

## Mommy Wars: Judging and Feeling Judged in a Diverse Body

Joey Michele Elliff

Within a few hours of airing on YouTube, a Similac commercial called “Mother ‘Hood” went viral. In it, groups from several different mommy sub-cultures show up at a playground—nursing moms, bottle-feeding moms, businesswomen-moms, even baby-wearing-yoga moms. Battle lines are drawn immediately and insults fly.



Eventually, just as the fight promises to become physical, the camera focuses on a stroller that has been forgotten in the fray. As the moms realize that the baby is rolling downhill unattended, they drop their fighting and sprint to save her. She is returned to her grateful mommy and everyone shakes hands in a newfound unity as the words “No matter what our beliefs, we are parents first” scrolls across the screen.

This picture strikes a chord deep within the heart of every woman, whether a mom or not. In the church that Christ has redeemed, differences abound. Schooling, diet, parenting, clothing—it’s incredible that we are able to get along at all! In an atmosphere of such diversity, how can we live with love, without judging one another or feeling judged?

### ***A New Identity***

When we become Christians, we become a New Humanity. Our identity changes. Before, we were defined by our interests, careers, cultures. Now, we are defined by Christ, the one who is “all and in all.” In the following passage from Colossians, Paul paints a picture of this New Humanity (the word “self” actually means “man” or “human”). Note that Paul makes several allusions to Genesis 1. In Christ, we can become what God always intended for humans to be: a unified, multi-ethnic body characterized by mercy, love and forgiveness.

*“... seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” (Col. 3:9-11)*

### ***What to Do When We Feel Judged***

If we can train our minds to embrace this new identity, the battle is halfway won. Here are a few practical ways to fight for unity as sisters.

- *Give the benefit of the doubt.* “Love bears all things, believes all things.” (1 Cor. 13:7) When you assume that your sister is judging you for eating that cookie or using worksheets in homeschooling, you are doing to her the very thing you fear she is doing to you! Believe the best about others, not the worst. Most of the time, your sister is not judging you; she’s simply different than you.

- *Find your worth in God’s love, not in others’ opinions (or perceived opinions) of you.* Unfounded insecurity paralyzes both you and the Body. Look to Scripture alone to define what God expects of you and how he views you. Be open to change if necessary. Otherwise, be confident in the decisions the Spirit has helped you and your family to make.

### ***How to Avoid Judging Others***

- *Accept your sister as Christ has accepted you.* First of all, she may have good reasons for her choices, or simply different preferences. Even if your opinions are quite strong about an issue, you still need to accept her, with all of her differences. Do we really want every member of God’s New Humanity to be exactly the same? And if she truly does need to change, tell her directly in love; don’t hint or tease.

- *Temper your passions for things other than Christ.* Interests are good and God-given, but guard yourself from giving them an undue place in your heart and speech. If you are always talking about how your new diet has changed your life, others may feel insecure around you.

- *Affirm others, especially when you know they might feel judged.* Once recently, an older sister was at my house and sensed I was flustered about the mess my toddlers had made. She put a hand on my shoulder, looked into my eyes and gently said two words: “No pressure.” The acceptance she communicated in that small gesture has reaped long-term benefits in our relationship.

“No matter what our differences, we are a Body first.” Let *that* be our motto. If we commit to find our identity as a Body in Christ, put away our insecurities, and accept one another in love, we can show a watching world a very surprising and beautiful picture of diverse women bound together by the love of Jesus.