**Maria And Deanna**

[00:00:00]**Deanna:** [00:00:00] The days are long. The years are short. How many of us have heard the saying? Except recently, I heard someone say that in a pandemic, the days are long. The weeks are long. The months are long. Everything is long.

[00:00:13] Welcome to Mennonite Girls in a Modern World. I'm your host, Deanna Friesen. On today's episode, Maria and I take some time to encourage moms in the trenches at a time when life is particularly stressful and hopefully bring a little hope to your day, however long it may feel.

[00:00:29]**Maria:** [00:00:29] You know, one of the things that I think we are forgetting in this pandemic all the time is, we've never done this before. If anyone's feeling like I am lately, it's easy to forget when life starts to feel a little extra hard and you're like, why is it feeling so hard?

[00:00:45] And then you start to remember the fact that when you have young children, that's a really particular season in your life with very particular challenges. And now you are doing it on top of a pandemic, which has interrupted our lives pretty much, no matter where you live, you're feeling it on one degree or another.

[00:01:04] And so I think that to have an episode today where we just take a little bit of time to remember this, this is a hard work that we are doing as mothers, and then just to be able to encourage each other to keep going, because, we've never done this before in a pandemic, but we have mothers who've gone before us.

[00:01:20] And, and so part of today's show is also to learn to glean from them, some of the wisdom that they gained in those really tough years and hopefully encourage some of the young moms who are a little bit newer in the journey. What do you find at this point, Deanna is, is like your biggest stressor?

[00:01:43] **Deanna:** [00:01:43] Oh goodness. We, we had such a big fight yesterday, trying to put him down to, to sleep. He just fights sleep and once we get him down, he sleeps well-fairly well, but he just doesn't want to go to sleep. And we have the schedule. We have the story, everything like there is a schedule and we try to keep it if we're not perfect, but we try and he just wants to not miss anything.

[00:02:10] And then The other day we were in Manitoba trying to, while we were staying at Andrew's parents, trying to get him to sleep. And one of my family members told me, "Oh, you are going to miss this!" And I just...

[00:02:23]**Maria:** [00:02:23] RIght.

[00:02:24] **Deanna:** [00:02:24] don't need to hear this right now. I felt upset. But in the back of my mind, I knew, right. Like they are right. I just, I, I didn't want to hear that.

[00:02:34]**Maria:** [00:02:34] I think sometimes when we have passed that we can turn around and in our, in our best intention is to give good advice, but we can end up coming across as unsympathetic and not realizing that sometimes what a young mom needs is not advice, she just needs a hug. She needs to be allowed to cry and just, you know, whatever, whatever it takes. And so, I remember too being told all the time that, "Oh, one day they will be past this and you'll miss it." Well, I am there, you know, those days are passed. I miss parts of it. I don't miss potty training. - Is there anyone who misses potty training? You know, I had my own battles with, with potty training and getting them to eat right, and getting them to sleep and all those things that we have to instill in them when they are young.

[00:03:28] And any encouragement I have for young moms today is to say that sometimes it really does feel like a long tunnel with no light at the end. But there is light and one day your hard work will pay off. It will pay off. And I think that's what we're here today to remind you of that.

[00:03:48] **Deanna:** [00:03:48] My husband and I, after the battle was done, we were just sitting on the bed and we were just exhausted. We felt like pretty much like failures is like, did we do the right thing? We just hugged each other and hopefully he'll still love us in the morning. And well, he did. He's been great -an angel today, so...

[00:04:08]**Maria:** [00:04:08] You are not alone. Deanna. I can still recall times where in potty training, I was crying just as much as they were. We asked some older moms for tips on some of those tricky things in parenting young children. But before we dive into some of the fantastic practical advice, we wanted to stop to remember that there are some important spiritual truths that we need to take with us when we enter motherhood.

[00:04:38] Otherwise we are going to drive ourselves crazy and there'll be just such a feeling of condemnation and feeling like a failure. So couple of things to remember, not really in any particular order of importance, but one of the things I think is most important to remember is you're not trying to be the perfect parent because you can't. You're a sinner, your children are sinners. You're just not going to be able to parent perfectly. And if you can free yourself from that expectation, it actually sets you up to being able to enjoy parenting. Sometimes on social media, we see this saying that says, *"You are enough, you are enough"*. And they're trying to give women a sense of empowerment to say, you can do this so I can appreciate the message kinda.

[00:05:29] But then there's the opposite message that says *"You are* ***not*** *enough"*. Like you are not going to be enough to meet all your children's needs. You cannot be their savior. You cannot cook every meal to their liking. And I think that as moms, we need to realize that, that we are not enough, and it is only in Christ that we are adequate to do the task He has given us to do.

[00:05:57] And so I think that's a huge mind shift. So I understand when people say, "Oh, you're enough, you can do this," but it's in Christ, you can do this.

[00:06:07] **Deanna:** [00:06:07] Exactly.

[00:06:08] **Maria:** [00:06:08] You know, and , I don't know why at some point in my parenting journey really early on, I just felt such freedom to not worry about being perfect mom.

[00:06:19]It was such a gift to be able to realize that. Maybe it's because I realized that my parents were imperfect, and yet I still loved them. So maybe that meant that I could be imperfect too, because it really is in children to love their parents, and children are capable of great love, and it's not based on perfection.

[00:06:41]So I think if there is a goal in parenting, it's not to be perfect, but it is to build a foundation. Because you are trying to prepare these little people to face a world that can be a really scary place. And so your preparation on how you are training your children is going to be physical how are you going to teach them to do household chores and to dress themselves and to pay their bills?

[00:07:05] How are you going to teach them spiritual truths to withstand the things they need to know as they head out into the world? How are you going to teach them emotional things like how to love, how to forgive, how to be vulnerable and how to have boundaries. So I feel like as a parent, you are trying to build all these foundations, and it can literally feel like you are accomplishing nothing.

[00:07:30] Right. It's like I got nowhere today. And I think that that's a trick and a tool that Satan uses to discourage moms to say, you didn't get anything done today, but that's not true. It's just, we're building cathedrals. They take a lifetime, and it's very slow progress. So I really feel like remembering that the goal is not perfection, it is to build a foundation and that really does take a long time.

[00:07:56] I think another really important thing to remember as a mom is that God has given you everything you need to accomplish the task He has given you to do. And in Him and through Him, you are equipped, but I'm going to point out something I heard in a sermon once that, to me, really flipped the switch in understanding something.

[00:08:19]In Galatians 6, we read two verses, and these two verses look like they're completely contradicting each other. In verse 2, it says, *"carry each other's burdens"*, but in verse 5, it says *"Each one should carry his own load"*. And it was Charles Price , a preacher with the People's Church in Toronto who had a sermon who talked about this, and he said, if you look up the Greek words, it said the word *burden* insinuates something big. The word *load* is like a backpack. So he was saying that really, we all have our own responsibilities. We all have a backpack that we need to carry through life. And that backpack is, is not burdensome. I mean, it, it can be, but it really, it is a load that we can carry, and God enables us to carry it.

[00:09:12] And so, for example, if you decide to get married, you put on the backpack of being a wife. You now have the responsibilities of being a wife. If you decide to become a mom, you're now carrying the backpack of being a mom. There are some responsibilities that only you can do.

[00:09:31] But, then in the next verse, when it says to carry each other's burdens-now a burden is something really large- it's a sickness, or when there is something that is happening that is just so heavy and so difficult. And what Charles Price said, and I'll never forget it, he goes, we have a tendency try to take off our backpack and make somebody else carry it. Sometimes I have seen moms try to shift their responsibility of parenting onto somebody else. Usually grandma. And that is not what it means because the daily responsibilities are yours, but it doesn't mean you can't ask for help. That's where your burdens come in.

[00:10:16] But as Charles Price said, sometimes we try to carry that really big, heavy, hard stuff on our own, and then we try to get somebody else to carry our backpack when you know, the reverse should be happening. There are just daily responsibilities and being a mom, nobody can do for you. But there is a time to ask for help and to invite people to come in and say, "I need help. This is a burden. I can't do it."

[00:10:41] And wisdom is knowing the difference and it really... that's where it can be really hard. When is this something I really just need to buckle down and get it done. And when do I say, I need help. So I don't know if that's encouraging though, but....

[00:10:56]**Deanna:** [00:10:56] It it's a good way to put it. I never even thought of it before. And I should add one thing that helps you carry your own backtrack is simply spending time with God and asking Him for wisdom because He says He will give it to us if we ask Him. And I've been doing the journey through the Psalms study by Unshaken Ministries, and I've just really enjoyed it.

[00:11:17] It's been wonderful to dig into the Word, and it's neat how in Psalms 1, it says that the man who is righteous he meditates on God's law day and night, and I've found that that is one way that I can just really buckle down and make it through the day. Sometimes, like I shared on a previous episode how I had struggled with a bit of depression this last year, and it just really helped me to meditate on God's word throughout the day. It gave me encouragement and, and it gives you wisdom. And if you pray for wisdom, you can figure out when should I ask someone for help. God can give you wisdom to see the difference in that. I think

[00:12:00] **Maria:** [00:12:00] Absolutely.

[00:12:01] **Deanna:** [00:12:01] He can help you to know if it's the right time, so then you don't have to be confused.

[00:12:06]**Maria:** [00:12:06] And when it says 'each one should carry his own load', that is under the assumption that the Holy spirit is your helper already. Like, you are not abandoned to that. You're not left alone. God is walking with you in those trenches , but I do remember finding that to be really helpful cause there were times in parenting, I just wanted to flake out and not do the hard work. And God's like, *"This is your backpack. You need to carry it. We need to do these hard things together." A*nd so that was helpful for me to do some of those really hard things.

[00:12:39] And there's times I think I probably should have asked for more help. I also like to be really tough and carry my burdens, but a woman. ..a woman who carries her own burdens just becomes depleted and cut off from the body of Christ and, and sisters in Christ who might want to walk alongside of you and, and help you. So there is a danger in being too tough, for sure. So it's a bit of a delicate balance, but whatever God has called you to, God has called you to this place. He is there with you. And I think that's the biggest thing to remember.

[00:13:16] So then the last thing that I just really want moms to remember is that God uses different situations in life to refine us. And for many of us, it is motherhood. I don't like it when people call motherhood the highest calling, because our highest calling is to be a disciple of Christ. But that can include motherhood.

[00:13:37] And also, you know, women who are single, they are going to find a different way, but they're still a disciple of Christ. So that's where I, I don't like to say motherhood is the highest calling, but when you are in motherhood. Exactly. But God does often use motherhood to show us who we really are when the heat is on and the pressure is on.

[00:14:01]It's when the circumstances around us are challenging and difficult, that the real you comes to the surface. This happens in marriage. It happens in parenting. You know, I didn't know I had a temper until I got married. And there's other things in parenting that brought to the surface and you're like, wow, I'm ugly.

[00:14:24]And that's not to condemn you. It is to bring things to the surface so you can repent, and God can cleanse you, and you can be refined. And so if parenting seems hard, it's because it's a spiritual bat tle, and it's not your imagination. If you feel like you are failing in a sense, because, maybe you are now for the first time aware of some of your hidden qualities that you didn't know, and you're not quite prepared to deal with them.

[00:14:57] So, in order to work through that, and you mentioned it, Deanna, you need ,to abide in Christ, like you're growing with him as a child. As your children are growing, you are growing in Christ. It's going to be staying tethered to Christ, and He is working in you, and He will work in you to work in your children. It is a long process that's for sure.

[00:15:21] **Deanna:** [00:15:21] So we have some practical mom tips that were sent to us in the question boxes on Instagram that we put out. Of our best nap time tips that we got were, make sure you take some too. So moms don't neglect your nap times. And for some of you that might not be possible. If you have more kids that don't take naps and they need your attention, but maybe there's a chance here and there to catch one and should take that opportunity.

[00:15:50] And a consistent routine, which I've heard so many times is very, very needed for young babies. It helps them to sleep better at night. For lots of us, we forget that the little ones, they need an earlier bedtime. Yesterday, we tried putting Eli down at 7:30pm, and that actually seemed to help him sleep better. So they need an earlier bedtime, I guess. Co-ordinate naps for all the kids so they sleep at the same time. That sounds very hard to me.

[00:16:19] **Maria:** [00:16:19] It can be, but I think it's a good, it's a good goal to try for.

[00:16:23] **Deanna:** [00:16:24] White noise machine is very helpful. We use that too.

[00:16:29]**Maria:** [00:16:29] When I was a young mom, one of the things that was really popular at the time was a program that taught you how to feed your babies and then to have these wake windows. And then to have your baby self sooth and go to sleep. It was a very controversial book.

[00:16:44] Oh, baby wise. That's what it was. Right. So, yes, I was a baby wise mom, and I actually didn't mind the program. As I became more comfortable being a mum, I did the program less strictly and adapted it to me. So one of the things I would say that I didn't like about it was that I never thought to do white noise or soothing noise for my babies, which was really irritating because then they had to have things perfectly quiet to go to sleep.

[00:17:10] So if I could go back, I would definitely make my house really noisy and try to get my kids to learn to fall asleep to that. But this idea of wake windows, that's something that there's a lady who is Taking Cara Babies, and she really teaches moms on how to get the most out of their nap times. And to have these wake windows where your baby is fully awake and that they're extending that energy before they are being put back down for a nap. So that's something that she teaches and that was given as one of the practical tips.

[00:17:42] **Deanna:** [00:17:42] Another thing that helps is having them in a room that's dark so there is no light coming in the window. And I've also heard that when you put them down for night, having all your artificial lights off. I don't know, for some kids that doesn't work, some kids like having a light on, but I don't know if you're desperate, you can try it.

[00:18:01] **Maria:** [00:18:01] right. Well, and these are just tips. It may or may not work for you, but these were some of the things that worked for some of the moms who put more than their fair share of kids to sleep.

[00:18:10] One of the other questions we asked on Instagram is how do you keep your kids entertained? Because first of all, we're in February, the winter is long, and then the pandemic has taken away maybe some of the activities you used to enjoy, like taking your kids swimming or so many play dates.

[00:18:24] And so the question now is: what were some of the things moms have done and have tried to successfully keep their kids entertained and not glued to a TV or to a screen. A friend shared how she would buy plastic cups, tons of them, a hundred plastic cups and let them build towers and, and build things out of them.

[00:18:43] And I'm like, yeah, that's a great idea. Why didn't.I ever think of that?

[00:18:46]**Deanna:** [00:18:46] The next one is cloud dough or Play-Doh, I don't know how you make cloud dough, but I know there's tons of recipes on Pinterest for Play-Doh and you can even make them smell good, which I dunno if that's a good idea, because if I had been a kid and my playdough smelled like candy, I would've wanted to sample it, I think.

[00:19:05] **Maria:** [00:19:05] I know some of these ideas, I never thought of , like, I know my kids enjoyed bath times in the winter and they would take long baths, but to have this idea with bubble baths with colored ice cubes never dawned on me.

[00:19:17] **Deanna:** [00:19:17] So one thing is to cycle through toys, put them away for a month or so at a time, I feel like lots of people do this and then , couple months later have new toys.

[00:19:28] **Maria:** [00:19:28] I used to do that a lot with Lego, clean it up in the summertime and then take it back out in the fall.

[00:19:34] **Deanna:** [00:19:34] And also blanket forts

[00:19:36] **Maria:** [00:19:36] Yes, that's a must, right? Well, maybe not the baking with them.

[00:19:41]**Deanna:** [00:19:41] I've had my friends tell me, Oh goodness. They just want to help with everything. And it's so much more work, but they enjoy it so much.

[00:19:48]**Maria:** [00:19:48] I've tried to get my kids to help me from time to time. That one was a harder one for me to do, but yes, we definitely had a lot of blanket forts and blanket sleepovers. Those are always entertaining.

[00:19:59] The other big question we had was what do you do with kids who are picky eaters? Because probably there's one in every family for sure. And again, we're not trying to tell you what to do. We're just giving you maybe some tips and ideas you hadn't thought of before. And one of the things that came up consistently in the answers was just keep trying to offer this food. Don't just offer it once. And if they don't like it, you say, "Oh, they don't like it", and never offer it again. There are many foods that I liked eventually, so one thing is just to keep trying and not give up.

[00:20:30] **Deanna:** [00:20:30] Practical thing would be to limit snacking . So that's an idea. And I have seen a couple people, they try to get their kids involved in making the snacks that they don't want to eat like vegetables, like your kids to help you chop them up or chop them into a fun shape. I don't know that makes them a little, maybe a little bit more interested in the snack that they rather not eat .

[00:20:56]**Maria:** [00:20:56] I think limiting snacks is a huge, huge thing. If you're grazing all day, you're not going to be hungry for a good meal. And this is still true. This remains true till almost teenager age. At that point, it feels like they could eat anytime at all time. And they're still always hungry, but definitely at a young age, limiting the snacks can be very helpful.

[00:21:17]**Deanna:** [00:21:17] So you can offer the same food in many different ways. Can just use your imagination, look on Pinterest, and then try to get them to try it. That's one way to do it.

[00:21:27] **Maria:** [00:21:27] You think of something like apples, it doesn't have to be eaten all hard and crunchy. You can turn it into Applesauce. You Can turn it into Apple muffins. You can do so many different things with the food. And you might find that there is one way that they do actually like it. Or maybe they just like the texture of something more and then just offer it In that way for now.

[00:21:46] But I still think it's always just really important to encourage them to try more and, and to make them eat a couple bites, like one or two bites. I still think you won't know until you try, and I know it can turn into a battle, so you need a lot of wisdom with that. But I don't think you can just let them say no, I don't want to try it and walk away cause you'll never, they will, there will not be a magical day where they just want to try it.

[00:22:09] But keeping that in mind. I think one last thing regarding foods they don't like is they should be allowed to not like a food. I remember my one son. I mean, he's not a vegetable eater to this day. But I would say to him, "Oh, you don't like carrots. Okay, fine. But then you have to like the other veggies, you're only allowed to dislike one veggie at a time." And then if corn would come up and he's like, "I don't want to eat corn." I'm like, well, then you have to eat carrots. You cannot dislike everything. So what's your veggie that you're not liking right now?

[00:22:35] I know that it's kind of silly, but I found that sometimes they really genuinely have a food that makes them gag. And I think there is a limit where you say, you know, it's okay. I don't like olives, so maybe it's okay if you don't like something that makes you gag.

[00:22:51] There should be a little mercy on those things.

[00:22:54] I love this next question because we asked the moms: what kept you sane? And one mom said, well, that is assuming we stayed sane. So I thought that was true. We don't know if we stayed sane. What kept you grounded in those really difficult years ?

[00:23:10] **Deanna:** [00:23:10] Time out with friends. I know this helps me a lot. And I only have one kid, so who knows how I'll do with more, but , it helps me to get out. Sometimes we get our husbands to babysit our kids and go out for celebrating a birthday. We went out for Christmas and it, it just really helped me to forget everything and have fun. And I didn't even really miss my baby, which sounds terrible.

[00:23:36] **Maria:** [00:23:36] It's not.

[00:23:36] **Deanna:** [00:23:36] I knew he was in good hands. I love him to death, but I just needed a break. So that was really good.

[00:23:43] **Maria:** [00:23:43] Yeah, that's a huge thing. Like now of course, with COVID we know that meeting with friends is in some places you're not supposed to, but you know, when you can, it can be such a great way. Because one of the things that I think it's so easy to do is to lose yourself in your mothering because in the beginning it is so new and it's so amazing.

[00:24:08] It's this incredible journey that you almost don't remember who you were before you had a baby. And so when you have a chance to just be an evening out with friends, with adult conversation, it keeps you a little bit more grounded to say like, okay, I am a mom, but I am also me, this person who loves music and loves to do all these other things.

[00:24:32] Because what can happen is a woman wakes up when her kids are teenagers, and she's like, I don't even know who I am anymore because they gave everything away. You need to put yourself into parenting and do the job that God has given to you, but I'm not a hundred percent sure you need to sacrifice your personality.

[00:24:47]Secondly, I would say, what kept me sane was remembering to spend time with God and to continue to, to ask Him for help and to have my quiet time. I would often, even when my kids were older, even if they were beyond naps, I'd say here's your hour of quiet time. Go into your rooms, read a book.

[00:25:05] And that was my one hour or two to just kind of read a book or have my devotional at that time, to carve out those times and not to neglect meeting with God. Yes. It's hard to create that time, but it's not usually impossible.

[00:25:20]**Deanna:** [00:25:20] . Another one is to just enjoy your kids. Laugh with them and just take time to get down on their level and play with them. I know this really helps me on days when I'm really tired to just sit down with my little boy in the midst of all his toys and just make him laugh and spend time with him. And then I ended up really enjoying myself, even though I'm so exhausted.

[00:25:44] It's such a good thing to remember, to do, to just forget about your tiredness a little bit and enjoy your little baby, because I know we've said it before, but it won't last, these, these moments won't last.

[00:25:56] **Maria:** [00:25:56] There can be such joy in having kids. I love telling stories about my kids and the funny things they said, because I feel like that's your paycheck as a parent. That's where you get to enjoy this really fun experience of watching these little people say and do funny things. And I remember one time sharing something that my kids had done and somebody said to me, "Your kids are so funny." And I went everybody's kids are funny just sometimes I don't think parents are tuned in to hear it. You know, we're so busy with all the other important things on our plate that we forget to listen to what our kids are saying, and just see the things that they do and take joy in it.

[00:26:44] And I'd really want to encourage moms to do that too, to record the funny stories, to laugh and enjoy that because that really is some of the richest moments in parenting when they're young,

[00:26:57]**Deanna:** [00:26:57] It was so funny before I just thought it was so cute. Eli was sitting on the floor with his toys and he was trying to be mad and he was trying to frown and he's like nine months old. And he's trying to figure out how his face works and his face was just contorting and he was trying to frown and it just did so much funny things.

[00:27:17] It was hilarious and so cute. And I caught it on video. It was just precious. I love that.

[00:27:23]**Maria:** [00:27:23] There's still a lot of fun when they're teenagers and growing up in a different way, but I do miss the days when they were really. Well, I shouldn't say I miss the days, but I do have such great memories and stories of when they were young and, and they'd love to hear them when they're older.

[00:27:38] Tell me about that again. Mom, tell me about that again.

[00:27:40]