



Overheard in the Nursery

by Rachel Weaver

Here is a little window into the lives of six mothers through a grandmother's eyes. I have no one in mind. Each mother is a composite of many of us. She is a fictional character, not a reflection of anyone. But maybe you, with me, will identify yourself as you read along and be challenged to greater heights.

“Granny Arthritis” lay on the couch in the nursing mother’s room resting her aching back. It had flared up and was so much worse this morning. But her husband was preaching and he dearly loved to have her there to listen to him and pray for him. He declared that he could do so much better when she was there listening. So she was there, cheerfully greeting the families as they came to the service. Now the service was in full swing and Granny had gone back on her couch in the nursery to rest and be inspired.

Granny was not prepared for what happened next. It had been so long since she had spent time in the nursery. As the first message progressed, mothers came one by one with their babies to nurse them. Often they brought along their two-year-old and sometimes a four and a six, too. Granny almost missed out on the blessing of the message as she studied the interesting events unfolding around her. What a lesson on humanity she was

observing. She always did love to observe folks. Granny had been known to sit happily in the airport as she waited for her husband to return home from a preaching trip, simply observing the endless stream of folks going by. Some folks smiled and some folks didn’t. Some seemed busy and troubled and some were obviously weary. Granny noticed this morning that the mothers were passing through the nursery were just as interesting and diverse. Granny’s interest in mothers and children was more than passing. As a good help meet, she carried her husband’s people on her heart and prayed often for the needs she saw here and there. It was a

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revelation to her to watch these mothers as they worked with their little ones.

There was Mrs. Tension sitting on the couch pouring out her woes to Miz. Frazzle. “You have such a patient way with your children,” she sighed wearily. I can’t stand repeating commands over and over again like you do. And you do it so sweetly,” she

ended despairingly. Miz. Frazzle's attention was distracted as she said sweetly for the fourth time, "No honey, you must stay here." Her little one stiffened and slid off the couch anyway as his mother turned back to Mrs. Tension.

"At least your children always obey you," Miz Frazzle replied, frustration evident in her voice. She dashed across the room to retrieve her refractory young one. "How do you do it? It seems like I talk all day long and no one listens." A uproar ensued as her little man struggled unsuccessfully to get down again. She administered a quick crack on the leg at and he responded with a howl. Mother and child vanished from the nursery trying not to disturb the others.

"Did he receive any training for that?" wondered Granny to herself. "I really doubt he gets effective training. At least it doesn't appear that way. If only Miz. Frazzle would realize that minute by minute training at home, with consistent consequences and blessings would yield both a quiet, happy child and mother."

She looked across the nursery and whom did she see but Mistress Perfection with her little "statues" all in order, sitting primly at her side. "Well, at least *they* are trained," Granny thought with some satisfaction. "She has them all sitting quietly." Just at that moment one of the statues kicked the other, hard, in the leg. Mistress Perfection saw the whole thing and administered a decided shake and a fierce look of reproof to the offender. The offender shrank in size and shivered visibly, a look of fear on his face." "Hm-m," thought Granny. "That wasn't the first time his ears were boxed! He looks as if he does not get much relationship along with his training. He should not fear his mother. I wonder which is worse—the Frazzle or Perfection method?"

Then Granny saw Mistress Perfection watching Mom Ho-Hum. Mom Ho-Hum was sitting there listening to the message and nursing her baby as her children turned the nursery into a mess. One of them sat at her feet crumbling up a cracker and playing with the crumbs as her three-year-old shook his juice cup upside down over the crumb maker. The little one squealed and the mother absently righted the cup and took no notice of Mr. Four over in the corner demolishing Miz. Frazzle's baby book. She could almost see Mistress Perfection's thoughts. "I would never let my little ones act like that." "Right," thought Granny. "But you do not seem to know how to fill their little lives with love and blessing either." Compassion filled her heart as she thought of the fearful, obedient little ones. She wished to cuddle them closely and teach them gently, life's many lessons.

All the while Mommy Cheerful had been sitting over in the corner contentedly nursing her little baby. Her bright-eyed little ones sat reverently beside her. A gentle reproof, here and a sweet smile there kept her little subjects sweetly in line. They looked up at their mother with trusting faces and nodded happily at the others around them. "True," mused Granny. "Children do reflect their mothers. She looks as if she enjoys her little ones. She is a happy lady who seems to enjoy others and life in general. And it shows in her little ones"

Other mothers came and went with their little ones. Some modeled Mommy Cheerful and some did not. As Granny remarked to her husband later in the day, "There was enough food for thought in the nursery to make a whole sermon."

And this is the sermon that she had for herself:

No mother is perfect, not even Mommy Cheerful. This little story was meant to stop you and make you think. What kind of mother am I? All of us



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need a check up sometimes. What kind of mother do you want to be? All of us could use a goal to strive for and a fresh vision.

Mistress Perfection

(This is a mother that demands immediate attention and perfection. She has little margin for childish mistakes. Her children are on trial to prove her mothering skills.)

This good lady has a lot going for her. She has her eyes open. She cares about what her children do, enough to take the time to train them. She is orderly and careful. These things are very helpful to have in a home, especially a home filled with little ones. But this one thing she lacks—a heart of loving compassion that treats her children like she would like to be treated. Too often we train our children for our convenience and for our testimony. If the Lord Jesus has impressed on our hearts the need for order and training, then He is also trying to impress on our hearts the need to “let the little ones come unto Me.” Our little ones will have a much harder time coming to Jesus if they see Him as an austere, stern commander instead of a tender Shepherd. A good shepherd leads gently. He sings to his sheep and carries them home under his arm when they are weak or sick. He is tender and caring. Too often the Perfection mama finds herself putting perfection before a child's spirit. Things and rules matter more than people.

Do not get me wrong, rules do matter and things should be in order because we are trying to teach orderliness. But that is not our chief aim. We are training our little ones to take them to the Master and their spirits and hearts must be gently nurtured. This takes, not only time, but a real unselfish heart. I find, in myself, that so often things or rules have come first because of my own desire to have everything in order. God is still showing me where I tend to act like a drill sergeant instead of a tender shepherd. “Do this, let's get that done. Can we all hurry now. That is just not

the way to do.” None of these things are wrong in themselves, but the tone of our voice usually conveys our heart and that spirit is not always a gentle one. So learn with me to have the heart of the shepherd and cuddle more with your children. Tell them how much you love them and how much God loves them. Take time to read and sing and play and talk even when the work is not finished. It never is when there are lots of little people. Enjoy them while they are there. My babies are gone. All I have now are children that are eight and older. I can never, never turn the clock back and redo. That chapter is finished. Perhaps you can learn some of the lessons with me that I wish I had learned twenty years ago. Remember, no one will remember if things were perfect or even if your children needed some more training. But they will remember the wonderful times they had with you and how sweet you were and how much you loved them. Start today with a picture of the tender Shepherd in your mind.

Miz. Frazzle

(Speaks over and over, sometimes sweetly and sometimes not so sweetly. Her threats and words are empty, so her children do not obey her well. Frazzled and frustrated with their disobedience, she becomes irritable and irrational. Her children never know when the sweet words will become sour and they will experience her vented displeasure. Often in her frustration she puts off discipline until her husband comes home. The poor man tries in vain to regain the order that his wife did not keep during the day, but it seems to be a losing battle.)

She usually has or tries to have a sweet spirit. She often is more gentle than Mistress Perfection by nature. She is usually a more patient person. She is less selfish and tries to please her children instead of herself. That fact becomes her downfall, for in her sweetness and gentleness she hates to discipline. She reacts when her husband disciplines and she often

accuses him of being harsh when he may be, in fact, only just. But through her gentle-colored glasses, she is sure that he or her older children do not understand the little ones. They are simply too harsh. This could be true but older children and husbands suffer lots at the hand of Miz Frazzle. They often react poorly to the children that she has trained to be disobedient. They pull back and hesitate to help with the training because they can never do it right. She in turn loses it and becomes frazzled since she now feels that she must do all the training alone!

What can Miz Frazzle do to turn her unbearable circumstances around? She is tired and frazzled and in no shape to train. Tears are just beneath the surface. What is the answer?

First, she must realize that this is who she is and that Jesus is the only answer. Then she must repent of her disobedience. She has not been faithful to teach immediate obedience to the children that God has loaned to her for just a little while. Immediate obedience is of such importance. A child who has been taught to obey his daddy and mother implicitly, will obey his God the same way. What a beautiful offering to give back to God! All of us fall short in this area, sometimes, but it is an area of supreme importance. Let me tell you, the boy who has been told to give up something to his daddy and yields it up promptly and sweetly is well on the way to responding right to his Heavenly Father. The next step is much harder. The stick-to-it and determination to be consistent will be a great effort for her. But God, again, will come to her aid. He will supply the strength she needs to be faithful, even when she is tired, almost too tired to get up.

Obedience training is a scriptural principle. "Train up a child in the way that he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." "A child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame."

Start with your very little ones. Most of us make the mistake of not expecting obedience when our little ones are tiny. They are so-oo cute and "they just do not understand," we say. But that is

not true. Our tiny ones understand far more than we have any clue. They even understand when we do not make them obey when we tell them, "No, do not touch mama's glasses." This sets the stage for greater and greater disobedience as time goes on. Try not to give any commands that you do not expect your child to carry out. And then expect your little one to obey you. When you tell your little one, "Its bedtime, Johnny. Amy is going to put your p.j.'s on. Expect him to allow his sister Amy to change his clothes without any fuss. If he fusses, immediately train him. If you do not, you reinforce his disobedience and make it more and more likely to occur. Eventually your older children will hardly be able to work with their younger siblings. Then they will have a problem respecting you, too, since they see your evident lack of authority. Most mothers feel like they spend all

day talking and they do. If you are unwilling to train carefully you will end up doing a lot of talking. If your children are older, start by telling your children that you have not been faithful to God in not requiring immediate obedience. Tell them that since you desire to train them to serve God with all their hearts, you must train them to be obedient to you so that they can be obedient to God. Whatever their age, begin by making obedience a must. Obedience requires a few things. The child must obey promptly, cheerfully, and thoroughly. If not, he is not obedient. Dragging the feet and pouting is a disobedient response. It requires careful training to turn these attitudes around. Actually the key is time. When a child is disobedient, stop and train immediately if at all possible. This is especially important for the very, young child. Never, never respond in anger to a child who has put off obeying you. Each of our children do respond the way we have trained them to. If your child delays, you have allowed him to. When you respond in anger, you confuse the issue. Deal kindly and patiently with each child if you wish to keep his heart.

We have had to retrain in prompt cheerful obedience from



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time to time. Sometimes after a period of illness or unusual busyness we will suddenly notice that we have slipped in requiring prompt obedience. Then we have to regain lost ground. The sooner we do it the happier we are. And when we have things back in place, the peace that follows is such a blessing. Mamas are not meant to be stressed out, harried people. They should be sweet and gentle and joyful. A happy, diligent mother will produce children who will be a joy to have around and she will not be frazzled.

Mrs. Tension

(This mother has a tense, unhappy set to her chin and mouth. She gets good obedience but the joy and peace are missing. Her children are an insecure reflection of her tenseness.)

This mother often has her household well under control, though not always. Things are usually orderly and sometimes even calm. Each child may have his chores and do them well, but there is something missing. Tension is often evident. Sometimes it is so thick that you could almost cut it. When you look at mama in the middle of those times, you will not see a shining face with a happy smile, but rather a set jaw and distressed eyes. No matter what the problem, whether a refractory child, unexpected company or a husband that is not toeing the line, this lady is definitely not happy and relaxed. If the children do not hustle and do their work she is sure to be upset. If husband comes home when she is in this mood she will either not talk much at all or she will be critical and snappy. No one can quite please her when she is in this mode. For some mothers this is an occasional, monthly problem that could be solved with proper nutritional supplements, enough rest and some much-needed exercise. For others it has become a way of life, evident by the wrinkled brow and the turned down mouth.

Mrs. Tension children are tense when she is tense. They are uncertain when the valve will blow on her pressure cooker and they will cause her dis-

pleasure. Our children do want to please us more than most of us know. They want to have a happy mama and a secure home. Tension has a way of changing all this and is particularly damaging to a sensitive child. These children often become irritants to the up-tight mother. They have a way of hitting her sore spots just right and triggering more tension. Let this child be your measuring stick. When he begins to irritate you stop and examine how you are handling life in general. Remember that when the pilot is calm, the passengers are calm, even though all is not well. A relaxed mama will make relaxed children.

Perhaps Mrs. Tension needs to stop blaming her problems on her circumstances and remember that God has the answer to any difficulty that she finds herself in. These answers are tucked in His letter to us and they really do work. Your trial is not unique. Your problem is not worse than those that others experience. You may or may not have a husband. He may or may not be living up to *your* expectations. He may or may not be godly. While all of these things make a difference in your circumstances, none of these things is an insurmountable problem with God as your Master.

I have noticed that Mrs. Tension often is not at peace with her husband. A woman who loves and respects her husband is usually not a tense, up-tight one. Since God has planned for us to be heirs together of the grace of God, we usually have more grace when our hearts are at peace and drawn together. This does not mean that a woman whose husband is an unbeliever or one who has no husband, is without hope. God is there for her and He will make her way straight. "With God all things are possible." But I am positive, from my own experience, that my tensions are at their worst when I am not in harmony with my husband. This may well be one of the answers for the many Mrs. Tensions. Seek God for a real faith in Him for any circumstances. He is there with you and He cares. Tensions will turn to trust when you understand that God does answer prayers. "Casting all your cares upon him for he careth for you." I Peter 5:7.



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Mom Ho-Hum

(This mother doesn't really pay attention to child training or her children. It is easier for her to zone out and let her little rascals fend for themselves. There is not much to say for this type of mothering except that it results in disaster. She may be sitting at Jesus feet and taking lots of time to meet God but if she is not putting it into shoe leather, it availeth her nothing, Mum Ho-Hum will usually turn into Miz Frazzle or Mrs. Tension at some point or other, especially as her family grows. Mothers, God has given us these children. They are ours to teach and to train and to mold, to use for a bit and then to give back to God. How we train them is up to us. There are many, many books and seminars on Child Training. You can do it this way or that way. There are advocates of Michael Pearl, or the Bradwicks or Denny Kenaston. But we all must follow the Lord Jesus and walk in His ways and experience His saving power. We want to raise boys like the three Hebrew boys, and girls like Naaman's captive maid. Children like this do not just happen. They come at a great cost and to the tune of lots and lots of training and work and prayer. A ho-hum attitude will result in the ultimate loss of your children. They will not obey you. They will not obey others. They will not obey God. Sometimes as I watch the passive mother, I feel so sad. Her children run over her. She doesn't seem to notice. They deliberately do the opposite of what she says and she does nothing. When they get older they will turn to others because mother never noticed, never cared. Sometimes, I think that children ask for training when they need to have our attention. If they cannot get it another way they will get attention through disobedience. So, mom ho-hum, if you discover that you have naughty children, you may find that taking time to be with them and listen to them and enter into their interests and train them, will help you tremendously. After all, you like when your husband spends time with you, don't you? You will never, never regret the hours and days that you spent carefully nurturing and teaching your little people. They will pay you with love, respect and cheerful obedience.

Mommy Cheerful

This is a cheerful, consistent mother who has a happy outlook on life and depends on her Saviour to help her direct her children in the right way.

This mommy is a real person. She is all of us sometimes but most of us could be like her more of the time. When Mommy Cheerful fails, she know how to get back on track. She repents to her Heavenly

Father, then she repents humbly to her family. This is a wonderful way to show her children the way of the Cross. Mommy Cheerful really loves her little ones, her middle ones and her older ones. She loves them by diligently training them even when she is tired. She loves them by setting a good example to them in how to work and how to serve. Her children are cheerful copies of their parents. Have you ever wondered why our children are reflections of us? Perhaps because it is a very effective way for God to get our attention about the things that He wants to change in us. Mommy Cheerful is growing in respecting her husband and loving him at all times. So are her children. They are copying her. She enjoys spending time with her children and they enjoy spending time with her. They know that she is their best friend and that they are hers. She is happy and secure and relaxed and so are they. Her husband and her children will rise up and call her blessed!

All of us can be a mixture of any one of these ladies. We are not always cheerful or frazzled. We are not always tense or perfectionistic. All of us are cheerful and happy sometimes. But most of us have a long way to go and to grow. Look at yourself through Granny's eyes and you may be surprised. Do not be discouraged. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The Lord Jesus loves you and is calling you to Himself. He is using your children as a way to get your attention. Do not be discouraged. You cannot do your job alone. Fix your eyes on the Master and stay focused on Him. If you begin to understand how wonderful He is and how much He loves you, you will learn to trust and obey Him. When things get difficult and you see your failures, turn and look to your Master and ask for help. He has promised "never to leave you or forsake you." When the tensions mount and you feel distressed, try singing. Singing lifts your heart and the hearts of your children. Head for your room and fall on your knees and spend a few minutes in prayer. Prayer changes things! It changes you. It changes your attitudes! That, in turn helps to change your children. Go in faith. Never be afraid! □

