



changing the 'To-do' list?



Military wife, mother, solicitor on maternity leave, cleaner, cook, taxi driver, homework assistant. So many job titles. So why do I sometimes feel as though I'm disappearing? *writes Katie Kyle.*

My husband is currently away and my daughter said to me on our drive to church last week (we were only 15 minutes late, an improvement on the previous week): 'We could stay at home so you could do more of your lovely chores.' I questioned why she described them as 'lovely.' 'Because you love them,' she replied.

Out of the mouth of babes... And yet I don't love these 'lovely chores', I don't even like most of them! But I've managed to give my eight year old the impression that they're as important to me as going to church, up there with worshipping my heavenly father. How have I done this? Perhaps because they are.

Lately, I've found myself shrinking as my 'To-do' list grows. Sometimes it feels as if I'm performing a vanishing act in the daily circus that has become my, whereby I juggle the school run with a visit from Carillion, Brownie pick-up with a baby who wanted to go to bed an hour earlier, weaning by poolside when the older two are having their swimming lessons.

This may sound like a female complaint but I wonder if the men feel it too? Perhaps they're the homemaker and they share my feelings. Or maybe they go

out to work and struggle in other ways. There's no time for a lunch break, let alone train for the marathon they signed up for, they haven't the capacity to deal with their inbox, let alone the Freeview box which the kids destroyed on Saturday morning when the adults were trying to have a lie in.

If you're anything like me, you also have a 'To-do' list. In many ways, it's a sensible thing to have. I'm never going to remember the school trip forms or the children's annual visit to the opticians if I don't. The problems creep in if our lives are shaped by our list, if we get our comfort and assurance from ticking things off. My thinking sometimes goes like this: I can't control where my husband is posted or how long we'll live in this quarter but if I focus on my list, then I can be in control and it soothes my bigger anxieties. I fill my time with my 'lovely chores' and any space for God is squeezed out.

The other problem with this task-orientated approach to life is that it can become depressing. If we're always doing jobs, we'll become weary. Even the enjoyable jobs will become just another thing to get through. Am I the only mum who missed out on the full enjoyment of watching her babies learn to feed themselves because I worried about the mess? Am I the only mum who reads the bedtime story at 100mph so I can go downstairs and get the next load of washing on?

So how do we give God His rightful place in our lives? How do we resist the temptation to chat to Him only once the jobs are done? I certainly don't have all the answers but here are a few thoughts. I heard of a vicar who opens his curtains

every morning and asks God 'Will you come back today?' Our chores probably aren't going to disappear but we can change our perspective on them. I imagine we'd strike a few things off the list if we viewed it from a more heavenly perspective and find more time for Him. Another way to allow God a place in our daily routine is to change our view of our jobs. How many mums say 'I'm just a housewife?', 'I just do a bit of cleaning,' 'I just sell stuff from home.' These aren't 'just' jobs. They're jobs God has given us to do. He loves to see us mothering our children, He loves to see us being enterprising with our business ideas. If we remember that God has given us these roles, we can spend time with Him as we do them, not see Him as someone else to deal with at the end of the working day.

And it can help to remind ourselves of our identity in Him. This is a great antidote if we've lost some of our self esteem to the daily grind. My mum was once nervous about going to a party full of 'important' people. Her friend asked her: 'Why? You're the daughter of a king.' Jobs are important but they're not where our true value lies.

I once went to a Christian Ladies Conference where we were given a T-shirt bearing the words: 'Princess, Warrior, Daughter'. It could just as easily have said 'Prince, Warrior, Son.' That's what God thinks of us. If you're depressed by the dirty clothes climbing out of the laundry bin or your disappointing annual appraisal, remember that you're the child of a King and the King delights in you.