

Sometimes She Cooks

I'm learning to keep a sense of humor in the face of my foibles.
by Lisa Johnson with Elisa Morgan, M.Div.

Kids are masters at backhanded compliments. Last week my 12-year-old brought home a cookbook he'd made at school. Inside he'd penned a tribute to—whom else?—the blessed saint who brought him into this world: "This book is dedicated to my mom because she gave birth to me, and she buys groceries and keeps me alive ... and sometimes she cooks."

When I was a new bride, my culinary impairment became painfully obvious to my adoring but famished husband. My first shot at mashed potatoes left him waiting patiently for two hours as I cranked up the stove to LOW and attempted to boil three pounds of spuds.

Then there was my maiden voyage into frying bacon. My bewildered husband watched as I poured cooking oil into a frying pan and submerged bacon slices in it. "Babe," he said, displaying more than a hint of trepidation, "I don't think you need grease to cook bacon." Maintaining my dignity, I simply agreed to do it his way from then on.

A few years later, I decided to prepare pies for the elderly members of our congregation. Did my mom's faded recipe card say, "One tablespoon cornstarch," or "One cup cornstarch"? I figured more is better, so in went a heaping cup of cornstarch. Poor Mr. Churchman's dentures never were the same after that chunk of chocolate pie!

When confronted by the distinct smell of burnt something-or-other wafting through our house, my kids no longer yell in alarm, "What's burning?" but rather in anticipation, "What's for dinner?" They claim ours is the only house where you can help yourself to a hefty slice of rice.

I think I've proven my case: Betty Crocker I'm not. There are lots of areas besides cooking in which I'm, shall we say, less-than-gifted. I'm easily distracted, directionally challenged, and have managed to ding, dent, or wreck a good percentage of the vehicles I've driven. One of my grandest achievements was ripping the car door off as I backed out the garage a few years back.

No one does everything with excellence. In fact, there are some things at which I downright stink. It's easy to let my weak points chip away at my self-image. But I'm learning to keep a sense of humor in the face of my foibles and to treat myself with the same kindness God showers on me in the midst of my messes.

The payoff comes not only in bolstering my own self-image, but also that of everyone around me, especially my children. When they see me model a healthy sense of humor about my humanity, I give them permission to do the same. I show them the reality of what King David talks about in Psalm 103:13-14. Try personalizing it as I've done and see if you don't breathe a big sigh of relief at the end: "Like a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on Lisa because she fears him. For he knows how Lisa's made. He remembers that she is dust."

Apparently my ten-year-old, Chandler, shares God's perspective. In a recent school essay entitled "Someone I Admire," he wrote, "My mom knows how to burn ice cream, but she also knows how to be the best mom in the world."

I'll take that backhanded compliment any day!

A Note from Elisa: Dear Mom, We're in the process of becoming like Jesus—but we're not done yet. If we were, we'd be dead! The apostle Paul shows us how to keep the right perspective between the old and the new "us" in Romans 12:3: "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

Yep, we have many areas in our life that are less than lovely. God sees them—and the ones that are somewhat improved—and smiles at our progress. Do we?

Lisa Johnson is a writer, speaker, and recording artist from Southern California. She is the author of [Days of Whine and Noses](#) (Jossey-Bass).

Elisa Morgan is president of MOPS International. Call (800) 929-1287 or go to www.mops.org for information about a MOPS group in your area.

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