

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." – 2 Corinthians 5:20

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The Spiritual Disciplines of Motherhood and Being in Limbo

It's hard to know where to start, as our hearts are so heavy that we are still unable to return to Romania. Our teammates were able to return in January because they've resided in country long enough to have residency visas, and we rejoice with them!! But every picture, every reminder of Romania, every Romanian word we speak, every day that we creep closer to April 1 (the day we were supposed to go back in 2020) ... all of it makes us sad. We long to be back in Romania, and yet for reasons we don't understand, the Lord continues to keep us in Georgia.

A highlight for me right now is my continued participation in the Romanian Women's Bible Study. When I began substitute-teaching on Mondays, the group voted on their own to change the day of our Bible Study to Thursdays so that I could still participate. That uplifted my spirit so much, as I was so blessed to feel wanted by these women I have grown to love. And I am so grateful to God that He has blessed me with such miraculously close relationships with these women since - all in all - we were only in Romania for 20 months total, and have now been Stateside for 18 months and counting. We've been doing a video series study on Deborah, but as is common with a group of young mothers, undoubtedly our conversations move toward how to be a God-

honoring mother. And what a difficult challenge this is for all of us!

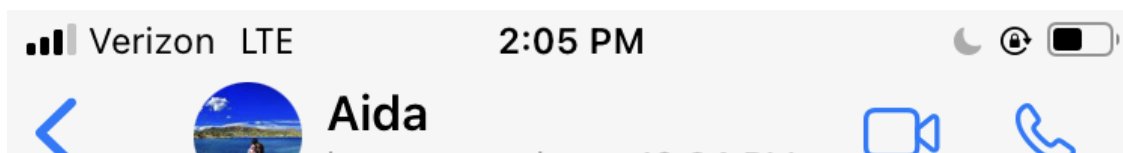
The newest mother of the group had her first baby in November, a son named Aaron. She was expressing how difficult new motherhood is, and how scary it can be when none of us knows what we are doing, but mostly how she feels like a failure as a Christian. Before the birth, she had a thriving morning quiet time, prepared well for our weekly Bible Study, participated in different elements of the church service, and was growing as a women's leader in our church. And literally overnight, she has become a bleary-eyed mother, full of hormones, wondering how to care for Aaron during his first ear infection during a pandemic, finding very little time to sit with God in His Word, fighting the temptation to not attend Bible Study because she wasn't able to prepare well, forgetting to pray about things, and experiencing new challenges with her new family. But more than anything, she fears that she is going to lose all the spiritual growth she's worked to cultivate over the last few years.

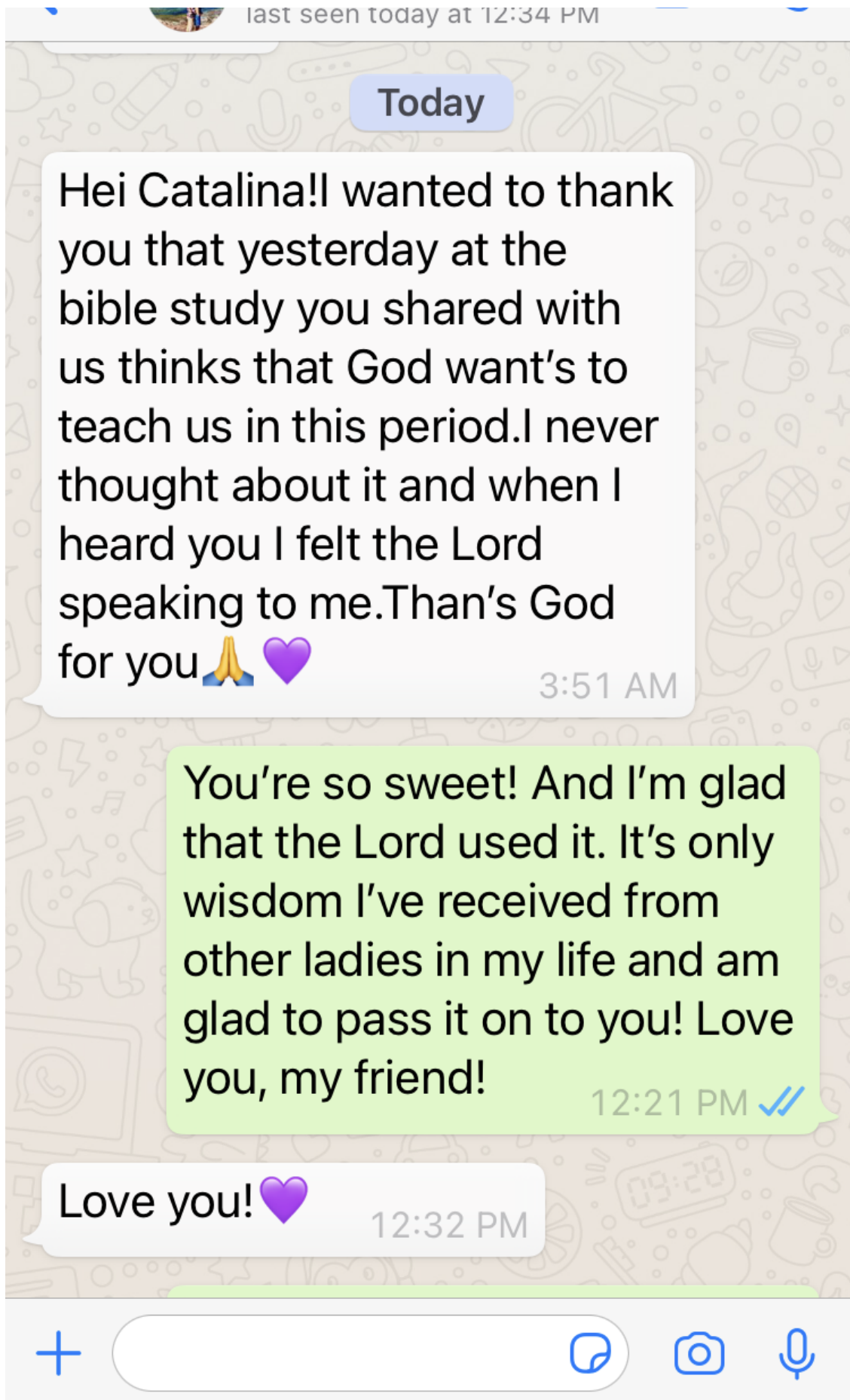
I asked her, "Aida, it's true that you aren't 'disciplined' right now to get up early for a long morning Bible Study or prayer time. But do you think God is teaching you any new spiritual disciplines right now?" So we brainstormed.

The discipline of silence and isolation as she's awake in the middle of the night with Aaron. The discipline of praying immediately when someone tells you a prayer request because you may not have time or remember later. The discipline of finding new modes of worship, like music and short Psalms throughout the day to sustain you. The discipline of putting your own desires aside completely to sustain another life. The discipline of coming back to the Lord again and again throughout the day instead of just one long time in the morning. The discipline of trusting the Lord and His faithfulness to sustain you through each new day and each new trial. The discipline of laying your whole self down for another person. The discipline of recognizing Christ as The Bread of Life and The Living Water, because we too often have to experience spiritual hunger and drought to be even more appreciative of the times you can feast and drink.

These are the spiritual disciplines of motherhood.

The next morning, I received this sweet text message.





I was so grateful for the reminder of how kind and faithful the Lord has continued to be to me in helping me develop deep relationships with my friends in Romania, even when we are unable to be physically present. But even moreso, when I got the text, and felt this gratitude, it's like I heard all my own words come back to me for my own situation. Not only about motherhood, but about this period of waiting.

We are battling so many feelings of discouragement, disappointment, exhaustion, and instability right now. While we fully trust that the Lord is good and in control of our story, and will ultimately bring about His good purposes in our lives, it is easy to question things right now. Maybe it's not new motherhood, but it is certainly new territory for us. We're afraid of losing ground with our work in Romania, losing our language skills. We're not sure what to do or how to handle these new situations when we have to make decisions and there is no clear, easy answer. We don't know how to help our kids maneuver these paths of uncertainty. Throw in the fact that our sixteen-month-old still wakes up at least twice a night, and we've got an exhausted recipe for both physical and spiritual challenges. It feels like we're lacking direction and purpose; as if the calling God has put on our lives and the spiritual growth we experienced in Romania are waning.

But I have to say to myself, "Catalina, it's true that the things I'm used to are very different right now. But do I think God is teaching me any new spiritual truths that I can use not only in my own personal walk with Christ, but also to be a better mother, a better wife, and a better missionary?" So let me brainstorm.

I'm learning to walk in faith and wait on the Lord to slowly unravel the jumbled future for me. I'm learning that I struggle to be content and joyful in all my circumstances, and I need to repent and ask the Lord to help me in this area. I'm learning what it feels like to not have *Home* and how that makes me long even more for Heaven. I'm learning that I can trust Him to provide for us. I'm having to learn that my tendencies to plan far in advance are not always in God's plans. I'm learning to deal with uncertainty. And I'm learning that even in the midst of all of this, I can still encourage others in their walk with Christ - both people here and in Romania.

The spiritual disciplines of being in limbo.

*The story and text message are used with Aida's permission.

PRAISE AND PRAYER:

- We praise the Lord that He allowed our teammates, Derek and Shannon Ebbers, to return to Romania with their family. They have residency visas because they've lived there for fourteen years, allowing them to get back. This has been a big encouragement to our church members in Romania, and under the Ebbers' leadership, they have once again started the Sunday Social group with the young couples in the church. Please continue to pray for the church in Codlea!

- Please pray for us as we fight discouragement and decision-making. We have a number of opportunities we're pursuing while Stateside and look forward to telling you more about these decisions soon!





Life in the States Update:

We've had a lot going on in the last few months, including COVID-19 and finding a new place to live, both of which took up a significant part of our time and energy. We've got a lot to share with you about what life looks like for us and will look like in the following months, so stay tuned for a VIDEO NEWSLETTER soon!



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

1/8/2021 - Means and Ends: Purposing (podcast) by Derek

1/14/2021 - Means and Ends: Concomitancy (podcast) by Derek

2/17/2021 - The Undeserving (article) by Derek

Continuing - [Podcast Series](#) by Derek

Check us out on Facebook! We post on Catalina's ["From Dacula to Transylvania"](#) album or our ["2019-2020 HMA"](#) album so that you can stay up to date with us. You

can also follow [our photos on instagram](#) or check out our [video archive](#). But best, of all, you should let us know if you want to join our secret Facebook Group to get more updates!

Support Account Reminders:

- If you're interested in one-time giving and would rather support projects, we have a project account for the Romanian church which goes towards things like the youth program, elder trainings, etc. The account is **#94978** for the Romania church plant.



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