

THOU SHALT NOT KILL

*Encouragement For When
We Want to Kill Our Kids*

BY KRISTIN FUNSTON



CONTENTS

The Exodus 20:13 Moments

DAY ONE / Exasperating Ephesians

DAY TWO / Blessings from Matthew

DAY THREE / Chosen in Genesis

DAY FOUR / The Most Annoying Verse from 1 Thessalonians

DAY FIVE / Holding Hands in Isaiah

DAY SIX / Training in Proverbs

DAY SEVEN / Fruity Galatians

DAY EIGHT / Pick Your Battles through Exodus

DAY NINE / Overwhelming Direction in Psalms

Acknowledgements

About the Author

THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

EXODUS 20:13 (KJV)

Hi, friend! I'm so excited you're here! We are now officially teammates in this thing called parenting, and I'm so excited to do life with you!

Sometimes we need a quick reference guide for when things get a tad out of control. And life sure gets crazy, doesn't it? Especially as parents. Am I right or *amiright??*

Amidst the craziness, we'll need each other.

But even more, we'll need us some Jesus.

That's why I put together this short and easy-to-reference e-book. It's for our Exodus 20:13 Moments -- you know, the ones when you just know the best option to escape the crazy is to kill. (Not really, but really.)

Beyond our title verse, there is plenty of scripture to turn to in the heat of an angry or upset moment. I have compiled a few for you in this easy reference guide. Also, just for fun, you can click [HERE](#) for a few FREE scripture prints and quote images. (Yay for pretty things!) We all know that when all hell breaks loose (and I do mean that literally), you may need them quickly.

Because Jesus wants you to remember Him during those crazy moments.

And so do I. After all, we're in this thing together, and we need each other and Him.

fist bump

I'm praying for you,

Kristin

DAY ONE

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" - which is the first commandment with a promise - "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:1-4 (NIV)

Goodness. I just love the first three verses of Ephesians 6 so much, don't you? "Children, obey your parents... honor your father and mother... so that it may go well with you." Our children should obey and honor us, because life will be more enjoyable for everyone that way. Right? *Right?!?* I am the parent, after all. My kids should *just know* to do as I say.

But verse 4 makes me hesitate. Surely he meant to say, "children, don't exasperate your mothers." It almost brings up questions of motive - my motives. Why are my children exasperated? Is it rightfully induced? Or am I being too harsh? Too short-tempered? Too... well, anything?

The Message version of verse 4 says, "Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master." Initially, I may not love this verse, but I do

love what "taking them by the hand" indicates - leading, guiding, and showing, all with a tender touch.

It's not an accident verse 4 follows verses 1 through 3. They indicate that we, as parents, have divinely appointed power and authority over our children. However, as the saying goes, with great power also comes great responsibility. Verse 4 warns against abusive power.

Our children model what they see and hear, so we must handle them with love and tenderness and self control, not acting impulsively or emotionally like they often do. We must parent in a manner as not to intentionally "exasperate" them with our expectations.

So let's tenderly take them by the hand to lead and guide them, just as God does for us.

PRAY WITH ME?

Jesus, come right now and be with us. My children and I need you. Father, send your Holy Spirit to give us all a spirit of gentleness in our emotional tirades. Fill me with patience and love to handle this situation, and help me remember Your commands in how to train and instruct them. Give me the discernment to know when I'm overstepping any parental lines you would not approve of, and equip me with the energy and courage to change my ways. Help my kids remember I only have their best interest at heart, because I'm working to parent them in You, Jesus. I pray for peace around all of us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY TWO

And who shall receive one such little child in my name, receive me. - Matthew 18:5 (KJV)

Sometimes, I just want to be left alone. I've been known to lock myself in the bathroom, closet, or pantry just to have a second of quiet. But sometimes--most times--I can't have that. (Like at 4 am, when my youngest decides it is time for pancakes and bacon, and I've decided it is time for some more shut-eye.) Our kids often make it impossible to enjoy any peace and quiet.

Just before Jesus fed the five thousand, He taught us it's important to get alone and fuel ourselves as He did (Mark 6:31). But He did it for a purpose: "But when He saw the needs of His people, he immediately turned back to them with compassion (Mark 6:34).

Like Jesus, there are times where we must choose purpose over preference. Moments when we must choose compassion over frustration with our people. We will have multiple opportunities to rest (they may be quick and only until 4am, but hey, what can you do?), but some of those opportunities are meant for us to love and receive others.

When we receive a child, we are receiving Christ, in whose image our child is made. Jesus not only provides parental support for us practically through His Word, communities, and the finances he provides, but He also blesses us when we

receive His children as our own (Hebrews 6:10).

Did you read that? Let me type it again. **He blesses us.**

Sure, it's easy to love our children most of the time (at least on the good days). But when we show kindness to them when we don't want to (4am wake-up calls, anybody?), we will receive a reward (Matthew 10:42). Maybe the blessing will come immediately, or maybe when we reach the end of ourselves and allow God to fill in our gaps. Either way, He promises blessing will come when we love and receive our children as He does. God is not unjust--He will remember what we've done (Matthew 25:40) and bless us.

(I personally hope my reward will be in the version of an all-expense paid, adults-only trip to Fiji. Just kidding. I don't expect God to send me to Fiji. But for the record, I wouldn't say no if He offered.)

However He reaps the blessing, my goal is to consciously choose purpose over preference and to recognize the difference between the two. I have hope He will equip us with grace each day to choose His way.

PRAY WITH ME?

Jesus, thank you for your Truth and the knowledge that while I must make time to be alone, I must also be able to discern the moments when my children need me, even when it is not convenient to my preferences. Father, thank you for your example with the 5000. Give me the wisdom to know when I'm being selfish in my desires and when I truly must get alone to refuel. Thank you for your abundant blessing of salvation and forgiveness, because I need it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY

THREE

God must have been in a snarky mood the day He decided to make me a parent. Not a joke. He, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit probably sat around and said, “Hey, You know what would be funny? Let’s make *her* a mom.”
<cue the holy laughter>

Do you have those moments? Where you doubt the decision He made to put you in charge of other human lives? Because I do.

Most days, I just can’t seem do it right. Because good moms would want to play with their kids every moment. And good moms would not lose their patience with the non-essentials. Good moms have happy, non-tantrum-throwing kids (Genesis 18:19).

It’s easy to fall into this mind trap the enemy sets up. But what I read about God’s faith in Abraham gives me hope that the joke isn’t necessarily on me.

Just like God expected Abraham to do what is right, He expects us to do what is right.

(No pressure. *wink*)

But I still have to wonder: if I mess up every day, why would He choose me?

Because He knows me (Jeremiah 1:5). And he knows you. He knows our hearts and our desire to do what is right and just. And most days, I believe that desire is enough for Him. While we could never do enough to make up for our mistakes, God knows His sovereign plan is perfect, even in our imperfection (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God doesn’t make mistakes. Abraham was called to be the Father of many nations (Genesis 17:5). History proves there wasn’t a glitch in his calling as Dad, and history will prove the same for us. We just can’t see past what’s in front of us, past right now, past the rolling laughter from the heavens as we try to parent these worldly kids.

We are chosen.

PRAY WITH ME?

Jesus, You have chosen me as these children’s mother-- me, Lord. Help me to not only accept, but embrace this incredible calling as their mom. Thank you for the gift of my children. Even when things are hard, I will rejoice and praise You for this decision. Help me to direct them, and help my household to keep Your ways, Jesus. Give me discernment and Your Godly wisdom to know what is right and just. You have made promises, Lord. Promises that I don’t deserve, but am graciously given through the blood of your Son--promises You will keep. Father, I ask you to surround me and my family with Your love. Pour into me, so I can pour out into others. I love You, Jesus, and thank You for this opportunity to be not just a mother, but *their* mother. In Your name, Amen.

For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.

Genesis 18:19 (HCSB)

DAY FOUR

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

Ah, here it is. That annoying verse loitering at the edge of Freak-Out Cliff, beckoning us to step away from the ledge. In these Exodus 20:13 Moments, it's hard to stop barreling toward the edge. But that's what we have to do. Right now. Even if it takes just 5 seconds. Close your eyes and breathe. Then, take it in.

Rejoice always. We don't have to rejoice at what is physically taking place in this moment, but we do need to rejoice in God. To be joyful for who He is. Say who He is out loud. Go ahead - read through this list with me:

El Shaddai (The All-Sufficient One)
El Roi (The God Who Sees)
Jehovah-shalom (The Lord is Peace)
El Olam (The Everlasting God)
Jehovah-raah (The Lord My Shepherd)
Elohim (The Creator)
Adonai (Lord, Master)
Jehovah-shammah (The Lord is There)

Pray continually. The way to rejoice always is to pray continually. The enemy is going to distract us with anything and everything he can to keep us out of communion with God. **So we must be intentional about not doing anything that keeps us from praying.**

God is near when we pray (Deuteronomy 4:7), and He will respond to us (Psalm 102:17). He does this by laying His peace as a shield over our hearts and minds to guard us from the enemy (Philippians 4:6-7).

Give thanks. Because, even when we can't think of a scenario, it could always be worse. There are times when our blessings can be hidden in the crevices of prayer, times when we can only see them through intentional search and submission to His will. Searching for thankfulness can and will change our attitude, pulling us away from the cliff.

PRAY WITH ME?

Jesus, thank you for who You are. Thank you for loving me enough to be Jehovah-shammah - my Lord who is here, and El Roi - my Lord who sees. You see everything right now. Jesus, keep the enemy from me, and give me a sense of peace in this crazy moment of parenting. Remind me of the joy my children bring so my heart can be thankful, rejoicing not only in You but in these kids you've created for me to parent. Thank You, Father, for being here and bringing Your peace to our family. You are the One who is my ultimate peace. You are my Master, Jesus. I love you. In Your name, Amen.

DAY FIVE

*For I am the
LORD your God
who takes hold
of your right
hand and says
to you, Do not
fear; I will
help you.*

Isaiah 41:13 (NIV)

Do you ever feel like you are ruining your kids? Because whew, Lord! I know I do!

So many days it feels like it's me versus them. And I am outnumbered. They may be small, but they are indeed mighty. The perpetual "Mom, can I... can we... can I... can we..." questions pack a swift ninja kick to my worn-out brain. I just lost my mind on my children after the 876th "can I" question, and now, because of my tone and choice language, I know they're going to grow up living a life of drugs, sex, and rock-n-roll.

Parenting is funny sometimes. Both big things and little things can cause fear to wrap its bony fingers around my mind, threatening to take over my heart. I'm terrified of all the things in my kids' lives. Terrified for their safety, their friends, their feelings, their purity, their language, their interests, their salvation, their choices, my choices for them. All the things.

I bet our Fear Lists combined would go on forever! (Not to mention our own sanity in the midst of it all, but that's another story.)

PRAY WITH ME?

Oh, Jesus, Thank you for Your nearness. You are here. Even when I can't feel You holding my hand, You can feel and see my fingers laced between Yours. Jesus, show me that, for I am fearful right now. Full of all kinds of parental worries. Jesus, take them away, and give me the peace only You can give--the peace that transcends all understanding. I trust You, Lord, to take care of my family and this situation holding my fears captive. Thank you, Jesus, for your unending love and peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Word calls us to turn to God when we are scared (Psalm 56:3). Sometimes it feels like God isn't within reach, but instead hovering at some far-off point, watching our day-to-day through His own sort of spiritual Facetime feed. We can talk to Him, and He can hear us, but He isn't actually *with* us.

That's a lie.

He's right here, right now, right next to you. Look to your right. He's holding that hand. Did you hear that? He's whispering to you. "Do not fear; I will help you."

Our God is bigger than any "can I" or "can we" question. Bigger than my worn-out brain. Bigger than the decisions we or our children make. Bigger than drugs, sex, and rock-n-roll.

2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT) says, "God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."

And He's holding your hand right now. So do not fear.

DAY SIX

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6 (ESV)

As a parent, I get tired. No, let me rephrase that. As a parent, I *am* tired. At this moment and in this season of parenting, I'm exhausted. I'm tired of the constant care, disciplining, interacting, and even playing.

In the midst of a huge parental fail (complete with kids screaming and Barbies flying across the room), I made a desperate plea to God and opened my bible, hoping to find something-- anything--to calm me down. I opened right to Proverbs 22:6: "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it."

Conviction hit hard. I had hoped to find something in that crazy moment of toddler meltdowns to make me feel better about myself. (Or possibly even cast blame on my children for surely being inhabited by evil spirits. Ephesians 6:1, anyone? *see page 3.*)

Instead, what I found was Solomon's divinely-inspired wisdom. There isn't a question mark in this verse either: "will you please train a child in the way he should go?" No, it's a statement. A command. Wisdom tells us to teach children in the way they should go. The second part explains why.

Our children's future depends on us. (No pressure, right? *wink*)

No child will have a strong foundation for a Christ-centered future if they're not taught right from wrong and, above all, how to love and respect others. A world lacking people with a love-based infrastructure is not a world I want my children to grow up in.

So when we're tired of the disciplining, the caring, or even the playing, let's look to Him. He showed us how to live and teach others through love and patience. God calls us to do these things even

when we don't want to, because to love is to discipline, to care for, even to play with.

So by His grace, I'm going to make myself go back in there and face another round of gentle disciplining, band-aiding skinned knees, answering the same question fifty times, and even playing another game with (*sigh*) Barbie dolls. **Because God has shown me our short-term exhaustion is fleeting compared to our children's long-term faith.**

PRAY WITH ME?

Father, give me energy. I need it and You right now to make it through this tired moment of mine. I know every detail in how I parent these kids has long-term effects--so Lord, give me energy and reminders of that now, and every day. Jesus, I realize the burden I bear in training the next generation in Your ways. Help me to embrace that task and love on my children--*Your* children--in the way You deem necessary. Thank you, Lord for your continued grace and mercy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY SEVEN

Yesterday, I met all the major requirements on the mythical Parenting Checklist:

- √ feed & clothe kids
- √ make kids brush teeth
- √ get kids to school and activities on time
- √ make kids use manners
- √ limit kids' use of electronic devices
- √ get kids in bed at a decent hour

Easy enough, right? Wrong. While your list may look slightly different if you are in a different stage of parenting than I am, the list of parenting responsibilities is still lengthy. Maybe it includes signing off on report cards or teaching your sixteen-year-old how to drive (safely!), or transferring money to their college "spending money" account (send some my way, while you're at it! *wink*).

But looking back over my list, I realized I missed something crucial. Love. Yes, I am--we are--called to love our kids. And I do. However, yesterday I definitely missed a few of the details partnered with love - joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control. Have you ever dropped the ball like I have?

PRAY WITH ME?

Jesus, thank You for this reminder that love is more than just a feeling. Love is action, as You showed when You laid yourself on a cross for me. Remind me of that love, so that I can love my children that way - with action. You've shown love isn't about WHAT we check off on the parenting list, but HOW we check it off. Holy Spirit, send Your fruit - I want to parent with a spirit of joyful peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I can only do this thing with You alongside me. So nudge when I'm lacking, so I can intentionally reach for it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Our key verse uses the singular word "fruit." It does not say "fruits of the Spirit." All of the attributes listed make up one fruit; we can't pick and choose which attributes we want to use.

Turns out, this whole parenting thing is a pretty tough job. Especially when you've been attacked by your own mini-humans, armed with headless dolls and a screech that shatters glass. There are days when I definitely want to leave out some of the fruit ingredients. I can still love my kids, but I'm definitely not up for being patient or gentle with them.

Because of my sin, most days, I'm not cut out for this job. Scratch that--*every* day I'm not cut out for it. But on just enough days, I get the help and encouragement needed to get them and myself through (alive, at least). And you know what? My kids have turned out pretty stinkin' alright. And I bet yours have too. Not because of us, but in spite of us. (Praise Jesus!)

So today, let's be intentional in our effort to keep the fruit of the Spirit part of our day-to-day while swimming through the trenches.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

DAY EIGHT

The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.

Exodus 14:14 (NIV)

Some days I just can't seem to get it together. I've tried so hard, but the universe (or just my children) seems to be out for blood--my blood. I slaved away over a hot breakfast for my kids, and they want cereal. I tripped over not one, not two, but three pairs of shoes while trying to clean up spilled milk. I was screamed at, whined at, and even ignored when I politely inquired if everyone had finished their homework from the night before. And then the youngest threw up all over my clean clothes.

It is days like these I find myself fighting everything and everyone. I argue, bribe, ask, demand, yell, and sometimes (gasp!) use choice language.

I believe we all have moments (days?) like this. (Well, you may have a better handle on your language than I, but you know what I mean.) These are the moments when anything said is going to come from us and *not* from God.

After I've lost my mind, I usually have nothing left to give or do. Nothing but be still and quiet. The ESV says, "The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."

Have you been there? Are you there now? Let's not only be silent right now; let's be still. Let's get quiet and physically still, just for a moment. Because maybe in our stillness God will take over that heavy, angry space between us and those we are fighting.

We know we are not fighting against flesh and blood, even though our kids are wrapped in flesh and are acting very "worldly" (Ephesians 6:12). A lot of times, we want and do slice that space with our own words, our own anger, and our own frustration. But we know better.

Because God is fighting for us right now, and He will be victorious. But only if we get out of the way through stillness.

PRAY WITH ME?

Lord, I need You right now. Come invade this thick space of anger and frustration clouded around me. Pour Your peace over me, so I can be still. Quiet my tongue and slow my steps, because You have this. I will never win this battle, but You already have. Jesus, forgive me for my hastiness in the way I've interacted with my family members, and help me to forgive my kids for acting so worldly, for they know not what they do. Jesus, thank you for Your steadfast love and endless mercies. Refresh and renew this day. Give us a new start, so we may walk along with You and glorify Your name. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY NINE

*When I am overwhelmed,
you alone know the way I should turn.*

Psalm 142:3 (NLT)

Most appliances come with an instruction manual. Most events come with preparation. Most jobs come with training. But not this. There are no instructions for the biggest thing we will ever do--parent.

Sure, we can read *What to Expect When You're Expecting* or *Positive Discipline for Teenagers*, but there are zero fool-proof strategies in parenting, because we are dealing with people. There are so many options and decisions for parents to make these days. We're faced every day with big decisions and small decisions, from how to dress our toddlers for church to what college or university we should advise our teenagers to attend. It's overwhelming.

I remember when my children were first placed in my arms at the hospital. After the immediate wave of love and affection crashed over me, I was submerged in a massive wave of responsibility.

I wasn't ready. I knew it. I wasn't ready for what was to come over the next weeks, months, even years. I had read every parenting book, blog, and community forum there was, but I was still overwhelmed.

Most employers offer training prior to sending their employees out into the field. But parenthood only provides on-the-job training. I believe God does this on purpose, because if we were ready for the field before our children arrived, we wouldn't need Him.

He calls us into our calling before we're ready. If we are ready, then we will attribute our success to our own abilities.

It can't be this way if we are to fulfill our purposes in this world, especially in this job position. This job needs a good manager, because it's overwhelming--every stage of it. From their infancy to adulthood, caring, teaching and providing for our children is an immense undertaking.

He knows the way we should turn when overwhelmed--to Him and His Word. He will provide answers, guidance, energy and peace when needed.

So let's turn to Him first, before we turn anywhere else.

PRAY WITH ME?

Jesus, wow, thank you for this promotion into parenthood. It's a huge responsibility, and I quite honestly am not prepared for it. Lord, with these responsibilities I become overwhelmed, so I thank you for your availability as a manager and overseer. You know which direction I should turn when making decisions for and with my kids, and You've provided yourself as counsel in those decisions. Thank You for Your Word as my instruction manual. Lord, You are good, and I thank You for providing Yourself when I am overwhelmed. Help me to remember to always turn to You in not just the overwhelming moments, but even the mundane, regular ones. Lord, thank You. I love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Ashley Abramson & Erin Nausin-- ladies! Your direction and writing/design wisdom rocks my face off! Thank you for turning these words into something readable and pretty!

Jesus, when I felt You tell me to start unpacking scripture through my writing, I laughed-- hard. Because, um, ME? Write about YOU? I'm not nearly smart enough, kind enough, "Christian" enough, anything enough to have anything to do with You. But Your grace is sufficient, even for me. I pray only Your truth is found through these words. Bless those who read them. You know their every need. Thank You for loving us and our kids more than we will ever comprehend on this side of Heaven.

ABOUT

KRISTIN FUNSTON

Kristin is a mom of girls, wife of an athlete, writer of musings, and embracer of mayhem.

Her husband keeps her grounded, her kids keep her humble, and her (five!) pets keep her insane. Her greatest desire is to encourage and lead women in experiencing snippets of Jesus amidst the crazy of everyday life.

Kristin regularly contributes to the Memphis Moms Blog as well as writes for, teaches and leads moms groups through her home church in Memphis, TN. You can also find her reliving the glory days by regularly writing for *American Cheerleader Magazine*.

Kristin would love for you to ~~stalk~~ connect with her at:

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