

or in line with what X has written.” This second prayer gets at the reasons *why* it was difficult for me to complete the paper rather than just asking it to be done. It forced me into a greater awareness of my heart.

AUTHENTICITY AND WHOLENESS

I conclude with this exhortation toward greater soul care and spiritual awareness because I truly believe that this aspect—the spiritual—is key for the Christian academic mother who desires to pursue scholarly ambition and family life. So much of this work involves managing the fears and anxieties that can hinder our writing *and* our parenting. We can easily succumb to the motherhood, ideal worker, and individualism norms described above and feel stressed, divided, and worn out. Yet I think the beauty of both research and parenting is that both are long-term endeavors requiring patience and endurance. Both are also intensive, “all-in” activities. If we are willing, both the pursuit of scholarly ambition and parenting can compel us to strip the layers covering our hidden selves, revealing the vulnerable parts of our inner world that need God’s light, and thus point to greater intimacy with Jesus. Both, therefore, are apt vehicles for *spiritual formation*. Through my felt conflict between the pursuit of research and being more present with my family, God has formed my heart and challenged my selfhood in ways that I did not expect. Scripture’s counter-narrative to the paradigm of time conflict and competition, I would argue, is the *opposite* of self-division: it is one that, paradoxically, leads to greater self-wholeness through the recognition of our limits, propelling us toward greater dependency on and trust in God. This trust manifests in releasing our research “to-do” lists, plans, and eventual outcomes for the day (and even in the future), as James 4:13-16 so wisely reminds us.⁹ Learning to give our desires and plans—for our professional accomplishments, for our

⁹James 4:13-16 (NLT):

Look here, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.” How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it’s here a little while, then it’s gone. What you ought to say is, “If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.” Otherwise you are boasting about your own plans, and all such boasting is evil. Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.

children's growth and well-being—over to the Lord daily asks us to be present with our inner lives in a way that is at once freeing and terrifying. That kind of authenticity ultimately yields more wholeness.

So instead of time conflict and fracture, of “divvying up love,” which can still *feel* all too true, I submit instead the idea of being honest about our ambitions, desires, and needs—that we want to participate fully in both our intellectual pursuits *and* our children's lives. We begin by acknowledging who we are—scholars and mothers—and we embrace both fully, believing that both identities can coexist in God's spiritual economy. Moreover, we grant that the struggle to realize this coexistence is a special gift for the Christian academic mother, an invitation to question and work out our received narratives and beliefs about our identities as women. As we invite God into the hidden, vulnerable places of our being through our work and parenting, we discover the encompassing love of the Father. We experience his love in a deeper way because we are more honest with him and ourselves, and thus we are transformed by these encounters. Rather than seeing our ambition and our families as mutually exclusive, we can instead see them as both part of our calling to worship God with our whole lives and whole selves, as Colossians 3:17 so aptly encourages us: “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”