

ABOVE RUBIES

www.aboverubies.org

Issue number: Sixty-nine

Strengthening Families Across The World



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From Our Home to Yours



In the last issue of *Above Rubies* I shared how Serene would count to eight to make sure all her children were in the van. The children would then spontaneously respond with nine, ten, eleven! Nine and ten are Kula and Jabin who have now arrived home from Liberia to join their family. It has been a long wait for these children since the beginning of the year, and in fact, for the ten years they have been in the orphanage.

Now Serene is expecting a new baby, number eleven due in May! Evangeline is due with number nine about the same time. That will bring our total, so far, to



very close to the heart of God and God is touching hearts to bring His purposes to fulfillment.

God's ultimate plan is that every child live in a family. This is how God planned for people to live. He wants every child, even those who have become bereft of parents, to live in a family. God is orchestrating this by His Holy Spirit. Not only are families all over the world opening their hearts to embrace the children

He wants to give them naturally, but He is pouring His grace into their hearts for orphan children. What a beautiful thing God is doing.

When God causes something to happen that is on His heart, He does not speak once, or to only one person, but to many people and all over the world. I have been sensing strongly God's heart for adoption. Just a few days ago I heard that intercessors, who are praying for the nation of America, have felt a burden to pray for one million children to be adopted by families in the USA. They are calling for people everywhere to join with them in this prayer. (As we pray for the abortion laws to be changed in this nation, we must also be prepared to embrace the precious babies who will be

born.) As we pray, I am sure God will touch people who previously never thought about it.

Colin and I had never thought of

doing such a thing, but God changed our hearts. I felt the burden to share this need with young couples and families, never thinking that it was something that older couples should do. The first night that I shared, I came back to bed and could not sleep. I felt God saying to me, "What about you?"

I'll talk to Colin about it in the morning I thought. He's sure to say No, and that will be the end of it. Instead, he replied, "Let's go for it!" Help! There was no backing out now! The more we have opened our hearts and stepped ahead in faith, the more excited we have become. We are now, after getting our US citizenship, in the process of adopting three teenagers from Liberia and looking forward to embracing them into our home.

God is pouring out this burden, not only on families, but singles. I meet many singles all over the land upon whom God is pouring out a strong burden for orphans. A college graduate whom I had never met before came and stayed at our home last night. God has strongly bur-

Meadow (Pearl's daughter) and Rashida (Evangeline's daughter). They get together most days and love to cook together. Here they are making carob balls which they usually make when they are organizing tea parties.



Serene and Sam Allison with their family: Selah (15), Kula (14), Jabin (13), Isaiah (10), Arden (8—firstborn), Chalice (6), Cherish (6), Cedar (4), Engedi (nearly 3) and Vision (20 months).

34 grandchildren and we are still praying for more! The more godly grandchildren we have, the more impact we will have for God in this world.

It is awe-inspiring to see how God is moving in this hour. Since sharing about the orphans of the war-devastated nation of Liberia in March 2005 *Above Rubies*, hundreds of children have been adopted. Children who have longed to have a mommy and daddy now enjoy the blessing of belonging to a loving family. I could not have made this happen. Nobody could make families adopt children. It is a long process. There are many hurdles. It is a financial step of faith. You have to keep pressing in and praying through. And yet hundreds of families are responding. It is a work of the Holy Spirit. I believe that it is

The favorite thing our grandchildren love to do is dress up. Nearly every day they delve into the dress-up box. Left to right: Chalice, Cherish, Engedi, Promise (my sister, Kate's little girl whom she adopted from China and who is like one of my grandchildren) and Cedar.



dened her heart for widows and orphans. For many years the numbers 1018 have come to her attention. She wondered why. A friend suggested she should check those numbers out in the Bible. As she did, the two 1018's that jumped out at her were Deuteronomy 10:18, "He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing," and Psalm 10:18, "To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may oppress no more." God confirmed His purposes to her through His Word.

It seems that my editorials are becoming a collage of pictures of grandchildren, but they tell the story of our lives. Twenty-four of our 32 grandchildren live here on the land. They have a wonderful life together and children are in and out of my office all day long.

Recently I sent out a message on my email list to ask for ideas on how to encourage husbands and children. I received hundreds of replies—too many to print in this magazine. I know you will be inspired by the testimonies printed in this issue. If you want to read more, make sure you are subscribed to the email list by sending a blank email to subscribers-on@aboverubies.org. I will print more in future emails.

Last issue we advertised the *Etiquette posters*. I am printing one more for you to enjoy in this issue (page 15). This is the last one I will print in the magazine. To receive the other posters you will need to buy the set. You will find them a blessing to your home. Serene is using them in her Family times with her children each day.

What about the special for this issue? I am extending the special for *The Power of Motherhood* because it was six weeks late on the ordering page. As it is only \$10.00 (bedrock price!) the ten percent shipping only

FRONT COVER PHOTO:

Isaiah and Arden Allison, Primm Springs, Tennessee, USA.
Photo by Shay Nicholson.



My four wonderful helpers during September and October, 2006: Top: Shay Nicholson (Texas). Left: Sarah Herzog (Texas) Shay and Sarah are friends who came together, Right: Kristin Petersen (Washington). Below: Destiny Holowell (Pennsylvania).

comes to \$1.00. However, it costs \$1.80 to send it to you. If you would like to be kind to *Above Rubies*, you could add the extra shipping by donating on the Donation button.

By the way, I know that many of you are desperate for new information on our *Above Rubies* web page. I have loads wait-

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 Dorniny, Dorniny & Associates, duanead@excite.com
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Destiny fell in love with Serene's little girl, Engedi (as most of the girls do). Here she is, busily taking an order in the office with Engedi asleep in a lapa on her back.

ing but little time to get it on. However, the web page is in the process of being re-vamped and updated! Watch out for it. It should be up and running early December.

One of the greatest blessings in the ministry of *Above Rubies* is my helpers. I could not continue this work of love without them. Yes, *Above Rubies* is a ministry of love. I freely give my life and time, and have done so for over 29 years, to strengthen, encourage, inspire and undergird the marriages and families of the world. However, it was becoming overwhelming. I wondered how I could get help, when I thought of the idea of asking young people in their late teens and early twenties to come for a mission trip to Tennessee! They stay in our home and help in the *Above Rubies* office (which is part of our home) each day. They usually come for about two months at a time. They are all the most wonderful girls. Most of them I have not met before until they arrive, but I have been wondrously blessed to receive the cream of the crop. They come from Australia, England and many different states of America.

I started off with one helper. Then I needed two, then three. For the last two months I have had four girls living with us, helping me in this world-wide ministry. It is a wonderful blessing to them too. They make friends for life.

By faith, we are gradually extending our *Above Rubies* office, and putting in extra bedrooms. The ministry is growing. We are running out of room to work and to store the magazines and books. Plus, we need room for our helpers who live with us (sometimes they have had to sleep on the sofa)—and the children we are adopting from Liberia.

From Our Home to Yours *continued*



Above: Our sons—Stephen, Rocklyn pushing, and Wesley in right hand side go-kart and friends around. Little Pearl is on the left of the picture overseeing the proceedings!



The go-karts are getting bigger. Wesley in JAWS.



They are now making motorized go-karts. Little Serene tests it out!

A friend of ours was having a hard time finding block-layers for us. "Nobody wants to work," he complained. I believe that if you train your children to work hard and always do their best, they will never lack for a job as they grow older. Train them now to work at home. Prepare your sons to be the providers of their family in the future. It does not start when they get married. They should be trained and geared up for it while they are young.

Our son-in-law, Sam has roped in his sons, ten year old Isaiah and eight year old Arden to help build their home. The boys put in all the insulation by themselves, laid down most of the wood floor ready for Sam to nail, helped Sam hold up dry wall and textured the walls. The boys also frequently have turns at having a day at work with Daddy and are already learning to paint.

I hope you enjoy the front cover. This is Isaiah and Arden riding their go-kart which they purchased with money they earned through working very hard. Go-karts have always been part of our family. Our own sons built go-karts when they were very young. They made them out of wood and old lawnmower wheels. I think they spent more time fixing them than riding them! They progressed to making motorized go-karts, and, as they got older, to riding moto-cross bikes. They are now in their forties and still ride for recreation.

I believe it is time we began to really shine like beacon lights in this deceived world. It is very sad to me that many Christians today live no differently to the world. It is an indictment against God and His son, Jesus Christ that we should even hear of adultery amongst

those who name the name of Christ. And yet it happens. May He help all married couples to live as God intended, to be a picture of Christ and His bride before the world around us. Christ is committed to His bride eternally. This is the picture we should show to our children and the world.

What about our attitude to children? Is that any different to the current world system? Most Christians limit their families to one or two children, which is a belief-system rooted in humanism and feminism. It doesn't come from the Bible.

Philippians 2:15 says, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

The Knox translation gives a good translation of this Scripture: "You live in an age that is twisted out of its true pattern, and among such people you shine out, beacons to the world, upholding the message of life." How true. We live in an age that is twisted out of the true pattern that God set forth in the beginning. As God's people, we are not meant to be part of this twisted pattern. We are meant to be beacon lights, showing forth God's plan that He set down in the very first chapters of Genesis.

We are not meant to be on the devil's side, helping him to "rob, kill and destroy" life. We should be on God's side, embracing life and the children He wants to give us. God is a God of life. He is the author, the giver and the lover of life.

May you and your family shine like stars in this deceived world.

NANCY CAMPBELL

Are You Starved for Encouragement?

Send a blank email to subscribers-on@aboverubies.org

You will receive regular email devotions to encourage you in your high calling of being a wife and mother. You will also receive an occasional newsletter (a mini *Above Rubies*) to keep you going until the next issue arrives!

"Your devotions always arrive just when I need them. I feel they are written just for me!"

If you have subscribed to this email list but have stopped receiving them, please subscribe again. Sometimes the email list drops names for no reason at all.

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.

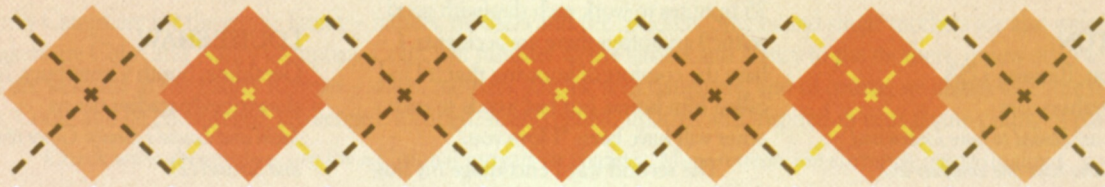
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AboveRubies/>

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

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

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

HUSBANDS NEED ENCOURAGEMENT



“A word of encouragement does wonders.”

Proverbs 12:25 TLB

Make the Weekends SPECIAL

My husband, Jeff works long hours during the week so I try to make his weekends worthy of “bragging rights” on Monday at work. I make sure he sleeps in while I wake up early with our toddler and make him a special breakfast. The morning and afternoon are his to enjoy. Whatever he wants to do is what we do. And, I do it joyfully. What Jeff wants to do is not always the most fun, like digging trenches, spreading compost, or going to the comic book shop. But, I still do it without complaint and with a smile.

This Saturday we met our family at the cider mill and picked apples. On Sunday we took a long motorcycle ride after church.

When Jeff says to me, “I wish I had more time, I would love to do this...” I take a mental note and make it happen. Making the weekends special for Jeff often means a lot of work for me, but when he leaves for his job on Monday morning and says, “Amber, I’m going to miss you. I didn’t want the weekend to end,” it is worth every sacrifice.

AMBER ARNOLD

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Jeff and Amber have Kyra (21 months) and baby due May 2007.

One Good Thing

One day, about two years after we were married, it dawned upon me that this man I married was not all I had imagined. I started questioning what I was really doing

being married to him. I could no longer see anything good—only the bad! These thoughts soon reflected in my behaviour toward him.

Fortunately, I found an article where I was encouraged to look for ONE good thing in my husband and thank God for it. Not only did I do that, but I also thanked God for that quality when we prayed aloud together, e.g., “Thank you, God for Chris and his patience with the children.”

This article also encouraged me to thank God for his manliness. I started thanking God in our prayers together for his strong muscles and the way he uses them to provide for us. Chris would thank me for my prayers and walk with a lighter step.

These prayers continued. My focus on one Christ-like quality grew and grew until I could no longer see the faults and thought more and more of my husband’s fine qualities. In the process, Chris was greatly encouraged. Even today, the most encouraging thing that I can do for him is to pray aloud for him and specifically thank God for his Christ-like qualities.

JANICE WILLS

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Chris and Janice’s family: Brett (24), Rachel (22), Kieran (20), Jessie (17), Tori (10), Alec (8), Warren (7) and Lydia (3). Jessie was married this year to Hamish Anderson and Rachel is engaged to Nathan McGimpsey

Love Letters

Once a month or so I pull out some pretty paper and write to my husband. If I don’t have pretty paper, I draw hearts and flowers on blank paper. Sometimes I glue pictures of us together to the front of construction

paper. I express how much I love and appreciate him. This way he knows that the “little” things he does don’t go unnoticed. I often talk about our dreams for the future which spurs him on to “fight the good fight.”

I put my love letters in his lunch box, on the seat of his work car, under his pillow, or by the bathroom sink for him to find in the morning. I know my husband enjoys these love letters because for several days after receiving one, he has a huge smile on his face and holds his head up a little higher!

RASHEA COX

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Lee and RaShea are blessed with Sheldon (10), Austin (9), Sadie (7), Ellie (5), Jared (3) and Zachary (20 months).

Daddy Alarm

At our house we have a “Dad Alarm.” This is a recurring alarm that I set on my cell phone. It goes off one hour before my husband arrives home from work. It reminds my children to clean up any messes around the house and tidy themselves up. It reminds the older children and me to start supper. It also reminds me to make sure my clothes are fresh, to fix my make up and my hair and say a prayer for my big sweet hubby.

To be honest, we are not as consistent with this as I would like to be. Sometimes the alarm goes off and I ignore it, thinking to myself “too busy.” But when we are consistent, the results are not only a blessing to my husband, but a blessing to our whole household. My husband is never “too busy” to go to work to provide for his family and this family should never be too busy to pro-

vide a warm, clean, "Welcome Home" for him.

JULIE BANTON

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Doug and Julie are blessed to have Jordan and his wife Leslie (who have one daughter and another child on the way), Levi (17), Noah (16), Caleb (13), Gideon (11), Glory Hosanna (10), Charity Joy (8), Jonah (6) and Elijah (3).

Leave a Voice Mail

When my husband is feeling stressed or having a rough time at work I like to call his office and leave him a voice mail. I make sure to call right after he leaves the house. When he gets to work, it's on his voice mail. I tell him how much I respect him and his commitment to provide for our family, how much I appreciate all the hard work he does for us, and how proud I am of him for sticking with it even when it is very difficult. He saves the message and listens to it again when he needs a boost!

GINA McINTOSH

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Jim and Gina's family: Mitchell (home with the Lord at age 8), Tatum (8), Sophie (5), Kendra (4), Riley (4), Isabel (2.5) and Priscilla (1).

Actions Speak Louder than Words

Almost every day, for 22 years, I have got up with my husband at 4:45 am, ironed his shirt, packed his lunch and made his coffee. The only times I have not done this were when I was in the hospital after delivering a baby and, on rare occasions, when sick.

Many friends have told me that I am crazy and that I should do all this the night before and sleep in. I tried this the first time someone gave me that advice and never did it again. I can be sleepy, achy, irritated or just selfish on some mornings, but I have chosen to put that behind me and act kindly towards my husband. It has blessed us both over the years. The Lord has taught me that to act lovingly to my husband is more important than how I feel at that moment.

I want my husband to know that this is OUR time together. My husband travels 75 minutes to work each day (with good traffic!) and often there are accidents. I have the comfort of knowing that if God called him home, our last words to each other will have been "I love you."

The second way I encourage my husband is by having dinner ready when he comes home. Even if it is not quite finished, to have something smelling good and nearly ready is a great blessing to him. I have noticed that he is so happy when he can sit and eat a fragrant, hot meal right away.

SANDRA GRAMMER

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Bryan and Sandra are blessed with Lindsay (20), Meredith (18), Kelsey (17), Daniel (13), Evan (12), Jillian (6) and Delaney (4).

CHEER him on!

Over a year ago my husband cut off his left thumb. I try to point out to him the many things that he does with one thumb (like plumbing for instance) that a lot of men with two thumbs still cannot do. I think this encourages him to see how far he has come in his recovery. When he feels frustrated or discouraged, it is good for him to hear me say that in my eyes he is an over-comer!

BECKY MESSER

Missionaries in San-Pedro, Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. When in USA they live in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.
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Andy and Becker have six blessings, Leah (9), David (8), Nadia (6), Lexie (4), Prisca (2) and Hadassah (1).

Dress to Please

Recently I have begun to honour my husband by dressing more femininely and lovingly to look upon. I wear far more skirts than before. I wear bright colours and take care with my hair and make-up. My husband loves to come home and be greeted by a wife who has made a real effort to please him. He always says he loves me no matter what I look like, but he is encouraged to

know I love him enough to spend the extra time to delight him.

LOUISE SHAW

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Jason and Louise's family: Grace (6), Esther (4) and Samuel (2).

Nothing Better Than Prayer

I believe the greatest way we can encourage our husband is through our prayers.

Here are some questions I ask myself. I found these questions on the web, www.doorposts.net/Samples/aul_prayer.pdf, but have added my own comments.

1. Do I earnestly pray for my husband's spiritual growth and wisdom as he leads our family?

I pray that my husband seeks to know God and His plans for his life and I pray Paul's prayer in Colossians.1:9-12 for him. I pray earnestly for my husband as he leads our family. I pray that he will actively seek God in all that he does. I pray for the Lord's wisdom as he answers our children's questions about spiritual matters.

2. Do I pray for my husband in his work, his leadership responsibilities, and his relationships with others?

As my husband interacts with the people he contacts at work, I pray he will lead a godly and honest life, one that reflects the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that those around him might see the difference that God has made in his life. How often we forget that our husband's mission field is his workplace.

3. Do I pray for a reverent heart and submissive response to my husband?

I have learned that neglecting my spiritual walk to do other seemingly important tasks benefits no one, especially me. I serve the Lord through serving my husband. I am learning God's will as I show reverence to my husband. I cannot be the wife that God has created me to be if my heart is not right with Him. (Psalm 139:23-24)

4. Do I pray for my husband's relationship with each of our children?

In Malachi 4:6 it says that a father's heart is to be turned towards his children. I pray daily that my husband's heart is turned toward his children. I pray that he will see the individ-

ual needs of each child and that God will guide him as he interacts with them. A great book is *Keeping Our Children's Hearts* by Steve and Teri Maxwell.

5. Do I pray for my husband when I know he is going through times of testing and hardship?

We are to "bear one another's burdens." (Galatians. 6:2) We need to be mindful of what our husband's are going through. I make it a point to find out what is bothering my husband so I can pray specifically. I will ask him, "How can I pray for you today?"

6. Do I pray for my husband to be strong in his particular areas of weakness and temptation?

I know that many temptations face my husband daily. I usually try to pray a pray of protection over him as he walks out the door each morning. It is getting harder for a man to stand strong in this world when everything relates to a humanistic value system with no fear of the Lord. But God will deliver the godly out of temptation. (2 Peter. 2:9)

7. When my husband is in sin or when I believe he is making an unwise decision, do I humbly entreat him and then earnestly, patiently, and quietly pray for God to lead him?

I sometimes lash out at my husband if he is wrong or making a bad decision. How many times have I said something only to regret it two seconds later? Why don't I remember God's word in Exodus 14:14, "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."? I know that my husband's heart is in God's hand and He will turn it as He wills. (Proverbs 21:1)

As I pray faithfully for God to change my husband's heart, I try not to say "I told you so" when God does change his heart. I must give the glory to the Lord for He deserves the praise.

8. Do I pray for my husband when he has offended me, or do I criticize and harbor bitterness?

Forgiveness is hard. How God forgave us I will never understand. Only by His grace. I pray that God will hold my tongue in situations like this. In Proverbs 21:9 and 19 it says that it is better to be anywhere else than with a brawling angry woman. I am a miserable woman to live with when I have been (or think I have been) wronged.

It is important to be open with your husband about your feelings. I am usually surprised my husband didn't even know he had hurt me. I pray for

the Lord to help me forgive, move on and forget. What if God kept on recalling my past sins all of the time?

My favorite verse to help me to remember to pray for my husband is 1 Samuel 12:23a "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." I sin against the Lord by not praying for my husband.

HEIDI KEMP

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*Egan and Heidi's children are Anri (8),
Celina (7), Samuel (3) and Elijah (2).*

Little Things

This is what I have learned to do to bless my husband.

1. Listen to him without any comments or advice.
2. Give him a five minute shoulder rub when he does not expect it.
3. Smile at him – a lot!
4. Ask him how his day was without including anything about my own day.

LORI CHIRICO

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*Phil and Lori's children are Trevor (12),
Shawn (10) and Jason (8).*

T-Shirts

I special ordered a T-shirt that says,
I ♥ Doug!

He is a fire-fighter so another one I wear says,
I'm In Love with a Firefighter!
He gets a kick out of it.

DALYN WELLER

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*Doug and Dalyn's children are Tori (14),
Taylor (12) and Ben (7).*

Sing Him a Song

My husband, Jim is in sales which has its ups and downs, much like a roller coaster. I started to sing to my husband when he closed a sale, "I'm proud of you, I'm proud of you, Oh yes, I'm so proud of you. Boop, Boop, Dee, Do!" Much to my surprise, it

really spurred him on. He tries his hardest to get as many sales each day as he can, so he can call and hear me sing his reward. I know this really showed him how much I appreciate him going out and working hard for our family.

ANGI MARTIN

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*James and Angi are blessed with 5 year old twins,
Max and Molly.*

Pick-me-up Binder

For my husband, Jeremy's 33rd birthday, I asked family and close friends to send their words of encouragement to me via email—a favorite memory, a letter, a poem, verse of Scripture or a word of encouragement from the Lord. I then compiled these messages into a binder that Jeremy can read when he needs a pick-me-up.

LORIE DILLER

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*Jeremy and Lorie have three sons—Judah (4 1/2),
Asher (2 1/2) and Tristan (2 months).*

The Reward

Our van recently needed a new battery. My husband, Larry, checked on the price. Over \$100 installed! He looked at me and said, "I can find it cheaper." He did. But, installing a battery on our van is rather labor intensive and involves removing much of the housing around the battery. Gathering courage Larry said, "I'm going to go out there and rip it apart myself!"

I cheered him on as he left with all three boys in tow. Pretty soon our oldest stuck his head in the door and declared, "Mom, Dad says that he almost has all the necessary parts removed." I replied, "You tell your Dad that if he succeeds, then he'll get a GREAT BIG kiss from me!" Well, that just set them off!

They came back a few minutes later and beamed as they reported, "He's putting the new battery in place!" I said, "You'd better tell him to start puckering up. I'm sucking on a lemon to be sure I have a REALLY big pucker ready for him." They giggled and gave him my message.

Soon they reported, "Mom, the new battery is installed and everything is back in place!" As they looked at me expectantly, I said, "Tell Daddy that he has to test it out before claiming his reward". They raced outside with me close at their heels. Soon the engine roared to life and three boys yelled, "He did it!" Then six eyes watched (and who knows how many neighbors) as I grabbed their dad and laid a huge congratulatory kiss on him. The children applauded!

This was also an encouragement to our children to see me take the time to thank their father for a job well done. And, of course, it was a lot of fun, too!

HOPE WARE

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Larry and Hope have three sons, James (10), John (7 1/2), Daniel (2) and one sweet baby in Heaven.

Ten Tips

The following is my "top ten" list of things I like to do to encourage my husband:

1. When he is traveling I sneak a card or love note into his suitcase.
2. When he is taking a sack lunch to work I have made for him, I put in a picture that the children drew especially for him.
3. On a work day when he has something especially tough ahead, I leave an encouraging note on the dashboard of his car.
4. In the morning I make his coffee and breakfast.
5. I sneak a peak at his "to do" list and find things I can do for him.
6. When he leaves the house, the children and I all huddle around the front window and wave goodbye to him as he drives away, waving to him the American Sign Language "I love you" sign and yelling loud enough to wake all the neighbors up, "Bye, we love you!"
7. I call him at work every day at noon to check in to say "I love you" and ask him if there is anything he needs me to do. I've done this so consistently for the past nine years that he gets concerned if I happen to be a little late in calling.
8. I regularly thank him for being such a good provider and working hard so that I can stay home with the children. I also tell him what a great father he is and point out when his fathering skills are especially good in a certain area.

9. When he comes from work, my goal is to greet him with the five senses. This is what I try to do:

SIGHT

When he comes through the door, I have myself, the children and the house looking presentable.

TOUCH

When he comes through the door, I greet him with warm hugs, kisses and maybe even a little back rub!

SOUND

When he comes through the door...

- I do not talk on the phone. Everyone I speak with regularly on the phone knows that when I hear my husband driving up the driveway the phone call ends.
- I have the television off (unless it is his Monday night football game.)
- No whining, crying or screaming children.
- I save my need to speak with him about all the issues of the day until later, and greet him only with words of blessing and "I'm so glad your home."
- Sometimes I have some of his favorite relaxing music playing—praise music, jazz, or other soothing music.

SMELL

My husband loves to have dinner ready when he walks in the door. The smell of food cooking is so comforting.

TASTE

If dinner is not ready, I have a little plate of appetizers for him to munch on while he waits, such as cheese and crackers, chips and salsa, etc.

10. I pray diligently for him.

GINA CALLAGHAN

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Ed and Gina's children are Francesca "Kiki" (5), Lily (2) and Peter "PJ" (2).

Keep Your Mouth Shut

For as long as I've known my husband of 19 years he has battled low self-esteem. The greatest way I encourage him is to keep my mouth shut at "critical" times. It's so easy to say, "I told you so—you should have listened to me!" when he makes a mistake, big or small. I still have bouts of opening my mouth and then biting my tongue before saying too much. It's a constant, daily battle to keep the doors of my mouth under tight surveillance.

I try to give my opinion only when my husband asks for it. When he doesn't, it is hard to watch my husband make mistakes, even with our finances. However, I enjoy watching the Lord work in my husband's heart, something that I can only influence but not truly change. Trust is key. I know God wants what is best for His children, just as I do for mine. I want my husband to feel the freedom to lead and to watch him grow in faith and spiritual understanding is exciting.

Even though I am scared to death of the unknown territory we've begun to climb, my spirit feels victorious because I'm holding to God's unchanging hand.

ANGELA PRINE

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Dennis and Angela are blessed to have Nathaniel (11), Katie (7) and Noah (14 months).

Put Him First!

I have been married for almost 12 years. Three years ago I finally stopped focusing on me! I used to jump all over my husband's case when I felt my needs were not being met. This was most of the time because I was totally focused on me! He was feeling so beat down and "submitted" to me to keep peace.

Now my husband is a confident and excellent leader and I joyfully stand behind him. We have had so much harmony and love in our home since I started this practice.

ERIKA SCHAMBACH

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Eric and Erika's children are Joseph (10), Kathleen (8 1/2), Jack (7), Kaelin (6), Jesse (4), Kalli (2 1/2) James (1) and joyfully expecting their 8th baby.

Hugs and Kisses

Quality time with one another is a must and has a positive effect on the children as well. When Dad and Mom are passionately in love, the children will thrive. My husband and I always make a practice of hugging and kissing after we have a meal together, before he leaves and when he

comes home from work. The children don't miss much. When they see us hugging, they come running to do the same.

Another thing that has blessed our marriage is our chat time before bed. It's a great time to unwind, share the details of our day and a kiss and a hug always seals it. I daily tell my spouse how much I love him and that I couldn't imagine life without him. Our marriage is a daily commitment, not a once and done thing.

JEWEL NOLT

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Winifred and Jewel's children are Brandon (14), Janisa (12), Cherise (10), Victoria (8), Megan (7) and twin boys, Kendall and Zachary (2 1/2).

Surprise Birthday

My husband, Karl, had been going through a difficult time around his birthday. I got an idea. I gave him a card for his birthday, asking him out to supper. During the day I packed everything we would need for camping. I packed fun treats, his favorite game, and a book to read together. Some friends went to a camp ground and set up their camper for us to stay in. That evening we dropped our son off at grandpa and grandma's, my husband thinking we were just going out for supper.

After supper I gave my husband another card inviting him to spend the weekend with me. He was completely surprised! It was a blessing to have time together and be able to enjoy some time away without expensive hotel costs!

Karl and I also enjoy talking on instant messenger. Often I go online while he is on his way to work and leave him encouraging messages. When he has to be gone over night, I put love notes throughout his belongings—in his billfold, razor bag, with his pajamas, etc. It is fun thinking of the surprise he will have when he opens his bag.

SARAH SNEATH

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Karl and Sarah's children are Josiah (10 months) and 2 little ones worshipping with Jesus.

Blessed Beyond Measure



When we married 25 years ago, Phil and I planned to wait a few years before having a baby. However, our first child was conceived a few months after our wedding instead of a few years! Ryan was born the following year and we were overjoyed.

Soon after that, our second baby was on the way, only to find out via ultrasound that he was anencephalic, a fatal neural tube defect. The ultrasound showed that he would die and there was nothing that could be done. It was emotionally devastating to carry a baby knowing that his birth meant his death. Ryan was a little over a year old when Timothy was born, close to term. He lived 1 1/2 hours, and died in my arms. We knew we would not terminate a pregnancy if the same thing happened again, so we decided to trust God and not have ultrasounds for future pregnancies, unless there was a good medical reason.

We prayed for another baby. I especially wanted a little brother for Ryan. Shayne was born on December 1984. What a wonderful Christmas gift and answer to prayer! Natasha, our first girl was born September 1986. We were thrilled to have our first girl. Many people told us that "we must be done because we now have a girl." "Maybe they are right," we thought. I had a prescription for birth control pills that I was about to fill out when I discovered I was pregnant again. I was shocked; but during that pregnancy God showed us that we were to trust Him for our family size.

Zachary was born June 1988. What a blessing he has been to our family and we almost missed him! As we researched, we also found out that birth control pills not only prevent a pregnancy, but often cause abortion as well!

We have been blessed with ten more children since. I am so grateful that God intervened. I cannot imagine life without any one of them.

The first thing I said when we decided to let God choose our family size was, "What if we have a dozen children?" Well, when our 12th child, Nina was born, she was not only welcomed by us, but by 11 loving siblings as well!

God has always provided our needs, and many extras as well. Six of our last seven children were born at home. What wonderful and peaceful experiences they were. We also began homeschooling shortly after Zachary was born.

It is also God's design to breastfeed our babies and that spaces children God's way. I often 'wear' my babies in a sling. It also enables me to take care of the other children while keeping the baby with me. I would never have thought I would still be breastfeeding a baby after 25 years of marriage, and homeschooling them, but am I ever so blessed. Has it been easy? No! But anything worthwhile will take some effort. We have been through many trials, but the blessings outweigh the trials.

I believe that fertility is a gift that should not be thrown away.

CYNTHIA HOUNSOME

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Phil and Cynthia with their family (photo above)—Ryan (24) and his wife, Jillian and baby, Rhys, Shayne (21), Natasha (19), Zachary (18), Gabriel (16), Zoë (15), Jonathan (13), Nekoda (12), Benjamin (10), Sebastian (8), Bronwyn (6), Nina (5), Adam (3) and Pj (9 months).

I Left My Joy Behind



Gary and Patti with their children, Gabrielle (16) and Garrett (14).

In early 1993, I heard the Gospel for the first time, and I responded with joy, receiving Christ as my Savior. My life was wonderful. I had a wonderful hard-working husband, two sweet children, a beautiful home, and the joy of the Lord bubbling up from within. I was a happy, stay-at-home mom, supremely content and totally in love with life.

My heart was in my home. I loved keeping a home for my husband, making nice meals for him, washing and ironing his clothes. I loved playing with and reading to my children, taking long walks with them, singing songs, baking in my kitchen, and a myriad of other home-centered things.

But, things changed. The message I kept hearing—in the church, in Christian books, and, of course, from Christian friends—was that I needed to be more involved in church ministries. I needed to have a “ministry”. I fell prey to this philosophy and jumped on board. I began attending the ladies’ Bible studies (sometimes two at a time, resulting in 20+ pages of homework a week), teaching Sunday School, overseeing the four-year-old nursery, joining the prayer chain, the nursing home visitation committee, the secret sisters, and several other “ministries” at the church.

Although I had been very happy serving my family, I was taught that it was really not “ministry”, that “real” ministry had to be outside the home. It wasn’t considered “God’s work” if it didn’t involve church programs and activities. I packed my children into their car seats and headed off to the Bible studies or this or that committee meeting. I left my

joy at home—and it would remain there for nearly 12 years!

As I grew more involved in church activities, I had less and less time for my precious family. What had once been a source of joy for me, I now looked at as an intrusion on my “work for God.” I didn’t have time to clean my house anymore. The dust piled up, and, as a result, allergies, and eventually asthma kicked in for me (and my children as well). This led to chronic bronchitis, even pneumonia,

I ceased doing what God wanted me to do.

and many months of antibiotics.

I didn’t have time to cook healthy meals. We ate mostly junky, packaged stuff or fast food. I didn’t have time to do the laundry, unless, of course, my husband mentioned he needed socks or underwear. Angrily, I would get a load done. I rarely folded it, and he learned to get what he needed out of the dryer each morning. (I am weeping as I write this, because it is very painful to relive these years).

I no longer read or played much with my children. I simply didn’t have the time, and being brutally honest, I would have said that I had “more important things” to do. It was not only church

activities that kept me busy and out of the house. I was heavily involved in social outings, lessons of different kinds for my children, and homeschool activities.

My health began to deteriorate. During the past twelve years, I suffered from migraines, digestive issues, constipation, skin rashes, joint pains, muscle pains, autoimmune issues, visual disturbances, secondary infertility, allergies, dizzy spells, sinus problems, fatigue, insomnia, weight gain, weight loss, and horrible depression. I know now that my body was SCREAMING at me to come back home. My joy was totally gone. I was a shell of the person I had once been. I could not understand what was wrong. Why was I so wretchedly unhappy? Why wasn’t I fulfilled? Why did I feel as though I had lost something I could not get back?

Finally, a little over a year ago, the Lord spoke to my heart through many passages in the Bible. One was Proverbs 7:11 which talks about the adulterous woman and her feet never staying at home. Another passage was Proverbs 19:3 where it says that a person ruins his life through his own folly and then is angry at the Lord. Another was Psalm 77 where David laments the good old days when his nights were filled with joyful songs.

As I pondered my “good old days when my nights were filled with joyful songs”, the Lord brought me to Titus 2:3-5. At that point, I saw CLEARLY why I had lost my joy (and my health). I had ceased doing what God had put on my heart to do. I was looking for fulfillment

in church ministry, when he had given me a ministry right in my own home. I had a husband to minister to, encourage, and love. I had children to train and disciple for the Lord. I had been neglecting this in order to do what I thought was "more important."

Now, my heart has come home, and I am supremely joyful again. I am content with loving my husband and my children and being a keeper of the home. My health is better than it has been in years.

It is a ministry to serve your family. The Lord does not intend for you to do dozens of church ministries. His will is that you love your husband, your children and homemaking. (Titus 2:3-5 NIV). The older women weren't told to train the younger women to attend all the Bible studies or do all the church activities, but to "love their husbands and children and be busy at home." (Titus 2:3-5).

Actually, you do not even have to go out of your house for Bible study. I am currently working through Nancy Campbell's *The Power of Motherhood*. It is excellent, eye-opening, and I highly recommend it. Waiting for me after I finish it is *The Family Meal Table and Hospitality*.

I believe that many women today are joyless, stressed, discouraged, sick, and exhausted because they are seeking to do that which God has not called them to do. Their spirits and their bodies are crying out to slow down their frantic pace and to put their whole heart into serving their families. Sadly, like me, they have been deceived into thinking that it is not ministry.

Motherhood is a ministry. There is nothing more important you could be doing.

PATTI GARDNER

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A CLEAN SLATE

Each day is a brand new opportunity to be a better mother than I was yesterday. That's what I like best about being a stay-at-home mom.

I admit that there are some nights I go to bed feeling like a failure in the motherhood department. Sometimes I lose my cool with the children, react with impatience or act like a plain old grump. After a day like this, I am painfully aware that I don't have enough goodness on my own to be a great mother. Faced with my own short comings, I pour my heart out to God. Some nights my prayers are desperate pleas that tomorrow He will help me be a kinder, softer and more patient mother.

I love the Scripture that says God's mercies are new every morning. The sun rises again and I have a clean slate to start again. I don't have to act the way I did yesterday. I can wake with a clean heart, ready to allow God to help me minister anew to my children.

What better working ground could we have than being at home with our children? We have so many opportunities to practice the fruits of the spirit. The two year old spills his oatmeal on the floor after he just spilled his juice and wacked his sister on the head. What a start to the day! The flesh wants to explode. Instead, we can use this as a moment to ignore our first response and allow God's patience to work through us. The more we practice this, the better we



Left to right: Noble (4), Rocklyn (6), Autumn Rose (2), Bowen (8) and Meadow (11).

can learn to discipline with patience, firmness and love.

This is easier said than done of course. We all fail miserably at times, but as the apostle Paul urges us, we press toward the mark. I believe we are training ourselves as much as we are training our children. The more we practice God's love and kindness toward our children, the more it will become second nature to us. It doesn't happen overnight. Little by little, we are changed into Christ's likeness and then reveal these aspects of his character to our children.

I'm not interested in remaining the same. I look at motherhood as a craft that we can hone. We can become skilled in this mandate. Everyday is a new gift we can use to fill our homes with beautiful words and actions. If we mess up, we know, without a doubt, His mercies are new every morning.

Here's to tomorrow—another fresh start!

PEARL BARRETT

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I confess I'm one hundred percent passionately addicted to horseflesh. I have been all my life! I love to bury my face into their necks and breathe in that unmistakable aroma. There is something beautiful and majestic about God's creation, the horse!

However, in enjoying God's beautiful creation, I somehow managed to cross the line of worshipping the creation in place of the Creator. All my time and thoughts were consumed in equine literature while my Bible collected dust on the shelf, not to mention my neglected times alone with God.

My family also suffered. Yes, I was present in my home, doing the daily routine and home schooling our seven children alongside my husband, but the difference was that my heart was absent from my family. My focus was no longer on the relationships within my family, but on myself and the relationship I was building with my horse. My dream was to establish a partnership with him, so that when he is at liberty to come or go, he will choose to be with me. I also desired to be able to ride him without the aid of bridle or saddle. I follow the *Parrelli Natural Horsemanship* program and have had great results. I am hooked.

There is nothing wrong with having the desire to do these things, or even in doing them, but what I failed to see at the time, was that I was neglecting something far more valuable. My relationship with my children! These beautiful children are my inheritance from the Lord. In losing my focus, I gave ground to the enemy to enter my home and rob us of the fullness of blessings God had given to us. Much of my time and energy, were

spent elsewhere.

In January 2006 the Lord drew me back to Himself and totally captivated my heart. One morning He showed me how we are strategically placed in our homes. I looked up the word *strategic* and discovered it is essential to the word *strategy*, which means: intended to render the enemy incapable of making war, as by the destruction of materials, factories etc. In effect, we destroy those things that would make the enemy powerful. We take away his power.

But what was I doing? I was giving ground to the enemy because I had abandoned my post. I had left the door wide open. I was not watching or even aware of the signs indicating I was being robbed. Yet the thief was at work, trying to rob and destroy my family.

The Lord showed me that as parents we are His representatives on this earth. As we submit ourselves to Jesus' leadership, we are anointed to teach, guide and correct the children He has placed in our care. We are their covering of safety and protection from the enemy. It is our duty in serving our Lord for we are building a godly generation for our King.

As a mother, God has placed me strategically within my family. When I listen and obey His commands, I render the enemy incapable of making war. I take away his power as I stand on watch and move as God directs my path.

One night The Lord woke me with a vision of Braveheart, my horse. He was a fair distance away from me and as I asked



Mark and Natalie with their seven children: Calais (17), Jaeger (15), Paige (14), Anais (13), Kaylah (11), Jace (9) and Jordan (6).

him to come to me, his ears pricked forward and all his focus was on me. He began to canter towards me. When he reached me, he stopped with his nose almost touching mine. (He's a big horse, 16.3 hands high. When he does this it can be quite awesome, making me wonder if he has time to stop!) In that moment I heard God speak to me. "Natalie, just as your heart delights and is excited by the way Braveheart runs to you when he has the freedom to go elsewhere, that is how I feel when you run to me."

Then I remembered how in the last few days Braveheart had been distracted. Instead of running toward me with all his enthusiasm, he had slowed down and was even contemplating heading in another direction. His focus wasn't totally on me anymore. I was so disappointed. He was losing the desire to run to me. Again God spoke to my heart, "Natalie, the disappointment you feel is the same disappointment I feel when you choose not to run into Me".

My heart sank. I realized I had not been putting Him first in my life. My Lord was gracious enough to show me and bring me into a closer walk with Him. Jesus longs for us to run into Him. I know now that if God asks me to give up the horses for Him, I will have to obey my Heavenly Father, for I know He has a plan for me for good and not evil, to give me a future and a hope. At present He has not asked me to. Phew! But I have changed my priorities and I keep a diligent check on them.

Mother, can I encourage you to keep watch over your families? It is not always easy and can be very challenging to say the least, but hold fast and build that relationship with your children. Do not let the enemy distract you from your position, for you are the heart of your home. You have been commissioned by the Lord Himself to be a nation builder. His reward will far outweigh any reward in the here and now. Your passion may not be horses, it may be something else. Keep it in its rightful place. Do not let the pleasures of this earth rob you of your royal position within your home.

NATALIE STRIPP

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LOOKIN' GOOD

It seems I'm not as put together
As I used to be.

Things have changed a bit
Since I had these children three.

I don't wear lipstick very much
For I have cheeks to kiss.

I'd rather paint with finger paints
Than paint my finger tips.

The baby likes to pull my hair,
I have to wear it back.

I hope the vacuum makes me strong
'Cus workout time I lack.

The high-heeled shoes are put away,
I might trip on the toys,

And skirts don't work down on the floor
While playing blocks with boys.

My dressy clothes are good-as-gone
Since everything gets spit up on.

And half the closet's pregnant clothes
Since half the time I'm wearing those.

Jeans and T-shirts are the rule
For cleaning, playing, doing school.

A wedding ring and happy smile
Are all my jewelry for awhile.

And yet when I look in the mirror,
I've never looked so good!

Guess nothing ever suited me
As well as motherhood!

NICOLE SIDDALL, a glowing happy mother!

Shadow Hills, California, USA

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Mark and Nicole are blessed with Anne (7), Emily (7) and Caleb (1).

Children Balls

The humble ball is an often forgotten toy these days as children are overpowered with computers, video games and other complicated battery operated gadgets. Balls are great for developing self esteem, confidence, co-ordination and necessary motor skills. Balls are mostly inexpensive, and best of all, they don't need batteries! They are also portable, making them great to play with anywhere. Here are some ideas:

Quick Balls

To quickly make a ball to toss around, simply roll a pair of socks into itself. It won't damage the walls in your house, and it is soft enough for a young child to practice catching. You can also make a ball by rolling a piece of coloured junk mail into a ball and securing it with cellotape.

Bucket Tossing

Set up a bucket, stand back and throw an appropriate sized ball into the bucket. Each time you land a throw, move back a step, seeing how far you can get. You can use a bucket that has holes and can't hold water anymore, or you could also cut out the bottom of the bucket and nail it to a fence or post in your backyard like a mini basketball hoop.

Skittles

Set up some homemade or bought skittles, and practice bowling your ball into the skittles to knock them down. Six clean and empty soft drink bottles make good skittles. Pour water in each one to make them more stable. You can use a tennis ball or home made ball for this game.

Rubber ball Fun

It's amazing how something so small and bouncy can entertain a child for so long—catching, bouncing, rolling, and throwing.

If your child is under three years, buy them a bigger ball that can't be swallowed accidentally.

Ball Rolling

I spent many hours on the floor with my children when they were little, rolling a ball to them that they then caught and rolled back to me. When more children came along, we spread our legs to form a different shape and kept playing. As soon as babies can sit up by themselves, around the six-month mark, they can enjoy this gentle game.

Piggy in the Middle

Some children find this game frustrating, and others love the challenge of trying to get the ball and jumping high in the middle.

Kicking Practice

To get good at kicking, set up goal posts in your back yard, or visit your local soccer or rugby ground when nobody is playing, and practice setting the ball up and kicking it into the goal.

Ball Ballancing

With a small ball, place it on your child's head or your own to start with, and show them how to tilt your head to one side and carefully if you can, roll the ball down onto one shoulder and down your arm without dropping it. You can also practice balancing a ball on one raised thigh and flipping it onto your other thigh and back again, or spinning it on one finger.

Tube Rolling

Give your child a small ball and a cardboard tube left over from tinfoil or plastic wrap. Show them how to roll the ball through the tube. Very young children enjoy these simple and repetitive games.

Tossing & Catching

Teach your child different ways of throwing and catching a ball depending on their age and ability. Do overhead throws, underarm passes, Australian Football Rules punch passes, American Gridiron throws, netball throws from the chest, side on Rugby passes, under the leg passes. Show them a variety of ways to catch these throws too.

Donkey

When your child is good at catching and throwing, play a game of donkey with them. The first one to drop a pass gets the letter D and so on until Donkey is spelt. Play PIG for a quick game or with a really young child.

Dodge Ball

Now that my three children have grown up somewhat, we enjoy early evening and weekend games of Dodge Ball. We use the garden hose to mark a half way point, and lay several large balls on this line. Each person gets back into their half of the grassed backyard and one person yells, "Go dodge ball." Each person runs to the centre and tries to grab as many of the balls as they can. Then they return to their marked grassed sections and the game begins.

The idea is to lightly hit a person from the shoulders down. If you catch the other person's thrown ball on the full, you get a spare "life". The first team to get all the other players out is the winner. It's a fun game to play and gives us adults some exercise too. The neighbours must think we are mad throwing balls at each other all the time, but we all enjoy it. Use only large soft balls, not tennis balls or anything hard like cricket balls or you could do some real damage.

No matter if you organize a structured ball game or just toss it around with your children, they will remember the time you've spent playing with them.

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Speech Etiquette



Articulate your words clearly. Do not mumble!

Look people in the face when you speak to them.

Speak politely. Always say "Please", "Thank you" and "You are welcome".

Speak encouraging, positive, kind and life-giving words. Bless people instead of criticizing people.

Speak with a smile, rather than a frown.

Children, do not interrupt adult's conversations. Wait until the person has finished talking and then say, "Excuse me" before talking further.

Do not talk over the top of others. Do not monopolize conversations.

Do not be afraid to speak your convictions, but share with gentleness and grace.

Do not invade someone's personal space. Do not get too close to them when you speak.

Do not be a talebearer.

Do not speak with your hands in your pockets.

Always speak the truth. Lies are for cowards who do not have the courage to tell the truth. Do not exaggerate.

Be interested in what others have to say. Ask questions about their life, rather than talk about yourself.

Be attentive and a good listener.

Answer the phone with a bright, happy voice.

Always think before you speak. "Put your brain into action before you put your mouth into gear."

When introduced to someone, shake hands and say, "How do you do?" which is traditional, or "I'm very glad to meet you" which is more meaningful, or "I'm very glad to meet you, Mrs. Jones" which is even better and more personal.

Address older people as "Mr." and "Mrs." unless told otherwise.

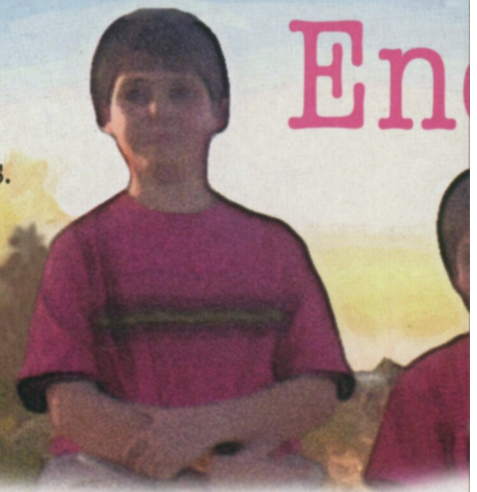
Husband and wives, say "I love you" to your spouse and each one of your children every day.

Children, say "I love you" to your parents and siblings each day.



I believe that encouragement is the rich soil in which we grow our children to their full potential. I was blessed to grow up with encouragement. We raised our own children on encouragement. It was their daily bread, as much as their food. Encouraging our children, and everyone around us, should be the habit of our lives. Don't be a little encourager. Be a great encourager. Be a habitual encourager. I trust the following ideas will inspire you in this important ministry to your family.

Nancy Campbell.



Night Time Talk

Each night, we pray and talk with each of our children. I didn't realize how important this time was for my children until one night I was tucking the little ones in their beds. My oldest daughter was waiting for me and I noticed she had something on her heart. After we prayed together, I asked her if she had something to share with me. She told me what was heavy on her heart and we talked together. As I was leaving her room she said, "I am so glad we talked, Mommy."

I find it is important to the children that I talk with each child. The day seems even longer because of this, but it is well worth it. Their tender little hearts need the encouragement of their Mother and the affirmation of their Daddy. Although I praise them during the day, the night is usually the time when I praise their accomplishments of the day and tell them how much I praise God for giving them to us.

Encouragement is a building block that is necessary for later. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines encouragement, "to inspire to continue on a chosen course; impart courage or confidence." We want to inspire our children to continue the chosen course of following the Lord with a loyal heart and a willing mind.

MARIA MALKASIAN

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Bill and Maria's eight blessings are Elisa (11), Samuel (10), David (8), Matthew (7), Daniel (5), Nathanael (4), Mary (3) and Sarah (2). You can see them in the art at the top of this page.

A Little Song

Whenever my children need to be uplifted, or after they've been disciplined and are ready for comfort, I always sing them this little song to the tune of "I had a little sister, her name was Susie Q, I put her in the bathtub to see what she would do..."

"I love you, love you, love you,
no matter what!
Always, always, always, I love you!
I love you, love you, love you,
no matter what!
Nothing you can say or do
stops me from loving you, you, you!"

I want to remind them of my unconditional love for them so that they can readily grasp the idea of God's unconditional love for them too!

GINA CALLAGHAN

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Ed and Gina are blessed with Francesca "Kiki" (5), Lily (2) and Peter "PJ" (2).

Praise the Positives

I discovered, long before I had my own children, that a child will try to get your attention any way possible, either by acting in a positive or negative way. My husband and I decided before our first child was born that we would ALWAYS encourage the positive behavior. It has worked miraculously.

I praise the way they get their chores done in the mornings. I praise the way they manage their time efficiently in the busy morning time when we are all getting ready for the day. I say things to my teenager daughter such as, "I like the necklace you chose to wear today. It's as pretty as

you are!" Or "I like the books you have chosen at the library today. I am proud you are such a great reader!"

When my son was tiny, my mother in law asked me why I tell him, "Son, I love the way you are coloring that picture so nicely. What beautiful colors!" Or, "Son, you are doing such a great job of helping me with the grocery shopping today. Thank you!" She could not understand this and thought I was "coddling" my children or stroking their egos. To the contrary! My children feel great when they know the good things they are doing are being noticed and appreciated!

Find the positives! Uplift your children with the good they are doing even if it is just, "Thank you for brushing your teeth this morning." As soon as you find things they are doing right, they will do MORE things right and feel GREAT about pleasing you!

I get a lot more POSITIVE behavior when I comment on the positives!

MICHAEL ALEGRIA

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Tony and Michael's arrows are Bronson (15), Sydne (13) and Amadi (10).

"Pass it Back" Journal

I read about a "Pass it Back" journal which I now use in my home. I selected a pretty, spiral-bound journal and wrote a note to my eight-year-old daughter explaining that the book was a place for us to write personal notes to each other. I began by telling her how beautiful she is—on the outside, but more importantly, on the inside. I shared some of my prayers for

courage Your Children



her, and described some of the ways I have seen God growing her character. I invited her to write to me about anything she wanted.

She loved the idea, and in one of her first entries she asked if just the two of us could do something special together—like go to the mall. I have a strong distaste for malls for a number of philosophical reasons (not the least of which is the pervasive materialism) and I was able to use the journal to explain my point of view, and encourage her to think about a “bigger picture” than she had previously considered. She “passed back” an alternative—a trip to the zoo (to which she had recently won a family pass). She itemized the economic factors involved (it would be free because of the pass, we could use coupons for lunch and described all the wonderful things we could see and do together, just the two of us.)

To the zoo we went. What a wonderful day it was! We leisurely visited her favourite animals and even trekked to the Canadian exhibit (which involved descending and then ascending a steep hill on foot) that we’d never visited before because of the encumbrance of strollers and wagons for younger siblings. We both found ourselves repeatedly commenting on how happy we were to be alone together for a whole day. Afterwards, because Dad had taken the other children out for the afternoon and evening, we went to her favourite restaurant for supper and then lounged on the couch reading together.

We had such a delightful day together and we each recorded our joy in our “Pass it Back” journal.

The journal is an encouragement that keeps on giving, because it will again

be an encouragement to both of us when we read it years down the road and relive our memories of this stage in our lives.

PAULA PIKE

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Blair and Paula have three children—Mattea (9), Tamas (7) and Talia (4).

Ice Cream Party

When my children do well in school at home, I encourage them by drawing an ice-cream Sunday, part by part (one part for each day they do well). When the whole ice-cream Sunday is finished, we have a big family ice-cream party. They find this very encouraging.

BECKY MESSER

Missionaries in San-Pedro, Cote d’Ivoire, West Africa. When back in USA they live in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.
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Andy and Becker have six blessings—Leah (9), David (8), Nadia (6), Lexie (4), Prisca (2) and Hadassah (1).

Truth Phrases

One of the ways I encourage my children is by giving them little phrases to say. I call it “speaking the truth” to themselves. I repeat the same phrase every time they are in a particular situation it fits with, and before long, they start saying it to themselves. The phrases act as a scaffolding to support them and help them to develop character and self-control.

If a task seems too hard, they often say, “I can’t do it!” If it is something I know they can do with a little effort, I do not do it for them. Instead I encourage

them, “You can do it! Speak the truth to yourself.” They try again, saying to themselves, “I can do it”, which quickly turns into an excited cry of, “I did it!” They then have the satisfaction of a job well done and are motivated to try harder next time.

Another phrase I have used is, “It’s not so bad.” Sometimes they anticipate going through something with fear such as a hair cut, being rinsed off after a bath, doing an overwhelming chore, then they find out that it wasn’t as bad as they thought it was going to be. I try to reinforce that thought so they will remember it the next time they are tempted to panic.

Other times they will say, “I need to be patient,” and they start singing the “Have Patience” song we’ve taught them. Or it will be, “I’m going to trust God,” and they will sing, “When I am afraid, I will trust in You...” They hold on to the little phrases they’ve learned from Scripture, songs and stories, and they use the truths to help them choose the right. Their wills are being trained by this “truth speaking”. It is encouraging to hear them instruct themselves in what to choose.

There is power in speaking the truth to ourselves and to our children. Lies defeat, but the truth sets us free. Many of our battles are fought in our minds. Truth-telling is the process of renewing our minds. (Romans 12:2)

When we give our children truth for their minds, their hearts take over and they begin to act on that truth. My son used to tell me that he did not love me, and that he only loved his daddy. Instead of telling him how that hurt me, I started telling him, “I love your company.” Before long, he and the rest of my children start-

ed saying that to me, my husband and to each other. It made such a difference in our family.

As my children speak these positive phrases, I am seeing them set free from things I struggled with into adulthood. And now, when I am tempted to fear, lack trust, or be impatient, my children repeat these phrases back to me!

CASSIE TYNAN

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Rob and Cassie's children are Matthew (6), Christopher (5), Sarah Elizabeth (2) and Laura (1).

Play Pollyanna

Here are a few things I do to encourage my children individually.

1. I leave them a note where they'll be sure to find it (in their desk, under their pillow, taped to the headboard, etc.). I give them notes when they are feeling down or have done something well.
2. Occasionally, I do their chores for them. Imagine their gratitude when they come down to do their "mundane" chore and it's done for them! They are surprised that someone would do something for them when it isn't their birthday or any other special occasion. I give them a squeeze and tell them I did it because I love them.
3. We have a "pep" talk. I remind them of how blessed they are compared to most of the rest of the world. I gently remind them of the orphans, persecuted Christians and poor around the world. This helps them to get the focus off of themselves. We then begin naming things that we can be thankful for.

Here are a few encouraging things I do when the whole group needs a "lift".

1. I bake or bring home a special treat for all of them.
2. I yell "everyone in the car" for a spur-of-the-moment outing to our local nature museum, a walk by the river, or playing at the park.
3. We play "Pollyanna". For those who aren't familiar with her, she is a little girl who finds the bright side in everything. She makes a game of it and delights in the challenge of finding something to be grateful for in the most difficult situations. The book is well-worth the read. Don't bother with the movie versions!
4. We have a "praise" service. I join all the

children together to sing and take turns naming things we are thankful for. This quickly removes the sour looks from their faces!

5. My husband and I pack up the children for an outing to one of the beautiful sights around our home—mountains, lakes, rivers, caves, etc. It is very difficult to be down when you are marveling at God's creation.

STACY SCHNIEPP

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Jack and Stacy and blessed with Caleb (14), Elizabeth (9) and Faith (7).

Mommies in Training

I encourage my little girls to be helpful. I make it a point to let them participate in the things that I'm doing. This generally means the task will take twice as long but the gleam in their eye after it's completed is worth it. They are so proud of the fact that they are mommy's little helper.

They help me sweep and mop the floor, make bread, make their bed, unload the dishwasher, bring in the firewood, do the laundry and so on. They are little mommy's in training and I praise them for being such good little helpers.

NICOLE STOL

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Hans and Nicole's little ones are Elizabeth (3) Morgan (2) and Haley (1).

The Special Plate

Here in New Zealand there is a Christian Parenting Organisation called *Parenting with Confidence*. One of the products they promote is the "Red Plate". It is a red dinner plate with writing in the centre saying, "You're a Star". In our house, whenever a parent notices something great a child has done during the day, out comes the red plate in their place at the table that night. They rarely know it is coming, and as we use it only once or twice a week, it is always a surprise. There are shouts of glee when they see it in their place, and great is the excitement and suspense as they wait for grace to be said before they find out "why they got it."

While it does come out for obvious

successes e.g. toilet training, reading first words, climbing up a difficult area of the playground for the first time, etc, it also comes out for character issues such as a shy child using good manners to an adult on the street, or a toddler helping his sister put her toys away.

You do not have to purchase a red plate to incorporate this into your lives. Any "special" plate from a garage sale would do. The magic is in the honour it bestows!

As well as encouraging the "child of the moment", it also encourages other children to learn to congratulate each other and cope well with not being "the chosen one" at the time. Now whenever something great happens (e.g. first ride on bike without trainer wheels) you can here the children call to each other, "Maybe you'll get the red plate tonight!"

LOUISE SHAW

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Jason and Louise are blessed with Grace (6), Esther (4) and Samuel (2).

Praise Binder



On a bulletin board, I tack pocket folders for each person in the family, and an extra one for strips of paper. Throughout the day, when I see something the children are doing that I can praise them for, I write it down on a strip of colorful paper and put it in their pocket. After dinner in the evening (but while we are still sitting around the table) my husband reads them out loud for all of us to hear. The children are so excited to be praised, but especially because it is in front of their daddy. This is also a good way for Mike to keep up with the godly character development of his children.

I collect all the strips and at the end of a week or two each person has a page full of encouragement strips. It takes no time to tape them on to a piece of white copy paper (one for each person), slip them into a page protector and into a binder. The children love to look back at their encouragement notes. I also praise my husband for things at the same time by writing something for him each day.



This also helps my children to learn the art of giving praise. They write notes to other family members too. Even my four year old, who doesn't write well yet, likes to write "Hi" for all of us.

SHELLY McALISTER

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Mike and Shelly are blessed with Brent (6), Kana (4), Bryce (2 1/2) and Katelyn (6 months).

The Marble Jar

Any time I see one of my children doing something good, e.g. being kind to a sibling, colouring carefully in the lines, doing a chore without being reminded, writing particularly neatly, I might say, "Put a marble in the jar!" There is one jar between siblings to encourage them to work together for a common cause and together they pick a reward when the jar is full. It may be a family night with a movie, popcorn and chocolate, or a picnic tea in the park.

LIAN PEET

Belgrave Heights, Victoria, Australia.

They often see kangaroos and echidnas in their backyard!

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Jeremy and Lian are raising three children so far - Samuel (12), Caleb (10), and Anna-Rose (3).

Take Time to Listen

The main way I encourage my children is by listening to them and waiting for their point of view before I spout off an answer. Listen, then listen some more. Hugs are always on order in our house, too. I think hugs are one of the best ways to encourage someone, whether they are tired, not feeling well, exasperated or frustrated.

SARAH FRANTZ

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Lane and Sarah's children: Allison (19), Hannah (14), Jacob (13), Grace (11) and Rinnah (6).

Hope Instead of Criticism

I had to change my bad ways and overcome the critical way I corrected my children. I went from "don't you ever do that again" which sets them up for failure and therefore discouragement to "I know you'll do better next time." My children are always hurt by my criticism, but when I correct with that added hope for improvement, they don't call it "criticism" anymore.

I was tired of correcting only. Now I look for things to praise them. Every kind word or deed, every helpful action, every Christ-like behavior, any improvement in areas under development gets a kind word, a smile, or a compliment from Mom. They may not respond in visual or verbal ways but I know they receive it.

I sometimes just give the encouraging look. I catch their eye and then smile big at them to say, "I love you, you are special."

Mothers, don't give up. We are teachers and trainers of our children who will be leaders in the near future.

MARY ANN AVERY

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Ken and Mary Ann are blessed with Ann (16), Emma (14), Audrey (10) and Andrew (8).

Keep Touching

Children are easy to encourage. Instead of being on the lookout for what they do "wrong" or "bad", we should be on the lookout for what they do "right" or "good". Harp on the negative? You get sick of being around that type of person, no matter who they are! I think we should verbally tell our children when they have done well.

I also touch my children. Who doesn't like a comforting touch? When I walk by one of them, I give them a back scratch, touch their hair, or give their shoulder a little squeeze. Even my 19 year old still enjoys a "mommy hug"!

We also go on "dates" - just me and one of the children. Whether it is a trip to the store or we go out for a drink, it's just the two of us. We have great talks this way, and of course listening. No advice, just a handy ear.

The children also enjoy receiving

mail so I often mail them a small card.

MOLLY MAHNKE

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Ed and Molly's children are Emily (19),

Abby (15), Misty (17), Logan (14), Wesley (12) and they are in the process of doing paper work to adopt Misty.

Be Encouraged to Encourage

To encourage my children, I start with encouraging myself. I do this through reading God's Word. I began a daily journal in 1997 after we began homeschooling. I realized that this was a task much bigger than I could handle in my own strength. I asked the Lord for one specific encouragement to write in my journal each day as I read through the Scriptures. I made it a priority and did it before I had any breakfast.

I would purposely try to recall that encouraging word at specific times throughout the day and it helped me to encourage my children. I am challenged by the quote, "We will teach what we know, but we will reproduce who we are."

I try to use specific encouragement. Instead of a general "that was helpful" I say, "You saw dishes that needed to be put away and you did it. Thank you." Specific encouragement is a big motivator!

I also look for their unique qualities and imagine how God can use those qualities to build His kingdom. My son has a brilliant wit, but can sometimes be hurtful to his siblings. He doesn't always communicate clearly, but expects others to understand his mumbling. I tell him regularly that I believe that one day he is going to communicate God's truths and have an impact for the Kingdom of God. He is beginning to speak more clearly and use his gifts to express himself thoughtfully.

Another great way I encourage my children is to read them biographies of great Christians who have made an impact upon the world. We usually read one chapter of a biography after we read a chapter from the Bible. We have been inspired by so many great lives as we read how they made difficult choices to follow God or find unique ways to use their talents and gifts for His work. I am extremely

continued on page 22



Zara belongs to Alan and Joelene Booth, Zara (5), Xavier (4), India (3), Levi (15 months) and new baby due April 2007

Little Girl,
BIG HEART!

Come along to Zara's store
Where value spent will earn much more
if you need jelly, honey, jam
Then you need me
and here I am!

I would love to share with you about my granddaughter, Zara. About two years ago her great grandma (Granny Joy) showed Zara a *Mission Without Borders* video promoting their programmes in third world nations. Zara was very concerned for the children living without all the things she thought everyone had. Soon after I received my *Above Rubies* #63 with Nancy's first article concerning the orphans in Liberia and I read the story to Zara.

At the time I was teaching Zara to make jam. While we were working together

Zara said, "We should send some jam to the poor children." I explained why we couldn't send jars of jams to Africa. A few minutes later Zara said, "If we can't send the jam, we could sell the jam and send the money to the children." A cool reaction for a four year old! I couldn't argue with an idea like that so we started our project!

I felt it was important for Zara to learn that self sacrifice was a big part of helping others. She helped wash the jars, scrub the labels off, measure ingredients, make new labels, cut fabric to cover the lids, and most of all, make lots of jam! Zara is the only five year old I know who can tell when jam is set!

Over the past 18 months we have made jams, chutneys and lemonade, held a cake sale and sold bags of home-grown oranges. Zara has worked tirelessly to make the work happen. We recently did a count of how much she had raised. We were surprised to find it was \$1,300.00 NZ! Not a bad effort for a wee girl! The funds will be sent to the orphanages in Liberia.

Zara has also started to help clean her grandma's house each week. She uses this money to sponsor a little girl her age in India. As part of Zara's homeschooling she writes letters, draws pictures and makes things for her sponsor child. Even a child who doesn't have the opportunity to do major fund raising can be encouraged to do something small like this.

Granny Joy has taken on teaching Zara to knit and Joelene, Zara's mother, has taught her to sew and quilt, so blan-

kets – here we come!

COLLEEN BRIDGE
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Three Generations!

Colleen also writes: "We now have three generations of our family positively affected by the ministry of *Above Rubies*. I was at the Auckland Camp 29 years ago when Nancy had the first issue of *Above Rubies*. She said something that changed my life at that camp. She talked about our godly heritage and said, "Stand up if you are the first person in your family to become a Christian." Up I got. I had been feeling discouraged as a young Christian, but she said, "Congratulations, you are the beginning of a godly line." That changed my whole perspective. Now I see my beautiful daughter, a second generation walking in the ways of the Lord and have the joy of sharing the things of God with a third generation of grandchildren!

Blanket Ministry

You will have read about the *Jabez Ministry* in the last issue of *Above Rubies*, #68 which facilitates sending blankets to orphans around the world. Because it is based in Canada, it is not so convenient for Down Under readers. However, Colleen helps with making blankets for a project called *Operation Cover Up* with *Mission Without Borders*. It started five years ago when a lady from Taupo, New Zealand knitted a blanket for her sponsor child in Ukraine. From that one blanket *Operation Cover Up* began. Last year, New Zealand women knitted 5,800 blankets and over 22,000 knitted items. If you would like to be involved with knitting or crocheting blankets for the needy, contact Colleen or Joelene at wild-palms@extra.co.nz and they will send you information.

What a joy it is to be alive! What joy to have purpose for life! I believe that our greatest purpose in life is to bear the image of God. That is why we were created! To wear the likeness of God—in our daily life, before our children and to the world around us. There is nothing that is more powerful and influencing than to reveal God's character.

What is God like? The Word of God reveals His character. As we read, we see that more than anything else, God gives. He is a giver. He freely pours out His blessings. He gave the greatest gift of giving up His own beloved son to die for our sins. God is life and He freely gives life. He is Light and He sheds forth His light into the darkness of our hearts. And of course He is Love, pouring out His love and grace upon us who are undeserving sinners. As mothers we have the privilege of revealing these glorious attributes through our lives.

We are LIFE-GIVERS!

Genesis 3:20 tells us that Adam called his wife's name, Eve. The Hebrew for Eve is *Chavvah* which means Life-giver! Eve was the first of her kind, the prototype of all women to come. God who is the giver of life, gave to women the blessed privilege of bringing forth life. We are life-givers to the world—and eternity! How amazing!

And we keep on giving life. When a little baby is born, we put it to the breast, pouring life into the little babe. We continue to give life-giving foods to our children as they grow. Because we are life-givers, we pour life into our children in every way—not only in the food we give them but in our actions and the words we speak to them. As mothers, it should be our habit to speak life-giving words. (Proverbs 10:11 and 18:21)

May God save us from being life-stoppers, or speaking words of death. Instead, when you wake each morning, confess out loud...

*"I am a life-giver!
I am a life-giver to my children today.
I am a life-giver to the world."*

We are LIGHT-GIVERS!

God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all. Jesus is the Light of the world and He wants us to shine His light in us and

Givers to the World



through us to expose the darkness in this world. As mothers we are light-givers to our children.

Every Sabbath evening Jewish women light the candles at the table for their Sabbath meal. The woman has the responsibility to keep the light of God burning in her home and because of this she has the privilege of lighting the candles.

The Word of God tells us that the teaching of the mother is a light to keep her children from the way of evil. The mother's light-giving words will continue to lead her children when they leave home, keep watch over them when they sleep and remind them of God's ways as they walk this life. (Proverbs 6:20-23) The greatest education we can give our children is the entrance of God's Words into their lives. (Psalm 119:105 and 130)

As you wake each morning, confess...

*"I am a light-giver!
My words will give light
to my children today."*

We are LOVE-GIVERS!

We know that more than anything else, God is Love. If we are walking in His image, we will be constantly pouring out love. Love is not stagnant. It is a verb. It is action. Love is not love unless we give it. As mothers we have the privilege of giving love moment by moment and day by day.

How do you do this? Give. Give smiles. Give hugs. Encourage. Touch. Speak kindly. Do loving deeds. Give spontaneously. Give sacrificially. Show hospitality. Immerse yourself in God's love and pour it out freely.

It is easy to give love when your children are lovable. What about when they

are difficult and rebellious? Keep on loving. Of course, you don't give wishy-washy love. God's love is beyond all love, giving beyond measure. He keeps on loving even when we rebel against Him but it is not insipid love. Even though His love never stops, we cannot have fellowship with Him and receive the fullness of His love while we are in sin. It is only when we confess and forsake our sin that He forgives us and restores fellowship with us.

In the same way, you keep loving your rebellious teen, you pour out your heart in intercession, but you cannot compromise God's standard for your home. Many parents tip-toe around their children. They don't take a strong stand against the sin because they don't want their child to reject them. This is sickly love. True love takes action. True love prays, entreats, holds up the standard and pulls them out of the fire. (Jude 12:23) And sometimes it has to wait!

It is easy to love other people when they are nice to us. What about when people speak against you? What about when in-laws have a vendetta against you? Keep on loving. Keep on blessing and praying for them. Love always overcomes.

When you wake up each morning, confess...

*"I am a love-giver!
I will pour out love to my husband
and children today.
I will speak words of love to them."*

There is no more room for a pity party because "nobody loves me or cares about me." There is no more room to think, "I give and give and never get anything in return." Love does not love to receive. It does not love to feel good. It loves because it is Love.

Pour out love no matter how you feel.

Pour out love no matter what people say or do to you. You are the bearer of the image of God to your family—and God is love.

NANCY CAMPBELL

Encourage Your Children cont.

encouraged to see my older sons seeking God and walking in His ways. It is wonderful to be able to discuss the things of God with our adult children and hear their burden to reach out to their generation!

BECKY HASTINGS

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John and Becky are blessed with Nathanael (24), Matthew (21), Michael (17), Rachel (13) and Leah (6).

A Forgiving Attitude

I really want my children to learn to seek forgiveness when they have wronged God or someone else but I don't want to make them ask for forgiveness because it is given as a command. God burdened my heart to model asking for forgiveness to encourage them to do the same. When I sin against my children I ask for their forgiveness. It has been amazing to see their response and how much they learn from my example. Now my older children will come to me when I don't even know they have done something wrong, confess it and ask for forgiveness.

MERCI HALE

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Aaron and Merci are blessed with Seth (8), Zach (6), Cade (3), Jake (2) and Morgan (1).



It's Time to Pray!

"If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7:14

Have you ever thought of waiting as a gift from the Lord? I have not always known that, but I'm glad He has opened my eyes! It does not have to be a "trial" or a "struggle". If we are willing, it can be one of the sweetest times of our lives with our Savior.

I am waiting on God for a somewhat unusual gift—a husband! Not just any husband. I could have probably obtained that years ago by giving in to all the "match making" my friends and family have tried to do, or better yet, picked someone out for myself. But, I don't trust my own judgment in these vital areas of life. I figure it would be terribly easy for me to make a bad choice on something so important and lasting.

One day, when I was around 18 years old, and had just left the halls of a public high school for good, I decided that I needed to give God control over every area of my life. I asked Him to choose a mate for me—the one He had actually designed from before the foundation of the world, the one that I could never be capable of finding by myself, apart from God's sovereign wisdom.

Marriage is such a holy thing, something that perfectly demonstrates Christ's love for us, His bride. When it comes time for me to walk down the aisle, I want to make sure the man I'm gazing lovingly at is the one God chose for me! For this reason, I have made the choice to not date—a radical decision, many tell me, but one that God has lead me to nevertheless. As Eric and Leslie Ludy put it so beautifully, "I have given God the "pen" and the freedom to write my love story, taking my error-full hands off."

However, I have learned that with this beautiful idea comes learning how to be patient. This is the most difficult part. It's hard to believe in what we cannot see. Through the years, the Lord has taught me several things about waiting and contentment and my once hasty heart has finally learned to "sleep" in God's will until He wakes my "Adam" up. If He, in His sovereignty chooses to never give me a husband, then in true God-given contentment, I can say, "That's okay, because Jesus is more than enough, and my life is full and overflowing because of Him. I need nothing more to complete me."

God's holy, faultless Word tells us in

Isaiah 49:23, "They shall not be ashamed who wait for me." I believe this means that though our patience on the Lord's timing may seem foolish to those around us, and even to ourselves at times, God has assured us that we will not be put to shame by waiting on Him. What a relief! His Word also tells us that those who "wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles." (Isaiah 40:31) I have often tried to imagine how it must feel as an eagle to soar effortlessly among the clouds. The only word that I can think of to describe the experience is freedom. When we wait upon the Lord, we find freedom as well as strength!

The Apostle Paul urges us to be content in every circumstance. This cannot be done except by the power of God at work in our lives. In our natural, carnal state, we are simply not capable of having peace and serenity when things in our life seem so uncertain. However, through Christ, we are able to have incomprehensible peace, peace that our human brains are not able to understand.

There are many things God wants to teach us during our "waiting period", no matter what it is we may be waiting on Him for. I know that I have a whole lot of things yet to learn. I can only pray I'll remain open and teachable. He wants our time in the "waiting room" to be a joyful experience. He wants us to "enjoy the scenery" and not dwell on the destination only. When we really understand that His way and His timing is absolutely perfect, then we are able to solely, with no reserve, trust Him. And when we trust Him, even when we cannot see, we will be able to receive the true contentment that only Christ Jesus can offer us.

God has shown me four basic ways that I can embrace the gift of waiting and make the most of this season in my life.

1.

Savor Every Moment

More than likely, once the object of our waiting has been brought to pass, changes will take place and life as we know it will be different. Anytime there is a change, we will lose privileges, even if they are replaced with new ones. Take

WAITING FOR A Husband?



this time that God has given you and enjoy it! Be well aware that you will not have these exact moments of your life back—ever again. This season will more than likely not last forever, so remember, no matter what you may be waiting on God for, the present days are only yours once. Do not be in such a hurry that you miss out on all the present blessings God is showering you with.

2.

Do Not Wait Idly

Keep yourself busy for the Lord and your family. Ask Him to bring opportunities your way to minister, witness and bring glory to His name. Do things that will help prepare you for what you may be waiting on. Honor your father and mother and others in your life by doing special things for them. Practice submission and self-dying by putting others' needs before your own. Offer child care while mommies and daddies go on a much needed "date". I have to say that I have been blessed by doing this! I have learned so much. Every time I walk into a godly home, full of laughter and the pitter-patter of precious little feet, I take mental notes on tips that I will use with my own children some day. I leave feeling so rewarded by God. Refuse to look at your time of waiting as a "pity party," but serve others and receive the joy that comes with obedience! Stay busy for the glory of the Lord. Nothing you do for Him will ever be in vain!

3.

Be a Broken Vessel

Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up. Share your heart's deepest desires with Him. Cry unto Him, uncensored. Pour yourself out in prayer and worship. Become a piece of soft, pliable clay in your Maker's hands. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you in a way that you have not yet known. Be willing to allow your wishes to die, taking Christ as your All in All. Ask Him to reassure you that He is more than enough for you. He will. When we say, "Not my will, but Thine be done.", that is usually when He truly moves in our lives. He desires to have our utterly surrendered heart.

4.

Work Double Time for the Lord

I feel that singleness is a wonderful time to give all our strength to the Lord through missions. Remember that missions do not have to be across the world's oceans. They can be across the street or even inside your home! This is such an ideal time to become a hard-working laborer in His plentiful vineyard of ripe souls.

Maybe you are waiting on a healing to take place in your body, an adoption to go through, a loved one to come to Jesus, or God to fill your womb with life—or maybe, like me, you are waiting for a husband, having placed it into the hands of the Master Match-Maker. I challenge you to walk with me by faith and watch God

move in His perfect, beautiful time. This way, He gets all the glory. He is orchestrating it all. All we have to do is listen, trust, and obey.

CANDACE DAVIDSON

Big Stone Gap, Virginia, USA
candace714@ntelos.net

Candace (26) is blessed to live at home with her parents in the "mountains" of Virginia as she contently waits for God to reveal her husband in His time.

Candace came to our home on a mission trip to help in the *Above Rubies* office during the summer. She was a very sweet blessing. **Nancy**

Love
Gives...

Love ever gives,
Forgives,
Outlives,
And while it lives,
it gives!
For this is love's
prerogative,
To give,
and give,
and give!



From Loss to Gain!

In February 2005, I had just returned from a trip to Houston where my children and I had visited my good friend Heather Harrison and her children for a week. Heather and I had a great time visiting together and preparing for our 2nd *Above Rubies Ladies' Retreat* in April. I was 12 weeks pregnant and had my first appointment with my certified nurse midwife during the week after we arrived home from our trip.

We spent nearly an hour going over my history and sharing previous birth stories before she began the physical exam. When she was unable to find the heartbeat, she wheeled in the portable ultrasound machine. There, on the small, grainy screen, we saw a beautiful, perfectly formed baby. We saw the tiny skull and all of the little vertebrae running down the back, tiny ribs, two arms and legs. After a few more minutes of quiet observation, she asked her assistant to get one of the doctors. I assumed this was simply their procedure for confirmation. One of the doctors entered the exam room, introduced herself, and began studying the screen. A few minutes later, she began saying how sorry she was...

Although the baby appeared to be perfectly formed and measured exactly right for my stage of pregnancy, they were unable to find a heartbeat. As I watched more intently, I noticed that there was no movement of the arms or legs. The midwife commented to me that this was "nature's way" of protecting my young family from a defective baby who would have high needs. I felt too stunned to respond and thought I was going to be sick. I quickly gathered my children and left for home. I called Kevin on the way and sobbed quietly throughout the remainder of the drive. The midwife called back the next day, stating that the doctor who came in during the ultrasound wanted to go ahead and schedule a D&C. I declined. I wanted to wait and let things progress naturally. If I did end up having to move ahead more aggressively, then I at least wanted to have a doctor of my choosing.

During the next few weeks, I fluctuated wildly from extreme highs to extreme lows and back again. At times, I asked God to let me go ahead and miscarry since our baby was dead. Other times, I pleaded passionately with Him to reverse it all. I remember praying, "You breathed life back into Lazarus! I know You can breathe life back in to our baby!" I tried to convince Him of what an incredible testimony it would offer. I assured Him that all glory would be given back to Him. And, on and on.

After three weeks of this, I broke down during my ladies' Bible study group. I poured everything out. I told my group that I never had a lot of sympathy for "victims." I had a less than desirable childhood with parents who went through multiple marriages, used alcohol and other drugs, etc. Yet, I strongly believed that life was what you made it. You could choose to live forever as a victim of your past or you could "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" and get on with life. I fell into the second category. In addition, I generally believed that if you worked hard enough, you could fix anything. Throughout life, I have rarely accepted "no" as an answer. And now I faced something over which I had absolutely no control. No matter how hard I tried, or how many different ways I prayed, I could not guarantee any sort of change in this situation.

It suddenly dawned on me—I did not trust God. I was afraid He would make the wrong choice, that He wouldn't really do what was best for me or my family. I was hurt, broken and confused, convinced that I must have done something wrong to make all of this happen. The ladies prayed over me and for the first time, I felt peace in my heart and I knew I could turn it all over to God.

Three days later, I had a full ultrasound. I should have been 15 weeks pregnant at that point, but the ultrasound still showed a 12-week-old baby. Still no movement. Still no heartbeat. I took a deep breath, and in my heart, I said "goodbye." I scheduled my next OB-GYN appoint-

ment for early the next week. At this appointment, we decided to use a medication which induces labor. Our *Above Rubies* retreat was only about a month away at this point and I had no trouble staying busy. I poured everything into my family and the retreat, and tried to not let my mind wander to what might have been.

One month later, we were pregnant again and had hopes for a much happier outcome. I could not make a 12-week appointment with my midwife. I made a 13-week appointment!

I was nearly 12 weeks pregnant and we were driving home after church. Two or three miles from our home, we were hit head on by another vehicle. We were all jarred and shaken, but no one seemed to be hurt. When the police officer came and asked if anyone needed an ambulance, we said that we were all okay, but then remembered I was pregnant. Panic entered my heart, but we decided to wait and call Monday morning for an appointment with my midwife. They were unable to get me in for a couple of days, so we continued to wait. I went in to have an ultrasound the day I was 12 weeks pregnant!

The screen was turned slightly away from me and I tried to take deep, even breaths and make myself relax. The same midwife and nurse were performing the ultrasound and I remember having a certain sense of déjà vu and praying, "Help me rest in You, Lord!"

They quietly studied the screen. The minutes crept by. The silence was unbearable. Finally, I asked, "What's wrong?" The silence was too long for everything to be normal. The midwife looked at me very solemnly and asked, "Are there twins in your family?" A wave of complete disbelief and joy rushed over me! I blurted out that we have three sets of twins in my family! She turned the screen to show two tiny, perfectly formed babies!

Our identical twin daughters were born December 27, 2005. Their names are Chaella (Kay-ella) Jean and Amaris (pronounced Ama like Bama-riss) Mireya.

Surely, this is the end, right? Not quite... in fact, I believe it is still the beginning. The Lord sparked a vision for adoption in my husband's heart several years ago, but I wasn't quite ready. Last year at church, our pastor asked, "What would you do if money was no concern?" and my heart cried out, "Adopt!" In fact, the Lord placed the same two objectives on our hearts separately, (1) to get out of debt and (2) to adopt a sibling group who might otherwise not be adopted. With the cost of adoption being so high, we did not understand how those two could go together, but continued to pray.

We have been "snowballing" our debt and have paid off almost \$20,000 since last fall. We still have a ways to go with student loans looming ahead of us, yet the Lord continues to speak to our hearts, urging us to trust Him.

During one of our pastor's messages, he talked about not stepping out in faith and obedience because the timing didn't

seem right to us, such as, "We'll have children once we can afford a bigger house." The Lord has brought that message back to our hearts many times. This is exactly where we have been with the entire adoption issue. He is telling us to do something, but it doesn't make sense to us! "But Lord, we only have a three bedroom house..." "But Lord, we have five children ages nine and under..." "But Lord, we haven't paid off all of our debt..." "But Lord, adoption is expensive..." And each time, He speaks back, saying "Trust Me."

By faith, we are starting the adoption process and plan to adopt a sibling group from Liberia. We have a multigenerational vision for our family which will include these children whom we have not yet met. We believe that these children will thrive in a loving, Christian home. We strongly believe that the Lord is not calling us to take on more debt, yet we also have no clue where this funding will come from. And still, we have never had more peace

in our lives! I have gone from being the "in-control-gotta-fix-it" girl, to just being content with enjoying the ride.

CANDICE STEWART

Midwest City, Oklahoma, USA

candice@texasrubies.com

Adoption journey blog, www.bringingthemhome.org

Kevin and Candice are blessed with Abigail (9), Emma (6), Samuel (3), Chaella (1) and Amaris (1).

Candice is helping to organize their fourth *Above Rubies Ladies'* retreat at Mt. Lebanon Baptist Camp, Cedar Hill, Texas the weekend of 20 - 22 APRIL, 2007.

For more information and to register online, go to www.texasrubies.com or email 2007retreat@texasrubies.com. If you do not have Internet access, please contact Jeanette Watje @ 830-609-6155.

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Helen Keller

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A Repentant mommy

The morning began perfectly. I tiptoed downstairs in robe and slippers, and settled in my lazy boy with my Bible, the sunrise, and the wondrous quiet of a house with sleeping children. I read my "Mother's Manual", the Bible, and then prayed about what I had read. I asked God to make me a gentle Mommy with a "meek and quiet spirit", a prayer I had prayed many times before. This was something I've desperately wanted as a mother. My hot German blood and red hair suit my temperamental tendencies. Surely after such a spiritual start to this day, my girls and I would see a change for the better. I was determined to remain calm, no matter what.

Things went smoothly for a while. I was impressed with my ability to "stay sweet" through spills and spats. I felt so good about myself! That is, until the sewing incident.

I was mending a shirt by hand, surrounded with buttons, pins and thread. The girls were playing nearby with their toys, and I had warned them not to come too close. But suddenly there was my youngest, seemingly diving into my sewing supplies, scattering needles and buttons everywhere, and entangling herself in three colors of thread. I lost it—not just the button in my hand, but every ounce of self-control I'd been proudly carrying around. I grabbed her arm and with a sky-level voice demanded, "Now do you see why I told you to stay away?" I wheeled her around to face her crime. "Just look what you did! LOOK WHAT YOU DID!" Her tears of shame and my tears of frustration began in unison as I continued to scold

her for upsetting my project. I turned her out of the room and we both eventually calmed down.

And then the guilt set in. Always after such an episode, it comes creeping around me like a snake—a heavy, suffocating guilt. It seems to hiss in my ear reminders of what a failure I am as a mom, and that I'll never change. I spent the next few hours convinced I had permanently damaged my daughter's emotions toward her mother and herself. Where

**I felt extremely shameful,
but at the same time suddenly realized
this was an opportunity I could seize.**

was the hope I'd felt that morning? How had all I'd gained been suddenly lost in the heat of the moment?

I was pondering this when I heard a little voice behind me. I turned to face my three year old, her lips quivering. Peering through snow-white bangs and with pleading blue eyes she asked, "Mommy, why did you yell at me? I don't wike it when you yell at me." I felt extremely shameful, but at the same time suddenly realized this was an opportunity I could seize. I pulled her close and held her tight. I choked out the words, "I'm so sorry, baby. Mommy's so, so sorry. I didn't mean to yell at you. I never want to yell at you, but sometimes I can't help it. I just get so upset. But that's wrong of mommy. I want to change. Will you please pray for me, that I'll be a better mommy?"

And she did. "Dear Dod, pwease help mommy not to yell at me, and help her to be a dood mommy. In Jesus' name, Amen." Then she topped off her prayer with an, "I wuv you, Mommy." I cried and said I loved her too.

I held and rocked her for a while, and we were lost in each other's kisses and lovin's. I felt that creepy old guilt melt away under my daughter's tight embrace. It was a moment to be cherished.

I continue to blow it at times with my children, but countless memories like this one prove to me that God is at work. It won't be an overnight change, but He is smoothing out the rough edges little by little as I allow Him to come into the ups and downs of my mothering. I think He prefers to change me in front of my children, and with the help of my children. And, painful as that may be, it makes for precious times of reconciliation—moments I wouldn't trade for all the composure I envy in my fellow moms.

My girls may inherit my short fuse, but I pray that they also learn to face their failures with a repentant heart. They'll grow closer to their children, as I do with mine. And they'll remain close to a God who is patiently at work, making them into the mommies they'll want to be.

FAITH BOGDAN

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David and Faith are blessed with two sets of playmates: Sarah and Anna (8 and 9), and Ruthie and Rebecca (3 and 4). Sarah still prays for Mommy.

ABOVE RUBIES

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Contact: Holly Anderson: isaacandholly@comcast.net

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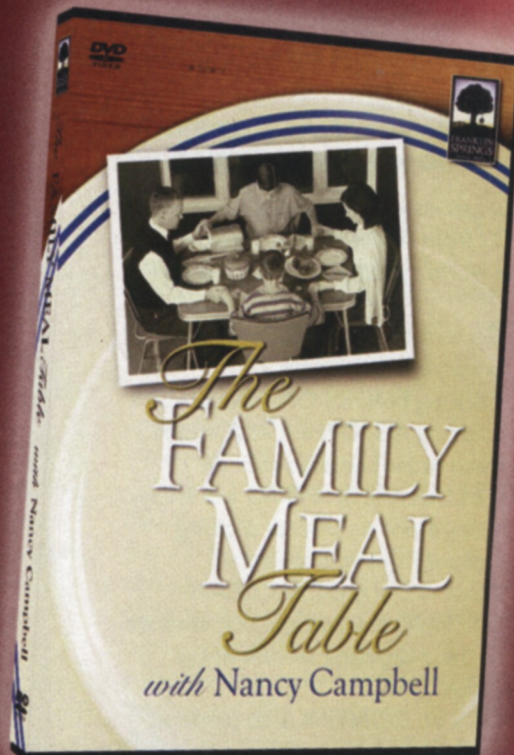
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"This DVD is an invitation
to a feast. It will change the way
you look at your table."

"The family dinner table
is one of those things
that people are homesick for
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I was inspired to continue
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