

# Ministering to Moms in Hard Places

Deb Douglas  
Lifeway.com

*A Note from Chris Adams: Sometimes God asks us to minister to moms in hard places. Consider what it would be like for you as a mom to be homeless? I can't even imagine the difficulties these women face. Learn some practical ways we can embrace and help women in situations like these as you read today's post by Deb Douglas.*

Sometimes a lesson from the Lord slams into us. Usually, it is one of those lessons we don't want to learn—something that is good for us, but we are resistant to the difficulty of the learning. That happened to me today. I was challenged in how far I would go to accept moms as they are, so I can help them see Jesus.

It started with a hug. The smell of homelessness clung to my clothing. I have worked with the homeless for the last 10 years, but it's a smell that I have never gotten used to. Today, as I began stripping off my scarf and clothes, the smell lingered, and I was slapped with a reality. Ministry doesn't stop when I leave the shelter, or walk away from a homeless mom on the street. It is a lingering ministry, not a 9:00-5:00 kind of ministry. It's not just something we do; it is how we live our lives.

## **First, let's look at some of the needs of a mom currently in a difficult place in her life:**

- **She needs Jesus.** A relationship with Him is her number one need. He will change her life more than we ever could.
- **She needs someone she can trust.** Trust is a rare commodity in the life of a mom in a difficult place. When a trustworthy person comes into her life, she begins to understand how she can trust Jesus.
- **She needs someone who accepts her.** Moms are not bad moms just because they are homeless or going through another difficult experience. They are struggling and need help.
- **She needs a glimpse of what her life could be.** She also needs support to help her get there.
- **She needs a listening ear.** Listening to someone helps her feel valued and loved.
- **She needs practical help.** Moms often need help getting into local programs for long-term changes in their lives. Provide free wifi, temporary shelter, school supplies, school uniforms, kid-friendly snacks and portable foods, transportation to appointments, or help understanding and navigating the legal system. These are simple things to supply that make a big impact!

**So, how do we as leaders prepare to step out and minister to these moms in hard places?**

- **Seek God's guidance.** Ask Him how to minister to the moms in the area.
- **Enlist others to pray.** Share the desire to minister to all moms, no matter their circumstances.
- **Communicate with your pastor.** Share the vision and heart for this ministry. Seek the pastor's approval and wisdom.
- **Invite others to join you.** Begin talking with other women who will serve alongside you in this ministry.
- **Research local ministries and resources available to moms.** The more information accumulated, the more effective the ministry will be.
- **Get started.** Begin reaching out with a heart of compassion and care for moms living in hard places.

Ministry gets messy. When we open our eyes and lives to the world beyond the church doors, we will get dirty at times. But isn't that exactly what Jesus calls us to do?

*“And the King will answer them, ‘I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the **least** of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.’” —Matthew 25:40*

# Ministering to Moms Who Don't Know Christ

*Deb Douglas*  
*Lifeway.com*

Women's ministry. We think Bible studies, big events, projects, and fun times for women building relationships with other women. But that's not all there is to women's ministry. There's another crucial component: evangelism. Yes, we share Christ in all that we do, but are we being intentional about introducing women to Christ?

Just like we have a tendency to think that anyone with gray hair is a Christian, we do the same thing with moms. It is tempting to put characteristics on women just because of their status. The reality is that being a mom does not make one a Christian. How can we as women's ministry leaders reach out to women who don't have a relationship with Christ?

Here are a few ideas for making evangelism a priority in your life and ministry:

- Be intentional. Share the gospel at every opportunity—at events, in Bible studies, over coffee—and then keep sharing!
- Be prayerful.
  - Pray for opportunities to share Christ.
  - Pray for the hearts of moms to be ready to hear about Jesus!
  - Encourage other women to pray for moms who do not know Jesus. When women pray consistently, their eyes will be opened to moms who need Jesus in their lives.
- Be bold.
  - Talk about Jesus. Everywhere you go!
- Approach moms when you encounter them. I noticed moms of preschoolers hanging out at a local restaurant, so I began going on a regular basis in order to chat with the moms about Jesus. It takes boldness to approach a mom we do not know, but her eternity is worth the uncomfortable feeling we may experience.
- Be compassionate.
  - Reach out to moms in need. By meeting the practical needs of moms, trust is built, and Jesus can be shared.
- Reach out to moms around the world. Think about a women's mission trip to reach children and their moms!
- Be present.
  - Take time to listen to moms share their stories. Women love sharing their stories! Opportunities to share Jesus can be heard through listening intently.
- Slow down enough to hear the desperate cries for Jesus all around us!
- Be relational.
  - Build relationships with moms so they can see Jesus in us.

- Equip other women.
  - Teach women how to share Christ.
  - Encourage women to attend evangelism training.
- And simply keep sharing Christ Most women are afraid of sharing—either they feel unqualified or unequipped. By teaching a simple way to share, those fears are removed.

Moms need Jesus. When a mom comes to salvation, her whole family is changed! We can make a difference in the world when we become bold in sharing the gospel with moms. It's time to go and tell!

# Ministering to Moms with Complicated Lives

Deb Douglas  
Lifeway.com

*A Note from Chris Adams: Sometimes we make false assumptions about the moms in our church and community. “Dad can take care of the kids while the mom comes to our Bible study.” If we think this way, these assumptions limit which moms can participate. Dr. Deb Douglas, Director of Biblical Counseling at First Baptist Church, Bossier City, LA offers a look at some of the complicated lives these moms have and gives us some actions steps to take to make sure our mom’s ministry includes all moms!*

Mom, Dad, 2 kids. A picket fence. A dog named Spot. A house with a fireplace. That’s the picture in the past of what a normal family was “suppose” to look like. But normal has faded away and been replaced by complicated families with complicated lives. Some of the complexity is caused by choices, but some of the complexities are a result of a complicated world. For example, next door the family is a mom and dad who are both deployed military personnel, leaving a grandmother and aunt to care for the children. It’s complicated, but it works. There are other examples: The mom with a special needs child facing the unknown. Or the single mom, or the step mom, or the widowed mom, or the mom facing cancer or financial collapse.

How can we describe moms in complicated lives?

- Moms in complicated lives feel isolated from other moms.
- These moms are overwhelmed by life and its complexities.
- Each mom’s situation is unique and different. Feeling like no one’s situation is the same as our own can leave us feeling alone.
- Women like to find their niche—the place they fit in. Moms in complicated situations may feel there is not a niche for them in the church. Maybe they’ve tried other churches and become frustrated by not finding a place to fit in.

Moms in complicated lives need help from the women’s leader, but often the leader is covered up already with needs from moms, singles, and seniors plus their own personal needs. What’s a women’s minister to do?

- **Be inclusive.** When advertising events, consider the wording used, the time of the event, and childcare. Improper wording, lack of childcare, or poor timing can make moms feel as though they are not included.
- **Be careful.** Watch the wording when promoting events or writing articles or blog posts about mothering. Ask someone else to read it before using. Another person’s perspective may prevent misunderstandings.

- **Be intentional.** Personally inviting moms in complicated situations to events or Bible studies is important. This will help them feel included.
- **Be still and listen.** Most moms need a listening ear. Moms in complicated lives are in desperate need of a loving person to listen.
- **Be prayerful.** Recruit prayer warriors to pray for moms with complicated lives. Pray about how to best include moms of all circumstances in the women's ministry.

Complicated lives are the new norm. Learning to minister to moms in complicated lives is a continual process. Keep learning, keep praying, and keep trying!

# Ministering to Moms in Tears

Deb Douglas  
Lifeway.com

*A Note from Chris Adams: Mom tears can be an invitation to minister to moms. But often when we see tears we become paralyzed or do not want to interfere. What if we saw tears as an invitation (even a divine appointment from God) to reach out. Read this post by Dr. Deb Douglas, First Baptist Church, Bossier City, LA to see how we can respond in a positive way to moms who cry.*

Today at an event, I saw moms in 3 stages of motherhood fall into tears at different moments. We were not at a funeral but rather at a happy, celebratory event!

There was the mom of a newborn exhausted from lack of sleep who just wanted one minute of precious rest. The mom of busy, school-age kiddos was fighting a wide range of emotions with no time to contemplate her life circumstances. And then there was the grandmother/mom who was overwhelmed by the conflicting needs of the generations and the busyness of life. As a mom myself, I was feeling responsible for helping all the other moms but was clueless how to do so. All three were in tears, and all three were in need of encouragement.

**What's a women's ministry leader to do? Here are some basics to understand and remember when ministering to a mom in tears:**

- **Tears are healing.** A good cry is healing. God gave us tears, and yes, hormones, for our use as we process life.
- **Recognize when tears are more than tears.** If a mom is exhausted to tears, there is a problem. Is she crying on every occasion she's in public? Does she seem disconnected? Depressed? Be bold, but lovingly suggest she seek medical help. Offer to help her find childcare or go with her.
- **Sometimes a mom needs a hug and a listening ear.** Take time to listen; much of life gets solved over a cup of coffee.
- **Hormones.** It seems these pesky things have a tendency to rage. Knowing the differences between a hormonal good cry and a desperate, heart broken cry is essential to effective ministry. Knowing the women in your church will help in this, but so will the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Pray for discernment.
- **Tears may be an invitation.** Instead of being embarrassed by seeing a mom in tears, see the tears as an opportunity to inquire if help is needed. Stop and pray with the mom. Set up a time to talk more later.
- **Avoid the oversimplification of life.** Giving cliché answers to life's difficult situations and challenges harms rather than heals. In fact, it is insulting. Seek out resources such as free counseling for real help.

- **Be realistic.** As women's ministry leaders, we cannot stop all the tears or heal all the hurts, but we know Who can! Praying with moms in tears is the best and most effective help we can give.

Being a mom is hard. Tears will always be a part of motherhood. As women's ministry leaders, we need to see the tears as a point of intervention. Whether we are sharing in tears of joy or rescuing a mom on the brink of being overwhelmed, we need to be preparing in prayer to minister to moms. Praying for discernment in how to intervene and for comforting words to soothe a hurting mom's heart are daily essentials for any women's ministry leader.

So, pack some tissues and get out there and minister to moms in tears!

# **Ministering to Teenage Mothers**

Justbetweenus.org

MOPS International is not only meeting the needs of moms of preschoolers, but has launched out to include teenage girls who find themselves trying to fill the role of “mom” while they are still growing up themselves.

There are just under 100 Teen MOPS groups in the U.S. and Canada that provide a faith-based, supportive, nonjudgmental environment where teen moms can come together for support and encouragement. In Teen MOPS, the teaching, activities, and friendships are all focused on the needs of teenagers. Teen MOPS helps teen moms become more self-sufficient, confident, mature, giving, and self aware young women.

Teen MOPS groups can meet in public schools or community centers, as well as in churches, and often meet twice a month for teaching and/or activities. All meetings encourage young mothers to voice their frustrations, fears, and joys while knowing that their children are well taken care of in the MOPPETS program.

The ministry offers biblically-based teaching by women past their teen years who can share insights on motherhood, childrearing, relationships, and other topics of interest to teen moms. There are also discussion groups in an open and caring atmosphere, a craft time, leadership training and development, and an opportunity to build friendships both with other teen moms and MOPS mentors. The MOPPETS program for the children focuses on Christian love and teaching. Starting a Teen MOPS ministry can offer life-altering benefits to young mothers as you help them stay in school, become better moms, develop leadership skills, choose healthy relationships, and develop positive support and influence.

If you would like to find out how you can start a Teen MOPS ministry in your church or community, contact MOPS International by calling 303-733-5353 or emailing [info@MOPS.org](mailto:info@MOPS.org).

## A new way of ministering to stay-at-home moms



Caryn Rivadeneira05/27/12

When a friend posted a Slate article titled “Why Are Stay-At-Home Mothers More Depressed?”, another friend simply commented: “Captain Obvious.”

Indeed, it was to me too. Those of us who’ve been stay-at-home moms or spent any time around stay-at-home moms don’t need a Gallup study to tell us why a woman who spends day after day after day after week after week after week with no one but demanding - if darling - children could get depressed.

Indeed, the study found that 28 percent of at-home moms reported feelings of depression, compared with 17 percent of working moms (which incidentally is the same rate of depression among working women without children). Beyond the depression, Slate reports: “Stay-at-home moms fare worse than these two groups by every emotional measure in the survey, reporting more anger, sadness, stress and worry. They were more likely to describe themselves as struggling and suffering and less likely to see themselves as ‘thriving.’”

Again, all seemed likely - Captain Obvious - to me.

I’m looking right at you, Church.

However, what wasn’t Captain Obvious were the *real* reasons why at-home moms felt so blue. I would’ve guessed it was the isolation, the repetitive - often vacuous - days and the stagnation that drives many at-home moms to despair. While those play a role, according to the Gallup survey, it’s mostly the “financial cost.”

“Economics are at the heart of why mothers without jobs are particularly blue,” according to Slate.

Ah, yes. The money. As my friend Jennifer says, “Money can’t buy you love, but it sure can alleviate stress.”

So what do we do with all this information? Well, the Slate article says we need more laws to protect part-time employee status so that at-home moms have more opportunity to work and get the much-needed money, as well as mental stimulation.

I'd like take a different approach - look another place besides government. Of course, I'm looking right at you, Church.

While most people within and without churches imagine we are doing a great a job ministering to the needs of at-home mothers, this study should give us pause. Because while perhaps mom ministries help moms feel less isolated, if isolation isn't *really* the big factor in making moms blue, we ought to rethink our strategy.

While certainly we can continue to offer gathering places for moms to tuck babies into nurseries for two hours to hear speakers (like myself!), to munch on brunch foods, to lament all things potty training and discipline, what if we also ministered to these women by offering a place where moms could actually live out their gifts - in ways that even brought in a buck or two?

What if churches led the way on creating opportunities for at-home moms to find freelance, work-from-home or part-time jobs by assessing (or simply asking about) gifts and abilities, by creating directories, by encouraging fellow Christians to tap into the amazing work potential of the at-home mom?

Back in my early days of motherhood, a call from a former colleague asking if I could help his company with freelance editing and writing saved my sanity in many ways. While clinical depression is not a spiritual issue or something that can be bought off with money, certainly lesser grades of depression or the blues can be kept at bay by reducing stress and by feeling valued.

We Christians do a good job of giving lip-service to the value of the at-home mom and of motherhood in general, but maybe it's time we focus on giving it some monetary value as well.

### **What Do You Think?**

- Is it obvious to you that stay-at-home moms would be more likely to report feelings of depression?
- In your experience, what might be the reasons for these Gallup results?
- What ways might churches help improve the emotional health of stay-at-home moms?

[thinkchristian.reframemedia.com](http://thinkchristian.reframemedia.com)