

Strengthening Families Across the World

# ABOVE RUBIES

ISSUE: Ninety-one

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[www.aboverubies.org](http://www.aboverubies.org)

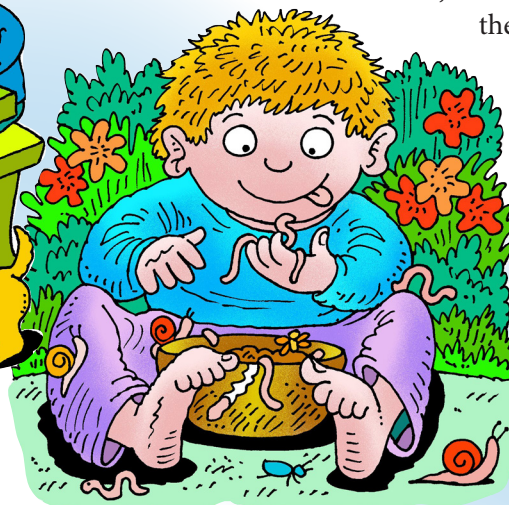
# From Our Home to Yours



Nancy reading to some of her grandchildren: Shepherd Allison on top; l to r: Saber Johnson and Haven and Breeze Allison.

**H**ow blessed you are to be building a family or to be part of a family. It is

in the family unit we find safety, security, and blessing. It is God's plan for us to live as families and He has no other alternative. To live any other way is substandard. Yes, I know you face challenges and sometimes even insurmountable difficulties. But, by



God's grace and His grace alone, keep on keeping on. As you build a strong family, you strengthen the nation. When you vacate the home and childbearing the nation weakens.

I have a new book to share with you in this issue of Above Rubies. This time it's not for you as a wife or mother, but for your children, although I know you'll enjoy it too. It's called "Nanny's Nursery Rhymes for a New Millennium."

I have always loved nursery rhymes. I loved them as a child and learned most of them by heart. I loved reciting them to our children and they learned them by heart. When looking for children's books, I looked for those written in rhyme. They are much more fun to read and for the children to listen to.

Nursery rhymes are very important for brain and language development. They build memory capabilities, improve oral language skills, and best of all, they are fun and easy to learn. Rhymes provide a certain type of music to the child's ear. Little children's eyes light up when they quote rhymes in a singsong meter.

Will you forgive me for saying that I believe children are deprived who are not raised on nursery rhymes? However, although I love the traditional nursery rhymes because of their rhyme and meter, I have not always enjoyed the content. Who likes

reading about a mother who whips all her children and sends them to bed without any supper? Who likes reading about the baby and cradle that falls from the tree (although, unbelievably I've sung it to my babies hundreds of times). Who likes reading

about tripping up a man with bandy legs so he falls on his nose? Are these the values we want to teach our children?

Therefore, my daughters and I decided to write new nursery rhymes—over 60 rhymes with positive content that relate to children in our 21st century. You will find lots of variety. Some are funny, some are about things children love to do, and others instill in them the good things we want to see in our children—to be happy, obedient, smiling, truth-speaking, and to have good work attitudes.

You won't want to be without this book. It will bring your children hours of pleasure and they will be blessed and inspired at the same time. I have printed this delightfully illustrated book in hard cover (a little more expensive) but important for a nursery rhyme book that lasts generations.

Keep up the great work as you build your family. You are

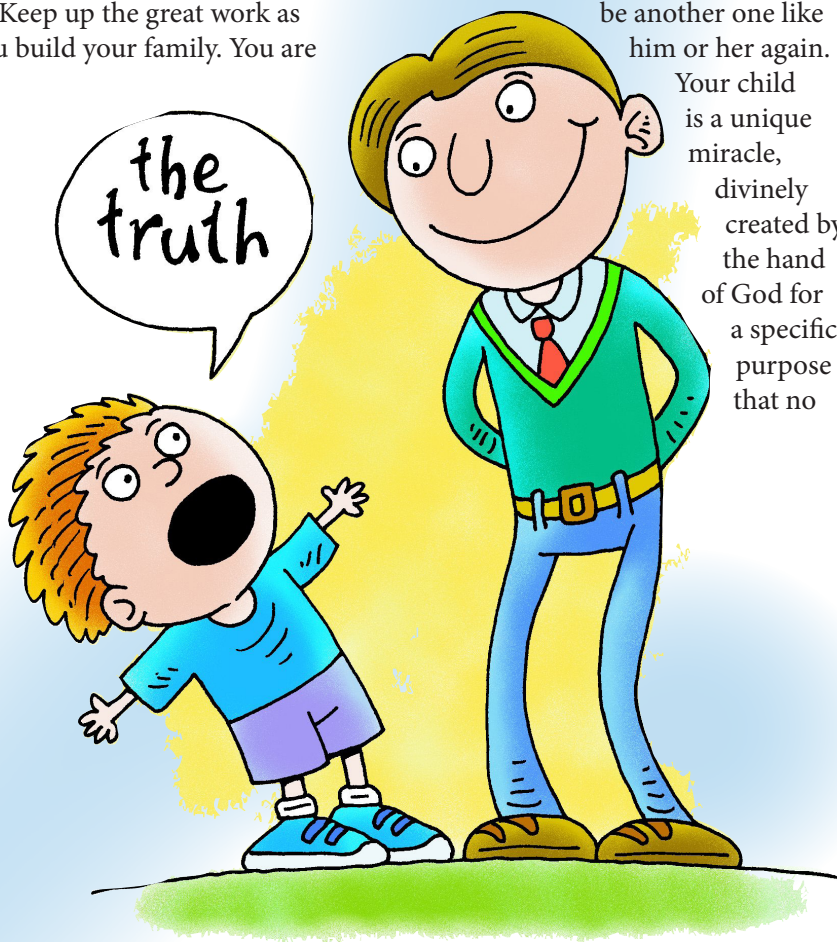
accomplishing more than you realize. What did God give to Moses to take before the great Pharaoh of Egypt? A shepherd's rod, a thing of naught in the eyes of Egypt. As Moses wielded his humble rod before Pharaoh, he received resistance, ridicule, and rejection. However, in the midst of this mockery and derision, he wrought mighty miracles--some of the most outstanding miracles the world has ever seen.

As you embrace motherhood and the precious children God gives to you and stay home to train and educate them, you often receive resistance and ridicule too.

Be encouraged. Your rod of motherhood may seem insignificant to you, but it produces great miracles. Every child God gives to you is a divine miracle. There has never been another child like your child in the history of the world, and there will never

be another one like him or her again.

Your child is a unique miracle, divinely created by the hand of God for a specific purpose that no



one else will ever do.

Every day God gives you miracles of His wisdom, guidance, and protection as you mother your children. You may not even be aware of all the times God compassionately sends His ministering angels to save your children from disaster. I acknowledge that my children and grandchildren are only alive by the miraculous protection of God.

You have not yet seen all the great things God will do through your children to bring salvation to people and to reveal God's image in the earth. Often we have to take our head out of the sand to see the miracles. Don't miss them. Thank God for them. Take hold of your rod of motherhood—your humble yet miraculous rod! Don't run from it. Embrace it. Wield it for the glory of God as you impact this earth and eternity.

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#### NANCY CAMPBELL

Founder and Editress of Above Rubies for over 37 years

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Above Rubies is a magazine to encourage women in their high calling as wives, mothers and homemakers. Its purpose is to uphold and strengthen family life and to raise the standard of God's truth in the nation. The name has been chosen from Proverbs 31:10 AMP, "A capable, intelligent and virtuous woman, who is he who can find her? She is far more precious than jewels and her value is far ABOVE RUBIES or pearls."

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FRONT COVER: Campbell cousins jumping on the trampoline together: Cedar Allison, Arrow Johnson, and Noble Barrett. Photography by Rashida Johnson

\* Check Facebook at Rashida La'el Photography.



**Jaap and Marieke with their children: Christian (17), Jesse (15), Grace (12), Yiska (9), Tim (7), Amy (4), Vera (2), and baby Ellie.**



## Not a Hindrance

It was early morning when we left for the hospital to give birth to our eighth child. The Thai nurses were as friendly as ever. After the check-in I had to put my thumbprint on a piece of paper. Next to my thumbprint was an empty box where, after the birth, our child's footprint would be. The nurse asked me if it was a boy or a girl. I told her we didn't know as we love to be surprised, but I had to put my thumbprint on two pieces of paper, a blue one and a pink one.

We left our home country, Holland, twelve years ago, with three small children, the youngest only four months. We were sent to a "Creative Access" country in South East Asia. After a two-year language study we moved to the country where we now live. In this country people are only allowed one child which makes our growing family a real novelty. There are three things people always comment on when they see our family: (1) "Look, foreigners!" (2) "The husband is so tall!" and (3) "Wow, so many children."

When I go to the market, people always ask how many children I have, even though many of them already know. They just want to hear it again and again out of my own mouth. The people who sell vegetables ask me the question so people who are standing next to me can hear my answer. After they hear my answer they start talking and asking questions.

"What? Seven children? Did you give birth to them all? Did you have c-sections? How can you have so many? Children are such a burden; you must have tons of money." And when they see my growing tummy, some say, "Did you know you can go to the hospital nearby and get rid of the baby easily? Abortion is not really expensive."

All these questions leave a wide open door to talk about

our faith. I tell the people that children are a blessing from God, that we love children, and we are delighted to have so many. And no, we don't have a lot of money. Sometimes an older woman would tell me she grew up in a big family and that she loved it. But many, many others, especially those of our own generation, have fallen for the lie that parents only have love for one child, that children are a burden, that no one can ever afford more than one child, and that it is better for everyone to just have one.

Many are confused when they see a family where parents love each other and love having children. People are always watching us—in our home and outside our home. Our neighbors sit on their balcony, looking at our family, and talking and commenting about everything they see. Isaiah 61:3 (ESV) often comes to mind where we are called "oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified."

Our prayer is that when people see us, they will see the Lord. Sometimes we feel very vulnerable. Our family, like every other family, is not perfect. Our neighbors see our children play, but they also see them fight. They see a mess, bikes and toys all over the yard, and buckets full of laundry. But we hope that they also see a good marriage, children saying sorry to each other, and enjoying each other's company tremendously. We pray that they see the joy of the Lord through everything we do and say.

Our sending organization requires us to go to Thailand for the delivery, because the healthcare is a lot better than where we live. So there we were for the fifth time. On December 17th, after a good delivery, our eighth child was born.

"It is a girl, Marieke," my husband whispered in my ear



as soon as the baby was born. Words cannot express the feelings after the birth of a baby. The moment one goes from pain to relief, to hear the first little cry, and to glimpse the first sight of the precious life you carried for nine months.

On the pink card, in the box, next to the box with my thumbprint, is the footprint of Ellie Gabrielle Mercy.

An hour after the delivery we called the children. We did not say whether it was a boy or girl as we really wanted to see their faces when they saw their baby sister. A friend brought our children to the hospital. I wish I could capture the look on the faces of all our children when they saw their sister for the first time. There is nothing like a new sibling. The oldest to the youngest were in awe! The nurses were all so excited to see such a big family. They gave cookies and fruit to the children and carried the younger ones. One of them said, "I have one child, but seeing your family makes me want to have more!"

As is the custom here in Thailand, I stayed in the hospital for two days after the birth of Ellie. Those days were so precious as I was alone in my room with God and my beautiful little girl. Just looking at her made me cry. I was, and am, so thankful! My heart overflows with thankfulness.

God called us to the mission field in South East Asia and He gave us children. Children are not a burden to do the work of the Lord, or a hindrance to the ministry, but on the contrary,

children give tremendous opportunities to share the good news in a country that is closed to the gospel and where there are hardly any examples of a healthy family. God does not call perfect people or perfect families. He calls ordinary families because He wants to use our weakness to show His strength so He will be glorified!

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South East Asia  
(originally from The Netherlands)



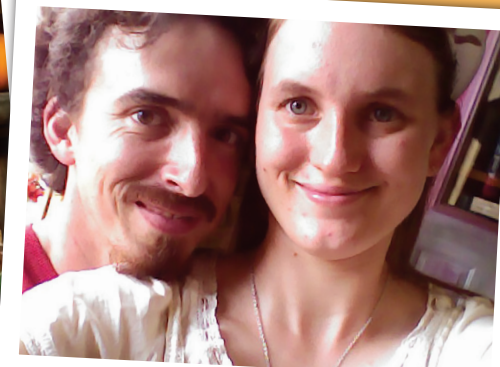
# Ordering My Life

I have been reading *Above Rubies* since I was a young girl. I am now a mother of three little girls aged five and under and expecting another baby in May. We live on an off-grid farm in Tennessee. Since I was a teenager, I have always wanted to be a stay-at-home mother, but life often becomes hectic. I would routinely get frustrated, lose my vision, and then feel guilty for my failures. I couldn't even get a good night's sleep and my days were filled with one legitimate need after another. How was I supposed to spend time with God?

The answer came through my husband. One day when we were both about to pull our hair out in frustration, he said, "We need some kind of order to the girls' days." I had always been closed to having a schedule with times for everything. I thought it would make me feel hemmed in and inflexible. My husband is naturally more orderly and methodical than I am and I realized this would be a wonderful way to show him honor, even though I wasn't sure how I would like it personally. I think he was surprised when I said "Okay, we'll sit down and figure out a schedule tonight!"

I have never regretted it. Writing down times for specific tasks and sticking to them has opened up my day so much! What I thought would be restrictive has given me freedom! I used to run all day long from room to room trying to put out fires and fix all the messes as they happened. It was not effective, to say the least. My house stayed semi-clean, but there was never time to read a book with the children and meals were rarely ready on time.

Now, I have thirty minutes of quiet time each morning. The girls have learnt to sit quietly and listen to the Bible on CD while I make breakfast



Dustin and Janet have three daughters: Esther (5), Lillian (3 1/2), Ember (2), two babies in heaven, and baby due May 2015.

on our wood stove. I have clean up times after meals and times for other necessary everyday tasks and homeschooling planned out.

My biggest surprise was the blocks of "unplanned time" that showed

up on my schedule. Wow! Time for exercise, sewing, letter writing, impromptu tea parties with my girls, or striking off some of those "extras" from the to-do list. Best of all is being able to have a daily, planned time with

## Janet's Tips for Ordering Your Day

1. Get up at least a half hour before your children wake and have some quiet time—just you and God. This will increase your sanity and peace through the entire day! I LOVE to sleep in so this has been my biggest challenge, but I can testify it is worth it.
2. Make a list of the things that must be done every day and make specific times to do them. Be careful not to go overboard and always prioritize. For example, washing dishes every day is going to come before dusting and waxing the house. Keep in mind the object is a freer, saner family life, not having a show room home.
3. Seek to establish a healthy rhythm. Children thrive as the day flows along in a predictable way. You will not be flustered by constantly thinking, "What do I need to do now?"
4. Remember your schedule is to serve you and not the other way around. If something isn't working, change it. If you have a new baby, everything will change again. To be available for your baby and snatching whatever sleep you can get is paramount at this season, so don't stress. Get whatever help you can, rest up, get your strength back, and enjoy nursing your baby. As things settle down and baby grows you will naturally figure out your new family pattern.
5. Follow some kind of bed time routine each night with your children. It needn't be fancy, but reading before bedtime each night, or having a special bedtime song (or whatever you do) before prayers helps everyone settle down more quickly. Movies or other screen time just before bed is probably a bad idea as some studies show this can keep children awake at night.

God. This is one of the greatest times of the day. Sometimes I read the Bible. Other times devotionals like Nancy Campbell's "100 Days of Blessings" (given to me by Evangeline Johnson after a fun impromptu meeting when their family floated the Buffalo river that runs by our farm), or Oswald Chambers' "My Utmost for His Highest" encourage me.

My whole family is blessed by this new order in our lives. My husband gets a happier wife and a restful home. The children have calmer parents and thrive by knowing what to expect. They also get God's Word in their little hearts by the daily Scriptures we read to them. I am able to actually focus on my mission field and not just control chaos!

I shouldn't be surprised at all this. After all, our God is a God of order. Reading the first chapter of the Bible, not to mention the rest, should open our eyes to that. I'm so glad I was able to submit to my husband's wisdom instead of complaining it would be too hard.

Sometimes I lose sight of my vision and things start to get crazy again, but I seek to find my way back to an ordered and therefore blessed life. It doesn't make sense to go backward!

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## DO YOU WANT TO BE INSPIRED?

### ABOVE RUBIES FACEBOOK

You will be encouraged by daily posts to inspire and strengthen you in your great calling of wife and mother. Get your encouragement for the day, sign off, and get on with your great career of nurturing and training your children.

Go to:

<http://facebook.com/AboveRubiesUS>

### ABOVE RUBIES DAILY BLOG

If you don't get to Facebook every day and miss some of the encouraging messages, you can get them on the Above Rubies blog.

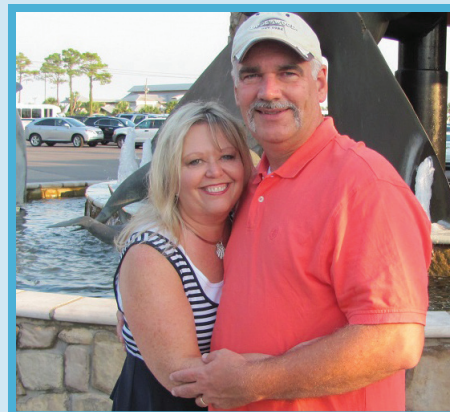
Go to:

[http://tinyurl.com/](http://tinyurl.com/WomensDailyDevotionalBlog)

[WomensDailyDevotionalBlog](http://tinyurl.com/WomensDailyDevotionalBlog)

# Three Anchors

Marriage is a wonderful blessing ordained by God, but when imperfect humans enter into this covenant relationship, the seas of marriage sometimes become stormy. After being married for more than twenty years to my wonderful wife, Elaine, God has taught me "three anchors" to keep us from being tossed about.



### *The Binding Contract*

The first anchor is the binding contract we made with God when we pronounced our vows in the marriage ceremony. At the altar we declared that we would remain married for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do we part.

Do you ever wonder how many people only hear the "better, richer, in health" sections? When life gets stormy with waves of "worse, poorer, in sickness," too many couples call it quits without considering the magnitude of the marriage contract. God says that He expects us to fulfill our vows, and that it is better not to vow than to break a vow to Him (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6). The power in this anchor is that once we settle in our minds that we are truly committed for better or worse, and that we are determined to persevere until the end, then we focus on fixing the marriage rather than ending it.

### *The Enemy is Not My Spouse*

The second anchor is the understanding that the enemy is not my spouse. When we are unhappy, it is easy to blame the person closest to us for our unhappiness. The Bible tells us in Ephesians 6:12 that our battle is not with flesh and blood, but against spiritual powers. There is a spiritual enemy who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy our marriages (John 10:10). If the enemy can influence husbands and wives to turn against each other, he undermines our testimony to the world, interferes with answered prayers, and effectively weakens the body of believers.

Several years ago, my wife and I were involved in a moment of "intense fellowship" (as one of my friends calls it). My poor wife looked at me as if I had lost my mind! After I cooled off, I couldn't believe that I had gotten so bent out of shape. Later, I realized that the enemy was trying to keep me and Elaine from a particular blessing that God was about to reveal.

### *Love Sacrificially*

The third, and probably most important marriage anchor is learning to love sacrificially, as Jesus loves the church. All love involves sacrifice. Read that last sentence again. We live in a narcissistic world that encourages selfishness, but truly happy relationships take sacrifice. I have heard Colin Campbell often preach, "Marriage is a test of the self-life." This is true! Marriage reveals our spiritual condition. Fortunately, we can change. We can become more like our Savior, who was willing to wash the dirty feet of His disciples. A little sacrifice (a foot massage, a favorite meal, a card, a phone call, an apology) can go a long way towards calming a stormy relationship. We want Jesus to be merciful to us; we should be merciful to our spouse.

U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt is credited with the quote, "Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty." A good marriage is worth having! It is worth the effort, pain, and difficulty! Elaine and I pray that these "anchors" that have helped us will bless your marriage as well.

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Phil and Elaine are blessed with Zachary (19) and Emily (12).

# Are You Settled?

Are you settled in your spirit? Are you contented with your divine calling of raising your children in your home? Many times we cannot answer yes to these questions. We feel unsettled. Sometimes we even feel despised and debased. Often family members cause you to feel inferior and that you should be doing something greater with your life. Perhaps you are facing financial pressures and you feel the pull to take a job and make some money.

Dear mother, please be encouraged. You are right where God wants you to be. You have the highest career in the nation as you train the next generation; as you make a stable, loving, peaceful home for your children; as you daily fill them with God's powerful words which are the greatest wisdom in the world; and as you prepare them for the destiny for which God has brought them into the world.

And there's more. Your career is an eternal one. You came naked into this world and naked you will go out, not taking anything with you, except your redeemed soul and the redeemed souls of your children, which are eternal. Others pour their lives into careers outside the home, which will all be left behind. You are pouring your life into lives that will live forever. You are doing an eternal work.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians telling them: "Therefore, my beloved brethren be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Motherhood is the "work of the Lord." It is God ordained. We are commissioned by God to birth His children and train them for His purposes.

But God does not leave us in the dark. He always shows us the way and in this Scripture He tells us what kind of an attitude we should have in our great work of mothering. Yes, it is work. It's consistent work. It's hard work. It's never-giving-up work. But it will never be in vain. Read the promise again: "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Let's see how we are to do it:

## 1. We are to be steadfast

This Greek word for "steadfast" means "to be settled." God wants you to be settled in your great calling. Not tossed to and fro and hankering after another lifestyle. You've come to terms with God and yourself, knowing that this is the life for which you were born. You know you are in the perfect will of God.

You understand there is more to motherhood than just loving your children. You actually love motherhood. Every mother loves her children, but when you love the career of mothering your children it makes all the difference in the world. Psalm 128:3 (TLB) is your testimony: "Your wife shall be contented in your home." You are enjoying God's blessings He gives to you in Isaiah 32:18: "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

The dictionary meaning for "settled" is to be "placed, established, fixed, composed, and adjusted." Your home is the place God has chosen for you to fulfill your destiny. It is your appointed place. It is the place God has chosen for you to raise your children (He chose the home, not daycare facilities). It is the place God wants your children to enjoy and where they make wonderful memories.

I believe it is important for us to find "rest" in our home and in our mothering. When you are settled and rested in it, you will be at peace. Of course, I don't mean that you will live a life of ease with nothing to do but lie on the sofa and read books! Motherhood is a hectic and demanding life. How could it be anything else when you

are determining the future destiny of a nation? But in the midst of accomplishing all you have to do, you can have a spirit of rest and peace, knowing that you are in the perfect will of God.

Back in Bible days, God rested in the Holy of holies so that He could be near His people. Now He wants to find His rest in your heart and in your home, for God is a "dwelling God." Psalm 132:13-14 says, "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." God desires a resting place. He wants to rest in your home, but He can't do this if you don't believe your home is your resting place. Proverbs 24:15 says: "Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous, spoil not his resting place." We must guard against anything that can spoil our resting place."

If you read Psalm 132:15, 16 you will notice the blessings that come to you when God rests in your home because you are settled.

a) He will abundantly bless your provision and satisfy you with food. That's a good promise, isn't it?

b) He will clothe you with salvation and songs of joy will fill your home.

## 2. We are to be unmovable

Nothing will move you from your high calling. You won't be moved by the negative statements your family and friends say to you about having more children or homeschooling. You won't be moved when facing hardships or financial stress. You've counted the cost. Your heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. You are unshakable. Because you know your purpose, you will stand true to your convictions.

When Nehemiah went back to Jerusalem to repair and build the gates of Jerusalem he faced continual persecution and ridicule. His enemies did everything in their power to thwart him from his great purpose. When they asked him to come down, he refused to stop his great work. Instead, he sent messengers to them, saying, "I AM DOING A GREAT WORK, SO THAT I CANNOT COME DOWN: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:1-4).

Print or type these words in LARGE print and pin them up in your kitchen. When others tempt you, or you are tempted yourself to come down from your high calling, speak them out loud. Don't lower yourself to come down. Keep up your great work. You haven't got time to deviate from your purpose. You are also building a wall of defense, the greatest building program in the nation.

## 3. We are to abound

The word "abounding" is *perisseuo* and means "to excel, to super-abound, more than enough." Because motherhood is the career that God has given to you, do it with all your heart. Throw yourself into your great calling. Don't do it half-heartedly, or half-time. Don't do it grumblingly, grudgingly, and grouchingly—but enthusiastically. Never the status quo, but more than is necessary. Give yourself fully to your calling.

Pray this prayer today: "Dear Father, Please help me to fully understand my purpose as a mother. I want to be steadfast and unmovable, not tossed around by what everyone else says. I want to stand firm in Your truth. Please pour out Your mothering anointing upon me and help me to be contented in my home. Amen."

NANCY CAMPBELL  
Primm Springs, Tennessee, USA





P.S. After proofreading this article, my sister Kate facetiously wrote at the end: “Can she come out of her four walls for a quick breather? Is she allowed friends of her own to connect to and fellowship with?”

Of course. One of my greatest blessings when raising our children was the blessing of fellowship with other mothers. It was my sanity. I had a Ladies’ Bible Study in my home for years where mothers and their children came every week (loads more babies and children than mothers!). I led this Bible Study, usually nursing a babe at my breast. They were wonderful times of fellowship and encouraging one another.

We also organized picnics at the park together with our children. We opened our homes in hospitality to each other and also the lonely and hurting around us. We cared for one another when one was sick, overwhelmed, or pregnant. I remember one time when Val Stares (who is now the Director of Above Rubies in Australia) visited a mother who was sick. She took her a big pot of soup and also wrote a song to encourage her which she sang to her. Now Val is like me and can’t sing for nuts, but that didn’t deter her from encouraging a fellow mother.

For your information, Val has been with me in the ministry of Above Rubies since it’s very beginning over 37 years ago. Her sister brought her to our church one Sunday evening as an unbeliever. That night she was gloriously saved and has never been the same since. She started coming to my Ladies’ Bible Study, although she was so shy in those days that she would cry if I asked her to pray. But soon Val was sharing her testimony everywhere. Today she is an anointed older woman who teaches God’s truths to wives and mothers all across Australia and New Zealand.

We not only enjoyed fellowship together but continually thought of ideas to bless others around us. We would put on luncheons for widows, for the elderly, for single moms, and whatever idea we came up with. We didn’t exclude our children. They helped us, and entertained those who came with their songs and whatever they could do. Older people love to hear children sing and recite, and also hold a little baby.

The home is not a negative place. It is where we live life! It is where we touch many lives for Jesus. From our home we can impact the community around us. Are you feeling lonely in your home? Are you feeling dispirited and that you are wasting your life? Dear mother, these are the lies of the enemy. You are doing the greatest job in the nation as you raise your children for God. And you have a home where you can influence and bless many lives.

Open your home in hospitality. Invite other mothers to your home. Think about another mother who is also lonely and needs lifting up. Plan a picnic together. Start a Ladies’ Bible Study. You don’t have to go out of your home to have a mighty ministry for God. You have the opportunity to change lives forever by opening wide the doors of your home and inviting in those whom God puts upon your heart.

~ NANCY

# Mud Hut Home Birth

I am an Aussie, married to a Kiwi, and we are volunteer workers with an NGO in the Republic of Benin, West Africa. I had three previous water births, two of them at home. I was now pregnant with my fourth child and had a clear sense of how I wanted to birth my child. I believe in the importance of birth as something sacred, private, and deeply powerful. Grantly Dick Read in “Childbirth Without Fear” states: “We are not concerned with disease, but with healthy women carrying out a normal and natural function.”

Because we are working in Benin I knew it was unlikely I would find a midwife that would be an advocate of physiological birth (or if they were, one that would allow

me the birthing choices I wanted to make). I also knew that it is very expensive for anyone to travel this far to visit.

In the maternity wards here, most are trained in a medical model system that usually looks for the worst, and unfortunately, more often than not, finds or creates it. We had just heard of a baby dying due to forceps injuries at the local Natti hospital.

I prepared myself for birthing unattended. I did a lot of reading (in the context of home births) on all my questions and doubts, and came away satisfied, yet again, that natural birth was achievable and desirable in my circumstances.

After an ultrasound, I knew baby and I were in good health. I took multivitamins and tried to eat well. I spent many hours in prayer and felt an assurance and deep sense of peace before God that things were okay, and that we were in His hands. I kept thinking of Mary birthing in the stable. What circumstances! And yet the Nativity is a lasting image and emblem of something holy and sacred.

Eventually, we were blessed that Sharon, our Kiwi midwife, was willing to come to West Africa. She did a lot of independent fundraising and went to a huge amount of personal effort to accomplish this. I was so thankful and pleased that she really wanted to be a support and help for us. She is an advocate of the midwifery guidelines that ensure the woman is informed and then give her the dignity of choice.

However, I went into labour before Sharon arrived, but was well-prepared to birth



unattended because of my ongoing expectations and beliefs about birth. I see it as a privilege to be a healthy woman with a supportive husband and the option to birth in privacy and peace. “Birth is not an emergency but an emergence.”, writes Stephen Levine.

When I went into labour, it felt more like practice contractions and I wasn't fazed. I call them “tightenings.” About the same time my youngest (who I was still breastfeeding) came and asked for a drink. Another tightening came.

“Hmmm,” I commented to my husband, Jo. He thought they were only practice too, until he saw the way I was concentrating, leaning against the kitchen bench! They kept coming.

I didn't really think I was in labour. I moved into our room and pattered around, opening the buckets of old sheets and towels I had prepared for birthing. During a few tightenings I sat on my armchair, and concentrated on relaxing. I moved to the toilet because it was the place where I felt most open. I had one intense tightening, not realizing it was transition! I called for Jo. I had two more intense tightenings which I realized in retrospect were pushing contractions because of the way I breathed—exhaling through my open mouth rather than breathing quietly as I had before. I crouched down. I could feel the baby descending!

“The baby's coming now,” I gasped. I felt the head crowning slowly. The baby turned and

slipped out into my hands in front of me, face up, pink, and crying vigorously! It all took less than an hour. I lay on the mattress, baby on my belly, while Jo tidied up and cut the cord.

I then leaned over my armchair with baby lying against me and delivered the placenta. We settled on the nearby bed, broke out the traditional celebratory Peanut M&M's, and baby nuzzled.

We were so glad Sharon still decided to fly to Benin. She was such a support and encouragement and she brought so many presents. It was like several Christmases combined!

Noah Ezekiel was born here at home in our mud hut on September 22nd at about 6.30 pm, we think! He had a good aggar; he was pink-and-golden-healthy and making plenty of noise.

We think he weighed about 3.5 kg, and we think he was about 53 cm long! However, we do know he's wonderful and his three brothers agree.

To me, Noah's birth was a 10 on the scale of life experiences.

---

#### KRISTIE BAYNE

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Natitingou, Republic of Benin,  
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Johann and Kristie with their children: Enoch—born in NZ (6), Zion—born in Benin (4), Stefan—born in NZ (3), and Noah—born in Benin (1).

#### Interpretation:

**Ausie:** a person born in Australia.

**Kiwi:** a person born in New Zealand.

**Weight:** 3.5 kg. = 7.7 lbs. \* 53 cm = 20.8”



## You Set the Tone

“House of praise—heavenly dew.” Ten years ago God put these words in my heart. It speaks of dew so plentiful that the vegetation is watered almost without rainfall. It also speaks of the blessings God delights to send to a family who welcomes His presence through praise.

Imagine Jesus standing at the door of our homes waiting to hear the sound of praise to welcome Him in. What does He hear as He listens? Is it complaining, arguing, foolishness, belittling, and confusion? Or is it gratitude, harmony, thanksgiving, and peaceful words?

Do you want a home where Jesus dwells? If so, I believe we must “Speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19). God decides whether or not He can inhabit our home by what He hears at the door.

The Lord has been doing a deep work in our family over the past few years, helping us to become the house of praise He has called us to be. He enabled us to break free from the confusion and disorder that comes through arguing and complaining, replacing it with His order and divine peace. This transformation is happening through the power of praise. Because we desire our home to be a place where God’s Spirit delights to dwell, we are constantly endeavoring to fill our home with more praise to God.

To this end, we have organized for our children to get music lessons. About seven years ago, a sweet, homeschooled young lady began coming into our home to give a few of my children lessons on the piano and flute. Since that time,

we have acquired more music teachers and more musical instruments. To save fragmenting our family life, we searched for music teachers who were willing to teach us in our own home. We did not have to interrupt schedules by constantly carting children across town, and as a result, we were able to devote more time to the Lord, to our family, and to ministry opportunities.

We noticed that many homeschoolers in our area had become virtual “car schoolers,” constantly transporting their children back and forth to countless extra-curricular activities outside of the home. In the process, they were losing their children’s hearts and destroying the family unity that home education promotes. My husband

and I decided to do things differently—to base our home education around the home (pun intended). We therefore declined many outside involvements so they would not take precedence over our home discipleship, relationship with the Lord, and family unity.

About two years ago, all eight of the children began playing together: Joshua on the guitar, Daniel on the bass, Stephen on the piano, Nicole on the flute, Sarah on the trombone, Anna Joy on the violin, Rachel on the clarinet, and Jonathan on the trumpet. We have recently started playing and singing at churches, nursing homes, and gatherings of believers. We trust God that as our family plays their music together in one accord that they will minister unity to the body of Christ. When we lift up praise to God, we break the power of the enemy. The Holy Spirit is then able

### *“House of praise—heavenly dew.”*



Or, if you allow whining and bickering among the children, you quench God's Spirit in your home. Satan loves to see families who are divided and at odds with one another. However, if they join together to lift up their hearts in praise to God, they confound and completely thwart his plans, and the "peace that surpasses all understanding" fills the home.

If you have been wondering how to make your home a place where God's peace rules, I encourage you to incorporate into your family the power of praise. Rid your home of whining, arguing, and complaining and choose to lift up the name that is above every name, the One who is called our Prince of Peace. Choose to give thanks in all circumstances and instill in your family an attitude of gratitude for the many undeserved blessings of God. You will see the Lord move mightily on your behalf as the old ungodly attitudes and actions drift away and your home is transformed into a house of praise.

**CONNIE LANFORD**  
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to change lives and bring unity and heavenly order instead of discord and confusion.

Psalm 22:3 tells us that God "inhabits the praises of His people." In other words, if we want our homes to be a dwelling place for the Spirit of God, we must endeavor to keep our homes filled with praise and thanksgiving at ALL times.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT) encourages us: "Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

As a mother, you hold the key to the tone of your home. You can invite God in by your loving and life-giving words that offer up a pleasing sacrifice of praise—a fragrant aroma to our Lord.

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# A Generational Impact

Last summer we were asked to create a T-shirt design for my husband's family reunion, which we enjoy together every other summer. My husband has amazing skills and was able to carry out exactly what I envisioned.

Grampa Keith and Gramma Sara were special people. I never had the opportunity to meet them. They passed away when my husband was a boy, but I feel as if they were part of my life. Keith was a pastor and Sara a woman who passionately supported her husband as a godly wife and mother. Both were first generation Christians.

God's word and adherence to their faith were the foundations of their home. They did not have much materially, but they were rich in the blessings of the Lord. Together they had seven children, five girls and two boys, my father in law being the oldest boy. There were times when they lived in a two-room house and the twin girls shared a bed all the way through high school (if I remember correctly, several of them did). They all tell of the joy those years of togetherness brought to them.

Gramma Sara could stretch a pot of soup, not only for their own family, but to all who visited. Every Christmas an uncle from California would send a 40 pound box of raisins, a box of almonds, and a big bag of oranges to Oregon on the Greyhound bus for the family to enjoy. Even in their sixties and seventies, the seven aunts and uncles have sweet memories of how excited they were to receive this special delivery each year.

These seven siblings went on to have 25 children between them and were greatly influenced by the legacy of their grandparents. Most of the cousins are married and have children of their own, and many are in full-time Christian ministry. There are pastors and missionaries in more than one country across the world from this line. Others are focused on raising their children for the Lord and to strike a blow to the enemy as their families impact their communities around them. This generation was raised with vision and a full knowledge of their heritage and their part in it.

At current count, there are 75 offspring from the cousins,

including biological and adopted children (both domestic and international). Two of the youngest generation recently married and one is expecting the first great-great grandchild of Keith and Sara. Even in this tier of the great grandchildren on our family pyramid, we already have many young people engaged in missions for the Lord. The young adults, teens, and young children of this generation also understand the legacy of which they are a part.

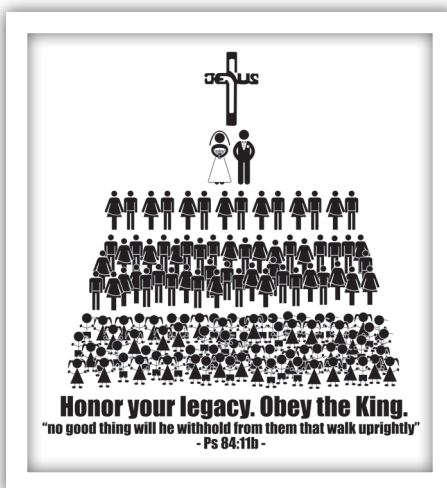
When we gather at our family reunions, we spend hours sharing, rejoicing in each other's triumphs, and praying for one another's burdens. Those of us who married into the family feel honored to be part of it. We are grateful to join with our spouses to share in this legacy of generational faithfulness to the Lord.

Our family T-shirt this summer symbolized what is possible with the Lord. At the top of the shirt is a cross, which is the true and sole foundation of this family. Below the cross and symbolically at the feet of it is a silhouette of Keith and Sara. The next set of silhouettes represent the seven siblings and their spouses and below them, the symbols for the 25 cousins and their spouses. The final tier are the great-grandchildren of Keith and Sara. This group will continue to increase greatly in the coming years as they marry and add to this lineage. And the legacy will continue as the great-great-grandchildren start coming.

The T-shirt is a wonderful memory of our family reunion, but ultimately it is a testimony to God's faithfulness and a people dedicated to humbly serve Him and do His will. When we wear these T-shirts, or people receive a notecard with the image on it, we

want to be a testimony to those who ask, "Who are all these people? Is this for real?"

Yes. This is what happens when two people fall in love and seek to honor the King of kings with their lives. We pray that it continues with each of our marriages and families. I pray it will be your testimony too. If it isn't your past testimony, you can now begin a godly generation.



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Pam has attended 11 Above Rubies retreats and organized seven Above Rubies retreats in Oregon

Andrew and Pam with their children: Caleb (18), Emma (17), Ben and Isaac (14), Ruthie (11), Sarah (8), Clarity (6), Valor (4) and Eli Noble (22 months).



## BEATITUDES FOR THE HOMEMAKER

BLESSED is she whose daily tasks are a labor of love, for her willing hands and happy heart translate duty into privilege, and her labor becomes a service to God.

BLESSED is she who opens the door to welcome both stranger and friends, for gracious hospitality is a test of brotherly love.

BLESSED is she who mends toys and broken hearts, for her understanding is a balm to humanity.

BLESSED is she who cleans and scrubs, for she knows that cleanliness is one expression of godliness.

BLESSED is she whom children love, for the love of a child is more to be valued than fortune or fame.

BLESSED is she who sings while she works, for music lightens the heaviest load and brightens the dullest chore.

BLESSED is she who dusts away doubt and fear and sweeps out the cobwebs of confusions, for her faith will triumph over all adversity.

BLESSED is she who serves laughter and smiles with every meal, for her buoyancy of spirit is an aid to mental and physical digestion.

BLESSED is she who preserves the sanctity of the Christian home, for hers is a sacred trust that crowns her with dignity.

~ Source unknown.

Daniel and Allison and the family in their garden. They are so concerned with genetically modified foods, synthetic fertilizers, and preservatives that they now grow their own food. They follow the "Back to Eden" woodchip method of gardening. They love the Scripture: "But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content" (1 Timothy 6:8).



photo by hartman photography



photo by hartman photography

Daniel and Allison with their children: Makenna (16), Eden (12), Halle (10), Ethan (9), Asher (7), Levi (5), Emily Kate (3), Annalee (1).





## LIVING DEBT FREE

Many of us agree that being in debt is not a good thing. We would also agree it is not biblical. The Bible says in Romans 13:8 (ESV): “Owe no one anything, except to love each other.” It also says in Proverbs 22:7 (ESV): “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is slave of the lender.”

As a married couple, we always agreed to not go into debt. We knew the statistics on how money and debt affected marriage and were not interested in being one of the statistics. In fact, I had always been taught growing up to stay out of debt. My husband’s grandfather had instilled this principle in him as well. However, we never considered that house debt as bad debt. We figured, like most of you, that there is no way to get around being in debt with a house, at least in the first twenty to thirty years of marriage. Thus, we justified that it was not really debt. We worked hard, saved as much as we could, and tried paying a little more on our mortgage every month, but that’s about all.

Around 2002, my husband gave his brother a Dave Ramsey book for a birthday present and in 2003 his brother came down with kidney cancer. Having six children, he read the book and followed it completely, fearing he was going to die from the cancer and leave his family in debt. He gave one hundred percent to being debt free. He went from nothing paid for and one property to multiple properties paid for and being completely out of debt.

Around 2008, all the people around him that had gone into debt to expand their business before the housing crash, either lost everything and/or went out of business. He was able to take a vacation and wait for the work to pick back up. My husband and I were in awe. Following his example, we started actively paying off our home.

### Hard Work and Sacrifice

Around 2010, we were mortgage free. It wasn’t without sacrifice. I remember having no money in the bank and no work lined up for the following week. Even before we married, my husband had always been in business for himself. He owned a painting/handyman business and worked hard.

However, when you are self-employed, you are basically unemployed after each job. One time, sitting at a Waffle House eating dinner, I asked him, "How much money do we have in our bank account?" "About \$11," he replied.

"First of all, why are we eating out with having only that amount of money?" I asked. "And second, what are we going to do about it?" That night we decided to start knocking on doors. In the afternoons, I loaded up our little one in a stroller and canvassed our neighborhood for any handyman jobs. I told them my husband could do just about anything, not knowing if he had ever done it before! They didn't know that!

One time I excitedly came home exclaiming I had a tile job for him.

"I don't even do tile," he stated. "Well, you do now," I answered. Of course, he did a great job. He has a degree in mechanical engineering, so he can figure out anything.

Often we would go out as a family late at night, when everyone else in the world was in bed, and stuff flyers in newspaper slots in mailboxes. Many times we would be out from midnight until 2.00 or 3.00 in the morning, our little ones sleeping in the car.

We did whatever it took to get our business up and running. We were never the type of people to sit home and wait for work to come to us. We eventually transitioned from our handyman business into a fulltime photography business and continued to market like crazy to get our name out.

### We Paid Off Our House

We paid our house off within eleven years. We were now able to start looking for property to move to and build. Because we wanted God to bless us with more children, I desperately wanted to move to a bigger place. But we agreed to pay cash for it.

Our business was going well, especially our beach photography business. However, in July of 2010 the BP oil spill hit and our beach business completely dried up. We decided to advertise to schools in our area and quickly started getting contracts for school yearbook portraits.

In the meantime, we wrote down on a piece of paper specific details of the property we wanted and put it on the fridge. We wanted a cheap piece of property that had a dumpy, fixer-upper house

to rent out, with about three to five acres to build on. We started to pray for that piece of property, (me with little faith and my husband with complete faith we would someday find it.)

After the BP oil spill, they gave a settlement to all businesses that incurred a loss from the spill. Shortly after that, we found our property. It was exactly what we prayed for. We found it on a foreclosure list we received every midnight by email and paid cash. It was in bad shape. No HVAC, holes in the walls and ceiling, nasty carpet, and rat infested. But with the BP money and our savings, we were able to get this 3.3 acre property with the dumpy house and a 40 x 40 shop for a very good deal. In fact, at closing, a realtor offered us about \$40,000 more than the property was worth.

### Keeping to the Plan

On Christmas Eve of 2010, we moved into the 860 sq. ft. little house on the property with our six children and one on the way. Little did I know it was going to be two long years in this dumpy house.

We didn't want to spend money or take time to re-do the plumbing in the original little house so we could not flush the toilet or take a shower at the same time. Extremely challenging with a large family. Since there was only one bathroom, it meant that someone usually had to use the outhouse.

One day, when I was about eight months pregnant and using the outhouse, our momma and baby lamb (which we used for Easter pictures), all the chickens, and our two shelties suddenly pushed the door in and stared at me! At that moment, I nearly lost it and told Daniel we needed to get a loan to finish the house. It was as close to third world conditions I ever wanted to get. But, my husband faithfully kept to the plan to stay out of debt.

We finally sold our other house and used that money to build. My husband did the foundation and plumbing himself. We paid students from a Vo-tech school to do the HVAC and electricity. We did all the painting, roof, flooring, countertops, lighting and many other things ourselves. We poured concrete countertops and stained the foundation to save money. During the whole process, we

kept running our business, had our seventh baby, and kept up with everything that needed to be done. Daniel determined to spend as little as we could, or do without, so we could put all our money into the home.

We finally passed our final inspection and moved into the "big house." We were now living in an ICF (insulated concrete foam) house, with Geothermal HVAC. We even had a pool for which Daniel did most of the labor . . . all debt free. We moved in the new house right before Christmas 2012. One month later God gave us our first housewarming gift—the news that baby #8 would join us in October.

### We Never Gave Up

Just as having children is a blessing from God, being out of debt is also a blessing, though difficult and not without sacrifice. People would say to us, "Why would you choose to live in a 860 sq. ft. house with one bathroom and seven children, especially when you could afford to live in a nicer rental while building?" They didn't see our vision. If we had spent money on a rental, we wouldn't have been able to build debt free.

As I look back on this experience, I feel bad I wasn't a more supportive wife for my husband's vision. He truly had a dream and goal while all I was worried about was being inconvenienced. I am thankful he didn't succumb to my whining, but persevered in his goal. We made some of the most precious memories in that little house and wouldn't trade it for anything.

We are also teaching our children these principles, not only in action, but encouraging them to save money by owning their own businesses. My 16-year-old daughter buys and sells furniture she gets at garage sales or Craigslist. She also started a business making and selling chocolate bars (THM plan) with her two younger sisters at a local Farmer's Market. She has already saved over \$5,000 to go towards a car.

I encourage you to work more, spend less, and make a plan to get out of debt as soon as you can. It's not an easy road, but the blessings far outweigh the sacrifices.

P.S. Daniel's brother had his kidney removed and is totally free from cancer.

---

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## Encourage yourself with positive bracelets!

Even when you feel the opposite, wear them and confess the truth out loud!

<http://tinyurl.com/BraceletsEncouragement>

# THE HUMBLE ALTAR



Charles teaching God's Word to his children, Boris and Rocky. Charles and Denise (Canberra, Australia) usually do their daily Bible reading around their table, but recently purchased a tent, and of course it was fun to do Bible time in the tent!

What is the greatest deception of all time? I believe it's the deception of distractions. As fathers and mothers we must be constantly aware of this deception lest we fail to put our attention on what really matters as far as God is concerned. In the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden, Satan distracted Eve away from the tree of life toward the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, bringing about the fall of all mankind. We have been tempted by diversions from God's plan ever since. Therefore, we must teach our children to be alert, lest they also fall victim to distractions.

Jesus spoke a parable in Matthew 18:45, 46: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

I'm sure this merchant loved all the pearls he had collected over the years, but he had to let every one of them go in order to purchase the pearl of "great price." He could not have both. It had to be one or the other. We who call ourselves Christians have found the "Pearl of Great Price." We could not afford this priceless pearl, but it has been given to us by God's grace. And yet we are still distracted by all the other "pearls" this world offers. Why should this be?

Satan even dared to tempt Jesus with a similar distraction. If He had yielded, he would have aborted His mission to redeem us. Matthew 4: 8-10 (NKJV): "Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

The great pearl that Jesus sought was the redemption of all men, and it cost Him everything to accomplish it. How amazing. Jesus Christ would not entertain for even a second the temptation to receive all the glory and kingdoms of this world in exchange for worshipping Satan.

We read a wonderful passage in Exodus 20:23-26 (NKJV): "You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it."

The truth is that every altar that God approves must point to the simple, rustic, down-to-earth, rugged cross upon which the Lamb of God was crucified on the unhewn rocks of Golgotha (the place of a skull) just outside the walls of Jerusalem.

God does not want fallen man, who is so easily distracted, to divert his affections to the altars made of gold, silver, or cut stone. He wants us to focus on the precious, sacrificial life of Jesus Christ, who was slain upon that altar. He is the Pearl of Great Price whose precious blood cleanses us from all of our sins.

Throughout the centuries of the church, man has built cathedral altars of beautiful carved wood and cut stone. Ever since, we have been distracted from the simple altar where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, humbled Himself to become flesh. He offered His own body

*(continued on pg. 21)*

# We Were Wrong

“Don’t You know I could die, Lord?”

“Can’t you trust Me, no matter what? To live is Christ, to die is gain.” I sensed God speaking these words to my heart one night as I sat at the dining room table with my Bible and a cup of hot tea, arguing with the Lord about having more children.

I had two beautiful children; a five-year-old son and two-year-old daughter. My husband, Harold, and I had been using Natural Family Planning to avoid conceiving another child. We felt it was right to do this because after the birth of our daughter my midwife advised us to never have children again. With both my husband and I being nurses, we knew without a doubt that I would put my health on the line if I became pregnant again.

I developed Pregnancy Induced Hypertension (PIH) with my first and second pregnancies. With my second pregnancy my kidneys, liver, and neurological systems became affected and my blood pressure did not return to normal until months after my daughter was born. We decided not to have any more children. We felt this was the right decision for surely God would not want me to endanger my life. God would certainly want us to use our medical knowledge to make a wise and responsible decision to guard my life and health. We were wrong!

God began to convict our hearts, each of us separately. I didn’t know that God was speaking to Harold’s heart just as He was speaking to mine. Both of us were hearing the same thing: “Trust Me with the children I have for you.”

I argued long and hard with the Lord, assuming He would never want me to risk my life. I forgot that my Savior was the one who said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). He also said: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it”



Harold and Grace with their children: Kurt (16), Caroline (13), Julia (9), Corin (6), Haddie (5), Adelina (3), and Brogal (1).

(Mark 8:35). My debating and pleading with the Lord culminated that night when He clearly spoke to my heart and asked me to trust Him—no matter what. I could no longer deny the Lord was calling me to trust Him with the children He had for us, even if it meant I needed to lay down my life for the child He would give.

I finally worked up the courage to speak to Harold. I was amazed to hear that he felt God speaking to his heart saying, “If I took Grace from this earth, would I not be sufficient for you and the children?” God’s voice and instruction were clear. Now it was only a matter of obedience or disobedience. How could we refuse to obey the One who had been so good to us; who had given us life, breath, and eternal hope. With fear and trembling we trusted our God.

Three months later a baby was on the way.

PIH is a condition that develops in the third trimester of pregnancy. My body would show signs at 32 weeks into the pregnancy. We waited with no assurance of any particular outcome—only a call to trust. Would I hold a baby in my arms or would I be in my Heavenly Father’s eternal arms?

I remember driving home from my 32 week prenatal appointment. I had been sure I would see a rise in my blood pressure and protein in my urine at this visit. To my surprise everything

was fine. My blood pressure and urinalysis were normal and the baby and I were doing great. As I drove home a hymn played, “Ponder anew what the Almighty can do, if with His love He befriend thee.” I wept and cried most of the long drive home. I was overwhelmed by God’s grace and power and by what He was doing.

On a beautiful spring day with the sun shining, praise music playing, and the cool breeze blowing through the palms, my sisters gathered around the Jacuzzi tub in our backyard as Julia Adelle Puerto was placed in my arms by my own dear mother, who was also my midwife. My blood pressure remained normal throughout my pregnancy, birth, and post-partum.

Julia means “guided by faith” and Adelle means “under God’s guidance.” We came to this moment by faith and God’s guidance and were privileged to behold a miracle—a miracle of love and grace from a generous and patient Almighty God.

I remember the tears of wonder and joy as I beheld my beautiful newborn daughter. I said to the Lord, “I can’t believe You had to talk me into this.” Never again has the Lord had to talk us into the children He has for us. We have seven precious children now and hope the Lord is not done blessing us yet. We are so thankful for all God has

done for us.

Many times I hear women say, “I can’t have any more children because . . .” and then they mention some health issue ranging from a bad back or hemorrhoids to diabetes or worse. I can testify that there is never a reason why we can’t trust the Lord for the children He has for us. He gives us no guarantees of perfect health or freedom from pain or suffering, but He promises to be with us. He will never leave us or forsake us. He uses all things for our ultimate good and for His glory. In the light of eternity, even if we end up laying down our physical lives on this earth for our children, we lose nothing and gain everything—for to live is Christ and to die is gain.

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## A Mother’s Creed

I am not languishing. I am not deceived. I have a vision. I know who I am and who God created me to be. I know my purpose. I am walking in the perfect will of God. I know it’s not easy, but I’ve counted the cost. My goal is set. How could my career be easy when I am influencing a nation for God, generations to come—and eternity? How can it be easy when I am destroying the plans of the devil? Such is the power of my God-mandated career, the highest calling ever given to women—motherhood. I have embraced my calling. I am not intimidated by my antagonists. I will not be moved. My heart is fixed. I may be hidden in my home, but look out world! I am sharpening my arrows. I am getting them ready to shoot forth and destroy the adversary. In the power and anointing of God, I am advancing God’s Kingdom.

~ NANCY CAMPBELL

## THE HUMBLE ALTAR *(continued from page19)*

and blood to redeem us from the world, the flesh, and the devil. How sacrilegious that we should build our altars of cut stones and even dare to place a cross on top. What a distraction from the humble cross of Christ. And yet many Christian parents have given their children’s entire spiritual education over to the nice-looking altars of the church.

I have been to many cathedrals, especially in Europe, and have come away thinking of the magnificence of what man has created. What grandeur. What brilliant architecture. I have never felt drawn to Christ and His down-to-earth humility in the glory of what man’s hands created. Neither am I drawn to Christ by the greatness of the crowd, the brilliance of the human mind, or the eloquence of the gifted speaker who draws attention to himself. To be really honest, we have to conclude that it’s all pretty much a distraction from the humble cross of Christ.

God says that it is in the place where the altar is made of earth and uncut stone that He makes His presence known. This is where He promises: “I WILL COME TO YOU, AND I WILL BLESS YOU” (Exodus 20:24). Jesus Christ wants to make His presence known to us in our homes every day, not only once per week.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:20: “For where

two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

As parents, we must teach our children the supreme importance of family worship/devotions around our humble family tables where we gather as living, uncut stones. This is where we daily read a portion of God’s Word, morning and evening if possible. This is where we humbly pray—father, mother, and all the children joining together in heartfelt prayers, and concluding with a song of worship.

1 Peter 2:5 (NKJB): “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” The family altar in our home is not a place of human excellence or gifted entertainment, but where we can place all our affections on Christ. The family altar is our number one church. All else is secondary.

I encourage you to take your family to regular church services. This is mandatory (Hebrews 10:25). However, a once a week church service should not be a substitute for the daily morning and evening devotions we enjoy together around our humble tables.

In these days of deception and many distractions we must provide our families with as much of God’s Word and prayer as

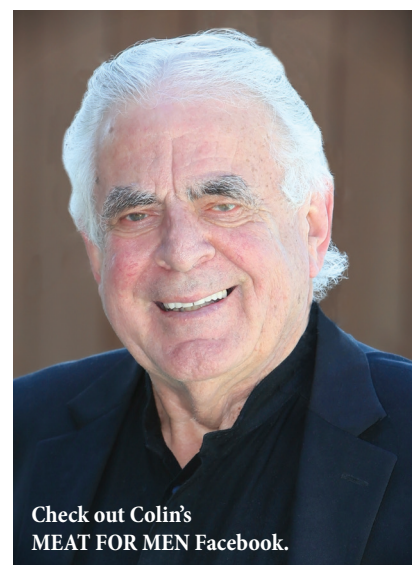
possible. This is the only way we can withstand all the distractions that continually compete for our attention.

Isaiah 66:1, 2 (NKJV): “Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? . . . But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.’”

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**COLIN CAMPBELL**

Primm Springs, Tennessee, USA



Check out Colin’s  
MEAT FOR MEN Facebook.

# THE ROMAN ROAD TO SALVATION FOR YOUR FAMILY

The following Scriptures are known as the “Roman Road to Salvation.” They are Scriptures from the book of Romans which show God’s wondrous way of salvation. It is good to know these Scriptures. It is most important that our children know these Scriptures. It shows them the way to experience salvation through Jesus Christ. It shows them how to lead another person to Christ.

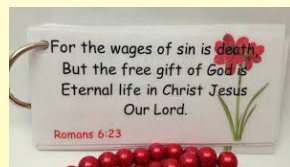
It is so sad that many Christians today do not even know Scriptures that can help lead someone to Christ. When I talk to young people I find that many of them don’t know these Scriptures, and these are young people who have been brought up in homeschooling families. Don’t let this be the testimony of your children.

I will list the Scriptures here for you. I encourage you to read and talk about them with your children. If they have not yet received Jesus Christ into their lives as their Lord and Savior, encourage them to do this. If they are already born again, they need to not only know about, but to memorize these Scriptures so they are equipped to lead another person to Jesus.

You may even like to do a project with your family and make cards, either typing or writing the following Scriptures on them. You can add designs or pictures, laminate them, and put each one on a key ring or binding ring. Each child can then have his own to help in memorization and to share with others.

You may also find it a wonderful blessing to have extra key ring cards for yourself to keep in your purse and take wherever you go. As you meet people and talk to them, you will have them ready to give.

Here are the Roman Road Scriptures. I have printed them from the King James Version, but you could use the translation you usually read.



## 1. All have sinned

We have all sinned and therefore fall short of God’s standard.

**Romans 3:10:** “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.”

**Romans 3:23:** “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

**Romans 5:12:** “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

## 2. There is a penalty for sin

If we remain in our sin, we have the condemnation of death upon us, but if we repent and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we receive eternal life.

**Romans 6:23:** “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

## 3. Christ died for us

Even though we are sinners, God loves us and sent His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die in our place and take the punishment of our sin.

**Romans 5:8:** “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

## 4. Call upon the Lord

We must call upon the Lord. God promises that when we call upon the name of the Lord we will be saved. There is no other name through which we can receive salvation.

**Romans 10:13:** “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

## 5. We must believe and confess

We must believe in our hearts that Jesus died and shed His spotless blood, was buried, and rose again for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), but we must also confess out loud with our mouth that He is Lord and Savior.

**Romans 10: 9, 10:** “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

## 6. It’s a faith walk

We receive God’s salvation by faith. When we are saved, we keep walking by faith, which grows stronger as we read God’s Word every day.

**Romans 10:17:** “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

If you have never received Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God into your life and been born again, or if your children are not yet born again, here is a prayer to pray:

“Dear Father, I know that I have sinned and deserve the punishment of my sin, which is death. But I thank You that You died in my place, and took my sin upon Yourself as You died upon the cross and poured out Your blood. Please forgive me for my sin and cleanse me with Your precious blood. I thank You that You died, were buried, and rose again for me. I ask You to come into my life and to be Lord of my life. I confess aloud right now: JESUS CHRIST IS LORD AND SAVIOR OF MY LIFE. Amen.”

When you are born again into God’s family, you are a new baby in Christ. A baby only grows by drinking milk. The more you feed from God’s Word the more you will grow strong in your faith and in your walk with God. Read God’s Word daily.

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NANCY CAMPBELL

# MESSY BUT MIRACULOUS

My husband and I have been married for twenty years and have four adopted African-American children. After many surgeries due to endometriosis, we started the adoption process. Our first private adoption, our son, Joshua, was born December 21, 1996. He was born in another state and we anxiously awaited that phone call, but our hopes were dashed as his birth mother changed her mind. God took us through that roller coaster, but after five weeks she changed her mind again and he was placed in our arms.

Twenty two months later, our second son, Nate, came into our lives at five months old. He was part of the foster care system and struggled with attachment reactive disorder (RAD) until five years old. God's grace is the only way we were able to get through those years. Through those dark days, God called us to homeschool. The furthest thing from my mind was "being with that child" all day, but God changed my heart and showed me that's exactly what he needed.

Just over two years later, the Department of Family Services called us about a little special needs girl who needed a home. Esther was 22 months at that time and had/had fetal alcohol syndrome and failure to thrive. After one year of being our daughter, tests ruled out Autism, and they discovered she had ACC (Agensis of the Corpus Callosum). The Corpus Callosum holds 500,000,000 connectors to both hemispheres of the brain, consequently she should be in a wheelchair, not walking or talking. However, she appears normal to those who don't know her well. She struggles mostly with developmental/schooling delays and some social issues, but she is a miracle. Love is an amazing thing!

For some time, I was overwhelmed with caring for three young children. There were many days of therapies and struggling to seemingly survive the emotional struggles. Little did we know

that this would be a small part of the rest of our story.

In 2005, we received a phone call from a local pregnancy center about a special needs ten-month-old boy. He had kidney failure, crossed eyes, and severe developmental delay and was like a newborn. We prayed about it and felt God's leading.

We completed our home study in two weeks and traveled two hours to get him. The adoption laws in the state we live allow for the birth mother to change her mind within three days if the child is



David and Sarah with their children: Joshua (18), Nate (16 1/2), Esther (16), and Hannah (9).

over six months old. On the third day, we received a call from our attorney stating the unthinkable. She had changed her mind. This was tough. My husband rose to the occasion and the next morning met our attorney and the birth mother at the train depot. They exchanged signatures for our precious Elisha to be handed over. We had grown to love him as our own.

I am grateful my husband used that opportunity to proclaim Jesus to Elisha's birth mom. Two weeks' later we received a phone call from a deputy stating, "There is an investigation into a little boy's death." Elisha had passed away in her care. I struggled with anger, but eventually God helped me to see that my sweet baby is with the Him.

The good news was that having Elisha in our home opened our hearts up to adoption again. After two years of foster care in our home, Hannah became our own. She was a crack baby with lots of

hurts, but we are thankful for the privilege of raising her.

Adoption is a beautiful thing, but it is also difficult. Our boys hit the teen years with rejection and identity issues. Anger became out of control. We chose for our oldest to attend a Christian boarding school for a few years to protect him from himself. These were very difficult years. The ache in our hearts, and also his, was so painful.

Hannah struggles with severe ADHD and outbursts of anger. Parenting adopted children brings a whole new set of issues.

There are hurting and open wounds that take years to work through . . . until adulthood.

We have experienced the daily struggles of raising adopted children. It can be a lonely place, as many people don't understand the issues adoptive parents face. We have faced judgment on our parenting as well as struggled with fear of man and "What do people think?," which we still fight daily.

Many times, adoption is viewed through rose-colored glasses. It is very messy at times, but it is the brightest light we can shine that exemplifies the Gospel. Isn't this the picture Christ gives about our relationship with Him? Our parenting of these special children has been greatly affected by God's grace, for how often do we spurn God's grace and parenting of us? How often do we choose defiance and rebellion? Yet He keeps pursuing us. He keeps showering us with His love. He never lets go or gives up on us.

Right now, my husband and I are reading a new book entitled, "After They Are Yours: *The Grace and Grit of Adoption*" by Brian Borgman. I highly suggest this resource to other adoptive families who need encouragement and counsel.

**SARAH PUEBLA**  
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Michelle and her son, Isaiah.



## MEDICAL KIDNAPPING

“We are taught that hospitals are safe, that doctors are safe, and DCFS (Department of Children & Family Services) intervenes when intervention is needed. So when we accept the fact that this is really happening, we are accepting that we are not safe and our children are not safe.” These are the words of Michelle Rider, a 34 year-old mother who was charged with medical abuse on April 14, 2014 for requesting a transfer to another hospital for her critically ill teenaged son. She’s been fighting the state of Illinois for his custody and his life ever since.

If you’re like me, the first thought that comes to mind is that there must be more to the story. After all, doesn’t the Department of Social Services have rules and laws they have to follow? They can’t just take children away for no good reason. Right?

Sadly, that thought is based in principle and hope, not completely in today’s reality. Trusting in that thought is a defense mechanism, because if it’s not true, then what Michelle said about being safe is true.

Michelle’s son, Isaiah, was born with the genetic condition called Neurofibromatosis Type 1, also known as NF1. It is a condition that produces pain and tumors on his nerves, in his

abdomen, and on his spine. Because of this condition, what began as a typical broken leg at age four, led to a life of in-and-out of hospitals undergoing and recovering from annual surgeries. All of which left Isaiah with a deformed limb and ultimately an amputation.

Michelle, a registered nurse by profession, sought a specialist to remove the tumors causing Isaiah’s suffering and found Dr. McKay McKinnon. Together they decided to travel from their home state of Missouri to Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago for the surgery.

While still on the operating table, Isaiah’s leg, the one that had been amputated the year before, began to convulse. The first time this occurred, was when the leg was amputated. This violent, uncontrolled trembling produces excruciating pain that lasts for weeks on end.

When it happened the first time, just shortly after the amputation, Isaiah was transferred to Boston Children’s Hospital. His doctor’s managed to stop the pain, but failed to produce a diagnosis. This time around, a week into his stay at the Chicago hospital, he was admitted into the ICU for pain management of the convulsive stump.

After two weeks of watching her son suffer, it was clear to Michelle that Isaiah’s doctors had no idea how to make the excruciating tremors stop. Nor did they understand what was causing it. Michelle requested a transfer to the only hospital that had any success relieving his pain. She wanted to take him back to Boston Children’s Hospital.

As Michelle readied herself to leave the Ronald McDonald House where she stayed each night, Isaiah begged his mom, by phone, to hurry. He needed her. He missed her. She knew he was suffering and wanted to get back to him. Just before she boarded the transport shuttle back to the hospital she received another call. It was a social worker eager to know when she would arrive.

This same anxious agent of the state met Michelle at the hospital entrance. She stood smiling. She was chipper and pleasant, making polite small talk. She asked about Michelle’s night’s sleep, then told Michelle, “I have someone that wants to meet with you.”

The social worker explained that the woman waiting to meet her was Dr. Zena Leah Harris, the director of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). Instead of going to Isaiah’s room as Michelle expected, the new doctor led her away and into another area of the hospital.

Michelle had no idea what was going on as Dr. Harris and two social workers came up beside her. All the pleasantries vanished as they stepped into a small room and the new doctor announced, “We’re taking your son for 48 hours.” Then Dr. Harris informed Michelle, “I will be making medical decisions for your son going forward.”

“I will never forget those words,” Michelle said. Shocked and confused, Michelle asked why. She was told it was for Medical Child Abuse. Still not comprehending what was happening, she asked, “What’s that?”

“Google it,” the doctor said coldly.

The very same shuttle that brought Michelle to the hospital waited for her outside with instructions to take her back to Ronald McDonald House. However, before she was allowed



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to leave, they stripped her of her hospital band. They stood together and waited for her to stop sobbing before taking her into the public lobby.

Within hours the hospital evicted her from the Ronald McDonald House. At that point, all communication with Boston Children's Hospital ceased. They no longer spoke to her about helping her son. She was completely severed from her child's care, and Isaiah from her protection—at the very moment he needed, and wanted, her the most.

The state of Illinois, with the blessing of the hospital that was supposed to help them, isolated Isaiah from his family and left him to suffer alone in a strange city. After 30 days in ICU at Lurie Children's Hospital, they sent him to another hospital for two weeks until DCFS sent him into a foster home in the south side of Chicago.

Although Isaiah is now in the custody of his maternal grandparents, he remains in the clutches of the state of Illinois. While in foster care, Isaiah told his mother he was raped at gunpoint. The details of that

traumatizing ordeal surfaced when the involuntary violent shaking returned yet once again. The state of Illinois extradited him from his grandparents' home in Missouri, back to Illinois for treatment.

You would think it couldn't get any worse. However, upon returning to an Illinois hospital Isaiah was isolated from visitors. No family, other than his grandmother, or church clergy was allowed. Only a Chaplin employed by the state was permitted to comfort or pray with him. There he stayed, in pain, alone, heavily medicated and banded with two electronic tracking devices, as if he had committed a crime.

Attorney for the family, Randy Kretchmar, called it an "incredible human rights violation." He has publicly stated, "The State's case is complicated by a lack of any evidence whatsoever and that Michelle actually did anything to cause Isaiah's medical condition, which all parties acknowledge to be a real, chronic genetic disorder."

Michelle and Isaiah's story is not unique. In fact, these cases have

become so common the professionals involved in the act affectionately nicknamed it the "parent-ectomy." The mothers and fathers who have had their sick children ripped from their arms have a different name for it: Medical Kidnapping.

Please pray for Michelle and Isaiah Rider. You can support and follow them on their Facebook page: Team Isaiah.

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**RHONDA ROBINSON**  
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Update: On March 11, 2015, 17-year-old Isaiah Rider, a Missouri resident, was made a permanent ward of the state of Illinois.

Rhonda and her husband, Mike, live in Columbia, TN. After raising nine children, they're now facing the prospect of an empty nest. As grandmother to 25 grandchildren Rhonda's passion for the stability and security of the next generation is poured into her weekly columns and cultural analysis. For more information on this and other hard cultural issues impacting the family visit [www.RhondaRobinson.me](http://www.RhondaRobinson.me).



# Labor Pain

**M**ost women dread the pain of childbirth. However, pain is useful to human beings and all living creatures, alerting them to what is going on inside and outside. Pain can be physical or emotional, but this article will primarily explore physical pain in childbirth.

Labor pains feel like menstrual cramps that come intermittently (unlike menstrual pain which usually lasts a few days continually). These pains gradually become stronger and more intense until complete dilation. When the cervix is fully pulled over the baby's head, the baby is pushed down onto the pelvic floor and the mother feels an overwhelming desire to push out the baby. The baby's head then presses against internal pain sensors, numbing them. Therefore, most women find that pushing the baby out (delivery) is less painful than reaching full dilation of the opening of the womb (labor).

Pain in childbirth has several benefits. The pain is signal to the woman that labor has begun. Labor pains are different than Braxton Hicks contractions, which are longer, painless tightenings of the uterus during pregnancy. When the contractions become like menstrual cramps, the woman realizes she is in labor and goes to the place she has prepared to labor and give birth. Although the husband cannot do much, his gentle, supportive presence is invaluable to his wife. She finds comfort in knowing that he witnesses the pain she endures by the grace of God in order to bring their child into the world. Her struggle and pain

cements the marriage bond, while at the same time, making the child even more precious to both of them.

Besides having your husband and other loved ones with you at the birth, a midwife is a great resource. A knowledgeable, experienced midwife will give you encouragement, undivided attention, comfort, companionship, and help you every step of the way. After all, the midwife is the normal childbirth expert. Praying for God's help in the childbearing is essential since He designed the process.

Warm water is very comforting and soothing. When choosing a water birth, it is usually best for the mother to wait until she is dilated at least six centimeters before she gets in the tub. She can save the tub as her "secret weapon" to get through the rest of the labor, using her own tub and shower until then.

Before water birth became popular, people used warm compresses boiled in a pot or crock pot. They used thick rubber gloves to wring them out, then waved them in the air to cool them slightly before placing them on the mother's back or belly. Using a birth tub saves people from having to do all that wringing. It is called the "Aquadural" because the warm water and buoyancy is so soothing. The pressure of the water also helps prevent tearing of the mother's outlet. Whether a mother merely labors in the tub or actually has a water birth, it is a great, natural way to reduce labor pains.

When the entire cervix is pulled over the baby's head, it is time to start pushing out the baby. The average

pushing time is two hours for the first baby and about fifteen minutes for subsequent babies. Try for two to three long steady pushes with each contraction.

Giving birth to a baby is painful, hard work. It can be like a marathon, but it is do-able. God is faithful to answer our prayers and to help us to endure the birth for which He has equipped us. Jesus said: "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for the joy that a man is born into the world" (John 16:21). Pain turns us to God in faith and prayer.

## Hadassah's Birth

Sometimes the best way to explain how to help someone with the pain of labor is to give a real life example. Hadassah's birth is a description of one way of dealing with the pain of childbirth. God's Word was the key to her success. In one of our last meetings together, I shared with Hadassah my morning Bible gleanings and of how Moses acted in the place of God to Aaron when he consecrated him as priest (Leviticus 8:7-12). Aaron presented his body "as a living sacrifice," and Moses did all the dressing and anointing.

When I shared this, Hadassah's eyes lit up with comprehension. Suddenly, she realized how she could labor. She could offer her body to God as a living sacrifice knowing that He would perform all the work in her to bring forth her baby. This realization helped

her to confidently relax her body and to trust God to cause her labor to progress well. She decided to accept the contractions as they came and not fight against them.

I can still picture her in her dark bathroom, sitting in a relaxed way on the toilet, a pillow and a heating pad behind her back, palms turned up, her face peaceful, accepting every wave as it came over her.

“Nice job!” “Good relaxing!” I cheerfully ventured between contractions. I was happy to massage her neck a little to soothe and comfort her and then to straighten her tilted head by holding a dry washcloth to her forehead as I gently cradled her head between my hands.

Soon she gave out a little squeal, “The baby is coming!” Her husband, having just washed his hands and scrubbed his nails, was ready to catch. I gave him the dry washcloth and directed him to support her perineum. It was a tight squeeze for his large hand to get between the toilet seat and where it needed to be, but he did it. Pretty soon the baby’s head was out, “born in the caul” (which means the amniotic sac doesn’t break during the birth).

At this point, I poked a little hole in the bag, peeling the membranes off the baby’s face. I noticed light meconium and suctioned the baby’s mouth and nose well. Then I directed the parents to continue holding the baby’s head down till any remaining meconium and stained amniotic fluid drained out. The coughing and sneezing of the baby assisted the process.

Shortly after the birth, Hadassah gave a little push and the placenta plopped into the toilet, but I held onto the cord, fished the placenta out, and placed it in the bowl my assistant handed me. We turned off the fan, wiped off the baby, and wrapped him in warm blankets. After determining that no stitches were needed and her husband gave thanks to the Lord, we joyfully continued helping mother and baby to recover from the miraculous event. To God be the glory once again!

There is so much to learn from real stories of other mothers. I have written three books on Christian Natural



Chuck and Marianne are blessed with three children: Alexandra, Luke, and Grace. Marianne has served as a midwife for over 30 years. She is also a lover of God’s Word and has read through the Bible more than 10 times. She not only reads it personally each day, but also reads it to her husband, to her son, and to her 16-year-old Grace who has Down syndrome. Marianne has attended 18 Above Rubies retreats in San Diego—she is a faithful Above Rubies supporter.

Childbirth, which include over 70 real life birth stories of how mothers have overcome their obstacles. Every birth is different and has something to teach us. I also provide information on many aspects of childbirth including pain management, cord management, emergency childbirth instruction for husbands, post delivery information, and how to avoid hemorrhaging after birth.

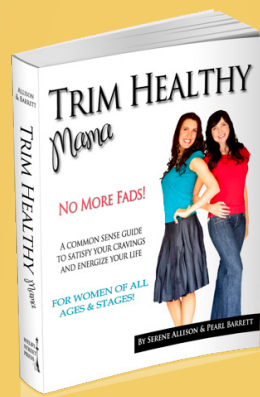
My goal is to encourage Christians to seek God in childbearing and to help them know what to expect when “expecting.” They are great resources for those desiring a Christ-centered birth, including doulas, and midwives. You are welcome to go to my webpage to order these books.

**MARIANNE MANLEY**  
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www.christianmidwife.com  
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### 5 - 7 JUNE, ALBERTA, CANADA

LADIES RETREAT at Riverside Bible Camp, Dixonville (20 min. from Peace River \* closest city for flights is Grand Prairie).

Contact: Mae Renfroe \* Ph: 780-836-2055 \* [maerenfroe@yahoo.ca](mailto:maerenfroe@yahoo.ca)

Or Ruth Unger \* Ph: 780 928-3931 \* [ruthunger57@gmail.com](mailto:ruthunger57@gmail.com)

Website: [www.albertarubiesretreat.weebly.com](http://www.albertarubiesretreat.weebly.com)

### 10 - 12 JULY, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA (NEVADA/SOUTH LAKE TAHOE)

FAMILY AND LADIES RETREAT at Mountain Meadows Bible Camp, Redding, CA (Shasta County, near Mt. Lassen)

Contact: Connie Lewis \* 530-776-5749 \* [connielewis72@yahoo.com](mailto:connielewis72@yahoo.com)

Or Jennifer Bidaureta \* 530-356-3153 \* [jbid@charter.net](mailto:jbid@charter.net)

### 21 - 23 AUGUST, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FAMILY AND LADIES RETREAT

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### 23 - 25 OCTOBER, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA

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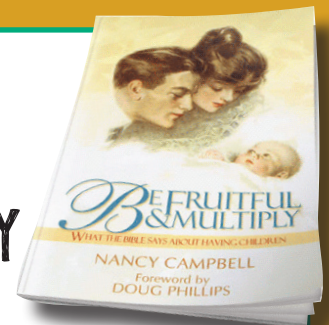
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# 91

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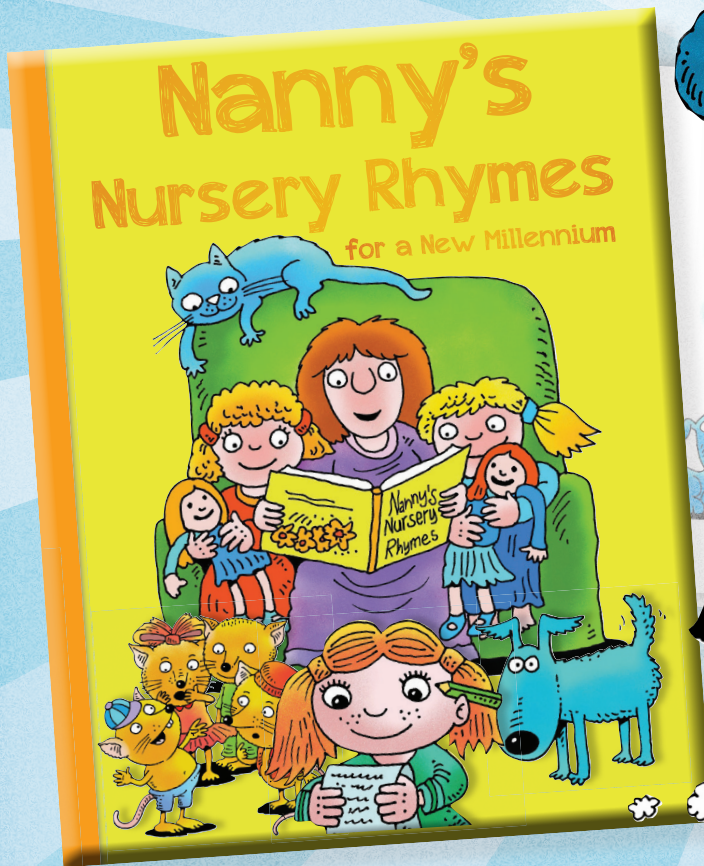


Saunya Munro with little Miriana

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# Australian/Papua New Guinea & New Zealand/ South Pacific News *Report*

VAL: In February I turned three score year and ten (70). The birth date fell on a Saturday and my eldest granddaughter, Calais, and I shared our birthday at her Bridal Shower, prior to her wedding in March. I thought it was a bit sad that everyone was focused on her, but of course I was extremely happy for her.

HEATHER: Natalie, Bill and I had been planning it for months. Evan and I booked our flights from New Zealand to the Gold Coast and arrived the night before. Natalie, (Val's daughter) picked us up from the airport and hid us overnight at Calais' place. Some people hate surprises, but Val loves them.

VAL: Bill and I had a little shopping to do before the Bridal Shower. As we drove out the family stopped us and sang "Happy Birthday" to me. Calais had arrived and because of the tinted windows I didn't see anyone else in her car. Next thing the car door flung open and out stepped my sister, followed by her husband, Evan. What an amazing surprise.

HEATHER: The look on Val's face was worth bottling. We clung together, almost crying. Even though we are sisters, we are also best friends. I told her the day was for us to enjoy together and asked what she wanted to do with it. She believed me! She made many suggestions, none of which we planned to carry out. With the help of Jessica and Kaylah, two of Val's granddaughters, we took her for a ride in Kaylah's convertible with the hood down and then for a shoulder massage.

VAL: At this stage, all I wanted was a "Nana Nap." We had already been to a Bridal Shower and coupled with the excitement of Heather being here, it was proving a bit tiring for me. Ladies, if you ever feel like I did and have more to do in the day, then I fully recommend a massage, if you can manage it. I came out fully recharged and ready for more. As we drove up the drive I was further surprised by all the parked cars, canopies, balloons, and all my beautiful family and friends. I am so wonderfully loved and blessed.

HEATHER: The "Nana Nap" was postponed till later in the night, but we enjoyed the day to the max. Val has worked tirelessly for over 37 years for Above Rubies, and this was just a small token of our love and appreciation for all that she has meant to us. Everyone, except Val, knew about the day of surprises of joy and a blessing. We all loved the day too and would have loved to have included each one of you who receive Above Rubies. However that would have proved impossible. At least we can share it with you so you can hopefully feel included.

VAL: Oh yes, there was one more BIG surprise. Paige informed me she is having another baby! By the end of the year I will have two more great-grandbabies.

On the Monday my precious friend of 57 years came to visit me. Pat Larkin (nee Lane) and I went to school together and have kept in touch all these years. When I went home from school and told my parents all about my new friend, Patty Lane, my father suggested I ask her if her father's name was Peter? It was, and the stories started of how our dads also went to school together. Sometimes this world is smaller than we think.

Nancy sent a Birthday message to me from Tennessee. It took me a few seconds to work out who it was from as Natalie read it out. She was extremely gracious. My tank is overflowing with joy. Thank you everyone. I love co-working with everyone in Above Rubies!

HEATHER: As I write this, I have been away from New Zealand for nearly two weeks. It has been a very enjoyable time with a flight up to Mackay to visit with our two wonderful friends, Blane and Janet Goodwin (ex Trustees of Above Rubies and ex Pastors in Mt. Maunganui). They still support Above Rubies here in Australia.

Before we came over, I dreaded the heat that would meet us over here, being February, but for all our trip the weather has not been too hot. I give thanks to the Lord for going before and giving me the desires of my heart.

P.S. By the way, send donations to Above Rubies anyway you like except Visa.

With love from your Above Rubies pals,  
**HEATHER JONES** (New Zealand) and  
**VAL STARES** (Australia)







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Nursery Rhymes  
for a New Millennium**

**Over  
60 Rhymes**

**PLEASE, GOD!**  
"When will I have another sister or brother?"  
"Keep asking God," replied my mother.  
"God, will you please bless mommy and dad,  
And give us a baby to make us all glad?"

**I'M A WARRIOR**  
I'm going for a walk outside in the sun,  
I've got my sword and I've got my gun,  
I'll protect myself from  
any snake.

**I LOVE SPAGHETTI**  
"Jason likes hotdogs, Laura likes fries,  
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But I love spaghetti. MORE, MOMMY, PLEASE!"

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