes in your family many years from now.

There are only a few ways to have an unhealthy family, but there are hundreds of different ways to have a good one. It's great fun to learn about how your family can be enjoyable, unique, and a place you just want to be!

### **How to Use This Book**

I recommend beating this book up: take notes, underline, and highlight sections to discuss with your spouse, a group, or a friend. Make it yours!

I also encourage you to access two video series we created to go with this book. These short videos supplement the content of this book. The first video series, called "Wise Moms Readers," aligns with each chapter. It gives you a chance to "meet me" in a

more personal way, as well as injecting some fun and encouragement into each of these topics! Visit [WiseMomsBook.com/videos](http://WiseMomsBook.com/videos) to access this series.

The website also includes a series of short videos for *Wise Moms* group leaders called “Wise Moms Leaders,” which take you step by step through the book and equips you to lead moms through studying this book together. Whether you’re a young mom who wants to meet up with some friends, or an older mom who wants to support and encourage younger moms, the *Wise Moms* leader videos will make it easy for you to lead! Visit [WiseMomsBook.com/videos](http://WiseMomsBook.com/videos) to gain free access to these video series.

The “Make It Yours” section at the end of each chapter uses a “Read, Talk, Plan” format to take you deeper. Use your phone to schedule actions and reminders as you read so you don’t have to rack your brain later, trying to remember what you read. Make notes when you find fun topics for date nights, or think of a plan for what you want to do with the content you just read. Finally, include your spouse. This book is geared toward moms, but if you’re married, all the topics will be enhanced by your spouse’s feedback.

I’ve enjoyed working with hundreds of moms over the past fifteen years. No two moms are the same, no two marriages are the same, and no two families are the same; I’ve decided God likes variety. Each family gets to use the agency God has given us to make choices as we embark on this building project. Our circumstances dictate that our situations look different from those of our friends. Having agency means that we have freedom in our circumstances, not freedom from them, and we can make choices that help us build well.

A mom becomes wise over time, so let’s start building!



Phase 1

## THE FOUNDATION

*A Wise Mom's Connection  
with God and Herself*

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Who you are as a wife and mom is key to building something solid for those you love. Your relationship with God colors your life every day and influences how you show up in the world and in your family. Feel the excitement as the foundation gets laid, outlining the home you dream of, built on Christ.

## Phase Summary

When you pursue an intimate relationship with Jesus, receive blessed by the way he heals, and get on board his wisdom for your marriage and parenting, you are on your way to building a quality foundation!

Chapter 1 affirms that we can start right where we are. God's promises are faithful and true at every stage of our lives. In Chapter 2, our self-esteem gets some honest consideration as we learn how God created us uniquely, and we learn to celebrate ourselves and others. Chapter 3 frees us to be explorers of our own stories and their implications as we create new chapters with our spouses and children. Chapter 4 explores our inner world, looking at the importance of our emotions and the value of partnering with God to convert less-positive emotions into things like patience, positivity, and hopefulness.

# BUILDING YOUR HOUSE WITH GOD

Wouldn't it be lovely to feel even more comfortable in our relationships with God? To engage with our world knowing that we are loved by God, precious to him, uniquely one-of-a-kind? To interact with our spouses and children based on a rock-solid self-esteem that gives us joy?

It's easy to compare ourselves with other mothers and feel that we are lacking in this area, and it can be especially unsettling if we're new to faith and have friends with long spiritual journeys that seem far superior to our own.

I remember years ago when Bill and Glynn joined a life group at our home. Bill was a funny guy, and after getting settled, he sat back and asked, "Do you have a *Bible for Dummies*?" He was a brand-new Jesus-follower and was sure he'd ask lots of dumb questions. We all chuckled, but truly their experience with Jesus was so new that they brought a lot of freshness and clarity to our group as we studied and learned together. They were eager to apply what they were learning to their marriage and parenting, and they taught us a lot with their thoughtful questions and openness to letting God reshape their lives.

Everyone is on a level playing field when it comes to a relationship with God. It doesn't matter where anyone comes from, but it is vitally interesting to see where they are going and then join them on their journey. Everyone has a unique relationship with God, so don't worry if your walk with Jesus looks different than someone else's. The pastor at my church has a winsome invitation at the beginning of his talks: "Whether you're curious about Jesus, cautious about Jesus, or committed to Jesus, this is a safe place to be. As long as you don't have it all together, you'll fit right in." I like that.

Some days I feel close to God, and other days, not as much. Looking back over my life, I now can see how patient God has been, how he took his time to teach me, how he brought along encouragement when I was at the end of my rope, and how he sometimes provided people to give me a kick in the seat of my pants and get me going in a new direction.

We often want instant spiritual maturity, but maybe that's why God gives us children—to remind us that our maturity happens step by step, just like theirs. And while we all have many things in common, remember that your life is yours alone. God is intent on meeting you, shaping you, and loving you in a one-of-a-kind way.

My niece Ange wrote a poem about all the transitions she was experiencing during the "young wife and mom" season of her life:

Along my journey of change, God never pointed off in  
the distance and said,

"You should be there and not here." No.

That's not how God works. He's met me exactly where  
I was,

Walking the road with me like a calm, gentle tour guide.

Slowly, over many ventures

Where he's turned up faithful yet again,

I've learned to follow without question.

The breathtaking views at the end of each one

Are something I've come to wait expectantly for.

## Starting Places

The moms I've interacted with have come from so many interesting places. Marie had questions about teaching her children to pray; neither she nor her husband came from a family that prayed, and she was unsure about getting started. Colleen was in a blended family and had a stepson as well as two young children with her husband. She had been a missionary in her earlier life, and while she had a strong biblical foundation, she had practical questions about her role as a stepmom and her relationship with her husband's ex-wife. Some of the moms I met grew up in alcoholic families and were keen to provide something different for their own children. No matter our backgrounds, life requires us to go deeper with Jesus.

My sister-in-law Julie has been through lots of good times and hard times during her forty-year marriage. In her family, she has experienced severe health issues, job loss, financial stress, and extended family challenges, along with times when things were peaceful and easier. I have watched God grow and

*No matter our  
backgrounds,  
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with Jesus.*

shape her through it all. Julie sent me a note recently, with her reflections on her early life as a wife and mom. Listen in:

My prayer for your book is that it would point all young moms to Jesus. I wonder what it would mean if every mom that reads your book could look back after twenty years of marriage and realize that God was in each moment, that he was there during the hard times, that any time they tried to make it on their own and failed, he was there. During the lonely times, when it felt like everything was crashing, in every moment that they felt broken and hurt and wanted to give up, that it was actually a blessing and a part of their personal journey to become the person God created them to be!

When all is said and done, the most valuable gift I can give you is to encourage you to seek Jesus. And while you seek Jesus, also ask him to send along a “Julie” for you who can offer support and encouragement.

## **Letting God Shape Us**

When I was a little girl, my mom read Bible stories to us. She wanted to give us a spiritual foundation that included learning the Bible’s stories. The interesting thing was, she was often learning the stories herself as she read. They were new to her as well. She was thrilled to be able to provide us with something she hadn’t experienced as a child. I’m sure it wasn’t always easy to navigate, and she had to be willing to learn from others, but I am so grateful for the example she passed down to me and my sisters.

When we asked her a few years ago what she knew at eighty that she wished she had known when she was younger, she replied,



“Early on, as a new Christian, I learned that God cares about the big things in my life, but I wish I’d known he cares about every little detail and that nothing is too small to pray about.”

Where are you in your relationship with God? What would you like more of? A good starting place is honesty. Here’s my list: I’d like deeper faith and more discipline in spending daily time with God through reading the Bible and prayer. I’d like to become more loving, less critical, a better listener, and willing to take risks—for starters! I’ve been on a journey with Jesus for over fifty-five years, and there are still so many ways he is growing me and showing me more of his love. The adventure never ends!

Maybe you’re the first one in your clan to be building a marriage and family based on a faith foundation—cheers to you! Jesus is the cornerstone of this building project, and he is unchanging, faithful, loving, patient, and kind. You can trust him with your marriage, and you can trust him with your family.

## Make It Yours



**READ** Be encouraged and informed by Barbara Rainey's book *Letters to My Daughters*, where she explores topics of interest to younger women and shares stories of how God taught and shaped her in her early years of building a marriage and raising a family.



**TALK** If your spouse is open to it, pick a Bible reading plan to do together or separately, and compare notes once a week to discuss what you're learning.



**PLAN** Download a Bible reading app like YouVersion. The Message is one of my favorite translations—a very readable version of the Bible that aligns with many of the verses in this book. Many Bible apps have marriage and parenting plans that are encouraging and helpful.

## 2

# CELEBRATING MOTHERS OF MANY STYLES

**T**oday's culture, soaked in social media, makes it easy for moms to compare and compete. I chat with women all the time who step away, at least for a time, from online platforms that make them feel diminished as wives and mothers. I wish I'd learned earlier the value of connection and community in my relationships with other moms. Years ago, I had to ask God for his help to corral my ego when it strayed into "I'm better than" or "I'm worse than" patterns of thinking. Practicing "I'm OK, you're OK" as a mantra in my early parenting years would have made me a kinder, more empathetic friend.

Tracey, a mom with one son, told me she was relieved when she stopped comparing herself to her organized neighbor who had four kids and structured routines that kept things mostly on track. Tracey was more random and not as organized. However, she discovered that when plans changed abruptly, she was able to go with the flow, while the mom of four would come somewhat unglued and have a harder time switching to Plan B.

My friend Beth, who has partnered with me at MomsMentoring for many years, has strengths where I'm weak. She's a good listener, a competent behind-the-scenes person, and an administrative whiz. We have been a good team for over a decade as we've had fun serving moms together.

## **Uniquely You**

You can't be every type of person, but there are many ways to be the person God designed you to be. What would it look like to parent based on who God has hardwired you to be and the strengths he's given you? I love Isaiah 64:8: "Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand" (NIV). It's freeing to learn your God-given style and sink deeply into who you are, bringing the best of that to your roles as wife and mother.

Years ago, I learned about the Myers-Briggs personality analysis and CliftonStrengths, which identifies your top strengths. I was curious, so I sat down and took the assessments. I learned that as an ESFJ (Extroversion/Sensing/Feeling/Judging), I tend to gain energy by being with people. I process information through my senses, rather than intuitively. My decisions are based more on emotions than analysis, and I prefer structure and planning over figuring things out on the fly. My top strengths are "Input" and "Woo"—I like to research and collect information. While "Woo" sounds like an unusual strength, it stands for "winning others over." I liked the attitude that developed in me as a result of this knowledge—I began thanking God for my strengths, practiced using them well, and became more accepting of areas where I'm not a superstar.