

He may not change your circumstances, but He can change your heart when you bow before Him in praise.

Our God loves you unconditionally in the major and minor details of your life. Our God cares for you in all circumstances.



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# Blizzard Blessings

by Alicia Bruxvoort

In the midst of your troubles and discontent, look toward the One who cares for you in all circumstances.

I went walking in a blizzard tonight. I'll admit the weather conditions were not ideal for a leisurely stroll, but the wind was an effective muffler of my cries as I shuffled around the neighborhood and provoked curious stares from within the few vehicles brave enough to skate along the icy streets.

My sensible husband had not asked questions when, clad in snow boots, I'd met him at the door and placed our crying infant in his arms. If he had wondered why our toddler was still in her princess pajamas at 6 p.m. or why our 5-year-old had finger paint all through her hair, he kept his inquiries to himself. Wisely, he did not demand explanations when he noticed that our son was playing video games instead of practicing piano, and he kindly refrained from commenting on the missing aroma of a hot cooked meal. He gave me a quick hug instead and said with convincing sincerity, "Have a good walk."

The whole outing sounds rather ridiculous now that my youngsters are tucked into bed and I am settled into my favorite chair. But the truth is, four brief hours ago the white-out conditions outside my home were more attractive than the chaos that reigned within. Perhaps playing the role of sibling referee during our surprise April snow day had drained my normally positive outlook on motherhood. Or maybe the 13th game of Candy Land combined with the baby's colicky cries finally put me over the edge.

Alibis aside, I left the house without a second thought and grumbled to God with every crunchy step. "Why is being a mom so hard? And why do You feel so far away

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when I'm pacing the floor all night with a fitful baby?" Icy snowflakes slapped my cheeks, but their Creator remained still. Undaunted, I continued, "Did You have to make my children so different from one another? Maybe they would stop fighting if they could find some common ground. Don't you want my family to live in *harmony*? After all, Your Son is the Prince of Peace. (Oh, and speaking of *peace*, I could use some of that – peace and quiet, to be specific. I haven't even gone to the bathroom alone in years.)"

No voice boomed from Heaven.

"Does God *really* care?" I wondered as I slipped along the sidewalk. "Does the Creator of Eternity truly have time for a discouraged mom traipsing through the snow in affluent America?" Pictures from evening newscasts reeled through my mind: starving babies, violated children, war-

torn families. Surely my cries seem minuscule to the One whose eyes roam the earth.

I hadn't expected a response to my ponderings, but as I turned the corner, I stumbled on an unlikely sight. Beneath the icy branches of a tall oak tree, a solitary robin stood, two feet planted firmly in the snow. Its bold orange belly looked oddly out of place on nature's white canvas, but stranger still was the sound of the little bird's singing. The steady chorus of muffled chirps sifted past my disgruntled soul like a whisper from my Maker.

*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Jesus had asked his closest friend one day as he tried to explain God's great love. Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father... Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31). Yes, I care,* God seemed to say as I watched the tiny bird. *I care about robins misplaced in the snow. I care about babies crying in the night. I care about moms wearied and discouraged. I care about YOU.*

The sky was growing dark as I turned to leave, but when I glanced back I noticed the robin's posture. Perhaps he was imagining green treetops or listening to the unusual symphony that howled through the bare branches above. For whatever reason, in the midst of the blowing snow and raging wind, the little bird tilted his head towards the sky and offered me one final message: *Look up!*

With renewed hope, I peeled my eyes off my own discouraged heart and looked heavenward. Then, inspired by the small feathered messenger, I attempted my own song of praise. I thanked God for the promise of spring and the hope of new life hovering just below the dormant landscape. I thanked Him for robins in the snow and the unlikely work He was doing in my heart. Finally, as I approached the house that I had fled in frustration a mere hour before, I thanked the Lord for the four noisy children and one incredibly patient husband who waited beneath my roof.

The dynamics of my home seemed unchanged as I snuck in through the back door. The baby was still screaming, supper was still unmade, and the muffled mayhem of the television still cluttered the air. But the cries of my heart were quiet. So before I pulled off my snowy boots, I turned heavenward once more and offered a final gift of praise. "Thank you, Lord, for blizzards." Because sometimes it takes a white-out to help a clouded heart see clearly!

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*A freelance writer and speaker, Alicia Bruxvoort is the mother of four young children and the wife of one wise and wonderful husband. While blizzard walking is not her favorite pastime, roaming through God's word and sharing it with others tops her list of favorite things to do.*