

# Hands Full

Thirty days of encouragement for busy moms

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## **HANDS FULL**

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



# Contents

Introduction .....	9
1. Full Hands or Open Ones .....	11
2. In my Mom Skin.....	15
3. In the Strength We Have.....	19
4. He Loved First.....	23
5. Just Keep Stirring.....	27
6. Love Is War.....	31
7. Only for a Little While.....	35
8. Grace and the Man on the Airplane .....	41
9. Feelings Are Real .....	47
10. Broken Cisterns .....	51
11. But here I am, writing a devotional .....	55
12. Functioning in Chaos .....	59
13. Moms and Muffins .....	65
14. Tearing Down the House .....	69
15. The Angel in the Marble.....	75
16. Two-dimensional Life.....	79
17. Run, Walk, Crawl .....	85
18. The Other Thing About Hills .....	89
19. Walled in Junk .....	93

BROOKE ELLEN FRICK

20. Village People.....	99
21. Peace and Powerlessness .....	105
22. The Puppy Dog Tree .....	111
23. Terrible Gifts .....	115
24. Bad Bananas.....	119
25. Constancy Over Consistency .....	125
26. Hot Coffee?.....	131
27. Moving Dirt .....	137
28. Not Enough.....	141
29. When You Feel Unlovely.....	147
30. Help Me Help Myself.....	151
Acknowledgements .....	155
About the Author .....	157

## Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Full Hands or Open Ones

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

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

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

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

Yes, I’ve got my hands full, I know. I have five children and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Uh-oh, my hands are full," I'd say in my exaggerated playful voice. But that didn't deter them. They smiled and kept on bringing the blocks. And so, not wanting to disappoint, I kept

## HANDS FULL

trying to hold them. And the amazing thing was I could.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That day I realized full hands were first open ones. And when we stretch those hands full of blocks or diapers, keys,

groceries, and shoes a little wider, with His all-sufficient love and power, we can hold more than we ever thought possible.

PRAYER

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