

Mrs. Dial asked me if I could describe what helps me maintain a True perspective in the middle of my life's apparent chaos. ☺ It's quite simple: Bible Study, Prayer, and Singing.

I believe that it's absolutely impossible to know true joy in the midst of suffering without consistent time getting to know the Lord more through His Word. I don't read Scripture to learn more doctrine, necessarily – nor to learn more encouraging tidbits, etc... Yes, those things come. But I read Scripture on a regular, consistent basis because *that* is how God has chosen to reveal Himself to us. It's true, my time in Scripture is not quite as structured as it once was. I have more and different demands on my time. But I am absolutely committed to regular study. I like to wake up before my boys and spend time reading, but that doesn't always happen – so some days I grab time during the boys' naps or I make them play together quietly (I give Silas some toys and give Noah books for "reading" time). And if all else fails, I try to read before I go to sleep at night. For a long time now I've used a particular method... I read through a small book (like the small Epistles) or chunks (4-5 chapters) of a large book every day for a month (sometimes it's 5 min. here, 10 min. there, and I've gotten used to interruptions). Mr. DuVall first started me on this in the 10th grade (he was my Bible teacher at Landmark) and it's been my consistently favorite method of Scripture study – I become *intimately* acquainted with each book and I find that the best way to interpret Scripture is to let it interpret itself. I do occasionally take breaks for other studies or just to get through larger portions (like the Pentateuch, for instance), and I regularly try to grab a moment and read a chapter of Psalms (usually read one during nap time). I also always have a Bible with me in my purse so that at a Doctor's appointment (with Silas – this never works with Noah) I can read some while I'm waiting. Is this the intense form of study I would prefer? No...but it's what I can do for now. Yes, there are days here and there when, I'm sad to say, I never "get around to it," but for the most part I'm consistent. David and I also have time with Noah and Silas before bed – we read a Bible story or two, talk about it, and pray through it. And then I try to remind them of it throughout the day and how it applies to them. I often try to point out every day things to the boys and explain what that shows us about the Lord (from His abundant kindness in giving us *two* eyes instead of just *one*, to his provision for the birds when we watch them eat birdseed, to when we get to Heaven our legs will work perfectly and stairs won't be so hard) – this helps both them and me to remember that God's fingerprints are everywhere and He should remain forefront in our thoughts.

My prayer life had honestly never been very strong until I had Noah, and it's only increased since I've had Silas. My prayers used to be so dry...they didn't feel personal. I know life is not about "feelings," but you have to admit that it's hard to be consistent when you feel like you're talking to yourself and attributing it to praying. But when I had Noah, I was so desperate that I had absolutely NO WHERE to turn but Christ, who made him and sustains him. It was an awful feeling to have doctors skirt around giving me definitive answers about Noah – they couldn't give any guarantees about *anything*. But Christ was my strength and comfort then and He has upheld me every day since. I begged and pleaded – not that the Lord would protect Noah from all struggle – but that He would be with him in the midst of it. Because struggles will come; heartache will come; pain will come. We're all going to face it at some point and to some extent. But that doesn't make God any less God – any less good, kind, sovereign, wise... And now there's Silas – never have I cried so hard or so much! So, prayer has become, for me, a continual conversation throughout the day – stolen moments when I pour out my heart. Noah has learned that praying is like breathing – we do it to survive and it's natural to us. I do it out loud all the

time to show him that God is *present* and He cares about even the “trivial.” And I can’t even count the times that I’ve barely made it to my car after a doctor’s appointment before crying, and then have had tears pour down my face the entire drive home as I’m praying, praying, praying... Sometimes, the words are no more than, “Oh God, please help...” I let Him decide what that means! And I always explain to Noah why I’m crying and why I’m praying – “Mommy got some hard news and so she’s sad. So that’s why I need to talk with Jesus about it and ask Him to help us – because the Bible says He cares and He loves us, and so I know He’s listening.” I do, sometimes, have specific time literally on my knees in prayer during the middle of the night, but it’s not consistent. *Praying* as you’re *doing* quickly becomes a habit – and that’s such a good thing! So, when I think of many of you who are also suffering, or when I think of my family that is unsaved, it’s an absolute *given* that they will be folded in to my prayers. While I’m cleaning, cooking, playing with the boys – maybe it’s just one sentence or maybe a long conversation – but it’s prayer to the Lord.

Finally, Singing. I’m a terrible singer. I’m convinced that only my kids think my singing is beautiful (Noah says, “Sing the pretty music.”). The Lord appreciates my singing for its sincerity, but not its beauty! ☺ But I sing with my boys *all the time* – while cooking, cleaning, in the car, in the bath, on the swing set, playing with play-dough, etc... We sing praise songs, hymns, kid’s songs, etc... We sing other things, too (I like Country Music), but our main repertoire is music focused on who God is and how we relate to Him. Some songs are really fun and others are serious and beautiful, and I always take the time to explain what a song means to Noah and why we sing this about God or to Him. Sometimes, when I’m in the car thinking hard and praying and crying, I just start singing while I’m crying because songs have such good and helpful words and they are some of the best reminders of who Christ *really* is – it’s so easy to forget!

Mrs. Dial asked me to share this because she said the updates I send out are helpful – I hope some of this is helpful, too. But please, don’t look to me as a perfect example because the moment you spend more than 10 minutes with me, I’m sure you’re going to start to see some serious flaws shining through! This is simply how I try to keep focused during the messiness of life and sin and bad decisions and pain. And I want you to realize that I don’t always have “good” days...and even my best days are tinged with heaviness. I know that none of us are guaranteed tomorrow, but for our family, I feel like there’s this Monster standing in the room with us at all times – this disease that’s hurting my boys. And so, even when we’re laughing and goofing off (which is often – we’re generally a very goofy household and I’m a crazy dancer), I’m mindful to cherish that moment and tuck it away in my heart for safe keeping because I might need to bring it out again later. And some days are bad – very bad – when I cry off and on almost all day and can’t seem to stop. But, I never, never, *never lose hope* – because I KNOW my Lord; I TRUST my Lord; and I LOVE Him! Noah and Silas don’t always like their medicine or their dinner, cry through physical therapy, and hate being told “no”, but I do those things to them and with them because I love them. My Heavenly Father is the same, and yet He loves me more fully and more perfectly than I could imagine loving my boys. Who am I to doubt that? And since He is who upholds me when I sometimes feel like I can’t possibly put my feet on the floor in the morning and start all over again, I *have* to spend time with Him, study Him, love Him. Like breathing.