

Strengthening Families Across The World

ABOVE RUBIES

www.aboverubies.org

Issue: Eighty-Two



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I turned my Marriage Around!
Managing the Budget
An Overflowing Land
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Nancy celebrating her 70th birthday.

Welcome to our home. I hope you enjoy driving down our driveway in summer.

I am listening to the drone of the roto-tiller coming from the Johnson property. It has been going for days and is still droning on! It is planting time and everyone is busy. My garden is planted. Evangeline's garden is mostly planted, but they are opening up more and more land. Zadok (18 years) tills up more land every day as he prepares to plant for market gardening. Even Rashida (15 years) is roto-tilling as she prepares ground for her soil to plant and sell her flowers. The children are all involved in their businesses. Arrow (10 years) has an organic seedling business. He makes good money selling them. I have purchased all my plants from him and he gets rich while I go bankrupt! It's a creative time of the year. Did you know that we will plant gardens and vineyards in the millennium? (Isaiah 65:21) Perhaps it is a good idea to get some practice now!

Serene forgot her weight training as she "worked out" in her garden instead, using all her energy digging new soil from "concrete like" earth! But now she is leaving her hard work and going up country. She turned her energy from digging to suddenly packing up her whole house. Her husband, who has a contract with the military in Kuwait, is now back in USA and she and the children are moving to be with him. It will be the first time she has moved from the family since she was married 14 years ago! I don't know how we are going to survive without them all.

It's amazing to see the grandchildren all growing up so quickly. Meadow, Pearl's oldest daughter has just turned 16 years. Gaby (20 years) is in Brisbane, Australia studying and serving in a church. Our

oldest granddaughter (now 24 years), is planning to be married in spring next year. All the younger ones are growing up—34 of them. Colin and I like to say of our grandchildren, "Thirty-four and hoping for more!" Each one of them is delightful. Life is never dull as they all take on different interests in the different seasons.

Now that it is summer, JoJo and Oliver are into competition swimming again. Some of the boys are seriously into chess and play chess competition every weekend. And you can see by the pictures *Rocklyn and Monique with their chess playing sons and their cousins. Children from l. to r. The Barrett boys, Rocklyn (11), Bowen (12) and Noble (9) and the Campbell boys, Joshua (10), Harry (6) and Max (4). They bring home trophies every weekend. This was taken at the Tennessee State Championships where they tied 2nd place with the top school in Nashville. Even 6-year-old Harry holds his own or often beats teenagers! Three cheers for Campbell Homeschool!*



Meadow Barrett on her 16th birthday. Photograph taken by Mercy. Mercy, Meadow and Rashida love to do photo shoots together.

that fishing is a passion at the moment.

Serene and Pearl have completed their book, *Trim Healthy Mama* but we are still working on proof-reading, photographs and finer details. If you are on the *Above Rubies* Facebook or receive the *Above Rubies* emails you will hear the news when it is ready.

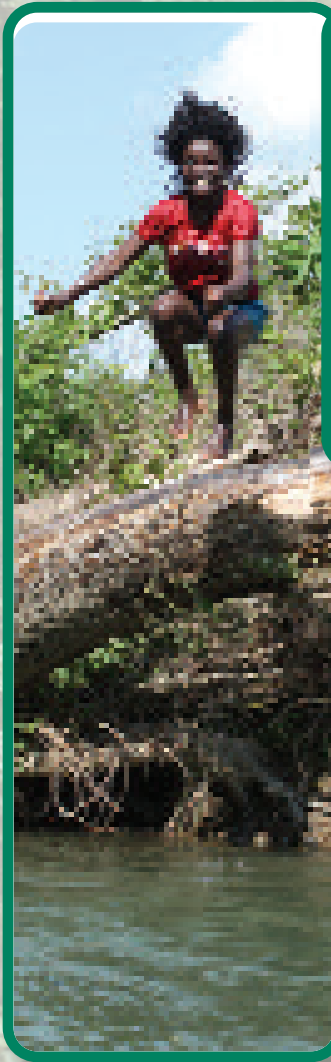
Many have been blessed by *How to Encourage your Husband* and I am now working on *How to Encourage your Children*. I had hoped to have it completed but it is not quite ready. Once again, watch out for the news on *Above Rubies* Facebook or receive the *Above Rubies* email devotions and mini email *Above Rubies* by sending a blank email to subscribers-on@aboverubies.org. I am also hoping to complete 100 Days of Blessing, Volume 2 by the next issue of *Above Rubies*. Pray for miraculous availability of time!

I know you will be blessed by the *Above Rubies* Facebook. It doesn't have to be a time-waster. Come in each morning to be stimulated for the day and then sign off and get on with your great calling of training your children and building a nation! Michelle (the director of *Above Rubies* in Canada) or I, or both of us, post a message to encourage you and strengthen you for the day. Sometimes they are comforting and sometimes challenging. Here are a few posts for you to enjoy now:

What is our attitude toward children? Even though we love our children we can often be irritated by them. Jesus said, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me" (Luke 9:48). Isn't it amazing that God says the attitude we have towards children is the attitude we have toward Him? And I wonder what God thinks when we don't want to receive His children! Nancy

The shortest chapter of life is the childhood chapter. The adult chapter can typically last at least five times longer! Savor every second you have to watch your child move through this extra-special time! Childhood is the shortest season. Michelle

Is there rejoicing in your home today? When God is in the midst there is rejoicing. When God removes His presence, "joy withers away from the sons of men" (Joel 1:12). But perhaps you are feeling depressed and don't feel any joy. Please don't rely on your feelings—they come and go and are very



Mercy's first big catch!

Meadow did a little better! >

*< Summer fun at the creek—
Cherish (11) going for a big jump!*



*But the boys know how to reel them in—
Rocklyn Barrett (11) with Oliver Campbell (7)
who caught this largemouth bass!*

deceiving. Begin praising the Lord for who He is, for His salvation, His blessings, your husband and family and joy will soon return. Nancy

Michelle Jesus said, "I am among you as the one who serves" (Luke 22:27). If this was the testimony of Jesus, the Creator of the world, how much more should it be our testimony? It's easy to take on the attitude of "being a slave around the place" isn't it? But to serve is the spirit of Jesus. If we want to be like Jesus, it will be our delight to serve our husband and those in our home. Nancy

control? Pick a discipline issue, and begin an overhaul! May the Lord multiply your efforts as you trust in Him for victory! Michelle

"For the ear tests words, as the palate tastes food" (Job 34:3). Our taste determines what we eat. We spit out nasty foods! In the same way we do not have to accept every thought that comes into our head. The devil tries to pull us down and immobilize us by putting negative thoughts in our mind—deceiving, doubting, discouraging and despairing thoughts! Don't accept them. Spit them out! Nancy Isn't it strange how opposite our culture is to

I love watching a woman prepare meals for her family! It is a beautiful thing to prepare food! When you peel, chop and cut for your family, it is the furthest thing from drudgery! It is love in action, full of beauty and emotion!

Wherever you are at today, start there! Does your marriage need a boost? Plan a romantic evening! Do some habits need changing? Pick one and begin to conquer it! Does your home need some work? Start with one closet, or one room! Is a child out of

Grandsons carrying bales of straw for me to make my compost bin. Each new season I make a square with bales of straw in which to put all my compost. The next season I use the straw on the garden.



ABOVE RUBIES

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Above Rubies is a magazine to encourage women in their high calling as wives, mothers and homemakers. Its purpose is to uphold and strengthen family life and to raise the standard of God's truth in the nation. The name has been chosen from Proverbs 31.10 AMP, "A capable, intelligent and virtuous woman, who is he who can find her? She is far more precious than jewels and her value is far ABOVE RUBIES or pearls."

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FRONT COVER: Meadow Barrett, 16 years.
BACK COVER: This picture was not staged. It was the immediate reaction of Emma and Kordell Gremier as they beheld their baby brother, Rhet, for the first time. (Morden, MB, Canada).

Would I do it again?



At 77 years, I look back over my life—a life of one child after another for 25 years.

How did it all start? God placed the vision in my heart when I was a young girl sitting in church. God said to Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Later I was inspired by the old movie, *Cheaper by the Dozen*—a happy family doing fun things together like learning French off the bathroom wall-paper and playing baseball in the back yard.

Joe and I talked about how many children we wanted before we were married. Joe said, “Four is a good number. How about you?” “I’d like twelve,” I answered. He told me later that his dream of fishing and summer vacations went out the window, but He could see the wisdom of God’s Word.

In our early years of marriage we learned to communicate and establish ground rules such as not spending any large amounts without agreement. One day Joe told me how he liked the way our neighbor kept her house clean. I got it. I soon learned how to keep order and beauty in our home, not so easy in a 27 foot trailer!

Fifteen months later Bonnie came. At two and a half years old she fell and broke her arm and hip center. The doctor was worried about the high white blood count and suggested she might have cancer. I was thoroughly shaken. He said she would need two years of a full-body cast but it turned out to be a vaccination given that morning that caused the high white count. Two and a half months of scooting around on a car dolly brought total healing. Today, Bonnie, after seven c-section births, is our prayer warrior.

Next came Cindy, our lively creative one who crayoned all the walls, until I cried out to the Lord, “Should I spank her more, or what?” Today, all her eight children play the violin and piano, ministering in many churches.

I learned how not to interfere between father and son with our first boy, Tom. He told me, himself, as a teenager, “Mom, this is

between Dad and me.” Humbling, but I quit trying to help and disappeared when they got into an argument.

Bill was an answer to prayer, as I didn’t want Tom surrounded by four girls.

Colleen was born five minutes after we raced to the hospital from the outdoor theater when my water broke. I remember telling the very nervous nurse, “Don’t be afraid, it’s going to be alright.”

Now I was exhausted. With six babies in six years I needed a break. We decided to do the rhythm system which meant very little intimacy as I hadn’t had a period since Terry’s birth. Our commitment to “fill the earth” still held but we had a break of two years until our next baby was born.

God had been keeping up with us, providing for His babies, like the cabin on the lake that was a haven from business and people. What a joy those three years were! We never missed a weekend of swimming, building the cabin, cooking our one-potters outside on the fire, and fishing. Colleen took her first steps in her playpen straddling a sand point that juttred into the lake.

Julie was in a hurry to come out. She came three weeks early. In our rush to the hospital we made it as far as Nicollet Ave in downtown Minneapolis when I said to Joe, “Pull over, the baby is coming.” A police car was parked on the corner with a policeman who had delivered seven babies. Joe was more nervous than me. He did a combination of undress me (the hardest), get the policeman, direct traffic, tell a bystander that all was fine, and watch his little girl born. It’s not so bad to be carted to a waiting ambulance on a sunny day at noon in May with a new baby. We were giving our testimony twelve years later at a Full Gospel Businessmen’s meeting in Virginia when a young man came up saying, “I was that policeman!”

Somewhere along here I was tempted to get a job to help Joe with finances but God sent a message from *Dear Abby* in the newspaper, telling women not to compete with their husbands to earn a living. I heard. Joe had been promoted to management, which meant a move and we chose Appleton, Wisconsin, near to our families. How wonderful to be in a new home with eight bedrooms (Joe added the last three), a family room and a dishwasher!

We moved into our new house expecting our eighth child, Peggy. I was mad at the doctor who wanted to tie my tubes on delivery. He couldn’t understand why I wanted my babies.

Fifteen months after Peggy, Wendy showed

up at 1:00 in the morning—another mad dash to the hospital. This time, Joe pulled over and delivered the baby himself. What a glorious event! God’s presence was with us. Joe leaned over and gave me a sweet kiss—a very special birth.

This move was also a step deeper into unknown territory with new temptations. There were parties and bridge games. The pull between the world and family became stronger until we had to choose. We chose to stop having babies. We fell for the lie that the world was over-populated. But God was faithful. We accidentally got pregnant with baby Joe. We were happy at his coming but God took him home in crib-death at two and a half months old. This was the hardest thing that ever happened to us and the beginning of a turnaround in our lives, a turn to God and away from the world. Our immediate reaction to Joey’s death was to recommit ourselves to having His children and a deep desire to know more of God.

Mary and John were born in the next four years, a blessed healing from the loss of Joey. However, the stress of child-raising and housekeeping was once again taking its toll and I was plagued with the question, “Where does the source of life come from?” I asked Joe time and again but he didn’t have an answer. Eventually my answer came at a new prayer meeting in town where we experienced the peace of God and the answer to my question—Christ was the source of life! Two months later those dear people prayed us into the Kingdom of God and our lives really changed from a life of self-centeredness of which we were unaware.

I had mothered the first ten children in my own strength. I sorely needed to continue to mother our children, but with less of me and more of Him. With the inflowing of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we did a 180 turnaround. The children followed along and we all entered this new life together—a life of love, service, morn-

ing prayer, home school, Joe birthing the next four babies at home, starting a home fellowship that still goes on today, leaving his job to be a full-time-father at the call of the Lord, trusting the Lord for finances and making his needs known to no one for the rest of his life. Life quickly became less of us and the world and more of Jesus, leading us down a whole new path of peace, love and joy.

I have 16 children and currently 79 great and grandchildren. Was it all worth it? Yes! Every cry, every diaper, every sleep lost, every evening-out missed and every tear. I would do it all over again. What did I miss? Nothing. What did I gain? Everything—an exciting and fulfilled life, very interesting people who love me and a happy and peaceful home that is always filled with laughter.

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the example Christ set? He said "Let the children come to me" and yet our society continually looks for ways to get the children out of our way. Set the tone by enjoying every child that crosses your path today and in this way you will also be following Christ's example. Michelle

Do you feel you are poor? Can't pay the bills! Your house is too small! You are in the very situation to make many people rich (2 Corinthians 6:10). You can make your husband rich by making your home a sanctuary of love, joy and contentment. You make your children rich by showing how to have a joyful attitude even in trials. You make them rich as you daily impart God's Word richly into their lives (Colossians 3:16). Nancy

Do you feel "victimized" in an area of your life today? Are you battling self-pity? Christ had every reason to wallow in self-pity as He was the ultimate victim! Yet he never behaved as a victim and He continued to pour Himself out for His family! With Him as our strength, no matter what we face, we can do the same! Michelle

Keep up the great work of raising your family. Never forget that you are doing the most important work in the nation.

NANCY CAMPBELL
Editress, Above Rubies

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A Pinched Nerve *Saved* my Marriage

I was almost eight months along in my fourth pregnancy when, out of the blue, I pinched my sciatica. I was unable to move and hobbled along with my three children (all under the age of five) trailing after me. My husband either worked or played golf. After suffering through unbearable pain for two days, I decided to call a chiropractor and get an adjustment.

After seeing the chiropractor, the relief from pain wasn't lessened. I was crippled and still had six more weeks of pregnancy! To make matters worse, I had gone to the chiropractor without my husband's blessing, and he was terribly angry. I couldn't see why he would want me to suffer and he couldn't understand why I didn't realize that nothing could really be done until the baby was born. He felt I had wasted money on a problem that wouldn't go away until the birth.

Holding on to my anger, he and I began our typical argument. For once, I held myself together, but he went absolutely crazy! We argued for two days straight. He spent the next day hiding out on the golf course and in the bar. I cried my eyes out on a rocking chair while my daughters took care of me by making pictures, praying for me, changing their baby brother's diapers, and even getting food ready. If I needed to get up, I would use a pair of crutches. I kept my 17 month old in an umbrella stroller most of the time.

Finally, I chased my husband down at the country club and demanded him to come home. It felt like the end of our marriage. He was more concerned with golf, his poker buddies, and storytelling at the bar while I was concerned with making it through a day without crying. I wanted to have a godly marriage and family, but it was crashing down before my eyes!

The next day was Sunday. I made it to



Brett and Kath with their blessings—Emma (6), Meg (4), Jack (2) and Luke (11 months).

church, on crutches, with the children in tow and the rain pouring down buckets. I was sobbing uncontrollably and asked for prayer. I was so angry at

Brett and in so much pain. How could he treat me like this? All I ever did was good for him? I gave him backrubs, wrote him encouraging notes, made sure the house was tidy, and a hot meal ready on the table. In my eyes, I was perfect and he was the failure in our marriage.

After that Sunday prayer, God began working in my heart. He asked me, "Kath, if Brett never changes, can you still obey him, submit to him, and show him love?" What God wanted me to do was obey His Word, without any strings attached. In the past, I had pretended to be a submissive wife. I would put on the show, but my heart was cold. I was doing the "good wife" thing just so that Brett would change! Now it was different; I was going to commit to obeying God's Word even if I never saw Brett change.

It's funny how quickly God works once we obey with a cheerful and willing heart. Reading the Scriptures, praying over my marriage, asking for forgiveness, and reading through two very powerful books on marriage, I started to see a change in my heart attitude. Was Brett perfect? No! Was

I? Not on your life! Still suffering incredibly from my pinched sciatica, I did as little as possible in my home, but what was going on in my home was more than I could ask for.

I started asking Brett about his golf outings, and rather than feign interest, I actually was interested. Instead of going out and getting a massage for my aching back, I asked his permission first to spend money on that luxury. "Of course," he said. Soon, he was calling me on his way home from work to pick up items that we might need. On Saturdays he would take the children with him grocery shopping. At the end of the day, he would clean up the kitchen and take up the laundry baskets. He saw my needs and served me.

On July 10, 2010 our fourth baby, Luke, was born. God gave me relief from the pinched nerve four days before he was born. Brett took off two weeks from work to serve our family and enjoy time together. Before my very eyes, a miracle in our marriage took place. Once I decided to get off my high horse, admit that I was prideful about my wifely duties, and obey God's Word with a pure heart, God did a good work in both of us. Rather than look at my husband with disdain and disrespect, I now look at him with awe and reverence!

I encourage all wives to ask themselves if they are tearing down their marriages under the guise of spirituality. I was. Instead, thank Him for the man He gave you. No matter how poorly you think he is treating you. If you submit to your husband with a quiet and gentle heart, God can do a good work for you, for your husband, and for your children.

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The Prosperity of the Nation!

"Neither woman nor the nation can afford to have home demoralized or in any way deteriorated by the loss of her presence, or the lessening of her influence there. As a nation we rise or fall as the character of our homes, presided over by woman, rises or falls; and the best gauge of our best prosperity is to be found in the measure by which these homes find multiplication in the land."

~ Dr. J. G. Holland

God sees the whole picture of life. He sees the beginning and the future all at the same time. God's picture is about generations. He sees my great-grandparents, my grandparents and my parents. He knew who my husband would be and He knew who my two blessings would be. I am blessed beyond measure with my two children.

Yet, despite these blessings, there are days I experience overwhelming sadness. I grieve the children I refused to have. You

He give parents the responsibility over their children? Didn't He need me to make HIM important to them?

With these questions, I learned an important lesson. It is through my husband and me that God's great truths are passed on to our children from generation to generation. God has created parents with a wonderful task to teach His ways to our children. God sees the **WHOLE PICTURE**. His truths started with Adam and have come all the way to my husband and

to stop parents from passing on God's truth to their children. He is working hard to crush the Godly seed and the ways of God.

Although my husband and I lost a lot of time, there is still time to pour into the two He has given us. Every minute is valuable. I now see how the Lord loves generations, how He loves children and how He wants us to have many. It is through our many that more come to know Him. With more children, there are more arrows to

I see a New Picture!

see, I was a religious feminist and believed I was meant to use my skills to fulfill my dreams. So, my husband and I stopped ourselves from having more children. We did not see God's picture; we only saw our picture. We were not focused on the generations to come. We were only focused on our own hopes and dreams, the here and now.

I also believed I could have it all. I believed I could have the great husband, the perfect family (one boy and one girl), a job, a perfectly decorated home, energy to workout, beautiful clothes, cultural toys, friends, the role of an amazing mom, AND children who loved the Lord. For quite a few years, I believed and followed this humanistic dream. I went off to work and used my so-called "gifts," leaving my children in the care and teaching of others. The picture looked good, but I started to ask myself, "At what cost?"

In all of this, my children picked up that "my perfect picture" was worth maintaining. Each time I stepped out the door to go to my "work," I showed my children that my gifts were more important than they were. Mommy needed to be important to someone else. My children picked up that job, house, "toys" and appearance were more important than my walk with the Lord. They learned that spending time with the Lord was secondary to my lifestyle.

The result of my lifestyle was children who did not desire the Lord and my husband and I did not have their "hearts." They were being swayed by the culture around them. I thought, didn't God make me important to them? Didn't

me—many, many generations. If we stop passing them on, they STOP. I have come to see that this is a grave and wonderful reality. If others had not carried His truths, somewhere along the way throughout those 6,000 years, my husband and I would not know HIM.

I now see beyond myself. Praise the Lord, He did not leave me to my selfishness. I see more of the picture now. I see that it is through me that my children come to know about GOD. It is through me that my grandchildren will come to know about Him too, for if I do not teach my children, who will teach my grandchildren? Who will teach my great-grandchildren?

It takes a lifetime to pass on Christian values and the ways of the Lord. It takes GREAT time and GREAT purpose. It takes me dedicating my whole life to this purpose. The ways of the Lord are not passed on easily. The Lord needs me home with my children and he needs me living my life right beside them. He needs me helping them when they mess up on their addition facts. He needs me showing them how to love their siblings and to speak kindly to others. He needs me teaching them how to obey mommy and daddy and how to love their neighbor. He needs me teaching them that children are a blessing. He needs me teaching them to love Him and that His ways are TRUE, RIGHT, PURE, and UPRIGHT. It takes great energy and time each day with God to keep teaching, keep training and keep alert so that my children catch the vision and imbibe God's truths.

Everywhere I turn, I see Satan trying



Tom and Kristi with Katie (13) and Timothy (10).

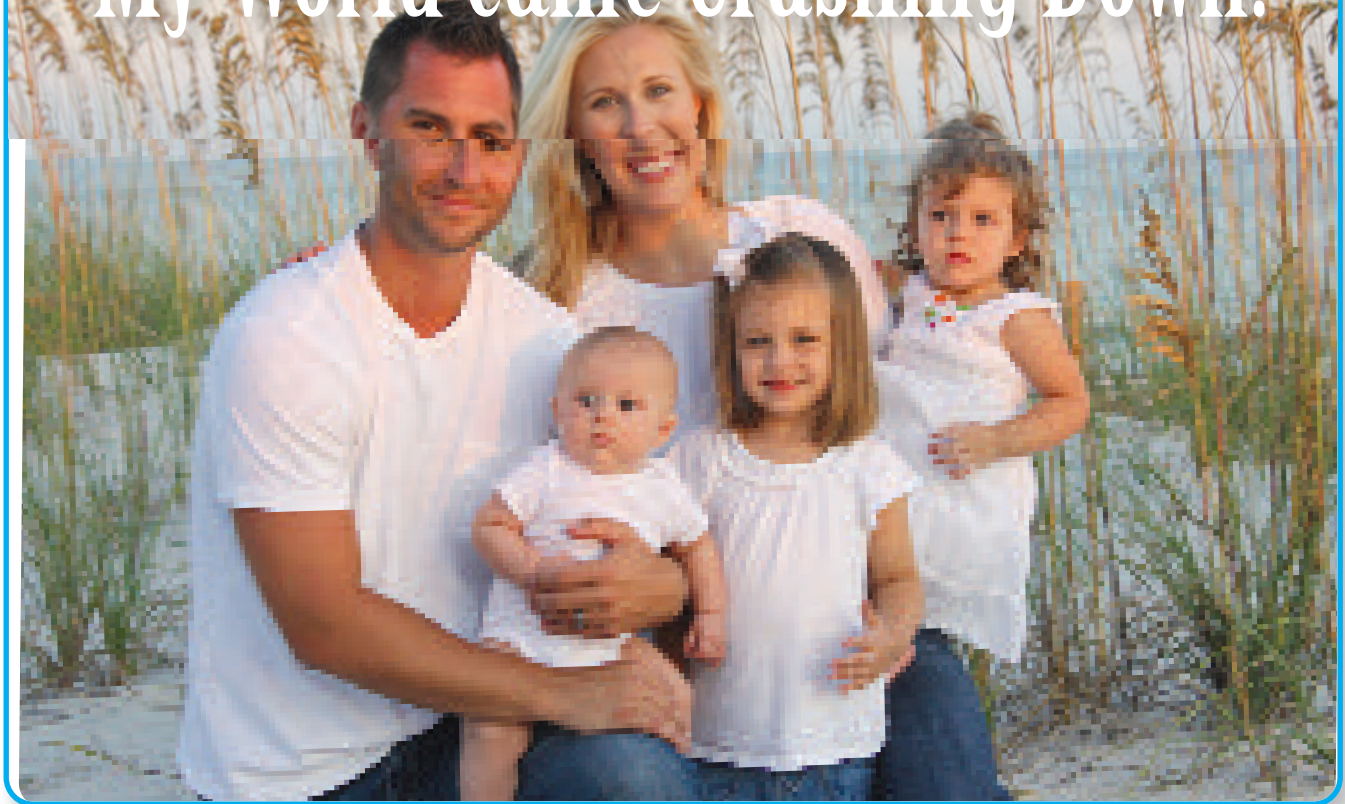
fight the war and to defeat the enemy.

Psalm 127:3-5 ESV says, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate." This passage came alive to me one day. God does not say my skills, my home or my friends are my heritage. He says that my children are a heritage from the Lord.

Now, my focus is on motherhood and being a wife that "does her husband good" (Proverbs 31:12). I see He still wants my husband and me to be "fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 9:7). This command has never changed. Therefore, the next part of this picture includes working to grow our family through adoption. Now we understand that "children are a heritage from the Lord," we desire to have more children. We see God's bigger picture. We see that life does not stop with us. It keeps going. Right now it will continue with our two and maybe someday with more, but we will pass His ways on to the next generation.

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My World came Crashing Down!



Brent and Lori with their blessings, Johannah (5), Kaki (3) and Haven (2).

My sweet husband and I, both believers, were married while in college. Being married so young, we struggled to find mentors as all our friends were single. After graduation, and by our second year of marriage, we were making excuses such as once we find the right church, the right job or the right house, then things will feel right. We were honestly just two young adults who were playing house. We knew things were not healthy but didn't want to admit to others we were struggling.

An opportunity for both of us to work our way up the job ladder caused us to make unwise choices and we began to disconnect. Bitterness, anger, resentment, hurt, disappointment and emptiness came in and then all communication stopped. I was looking forward to an argument but it never came. I always expected there would be a process and counseling before divorce, but one day when I walked into my home and saw my husband with his bags packed, my world came crashing down.

Followers of Christ, some of them strangers, gave of their time. They prayed for us on their knees. I totally surrendered

to Christ, even to the point that my marriage might never be healed (which was frightening), but I knew this would be the greatest and most challenging journey I had ever faced so far with the Lord.

At first I cringed at the thought of appearing like a groveling mess, begging my husband to return home. But after days of reading God's Word and praying, I knew that Jesus would pick me up off the ground, even if my husband didn't. I loved praying over the book of Psalms and inserting my name, making the Scriptures personal to my situation.

It was embarrassing and humbling to write love notes to my husband, not knowing if they would ever be read. But it was beautiful to depend so much on God. As I continued to write to him I began to remember some of the amazing things I really did love about my husband—his sweet smile, his silly humor and his love for family.

There is one memory I will never forget. My husband and I were alone in the car and I began to sing, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus/There is something about that name/Master, Savior, Jesus/Like a fra-

grance after the rain." I looked over to see his tears and he said, "Thank you for fighting for our marriage." I will never forget that moment.

Today we are together and my husband is a loving and hardworking man who praises our Lord with his beautiful voice. Recently we celebrated our 10th anniversary (we never thought we'd celebrate our third!) I am a former pharmaceutical rep. that gladly surrenders to the new role of homeschool mom. People in our new church make sweet comments about our family and the relationship my husband and I have together. I still seek out mentors and ask the Lord to reveal to me specific ways to lift up and encourage my husband. I don't want to only look good on the outside for my children. I want them to desire a Christ-centered marriage because they see Mommy and Daddy's love for Jesus and each other.

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Early in my relationship with my husband, we traveled on a full-time ministry team for two years. We spent all day and night with one another, our hearts focused on serving the Lord. Then the Lord called us to Seminary, and our lives changed. We called it, "Back to real life!" Chris worked the night shift as a nurse, and I worked the day shift as a chiropractic assistant. We certainly didn't minister together, and we had to work at having brief quality time together. Chris rarely accompanied me to church because he couldn't stay awake for the service after a 12-hour night shift.

After our first daughter was born, I stopped working. My interaction with adults diminished. After our second daughter was born 15 months later, days would go by without a silent moment to soak in the Word. By the time our first child had turned four, we had five children in the house, thanks to a set of twin boys. My husband worked two jobs and took classes at the Seminary every day. All the children shared a bedroom, and our living room and kitchen served as their play space. There was never enough kitchen counter space in our tiny apartment. Our glass dining table always needed cleaning. I spent hours planning menus and grocery shopping with five small children, and by the time I dragged myself home, I lacked the energy to actually put the groceries away.

Shoes were scattered in the foyer like boulders on a hill. I remember once when we had a tornado warning, the power went out, and seven neighbors came into our downstairs apartment with their families. every one of them tripped over the shoes on the floor. I was so embarrassed. The truth is, I was so pregnant and tired that I stopped caring. I cried almost every night during those years. I begged my Sunday school class for help with childcare and cleaning during my twins' pregnancy and was unceremoniously denied. I pushed myself to cook, clean, and educate my children, tend to my husband's needs, and fulfill ministry needs and service opportunities as my Christian duty. I chugged away at life, outwardly enthusiastic, but inwardly empty.

Once, our church hosted a special speaker to teach us how to pray to God for an hour every day. I hesitantly attended, mostly because they offered childcare. What he said enraged me. If I could just

I Found my Ministry!

find an hour every day of uninterrupted, undemanding, non-urgent silence, I would love some sweet time with my Savior. But with five small children, I couldn't even find 15 minutes! I left feeling disheartened and guilty.

About this time, my husband told me that God led him to read the Bible from cover-to-cover in a month, which

tedious, time-consuming activities that are inherent to motherhood. That simple change in attitude made me a happier person—more fulfilled, more intimate with Jesus, and more intimate with my husband.

I now enjoy, not just tolerate, teaching my children. I love watching them play games together while I cook dinner or do



Chris and Dorothy's blessings are Saja (7), Kora (6), David (5), Tobias and Tyler (3), and Julia Joy (2 months).

would mean about four hours of Bible-reading each day. While I rejoice that my husband seeks God's will and loves God's Word, I fought feelings of jealousy and anger. Why should he enjoy that much time with God, leaving me alone with the housework and the children, while I couldn't even enjoy one verse some days amidst the demands of motherhood!

The Lord, in his goodness, led me to discover a life-changing concept in a Christian book. I don't remember much about it, but one statement filled me with hope. If God wants you to be a homemaker, and you spend your days washing dishes and changing dirty diapers, then by fulfilling his plan for your life, you are worshiping God. I had been working so hard to find ways to serve God outside of and excluding my family. When I finally realized that God doesn't require me to fulfill every need I see, and that my family IS my ministry, I was able to rejoice in the

the dishes. I love letting my husband work while I fight to dress the children in the morning or while I struggle through the bedtime routine alone. I love teaching my children the precepts of God's Word. I realized at one point that my role as mother allowed me to experience true sacrifice and brought me closer to Christ-likeness. I sacrifice sleep, my desires, and even ministry opportunities. I sacrifice what I think is good, but I sacrifice for what is best.

God has since blessed us with another beautiful baby girl, a larger home next door to my parents, and a booming business that allows me to hire help. As the children age, they have become a great help and delight to my heart. Every stage has its challenges, but I regularly remind myself that my family IS my ministry, and it's a privilege to serve them.

If I could do those first five years of motherhood again, I would cut everything out of my schedule except the essentials. I

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Managing the Budget

Saving the Family Money

Money's always been very tight for our family, and many folks have thought us crazy as we've continued to welcome more children throughout the years! But God has always provided for our needs, and given us a lot of our desires, too. I've been thankful that my husband has not asked me to contribute to our income. My specialty has been to save our family money,

which is almost like making money for me! Here are some of the things I have done to stretch our budget:

- **Be content and thankful** with what we have, and not wish for more and more.
- **Stay out of stores.** Every time I enter a store I think of all sorts of things we want or need so I'm better off staying out of them.
- **Shop secondhand.** I try to regularly shop thrift stores for things that we will

very inexpensively by using what we have and asking everyone who comes to bring something to share. For a recent birthday party we had a treasure hunt, frosted cut-out cookies, enjoyed lunch, opened gifts, and played musical chairs with a houseful of friends, all for a cost to us of about \$5. Guests brought treasures to hide, cookies to frost, contributions to lunch, and gifts! We just provided a meeting place, a big pot of soup, some decorated brown paper treasure hunt bags, and some cookie sprinkles!

• **Eat inexpensively.** We have some sort of bean soup every day for lunch in the cold months and that sure saves a bundle! We grow alfalfa sprouts on our counter (we always have at least two big jars going) and everyone eats a "tuft" or two with lunch. Oatmeal, brown rice porridge or cornbread with honey are inexpensive breakfast choices. And for dinner, a pound or two of meat can be stretched with rice, potatoes or vegetables to feed a big family! We drink only water with all meals.

• **Keep birthdays simple.** I make a homemade cake baked, decorated by Daddy to birthday child's specifications. The birthday child gets to choose meals for the day, and receives a few simple gifts and lots of love, but no big parties or fancy outings.

• **Homemade gifts.** Years ago we stopped feeling obligated to purchase gifts to those outside our home and we now make a card or a craft, or something yummy from the kitchen.

• **Avoid haircuts.** My daughters and I rarely get our hair cut, and just let it grow. The boys sometimes go with Daddy to get a cut, but we also do it at home.

• **Save water and time** by not changing beds or towels as often, and by not showering or bathing daily. It's really not necessary and simplifies life as well as saving money.



would sleep more. I would get a wood table instead of a glass one. I would make good use of disposable dishes. I would surround myself with encouraging and helpful friends. I would spend less time cooking fancy meals. I would order things online, including groceries, when possible. I would stop comparing myself to others. Above all, I would rejoice in the trials, knowing that God is refining me and making me more like Him.

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need in the coming months. I find clothes and shoes, gifts, household items, craft supplies, and more for a fraction of what they would cost brand-new.

• **Gladly accept friend's offerings,** whether food, used clothing, furniture, or help! And send a nice thank you note, which usually results in more offers in the future!

• **Stay home.** We rarely leave home which saves a lot in gasoline, activity costs, convenience foods and more!

• **Offer hospitality.** God says to do it, and we are always blessed when we do. It's easier to have people to our home than go to a restaurant and usually friends are more than happy to contribute to the meal! We have had parties and gatherings

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Andy and Heather's blessings are David (15), Delaney (12), Alicia (10), Caitlin (9), Elisabeth (7), Molly (5), Eric (4), Kirsten (2) and Julianna Melody, our "youthful song" born 4/12/11.

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Family Meal Manager

One of the greatest challenges we have faced, as a newly-married couple living on one income, is affording healthy foods for our family. This is one area where we try to make as few compromises as possible, which takes some creativity.

As the meal-manager, I mainly shop in the outside aisles of the supermarket, purchasing fruits, vegetables, dairy (raw and farm-fresh when we can get it) and meat (antibiotic/hormone free, if not organic), with some canned beans, canned or frozen chicken and grains. We eat brown rice instead of pasta, since it's cheaper and healthier and we bake our own spelt bread on a weekly basis. At times it is frustrating when I want to buy expensive super-foods, but I know that I need to be faithful in the little things and manage our family's money well.

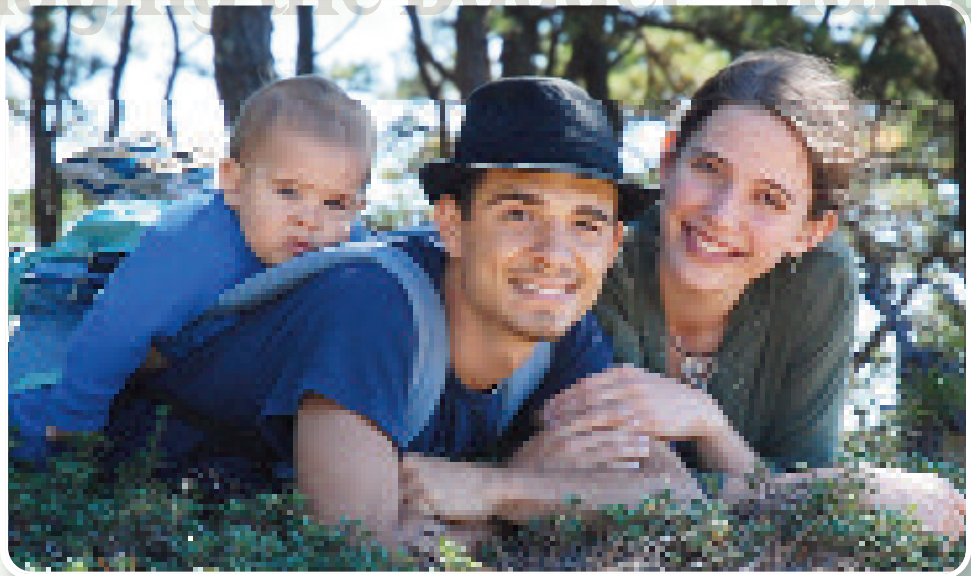
Here are a few things I keep in mind while shopping:

• **No "snacks" or sweets.** We hardly ever buy snack foods. Many of the snacks, even in health food stores, are nutritionally limited. They are full of fattening carbs without really meeting the body's needs. Why would I purchase chips or crackers when I can buy a whole food that will satisfy my hunger? My husband likes snacking on raisins and nuts to get the extra calories he needs when he's on the job. If I'm going out when I might get hungry, I usually make a sandwich or grab some fruit.

We also rarely buy sweets, even "natural" ones, and I only make desert when there's company. A nutritious sweet is fun to have every once and a while (we love dark, dark chocolate and Purely Decadent coconut ice-cream, sweetened with agave and dairy free!), but if I must make a choice as to which benefits the dinner table, I'll go with zucchini and sweet potatoes.

• **Pick your produce.** Pesticides are sprayed on many of the grocery store's produce that can be harmful to our bodies. Still, it is much more expensive to buy organic and I'd rather buy the fruits and veggies we need than not have any at all. I recently read about the EWG's *Shopper's Guide to Pesticides* on foodnews.com.

Their *Clean 15* and *Dirty Dozen* lists are a



Michael and Rebekah have been blessed with Jack (16 months) and are expecting a new little one November 2011.

great help in identifying what produce is more heavily treated and what produce is safer to buy. By eliminating the *Dirty Dozen* from your diet, you can cut 4/5 of your body's pesticide intake! This has helped me choose which lower-pesticide fruits and veggies to buy, and which ones are more important to buy organic.

My husband is also clearing our backyard for this year's garden. With about 3,000 square feet of garden space we are hoping to supply a good amount of our family's produce, preserve many of the veggies and store the root crops in our basement for the winter. We see this as an important step to managing our budget.

• **Identify cheaper foods and stock up.** I often find myself drooling over a display of exotic dates and realize that my money could be better spent on ground beef. I make a point of identifying the cheaper foods and stock up on them—onions, potatoes and carrots are a part of practically every meal. Cooking a big batch of soup and freezing it can provide some easy "fast-food" meals. Defrost it earlier in the day and heat up. Voila!

• **Buy in Season and Preserve.** Our choice to breast-feed exclusively for the first year of our baby's life was based on what we decided was best for his body and immune system, but it also proved to be a blessing on the budget. It's hard to imagine buying cereals, pureed fruits, or formula for a baby who is perfectly sus-

tained on nutritious mother's milk. Jack is now 16 months old and devouring everything we put on his plate. I have found that stocking up on fruits when they're on sale and storing them in our chest freezer is a great way to get him a variety of nutrients. I also purchase a lot of frozen veggies to steam or stir-fry for his dinners. I have done some canning in the past, but we have decided to mainly freeze the produce from our garden this year.

• **Cook simply!** Stay away from complicated recipes. This was something I figured out really fast after I got married. I would buy a gazillion ingredients to make a casserole or soup and then complain later when the budget ran out prematurely and I still had an assortment of random accessories. I don't use recipes very often now, and when I do, I choose the ones with minimal ingredients. Not only does simple cooking save money, it's also easier for your body to digest your meals when there's only a mix of five foods, instead of fifteen!

The most popular meal in our house is stir-fry over rice. It's fast, easy, and can look different every day of the week. I use different veggies, a variety of seasonings, and we also occasionally have it on pasta. It's incredible how delicious and satisfying a simple stir-fry can be!

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The Envelope System

The one thing that has made the biggest difference in our living on a budget is using an envelope system. It's like we got a HUGE raise! We divide our spending into specific categories and fill each envelope with a designated amount of cash each month. Some examples of our categories are: Children's Clothes, Wife's Spending Money, Husband's Spending Money, Home Improvement/Garden, Vacation Fund, Car Maintenance, Groceries, Wife's clothing, Husband's clothing, etc. In some envelopes, such as Vacation Fund, the cash builds up over several months. Expenditures such as something for Home/Garden need to be approved by both spouses so there's not an accidental deficit. This helps to make good decisions. For example, is a coffee at Starbucks REALLY worth \$4 of my spending money (and not feel guilty if I decide it is!), or do I want to save it up for something more needy?

The following are some other things that have helped us to be less wasteful.

- After making a pot of coffee, leave the filter and coffee grounds until the next morning. Then add HALF the amount of coffee grounds you would use for a new full pot. This saves half the number of filters and 1/4 the amount of coffee that you would normally use making it new every morning. We don't notice a difference in taste. Use the coffee grounds to make "compost tea" for your garden.
- We take all the return address labels we receive and cut off the pretty pictures on the left hand side to use as stickers for our children.
- Wash out and reuse plastic bags, plastic wrap and aluminum foil (except for those that have touched raw meat), then recycle the foil for cash.
- Use the 40 percent off coupons for Michaels and Hobby Lobby for buying home decor, craft supplies, and birthday presents.
- I crochet Afghans for baby gifts to save money and they are also a more meaningful, personal gift.
- Gardening! Can't wait till the peaches, plums and tomatoes come in this year.
- Automatic bill pay saves on stamps and envelopes (and time!)

- We buy bulk when it's advantageous. It saves not only the cost of groceries but the gas to drive to the store so many times.
- I plan a grocery menu. This way I can carefully plan my trips to several stores based on sale days, and avoid impulse buying.
- We have a large network of friends with whom we exchange hand-me-downs for the children and also for each other when we lose/gain weight. We also lend and borrow maternity clothes.
- Thrift stores are great, especially when I can find their clearance items; I purchased eight pieces of children's clothing and a birthday gift for our one-year-old for \$17 last month.
- Reuse packaging for mailing, gardening, toys, storage, etc.



- Cloth diapers save money if you don't get addicted to buying and trying the newest ones all the time.
- The 2 percent cash-back reward on the executive membership at Costco more than paid for our membership this past year.
- When the crock-pot is not in use for dinner, I make a large batch of beans and freeze them in 2 cup portions to be used instead of canned beans.
- When buying depreciating assets, buy used. We saved thousands of dollars on our used van and pop-up camper. Now the camper saves us loads of money when we camp instead of getting a hotel on vacation.

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Travis and Annie's children are Mollie (4), Luke (2) and Natalie (1).

Family Income Doubled

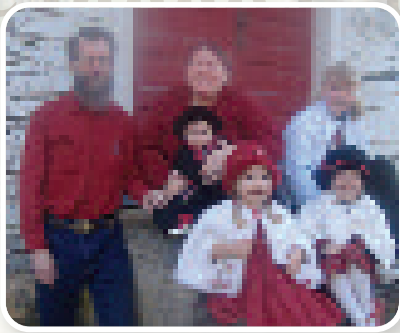
It was a huge step of faith for me to stop working outside of the home after the birth of our first child. At the time, my income provided most of our family's support. My husband has a physical disability and his home business had not been doing well. I kept working during our daughter's first year of life—and our finances kept getting worse!

Before we were married, my husband and I talked about doing foster care when my husband's business picked up and I could come home. Through a Bible study at our church, we both became convicted that it was time to move forward with the dreams God had given us. We did the foster parent training, and I left work. Around that time I also found out we were expecting our second blessing from the Lord.

During the next year, God provided many opportunities for my husband and me to work from home. By the time we had our home study for foster care, our family income had doubled and we had the money to start some home repairs in preparation for a bigger family. Now, at a total of four blessings (three by birth), God continues to provide for our growing family and we have been able to slowly pay back debt that we incurred while I was working. Practical budgeting has also helped us:

- Cable TV is a waste of money; if there is no money in your budget for entertainment, the library is great! They even lend movies. When we finally had some money in our budget for entertainment, we chose Netflix because we already had an internet connection for the business.
- Gardening is fun, educational, and lowers our summer grocery bill considerably.
- We grocery shop at the scratch and dent store. I do my meal planning for the month based on what we can get there and then pick up the odd ingredients I need at a full-price grocery store. Recipe finders are my friend.

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Shane and Kim are blessed with Kristina (16), Gracie (4), Maggie (2) and Millie (10 months).

- If someone wants to give us 50 heads of cabbage or some other random item, we don't turn them down. There are many online recipes for cabbage dishes and I can make big batches and freeze for the future.
- If someone offers us clothes, we graciously accept. We sort them later and give the clothes that don't fit to Goodwill.
- We shop at Goodwill and yard sales and my children wear brand name clothes!
- We give freely to others. It always comes back to haunt us.
- When things get tight, let people know your family is looking for work from home. A friend of a friend may have a mailing job, or need phone calls made for a local election, or need some creative writing. These are some of the things we have done from home.
- We take advantage of free programs and parks in our community. Colleges are a great place to look for free programs for the children.
- EBay is my friend. I buy books for 2 c. at my local library and sell them for several dollars on half.com. I buy nice children's clothes at yard sales and sell them online.
- We do our errands as a family. We pick one or two days a week to be "errand days" and schedule all of our appointments and shopping on those days. It saves gas and the less time I spend in stores, the better!

Of course, the most important thing has been learning to trust the Lord and obey His precepts in the area of finances.

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I was not raised to believe that a woman should work inside the home. My parents divorced when I was two years old and I have no memories of my father living with us. Both of my parents re-married but from the time I was two until seven years old, my mother was a single mother, working full-time. I grew up in daycare and cared for by my great-grandmother. When my mother re-married, she still continued to work. We always had a very comfortable life and I did not understand the concept of a budget. When I went to the store with my mother, we bought what we wanted, and it was always name brand.

I married at 23 and worked full-time as a music teacher. Halfway through my second year of teaching, I gave birth to our first child, in January 2009. I took my full 12 weeks maternity leave, all the while dreading to go back to work. My husband and I sat down numerous times to do a budget on one income, but could never seem to make it work. I reluctantly went back to work in April and left my baby with my sister-in-law (a stay-at-home, homeschooling mother—the only one I knew at the time). My sister-in-law understood my devastation at having to leave my baby to go to work and she prayed with us for a way for me to stay home.

I worked for six weeks until summer break and I was able to stay with my baby. When July rolled around and it was time to go back to work, we made plans to put Abby in daycare because my sister-in-law was a little overwhelmed with her own responsibilities. I cried every day and prayed every night for God to show us a way. God had answered our prayers! The week before school started, my husband was given a promotion that allowed me to quit work and become a full time wife and mother.

Unfortunately, I had no idea how to manage money on one income. After almost two years on one income, I am now beginning to understand how to make a budget and stick to it. When it doesn't seem we will have enough to make it to the next pay day, I pray for God to provide and He always does. I have experimented in many ways as to how to save money and have a few tips to share.

- Shop at a discount grocery store. One-stop shopping at a superstore is convenient, and can be cheaper than grocery stores, but I have found the best deals at

Sticking to the Budget



Jordan and Julia and Abby (2).

discount stores. This gives me 95 percent of the groceries I need and for the other 5 percent, I head out to the superstore.

- **Put your husband on a lunch budget.** My husband ate out every day when he was single. He was surprised when he added up how much he spent! Packing your husband's lunch for him is a nice way to show him how much you care. I include notes for him to read on his lunch break, which he really enjoys.
- Cook six days a week. Although eating out is definitely less healthy, we treat ourselves and go out to dinner once a week.
- Make a plan. I bought a cute meal planner at a craft store for \$1.00 and I plan out the meals for everyday of the week and keep it on the refrigerator. I then make my grocery list off of the menu, which keeps me accountable.
- Buy in bulk. Bulk sizes are always cheaper, especially meats. I always buy family packs and freeze what I don't need immediately.
- Plan, Plan, Plan! I have a planner with all of our bills and their due dates written in it. My husband is paid by the hour, so the pay changes every time. Having everything in front of me helps me plan which bills can be paid on what pay day and keeps the budget under control.
- Purchase gas for cash only. When you pay with your debit card at the pump, they can put a hold on your bank account for up to \$75! My mother, who works in a bank, says this is because unlike credit cards, the debit cards can't verify immediately and so the banks can put a hold on

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our account! My husband says having the card at the gas station tempts him to buy overpriced snacks inside. Paying cash defeats this.

By following these principles, we have managed to live comfortably on one income.

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Don't forget to Tithe

Tithing has helped us so much. Before we started tithing we were barely scraping by at the end of the month. Now we have some extra, not a lot, but better than before! When my husband gets paid, I do the budget. If I don't put the tithe money in first, the budget never works, but when I do,

everything works out wonderfully.

We also find it is good to have an emergency fund as long as you don't touch the money unless it is a true emergency. This gives you peace of mind.

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John and Stephanie are blessed with two sons, Dustin (3) and Aydin (1).



Daniel and Laura are blessed with Lily (3) and Ada due 1 June, 2011.

First and foremost, I suggest praying for a godly attitude; one that does not covet and one that is content with what you have. Second, be willing to give and give. God blesses us when we give and he knows, as we do, when we hold back, whether out of fear or simply selfish reasons. Ask the Lord to show you your heart concerning your attitude about money. Be open to what the Holy Spirit impresses on you and your husband to do with your finances, which are all His anyway!

My husband and I usually don't see eye to eye on financial matters. He is more of the impulse buyer while I tend to be the saver/planner. If you are the one who is the impulse buyer, pray! If your husband is the one who is the impulse buyer, pray! You cannot make your husband change. All you can do is be an example to him, not by words, but by your actions. With this and your prayers for him, God can help your husband have a true heart change regarding your finances. It is a process! It is easy to get annoyed or perturbed with your spouse in this area but

The right ATTITUDE

pray for your attitude towards your husband in this matter. By honoring him, God will bless you and your family.

We have one daughter and one on the way, but being around other families that are much larger, we have decided that our daughters will share a bedroom. With the right attitude as parents, most children that share a room with their sibling(s) prefer it!

As far as clothing goes, much of what I purchase comes from second-hand stores or resale stores. Some resale stores can be pricey, sometimes more than buying something new on sale. You have to use your God-given judgment regarding this. Buying online is good too, if you can train yourself to go on for a specific purpose as it is easy to surf and waste precious time. I tend to buy timeless clothes, rather than trendy, so I know I will wear them until I can't anymore. If someone has a need in this area, I give because most of what we have has been given to us by others.

I plan my meals weekly. This way, when I go to the store, I know exactly what I'm getting and won't be as tempted to get something because I might use it or it looks good. I steer clear of packaged/processed food as much as possible. When buying meat, I try to stretch it and make the most of it. For example, I started buying a whole chicken and baking it, then eating one meal with it and saving the bones to make stock with. It is usually cheaper than buying the boneless, skinless chicken breasts or tenderloins.

We visited family on Christmas and they bought a ham that was delicious. They weren't going to use the bone or the meat left on it afterward, so I offered to take it. It made excellent ham-bone soup.

For me, realizing I don't need everything the advertisements and society tries to sell me, really cuts out the stress of feeling "I must have it", and frees me to enjoy what I can afford. It also inspires me to see what I can do with what I have been given, which can be very exciting and fulfilling.

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Postscript: I started working at our church daycare after I became pregnant this time. A fellow church member offered me the job as a temporary until they found someone else. I really believed in being a keeper at home, but said Yes partly because it was hard for me to say No. I recently quit. Working at the daycare and seeing the parents drop their children off every day and how their children behaved solidified in my mind why I chose to be a stay-at-home mom. Some of the little ones called the workers "Mama" because we were their mamas except on the weekends and a small fraction of their waking hours during the week.

Though he never complained, I knew my husband preferred me at home. Working on opposite schedules, it was nearly impossible for me to see him much or pack him food to take for lunch so he wouldn't have to eat out, which meant more money out and less healthy too.

Monetarily, I don't think my working added much to our lives. I splurged a little on food for convenience sake, and I also felt like I was neglecting duties that were very dear to me as a wife and mother. If my daughter was sick, which happened

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a lot being at a daycare, I was obligated to find someone to work for me (if I could), or I would have to bring Lily in with me anyway and I couldn't care for her there as well as I could at home.

Since quitting, God has been showing me ways I can supplement my husband's income and stay home. I have a sewing machine and have recently learned to love sewing! We decided to cloth diaper to save more money, and I have been sewing my own wool diaper covers from recycled wool sweaters from thrift stores. I know sewing is not everyone's gig, but for me it is very rewarding, and you can teach it to your children, just like gardening or cooking.
LAURA

coin-operated washing machine. To save on drying, we hang small garments on a laundry rack and have a collection of hangers for larger garments. We also have a way to hang some things outside, which is especially helpful for sheets and cloth diapers!

I have found that we can often use less of a product than we thought we needed and it will last longer—less shampoo, laundry detergent, dishwashing detergent, and toothpaste.

We also enjoy our local free-cycle program. I joined a yahoo group in our area and have been able to receive clothes for our children, bathroom rugs, dishes, and even a bed, for free!

I've had fun in recent months creating handmade gifts. We enjoy making things! Keeping scrap fabric from sewing projects and old clothes allows for some fun projects. Some fun ideas for little girl gifts are jewelry (even little people can string some beads!), doll blankets and pillows, and doll clothes. We've sewn a stuffed snake with button eyes for a little boy. Bean bags and capes are fun for boys or girls. I've made a number of baby blankets, even without batting, for a summer baby or nursing cover-up. We've decorated magnets for adults.

I'm the kind of person who has to be careful about legalism. I purposely don't do the above things all the time. We want



David and Beckie are blessed with Richard Benjamin (5), Rachel Elizabeth (3), and Salvation Regina (1).

to be good stewards of our resources, but we must trust God. All the budget-watching and saving I do will not save me! The Lord is our provider and not trying to be perfect about saving money helps me remember to trust Him, just like taking a day of rest. His providence does not depend on my performance.

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Ask Questions

I ask myself certain questions before I buy something new at the store.

Do we really need this?

Could we get by without it?

Do we have something already that we could use for that purpose?

Can we make something to use for this purpose?

Can we buy it used?

You know the saying, "Reuse, Reduce, and Recycle." I don't know if recycling can save you money, but the other two can. If we think of using items that can be reused instead of thrown away, we can save money. Cloth diapering definitely saves over disposables. Empty little trash cans from around the house into the kitchen trash to save on trash bags. Before you throw something away, think, "Can I still use this or some part of this in some useful way?"

Jarred baby food can be so expensive! Waiting until your baby is closer to one year before introducing lots of solids can help save some money. We also enjoy feeding our baby simple things like oatmeal made with extra water, canned pumpkin, and "regular" unsweetened applesauce found in the canned fruits section of the store. My parents bought us a hand food mill. When the baby gets a little older, we put some of whatever the family is eating in there, grind it, and viola!—baby food!

We live in an apartment and use a

"The desire to have children is a fundamental affirmation of faith in the future and in values that transcend the individual." ~ Joel Kotkin



Although I live in the great country of USA, I actually dwell on a parcel of land in the woods of Tennessee. But the land where I really live every day and night is in the “land” of my family life, as a wife and a mother. This is the real down-to-earth land where each one of us lives our lives. What is our “land” like?

We get a glimpse of what God wants it to be like when we read about the land He promised to His people, Israel. Although the promises about the land are literally for Israel, because God gave the land to them as an everlasting covenant, they also present a picture of how He wants us to live. How does God describe this land? We read 12 different descriptions about this land. It’s a good land. In fact, it’s “an exceeding good land” (Numbers 14:7).

Of course, I’ll admit it’s not a piece of cake. It’s not for the faint-hearted. This land is also a challenging land. It’s not only a land of plains (which would get very boring) but also a land of valleys and mountains (Joshua 12:8)! You often face problems in your home that are “greater and mightier” than you (Deuteronomy 9:1-3). There is no way you can tackle them in your own strength; you feel completely overwhelmed. But the wonderful news is that God promises to be with you. With God, you can face mountains that are bigger than you! He will never leave you or forsake you. When Joshua and the children of Israel entered into the land God’s words were, “Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

God does not leave you to mother your children on your own. He is right beside you, backing you all the way. He is with you constantly and watches over the walls of your home. His eyes are always upon you in your land of motherhood, “from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” (Deuteronomy 11:12). You can call upon Him at any moment. He is your source of wisdom and daily

strength—and His resources never run out! You will be amazed at how you cope when you take your eyes off your problems and turn them upon the Lord! The psalmist proclaims, “Though I walk in the midst of trouble,

their glory. What was their glory? Conception, pregnancy and birth. Hosea 9:11 says, “As for Ephraim, their glory will fly away like a bird—no birth, no pregnancy and no conception!” When God’s blessing is on a nation there will be lots of joy and celebrations of weddings and babies

The Overflowing

you will revive me” (Psalm 138:7). Often our difficulties don’t go away, but God has promised to revive and refresh as we go through them.

Not only is God constantly beside you, but He provides mothers with special hormones to help them in their great undertaking of motherhood. During pregnancy, estriol, the anti-aging hormone, rises 1,000 times! Pregnancy hormones cleanse the ovaries of pre-cancerous cells and can help eliminate ovarian cancer, as well as breast and uterine cancers.

God gives a nursing mother prolactin, a very protective, motherly hormone. In fact, the more a mother nurses her baby, the more motherly she becomes. This enables her to embrace and enjoy motherhood instead of living in frustration. It also acts as a stress-fighting hormone which is such an advantage in the challenge of our daily life. Oxytocin is released to stimulate the milk-ejection reflex and it is also a calming hormone, so much so that even in the midst of chaos a mother can pick up her baby and put it to the breast and be immediately calmed, even to the state of nearly falling sleep! God is certainly on the side of mothers. And all the while she nurses her bones are re-mineralized, reducing the chance of osteoporosis! What blessings are poured out upon mothers as they embrace babies and nurse them during their twenties, right up to their forties—blessings that continue into their older age!

This land of wifehood and motherhood is also a delightful land, “the glory of all lands” (Ezekiel 20:6). Mothering and training children is the glory of the nation. When God judged Ephraim, He took away

(Jeremiah 33:11).

It is a safe land, a fruitful land (grapes, olives, figs, pomegranates, corn, wine, wheat, barley and oil, plus the blessings of the increase of children), a life-giving land, a holy land, a land of provision and a land of blessing.

It is also a large land. It is not a small career to be a mother and home-maker. It is huge and becomes more far-reaching as your family grows. You start off as a married couple and gradually God blesses you with children from His bountiful hand. One day you have the blessing of grandchildren which exceed the number of your children. And then great-grandchildren, which usually surpasses the number of your grandchildren! The influence of motherhood not only affects the nation, but future generations.

Our land of motherhood should always be enlarging. It’s interesting that Satan wants to minimize the literal land of Israel, or hopefully eradicate it from the earth. He knows that if He can do that, He wipes out the Bible which is filled with prophecy for Israel. He also works to minimize the land of motherhood or diminish it altogether. He hates life and tries to stop it every way he can. But don’t let your land be diminished—you belong to a large land!

I have always loved G.K. Chesterton’s words, “To be Queen Elizabeth within a definite area, deciding sales, banquets, labours, and holidays; to be Whitely within a certain area, providing toys, boots, cakes and books; to be Aristotle within a certain area, teaching morals, manners, theology, and hygiene; I can imagine how this can exhaust the mind, but I cannot imagine

Photos taken by Heather Meyers Photography. Heather is the wife of Jacob and mom of 2 boys Asher and Zeev.

how it could narrow it. How can it be a large career to tell other people about the Rule of Three, and a small career to tell one's own children about the universe? How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone and narrow to be everything to someone? No, a woman's function is

their husband in his role of providing for the family because they do not believe God is able to care for them. This is like being back in Egypt, turning the treadmills with our feet. In this Promised Land we must totally rely upon God, a God who cares for us from the beginning of the year until the end!

Land



Above all, it is a land that "flows with milk and honey." This description is used 20 times in the Scriptures. The Hebrew word "flowing" is *zooob* and means, "to flow freely, to overflow, and to gush out." This is not a land where we only do

laborious, but because it is gigantic, not because it is minute."

The land where we live as a wife and mother is also a land where we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Deuteronomy 11:10-12 says, "For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year."

Egypt is a type of the flesh and the world. In Egypt they relied on the overflow of the Nile River for their irrigation. They stored the water by artificial means and irrigated the fields with treadmills, using their feet. It took human sweat and toil. But in the Promised Land they did not have the Nile River; they had to rely completely on God to send the rain to grow and harvest their crops.

It is the same for us. We cannot do it with our own resources. As we raise our children we have to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom and understanding and to help us moment by moment. We must rely on God to provide for our needs. We are totally cast upon the blessing of God. This is why one of the most important aspects of parenting is prayer—crying out to God for our children; crying out to God for help and wisdom. We cannot do it without Him.

Many mothers feel they need to join

what is our duty. We give freely and face every task exuberantly. We mother with a smile on our face! Yes, you can do it! Even when you feel like scowling, put on a smile. As you smile, joy will return and the whole atmosphere in your home will change.

We don't do our work grudgingly but overflow with love, compassion, forgiveness, wisdom and all the good things of God. 1Corinthians 15:58 says, "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." As we abound in the greatest work God has given to us, we go "beyond what is necessary with enough and to spare." It is opposite to the land of sighing, stinginess, misery, legality, depression and boredom.

What about your husband? Does he get the "leftovers" of your energy (or lack of energy) as you come to the end of a day filled with projects and rushing here and there? Did you know that you don't have to be involved in every organization at church or take your children to every extra-curricular activity that's going? If you are too drained to give yourself freely to our husband, cut back! You are meant to be living your life at home, not out and about on the town!

This land flows with milk. Milk speaks of nourishing and nurturing. For many years of a mother's life she flows with milk as she nurtures her babes from her breast. You are anointed by God to be a nourisher, not only nourishing your babe from your breast, but continuing to nourish your children with wholesome foods, and of course, nourishing them

with wisdom, knowledge and most important of all, God's living Word. We have a responsibility to not only give our children some knowledge of the Bible, but richly nourish them in Word. This happens as we establish regular, daily Family Devotions in our home.

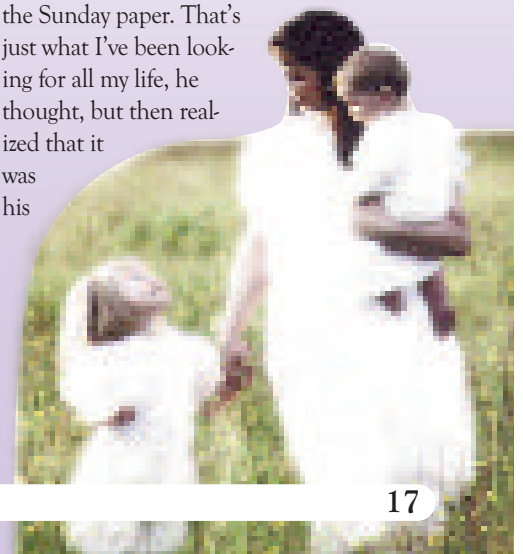
You not only flow with nourishment, but honey! Sweet words flowing from your lips. What a nice land in which to live! Your husband loves to come home to your sweet, loving and pleasant words. Your children thrive in the land of sweet, encouraging and life-giving words.

There are some who despise the land of wifehood and motherhood. Others come into it but stay around the edges. They keep their feet in two worlds, the land of motherhood and the land of the working world. Thus, they never have time to venture into all the land of motherhood. Can I encourage you to go in and possess it? Possess all of it, not just the fringe of it. There is so much more that you have not experienced. Search for the truth and find out all that there is in the land (Joshua 18:3-4).

Although God gave the land to the children of Israel, they had to go and possess it. God has also given us our land, but we will not experience its fullness until we possess it.

A friend of mine tells the story which his dad (who was a real estate agent) told him. A farmer became bored and dissatisfied with his farm life and decided to put it up for sale. He contacted the real estate agent, who after inspecting the land, advertised it as a beautiful farm land with rolling hills. Nice home, three barns, several out-buildings and two ponds. A delightful investment for someone wanting to make a good living from the land.

The owner read the advertisement in the Sunday paper. That's just what I've been looking for all my life, he thought, but then realized that it was his



own land that was advertised. He immediately called the agent to take it off the market! He already had what he wanted but had become dissatisfied.

Are you dissatisfied with motherhood? You'd like to get out and do something for yourself instead of slaving for everyone in your home every day! Stop for a moment and take inventory of the blessings you have—the security of home, husband, children etc. My daughter, Evangeline often says, “My children are not an obstacle to my dream; they help make my dream a reality!”

Is the adversary attacking your marriage? Don't let him defeat you. Go after your marriage. Don't let the adversary take hold of one little foothold. Rise and possess your marriage in the power of the name of Jesus, the power of the promises of the Word of God and the power of the blood of Jesus (Leviticus 26:13).

Instead of grumbling about this “good” land, embrace it and ENJOY it (Joshua 1:15).

NANCY CAMPBELL

The overflowing land.

Every believer should be familiar with God's promises regarding the land of Israel, and the return of the Jews to the land, especially at this critical time. Isaiah 62:6-7 tells us that we are to remind God of His promises to Israel and not stop praying until the Lord builds up Jerusalem and makes it praise in the earth. For a list of all these Scriptures go to:

<http://bit.ly/EverlastingPossesion>

There are 12 descriptions in the Scriptures about the land that “flows with milk and honey.” To check out these Scriptures, go to: <http://bit.ly/12Descriptions>

To read more about the land that “flows with milk and honey” go to:

<http://bit.ly/WomensDevotionalArchive>

To read more about nourishing babies, go to: <http://bit.ly/Articles-Breastfeeding>

To read more ideas about nourishing your children in God's Word, go to: <http://bit.ly/BibleInTheHome>

A friend of mine asked if I would accompany her in the hospital for her first labor and birth. “Patty-Jean,” she said, “You are the only woman who has spoken positively about birth to me!” Her words grieved me. A century ago, when all women had their babies at home, birth wasn't a mystery like it is today. Historically, by the time a woman reached childbearing age, she had most likely assisted or was present at several births of siblings, relatives or neighbours.

My journey began before I was married. I held to the belief that God was a better family planner than any human could ever be. I watched my peers get married and start various birth control methods. The valued idea in many churches was to encourage the newly wedded couple to take time to get to know each other before babies came into the picture. Or, for many of my peers, their priority was school, career, or ministry before having a family. When “the time” came for them to start “trying” to conceive, I watched them, one by one, struggle with the painful path of infertility. “I don't want to be in their shoes,” I thought. If I have fertility issues, I want to start dealing with them immediately, not five or ten years down the road, when we were “ready” to have children.

When my husband and I married, he held to the idea that one, two or no children would probably be adequate for us, but a year and a half after we were married, Rene came home from work one day and announced that God had spoken to him about birth control. “Birth control was taking control that only God should have,” he stated. Within the month we were pregnant. I was ecstatic.

Fearful to attempt a homebirth for our first, I imagined having a hospital birth for our first baby. Days after finding out we were pregnant; I was lying on a hospital bed in excruciating pain, more physical pain than I had ever experienced in my life. It was an ectopic pregnancy in my right fallopian tube. The tube was ready to burst and they gave us two choices, chemo drugs or a surgery; the latter they said may not save my tube. Because we were thinking of future babies, we went with the chemo drugs. When home, I was instructed to abstain from pain medication, in case the chemo did not work and the tube erupted. For two days in almost

continuous pain, I lay watching 20 hours of the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* series; it brought some distraction from the pain.

We praised God when we found out that we were pregnant three months later. Because of my previous experience, my fear of pain in labour was gone. I was sure that labour would not be as difficult as the pain I endured during the ectopic. “Midwife, homebirth, drug-free—bring it on!” That's how I felt.

Nine months later, I experienced my first labour. Beginning at 4 am, I was too excited to stay in bed. The day moved on and contractions gradually increased as I cleaned and knitted between contractions. I found that moving really helped, and sitting did NOT feel good, as baby was posterior. I have observed and helped in three hospital births that were not my own, and was very sad to see the women on their backs. It is hard for me to imagine how one manages labor in that position.

After three and a half hours of pushing, Selah finally slid out in the warm water of the kiddie pool in which I was laboring. I tore in three directions and it was many months before I could sit without pain. The blessing was that I could only nurse lying down. I believe that nursing while lying down is one of the most useful things a new mama can learn. I nursed on demand and Selah was 18 months before my cycles returned.

Six months later we were pregnant and ecstatic. At 11 weeks I started spotting. To say that I was devastated was an understatement! I actually felt more like I was going crazy. They recommended a D&C but D&C's have been attributed to a cause of ectopic pregnancies. Medical staff says that if you have a history of an ectopic pregnancy, your chances of future ectopic pregnancies may be higher than those who haven't. With this in mind, as well as the understanding that D&C's can terminate pregnancies, we chose not to have the D&C.

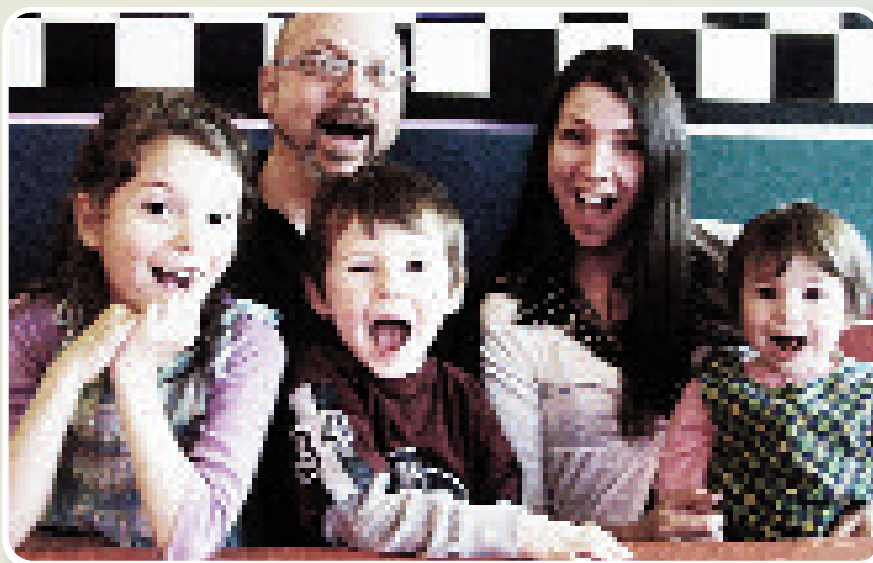
Psalms 91 became my medicine. I read it aloud, whispered it, sang it, prayed it, and proclaimed it and it brought sanity and peace when I would begin to panic. Two days after I became very sick and quickly realized I was in labour. Of my four labours (three live children), this was the worst. I delivered in a hospital toilet. I have since read stories of women who

Sons & Daughters for Glory

laboured and delivered these “too-little” babies in the comfort of their own home. This would be a better environment for closure and comfort.

Six weeks later I was in the hospital again. The symptoms were a possible infection in my uterus and I was pregnant for a fourth time. With the strict instructions we had received from medical staff to wait three months before getting pregnant following the miscarriage, I was very fearful

tub, and climbed out to push (with the help of my husband, the midwife and doula), and pushed for one hour on my side before Joash was born. Remembering it now, it feels like I pushed for 15 minutes. That is the beauty of the body’s natural pain management hormone. It leaves a woman with a rose-coloured memory. One of the downsides of artificial pain drugs is that the memories are more vivid and can be negative. For example, the



Rene and Patty-Jean with Selah (6), Joash (4), and Elousia (2) and new baby due November 2011.

that we were going to have another loss. Beside myself, the intern doctor looked at me pathetically for believing that it was imperative to wait the three months. “The only reason we ask you to wait three months after a loss, is to more accurately date your due date. The most fertile time in a women’s life is just weeks after a birth or loss of birth while the pregnancy hormone is still in her body. It acts like a powerful fertility drug!” I was stunned.

The following year five of my friends experienced early pregnancy loss. I told each of them what the doctor had told me, and each of them conceived within six weeks following their loss. Now I wish I could preach this message to the world: “Don’t wait out the three months just because of convenience.”

Joash was born June 9, 2007 in our friend’s home, while I labored in their hot

memory of the cold metal bar on the bed, the stern look from a nurse, the annoying ticking of the clock on the wall become more acutely remembered, rather than the actual delivery of the precious baby.

When Joash was just 18 months and my cycles had not appeared to have started again, I was pregnant for the fifth time. During this pregnancy I had a powerful revelation about labour and childbirth. I was seven months pregnant when I participated in an Encounter Weekend that our church runs annually for different groups. One of the sessions was about the Cross. They read Hebrews 2:9-10, “But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that

God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.”

I remember hearing the words “labour” and “many children.” This pregnant mother identified with those words. We watched the cross scene from *The Passion* and I was struck with how the actor playing Jesus endured the lashing almost like a labor contraction. Call me crazy, but that was where my brain was.

They read Colossians 1:24, “Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.” I was deeply moved by all that the Lord endured on the cross so that He could bring “many sons and daughters to glory.” Suddenly the idea of childbirth and labor seemed like a small task compared to what Christ did on the cross. I was humbled. Labor, painful contractions and long uncomfortable pushing times seem surmountable as I, in a small way, continue with Christ. Christ labored as well in a way we’ll never know, but we can somehow be connected to it as we labor to bring many sons and daughters to Glory!

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A Garden HOME

A garden is a place of beauty, peace and fruitfulness. How can we make our homes into a garden? Before the Fall, the paradise God chose for Adam and Eve was in a garden. What a lovely, soothing and refreshing home! God delights in gardens and if His plan for His first family was to live in a garden, we should try to create a lovely garden within our home, too.

To begin to grow our garden, God plants the seeds within our womb. The Lord delights in giving us a flowerbed of children. Psalm 127:3-5 states that chil-

I like what Elizabeth Prentiss says in Stepping Heavenward, "I want to see little children adorning every home as flowers adorn every meadow and every wayside. I want to see them welcomed to the homes they enter, to see their parents grow less and less selfish and more and more loving because they have come. I want to see God's precious gifts accepted, not frowned upon and refused."

All living things need nourishment!

God designed all living things to need nourishment. One of the mother's biggest tasks is to provide nourishment to her little seedlings. The Lord gives us a beautiful metaphor of the home life as a garden in Psalm 128:3-4, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table." Do you notice the family is all around the table? The table is where we join together for food and fellowship; enriching our souls with laughter and conversation, while nourishing our bodies with food that mother has nutritiously prepared.

What better food than momma's own milk for the new little seedlings? God designed us to nourish and comfort our babies at the breast and what a sweet time for both mommy and baby. In Isaiah 66:11-13 God reveals a beautiful metaphor comparing the comfort Jerusalem will receive to that which a mother gives her baby when he/she is nursing, "For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts." What a responsibility we have to satisfy and nourish each little plantlet with life-giving foods.

For gardens to flourish there must be a healthy root system. Looking back to Psalm 128:3-4 we are told that the wife is like a "fruitful vine in the very heart of your house." Where is the mother in this picture? She is rooted at home. In order for our children to grow roots of security, they need mother at home and actively involved in their lives. The mother is the very heart of the home; she holds the home together and gives it the loving and cozy atmosphere. When we stay at home to mother our children and manage the household, we fulfill the Scripture where God calls us to be "keepers at home" (Titus 3:5) and to "look well to the ways of her household" (Proverbs 31:27).

This mother diligently plants seeds of God's truth into her children's hearts throughout the day. Deuteronomy 6:7 states that we are to impress God's commands upon our children when they "sit at home and when (they) walk along the road, when (they) lie down and when (they) get up." By staying at home with our children, God gives us many opportunities throughout the day to sow these seeds of truth into their hearts.

A husband delights to come home to a lovely rosebud!

Gardens are beautiful and peaceful, like the way we should strive to be for our husband. When he comes home from a work-weary day, we get to provide sunshine to his day by creating a peaceful and refreshing haven to greet him. Do I brush my hair, put on some make-up, a touch of perfume and change out of my wrinkled,



Brian and CarrieAnn with their children— Isaac (7), Bethany (with our Lord), Luke (4), Ruby (21 months)

dren are a "reward from Him," and "blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." God enjoys blessing us with children and is honored when we raise them for His glory. What a joy to grow a babe within the womb. Each baby is a precious gift from our Lord and a sweet addition to our growing gardens. His Word reminds us of this in Deuteronomy 7:13, "He will bless the fruit of your womb." The Lord takes care, thought and planning in forming the fruit of our womb (Psalm 139:13-14) and even though the task is huge, we can trust Him to guide us and help us tend to our growing gardens.



food-stained clothes into an attractive outfit? A husband delights to come home to a lovely rosebud.

Do I greet him with a smile, a kiss and a warm welcome? Do we adorn ourselves with “the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Peter 3:4)? The most beautiful adornment we can put on is our smile. We should choose to put aside the stresses of the day for a few moments in order to greet our husband with a smile, knowing that “a merry heart does good, like medicine” (Proverbs 17:22).

Luke 12:27 says, “Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.” We don’t have to always

Delight the senses!

We add serenity to our homes by delighting the senses. By placing a flower arrangement on our family meal table, playing soft music throughout the day, and ensuring our house smells sweet through the use of candles or yummy food being prepared our home will be a soothing garden. We can make daddy’s arrival a time to look forward to each day by simply adding a little beauty to our home, our appearance and our countenance.

We can have a lovely atmosphere, but if we stop here, our garden will become overgrown with weeds. We also have to control all weed-growth. Instead of complaining to our husband as soon as he comes home, we should first refresh him, listening to his day before we share about ours. Proverbs 11:25 states, “he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”

Watch out for the thorns!

Thorns are nasty weeds. Do our words poke and prick our husband and children or softly uplift and encourage them? Do our words build up or destroy our garden? Similarly, we must diligently and carefully remove

the start of any bad weed growth among our children so that it will not take over their character. This is no easy task. It takes diligence, hard work, prayers and dedication but we sow what we reap. When applied to child training, think of 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” When we give our time and energies to guiding and training our children, God says we will “reap generously.” This passage continues by stating, “God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

God loves it when we cheerfully give of ourselves for our children and husband. By doing so, God has promised that we will “abound in every good work” and car-

ing for our family’s needs is certainly a “good work.” We want to reap a good harvest among our children so, “let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

Nurture your family the way you nurture flowers!

The most vital aspect for our gardens to flourish is spending time each day in the presence of our radiant Son. If we don’t fill ourselves with Him, we will wither and so will our garden. In John 15:1-2, Jesus states, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” Only our Gardener can do this pruning when we spend time with Him each day, in His Word and in prayer. Our children are watching and learning what a relationship with our Heavenly Father looks like. We sprinkle “Son” shine on them when they witness our love and worship to our Lord. A garden is such a beautiful, vibrant, peaceful and lovely environment. What a treasure that God allows us to be able to create one within our home! Let’s strive to consider our “home as a garden-nurturing family the way one would flowers.” (Mrs. Sharp’s Traditions by Sara Ban Breathnach)

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HOLY GROUND

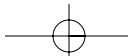
It may be on a kitchen floor,
Or in a busy shopping store,
Or teaching, nursing day by day,
Till limb and brain almost give way,
Yet if there by Jesus thou art found,
The place thou standest is Holy Ground.

~M. Colley



“work” at being beautiful. We all have thorny, stressful days where we and our homes look a mess, but by simply adding a smile to our attire we are transformed into a beautiful lily in his eyes.

Not only should we look lovely for our husbands upon their arrival, but we should try to clean up the children too. This can be accomplished by a quick wipe of the day’s dirt off their faces and a comb through their hair. We can also add peace and beauty to our garden by tidying up before daddy comes home. Make it a game to see how fast the children and mommy can wipe away the chaos and clutter from the day to create a peaceful garden for daddy.



Sibling fighting



Terry and Cheryl with their family: Amanda, married to Ryan and mommy to Aiden (4) and Jade (2), Stephanie (22), Emily (19), Haley (15), Mackenzie (13), Corrie (11), Isaac (10), Sam (8), Destiny (6) and Michael Ray (2).

Squashing Squabbles

It has been said that if you can learn to get along with every person in your home, you can get along with anyone in the world!

Few things will rob a mom of her energy and steal her joy like bickering children. Feuding siblings have been around as long as there have been children; Cain and Abel are perfect examples of sibling rivalry. A mom whose heart is broken by her children's fighting can relate to how our heavenly Father must feel when His children refuse to get along with one another. We love our children and we want them to love one another. So what do you do when your children bicker?

Through the years my ten children have generously provided me with many opportunities to discover creative solutions to their fighting (*wink). Here are some tried and true "cures" to squash sibling squabbles. Have the offenders:

Fix each other's hair. You may think this would only work with girls (and it is great for them!), but the first time I tried this with a sister and brother pair, the results were hilarious! First, she fixed his hair with styling gel, leaving him with a partial Mohawk. Then he took several hair bands and created small ponytails all over her head. By the time they were finished, they (along with everyone else) were squealing with laughter. Their fellowship was restored, which was the ultimate goal.

Wash each other's feet. We have a small tub reserved for this and we are always on the lookout for discounted soaps, body wash, bath beads and lotions just for this purpose. Several of our daughters offer a foot-wash to their daddy after he's had a hard day's work. They also give great pedicures! In biblical times, foot-washing was reserved for the lowliest servant and can still be a humbling exercise. Proverbs 13:10 says, "Only by pride cometh contention" (emphasis mine). When there is contention, there is always pride! The cure for pride is humility. I've

heard a humbled child quietly ask forgiveness (without any prompting from Mom!) while washing their sibling's feet.

Hold hands for a set amount of time (usually 30 minutes). During that time they must cooperate with one another in order to accomplish anything. This works well when we are out shopping.

Spend time together, whether working or playing. If the feuding occurs during chore time, they will be asked to assist one another with each of their chores. During free time, each child chooses an activity or game they would like the other to participate in. At times I have devised long-term projects when the offenders seem to be having more of a struggle in their relationship with one another.

Feed one another. No one wants to feed someone they are angry with and you certainly don't want to be at this person's mercy to feed you! This is a great motivator to reconcile although I only use this one after another "cure" has failed. Once when Corrie and Isaac were younger (maybe six and five years old, respectively), they were still nit-picking while holding hands. I was cooking dinner at the time and informed them that if they couldn't reconcile their differences by the time dinner was on the table, they would be feeding one another. Several minutes later I heard Corrie humbly ask Isaac's forgiveness for her wrongdoing. She then suggested they play a game after dinner.

Re-enact the conversation. This is a wonderful training tool to help teach children to properly communicate and to consider their words carefully. With Mom or Dad's help, have the offenders replay the conversation. Questions can be interjected such as, "Was that the right thing to say?" "How would you feel if they said that to you?" "How could you respond differently next time?" If conviction doesn't come quickly, I pray with the children, asking the Lord to speak to each of their hearts before resuming.

Pray a blessing over each other.

This is good when the children have been harsh with their words, condemning, criticizing or attacking each other verbally. After stating the offense and asking for forgiveness, the offenders hold hands and take turns asking the Lord to bless the other child and to help them love one another. We have found this to be very effective.

Note: These “cures” are not meant to be punishment, per se. Though it may seem like chastisement to the offenders, the goal is to restore the fellowship and to build the relationship. As we’ve used these methods through the years, we have been blessed by the results. Our children are best friends (most of the time). The older girls still wash each other’s feet on occasion, but now it is because they want to!

CHERYL LONG

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 Cheryl blogs at
www.treasuresfromashoebox.blogspot.com

Dishwashing Pair

My brother and I used to fight all the time, all day and every day. We couldn't seem to get along. Finally my father had enough and told us that until we stopped fighting we had to do the dishes together after every meal every day! He made us work out who would wash and who would dry, who would clear and who would put away. It was horrible at first but eventually we became efficient and started to work out a schedule between the two of us. It helped us to learn to work together.

LAUREN GROTTTS

Norman, Oklahoma, USA
 amylee9090@gmail.com
 Obadiah and Lauren are looking forward to a new baby in October 2011.

Best Friends!

My husband and I grew up in homes where our siblings (both sisters) were allowed to fight with us. Now, as adults, we do not have relationships with our only

siblings. Over the years we have tried to make amends, but to no avail.

When we first married, my husband and I both agreed that it would be different with our children. We did not want them to go through the sibling pain we experienced. At first we agreed to allow no fighting—period! Then as we started having children, we told them as young as they were able to understand, "Your brother (or sister) is your BEST friend!"

As situations come up, we handle conflict by making them aware of their sibling's feelings or needs, and realizing their wrong actions. We ask them to specifically apologize and forgive each other for their wrong behavior and follow it with a hug and kiss. The apology is not just an "I'm sorry I got caught." It includes, "I'm sorry for..." (specific behavior they did wrong). "Next time I will..." (think of what they can do instead). "Will you forgive me?" (asking for that release of forgiveness)

Usually, by the time they finish the apology and hug, they are laughing. If the one who started it won't apologize, or is still too angry to make amends, we have them sit in the bathroom in isolation until they cool off before making amends. If they destroyed or damaged something of their siblings, or were really mean to them, we follow through with restitution. They give them something belonging to them, help them buy something to replace what was ruined, or have them do something extra special for their sibling such as help them with a chore or write a card for them. We then repeat how their sibling will always be their best friend, above anyone else.

We had two whose personalities clashed a lot. After we started home-schooling, they started understanding each other better. Spending more quality one-on-one time together really helped! Now they often request to play with each other during free time. This didn't happen overnight. We had to encourage them to play and spend time together.

We also developed a decision to have "zero tolerance" for physical violence of any kind. We do not allow hitting, biting, kicking, throwing things at each other, or pushing at all. It usually takes a couple of



Ryan and Stephanie with their children—Melody (9), Luke (7), Destiny (4 1/2) and Ethan (2).

times before they realize we mean business. When you make stopping it a number one priority, it will stop.

Another thing that helps keep peace between siblings is praying for each other. We also teach them to praise each other's accomplishments and efforts. We model this, and praise them when we "catch" them being kind or loving to each other.

We also evaluate everything that is in our home, or comes into our home that affects the atmosphere. We quickly got rid of cable and TV! We check their music. Hanging out with unruly neighbor children also affected our son's behavior in the home. He was "down on girls" and treated his sisters badly after time spent with the unruly children. Children become like those they hang around with. It is our job as parents to protect our children. Everything we allow or don't allow will affect how they view and treat their siblings.

We also carefully guard what we let others "speak over" our children. Some people say, "Siblings are just supposed to fight." We lovingly correct them if our children are within earshot. My husband and I have seen the fruit of our efforts. Even though our children are young, they truly are each other's best friends. We expect this fruit to last and to bear fruit even in their children's lives. We are glad we changed our family tree through them! Siblings can get along and grow up loving each other!

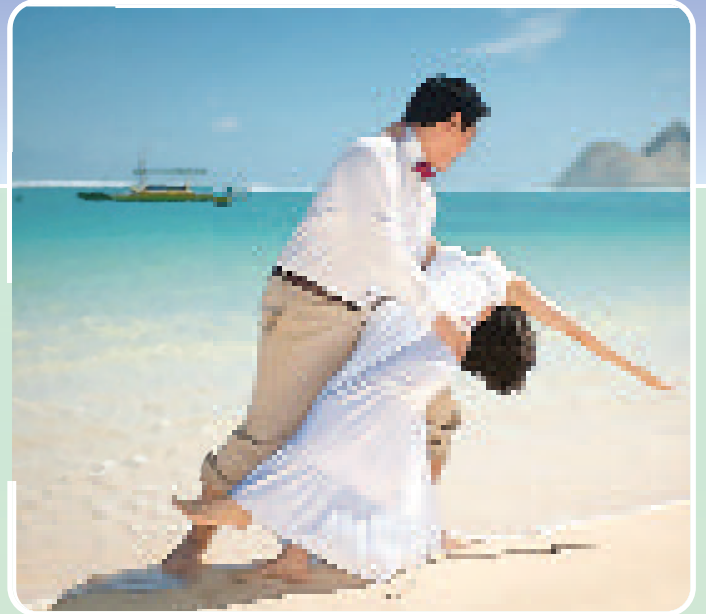
STEPHANIE GILES

Flagstaff, Arizona, USA
 giles.stephanie@gmail.com

“The philosophy of the classroom in one generation will be the philosophy of the government in the next.”

~ Abraham Lincoln

Honeymoon in HAWAII



God saved me when I was 30 years old. My husband and I had been married for nine years at the time and we had two boys. My heart and mind were filled with the lies and deception of pride, selfishness and the ways of the world. I was the world's modern woman and had a career I loved. I even worked with my husband and came home to my family afterwards. Then, God began to move in my mind and heart in a gentle, yet powerful way. I couldn't get enough of God's Word. Truth took root in my being.

Changes took place, especially in the area of my being a wife and mother. I saw the godly lives of the women in my church and wanted it so much. I had no idea what being "submissive to my own husband" meant in practice. I ran to my Lord asking how, and why? I was angry at one point for having been lied to for so many years, because believing those lies had cost all of us great heart ache and troubles. When I learned that God had created me to be a "keeper at home," I wanted to be that kind of wife and mother, too. I wanted all that God desired for my family. I studied His Word to find out what that would mean.

My husband was not saved, but he did not oppose the "new me." He didn't like it that I was at church so much, but I asked his permission every time, believing God would one day save him also. It was good practice in learning how to submit to his authority. I learned to ask his permission if a missionary, or an evangelist could have supper with us, or if I could help in the four to five year old Sunday School class. Countless times Malcolm has told others that it was because I learned to submit that our marriage has lasted. I'm still learning!

All my life, from the time I was a little girl, I wanted to live on a farm and raise a family in the country. Shortly after my

conversion, God gave me that request. I began to build up our little poultry flock, our little herd of goats, cows and horses and gardening became my passion. I was having the greatest time of my life. God allowed me to quit my full time Accounting Manager job to stay at home full time. Both my husband and I were blessed beyond measure with that one major change.

However, because we were not working at the office together anymore, and he had no interest in the "farm things," we began to drift apart. I pleaded with my Father for his soul, and for wisdom. Then my husband's father passed away and he withdrew further. We decided we needed counseling; he would find the counselor. Instead, he came home with tickets to a vacation in Hawaii. He told me that it would be dollars better spent than paying some counselor who had tons of troubles himself. But, I was deathly afraid of flying, especially over "big water." I thought I was perfectly content with our new lifestyle and didn't want to go anywhere else. I could hear a knock on my heart's door, "Trust me, you said you wanted to know what submission meant in your life, you will trust me, won't you?"

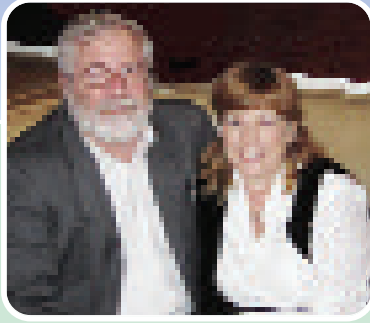
My husband said that I had to sell my little goat dairy because it tied me down too much. He said that it took me away from being with him too much. I had learned that prayer availed much in my life, so I ran to my Father's arms crying and rebelling, "Does this mean I have to submit to this too?" Guess what His answer was? So...I put an ad in the local paper right away, trusting and waiting to see how God would "take care of everything." And He did. Buyers for the goats came quickly and I received top dollar for them. Life-long friendships developed

from those sales, and yet one goat did not sell, even when I lowered the price. It was my favorite one and I believed God did that on purpose!

The next great release was to leave our small children home for 10 days. I had never been away from them for that long, and who would I get to take care of them God provided again—a young lady from our church, the eldest of seven children. She lived at the farm, cooked, cleaned, and helped care for the animals as well. My boys were seven and nine and pleaded with me not to go, but when it came time to leave, things were perfectly arranged. Of course, I knew that God had done all of it.

We did not have a honeymoon when we got married, so our little trip to Hawaii was just that. It was the first time we were together without distractions. We had no reason to leave one another's side. We talked, rested, and talked and rested some more. Our intimate times together were revived—very special and wonderful.

I talked a lot about Jesus with Malcolm during that time. My heart was so burdened for him to be saved, but he was not the least bit interested. He was my best friend, yet he could not understand my desire to live for the Lord who was my Savior. However, he agreed to attend church together while we were there. It was a little open-air sanctuary, with the sweetest people ever! Since we were never apart, I really missed my daily "routine" time/place with my Lord. The song "Sweet Hour of Prayer" sang in my heart constantly and filled it with gladness. Just as I longed so much to be with my hus-

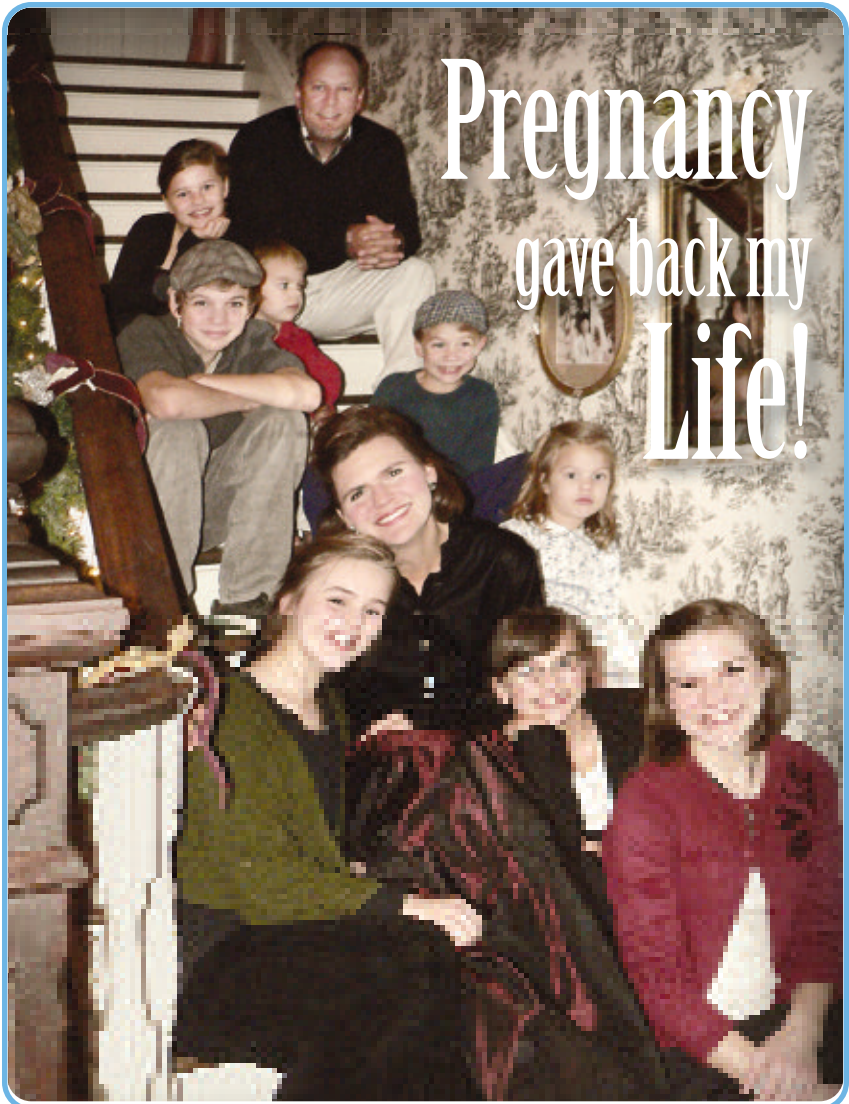


band on this honeymoon, I learned that God longs to hear my petitions and be a part of my life. I even learned to praise God during all those special, intimate times together. This was truly a gift from God. Neither one of us wanted this great time to stop, so we arranged to stay an extra three days!

This is just one of the countless miracles that God has worked out in our marriage. Over the years, even my husband has seen the hand of our Lord in it all. We have been married 36 years now and when people ask him for marital advice, he tells the husband to take his wife to Hawaii for a honeymoon.

It was 20 years later before God saved my sweet Hubby. Today, Malcolm is a wonderful godly man, husband and father. God has allowed us to live in a beautiful place where we operate a small non-profit children's home and Christian school. We've had over 250 foster children and adopted seven of them. We still have four young ones at home: Josiah and Paul, both 12 years old, Elsie Kay (8), and "Libby" Rose, (6). We serve an amazing God, a faithful Provider and Sustainer.

LYNN McDERMOTT,
proud wife of Malcolm McDermott,
Mother to countless children, And hand-
maid and daughter of the KING!
Pleasanton, Texas, USA
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Shane and Chace with their children, Abbie (17), Emma (15), Jackson (13 1/2), Libby (12), Ruby (10), Ethan (8), Josephine (6), Tate (4), and new baby due November 2011.

"You don't have a choice," the doctor said. "You've been hemorrhaging at critical levels for over a year. The ovary we drained last year has become toxic and it's cutting off the circulation in your uterus, causing varicosities throughout your entire abdominal wall. We either take it, or it takes your life." I submitted to the emergency procedure, a removal of my left ovary and fallopian tube, which later proved to be cancerous. After a battle with malignant carcinoma in my cervix only nine years before, and with eight children to rear for the glory of God, I couldn't afford to be a maverick, nor to take any chances.

As I wrestled with multiple, life altering, post-op complications, in the excruciating months that followed, I watched a neighbor from my upstairs

bedroom window, coming back and forth from chemotherapy appointments for ovarian cancer. She'd lost her magnificent, thick, long hair, and I grieved with her over the emotionally wrenching experience of choosing her first wig. This friendship gave me the perspective I needed. The most difficult part of my post-op drama was a large rip in the fascia in my abdomen, inadvertently caused when the surgeon removed her instruments carelessly. Without the additional surgery, I would have been at risk for wearing a colostomy bag for the rest of my life.

While healing from that third surgery, in my eighth child's toddler years, we pieced together the puzzle of a myriad of health problems that had surfaced during the years the ovary had

been causing difficulties. These debilitating issues could all be traced back to dangerously low estrogen levels, as a result of my entering the perimenopausal years, while only having the hormonal support of the one healthy ovary.

We learned that estrogen is a non-negotiable part of a woman's health, as it controls over 400 basic bodily functions. Without it, the neurotransmitters in my brain weren't firing the way God designed them to, so I couldn't sleep more than an hour or two at a time. My skin felt like there were bugs crawling under it frequently, which added to the overwhelming insomnia. TMJ migraines left me in a quiet, dark room, for hours, even days, as estrogen is a natural analgesic. The amount of pain medicine it took to get through a day was destroying my stomach and some of my pain meds made it unsafe to drive. I was also suffering from cardio-related anxiety and severe chest pains, as even your heart can't function according to God's design, without adequate estrogen levels. Even expensive, bioidentical compounded hormones, only improved my situation by about 40 percent.

In order to stay the course, as a woman committed to the Titus 2 mandate, regardless of my body's problems, my family and I began to plan out systems and new ways of coping. We immediately bowed out of all outside extracurricular activities, including academic homeschool co-ops, and sold a decade long investment of teacher intensive curriculum. We replaced it with computer-based lectures and interactive teaching methods and I was finally back within my bandwidth, to where there was something left over at the end of each day for my husband.

After a miraculous series of events, we were able to purchase a larger home, which made a world of difference in our ability to spread out on our busy school days. Our five daughters, alongside their brothers, learned to scrape, paint, and lay tile, as the foreclosure we bought needed lots of work before we could move in. Curious onlookers couldn't believe how hard we all worked to make the transition. "Blood, sweat, and tears" they called it, and all with Mama limp in' along, with my hormone-related health drama, up and down our steep historic staircase, over and over, slowly renovating and getting unpacked.

Our family calendar and ability to be productive on anything other than daily domestic tasks, seemed depressing at times, but we were all so grateful that the hemorrhaging had been resolved. With all the complications of a post-op, perimenopausal woman with only one ovary, there were only three or four good days each month for mom to rush about and accomplish a full month's of errands.

Well meaning people asked why I didn't throw in the towel and have a hysterectomy, but that would have been the most illogical answer of all, as the hormones I was still able to produce, via my right ovary, were the antidote to additional low estrogen problems, and therefore my most precious commodity. We continued to pray that the bioidenticals, supplements, and nutritious food I consumed would improve my condition, and were grateful that my life had been spared by a redemptive God who loved us enough to expose and remove the life threatening cancer twice.

Much to our surprise, an egg appeared on my fertility monitor one sunny winter morning. I knew the scar tissue from the cervical cancer surgery was thick, and from a medical perspective, I was highly unlikely to conceive so we were elated when two pink lines appeared on a pregnancy test two weeks later. I had no idea how much my husband and children had longed for this day. They'd all chosen to be selflessly content in their outward appearance as a form of kindness towards me, since my health history meant that another baby was not likely, and they knew how sad that made me.

However, I'm now in my 13th week now, and even though fatigue and nausea defined my first trimester, the SURGE OF ESTROGEN pulsing through my veins trumped the inconvenience these two early pregnancy symptoms caused. Almost overnight, as my hormone levels began to rise, I had to wean from the bioidenticals. I regained the energy and passion for life that I'd lost so suddenly when the ovary was removed.

The children feel like God has deposited the mom they knew from before the surgeries, back into our home, and they almost don't recognize me. My "get up and go," my "hudzpa," has returned fully, and the freedom to engage in outings and social events is one I will never

take for granted again.

Research indicates that if I choose to embrace my "babymoon," the newborn and infant phase, postpartum, where my body needs to be homeward and focused on embracing this new life, rather than keeping up with the Joneses, that the amount of estrogen I'm receiving now will flush and reset my system for many years! I am committed to not overdoing it during that important time, to avoid the consequence of inviting the stress hormone, cortisol, into my mix, as it nullifies the rich abundance of hormones God blesses us with in pregnancy. According to current medical research, my need for bioidenticals could be significantly less complicated until this child in my womb becomes a toddler! I am shocked and astounded! Never in a million years would I have dreamed that a ninth pregnancy, after all my body has been through, would actually be the right answer for my health problems.

CHACE SIMMONS

Waxahachie, Texas, USA
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P.S. Chace, who once danced and taught dance professionally, had to walk away from most forms of physical fitness during the difficult post-op years. Because of the estrogen surge of her pregnancy, she was able to dance with her five daughters at church during her 13th week of pregnancy, on Resurrection Day, Easter Sunday. The lyrics and choreography to the Gateway worship song they danced to were symbolic of all God had done for her and her family:

You saved my life from death,
I was all but defeated.
You spoke your promises,
And brought life to my weakness.
Came as a conquering King,
And you warred for my freedom.
My soul can't help but sing, Hallelujah!

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700 Sam Hollow Rd • Dickson, TN 37055 • www.garnercreek.com
Contact: Shelly Cathcart • Ph: 828-586-3024 • shelly.cathcart@gmail.com
Or Katharine Collings • Ph: 828-226-8414 • mikatcoll@yahoo.com*
Serene, Pearl and Evangeline will be attending this retreat.

26 – 28 AUGUST, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

FAMILY and LADIES RETREAT at Pine Valley Bible Conference Center
Contact: Gary and Trish Evans • Ph: 951-681-4858 or Cell: 951-315-9078
Email: gtkdz@empirenet.com

16 – 18 SEPTEMBER, WASHINGTON

LADIES RETREAT at Camp Brotherhood, Mount Vernon
24880 Brotherhood Rd, Mount Vernon, WA 98274
<http://www.campbrotherhood.org> • Ph: Pat Slater: 360-420-1468
Contact: Meighan Graham • Email: skagitvalleyrubies@gmail.com
Ph: 206-351-2942 or 206-909-3534

23 – 25 SEPTEMBER, ALBERTA

1ST ANNUAL LADIES RETREAT, Pioneer Lodge, Sundre
Only 1.5 hours out of Calgary!
Contact: Michelle Kauenhofen • Ph: 204-388-6015, 204-355-7682
Email: ceducate@xplornet.ca

21 – 23 OCTOBER, ALABAMA

LADIES RETREAT at Shocco Springs Christian Retreat Center,
Talladega, Alabama
Contact: Julie Rodgers • jrose0152@yahoo.com * • Ph: 256-520-2497
Or Contact: Melody Stroud • stroud_crowd@yahoo.com *
** This e-mail address is being protected from spambots.
You need JavaScript enabled to view it*

28 – 30 OCTOBER, CALIFORNIA/NEVADA

LADIES RETREAT at Zephyr Point Presbyterian Conf. Center, Lake Tahoe
Contact: Kasey Channell • Ph. 530-544-1366 or 530-307-2442
Email: kkchannell@hotmail.com
Or Jennifer Brackett • Ph. 530-318-3370 • brackettjen@gmail.com

4 – 6 NOVEMBER, OREGON

LADIES RETREAT at Aldersgate, Turner (South of Salem)
Contact: Pam Fields • Ph: 503-363-0579 • quiverfull@divix.biz
Or Terri Burkert • Ph: 541-580-2905 • burktertstravel@yahoo.com
Go to website: www.oregonrubies.com

2012

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Email: ceducate@xplornet.ca

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LADIES RETREAT, Black Lake Bible Camp, Olympia
Contact Nicole Stol with questions concerning registration.
Ph: 253-655-4713 • ar blessings@gmail.com
Or other questions: Heather Bryant
Ph: 360-271-9668 • hbbry91@msn.com

2 – 18 MARCH, UNITED KINGDOM AND ERUOPE

For all details contact:
Alice Gurr at info@aboverubies.co.uk • (020) 8224 3628

31 MARCH – 1 APRIL, WISCONSIN

14th ANNUAL FAMILY RETREAT at Inspiration Center, Williams Bay
Contact Roger and Jackie Thelen
Ph: 262 723 6557 • safehaven@pensys.com

13 – 15 APRIL, TEXAS

Contact: Jeanette Watje • Ph: 830-608-0880 Email:
Retreat2011@TexasRubies.com • www.TexasRubies.com

1 – 3 JUNE, LOUISIANA

FAMILY RETREAT at Rocky Creek Conference Center, Pineville
Contact: Angela Decoteau • Ph: 225 715 1587 • calmdec@cox.net

8 – 10 JUNE, ONTARIO, CANADA

FAMILY CAMP at Torrance (near Gravenhurst)
Contact: Alison Morrison • labadddc@hotmail.com • 705-458-9631

22 – 24 JUNE, MANITOBA, CANADA

5th ANNUAL LADIES RETREAT at Wilderness Edge Retreat Centre,
Pinawa. We will celebrate Nancy's birthday at this retreat!
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Email: ceducate@xplornet.ca

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LADIES RETREAT at Camp Manitoqua & Retreat Center
Frankfort, IL (35 miles SW of Chicago) • www.manitoqua.org
Contact: Becky Gustafson • windycityrubies@gmail.com
Or Denice Gustafson • gusfamily7@gmail.com
www.windycityrubies.blogspot.com

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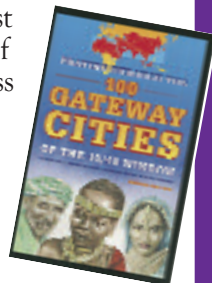
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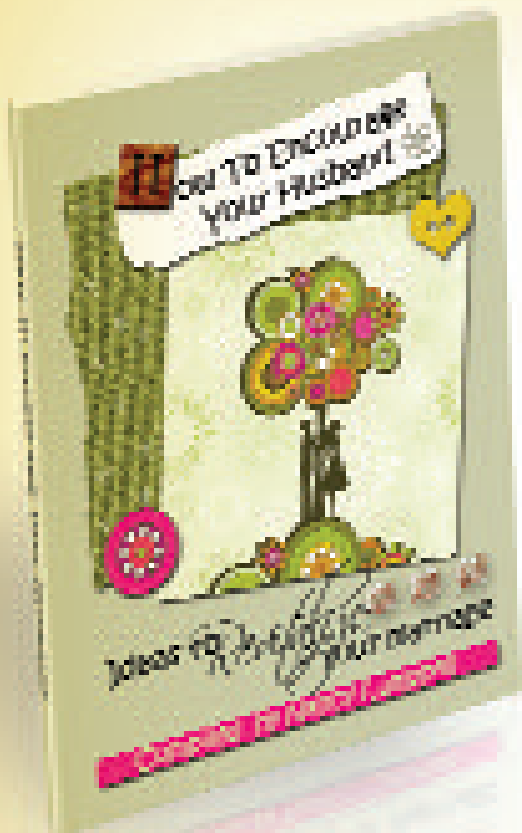
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