

Don't Forget the Chocolate Chips!

*Becoming the Individual
God Created You to Be*

By
Laurie Grisbach

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DEDICATION

To my incredible mom, Joan Barnes, who has always encouraged me to be the woman that God created me to be. Through difficult times and wonderful times, you have always demonstrated warmth, hospitality and grace to those the Lord entrusted in your care. It is a blessing to have you as a role model in my life. I love you Mommy!

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INTRODUCTION

I have found that I enjoy reading books and listening to sermons about subjects that either affect me directly or encompass things that I truly enjoy. As I prepared to write this book, I could not help but be drawn to the fact that most people I've met seem to love chocolate chip cookies as much as I do!

There's just something about chocolate chip cookies that brings back pleasant memories. I remember being a little girl standing in the kitchen with Mom and going through the steps on the chocolate morsel package. Every time mom would turn away for any reason, I would help myself to some of the cookie dough. I am sure she knew what was going on, but never seemed upset by it. After all, it was a big part of the experience of making cookies!

Then there was the smell of the baking cookies that permeated the entire house. How incredible that smell was! How soothing and reassuring. It smelled the way a home was supposed to smell. I am quite certain that if *love* had a smell, it would be that of chocolate chip cookies baking in the oven.

Despite the fun of making the dough, the thrill of sampling it without getting caught, and the unrelenting aroma of the baking cookies, it was the anticipation of taking the first bite of cookie, fresh from the oven, that was really the ultimate experience. The last 30 seconds remaining on the clock felt as if my mom accidentally set the timer on *eternity* instead of on 8 - 12 minutes. Then, in a moment's notice, the timer would ring and there was a rush to pull the tray from the oven before the chewy cookies became too crunchy.

It just didn't seem fair. After waiting so patiently for the timer to ring, I now had to wait another 30 seconds before I could even remove the fully-baked, ready-for-my- consumption cookies from the tray and place them on a wire rack for yet another few minutes before I could partake of this incredible creation.

When I was just about ready to give up hope, I would become overwhelmed at God's graciousness as He allowed one of the cookies to break into pieces while being transported from the tray to the wire rack. Of course, I felt it was my duty to remove this pitiful

little cookie from the tray promptly so that it wouldn't ruin the lovely display!

It is amazing what joy the taste of a warm chocolate chip cookie can bring to an individual of any age. The sensation of the smooth, melted chocolate chips on your tongue, with just the slightest aftertaste of butter is simply an experience like no other.

I believe the joy that I receive when making chocolate chip cookies is much like the joy that God receives when he makes each one of us. He determines what we will be like in His sight, gives each of us all of the ingredients to become the perfect creation, waits with anticipation, and delights when we turn out exactly as He had planned.

The desire of my heart is to become the perfect individual that God has created me to be. Is it yours? Then let's make some cookies!

1.

Preparation

The recipe we will be using for our chocolate chip cookies is from life's ultimate cookbook, the Bible. The Master Creator of such other great things as the universe, human life, night and day, and one of my personal favorites, redemption was the inspiration of this recipe.

Before we get started, it is important to make sure that we have all of the necessary ingredients.

Checking out your spiritual pantry

Have you ever been in the middle of preparing a wonderful meal for your family and you can't find one of the critical ingredients to complete the recipe? It can be so frustrating, especially when you know you saw that item in the pantry earlier in the day. Before we go running out to the store, we need to take a

moment to determine whether the ingredient is in fact, missing.

Genesis 1:27:

And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Since God created us in His image, it would seem a sure bet that He created us with everything necessary to be what He wants us to be. His Word provides us with further reassurance that we have all of the required ingredients in our pantry.

Philippians 4:19:

And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

So as we continue through this journey of becoming the unique individual that God wants us to be, we can already be certain that all of our ingredients are provided for us. Now all we have to do is figure out where they are! Just as most of us

tend to have cluttered pantries or at least junk drawers in our earthly kitchens, so our lives need a thorough cleaning every once in a while. It may very well be that we are going to need to clear out all of the expired goods so we can find the ingredients needed.

What are the expired goods in your life's pantry? Are you holding on to resentment for a wrongful deed someone once did to you? Are you bitter toward those who call themselves Christians because you were whipped too many times by the Bible belt? Has something happened in your past that caused you to question whether a loving God actually exists? I need to tell you that you will never be able to find your required ingredients unless you can throw away these expired goods and allow yourself to live each day anew.

Ephesians 4:31-32:

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

My expired goods are:

I know that it is easier to instruct you to get rid of your expired goods than it is for you to do it. There have been many times in my life when I have had to forgive others out of an act of obedience to God rather than from a willing spirit. The good news is that God will honor that! He knows it is not our nature to forgive others with ease; after all, we are sinners by our very nature and it is through Christ that we become able to do things beyond our human capacity.

Perhaps you have taken a moment to search your pantry and you have not been able to find any expired goods. Wonderful! Now you can move on to purging your pantry of all the clutter. You do have

some clutter in your pantry... don't you? It may be that bag of shredded coconut you opened last Christmas and just can't seem to throw away because you may need it someday. How about that can of exotic vegetables that looked interesting while you were in the store and for the life of you, you can't remember what you were thinking?

We all have some degree of clutter in our spiritual pantries. What are the items cluttering your pantry? Do you spend every available moment between school and dinner running the kids from one event to another? Are you the backbone of your church and always leading a committee? Do you have a professional career and find yourself rushing home to work the second shift as wife and mother? While some of these activities are important pieces of who you are, too much of any given scenario can sabotage your ability to be the woman that God has in mind for you to be.

In Revelation 2:4, Christ speaks to the church at Ephesus about His concern that they had left their first love. It is so easy for the clutter in our lives to trap us to the point where we inadvertently *leave our first*

love. I cannot begin to count the number of times I have seen wonderful servants in the church spend numerous hours planning one fellowship event after another, yet they never seemed to have any time to spend telling a friend or acquaintance about the love and sacrifice of Christ. It is possible for us to be so caught up in our church lives that we forget to live for Christ.

Since God is a God of order, it is important that we organize the remaining items in our pantries.

Matthew 6:33:

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you

1 Corinthians 11:3:

But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

The clutter in my pantry is:

If your “pantry” is not in the order God would like, please say this prayer with me.

Heavenly Father, You are so gracious and loving. You are the Creator of all things and I praise You for who You are. Lord, I ask that You help me to clear out my spiritual pantry of all the expired items that I have allowed to prevent me from becoming the person that I know You want me to be. Please give me a spirit of forgiveness towards those who have hurt me in the past. Heal my wounded heart so that I may better love those whom I have been unable to love. Father, please give me the discernment I need to clear the clutter

out of my life. Help me to seek You first in worship and in praise. Grant me a submissive heart to yield to Your guidance. Lord, I pray for the strength and energy to provide a loving home, centered in You, so that my family and friends may come to know You and develop hearts of service toward You.

***I love You Father, and give You all praise.
Amen.***

2.

The Basics

All chocolate chip cookies consist of variations of the same basic ingredients. Each recipe contains flour, baking soda and/or baking powder, white and brown sugars, egg, butter/shortening, and chocolate chips. While the ingredients used to create the dough are consistent from one recipe to the next, there are hundreds of variations in the amounts of the ingredients and little extras you can add to form truly unique cookies. In her article entitled “Best Tips for Baking Cookies”, Sarah Phillips observed that altering the primary ingredients or the baking temperatures will change the cookies’ look and texture.

How true this is for us as Christians! God created all of us with essentially the same ingredients; however, our textures and looks become altered by the temperature of the heat we have endured as well

as the varying amount of each ingredient that we possess.

Preparing the cookie sheet

The softness of the dough when placed on the cookie sheet will directly affect the ability of cookie dough to hold its shape when placed in the heat of an oven. Cookie recipes recommend that you place the dough on a *prepared* cookie sheet. We need to pay attention to this recommendation and its rationale. Have you ever baked a batch of cookies that looked as if they turned out beautifully just to find you couldn't get them off the cookie sheet without them crumbling or falling apart? It is very likely that you forgot to prepare the cookie sheet.

If we are unprepared to go into the purifying heat, we too, will very likely crumble when removed. There are times when we just need to sit for a while before we are adequately prepared to take the heat from the trials that lay ahead of us. If you are properly prepared, God will not allow you to crumble under fire!

Have you ever attended a new church and were so excited to be there that you jumped right into