


# Lessons from a Retired Potter:

*Learning to Let God Shape My Children*

by Alicia Bruxvoort

It wasn't just the break-neck pace of my son's life I wanted to change; it was the drive that went with it. Already at the tender age of three, Lukas was fiercely competitive and determined to always be the victor. He viewed any task as an opportunity to prove himself better. Getting dressed in the morning, eating meals, even brushing his teeth had become minor Olympic events at our house. He saw life as a series of wins or losses and delighted in rehearsing aloud his own record of triumphs.

"Is he always this way?" my sister had asked skeptically one Christmas as she watched my son knock his cousins down in a frenzy to reach the dinner table first. I hadn't thought much about Lukas's aggressive personality until then. Having grown up in a family of females, I had assumed that my son's competitive edge was merely a "boy thing," not unlike his fascination with bugs and his magnetic attraction to mud puddles. However, as I studied other little boys



Raising a child is a wonderful and overwhelming task all wrapped into one. Have we asked God to help us raise our children without asking what He wanted us to raise them into? Take a look at one mother's revelation regarding her son's temperament and God's plan for him.

"Did you have to make him so ACTIVE, Lord?" I asked with a sigh as I watched my small son bolt around the back yard in the twilight. I loved the zest Lukas had for life, but as post-supper exhaustion surfaced and the pile of dishes loomed tall, I wished I hadn't promised to play one more game of soccer before bedtime.

"Mom!" his impatient voice called, "Are you coming?"

"Yes, buddy. I'll be there in a minute," I replied as I psyched myself up for another round of major competition.

who did not replicate Lukas's drive, I began to realize that my firstborn's need for speed was not gender-based; rather, it was an intricate part of who God had created him to be.

As Lukas grew older and his personality emboldened, I often caught myself groaning, "Lord, I don't understand him!" I felt confounded by my firstborn's temperament and secretly wished that God had made my son a little more like me. Then one day, God responded to my complaints.

The morning had been a draining one; I felt more like a referee than a mother. By noon, Lukas's competitive edge had reduced his younger sister to tears. "I'm NOT RACING!" she had insisted as Lukas attempted to turn our simple meal into a peanut-butter-sandwich-eating relay. At the end of the day, I collapsed on the couch and convinced myself that God had given me the wrong child. "Lord, can't you change him?" I pleaded as I listed my son's annoying character traits.

God's response jumped off of the pages of my Bible. "... Do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands? It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it..." (Isaiah 45:11-12a NIV). Suddenly I wanted to bury my head in shame. I had been telling the Potter how to shape his own clay (Isaiah 64:8 NIV). From the moment God had breathed life into my fast-footed son, He had known the purpose for which Lukas was created. With a humble heart, I begged God to forgive me for trying to do His job, and asked Him to show me how to delight in my son's design.

The next time I stood at the window and watched Lukas racing the neighborhood boys across the yard, I felt God prompting me to pray that those "fast feet" would chase hard after Him.

It was a simple prayer, but a profound turning point for me. It marked the beginning of my teaming with the Lord to help Lukas live out God's plan for him, not mine. As wise mother and author Jean Fleming states in her book, "A Mother's Heart:" "The goal of parenting is not for us to decide what we want our children to become and then ruthlessly train, squeeze, badger, and cajole them into that mold. Instead, we must recognize that God has already designed them ... Our job is to see our children as God does and to involve ourselves in God's plans for them."

Applying Fleming's advice has taken time. But with God's help, I have quit asking the Potter to change my son's design and have begun praying that those very qualities that confound me will be used for kingdom purposes. I pray that Lukas's stubborn determination will one day lead him to relentlessly pursue the lost, that his appetite for victory will enable him to stand firm in spiritual battles, and that his fast paced feet will empower him to one day "run with perseverance the race..." that God has planned (Hebrews 12:1 NIV).

There are still times when I wish I could leisurely stroll around the neighborhood with my son rather than racing to the end of the block, still moments when I long to play a game of catch without keeping score. But more often than not, I smile at the "jar of clay" that is beating me in backyard soccer, and I look forward to the day when the treasure of God's work shines clearly through a fast-footed man chasing hard after the Lord. 🙏

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A former educator and mother of three, Alicia Bruxvoort is known to pen love letters to her children. A firm believer in Proverbs 25:11, Alicia uses her passion for writing and teaching to encourage women to live life abundantly. Alicia resides in Pella, Iowa.

## Four ways to let your children be themselves:

1. Acknowledge that your child was created for God's glory (Isaiah 43:7). Ask God to show Himself through your child.
2. Rejoice in the unique plans God has for your child (Jeremiah 1:5). Ask God to help you partner wisely with Him (James 1:5) and to keep you from standing in the way of your child's God-ordained destiny.
3. Ask God to help you identify your child's unique strengths. Find ways to foster the development of those gifts and encourage your child to use them in service to the Lord (Romans 12:6).
4. Pray for the ability to see your child through God's eyes (1 Samuel 16:7). Praise Him for what you see!

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