



# MOYA CHRONICLES

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## LIFE IN LOCKDOWN: A MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

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### INTRODUCTION

We are living in unprecedented times. In the United Kingdom from where I write, we are in our third lockdown since the pandemic broke out. With working from home and home-schooling, life has changed for everyone — mums, more so. As physical contact with others became restricted, our main way of contacting people (for socialisation, work and for our kids' schools) quickly shifted to our screens. Novel and exciting as it was initially, it is now becoming tiring. If like me, you home-school toddlers, chances are you would have noticed that we just seem to help them do their tasks as quickly as possible without even letting them savour the process. My home-schooling mantra has been to “get in, get it done and get out.” Working from home is not much different; sitting by a computer screen from 9am to 5pm can feel more exhausting than if we had commuted to work and back. But really, why are we tired? Could it be that we are paying attention to the acquired noise all around us? We should not be trapped by a seeming need to do much more such that we fail to pay attention to the most important group of people who need us — our family. If we cannot give ourselves to them, then what is the point of trying to reach out to others out there on the other end of our screens?

In my ongoing journey through the Bible in a year, I have been especially fascinated by Rebekah's story — how it presents some splendid life lessons that might be useful to mums in this *new normal* we all face. Here are some of the lessons I gleaned from Rebekah's life:

### 1. Tune out the noise (Genesis 24:16).

In Genesis 24, Rebekah's above-and-beyond gesture in giving Eliezer and his camels a drink is often spotlighted in sermons. However, we tend to miss the fact that she was minding her own business. Her task was to go get water and that was all she did. She wasn't distracted by the sight of a man with 10 camels. She drew water and returned to go before being side-lined by Abraham's servant (v. 17). Let's take a cue from her and maintain focus and directed energy. If your task in the morning is to work on some emails, simply do this and nothing else. You don't have to respond to the WhatsApp chats popping out from your phone or take the private number call. Unless there is an Eliezer knocking on your door to ask for water, focus and tune out the noise. Let a Twitter tweet all it wants; you don't have to be in the know about everything. Besides, the messages will be there waiting for you when you are done.

### 2. Choose your distractions (Genesis 24:19-20).

Notice again that Rebekah chose to respond to Eliezer's request; she did not seek him asking if she could help. This is not to say we shouldn't help others, but rather that we should choose whatever will ‘distract’ us from our plan for the day, if any. Rebekah also chose to feed the camels — which was no small task. She chose her distraction — her detour — and it paid well for her. So, choose your detours; control your narrative. Don't join a church meeting on Facebook just because you were aimlessly scrolling through your feed. For the sake of our mental health, this pandemic requires some sort of stillness as each day goes by — a stillness that makes



you appreciate the enormous opportunity you have to make each day count for you and for your loved ones. It is a directed stillness that makes you aware of the rain falling outside your window or the wow on your child's face after explaining a difficult concept to him/her. It is a stillness that makes you appreciate God more for the little joys we experience daily. With this, our tiredness will reduce and we will become expectant. We will laugh more, smile more and tease ourselves more. More so, we will forgive more.

### 3. Be aware (Genesis 24:24-25).

Rebekah was aware of the things going on in her house. When Eliezer asked if they had a room for him, she responded without having to make consultations. I would have thought that piece of information would have eluded her because she was *just a girl*. But no, she was not going about being the *daughter of the house*; she pulled up her sleeves and contributed. As they say, familiarity breeds contempt — and assumption. When we have been with people for some time, we stop asking how they are and simply assume they are fine because they look fine. Let us use this opportunity of being locked down to be more aware of our partners, our children, our parents and even our pets. Ask how they are doing and listen to them. Hold back your quick-fix responses and let them just talk while you chuckle and *oh* and *ah* at the appropriate times. Let people be themselves with you. There is a tendency to want to overachieve and over-utilise the resources available, but a day is still 24 hours only. It is not how much you squeezed in but how much you've loved that will count. Let this season be less about us and more about the people we live with, the church member on a Zoom call, the neighbour next door, the child tugging at your skirt, etc. Be creative and find ways to be together in ease.

### 4. Inquire of God (Genesis 25:22)

According to Barna's report on *Church Pulse Weekly*, most pastors now feel overwhelmed by the pandemic and many of them are questioning their chosen profession. We sometimes feel that it is our pastor's duty to help us and our children understand God and answer our questions about life. No, it is *our* responsibility — not even our partner's — ours! It is solely on us to ask God about anything. When Rebecca's pregnancy troubled her, she went to inquire of God, not Isaac. As such, everything she did afterwards flowed from that conversation she had with God (which, I believe, made her choose Jacob over Esau). If she had gone to a priest/pastor through whom this knowledge was revealed, she would have been tempted to keep going back whenever she is confused. Our pastors are humans and have their own troubles, so let us help them focus on their pastoral duties without having to burn out. First, inquire of God about a troubling matter. If unclear, then share with your partner or your

mentor or your parents as the case may be. If still unclear, then you may share with your pastor. By the time you get to this stage, you would have gained some perspective into the issue and possibly make it easier for your pastor to process. Basically, you have the same access your pastor has to God, so use it. Stop using them . . . unnecessarily. Moreover, stand by the truth you receive from God in spite of what others may think. When Jacob hesitated about lying to his father, Rebekah was ready to take the curse. Such strong conviction! Such an indomitable stance! Such courage! All these from the words she heard from God years ago.

### CONCLUSION

Life-threatening mental health issues are on the rise because of the disruption that COVID-19 has brought to our rhythms. Many people feel like nobody understands them, so they internalise the confusion, the pain, the hurts, and the silliness, even. Let us not add to that statistic. The disruption is real; face it. Don't be an ostrich who buries her head in the sand hoping for the storm to pass away; be an antelope who raises its head as the sound of danger to calculate its best move. Own up to your mistakes as Rebekah did. Stand by your truth. No filters. No dressed-up space. Be real. If you are for God, be for God without apologies. Take a stance in God and stand by it. May the God of all wisdom keep us all in Christ Jesus. Amen.



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