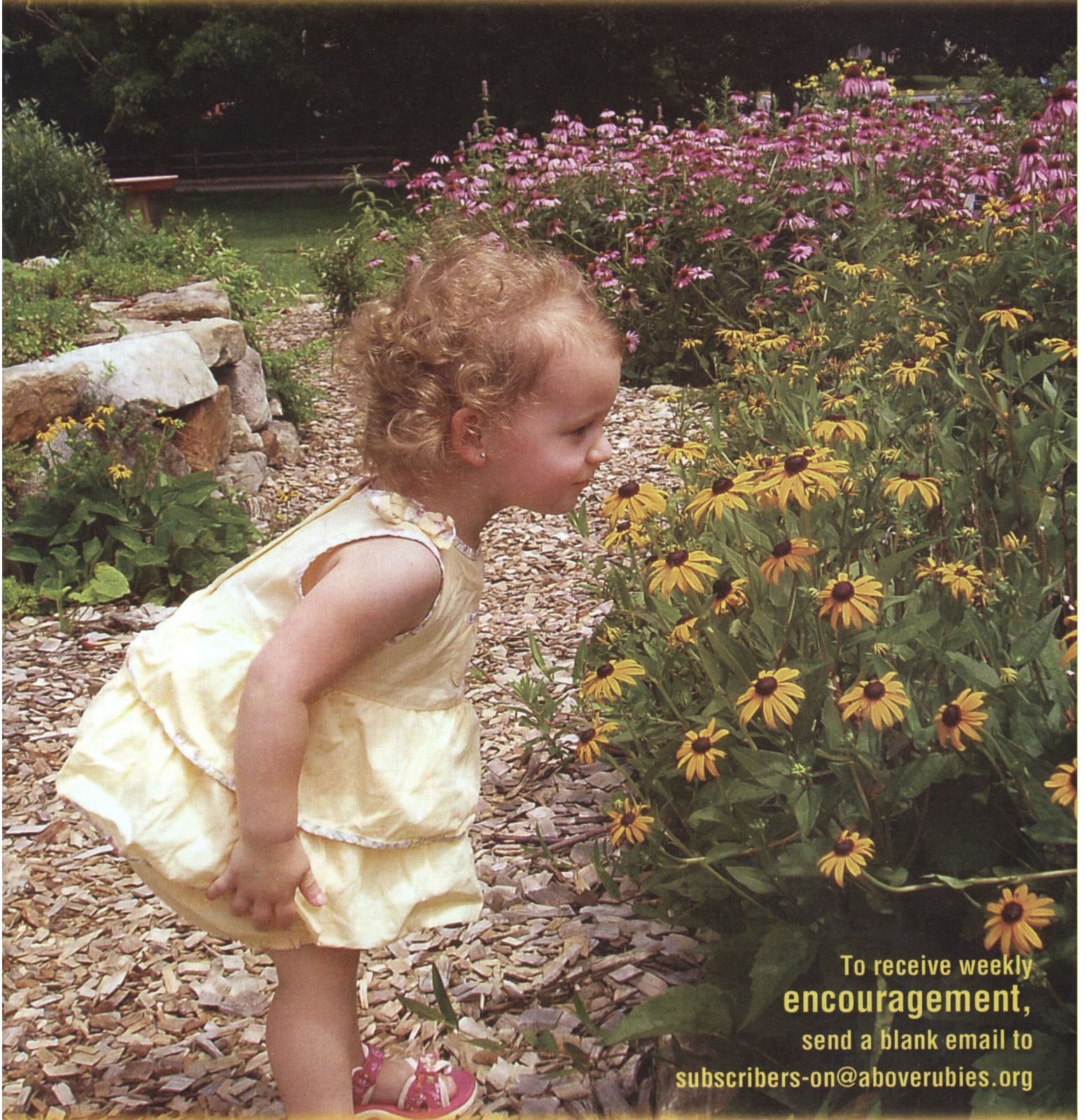


ABOVE RUBIES

www.aboverubies.org

Issue number: Seventy

Strengthening Families Across The World



To receive weekly
encouragement,
send a blank email to
subscribers-on@aboverubies.org

From Our Home to Yours

I am always delighted to bring another *Above Rubies* magazine into your home. I never tire of preparing this encouragement for you. I should say that I do get tired, but I don't get tired of doing the job! I am now in the thirtieth year of publishing this magazine and it is still my greatest joy to undergird, strengthen, fortify, inspire and encourage the mothers and families of the world. I feel very close to God's heart as I do this work as I know His heart is for families. He wants families—father and mothers—to be strengthened and inspired in their family life and therefore I feel like I am working with God.

I could fill the whole magazine with the comments that come in every day from wives and mothers whose lives are changed by *Above Rubies*. I'll share a few.

"Your magazine is like sweet honey to my soul."

"After reading *Above Rubies* I have been encouraged to sit together as a family to eat our meals. When I asked my husband what he felt about doing this he responded with, "Really, that would be nice." I had never thought about doing this until I read *Above Rubies*."

"One day I was "in the flesh" and ready to burst! Right then I happened to receive *Above Rubies*. As I read from cover to cover my bad mood slowly dissipated. I was reminded how my calling as wife and mother has power to bless and encourage, build and edify. By the time I finished reading, the anger had melted away. I felt the Holy Spirit correcting and convicting. I repented and spent the day blessing my husband and family with love and affection."

"I have fallen in love with your magazine."

"My 10 year old daughter and I pore over each *Above Rubies* magazine and eagerly soak up all the wonderful nuggets it has to offer. Thanks to your ministry I am a more patient and loving mother. I finally understand what it means to be submissive to my husband and have repented of my sins in this area. I am joyfully embracing my role as mother, teacher, wife, cook, and house keeper. We have repented of our sin of birth control and my husband had a

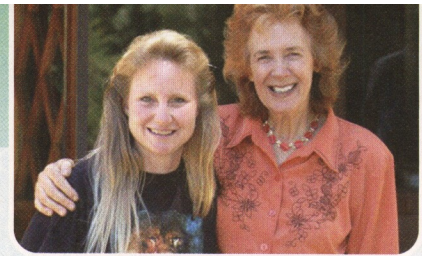
vasectomy reversal in July 2005. We are excited to report that we are expecting our fourth baby!

...Thanks to *Above Rubies* and your dedication to serving the Lord, our family has learned how to eat real living food. Just two years ago our family suffered from regular illnesses and I was taking five prescription medications. I was told I would be on these medications for the rest of my life and there was no cure for my illnesses. Today I take no medications, either prescription or over the counter. Praise be to our mighty Lord Jesus, I feel better today at age 37 than I did at age 27 with my first pregnancy! Your work really is making a difference in the lives of your readers."

"*Above Rubies* is my most favorite magazine. I devour it the moment it comes and it never disappoints me."

"We are expecting our sixth child and feel incredibly blessed. Before reading *Above Rubies*, I don't know if we would be having this wonderful experience, but God has done miracles in our hearts and minds."

"*Above Rubies* challenges me every time I open the cover. The minute it comes in the mail I sit down and devour every little article, read every caption



Nancy with Trish Evans. Trish and her husband, Gary, are preparing their 15th *Above Rubies* retreat in August this year. Check page 27 for details. Trish is expecting her 7th baby in September.

under every picture and then do it all over again."

"*Above Rubies* has helped turn my life around! I eagerly await each new issue and jump with excitement like a little child when the new one arrives!"

"I am so uplifted by the articles shared by mothers all over the world that I literally float from one task to another with a smile. I cuddle my toddlers 'till they gasp for breathing room and hug my husband tighter for weeks. Sometimes as mothers we feel we are doing a thankless job, and certainly wonder if we are "fighting the good fight" alone, but when your magazine arrives I am reminded that I am doing exactly what God created me to do."

"Your magazines are the most precious reading I've ever owned besides my Bible. Your encouraging words come back to give me strength at troubled moments."



Red-haired Vision, Sam and Serene's youngest. He doesn't look like anyone in his family, but of course he looks like his "Nana"! When we want Vision to smile, we say, "Put on your Christmas smile, Vision," and this is the result!



Above: Harry Campbell, second son of Rocklyn and Monique. What do you think of these eyes?



Sharon with John Wesley (Jack), youngest child of Wesley and Sharon.

"I love *Above Rubies*. It's like drinking from a fresh water spring in the desert. I especially love reading about your family and seeing how the grandchildren are growing up."

"I devour *Above Rubies* each time they come and I am quick to pass them on to my long list of needy friends."

"Your magazine is a highlight in my life!"

"A friend of mine was shopping with her children when a woman handed her four issues of *Above Rubies*. After being blessed by them, she passed them on to me and another friend, and we were blessed as well. Thank you so much for your encouraging ministry."

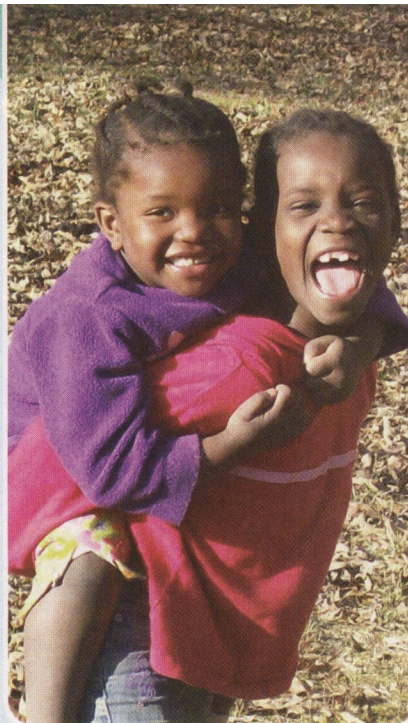
Husbands too—"My husband saw *Above Rubies* and picked it up. He read and read and read. His comment to me was that he was blown away!"

I must stop now or I will fill the whole magazine! We are preparing for the addition of new children into our extended family—Evangeline is due to have her 9th baby at the end of April and Serene is looking forward to having their 11th baby mid-May. I thought we would have our children from Liberia by now, but typical with adoptions, there have been delays. Hopefully they will come home late March. I will have lots to share in the next issue.

Pearl and Serene are gradually working on their next two CDs. Pearl's husband, Charlie, who is their producer, has finished all the music for their Lullaby CD and the girls are now doing the vocals. Pray that Serene can find some moments of time to record in the midst of mothering her ten children and soon to have number eleven!

Serene and Pearl have also written all the words and music for the next project which is a CD for children. No, it's not children's songs, but songs to minister into the lives of your children. As they were writing the lullabies, they felt they needed to also write songs that would inspire and "speak" words of inspiration to children of all ages. This CD is going to bring great blessing into your home. You'll want to have it playing day and night!

But, that's not all. Charlie and two other fathers with gifted voices are writing the most wonderful songs for men. We were hoping to have it ready for Father's Day but time is getting away on us. Keep it in mind for a special Christmas gift for



Cherish is such a strong little girl and always piggy-backs Engedi all the way through the woods from Serene's place to ours. She delights to carry the heaviest loads and I think could out-carry some young men!

your husband this Christmas.

But, there's more yet! When these projects are completed we have something very exciting coming up in the music realm. It's too good to tell you about yet. I'll wait until it gets closer to the time. With all that we have going on musically we desperately need a studio here on the land. At the moment, they do all the

ABOVE RUBIES

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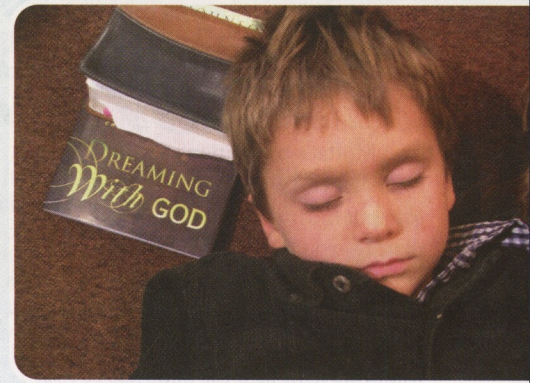
Above Rubies is a magazine to encourage women in their high calling as wives, mothers and homemakers. Its purpose is to uphold and strengthen family life and to raise the standard of God's truth in the nation. The name has been chosen from Proverbs 31:10 AMP, "A capable, intelligent and virtuous woman, 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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GRAPHICS: Duane Dominy, Dominy & Associates, duanead@excite.com

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COVER PHOTO: Michael and Pamela Turner's little girl, Julia, smells the flowers. New Jersey, USA.



*This picture was not contrived. Evangeline's boy, Arrow Masada (5 years) fell asleep on the floor at church, not knowing he was sleeping by the book, *Dreaming with God* (which someone had left on the floor). They just had to take a picture!*

recording in one of Pearl's bedrooms, so all children have to be out of the house when they record. This really slows us down!

I will give you a glimpse of a few more of our grandchildren in this editorial. It seems that readers love keeping up with our family. There's a lot to keep up with so a few each time!

Keep up your great work of parenting. And keep the joy in your home. God intends homes to be full of joy. He intends mothers to be joyful. Sadly, there are many homes where joy has gone out the window. This is because the enemy of our souls has robbed them. The devil is out to destroy homes and destroy the joy. Don't let him have the victory in your home.

Instead of focusing on all the problems, cultivate joy. When the children are all going "crazy" stop what you are doing, sit down with them and read together. Or get everyone together, go round the circle and encourage each one to say something special about someone in the family circle. Do this frequently so everyone has a turn. Plan some special meals around your table. Plan some fun things to do together as a family.

Smile at your children. This brings joy to your heart and to your children. If you smile a lot more instead of frowning, a whole lot more joy will come into your home. Don't wait until you feel happy or feel like smiling. Do it anyway. This action will change the atmosphere. I was reading the book of Job recently. In one part he was reminiscing the good times when God's blessing was upon him (which also came back upon him double fold.) He said, "When they were discouraged I

From Our Home to Yours *cont.*

smiled and that encouraged them, and lightened their spirits." (Job 29:24 TLB).

Moffat's translation says, "When I smiled, it encouraged them; my cheerful gaze put heart into the hopeless." I love that. Do you feel hopelessness in your home? A smile will change it. A smile will chase away discouragement, depression, deception and even discontent. A smile will bring light into the darkness of your home. A smile will cause troubles to take wings.

Smile with your mouth and smile with your eyes. Proverbs 15:30 Knox says, "The eye that smiles, how it cheers the heart."

NANCY CAMPBELL
Primm Springs, Tennessee, USA

Above Rubies E-Groups

Come and join over 1,500 women from 16 different countries of the world as they encourage and help one another in their high calling of mothering and home-making.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AboveRubies/>

Down Under E-group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AboveRubiesDOWNUNDER/>

United Kingdom E-group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AboveRubiesUK/>

Study the Above Rubies Manuals Online

The Power of Motherhood: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/POMSTUDY/>

The Family Meal Table and Hospitality: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FMTSTUDY/>

Be Fruitful and Multiply/God's Vision for Families: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/GVFSTUDY/>

Questions, please email: Tamie Krawczeski at tamielovestn@hotmail.com



My husband is a Naval Flight Officer and usually spends at least half of his year apart from us. He is not only a defender of our family, but also a defender of the freedoms and liberties we Christians hold so dearly. Sometimes he leaves at the drop of a hat and will be gone for months at a time. We move frequently—four times in the last two and a half years. Our surroundings and houses may differ greatly from month to

Honoring Daddy

month, but one thing remains constant—our seven children and I honor their father.

As the children honor and serve their Daddy, they also honor and serve Christ. When Daddy is here, he is served first. At mealtime he has the first and largest portion. At playtime he is the center of their attention and adoration. When we are grocery shopping we shop for food to make "daddy's favorite meals," or "a special treat for Daddy."

The children get together and clean Daddy's car as a "special surprise" while he is relaxing. They leave little notes and drawings in his flight suit pockets or his flight bag. They stick paper hearts filled with x's and o's in his lunchbox. They make sure they keep themselves clean, tucked in, and otherwise presentable to "look nice for Daddy when he gets home." They are vigilant with their chores to lighten Daddy's burden, because "Daddy works so hard."

They are always on their best behavior in public so that people see they "obey Daddy because they love him." Our days are centered round serving Daddy and serving God.

When Daddy is on deployment, they send letters and pictures. They keep a journal of what he is missing. They write him

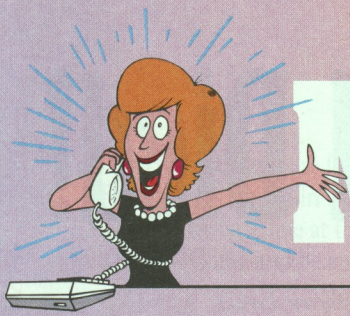
poems and songs. They send care packages with homemade crafts and treats. I have heard that the men who fly with my husband have as much anticipation over the arrival of our mail as my husband. A lot of these men hold my husband in great esteem simply because of our adoration and respect for him. They may not recognize their Heavenly Father's love, but it is perfectly clear to them the love this father has, both to and by his little brood.

I want my daughters to grow up seeing that I love, respect, honor, and obey my husband. They, in turn, will do the same when it is their time. I want my boys to see that one of the blessings of being a godly man is to have an adoring wife and children. Some of the first verses my children memorized from the Bible were Psalms 127 and 128. We try and live our lives so that people will see that my husband is blessed by his little quiver.

LESLIANNE

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This lovely family are blessed with seven children - Samuel (11), Jacob (9), Chloe (7), Lydia (6), Daniel (4), Henry (17 months), and Sophia (3 months).



Tell-a-Marketer Missionary

IN YOUR OWN HOME!

I was sitting in my easy chair, reading my Bible and praying. "Dear God," I prayed out loud, "Please help me to be a witness for you today, Amen." Then, I got up and started dusting my house.



Ring-g-g-g-g!

LINDA: Oh, there's that phone, again... and, it's probably just another telemarketer. I'm not going to answer it this time. I'm just too busy!

VOICE OF GOD IN MY HEART: Linda, haven't you prayed for opportunities to tell other people about Me?

LINDA: (looking aghast) Uh, well, uh...

Ring-g-g-g-g!

LINDA: OK, I guess I'll answer it...Hello?

TELEMARKETER: (with a nasal monotone) May I speak with Mr. Beeris? ("Burris", mispronounced).

LINDA: I'm sorry...he's not available.

TELEMARKETER: (still nasal monotone, obviously reading a script) Oh, is this MRS. Beeris? Ma'am, if I could just have a minute of your time. We have a special today on home repairs. Isn't there a project that you've been wanting to see completed on your home?

LINDA: Well, honestly, we really don't have anything we want to do at this time, but...may I ask you a question?

TELEMARKETER: (still nasal monotone,

but a bit surprised) Well....yes, ma'am.

LINDA: Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life...no one comes to the Father except by me." But, what about you...who do you say Jesus is?

TELEMARKETER: (no longer nasal monotone, normal voice) Me...you're asking me?

LINDA: Yes, ma'am.

TELEMARKETER: (surprised) Well, uh, uh, I don't know who he is.

LINDA: Ma'am, I believe that God had you call today so that you could hear that Jesus loves you very much.

TELEMARKETER: (still surprised) What?

LINDA: (gently) Jesus died for your sins, and He wants you to live forever with Him in Heaven.

(There is a longer pause, as the telemarketer stares into the phone.)

TELEMARKETER: (back to nasal monotone, as though reading a script again) Oh, well, thank you very much, Mrs. Beeris. If you have any questions, please call 1-800-444-3333. Have a good day. Good-bye.

(After the phone call, the telemarketer is very obviously thinking about what I had said...perhaps tapping her chin or with her arms folded. The point here is to show that the planting of seeds of God's truth never comes back void, though we don't always "see" the results.)

I smiled up at God, gently hanging up the phone. I bowed my head in prayer for the telemarketer, "Thank you, God, for giving me an opportunity to witness for You today, even as a stay-at-home mom."

Over the last ten years or so I have talked to many telemarketers about Jesus. Only about one in one hundred hang

up...if that many. The vast majority carry on a conversation for a few moments. Of course, a few still hope to sell me something after I witness to them, but if I let them know at the outset that I am not interested in their product, they usually do not do that.

Let me tell you about Mark from India who said he believed in Jesus, but who also said that he believed in other "gods" as well! He did not believe that anyone could know for sure whether or not they would go to Heaven when they died. I told him what the Bible said about Jesus being the "only way to God" and about not worshipping other gods. I also told him what it said about knowing for sure that you can be ready to go to Heaven.

"I did not know this good information," he said. "I will tell my friends about this. You are the only American who has ever told me about this. I will buy a Bible."

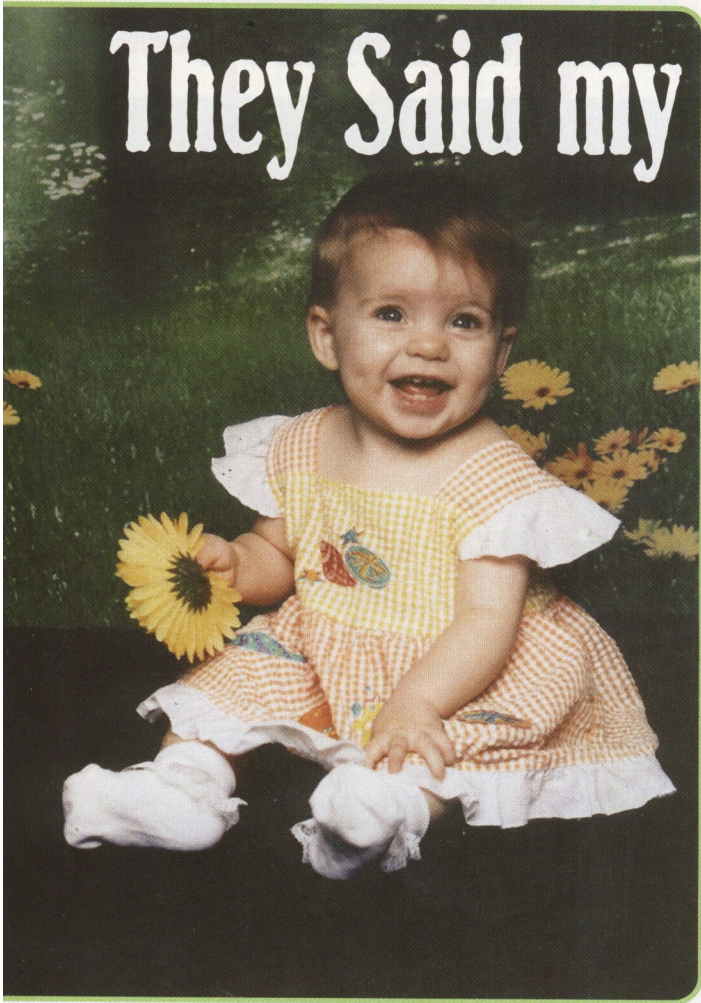
I then asked him if he would like to pray right now about believing in "the one true God". He said, "Well-ll-ll-ll.....", then he said very firmly, "Yes!" We prayed together, and he sounded very excited about believing in only one God, a concept he evidently had not thought about before. He said he would look for a church "where they teach about the one true God." He ended by saying, "God bless you, and God bless America."

I have also found that many (maybe even half) of the telemarketers that call me are Christians. Therefore, if I am rude to a telemarketer, I may hurt a Christian brother or sister. And, if he/she is not a Christian, then that's a missed opportunity to witness for Jesus. Even though it is an "interruption" in my day, I believe it is God's interruption.

LINDA BURRIS
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Don and Linda have two married daughters and one new granddaughter, Isabella

They Said my Baby had Died!



I was pregnant with our fifth child and I began to bleed. After bleeding for two weeks I decided to go to the ER. I had hoped for an ultrasound, but they were too busy that night. They took a blood test and said my BETA numbers were 122xxx and told me to call a doctor the next day.

I called a doctor and two days later went to have more blood drawn. The next day I went back to the doctor. She told me that my numbers had dropped to 111xxx. She said this indicated a miscarriage and the need for an ultra sound. I was scared and kept praying. We went into the ultrasound room and she began to scan. We saw what looked to be a dead baby of about four to five weeks. There was no heart beat, just a dead form.

I was nine weeks at that time. She said the baby had died and gave me three options:

1. Take pills to complete the miscarriage.
2. Have a D&C.
3. Wait and let nature take its course.

I decided I would wait it out. That

day ALL my bleeding stopped. Many people were very upset with me for not scheduling a D&C. They told me I could die or I could lose my uterus. I told them as long as I did not have a fever, I felt that I was fine. I felt at peace with my decision and continued to pray.

Many years ago I read an article called *Protect Your Womb* on the *Above Rubies* web site. From that point on I had started to pray for the health of my womb. This came to my mind many times during my wait. I leaned on the Lord and kept trusting.

Each day I waited for the cramping I knew would come. It never did. I was supposed to go back

to the doctor after two weeks but one of my children became sick. I didn't make it back until four weeks later.

The day before I saw the doctor, I was talking to a lady at church, and told her nothing had happened and I was fearful the doctor would try to convince me to have a D&C. I really wanted to avoid that. She looked at me and said, "Do you think they were wrong? Do you think you could still be pregnant?" I had not thought of that. I saw the image on the ultrasound machine. I agreed with what the doctor had seen. At first I thought it was cruel of her to give me a small peace of hope. I couldn't deal with my sadness and have this small hope too.

The next day I went to the doctor and the nurse asked what happened.

"Nothing," I said, "I have had no bleeding or cramping."

"Maybe the baby is still there," she replied. I began thinking, "No, don't put that in my mind." The small piece of hope was there but I couldn't let myself think of

it. But what if?

The doctor came in, "So, nothing happened?" she said. I told her nothing had. She asked if I still had pregnancy symptoms. I had to think on that a moment because I hadn't even thought of having symptoms. I had thought the baby died and that was it. But after a while I had to say, "Yes!"

"Let's do an ultra sound," she said. I told her there was no way for my dates to be off because I had an early positive pregnancy test and knew the date I conceived.

I lay down, barely able to breath. She scanned and exclaimed, "There is the baby's head!" She moved down a little, "I see two arms and they MOVED!" Then she saw the heartbeat! A HEARTBEAT! Can you believe it? I was shocked, thrilled and scared all at the same time. The baby was measuring 13 weeks, exactly where I was supposed to be!

As I left the office I broke down. I cried and praised the Lord, thanking Him for sparing my baby's life. If I had chosen any other option but to wait, I would have killed my baby. I called my husband and he couldn't believe it.

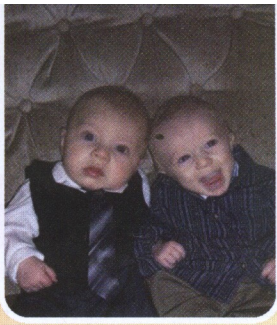
On July 14, 2005 I went in for my fifth c-section and my miracle baby was born. We named her Julianna Grace because God graciously spared her life.

After five c-sections I was curious about the shape of my uterus. I asked the doctor what my uterus looked like. He told me that it looked very good and he was surprised there was very little scar tissue after having five c-sections. I thanked the Lord. I know that my prayers for my womb had been answered.

ANNETTE WAY

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Reese and Annette's children are Audrey (14), Brionna (10), Amanda (7), Joseph (4), Julianna (18 months) and new baby Erica born January 2007.



My Brandi Girl

Does anybody get as excited over the birth of babies as I do? I love to see a brand new baby enter the world. I get excited when someone I know is about to embark on motherhood for the first, second, third or even the tenth time! It is amazing to see a brand new baby in all their soft innocence, to kiss a downy head and snuggle a tiny body close. What a precious sight to see a nursing mommy tenderly cradling her little bundle of joy. Babies are such sweet blessings!

My daughter is about to embark on the journey of motherhood for the very first time. I watch her and am in awe. How can this be? Just a short time ago I carried her in my own womb, thrilled as she was placed in my arms after birth and praised God for the sweet little bundle named Brandi. She was, just the other day, the soft downy head that I kissed as I nursed her, sang to her, prayed over and played with her. She was my little toddler who was full of silly antics and humorous expressions. She was my little tomboy who insisted on wearing dresses, the frilliest I could find for her, and yet played football, basketball, baseball and bicycled in them.

She was the one who would don a princess tiara with her frilly little dress and reign over her "castle." She was the one who loved to ride up and down the sidewalk on her trike at three years old belting out, "Jesus loves me this I know" at the top of her lungs. She was the one who got excited over each new Bible verse she memorized, corrected any adult who took the Lord's name in vain and who was very sensitive to the Holy Spirit in her life.

She was also the one who went through some topsy turvy times for about ten months out of her early teen age years, causing me to pray over her more than ever and reign her in with tough love. It hurt my mommy's heart like nothing I can describe but the Lord was faithful to bring her back to faith in Him.

She was the one who became a beautiful bride at the tender age of 17 and married a man who loves the Lord and adores

and cherishes her— so young, so tender, but with their hearts desiring to do things the "right way" as they described to us when they asked us if we would let them get married at such a young age.

Now, she is the one who is expecting a baby and who is about to become a mommy. I watch in awe and gratefulness to the Lord. She is mature, sweet, kind, tenderhearted and such a joy to have in my life. She is the one I am now learning so much from as I watch her joyfully serve her husband, loving him, enjoying him and communicating on a mature level with him. Wow! I sure love this girl... I loved her as my baby, my little girl, my difficult teenager and now as the beautiful woman and mother she has become.



Babies Together!

Brandi and I have been blessed to enjoy subsequent pregnancies together. It has been so much fun to go through this precious experience together. I got to be with Brandi as she became a mother for the very first time. She had a beautiful home birth with two midwives attending. Tiny little Brandi who only weighs 95 lbs. and is 4 foot 11 inches tall gave birth to her baby boy who was 8 lbs. 6 oz and 22 inches long!

Nobody knows why, but he did not breathe when he was born, even though his lungs were mature. He was transported by helicopter to the Children's hospital. The doctors gave a very poor prognosis for Kyran James, but God prevailed and, after spending the first two weeks in the hospi-

tal, he came home with his Mommy and Daddy and is doing very well.

Through the whole process, my daughter and son-in-law's strong faith in the Lord, their maturity and love for one another was so evident! Even when they were told their son may be mentally retarded, may never suck, swallow and could possibly be on a feeding tube for life, their faith never wavered. They kept their eyes on Jesus and shined like stars. They were courageous and peaceful. I learned a lot through them during the process and the situation caused Kyran to be even more special to us all.

Eight weeks after Kyran's birth, my seventh child arrived via c-section. Levi Jacob is a sweet natured little guy. We enjoy watching Levi and Kyran grow and change. They are both a delight.

At Christmas time this year, my mother, my oldest daughter, Heidi, and Brandi and I were all chatting in the living room. I didn't really give much thought to the fact that Brandi and I were sitting side by side nursing our babies since this is a very common event around here. My mom thought it was special though and picked up the camera and took a picture. I was tickled when I saw it because Brandi and I were sitting in the exact same position with our legs crossed exactly the same way and our babies in the exact same hold. It's quite obvious we're related in that picture and it's one I will cherish forever.

I'm very grateful to be a mommy again and a grandma at the same time. Brandi and I love to trade babies when we are together. I can spend time bonding with Kyran while she enjoys her baby brother.

JANA TAFT

Mt. Vernon, Washington, USA
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Rich and Jana's family are Heidi (21), Brandi (19), two sitting at the feet of Jesus, Natalie (7), Chrissie (6), Timmy (5), Noah (3) and Levi (3 months).

Degeneration or

Someone has said that "one generation is a generation away from degeneration." I have seen this happen in my lifetime.

As a child growing up in our little town of New Zealand it was the shock of the town if someone got involved in adultery. This was not only the sentiment of church folk but of everyone in town. Now, hardly anyone bats an eyelid when this happens in the church! Is this not degeneration?

When I was a child believers did not go to the movie theater. When my mother died at 83 years of age she had never been in a movie theater. One time, when an adult, I said to my mother, "Mum, there are some good movies that you could perhaps watch without being defiled."

"Oh no," she replied, "What if the Lord was to come and find me in the movie theater!" Now, it seems the norm for Christians to go to nearly every movie that comes to town. And if they don't do that, they watch them in the privacy of their homes! I am not saying that we cannot watch a wholesome movie, but we certainly must use discernment and scrutiny.

When I was a child we hadn't even heard of the word 'pornography'. It was never mentioned. Now, it is a word that is part of every day language and a bondage that has gripped thousands of men in the church today. What degeneration!

We know that there have always been backyard abortions, but when we were children we never heard the word spoken aloud. It wasn't practiced in the church. Now many church-going women have abortions! Forty-three percent of women obtaining abortions say they are Protestant and 27 percent say they are Catholic!

STANDING POWER

The morals of this world are going downhill
Against God's Holy Word and His divine will,
No longer black and white, it's now mushy gray,
God's eternal absolutes many shun today.

Will you stand against this tide when others are crumbling?
Will you stand on God's Word when many are stumbling?
Will you stand against sin and the devil's deceptions?
Making no excuses or subtle exceptions?

*Never be intimidated, never be fooled...
Neutralized,
Fraternized,
Mediocre-ized
Or let your fire be cooled!*

When there's no justice and only confusion
And God's people are hiding their light in seclusion,
Will you rise up and be counted, open wide your mouth
And proclaim God's truth to the north and the south?

Will you be strong in the Lord and the power of His might?
Always standing up for that which is right?
Rich in discernment, wisdom never ignored,
And walking daily in the fear of the Lord?

*Never be wimpy or crumble at the knees...
Normalized,
Traumatized
Luke-warmized,
And the devil never appease!*

Will you stand the test when you are wronged and hurt?
When you are persecuted and treated like dirt?
Will you have backbone when the pressure comes on?
Or be a spineless jellyfish with purpose all gone?
Will you keep on standing if you're the only one?
Lifting up the name of Jesus, God's only Son?
Will you stand true now, holding on to the end,
No matter what it costs, God's truth to defend?

Nancy Campbell

(I wrote this for my grandchildren but share it here for all.)

Although pagan societies have always accepted abortion, it was an antipathy in the early church. W. E. H. Lecky (1838-1903), the Irish Historian, although not always agreeing with Christian doctrine, wrote, "...it was one of the most important services of Christianity, that... it definitely

and dogmatically asserted the sinfulness of all destruction of human life as a matter of amusement, or of simple convenience, and thereby formed a new standard higher than any which then existed in the world. The influence of Christianity in this respect began with the very earliest stage of human life...With unwavering consistency and with the strongest emphasis, they denounced the practice, not simply as inhuman, but as definitely murder." We have degenerated greatly.

I believe it is time we got some backbone back into the church and into society. Why do God's people surrender to the climate of society and take that for their standard rather than the eternal Word of God? Have we become "cream puffs" or "jelly fish" as my husband often says?

It comes back to the Parents!

How do we get back to God's ways? David cried out in Psalm 11:3, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" I believe we have to build the foundations again. How do we do this? It starts with us parents. We are responsible to pass on the baton of God's truth and standards to the next generation. If we fail to do this, we fail God and this generation. It is

God's plan that each generation of parents pass on His ways to the next generation, establishing godly generations in the earth.

It's no use sending our children to church or Sunday School or telling them what to do if they do not see it operating in our lives. They will follow who we are and

REGENERATION?

what we do. They see through any compromise and hypocrisy.

Ephesians 6:13 says, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Can I share one or two other translations with you? Weymouth's translation says, "Put on therefore the complete armour of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground on the day of battle, and, having fought to the end, to remain victors on the field."

J.B. Phillips' says, "Therefore you must wear the whole armour of God that you may be able to resist evil in its day of power, and that even when you have fought to a standstill you may still stand your ground." That's the essence of this Scripture-to be still standing up even after the fight.

Stand our Ground!

That's what we have to do. Hold our ground. Hold on to our convictions. Never let them go. While we are taken up with our excessive addiction to sports, movies and entertainment, we have become soft and flabby and have forgotten how to fight for morality and righteousness. We would rather play than pray. While we have our heads in the sand the enemy is having a heyday. We are in a battle, but we are losing ground. Many have given up the fight. Perhaps you are struggling to fight the good fight of faith? Don't give up. Keep standing your ground.

We must also impart to our children the ability to fight and contend for the faith. We are the example for them to follow.

Evil is becoming more rampant. But God has told us in Isaiah 60:1-2 to arise and shine in the dark times. Will we shine in this evil day? Or will we hide our light and succumb to the darkness? Ephesians 5:11 says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove (expose, convict) them." May God save us from getting so used to the climate

we live in that we think it is normal. May He open our eyes to see His standards, and hold on to them. May He save us from assimilation, the most subtle of the enemy's strategies. May He anoint us to expose the evil around us.

Everything today has to be politically correct. In other words, we have to fit into what the world is doing! This is not Bible. This is not New Testament Christianity. This is apathy. It is being luke-warm which makes God sick. We don't have to be politically correct. We must be Biblically correct, even if we face persecution.

Most Christians do not condone adultery, abortion, and homosexuality. They would never do these things themselves. But they don't want to make a scene. I hear many saying, "Well, I wouldn't do that, but that is their personal choice. If that's what they want to do, I have to accept it." And now these things have become acceptable! All because we did not take a stand! We did not fight for God's truth! We assimilated to the popular trend!

May God help us to once again be a holy people, filled with God's truth and His Spirit, who will push back evil rather than yielding to it.

Don't Drop the Baton!

Dear parents, don't let the baton drop! Keep up the great work of imparting God's life-giving commandments to your family. Keep passing them on down the generations. You are doing a great work. My husband and I pray daily for our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren yet to be born. We are passionate about seeing the godly generation continuing down the years that our children, even those yet unborn, will be mighty for God, holding up the banner of God's truth and fighting against evil. We pray that your offspring will be "mighty upon the earth" too!

NANCY CAMPBELL

Praying for my Husband

Tom and I had been married four years when I went to a meeting at a local church. I was disappointed when I arrived that the person I wanted to hear was not speaking. Instead, it was his wife who shared that she had not been praying for her husband the way she should. It was an eye opener to me. I realized I was guilty too.

When I got home, I told Tom about my lack of prayer for him and asked his forgiveness. I realized I did not know how to pray for my husband. I asked the Lord to teach me. The Holy Spirit immediately showed me to go to my concordance in the back of my Bible and look up the word "integrity". I wrote all the integrity verses on a legal pad ready to pray them.

I could hardly wait for Tom to leave

for work. As soon as he left, I would pick up my legal pad and start praying for him. Here's an example from Psalm 25:21, "Lord, may integrity and uprightness protect Tom, because his hope is in you." I prayed the integrity Scriptures for one week. After that, the Lord directed me to a different topic to pray for my husband.

As long as I am open to the Lord's leading and guidance He continues to show me how to pray for my husband.

PATRICIA FOBES

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Tom and Patricia are blessed with six handsome sons, Patrick (29), Michael (18), Joshua (16), Stephen (14), Jonathan (12) and Samuel (10).

Motherhood Bliss!

Before I was married, I didn't know much about parenting (my own family was abusive), and I knew even less about God. When our son was born, I fell in love with him instantly! Thankfully, I had read *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* and decided to try nursing, even though I had never seen it done before. The only real 'mothering' experience I had was from babysitting a baby years ago. He had been formula-fed and was on a strict schedule, spending most of his time alone. What I remembered most about him was the awful way he would cry alone in the crib as I waited for him to fall asleep.

Soon every thought of returning to college left my mind as I held, nursed and carried my baby. I didn't want to be away from him, and of course, he was happiest right next to me. He came everywhere with me and rarely ever left my arms. All I had to do was nurse him when he was fussy or tired and change him when he needed it. He loved to sleep with my husband and me.

When he was six weeks old I attended my first *La Leche League* meeting. I learned so much. I read studies that proved doing things naturally, such as breastfeeding on cue, was beneficial to both mom and baby. I learned that carrying my baby provided him with better social development. I even learned that crib death is less common when babies sleep with their moms, and how doctors believe that the mom's body acts as a pace-maker for her baby's immature system. I was fascinated! I also met a wonderful Christian mom at LLL, who began planting seeds about God in my heart.

Two years later, my young son had a night where he couldn't sleep. I sat up with him as my new baby daughter slept in bed with my husband. Suddenly I remembered a much neglected Gideon's Bible that had been given to me years ago. The next few hours flew by as I devoured the precious words. With my sleeping son by my side, I gave my heart to Jesus Christ. Just a few months later,

my husband and I were both baptized in a local lake and started our new life together. God lovingly cared for me, His child, as I lovingly cared for my child.

Now that I knew God, the more I thought about mothering, the more excited I became. I realized the reason natural mothering works so well is because God designed it! In the same way God designed our bodies to give birth naturally, He designed us to mother naturally. I felt like I had stumbled upon some ancient mystery, and I knew the reason behind all those happy babies and children at the LLL meetings. Whether their parents knew God or not, they were raising their babies according to His design and received the blessings for following His plan!

Isaiah 66:11-13 says, "For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance. For this is what the LORD says: 'I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.'" (Emphasis added).

As a new Christian, I would sit with my new baby daughter for hours reading the Bible. I learned that God can use the Bible to teach us, not just with its words, but also by the people within its pages. As a mother, two of my favorite examples are Eve and Mary. Who better to look to as we mother our own children but "the mother of all living" and the mother of Christ himself?

God gave Eve everything she needed to do her job perfectly—breasts to nourish and comfort, arms to hold, a soft body to keep her little one warm at night, a voice to sing and teach, motherly instincts, and



a loving heart. She lacked nothing. I can envision her carrying her baby throughout the day, and the new family sleeping all curled up together at night, just as God intended. A beautiful picture of simplicity and love.

I love to think of Mary. All God does is good. He didn't only choose a family for Jesus. He also chose a time and culture. God could have decided to send Jesus anytime, even today! Could you see Jesus as a child in the schools today, riding the bus and playing video games? Or as a baby in His crib with a blankie, Mary hardening her heart as He "cried it out"? God had something much different in mind. He placed His son in a culture where every birth was natural, where moms kept their children close during the day, and where children nursed for years.

Just like Eve, Mary had no clocks for feeding schedules, no bottles, no separate sleeping room for her baby, and no "experts" writing books claiming to have a better way to raise her baby. They listened to the one true Expert, our Lord Himself! I believe both mothers did what came naturally, following their God-given instincts and mothers' hearts. They did not harden their hearts to their babies' cries. The Bible talks about the peacock who is deprived of wisdom and understanding because she is "hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers." (Job 36:13-17)

Then there is Jesus Himself. In Luke 6:31 He tells us to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In Matthew 18:33, He said, "Shouldest not thou also have compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Jesus wants us to put other's needs above our own.

In Matthew 25:35-45, He says, "For I

was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing... And the King will say, "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me! And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.'"

Who is the "least of these" more than a helpless baby or child? When He said to give a drink to the thirsty, certainly He includes our own baby, when he/she cries out for it.

God wants us to love our children the same way He loves us, and not forsake them in their time of helplessness. Listen to what the Bible says in Isaiah 49:15, "Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!" I will have to answer to God someday about how I cared for the "least of these" in my own home when they were in need. I want to be sure I do my best for Him.

We live in a modern world, but this neither changes God's design nor alters God's best. God never changes. By mothering this way, I teach my children about God. I show them every moment how God is always available for us, how He does not abandon us when we need Him. Just as we are dependant on God, God made babies dependant on us. We should seek to live out 1 Thessalonians 2:7, "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children."

Natural mothering is filled with all kinds of joy! I love the peace of falling asleep at night with my tiny nursing baby on one side and my husband's strong arm wrapped around both of us. What better alarm clock in the morning, than a

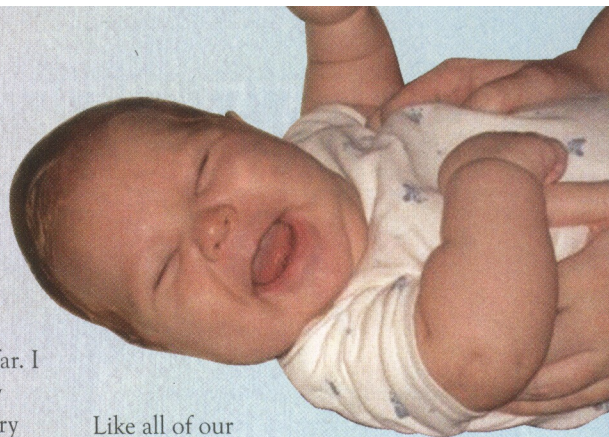
cooing baby who pats your cheek and squeals with delight when you open your eyes and look at him? There is nothing like having your baby in your arms (or your sling) all day, always in your world, always learning and enjoying your closeness—and you don't miss a smile or a laugh!

I have given birth four times so far. I admit that each time I have been very afraid of the pain as I tend to have very fast, intense births. So far, each birth I have placed my trust in something different. The first time, I trusted in man's way which caused only pain and human intervention. All sorts of unnecessary machines and gadgets were used.

My second birth came, and this time I was sure I was prepared. I had read all the so-called "right" books, and had all the "knowledge" I needed. I was even at home—and in the water this time! Although it was a beautiful birth, it was only man's knowledge, and the birth was still extremely painful. We need more than man's small knowledge to birth and mother!

The third time I was again at home—and in the water. I read a book by a Christian author who said she had the right way to birth, if I would only follow her method. You guessed it. Another good but very painful birth. The baby was just over ten pounds, a lot to handle for my small frame!

As much as I wanted my fourth baby, I was afraid to go through the pain again. I turned whole-heartedly to the only place I had left. I turned to Jesus and things changed for me. I prayed more for this birth and new baby than any of the others, and depended only on Jesus. It worked! When I heard my midwife say my baby was out, my first thought was "That was it?" It hurt, of course, but by depending on Jesus, for the first time it was completely and totally bearable and better than it had ever been before!



Like all of our homebirthed babies, he didn't cry, and was happy, pink and alert. But unlike our other babies, this little one has not cried to this day! He has never had a tear in his eye. He is four months old now, and the most joyful baby we have ever had, full of smiles and laughs. He has been in someone's arms almost every single moment of his life. He baths in the big tub with me and sleeps skin-to-skin with me at night. He nurses when he needs to, and naps as I carry him through my day. We are totally connected. I have truly never been happier, nor had a happier baby!

God's Word applies to all of life, including our mothering. We need to mother with what God gave us—love, our mother's heart, our biology, our God-given instincts, and our baby's signals. We need to stop listening to the many voices of the world and start listening to the only voice that matters. God's way is about the heart, the connectedness between moms and babies, rather than rules, so-called experts, and schedules. God's way is about people, relationships, and love rather than outward things. Babies' needs haven't changed since the beginning of time, and neither has God.

AMIE GRAY

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Don and Amie have four children, Brodie (7), Hannah (5), Aden (2) and baby Elijah (4 months).

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FINISHED SCHOOL?

What Now?

"Well, you can't live at home forever, so what are you going to do with your life?"

"So, are you going to college?"

Have you been bombarded with these questions from well meaning teachers and curious neighbors? When I was in high school I would inwardly groan when the questions of college and a career were brought up. My responses ranged from hurried "I don't know" to vague lawyer-like explanations. Since my father is a doctor, I was often asked if I intended to also be a doctor. One person told me a story of a woman who became a doctor and then had several children. She had a special room in her clinic where they were babysat. Then, between patients she could "mother" them. I was horrified. I didn't want to become locked into a career that would limit my ability to do the one thing I was sure I would love, being a full-time mom.

Occasionally, I would admit my desire not to attend college. Eyebrows would immediately raise and often disapproving or disappointed looks would follow.

Upon reaching the age of 18 and officially graduating from our family home school, I immediately met with very intense pressure from friends, teachers, and others to pursue a profession, attend college and even move out and get a "place of my own." Many people assured me this would enable me to become a successful, independent career woman. Happiness and fulfillment would of course naturally follow. Thankfully, I had several older women in my life (including my mother), who by example, showed me that true success, happiness, and fulfillment come from God and doing His will.

Romans 12:1-2 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye

transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God." We don't have to conform blindly to what the world tells us is our next step in life! Instead, we can seek God's wisdom. After all, God put us on this earth, designed us with a specific purpose, and gave us the gifts we need to do it. He's got a detailed map, and all we have to do is ask for directions!

Taking my mother's advice, I asked the Lord to show me what I should do with my time and talents. It seemed like everything I read in the Bible encouraged me to wait on the Lord. This was NOT what I wanted to hear! I wanted an answer now! I even prayed one day that the Lord would solve my dilemma by the following Thursday. On Thursday the answer came... Keep waiting Jenny!

Looking back, I can now see that the Lord was teaching me to trust Him in this area. When I finally released control of my future to Him, he began to reveal, in small pieces, His will for my life. I accepted an opportunity to take a correspondence writing course. Soon after, my father found himself in need of a secretary.

A year and a half later, the Lord opened a way for me to start a spring season greenhouse business on our family property. It is now three years since I opened the business and I am continuing to expand. I currently teach 17 piano students, and have been called on to play the piano and organ for several different churches. Because the greenhouse business only keeps me busy during six months of the year, I am also available for other different things such as helping a mom on bed rest, filling in as an accompanist for a music festival, teaching 5th and 2nd grade Math and English to my brothers... this list goes on!

What the Lord has not called me to do so far is to attend college, move out of home, or embark on a full-time career!



The very things many people told me I needed to do in life were not at all what the Lord had planned for me. His plan is so much better! God's plan has allowed me to get to know my father better after working with him for nearly four years. It has enabled me to become an entrepreneur, doing the things I love—working with flowers, children, and music! On the financial side of things, God's plan has blessed me with no debt, no rent, very few expenses, and a nice little income with room to grow.

Over the last few years there have been many times where I have been unsure of which bend in the road to take, but the Lord has always come through, even when there were problems with the greenhouse, or church organs with broken stops!

JENNY MCGINNIS

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(Jenny grows the beautiful hanging baskets in her greenhouses).

Names of fathers and children to right. From top middle picture and going clockwise: Jim Trimble walking with his son, Josiah (3), Belle Fourche, SD • A special moment together—Mike Oatis and youngest son, Ian, Fremont, MI • Baby Lydia Heeren (3 months), Belle Fourche, SD • Micah (4 months) loves his daddy, Elias delaFuente, Crystal City, TX • Jay Heeren fishing with his nephew, Josiah (4), Belle Fourche, SD • Baby Marcus Moss, son of Gordon and Mandy Moss of Parkes, NSW, Australia (this darling little boy was born with a club foot and has other problems) • Jim Trimble reading to his sons, Lucas (7) and Josiah (3), Belle Fourche, SD • Jamie Chadwick playing with his son, Ethan (19 months), Belen, NM • Jeremiah Young with son Josiah, Carlsbad, CA • Ron Jacobsen with his son Luke (5), Cary, NC.



The Little Chap who Follows Me!

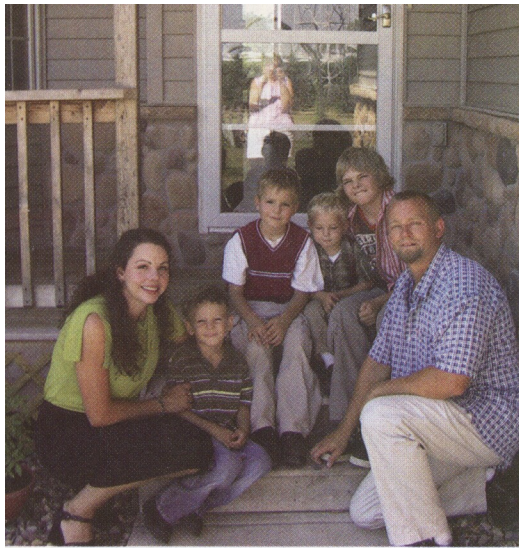
A careful man I want to be;
A little fellow follows me.
I do not dare to go astray
For fear he'll go the self-same way.

I cannot once escape his eyes,
Whate'er he sees me do, he tries.
Like me he says he's going to be;
The little chap who follows me.

He thinks that I'm so very fine,
Believes in every word of mine.
The base in me he must not see;
The little chap who follows me.

I must remember as I go
Through summer's sun and winter's snow,
I'm building for the years to be;
The little chap who follows me.

Author unknown.



Jeff and Carey have four boys, Jaelen (11), Jadrien (8), Jamison (5) and Jace (4).

I am guilty. Guilty as charged. How many times as a parent have I allowed current stressful circumstances to lure me into thinking my present harried situation is more important than my child's future? Countless times! In how many instances have I been annoyed by the sounds or actions of my children and reacted out of frustration rather than realizing that my choices as a parent can affect the adult lives of my children? I don't have that many fingers or toes to count on. And lastly, I am guilty of occasionally being too lazy or self-absorbed to discipline for offenses in which I know I should discipline. There you have it. I have confessed.

How often we forget our focus. We tend to focus on the "now" rather than the "what will become." It's easy to get wrapped up in the overwhelming tasks of life and to convince ourselves that keeping caught up on the laundry or making it to soccer on time is more important than training our children for their lives as adults. Although supplying the physical needs of our children is part of our job description, providing character training is far more important.

As mothers, we have two different task categories—the "unimportant important" and the "important important." Have you ever found yourself snapping at your children because they are in the way as you wash your dishes? This shows us how easily we can slip into the "unimportant important." The "important important" in this situation is showing our children in our words, attitudes and actions that they are loved and valued. Although clean dishes are important, it should not be held in higher regard than love and

respect for our children.

How do we keep ourselves from over-focusing on the "unimportant important"? By practicing "GNITNERAP" (pronounced "gun-i-ten-er-ap"). Parenting backwards.

"GN-I-WHAT?!" GNITNERAP is like reading a really good biography. The biography is written about your child. The only distinction is, you read this book a little differently than most parents. You start from the last page of the book and work your way back to the front. The front of the book is where you come in. The front of the book is NOW. Your job is to help the book have a happy ending.

How do we ensure our children's biography ends happily? We begin by deciding what kind of future we would like for our children. Would you prefer your children's stories to read that they were habitually late for work, physically unhealthy, rude to others, egotistical, prone to road rage, over-spenders and with no regard for the law? Or would you like the stories to say your children were lovers of God, moral law-abiders, prompt, humble, healthy eaters, respectful of others, self-controlled and financially sound? How the story ends is largely based on how we train them today. We are the beginning of the tale.

Shouldn't it be our goal to send children into the world with less personal struggle than we have ourselves? If we stop to think about it, aren't many of the complaints and woes we face in life mainly due to our lack of self-control or discipline in some area? Although our parents did their best, there were likely neglected areas of training in character and/or self-discipline or self-control. We can never be perfect parents, but we can aim to make our children's lives a little less consequence-based by equipping them with applicable life-tools. We can begin by facing the truth of the examples we are actively set for them.

Our Emotional Example

Isn't it ironic that we find ourselves reminding our children to speak respectfully to their siblings, and, in turn, speak disrespectfully to them or to our spouse. We see them throw a tantrum while with a contorted Scrooge-face we angrily exclaim, "YOU NEED TO GET CONTROL OVER YOUR ANGER! ARRRRGH!" We tell our children that it is not God's way to

hold unforgiveness in our hearts as we give our husband the "silent treatment" for telling us the truth when we asked if he thought we should lose some weight. When we look at our daily behavior from the perspective of our children's future, are we setting the right examples for them? Are we rearing emotionally sound human-beings, or creating little emotional train-wrecks?

Annoying childhood behaviors can become detrimental adult behaviors if we don't nip them in the bud. If our children find whining to be a valuable tool in getting their way, they will continue to whine into their adulthood. An adult whiner is not pretty! If our children are chronic complainers, you can bet their future spouses will spend a lifetime of listening to constant negative words. These are some of the behaviors that we as parents are responsible for curbing in order to eliminate adult grief for our children.

Our Spiritual Example

Teaching our children about the Lord is a priority for many parents. We tell them how important it is to learn more about God, pray, go to church, serve others and to give freely of our finances. Children know the simple truth, "Actions speak louder than words." If they hear us speaking the importance of these things, but we don't implement them into our lives, it will not be long before they realize we don't value what we teach them to value.

Paying verbal homage to spiritual discipline does not equal possessing our own spiritual discipline. If we believe in serving others, then we had better reflect that in our lives. If we believe that giving of our finances is important, it will be apparent by our yearly giving statements. If we are committed to learning more about the Lord, we will be on a quest for Biblical knowledge through prayer and Bible reading and with that new knowledge, teach our children. If church attendance is truly a priority, we will not instead choose sleep, ball games or shopping. What words would your children use to describe your relationship with God? How important would they say God is to you? Their answers are evidence of your living spiritual example.

Our Financial Example

Financial chaos can bring turmoil.

Divorce, high blood-pressure and even suicide have been side-effects of poorly handled finances. If we do not train our children in the financial realm, we will inevitably send into the world ill-equipped stewards who will bring only ruin and havoc into their lives. Choosing to live within our means, setting an example of debt-free living, saving for the future and tithing can be a good start in instructing our children financially. But, simply being a good example is not enough. Children need more than a good example to learn how to handle their financial lives. They require the opportunity to earn, spend, give, and even to fail.

A good idea is to sit down with your children to discuss your bills and giving. Do not unnecessarily burden them with any information that will cause them to worry about your financial life. Explain to them the cost of living, the traps of interest and God's spiritual laws of giving. Admit your past failures and pass along your strengths.

Allow them the opportunity to earn an income; whether this money comes from allowance for chores or a lemonade stand. Instruct them in the proper ways of handling finances, then stand back and watch them either sink or float. Simply running out of cash flow is enough to get them into a saving mindset. They will want to be prepared for the next rainy day that comes along.

Our Character Example

Have we recently spoken behind someone's back? Be careful. Our children are listening. Failed to mention that the cashier has given us too much change? Those little eyes are very observant. Promised the children we would read a story to them tonight, and then failed to deliver? Caution! Our reputation of integrity is at stake. What God expects of us should first be standards for ourselves, and then for our children.

If we tell our children that honesty is the best policy, then it had better be the best policy for us as well. Do what you say, say what you mean. Parent with integrity and impeccable character. Don't make promises you cannot keep. As the Bible says, "Let your yes's be yes, and your no's be no." If you cannot keep a secret, be certain to inform those who tell you things "in confidence." Let your word be as gold

and your children will value it as such.

Our Health Example

You've certainly heard the old adage, "You are what you eat." Let's modify that a bit to read, "Your children see what you eat."

GNITNERAP

Parenting Backwards!

And they will follow suit. Our unhealthy eating habits will be a legacy passed on if not placed under control. Do we want our children to suffer from negative effects of obesity such as diabetes, high blood-pressure, heart failure, fatigue and low-self-esteem? You may have failed until now, but it is never too late to begin making changes in your diet for your children's sake.

Do we encourage our children to go outside to exercise while we lounge on the sofa? An active lifestyle is one that is created by example. Bike-riding, walks in the park and kite-flying are activities which involve physical activity-with one added benefit, conversation opportunity. There is no better way to connect with your child.

Now, flip the coin. What about we who tend to overdo everything? Extracurricular activities, the weekend schedule, the exercise, the work-schedule. Running on adrenaline at all times can eventually lead to adrenal burnout. Decide which things in life you "must have" and those you can do without.

Our Priority Example

We all exclaim how important our families are to us. We love our families. There is no doubt about that. But while many of us pay lip-service to the importance of our clan, some of us debunk that statement in our daily actions. How easily we can allow the love of self, money, selfish ambition and pleasure to get in the way of healthy priorities.

In order to properly prioritize our lives, we must make minute-by-minute sacrifices. Most days, it is a constant struggle for me to choose what is in the best interest of my children over what is in my best interest. I pray daily that God would allow me to make choices that reflect servant-

hood and not self-servanthood. Many days I fail. It is much easier to be engrossed in cleaning the toilet than to play a game with my children. It is much less stressful to tell my children to keep themselves busy while I cook than to allow them to help.

A Biblical list of life-priorities would read something like this: God first, family second, work third. Our tainted human nature tends to lean towards what makes us feel best. Putting God and others first never feels comfortable at the time, but it is the only way of life without regret.

Why not begin practicing GNITNER-AP today by deciding to hold the future of your children in higher regard than the "annoyances of the now." Allow God to show you His will for each of your children and map their biographies according to His plan. Plan for their caliber of character. Ask the Lord for His blessing in your efforts and to keep your paths straight as you journey in your devotion to the "important important."

Happy backwards parenting to you.

CAREY KEAVY

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To order, go to
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R-I-S-K-S Worth Taking

Many people are amazed at the risks we were willing to take to adopt five teenage children we had never met. And from a war-torn country. We already had seven children! They are even more amazed at the beautiful reflection of God's mercy, grace, and love they see in our family today.

From the beginning, well-meaning people and supposed experts laid out their fears for us. Their list of potential risks was long! We heard everything from, "You'll need a Yellow School Bus to get around" to "It's dangerous to upset the age order in your home by adopting children older than the ones you already have." Then there were behavior/abuse issues (sexual being the scariest) the children might have suffered, and would possibly act out in our home and with our biological children. Of course, we were also warned of the potential for AIDS/HIV, other diseases from Africa, war-trauma, etc. As a result, we prepared for the worst, hoped for the best, and were pleasantly surprised.

Some of the obvious risks were the huge financial implications of adopting five teenagers internationally. We knew we would be radically changing our family's comfort zone. In the year 1999, my precious father died and left our family resources that allowed us to change our lifestyle quite a bit. My husband built our house, and stayed home to help teach, train and disciple our children. That could change if we adopted five more children; he may have to go back to work outside of the home.

Something Bigger than Ourselves!

We absolutely love our Dad-built house

and property in the country, but we could not allow it to be an idol in our life and get in the way of our serving God. We needed to be willing to offer it all up on the altar of God and open our hearts to the possibility of not continuing in this comfortable lifestyle.

Truthfully, we always wanted to be a part of something much bigger than ourselves. We had a sense of urgency to put ourselves on the line in whatever way God was calling us. We kept asking ourselves the question, "What do we want the end of our life to speak of?"

Glenn and I had just been through a season of losing all our parents, our few remaining grandparents, and even a few friends our age to illness and disease. Life became all too fragile and eternal life's reality became extremely REAL. We were ready to be living for what was REAL, painfully aware life here on earth was much shorter than we once thought.

The hole left in our lives from the death of our parents was significant. We all noticed it. Holidays, birthdays, fun-times and weekends spent with our folks... now they were gone. Somehow, the vacuum left inside made room for a strong call on our lives. It was a call that spoke to our spirits and encouraged us that we were equipped for "such a time as this."

For 19 years, we did what so many other Christian families similar to ourselves had been doing. We focused on our family by home-centered living, learning to parent with love and grace. We learned to home-school with God's design in mind for each child while trying to discover their personal interest and learning style. Our babies were born at home, we eat healthy and take care of

ourselves.

I have always held the word 'liberty' dear in my heart. We named our youngest daughter, Liberty. Now, God has used that word to bring my faith to a place of action with my precious Liberian children. The Latin root for Liberia is liber meaning free. The Country's motto is, "The love of Liberty brought us here." It reminds me of the quote, "True biblical liberty is a paradox! You're never truly free unless you're bound... to Christ." I think this quote explains why we've sacrificed our comfortable life and risked so much. No man is ever truly free unless he is bound to his Savior. We are all bound to something in life; if not the Lord and His desires, we will serve ourselves and our own sinful nature.

Missionaries in our own home!

As we considered adopting these five children, we realized we were making a huge decision. I needed to be extra certain that I was not deceived in my emotions or in my heart. Experience had taught me my emotions were open game for the enemy's deception! As we stepped out in radical faith, we were aware that many, many changes would be coming. For us, it would be like becoming missionaries in our own home. To my prayers, I added fasting (something that doesn't normally come easy to me). We had been praying and trusting God could, and would, make His will known to us. I am blessed to report that He did in so many miraculous ways.

Someone said to me recently that adoption should not just be about rescuing children but about making a family. True! But why does "making a family"



Glenn Liberty Alicia Cherish Robert Kabiera Hope Lightning Noah Botianna Joshua Andrew Shepherd Prayse

have to negate the fact that we are rescuing children? We are making a family—a lovely family—and we have also rescued children in the meantime.

The first two children, Boto (now Botianna) and Lightning, we chose to adopt because they had only months left before they would become un-adoptable. This pulled on our heartstrings. How could we let these precious children, who had been in this orphanage for ten years, reach this status of being un-adoptable? These children know we rescued them, feel rescued, and are thankful we rescued them!

Our children arrived home October 5, 2006. It is now five months later and they are an integral part of our lives. I periodically check with our younger biological children to see how they are really doing. I wish the world could see the joy and hear the responses. They absolutely love their new brothers and sisters! I actually see my children having beautiful compassion in their hearts for their new siblings and understanding for their weaknesses. They are getting missionary hearts.

Our two oldest biological children, Shepherd and Prayse, have both been to Liberia, and can't wait to go back the minute funds are available. Shepherd is developing "Liberty Vision Productions" comprised of himself, his video camera, and a great purpose — to bring people who will never go to Liberia "the eyes to see and the ears to hear." He is developing vision for his future and desires to use his video talents to assist the missionary aid effort of *Children Concerned*.

Prayse strongly desires to go back to Liberia and love on the children who remain. Since coming home from Africa,

she is gaining vision for her future and a life in ministry wherever her mission field may be. Even the younger children Joshua (9), Robert (8), Hope (7), and even Noah (5) have pen pals in Liberia. They are always asking their new brothers and sisters to tell them more about their friends there. They want to save their money and go to the dollar store to buy something for their friends in Liberia.

Our home is better than before!

How have our Liberian children fitted in?

Botianna (17) is quickly becoming a wonderful mother's helper. She absolutely adores Liberty and loves to take care of her for me. Likewise, Liberty adores Botianna and enjoys going to her. She has faithfully taken over managing the laundry. Wow! She helps with cooking and sometimes makes the entire meal. She does this especially well when we eat African. She is learning to make 30 loaves of bread on "bread day" and loves it. She has a GREAT personality and a beautiful, contagious smile. We would not want to be without her, and being the oldest Liberian, we all look to her for understanding. She takes her responsibilities in our family seriously. We all love her so much!

Andrew (16) is the calm, reserved one. His nature is to take things more seriously than the rest of us but, thankfully, he can be playful and laugh. He thrives on responsibility, is trustworthy, honest and focused. I can always trust him to speak the truth because his conscience is strong. I've so connected to him as a son, and we've had many long heart-to-heart conversations that have proven glorious. He will make a wonder-

ful father and leader one day! Our home is a more beautiful and wonderful place because he is in it.

Lightning (15) has surprised us all. When we processed our adoption for him, all we heard about him was that "he loves soccer!" We live way out in the country and had no plans of busying ourselves with a sport like soccer for only one of our children. We thought he would grieve this activity. Little did we know Lightning has so many interests! His younger brothers think he is a genius for all his creativity. He amazes us constantly. No one in this house can speak too highly of Lightning; we all adore him. Lightning doesn't know the phrase "I'm bored." None of them do, thankfully! His other absolute number one passion around here is food. He loves to eat! He's so excited because he can tell his fingernails and hair condition have improved greatly since coming home, not to mention, he loves to hop on those scales! Lightning's smile can light up a room! In fact, it does almost everywhere we go. When we are out people always ask, "Does he always have such a big smile on his face?" and we get to say "Yes!"

Cherish (12) is soft, sweet, tender and mild. She is sensitive and just a little girl inside. Cherish came here obviously wounded and bound; she had a hard time giving and receiving affection. However, she has been the most rewarding in terms of seeing her set free. One day, in the first few weeks of their being home, I had one of those migraines that got out of control. Cherish had never seen me sick and she could not stop crying for me. The next day while I was in recovery she laid all day cuddled up with me and never left my side. She is a nur-

turer and loves babies! I am amazed at how quickly we all came to cherish Cherish!

Kabiera (12) has the most expressive personality you could ever want to see, or should I say, experience. She is the queen of facial expressions! One day we were asking each child what some of his or her favorite things were. Andrew answered, "Laughing at Kabiera!" We all could relate. She is definitely a highlight to our home. She is spunky, cute, affectionate, warm and friendly. Just today, I had the privilege of leading her to the Lord. What a joy! Her heart was soft and pliable for Jesus, ready to hear and receive the gospel message.

The children had all heard enough Scriptures in the orphanage to have a foundation, but they still need one-on-one, individual discipleship. They need a personal relationship with wise and godly parents. They are so receptive if parents can walk in lots and lots of love, patience, and grace! The mission field is right in our home!

Whatever risks we took we feel were worth taking! We are all better people today because we stepped out in faith and recognized that our ministry, once again, really is in our home!

ALICIA AHLERS

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Glen and Alicia's 12 children are:

Shepherd (17), Botianna (17), Andrew (16), Prayse (15), Lightning (15), Cherish (12), Kabiera (11), Joshua (9), Robert (8), Hope (7), Noah (5), Liberty (3).

**"Opportunity
is missed by
most people because
it is dressed
in overalls and
looks like work."**

Thomas Edison

Look Up

How can I do it? I have too much to do,
I'm overwhelmed and feeling real blue,
I'm stuck in this house like super glue.
Don't look around - LOOK UP!

The dishes and laundry are piled up high,
When I look 'round the house I have to sigh,
And for supper my husband's expecting a pie!
Don't look around - LOOK UP!

We can't pay the mortgage; bills are overdue,
I'm tired and have headaches, not a few,
These children are driving me crazy, too!
Don't look around - LOOK UP!

My husband comes in late; he doesn't care,
He doesn't help with the children; it's not fair!
I don't want to smile; I just want to glare!
Don't look around - LOOK UP!

Take your eyes off your problems, look up to Him,
God's presence is with you, even in the din!
Confess your bad mood and He'll cleanse your sin.
He is your God - LOOK UP!

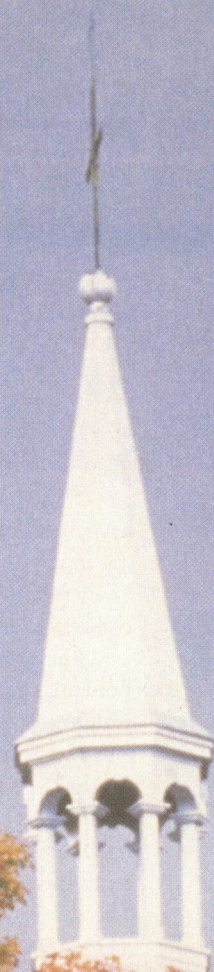
He'll show you how to order your place,
He'll give you direction as you seek His face,
He wants to pour upon you His anointing of grace.
He is your God - LOOK UP!

Keep your eyes fixed on Him; He is your Stay,
He is your Wisdom for problems each day,
He will bring His presence right into your fray.
He is your God - LOOK UP!

Each morning He comes as the refreshing Dew
To revive your body, and your spirit too,
He is your Deliverer and He'll make you new,
He is your God - LOOK UP!

By Nancy Campbell

*"I will lift up my eyes to the hills.
From whence comes my help?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth."
Psalm 121.1*



I turned on the news the other day and a book flashed onto the screen, "Better to be Single than Sorry". The author, a thirty year old woman, told the reporter that now that she is no longer in her twenties, she has "wizened up". She doesn't need a man to be happy. So far she has turned down three marriage proposals. When asked why, she responded that she'd rather be single than start a family with Mr. Okay instead of Mr. Right.

More and more women are delaying marriage or deciding against it altogether. Fifty one percent of women in the United States are now single. This is a record high.

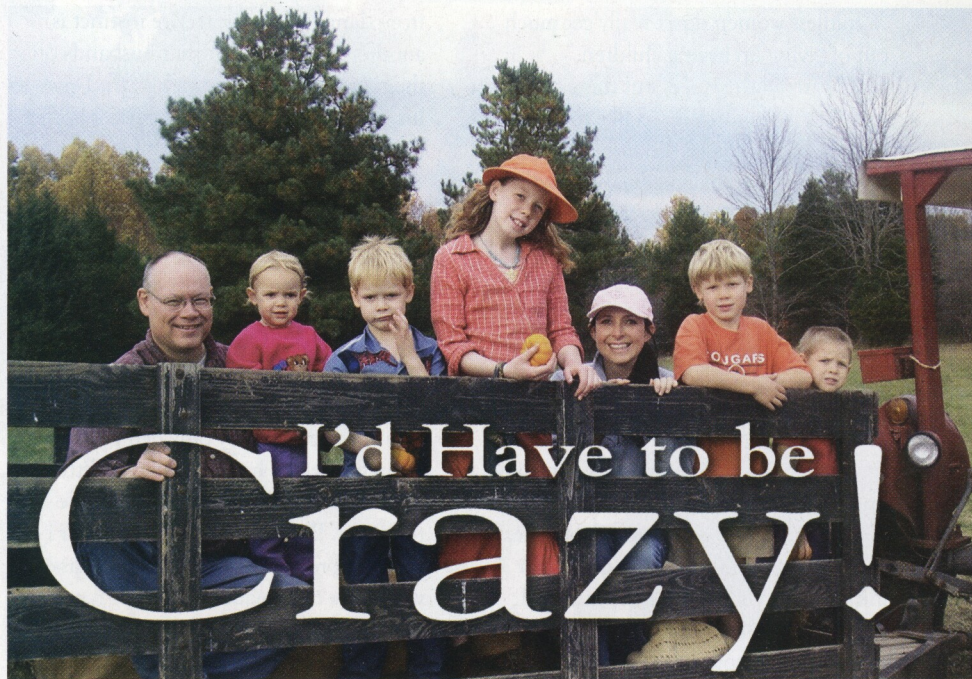
Why are women less anxious to get married these days? The author thinks it is largely because women are more educated. Right now, women outnumber men in colleges by 1.3 to one. They can provide for themselves just as well as a man can and this independence often pushes marriage out of their plans. Men are simply not living up to their standards.

The news item then flashed to footage of the author talking and laughing with her single girlfriends at a restaurant. The underlying message was that she had chosen the right path.

I felt very sorry for this woman and for all those who will read her book. The sweet memory of my husband's kiss goodbye that morning as he left for work still lingered with me. I remembered how safe and warm our home felt the night before when he arrived home and the children rushed to climb all over him. It felt wonderful to snuggle on the couch together after the children were in bed and laugh as we talked about their antics during the day.

The aforementioned author will be waiting a long time for Mr. Perfect and it is more likely he will never show. Will she still be smiling so much when she is forty and childless? What about when she is fifty and all alone? Will she regret her decision to be single when she is sixty and wonders what might have been had she accepted one of those marriage proposals?

Every man has his flaws, as we all do. Even a "Mr. Right" can appear to turn into "Mr. Okay" after a few years of marriage. The divorce rate reflects this. God's plan is the only one that works. If we learn to do as Ephesians chapter five outlines and 'honor our husbands' rather than putting them on a measuring stick, we



enable the Mr. Right inside them to stick around.

Of course we shouldn't jump into marriage. It is a prayerful decision and there are exceptions like Mother Theresa who devoted her life to nurturing orphans. This doesn't change God's plan for us from the very beginning.

God told us in Genesis, chapter one that a man and woman would become one flesh. He knows what's best for us. Our bodies were designed to bear children. With more women staying single, there are a record number of women in this country who are childless. According to a recent census, women with higher incomes have the highest childless rates. Bearing children, especially before the age of 24 offers long term protection against many reproductive diseases. Uh-Oh, the average age for first time childbirth is now above 25. This average has jumped up three years in a little over a decade alone.

The results are starting to come in—reproductive cancers are rising and ovarian cancer is soaring to alarming rates. The failure to experience lactation and childbirth appears to cause malfunctions which frequently result in health problems for women later in life. The U.S. Health Department declares childbirth as the most important known factor in preventing ovarian cancer. Women who have never had children are twice as likely to develop ovarian cancer. The more full term births a woman has, the lower her risk for

this disease.

This is also true for breast cancer. Women who are more likely to delay childbirth by pursuing careers have higher breast cancer risks than their counterparts. Women who breastfeed for at least two years cut their breast cancer risks by about half. Their risks go down for every following birth and year of breast feeding. Any woman who has breastfed for seven years out of her life decreases her risk for breast cancer by more than ninety percent.

Studies also reveal that having few or no children is a risk for endometrial cancer. Women in underdeveloped nations who frequently have six or seven children rarely get this disease. A recent study at Harvard School of Public Health has found that women who have had three or more children have nearly 40 percent less risk of lung cancer, whether they smoke or not. The risk for lung cancer also declines with the increasing number of births a woman has.

1 Timothy 2:15 makes more sense than ever before when it says, "Women shall be saved in childbearing." Once again, science proves God's Word true.

Childbirth has also been shown to have a positive impact on women's mental health. A 1992 Canadian study that examined more than a thousand women found that married women with children had the highest levels of psychological well being compared to women who did not have children. The researcher concluded that

"Childless women don't really get much out of giving up having children."

With all the voices out there saying marriage isn't worth it, I'd like to offer my own. "Oh, yes it is," I say. Sure, there are times when it is challenging, but anything good requires some work. Why would anyone want to give up such a precious gift? Not only does it make sense, it is truly rewarding. Here are five things I love about being married.

1. Being loved.

I think we take this one too lightly. Let's give it the respect it deserves. When someone chooses to love you above all others and cling to you for the rest of your life, this is no small thing. In a sense, it is a miracle in itself. To think my husband chose to love me out of every other woman in the world! I could have happy thoughts all day dwelling on this point alone. To think he would even lay his life down for me! That is a God-given love from a man to his wife. It is something to be grateful for and handle with care.

2. Having a Protector.

I'll admit that sometimes I feel like my husband is a little too protecting. He can't stand for me to be home late if I have to go out in the evening. The frown on his face when I get home says it all. He doesn't like not being there to physically protect me

from danger. This protective instinct is another God-given gift that husbands offer their wives. The security a husband gives to his wife and children is the perfect buffer from the perils of this world. I know I should accept this instinct with a little more grace.

3. Having a Warm Bed Partner.

There is nothing I love more than going to sleep and feeling my husband's arms around me. I pity any woman who values drinks with friends more than this. I can't say my husband is my only bed partner though. We still have a couple of little ones who like to join us in the middle of the night. But when we are alone, our bed can be a pretty exciting place. The passing years have only made this better.

4. Having a Provider.

While I may be capable of providing for myself and my children, I am glad my husband is willing to assume this important role. I have the freedom to stay home and answer only to him. I know some men love their job. Many others, like my husband, commit themselves day after day for the sake of their families. My husband drives well over an hour each way to and from work. I'm thankful he loves us enough to do this so I can be home with the children. If not for us, he would simply go back to being a road musician. We know we are

worth a lot to him for that sort of sacrifice.

5. Having a Best Friend.

I was one of the many who presumed having a best friend in a husband would be something quite different to what it is. I imagined many hours of soul talk where we would share our deepest emotions. We would shop happily together and discuss in dreamy detail the way we would decorate our home. It makes me giggle now to remember my dreams. Aside from expressing his love for me, I don't believe my husband has ever talked about his emotions in our thirteen years of marriage. Sometimes I wonder if he has any. But then, I probably have enough for both of us. Still, I would rather spend my time with him than anybody else, even if we don't talk about shades of taupe on walls. As a best friend, my husband is a wise counselor, a listener, a comforter, a source of encouragement, and he still makes me laugh.

Would I give all this up to be single? I'd have to be crazy!

PEARL BARRETT

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Charlie and Pearl's children are Meadow (11), Bowen (8), Rocklyn (6), Noble (4) and Autumn Rose (2). Pearl is Nancy's daughter.

God loves you!

God wants to be your friend here on earth and wants you to live with Him forever in Heaven.

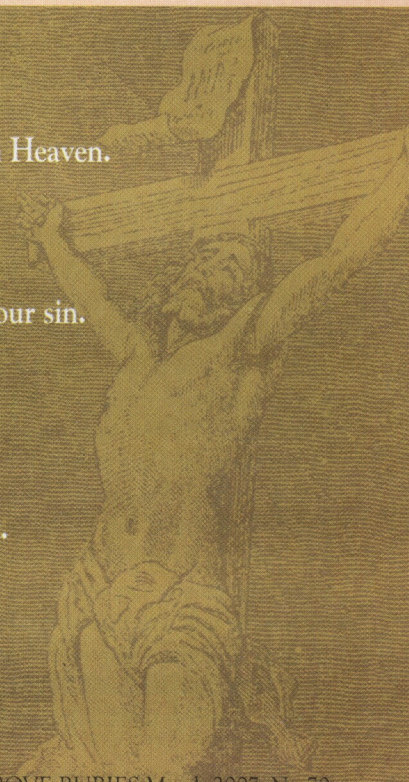
But, we have sinned and the wages of sin is death.
We are responsible to pay the punishment of our sin.

But, because God loves you so much, He sent His only son to pay the penalty of your sin.
He died a cruel death upon the cross and shed His blood to redeem you.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day to prove
that God accepted His sacrifice for your sins.

Will you thank Him and receive Him to be your Lord and Savior?
Your eternal destiny depends upon your acceptance and trust in Jesus Christ.

Pray this prayer now: "Lord Jesus Christ, I repent of all my sins.
I accept your sacrifice upon the cross for the forgiveness of my sins.
I welcome you into my heart right now as my Lord and Savior.
Thank you, Lord Jesus for hearing my prayer. Amen."



Perhaps the most devastating war that has ravaged our nation is one that began after the civil war, and has not yet claimed a final victory. This is a backwards war of sorts, where women have become the warriors and children have been identified as the enemy. The mission is the pursuit of freedom and equal rights for women. Battle after battle is fought for political rights, economic equality, reproductive freedom, liberation from male dominance, and freedom from the perceived servitude and captivity of motherhood.

In the beginning of the women's movement many battles were fought and won worldwide as women pursued the right to vote as equal citizens. After women claimed the victory to vote, the women's movement turned to fight for other causes. Until the mid twentieth century women were expected by society to work primarily in the home. The woman's role was to nurture children and to keep an orderly home for her husband and family.

Until this time women usually fought their battles without the shedding of blood. In most cases they became victorious through peaceful methods of rebellion. The real devastating war began when women realized that they would never be able to attain equality with men until they were granted reproductive freedom. Birth control became popular and women were finally able to have some control over reproduction.

With birth control becoming more available the sexual revolution ensued. Unplanned pregnancies became an even greater problem. Women came to the conclusion that they could never be free to live as they wish as long as they had the responsibility of motherhood. Children then became the enemy in the fight for women's rights. At this point many women abandoned the cause, but others chose to enter into the most deadly war our nation has ever seen.

Feminists proclaimed that it's the children who ultimately keep women from experiencing true independence. To become a mother is to become a slave, forfeiting one's work, education, career, wealth and recognition for the sake of raising children. Children come into the world demanding to be fed, clothed, rocked, wiped, cleaned, and pampered. Children are likened to parasites, as they leach the life out of women and prevent women from embracing any dream that



lies beyond the front door. All along it was motherhood that kept women from experiencing true equality. Yes, the guilt rested upon the children.

Women turned to violent acts of war to eliminate or remove children as necessary. Unborn children were the easiest enemies to eliminate, and every legal abortion became a victory in the march for women's rights. Many of the living children were sent away from the family home to be cared for by professionals in institutions while the mothers pursued work outside the home. Every empty home and empty womb became a tribute to feminism.

The feminist became the warrior, taking on the role historically given to men. But it is her own unborn child who sheds his blood for the freedom of the mother that he will never know. Is it not wretched that children die so women may advance in freedom? Equality is attained by the shedding of blood, yet we give no honor to the life that was lost, we pay no tribute to the one whose blood was shed. And women continue to

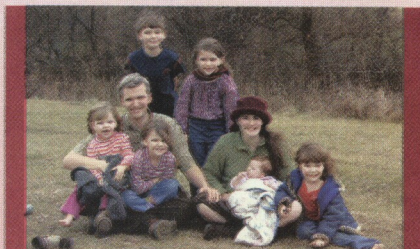
fight to keep abortion on demand legal. This allows them to do as they please to their unborn, throughout all nine months of pregnancy.

After the ongoing slaughter of 30% of America's unborn children there is no end in sight for this war. Peace will never come this way, and the warriors will never return home in victory and rest.

Is this war truly worthy of the innocent blood of unborn children? What mission is worthy of such acts of war? Throughout history many wars have been fought for the sake of the children, many men have died to secure the freedom of their children, grandchildren and the generations yet to be born. But what war is this when children yet to be born are our enemies? How have women come to see their own babies as evil tyrants deserving of death? How can we heartlessly take the lives of these precious ones?

The unborn have no power to rise up and fight for their lives. They are small, weak and helpless, depending on their mothers to nurture them, protect them and sacrificially give life to them. How can we shed blood that we would exalt our own personal freedom, rights, and personal convenience? Should the innocent die while the stronger ones go on to live a life of comfort and ease?

Feminists are fighting in the wrong war. The children in our wombs are our future, our treasure and legacy. We must fight for them, not against them. We must abandon any case that does not secure the



Josh and Sarah's children are Isaac (8), Anna (6), Estera (5), Rachel (3), Naomi (2), Susannah (5 months).

blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity. We must confess that we were mistaken. Our children are not the enemy and there is no way to win when we are fighting the wrong war.

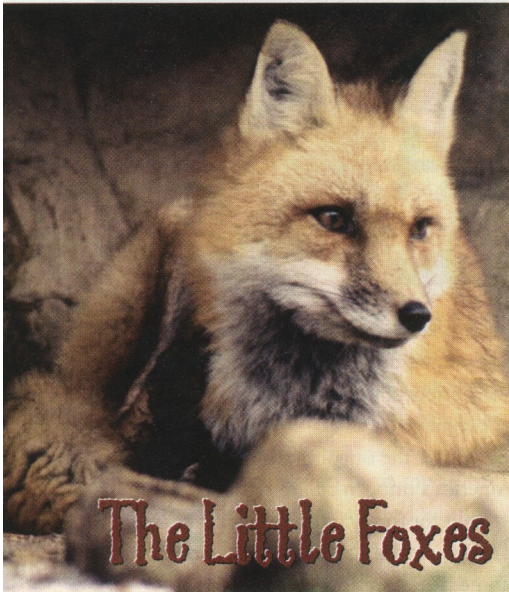
The only way to peace is victory through surrender.

SARAH BROWN
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Josh and Sarah Brown are helping to build a family-centered community in Indiana called Simpler Times Village.

Over 100 "Above Rubies" families are involved with the project already. Simpler Times will be a charming storybook village centered around a wholesome Children's Museum. Those who live in the community will be free to have little shops, cottage industries, gardens and farm animals. There will be over 50 acres of common forest, parks, gardens and pastureland. This will be a wonderful place for families whose hearts are turned toward home. We start building in 2008, with affordable homes and shops, to rent or buy. Visit www.ruralvillage.org to find out more, or call Josh at 800-581-3603.



It is a chilly autumn evening. My two eldest daughters are standing on the back veranda—squealing, laughing, jumping up and down and clapping their hands. Their Daddy, torch in hand, is bounding across the backyard doing his best 'ferocious dog' impersonation. What is going on? We have a fox problem!

It all started innocently enough. One evening, the children spotted a pair of beady little eyes peering out from behind the old boat we concreted into the backyard for them to play on. As the evenings progressed, our fox became bolder, coming out from behind the boat to stare at us. "Isn't it cute?" our daughters remarked. We proceeded to tell them that while the fox may look innocent and sweet, it is actually a very destructive animal.

It didn't take long for the fox to make its presence felt. It started by stealing shoes off the back veranda. One of each pair, mind you. It would then conveniently deposit that shoe in one of our neighbour's paddocks (never in the same spot twice, I might add). Now, this may not seem like a

big deal, but I think every mother will understand the frustration of having to go on a 'last-minute-hunt-for-your-missing-shoe' before hopping into the car. "I can't find my other shoe!" became a frequent cry in our home.

The fox had a profound effect on my husband's and my behaviour. We started doing things we had never done before in an attempt to scare the fox away and convince it to never return (such as the ferocious dog impersonation mentioned above). More than one evening saw us hiding behind trees on our couple of acres, ready to leap out on it. We perfected a myriad of ferocious animal sounds.

Then the full force of the problem hit. We were looking after our neighbour's chooks and ducks while they were away on holiday. One evening, due to a miscommunication, a number of them were left locked out of their shed. That night, quietly, skilfully, the fox crept up and killed all of the chooks and ducks left out. We didn't hear a thing. My eldest daughter discovered the evidence the next morning.

That very day, we fervently prayed and asked the Lord to get rid of the fox. The next morning, my husband called me from his mobile phone. "Guess what's in the middle of the road?" he asked jubilantly. Yes, the squished fox! We presume it was the same one as we haven't had a problem from that day till this.

While this story may be somewhat humorous, our experience with the fox got me thinking about the Scripture in Song of Solomon 2:15 (NKJV), "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." We can often excuse sin in our lives by thinking, "It's okay, it won't really hurt anyone, and it's just a little thing." What may appear innocent and harmless on the outside may actually be very destructive at the core—a sour look here, a critical or harsh

word there, a heart bearing discontent, unthankfulness, or a lack of forgiveness.

A life filled with 'little things' snowballs into one huge problem. Guess who it hurts the most? I can testify from personal experience that unconfessed sin leaves me feeling absolutely awful, emotionally exhausted, and a whole world away from my loving heavenly Father.

The wonderful truth is that we can be forgiven. Because of Jesus, every person who knows Him as their Lord and Saviour is seen by God as justified. As a result of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, when God looks upon His children He sees Jesus' perfection, not our imperfection. This fact sets us free!

Our own hurts and grudges carry little weight when we realise we need to see our sisters and brothers in the Lord as He sees them—complete and accepted in Christ. By His grace and His shed blood we are forgiven. Therefore by His grace we can forgive! By His grace we can lay aside our own expectations and love with His love! By His grace we can be encouragers instead of critics! But we have to make that choice. We need to daily deal with the little foxes that creep in to spoil our own lives and the relationships in our family life.

REBECCA DAVIS

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Phil and Becky are blessed with Sarah (10), Jemimah (8), Abigail (5), Joseph (4) and Hannah (2).



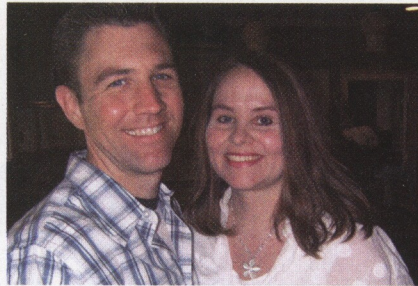
My husband and I stood at his company party, making the polite small talk that is typical of these functions. In my peripheral vision, I spotted an older couple headed toward us. The wife was the first to reach us as she took first my husband's hand, then mine. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "I've been so anxious to meet you! You must be the couple that has six children." My husband and I exchanged nervous glances, but held our smiles steady as we waited to hear the rest of her conversation.

Her husband stood by her side, nodding enthusiastically as she spoke. "We should have had more," she went on to say, an unmistakable sadness in her voice. "The trouble is, we didn't realize that until it was too late to do anything about it."

"Oh," I said, "How many children did you have?"

She smiled sadly, "Just two. But we should have had at least four!" The couple drifted off to meet and greet other guests at the party, giving me a chance to take in their words. This wasn't the first time I had heard this sentiment reflected by an older person looking back on their life. I've heard it said that on their death bed no one ever says "I should have spent more time at the office." But I think that they do say, "I should have had more children."

I saw a signature on an email once that reflected my thoughts on having a "large" family in a small family world. The woman signed her emails, "Striving to be an old woman with no regrets." As I have processed my conversation with



Sucking out the Marrow



that lovely woman, I realized that she is, indeed, an older woman with definite regrets. I had to take a moment to thank God for allowing me the benefit of learning early in life that children are indeed a blessing, just as His Word says. I would have hated to learn this truth too late to do anything about it, as the woman said

to me.

When my children grow up and leave home, I want to be able to say I have experienced motherhood to the fullest. I want to know that I know that I have not missed a moment with my children. I want to suck the marrow out of motherhood now, while I have the chance to do so. I want to embrace motherhood to the point of abundance. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) He also said, "I do not give as the world gives." (John 14:27) I think that when you put these two verses together, you see what the world at large is missing. God gives us children as a blessing to help us experience that life of abundance Jesus was speaking of—a life of no regrets over what could have been.

Motherhood is a blessing. It is God's blessing. I am so grateful I have not missed a moment of the blessings God had for me through my children. When I am an old woman, I want to look at my children and grandchildren and see the legacy He allowed me to have. I want to know that I sucked the marrow out of motherhood and didn't miss a moment; or a precious soul He wanted to entrust to us.

MARYBETH WHALEN

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marybeth6@gmail.com
www.marybethwhalen.com

God has blessed Curt and Marybeth with six blessings, Jack (14), Ashleigh (12), Matthew (10), Rebekah (7), Bradley (4), and Annaliese (18 months).

THE STRAW GAME

My husband and I have had the luxury of owning only one car most of our marriage because he works close to home. On days I need the car, I drop him off at work and pick him up at lunch time. If he is running late, my children and I kill time in the parking lot with the Straw Game.

"Straw Grime!" Theo, age three, yells with anticipation as I pull into the back parking lot. I keep a zip lock bag in the car with 20 straws and number flashcards (numbers written on index cards). The

game is pretty simple. Everyone stays strapped in to their car seats so they are ready to go at a moment's notice when Daddy arrives. I distribute 10 straws to each child (count out one by one so they can watch me). Then I show Grace (age four and a half) a flashcard.

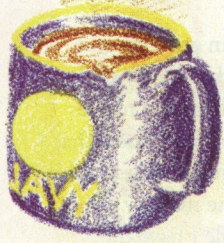
"Give me this number." She has to read the number and then count out that number of straws. Theo loves to join in and proudly counts out his straws. Some days we also work on addition and subtraction.

"What is two straws plus two more straws?"

When Daddy arrives we quickly throw the straws in the bag and greet him with smiles and hugs. Because my children and I had a nice time waiting, I don't feel grumpy at my husband for being late.

HILLARY CRANDALL
Denver Colorado, USA

Hillary and David's blessings are Grace (4 1/2), Theo (3) and Hannah (6 months).



Today Is Mother's Day

chatting with strangers who always ask the same questions. I keep smiling and reply, "No, it's not a daycare; yes, they are all mine; no, the girls aren't twins, just 15 months apart, and yes, we do in fact home school." The children all smile and I am grateful for their

I awoke to the sound of whispering in the kitchen. At least, as much whispering as a nine year old boy and his four year old brother could manage. I was still half asleep, and squashed like a sardine in my queen size bed. It was barely 7 a.m. and I was tandem nursing our 17 month old son, Henry and his new baby sister. Little Sophia had been born abruptly, unexpectedly, six weeks premature in this very bed just three months before.

These days, waking in the middle of the night is all I seem to do. There are, of course, two hungry babies to feed off and on until the wee hours. But what kept me up that night, and most nights, was thoughts of my husband, a naval officer, thousands of miles away in the desert. It would be about supper time there. I wondered if he had eaten yet and hoped it had been tolerable. I prayed for his safety and the safety of his men. I prayed that he would be a good witness to the crew that he flew with. I prayed for their missions that would ultimately bring both freedom and the opportunity to learn of the true living God to a people who had never known either. I prayed for each of our seven children who all miss their Daddy. When I could pray no more I would fall back asleep until the next round of crying babies or fear awoke me.

There I was, on a Thursday morning in October, completely exhausted, scrambling to compose my thoughts and organize the day's events in my head when I walked Daniel. At four years old, buzz cut hair and chocolate brown eyes; he was the spitting image of his father. He was grinning ear to ear, wearing nothing but his underwear. I was about to robotically tell him to go get dressed when he proudly announced, "Look, we made this for you."

He thrust a mug at me, nearly spilling its contents on his sleeping sister. It caught me off guard. Had my four year old really made coffee? Indeed he had, with the help of his older brother. I took

an obligatory sip to not hurt his feelings. Hmm. It was actually pretty good. They had put in just the right amount of sugar and cream, not to mention it was in my favorite mug—a bright blue one with fading gold letters that spelled out Navy and a big chip on one side, undoubtedly from one of the four moves we've made in the last two years. Before I could thank him, he came over and kissed my hand, put on his best superhero voice and said "Happy Mothers Day, I love you" then darted from my room, his arms spread out like an airplane, making a loud zooming noise.

Did he just say Happy Mother's Day? Surely he remembered that it was October. The leaves were starting to change and it was getting cooler by the day. He had to have remembered how we celebrated Mother's Day just a few months ago. It was the day my husband had left on a mission. We were still living in a hotel having just arrived at our new duty station three days before. I dismissed his mistake with a shrug and pried myself from the dimpled arms and legs surrounding me. I was too busy making breakfast, braiding hair, changing diapers, and laying out schoolwork to instruct my son on the calendar. I didn't give it another thought as I loaded the car seats, children, stroller, diaper bag, my purse and finally myself into the van. We were in hurry to avoid the crowds at the commissary this morning.

Let's see—we can put the baby in a cart and let Chloe push it. We'll need Samuel to push a cart for the eleven gallons of milk we drink each week, and then Jacob and Lydia can push carts for the rest of the groceries. I can push the stroller with Daniel and Henry and balance the eggs and bread on top. I smile politely at the people who stare at us as we walk like a row of ducks into the building. It's overcrowded and the baby is getting hungry. They are out of plain yogurt and the apples are all bruised. We stand in line for nearly fifteen minutes

sweet attitudes.

We finally leave, \$428 poorer, pondering how to fit our bounty into the van. "We'll put the stroller in first then start loading the milk, put the eggs and bread up by me, load in the babies and everyone else find a spot where you don't squish the food." On the twenty minute drive home we talk about the changing season, how much longer until Daddy comes home and the fact that the frozen pot roast sitting on Jacob's lap is making his legs tingle. The boys spend fifteen minutes lugging in the groceries that take me nearly three hours to put away. I have to stop to feed the baby, put a band aid on a scrape from a fall in the driveway, and figure how to divide all the food between two pantries and three refrigerators.

A gallon of milk is dropped on the kitchen floor, instantly breaking open and creating a huge mess. Meanwhile a toddler who is going unwatched as his mommy juggles the groceries has gotten into a bag of newly purchased chocolate chips and is making his own little mess. The groceries are finally put up and schoolwork started when I realize it's nearly 1:30. I haven't even started lunch. The rest of the day is spent correcting math, tying shoes, making dinner, catching up on cleaning, doing five loads of laundry and then ultimately bathing seven children and getting them ready to do it all again tomorrow. The house looks like it was hit by a tornado. It takes a bit longer than normal to pick up and tuck them in after our bedtime devotion.

Finally everyone is kissed and sent off to their rooms. There are a few tears for missing Daddy followed by jumping on beds, giggling antics, trips to the bathroom, requests for glasses of water, and then more trips to the bathroom. It is nearly 10 p.m. before everyone is asleep. I have nursed the baby and laid her in the crib in the next room. Henry is snuggled on my lap, trying his best not to fall asleep.

I read my Bible and praise God for

my many blessings. I thank Him for his constant love and protection. I praise him for His mercy on my sinful ways, and I thank Him for allowing my husband to have been home to help in the birth of his newest daughter. I ask the Lord to guide me in my husband's absence and give an extra portion of wisdom in raising these little "arrows" by myself. Then I try my best to fall asleep.

My mind is racing with the day's events. I try to remember if I locked the back door. I make a mental note to discuss homophones with Samuel. I briefly entertain the idea of getting up to correct Lydia's penmanship papers. I hope Jacob hasn't forgotten to read his Psalm for the day. I remember that I have not changed Sophia's diaper before putting her down and say a quick prayer that it holds until she wakes up for a feeding. I notice the basket of sewing sitting near my bed and think about the dresses I still need to cut out for the girls to wear on Thanksgiving. I think about Chloe's birthday approaching soon and try to remember where I stashed the new Bible her father had bought her.

The house seems extra loud and

dark with Doug gone. I decide to turn on the news, hoping it will lull me to sleep. Between the war coverage and stories of sinful people it defeats the intended purpose and I am even more awake. I decide to spend this quiet time with the Lord. As I finish praying, the phone rings. I look at the clock and realize it is well past midnight. I cautiously pick up the phone. A familiar voice booms, "Hi Honey, did you have a good day?" I try not to get choked up at the sound of my beloved's voice so far away. "Of course I did. You know today is Mother's Day."

LESLIANNE
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This couple are blessed with seven children - Samuel (11), Jacob (9), Chloe (7), Lydia (6), Daniel (4), Henry (17 months), and Sophia (3 months). (Full name withheld because of husband's secret missions.)

Pray for Leslianne
as she mothers her children
for most of the year on her own.

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Andrew Stories

When we adopted our little twin boys from the Ukraine, they were only 2 1/2 years. Neither could say a word and Andrew could barely walk. They have come a long way and we are thankful for their progress. Andrew warms every heart he comes in contact with—and keeps us laughing, whenever he doesn't have us crying!

At Christmas time he was joyfully and loudly singing, "George to the World" (sung somewhat to the tune of *Joy to the World*). His twin brother came up to him and with a chastening tone said, "No, it isn't 'George to the World', it's 'Joyce'!" We had a good heehaw and still sing George to the world every now and then.

One night one of my best friends and her husband came over for dinner along with their nine children. Pamela went into a bedroom to feed Noah, the four month old baby. She came out a little later and told me laughingly that she had done my biology lesson for the day with Andrew. She said that when he came close to observe the feeding, he commented with a tone of surprise, "I didn't know you could get milk out of those things!"

RENEE MCGILL
Paducah, Kentucky, USA
rmcgill@comcast.net

Doug and Renee are blessed with Breck (21), twins Gabriel and Andrew (7) and Johana (5) who is adopted from Guatemala.

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see page 29

NEEDS OR Wants?

While schooling this morning, Andrew set straight off working for a couple of minutes before Riley had found a pencil. Unfortunately, Andrew decided that the pencil Riley had was the one he wanted to work with. He suggested they trade. However, the pencil Andrew was working with was rather dull and the eraser almost gone. Riley decided to stick with the pencil in his own possession.

I thought the debate was over and done with, until Riley set his pencil down for a moment to use a crayon. Andrew promptly walked over and switched out his pencil for Riley's. Riley immediately objected. He was not done using it. This was true, of course, because he had several other pages where a pencil would be needed. Andrew argued that he had put it down, therefore it was free game.

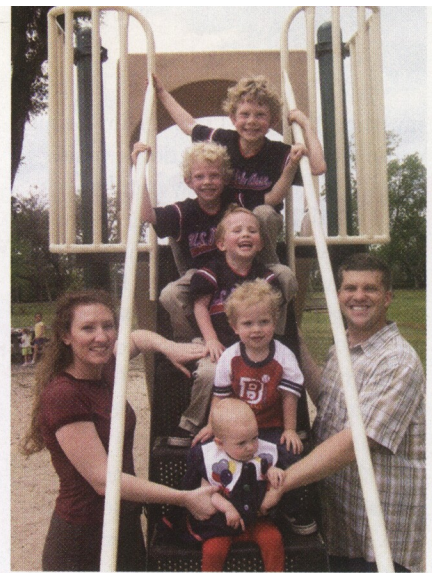
After I explained to Andrew that he could not use Riley's pencil, he was irritable. He tried to win the verdict by saying that his pencil did not work very well, and besides, the eraser was almost all gone. I handed him a pencil sharpener, got an eraser out of my own pencil box, and handed it to him. He reluctantly took the pencil and the sharpener to the trash can and began sharpening it. He had resigned himself to being unhappy and discontent.

As I observed his countenance, I decided I needed to have a little talk with him.

I called him over to me, looked into his little face, and asked him if I had met all his needs—the need for a sharp pencil and a serviceable eraser. He conceded that both needs had been met. I told him that the real problem was not that he did not have what he needed, but he did not have what he wanted. He wanted Riley's pencil, and he refused to be happy unless he had it. I asked him if he could learn to be happy with what he needed, and not everything he wanted. In the precious way of a child, he said he could, and went back to the table with a whole different attitude.

As I spoke to Riley, I heard the Lord speak to my heart, "My child, can you be happy that I have met all your needs, and not all your wants?" I still struggle with this, not over simple things like pencils and erasers, but over other issues in life. When God chooses to answer my prayers by not giving me what I want, I often feel slighted by God. The truth is, He has ALWAYS met all my needs, and I know I can trust Him to continue to do so.

Are you content with the way God has met your needs, or are you discontent because He has not given you everything



you want? Perhaps He has not answered your prayers in the way you wanted Him to and you wonder if He heard you at all. Possibly, you are wondering whether your prayer life is fruitless at best and futile at worst. I encourage you to go back to the Word of God, which tells us that He does indeed hear and answer our prayers. Present your requests before Him, and then trust in a Sovereign God who will supply all your needs, but not all your wants.

AMY SMITH
Hinesville, Georgia, USA
treverandamy@yahoo.com

God has blessed Trevor and Amy with Andrew (8), Riley (6), Dyaln (4), Josiah (3), Liberty (1) and Justice (4 weeks).

Trevor is currently deployed to Iraq for the second time. He was there all 2005 and will now be there all 2007.

Pray for his safety and for God's covering over Amy as she mothers her little brood on her own.

SMILE!

"Have you ever noticed how easily puppies make human friends? Yet all they do is wag their tails and fall over!"

Walter Anderson



No matter how grouchy you're feeling,
You'll find the smile more or less healing.
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All around the front teeth—
Thus preserving the face from congealing.

Anthony Euwer

ABOVE RUBIES

RETREATS AND SEMINARS

Family Camps are for the whole family - fathers, mothers and the children. Singles and single mothers are also welcome. The speakers are Colin and Nancy Campbell. Colin will minister to the fathers and Nancy to the mothers, unless otherwise stated. All ladies are welcome at the Ladies Retreats - wives, mothers, singles, teen daughters, and of course, we always welcome the nursing babies. Come and be encouraged, challenged, fortified, strengthened, uplifted and inspired in your divine calling of parenting.

Check www.aboverubies.org for additional retreats or changes. More retreats are currently being finalized.

-- Camps for 2007 --

31 MARCH - 2 APRIL, WISCONSIN

8th ANNUAL FAMILY CAMP, Inspiration Center, Williams Bay
Contact: Roger and Jackie Thelen, Ph: 262-723-6557
safehaven@pensys.com

20 - 22 APRIL, TEXAS

4th ANNUAL LADIES RETREAT
Mt. Lebanon Baptist Camp, Cedar Hill
To register go to: www.texasrubies.com
Email: retreat2007@texasrubies.com
Or Ph: Jeanette Watje: 830-609-6155

13 - 15 JULY, VIRGINIA

LADIES RETREAT
Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center, Toano, VA
Contact: Sonny and Angela Sundaramurthy: (804) 633-5358
Email: yellowbunnys@hotmail.com
www.varubies.org

27 - 29 JULY, CALGARY CANADA

2nd FAMILY CAMP, Living Faith, Caroline, Central Alberta
Contact: Bob and Ruth Klepel, Ph: 403-722-2059
Email: office@lfbcc.net

24 - 26 AUGUST, CALIFORNIA

11th ANNUAL FAMILY CAMP
Pine Valley Bible Conference Center, out from San Diego
Contact: Gary and Trish Evans, Ph: 951-681-4858
Email: gtdkz@empirenet.com

21 - 23 SEPTEMBER, EAST WASHINGTON-IDAHO

3rd FAMILY CAMP, Pinelow Park on Dear Lake, near Clayton, WA
Contact: Laura Neal, Ph: 509-891-9038
Email: lkneal@southernospelonline.com
Maralie Thomas, sotazzy@yahoo.com

28 - 30 SEPTEMBER, ARIZONA

1st FAMILY CAMP IN ARIZONA
Huachuca Oaks Christian Camp, Hereford
Contact: Xavier and Ronda Caballero
Email: xavroncab@netscape.com
Ph: 520-623-3501 or 520-403-1370

26 - 28 OCTOBER, KENTUCKY/TENNESSEE

FAMILY CAMP, Lake Barkley Resort Park
Contact: Russ and Michelle Thomas
Ph: 270-522-0073 or thomasquiver@aol.com
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ACRES OF HOPE:

Patty Anglin: thenest@cheqnet.net • Ph: (715) 765 4118
www.acresofhope.org

"It is the lifted face that feels
the shining of the sun."

Browning.

HELP FOR ADOPTING FROM CANADA

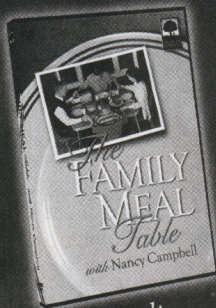
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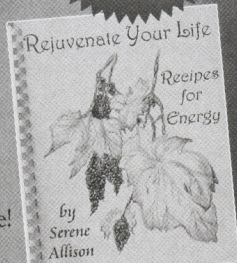
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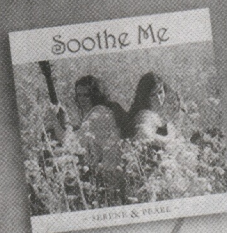
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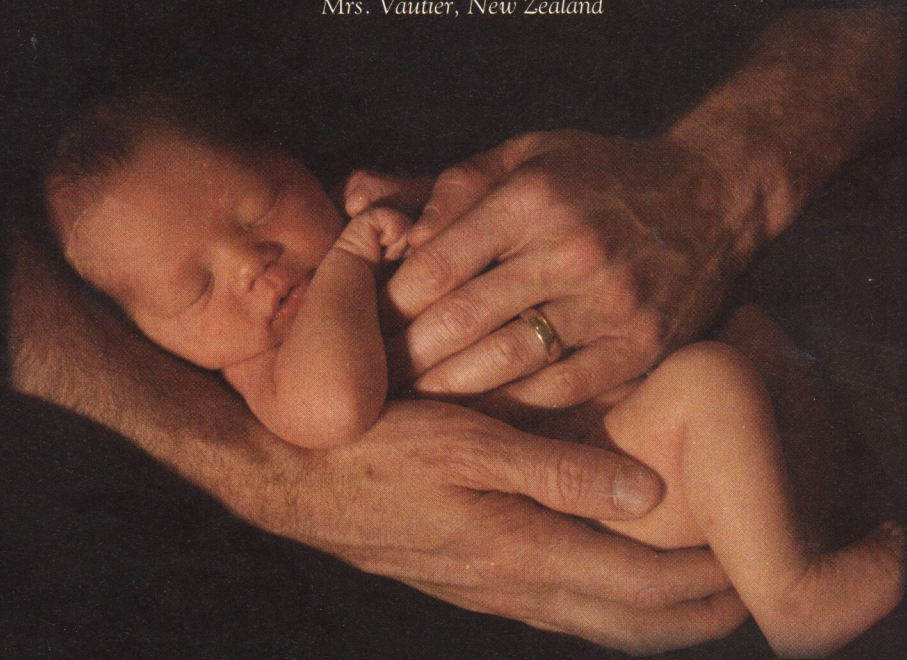
A Mother's Prayer

My dearest wee baby, so sweet and fair,
God guide you always, is your mother's prayer.
May God help you, darling, in all you do
And keep you through manhood, both noble and true.

You're the dearest baby, your smile is so sweet,
I kiss your wee hands and your soft dimpled feet,
I wonder what seed these dear hands will sow
And where through life's wanderings these feet will go.

God bless you, darling, and keep you in His care,
God bless you always is your mother's prayer.

Mrs. Vautier, New Zealand



Taia Elizabeth Shaffer (4 days old) held in the hand of her daddy, Brian Shaffer.
Kathryn (who took the picture) and her husband and family live in Durango, Colorado, USA.