

Strengthening Families Across the World

ABOVE RUBIES

ISSUE: Ninety-two

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www.aboverubies.org

From *Our* Home *to* Yours



With our youngest daughter, Mercy, at Jack and Rashida's wedding. Mercy was one of the six bridesmaids.

I love weddings. God loves them too. When our youngest biological daughter, Serene, was married, I felt very sad. Not because of the wedding—it was the most wonderful celebration imaginable—but there were no more weddings to celebrate! One person wrote in Serene and Sam's wedding book: "Damp stone walls, high arches, bagpipe echoes, tin whistles reverberate. The bridal troupe—this is Shakespeare! Oh yeah. A knight in shining armor. A damsel at the altar. The vows spoken. The rings exchanged. The special kiss. Off go the 140 golden helium balloons. Let the jousting begin. It's a marvelous day in the kingdom. The entourage assembles for the feasting banquet by lamplight. Knaves and vassals serve roasted meat and goblets of juice. Hereby approved and witnessed!"

Now the years have gone by and we are now enjoying a new season of weddings again—and there will be more than ever. We have far more grandchildren than children!

Evangeline and Howard's daughter, Rashida, married Jack Simpson on August 8th. And Stephen (Evangeline's twin) and Simone's daughter, Gabrielle, married Greg Warden on December 9th. They are now living in Australia while Greg works on permanent entrance into the USA.

Rashida had a delightful wedding with six bridesmaids and nine flower girls—she has so many little cousins. However, on the wedding day, a tenth flower girl came from nowhere, dancing down the aisle and throwing rose petals over everyone. We didn't even get a hint at the rehearsal the night before! Who was it and where did she come from? It was Evangeline, the 50 year-old mother of the bride, also in her white flower girl

dress. There is no one like our Vange to do something different!

And before this magazine gets to you we'll celebrate another wedding. This time it is Serene's firstborn son, Arden, who will marry Esther on February 20th. Esther came from Canada to be one of our Above Rubies helpers. Arden took one look at her and decided she would be his wife for life! Esther had read Above Rubies from a little girl and knew the names of everyone in the family before she came. Although she never thought of marriage, she had looked at pictures of Arden from a young child growing up! God had it all planned and there's no looking back!

Jeremiah 33:11 tells us that when God's blessing is upon a nation, it is filled with "the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride." Isaiah 62:5 also talks about the joy of weddings: "For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

Glorious wedding celebrations, when a virgin daughter marries a young man of God, are proof of God's blessing upon the nation. When weddings are no longer celebrated, we know it is God's judgment. Read these Scriptures: Jeremiah 7:34; 16:9; and 25:9-11.

Not to be outdone with weddings, we look forward to more babies coming this year. Jack and Rashida were blessed with a honeymoon conception and they are "over the moon" as they look forward to this precious baby coming. A recent ultrasound revealed their baby is in the 95th percentile for femoral and humoral length at this

point in the gestational period. This baby has long arms and long legs! I guess that won't be too out-of-the-ordinary in this family. Already we have many grandsons who have grown to well over 6' and many more to come. We're a land of giants!

The grandbabies are arriving May, June, and July. Rashida's baby is due in May. Christiana (Serene and Sam's daughter-in-law) is due in June; and Serene and Sam's oldest daughter, Selah is due in July.

And . . . just as we go to print, we received the exciting news that Rocky and Monique are expecting their fifth baby in early October. They have been longing and waiting for this miracle. Do you know Rocky and Monique? Rocky is our third son and Monique is the one who drew the amazing illustrations for *Trim Healthy Mama*. She also designed the BLESSED TEES. In fact, she informed everyone of the exciting news by posting a picture of herself in one of the BLESSED T-shirts on Facebook.

Monique was in love with Rocky when Serene and her were best friends as young children on the Gold Coast of Australia where we all lived at that time.



Evangeline, the surprise flower girl.

On one hand, we rejoice with weddings and babies coming. This is all part of God's kingdom, His plan, and the way He wants us to live. On the other hand, there are many who don't want to live according to God's kingdom. They choose an opposite plan to the one God revealed at the very beginning of time (Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:22-24; 3:20) and do not understand the blessing of children.

As families who live in the midst of a deceived culture, we must be careful that our children do not become deceived by the liberal agenda all around them. We must, faithfully and daily, impart God's Word and His truths to them. Our children must know more than a few Bible verses; they must truly know and understand the ways of God.

Consequently, it is our responsibility to know the educators of our children and what they are being taught. Unfortunately, many parents are unaware of the humanist agenda which undergirds our public education system. Let's read a couple of

statements (we could fill this magazine with more) of the humanists' plans:

Secular humanist, P. Blanchard writes in *Three Cheers for Our Secular State*: "I think that the most important factor moving us toward a secular society has been the educational factor. Our schools may not teach Johnny how to read properly, but the fact that Johnny is in school until he is sixteen tends toward the elimination of religious superstition. The average American child now acquires a high school education, and this militates against Adam and Eve and all other myths of alleged history."

~ The Humanist

Humanism: A New Religion: "Education is thus a most powerful ally of humanism. What can a theistic Sunday school's meeting for an hour once a week and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of the five-day program of humanistic teaching?"

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During the wedding ceremony (as you can see, it was an outside wedding). My husband, Colin had the privilege of marrying our children, and now he is marrying the grandchildren.



Arden and Esther's engagement



Nancy and Esther at her Bridal Shower.



Greg and Gaby

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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: Jack and Rashida Simpson on their wedding day. Photo by Lyndsie Mae Worley * lyndsiewphotography@outlook.com



A Father's Perspective



Ethan and Deb with their children: Cormac (10), Boden (8), Adelia (7), Hagan (5), Roric (3), and Torian.

Our son, Torian, was born June 4th, 2014 with a very serious health condition. He had countless seizures throughout his life, sometimes as many as 300 or more in a single day. More often than not, with each seizure, he would stop breathing and turn blue. He did this from the day he was born until the day he died, 15 months later.

He was almost completely motionless, rarely moved his arms or legs, and when he did it was usually because of another seizure. His eyes did not track and it seemed he looked right through you. The doctors were unsure if he could see at all. He was almost completely deaf in both ears. He did not communicate as healthy babies do, not even with facial expressions. He almost never cried, but when he did we were thrilled just to hear him make noise.

He did not reach out for things, never learned to crawl, and couldn't even lift his head from his pillow. He had extreme difficulty swallowing his own saliva and needed to be suctioned with a suction machine on a regular basis, especially when he got sick (which happened fairly frequently). He

could not eat by mouth, but was instead fed through a tube that was inserted through his nose going down into his stomach. When he was first born he breastfeed semi-successfully for a short time, but that joy was short lived.

He was Loved

What else can I say about my son Torian? I could tell you that he was loved. He was loved by my wife, myself, and each of our children. Early on, my wife and I were concerned that eventually our other children would grow resentful of Torian for the time and attention he received from us. We thought they may be upset for the numerous week long hospitalizations he received throughout his life. We thought they would feel deprived for all the fun things they missed out on because it was just too difficult to go places with all the machines he needed.

But they never showed any resentment whatsoever. They loved him and cared for him as only big brothers and a big sister could do. Every day they woke up and said good morning to him, squishing his chubby little hands or legs as he replied back



Little Torian

with his little grunt or sigh. He made this same noise when my wife placed her cheek up against his cheek. It was a happy sigh, as if to say "Aw Mom," or "Thanks, guys, for loving me."

He Smiled

From these noises we could tell he understood more than some thought he did. My wife noticed that whenever she gave him a warm bath or rubbed him over with warm coconut oil that the sides of his mouth would slightly turn up. This was how he smiled. We saw him making this little smile countless times throughout his difficult life.

As time passed on, we eventually started speaking for him, saying things in what we imagined as Torian's voice. For example:

"Boden, could you bring me my suction bag?" or "I'm very handsome" or "I just pooped in my clean diaper and now my mom has to change me again, he he he."

Or we sang for him in his voice:

"I am a baby, as cute as can be,
There's not many people cuter than me."

Or, "Me and my dad, we do lots of things together; me and my dad, me and my dad." (Deb tried to exchange the word "Dad" with "Mom").

We called him by many names, such as Buddy Buddy, Little Buddy, Best Buddy, Mr. Cute Stuff, My Sweet Baby, Boopa, Jitterbug (because his hands and feet twitched at times), Stinker Winker, and Baby Zorro. The dialog that Baby Zorro had with the other children was hilarious.

We will never forget these things.

Neither will we forget his long hair that made one long natural curl up on the top of his head. Neither will we forget his big long yawns, or him stretching his legs and pointing his toes. I will never forget my wife smelling and kissing on his feet all the time and trying to get the other children to do it too. We will not forget him squinting his eyes, shriveling his face, lifting up his upper lip, and showing his big toothless gums (we called this the Gum Show). Neither will we forget his "Turtle face" that he sometimes made.

He is Missed

The day he died, my wife and I could see his health quickly declining. We decided to move him from the couch to our bed and lay down with him. Grandpa Bolstad came over early in the morning to see how he was doing and took our garbage to the dump. While he was gone, the rest of us continued to lay in bed with little Torian, reading from the Bible, singing hymns, and praying with him. His breath became even shallower until he stopped breathing for almost a minute, then took another breath and did not breathe again. He died in my arms as I held his little hand.

I miss him immensely. We all miss him more than words could describe. He was an absolute joy in our lives. Some people may wonder how we could love someone who was so difficult to care for and seemingly had so little to offer in return. But he had love and we felt it continually. This should come as no surprise to those who have wisdom, for our son, little Torian, was knitted in my wife's womb by God Himself, and made in His image, just as all children are. The Bible tells us that "God is Love." If God is love and He made our son in His image, then it should be no surprise why we would feel such love from a boy who could do so little.

We have Hope

How do I continue without my son Torian? We know our son is already enjoying eternal life with Jesus Christ and all believers who have passed before him. I know this because this is the promise Jesus gave to all those

who put their trust in Him. He was the promised sacrifice to reconcile us to God. God never wanted death and suffering to enter His world. Death and suffering exists because our ancestors. Adam and Eve willingly chose to rebel against God by disobeying the one command that He gave them. They brought death into the world. We bring death to the world by our sins.

God, in His love, didn't destroy humanity then and there, but promised that one day He would send a Savior to save us from death and hell. The man known as Jesus of Nazareth was that Savior and lived in Israel about 2,000 years ago. He was God turned man, for no one other than God could have fulfilled the requirement of living a sinless life. Jesus willingly allowed Himself to be hung on a tree as our substitute. He

suffered death as the final sacrifice for Adam's sin, but three days later rose from the dead so that we could one day live in paradise with Him.

This is the hope I have for myself and for my family, including little Torian. This is the reason I can continue to live my life. Without this hope there is nothing but fear, depression, and in the end eternal suffering for those who choose to ignore God's free invitation to His home. One day I know that I will see Torian again, and he will be a happy, smiling little boy, running around, talking and laughing, enjoying pleasure unimaginable. I look forward to that day, as does my family. I hope you do too.

ETHAN AND DEB BOLSTAD

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Little ones at Breeze's Ball. Serene's daughter, Haven (in white) and her grandchildren: Elizabeth (Lizzy)—Christiana's daughter, and Sammy and Eureka (Selah's children).

I'm sure each one of you want your children to grow up filled with the knowledge of God's Word and in an atmosphere of the anointing of the Holy Spirit? We long for our children to live moral and pure lives, and yet many parents put their children in the system where alternative sexuality is openly commended. The gay lifestyle is becoming more and more entrenched as the homosexual agenda pushes it into the curriculum.

I can understand the ungodly being quite happy for their children to be influenced by this kind of education, but I cannot understand why godly parents would be. Many years ago Martin Luther said these words: "I am much afraid that schools will prove

to be the great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."

Psalm 1:1, 2 should be our vision for the training of our children: "Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD: and in his law doth he mediate day and night."

NANCY CAMPBELL

Founder and Editress of Above Rubies

Are Your Children Excited About World Missions?



Rob and Trudi with their children: Luke [21], Joshua [20], Lily Mai [12], Joseph [10], Josiah [8], and Grace [6]. They work with WEC International as mission mobilisers and served the Lord in Thailand for 11 years.
(UK spelling used)

God wants our homes to be houses of prayer for the world. He wants our children praying for the nations too. He wants our children to be excited about world missions and to have a heart for the lost.

There are many reasons why we as parents should try to get our children involved in world missions. First, the Bible shows us that God used young people. Many were called at a young age such as Josiah and Jeremiah. God continues to use children today. I have witnessed him using my children as they invite our local Indian, Turkish, and Nepalese neighbours to church.

Secondly, we are told to train up our children (Proverbs 22:6). We teach our children to have godly characteristics such as a heart for the lost and compassion to those who are in need. By hearing about people in our world they gain understanding of other cultures. They see that many children have far less materialistically than themselves and become more appreciative. They learn to pray and trust God for different situations that missionaries and other Christians overseas have to face.

Finally, it helps them to identify with the needs of other people and see how they can make a difference in the world. We need to sow seeds of interest in missions at an early age if we want to see our children develop into future missionaries. Research shows that children are most likely to hear God's call to full-time Christian ministry as missionaries or ministers between the

ages of four to fourteen. How?

1. Modelling

If children see their parents' passion for world missions they, too, will be inspired and follow. They need to hear us talk about what God is doing around the world and to see us earnestly praying. They need to witness our heart for the lost.

2. Teaching

Home schooling and family devotions are the ideal times to teach our children about world missions.



We can teach missions from the Bible including studying missionary characters such as Paul. We can learn about the needs of different countries/missionaries and pray together. There are many books, games, and different resources produced by mission organisations that can be used. During our family devotions, we use my book *40 Days 40 Bites* once a week. We choose to make Monday a special day of the week to focus on world missions and call it "Mission Monday."

There are also amazing stories about missionaries such as Gladys Aylward, Eric Liddell, Jackie Pullinger, and many others that will inspire our children.

3. Church input

A church that is involved in missions can also inspire children. Mission projects, mission weekends, missionary speakers, and contact with missionaries are all effective. Sunday schools can be encouraged to teach about missions and different countries. Some children can go on mission camps as a Sunday School group or individually. In the UK hundreds of children, who have attended a mission camp run by WEC International over the years, have later gone on to be missionaries.

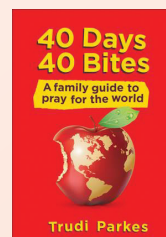
4. Experience

Children can also get excited about world missions by experiencing it themselves. Different mission organisations offer trips for families and teenagers during summer breaks. They expose children and young people to the needs of the world, increase their desire to serve God, and get them excited about world missions.

May our families be houses of prayer for the nations and our children be excited what God is doing around the world.

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40 Days 40 Bites: A Family Guide to Pray for the World

by Trudi Parkes

In 40 tasty, easily digestible bites you can travel round God's amazing world and pray! This book covers over twenty different countries including Algeria, China, and North Korea. This family guide to praying for the world will open your eyes to the need and challenge you to come before God and pray.

<http://tinyurl.com/40Days40Bites>

My Greatest Gift to my Children

As a child, I was raised in a home where athletics and education were the top priority. I was taught to be a liberal atheist and a feminist. As a young woman, I firmly believed that a family was a hindrance to being successful. My goal was to get a degree, never marry, and NEVER have children. God had a different plan!

In 2004 (the year after I graduated from college), God saved me! I was saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and became a new creation (Ephesians 2:8-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:17). I was born again into God's family in June, married in October, and became pregnant with my first set of twins on my honeymoon! Needless to say, it was a life changing year! My husband and I decided we would raise our children and not send them to daycare. One of us would always stay home. Then it came time to decide who would continue working. My income was twice the income of my husband's. Therefore, it made good financial sense for me to stay at work and for him to come home and take care of the children.

However, we soon realized after reading God's Word that God's plan for the family was very different from what we had chosen. It was unnatural for my husband to care for the babies that I was supposed to be nursing. It was also unnatural for me to be the breadwinner of our home. God's natural order of the man being the head of the home and the wife submitting to him was not the order which we had chosen for ourselves (Ephesians 5:22-33). But it was time to make a change.

We began the transition of my coming home when we both did part-time work after our third child was born. However, we soon realized that this was not good enough either.

It was not long before I was pregnant with our second set of twins. I needed to be home full-time, and we finally gave up my income! Trusting God in this area of our lives was one of the best decisions we have ever made! Even though my husband's income was lower than we were used to, God provided in mighty ways.

For many years now, my husband has been the provider and I have been the nurturer of our home. I have the great privilege of staying home full-time and homeschooling our five precious children. God has blessed our obedience. My husband and I have never gone without. Our children have never gone without. On the contrary, we are more content than ever! My husband has a wife to help him and my children have a mother at home to teach them. It's the greatest gift I can give my family... to be home!

TISH KLEINDIENST

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Chad and Tish with their children—two sets of twins: Parker in back row (10). Front row: Owen (8), Parker's twin, Payton (10), Trevor and Triston (6), and after a reversal, God is blessing them with another precious baby July 2016.

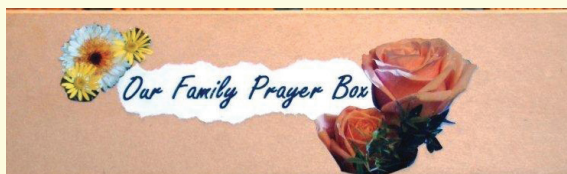
Photo by Hartman Photography

TRY DIFFERENT PRAYER BOXES



Jesus said in Mark 11:17: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Does your home belong to God? If so, your home will also be a house of prayer. Do people know that it is a house of prayer? Do your children recognize that prayer is the foundation of your home? Is it a committed part of everyday life?

In Above Rubies #90, I wrote about the blessings of having a Prayer Box to help your children pray more effectively. Did you know you don’t have to be limited to only one Prayer Box? You can make different boxes for different subjects. You can alternate them each week or use them according to the burden that is on your heart. Here are some ideas for Prayer Boxes you may like to have in your home.



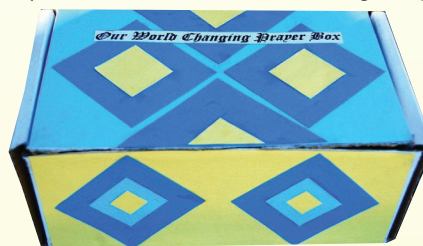
OUR FAMILY PRAYER BOX

Every family needs this prayer box. On your prayer cards, write the names of each member of your family, plus extended family—grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. For Christmas this last year I made a Family Prayer Box for each family, new couple, or single living away from home—21 prayer boxes! I color-coded, choosing a different colored card for each particular family.

I encouraged the families to not only pick out a card from their box each morning and evening as they have devotions together, but to keep the box on the table or in a conspicuous place, where everyone in the family can see it. Whenever someone passes the box, they can pick out a card, lift it up before the Lord, and pray for that person.

This is a wonderful way to keep our whole extended

family bathed in prayer—everyone praying for one another. We are very much aware of God answering our prayers.



OUR WORLD CHANGING PRAYER BOX

Write on your prayer cards the needs in the nation, international needs, missionaries you are praying for, and current needs that require prayer. We use this prayer box along with our Family Prayer Box each morning and evening. Therefore, each person takes two cards—one from Our Family Prayer Box and one from this box. There are so many urgent needs in the world at this time. We should also all daily pray that God will mercifully give us a righteous president, not the most popular or the one who can fix our finances, but the one who is the most godly.

Proverbs 14:34 says: “Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” Below you can check on an updated link for prayer needs for this nation and the world.

OUR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS PRAYER BOX

This is such a powerful and biblical prayer box to use. There are so many countries persecuting Christians that it is hard to keep up with all the needs of the persecuted church around the world.

Your box will be fat with cards. There are 60 countries persecuting Christians. You may have to alternate these countries in your prayer box. As you research, you will become aware of many specific needs and people to pray for.

Don't forget North Korea who persecute Christians more than any other country in the world.

How can we not pray every day for what is happening through ISIS in Iraq and Syria where Christians face beheadings, rapings, and cruelties beyond measure? No wonder Hebrews 13:3 tells us to pray for those being persecuted as though we were in prison with them and to feel their suffering as though we were suffering their pain in our own body. You will see a link below to find out more information.

OUR 10/40 WINDOW PRAYER BOX

The 10/40 Window is the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, approximately between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude. These countries include the majority of the world's Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists—a high percentage of the least evangelized and unreached peoples with the Gospel. The persecution of Christians in the 10/40 Window has increased by 400 percent over the last 10 years.

These countries in the 10/40 include:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Brunei, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chad, China, Hong Kong China, Macau, Djibouti, East Timor, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, West Bank / Gaza, Western Sahara, Yemen.

Wow! Do you know where all these countries are situated? What a great project for you and your children to learn about each one and gradually add to your prayer box. It is a great way for your children to learn about these countries, to get a heart for missions at an early age, and to pray for the lost and the unreached peoples of the world.

OUR COUNTRIES AND CAPITALS PRAYER BOX

We currently use this box along with Our World Changing Prayer Box and our Family Prayer Box. I write on cards the names of the most strategic capitals and countries of the world. This is also a good way for your children to get to know the capitals of the countries of the world and yet at the same time give them a vision to pray.

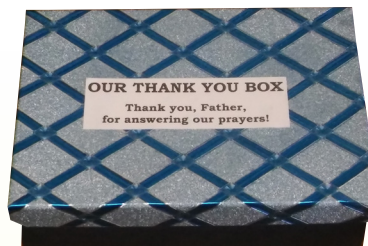
OUR CHURCH FELLOWSHIP PRAYER BOX

Write cards of the different families in your church who need prayer and encouragement. This is also a lovely box to have and we have used it from time to time.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD PRAYER BOX

Do you have a vision to reach out to your neighbors and community? The best way is to begin with prayer. Write cards

for the neighbors you meet who you want to lead to Jesus. As you pray for them, God will show you how He wants you to reach out to them. Maybe He will inspire you to invite them over for a meal to show them God's love and what it's like to live in a Christian home.



OUR THANK YOU BOX

Our God is a prayer-hearing God. We constantly receive answers to prayer which we then put in Our Thank You Box. We are to come before God with prayer and THANKSGIVING. We should also be a grateful people and never cease to thank the Lord for all His goodness and answers to prayer. I think of the 10 lepers who Jesus healed and yet only one came back to thank Him. Let's never be guilty of being like the other nine.

Enlist your children to help make the Prayer Boxes you would like to use in your home—and also writing the cards. You can find old boxes and redecorate them. Children love doing this.

If you have young children, you will find it a good idea to use pictures of missionaries, a certain person you are praying for to be saved or healed, the kind of people who live in different countries, and so on. Also places (pictures or maps of the countries you are praying for).

One mother of young and older children found a helpful idea. She wrote prayer needs on white cards for the adults and older children and more simple needs on colored cards for the younger children. The younger ones know which cards to choose with more appropriate prayers for them to pray.

Become a world-changing family as you pray for one another and the world. The greatest way to fight our enemies, the enemies against God and evil, is by prayer. Leviticus 26:7, 8 tells us that five people (that means a family of father, mother and three children) can tread down 100 enemies. One hundred people (that means only 20 families of five) can put 1,000 to flight! What could happen if every believing family (dads, moms, and children) began to faithfully pray every day for their nation and the world?

NANCY CAMPBELL

Check out these links:

<http://tinyurl.com/OurPrayerBox>
<http://tinyurl.com/IdeasForPrayerCards>
<http://www.worldwatchlist.us/world-watch-list-countries/>
<http://win1040.com/>
<http://www.1040windowreporter.com/#!prayer-points/vnvdq>
<http://tinyurl.com/RecommendedLinks>
<http://tinyurl.com/PrayerInTheHome>
<http://aboverubies.org/morning-evening-principle>

Falling in *Love* With Your

Babies Breed *Love*

Entering my late thirties I am often asked if I am done with having babies. With a little one in my arms and many others hanging around my skirt (or out climbing trees, or even our walls), and some already married and starting their own families, one might think I would answer “Yes.” But to their amazement, I truthfully answer “No, I still want more!”

Why wouldn't I want more of a good thing? Isn't it in our human nature to continually desire that which brings joy? My children have brought me unmeasurable joy. They haven't necessarily brought me peace, or much cleanliness, but they have certainly brought me joy! How many uncountable smiles and deep wells of laughter I would have missed without my children. They can be naughty, and even crazy sometimes, but they are hilarious and love runs deep.

Love! This is one of the main reasons why I don't want to stop receiving beautiful gifts from God. He showers His love upon me with every gift of life He gives. What child puts a limit on birthday or Christmas blessings? “Daddy, I don't want too many presents! It's too overwhelming!” I don't want to damn up the flow of my Father's love for me.

There are many diamond facets to receiving more children into our lives. The birth of each new baby releases a flood of maternal hormones that refreshes my natural instincts to mother with passion. This natural deluge of bonding and motherly hormones reignites my vision, commitment, inspiration, joy, and fulfillment of motherhood. Love grows stronger for my older children



A candid shot at Breeze's 6th Princess Ball. Sam and Serene are blessed with 13 children: Selah married to Samuel with Sammy, Eureka, and new baby due 2016; Jabin married to Christiana with Elizabeth (Lizzy) and new baby due 2016; Isaiah living in town; Arden married to Esther on 20 February 2016; and those still living at home—Cherish (16), Chalice (16), Cedar (13), Vision (11), Engedi (11), Shepherd (9), Breeze (6), Haven (3), and baby Remnant (Remmy) (9 months).

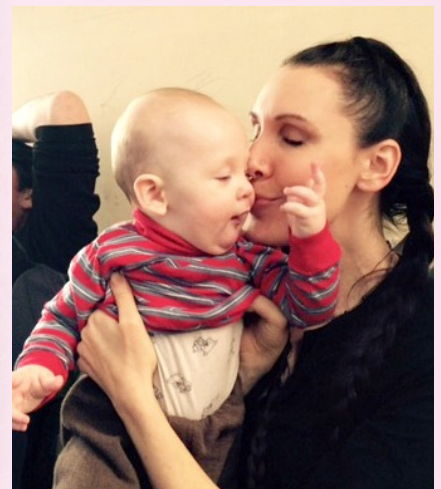
as well, even though one would think more children could actually spread it thin. A new baby, instead of diluting my love and attention to the other children, paradoxically deepens and secures it physiologically, emotionally, and mentally. Babies stretch love. They literally breed it.

With the ebb and tide of fertility, I notice the difference in my priorities when I have no baby in my arms. My dreams and hobbies drift out of the home when I am not a busy and occupied shepherdess. It's not that these endeavors are bad, and when my fertility naturally comes to a complete close they could be perfect and noble aspirations.

This God-given love is a river that widens and flows to every inlet of the family. Each

brother and sister is infected with it. They all fall madly in love with their new little bundle of “huggable loveliness.” Love surges from their big brother and sister hearts. They all vie for the baby's attention and affection. Family warmth through smiles, cuddles, and laughter from baby's funny faces (or I should say, the funny faces they put on for baby), generates a precious and attractive home atmosphere.

What about the extended family? My baby boy, Remnant, is the star attraction at all family gatherings. He is passed around like a prized treasure with cousins, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, and grandparents while I try to retrieve him for a little squeeze of his cuteness. He often takes center stage, sitting on the knee of one of the older cousins in a group of five or more strapping six



Cousins—Jeremiah Calhoon, Crusoe Johnson, and Josiah Calhoon talking with their best mate, Remnant.

Our Children all Over Again

feet plus tall guys talking man to man with him. It is a sight that warms the heart when you see full-grown young men absorbed with lighting a smile on a baby's chubby face.

I can't leave out the love my baby gives. I don't think I have ever felt so adored as when my sweet baby stares up into my eyes with innocent rapture. I am his everything, and in those eyes of complete love and dependence, I swim in an ocean of enchanted devotion and connection. A baby's love is the most pure reflection of the love I need to relax into and rest in. The love between my husband and me is watered and invigorated with every blessing of new life. Each new baby is a symbol of our union—our oneness and a continuance of the morphing of us together. They are a statement of our inseparableness—our very DNA, our genetic heritage, and our personalities.

Aside from the poetical and mystical nature of the miracle of children, the natural science of pregnancy hormones renew the passion of love. Morning sickness aside, pregnancy is known as a time of romantic fire and desire as the surging levels of sex hormones that nurture the pregnancy also nurture a fresh amorous honeymoon season. Love is alive in every way.

On a more vain and personal note, I am eager to keep having babies as an older mother for anti-aging measures. I don't mind admitting it for it is God's blessing to us. The wisdom of the world says that having children depletes our health and makes us fat and old before our time. However, modern science now backs up the Bible when it says: "Women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint" (1 Timothy 2:15 NASB).

After the age of 25 a woman begins physical decline. She has reached her bloom and blush of youth and begins a gradual descent from her prime. But wait! Pregnancy and breastfeeding can turn back this decline and keep these youthful hormones flooding a woman's body with healing, regenerating quantities. Remember the glow of pregnancy? Estriol increases 1,000 times during pregnancy to protect the mother and developing baby. This anti-aging hormone is now used in anti-aging skin creams. It has been known to reverse many diseases in the pregnant mother, such as rheumatoid arthritis.

The female brain actually grows and increases with brain cells during breastfeeding. Our bones re-mineralize after nursing a baby and lactating hormones attack stress and diminish cortisol release—only a few quick licks of icing atop of this incredible

cake of sweet health benefits bestowed upon childbearing woman.

I also like the natural breast lift I get every time I become pregnant and nurse a little cute bub! Sorry for being so frank, but yee-hah for this wonderful benefit. Let's count all our blessings, and a boobey lift sure ain't refused by me. When I stop breastfeeding my last baby, I'll hopefully go straight into menopause where the estrogen during this phase is known for building the breast once again. We go from strength to strength! Ha ha.

Having babies around keeps everyone young at heart. It keeps our sense of humor at their hilarity and strengthens our agility as we race to keep up with their quick tippy-toe steps.

Can you see now why my answer is not strange, legalistic, or self-sacrificing when I say "I still want more"? I don't feel under law. I'm not part of a cult. I don't feel obliged to have more. Instead, I look forward to each baby like a little child who is desperate for Christmas to come. The holy hush of the moment before my baby's first cry . . . the smell of heaven as I inhale their precious fresh scent with our first embrace . . . my babies come and I feel the overpowering of EMANUEL, GOD WITH US.

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Grandchildren are *Love Multipliers*

We have been blessed with four children—24, 19, nine and one.

"What big gaps you say!" We started when I was a teen mom at 17. We were blessed again a few years later with our daughter. Sadly, we decided my husband should get a vasectomy. A year later we began our homeschool journey and I quickly became convicted that we had made a mistake about stopping children. It took seven years for my husband's heart to change and have a reversal. We waited two years after that to conceive and another eight years before God sent our youngest, little Ruby Jean.

We have loved our children and relished being parents. Last year God brought a wonderful young man for our daughter to marry. I wasn't ready. I wanted to enjoy her in my home for a few more years, but we knew this was God's will for our sweet Renee.

God blessed them with a baby right away. She suffers with migraines which made her

pregnancy very hard and I spent a lot of time by her side. Renee and Jacob agreed for me to be in the delivery room with them. As the time approached I became nervous. I thought I would not be able to handle seeing my baby suffer, but God gave me courage.

At 10:30 pm on the 24th of May, Renee told me she felt extreme pressure in her back. I told my husband that they will call in two hours. At 12:30 am Renee and Jacob headed to the hospital with me right behind them. Renee was 6 cm. when we arrived and she had a beautiful labor and delivery. She was able to labor almost the entire time in the water.

This was a surreal time for me. What a gift they gave to me. I cannot even find words to express how special it was. Watching Renee and Jacob go through it with such love and tenderness and trust in God was beautiful beyond measure. Jackson Harrison Lingo was born at 5:34 am. on May 25th. Memorial Day. What a glorious day!

I have always heard that you love your grandchildren more than your own children. I could not even fathom I could love someone more than my own children, but in one moment my world changed. I did not love him more than Renee. No. But my love knew no bounds. I loved this baby and yet I loved my daughter more than I ever had. She was never more beautiful to me than in that moment. My love for my sweet son-in-



Baby Jackson at birth.



Michael and Rachael with Seth (10), and Ruby (2). Jacob and Renee with Jackson.



Jackson with Grandpa Lingo.

love grew as well. He became mine. He is the daddy to this baby and part of us now.

In the hours and days that followed my love grew for Jacob's parents and grandparents. Watching them love this baby that I loved so much made my heart full. Seeing them in Jackson, and how God makes the two one flesh, left an indelible mark on my soul. All of us love this child so much and this makes us all love one another more.

When you marry someone, you chose that person. When your children marry God brings two families together. Then you love people just because you all love the same two people who came together. I do not know how to describe this except to say that grandchildren are love multipliers. They cause you to love everyone more. They bring love between two families as they make two families one.

I am so thankful and my heart is so full of gratitude to a sovereign God who knew from the beginning of time that Michael and I would marry and have Renee. He knew that Philip Lingo would marry Trish and have Jacob. He knew that Jacob would marry Renee and we would all have Jackson Harrison Lingo. I love God's ways.

RACHAEL STOKES

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Amazing *Love* Hormones

Seven years of infertility were difficult for me. However, God used this hiatus to nurture many spiritual babies that came to live with us while they got their lives back together. We even adopted Katie (now 24) as our own. As the years rolled on, I trusted the Lord would bless us again with another little one.

By the time our three biological children were nine, seven, and six years I no longer had my "Momma Hormones" that come with babies and small toddlers. My children, (Alyssa, Josiah, and Emma), were now much more independent and with this freedom I took on more rolls in our community. I facilitated home school events, became more active in our home church, and involved our children in extracurricular activities.

But soon I began to feel desperate. I prayed, "Dear Lord, Emma will be seven years old soon. Please God, give us another baby!" Our loving heavenly Father heard my cry, and a month later we conceived our fourth biological child.

On October 8th, 2015 we welcomed a bouncing baby boy named Jeremiah David Welch into our lives and I was determined to breastfeed my child this time. My last three children were bottlefed due to lack of breast milk on my part, lack of council, and lack of understanding that there are alternate ways of

breast feeding.

Sadly, a small percentage of women cannot produce enough milk to satisfy their baby's appetite, and I was one of those women. I attribute this to underdeveloped milk ducts in adolescence. However, this time I had amazing, godly, nursing women around me for encouragement! This made a huge difference in my determination to nurse and helped with any discouragement.

When Jeremiah latched onto my breast for the first time, I felt a little milk leaving my breast. It may work this time, I thought. But as time went on Jeremiah was not fully satisfied.

My friends encouraged me saying, "You just need to feed him more." So I did. I nursed him literally around the clock, but he still cried and cried as though he had received nothing at all. Then I would cry and cry, feeling like a failure. It was hard watching all my girlfriends bursting at the seams with enough mommy milk to feed an army of babies.

I began extensively researching natural ways of encouraging milk production in my body. The best book I read was *The Breast Feeding Mother's Guide to Making More Milk* by Diana West. I began taking a barrage of natural organic herbs that many midwives around the world recommend for milk production. I found a concoction that really worked for me (see list).

With the herbs, my body produced a little more milk, enough for him to get some natural antibodies, but it was still just not enough to satisfy my little boy. He was not gaining weight.

Our midwife suggested we supplement my milk with some formula. Being determined to breastfeed exclusively, I began using a supplemental nursing system that allowed me to breastfeed and give my son formula at the same time he latched onto my breast. I fed him all the milk I had then filled a syringe with formula and attached a small feeding tube to it. I inserted the end of the feeding tube into the side of Jeremiah's mouth while he nursed. It was such a blessing to keep the intimacy of breastfeed-





Byron and Bridget's children: Katie (24), Alyssa (11), Josiah (9), Emma (8), and Jeremiah (15 months).

ing even though the formula was his major food source. As he grew older and needed more, I used a bottle with an inverted nipple and feeding tube instead.

Herbs to Help Breastfeeding:

3x a day I take:

X4 Fenugreek

X2 Blessed Thistle

X1 Goats Rue- This herb helps to build back the milk glands that are sometimes underdeveloped in childhood, like mine were. The beautiful thing is that as they restore, it means more milk for your next baby.

X1 Shatavari

I purchase all of my herbs on Amazon.com

In the early days of Jeremiah's life, I was alarmed by the terrible ingredients in his formula. Each North American brand of formula read like a grocery list of unhealthy fillers and chemicals. Through much research, I found a formula called *Holle* that is very close to breast milk. It is made in Germany where chemicals and genetically modified foods are banned. I order it from E-bay or <http://www.biologisch24.com>.

Did all this take extra work? A resounding YES! But it was totally worth it for the changes it brought to me as a woman. While expecting our son, I read an article entitled *More than Milk*, written from La Leche League which talked about the nursing relationship being much more than your milk supply. The article suggested that through nursing you provide comfort and emotional bonding for you and your baby. I decided then and there, that no matter what, I was going to have a nursing relationship with my baby.

I can safely say that at 15 months, my son LOVES to nurse. He nurses about four times a day, not just for food, but for comfort. I nurse Jeremiah to lull him to sleep and when he has

an accident. When he cries at night I pull him into bed with me to nurse and we both go back to sleep.

Nursing gave me amazing mothering hormones. I do not recall having such a strong intimate bond with my three bottlefed children as I enjoy with my son. That is not to say I did not have a special bond with each of my children during their baby stages, but it is much more intimate with Jeremiah.

With nursing and these amazing mothering hormones, something beautiful happened. It gave me my "mothering love" back for my older children. With the hustle and bustle of life, I had lost that close intimate love. Nursing made me slow down and proverbially smell the sweet roses— my children.

As I have been forced to sit still with my nursing son, God has given me a fresh vision for our home again. I had gotten so busy doing things outside of the home, that my family had become a side project instead of my main focus. Even though I planned events that involved my children, I was not directly involved with them. Having my little man refocused me onto my calling and what I am meant to be doing. God has given me back the passion to pour into my children for the few short years they are living in our home. My older children have embraced their little brother and he has brought so much joy into our home. My life has come full circle back to where my focus was when I began having children almost twelve years ago.

One thing I have come to realize is that God the Father has a perfect timing for each of our children to make their way into this world. God has a destiny for each one on earth and it is not our right to interfere with God's timing. I am reminded of Genesis 1:28: "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over



the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Did God ever rescind this command?

I was taught all my life to trust God with everything except conception. I was taught to be the family planner in my marriage, not God. Thankfully, I didn't follow this plan, but I have seen many fall into this deception. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NASB) reads: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Don't be afraid to do what God has called you to do. Don't listen to what the world tells you concerning your life, family, and body—listen to what God's Word says about you and your family.

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Bridget is organizing her
3rd Above Rubies Ladies Retreat
 in
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA
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A God Moment

Being an adult means that it's okay not to have your way in everything, even if it means giving up on one of your dreams for your children.

Driving home one night, I mentally prepared for my son's graduation. I had spent years homeschooling Matthew who has Autism Spectrum Disorder. I created the best school environment for him to thrive and he performed fantastically.

Then it dawned on me. Yes, I had a God moment. Matthew is not one for pomp and circumstance and all the showy stuff. I hadn't asked him how he wanted his graduation. Did he want to don a cap and gown to walk down the aisle in front of a bunch of people (most of whom he didn't know) to receive a piece of paper that confirmed he was done with High School

education? Or did he want a quiet little get together with family and friends, or nothing at all except, "Great job, son, here's your diploma"?

I came home and asked him what he wanted. He didn't want the ceremony and the craziness involved with that.

"Wouldn't it be easier to just give me the diploma? Why do I need a ceremony?" he asked.

I was about to plunge my son into a world he wanted nothing to do with because it was my dream for him. Then I realized that my dream for my sweet son was to succeed in his schooling despite the curve ball life had thrown him. And he has. He has taken more classes than the average high schooler and successfully passed them all with nothing less than a C and mostly A's. He has grown and matured beyond what we ever thought and is a respectful and godly young man.

Would I have loved to have seen him walk down the aisle to get his diploma? Yes. But I love it more that life doesn't have to be exactly the way "I" planned it to be.

On August 30th we had a small gathering of close friends to celebrate Matthew's success and graduation. He chose who was coming for the most part. We had his favorite food, pizza, and of course the cake. He was blessed with the singing of "Go Light Your World" by Kathy Troccoli. I retold Matthew's story (the struggles and the successes), and his daddy announced Matthew's completion of his high school studies and handed him his hard-earned diploma. I wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

Matthew was able to enjoy his very special day without anxiety and fear. I am so glad I chose to listen to the voice of the Father! Since then, Matthew has decided to try a few things out and see what fits his style as far as a job goes. He has begun learning to bake dog biscuits and is working on business courses online.

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Matthew receiving his diploma from his father. Timothy and Amber are blessed with four boys: Matthew (20), Joshua (16), Daniel (15), and Noah (10).



Memorizing Scriptures With Little Ones

Jordan and Juliana are blessed with Olivia (7), Ruth (5), Melody (3), and Brianna (1) and new baby coming July 2016.

I love to read and during my last pregnancy I devoured many books! My favorite was called *Ten P's in a Pod* by Arnold Pent 111. Arnold tells how he, along with his seven siblings and parents, traveled the country, ministering in churches through music, preaching, and reciting God's Word. The twelve-passenger van had not yet been invented, so they caravanned in three cars!

What struck me the most was how the whole family knew so much Scripture by heart. Arnold's father, Mr. Pent, led the family in reading the Bible after every meal. They didn't only read a few verses, but chapters! They memorized it by simply hearing it over and over and over. What a thought! Could we actually memorize Bible verses that easily? How cool is that?

I began to read a section of Scripture verses during lunch three times in a row (including reference, because I am always frustrated when I can't find what I've memorized). After about one to three weeks we have it memorized (we, being me and my six and four year-olds). My two-year-old can recite a lot, but not quite perfectly yet!

Taking time to memorize the Bible at this stage in my life seems a difficult task! But this is a way I can do it and with my children too. I am retaining it also. We have learned big sections such as Psalms 23, Psalms 8, Matthew 7:7-12, and Isaiah 40:28-31.

When our oldest was almost two years my husband started teaching her a verse before bed, and after several weeks she knew it. He would then add a new one complete with hand motions! Children love hand motions.

My husband leads us in the Proverbs after dinner. He is a wonderful spiritual leader in our family. Because of this I thought it wasn't necessary for me, the mother, to lead our children in the Bible, but now I realize I would pass up a huge opportunity. I am the one with them all day. Why not me?

I had to take my daughter, Ruth, to the doctor one morning because she woke up with her tonsils bleeding. On the way to the doctor, in the waiting room, and while the nurses checked her she continued to bleed. After the nurses left, we were alone waiting for the doctor, so I suggested we recite some of the verses we have memorized.

I hoped it wasn't hurting her throat to talk that much, but as we continued saying the Scriptures she began to spit out saliva instead of the blood she was spitting all morning. We continued to recite, and still there was no bleeding! Wow! When the doctor came in, she was able to see the tonsils clearly and diagnose accordingly. Praise the Lord! I had just wanted to recite the Word, but I did not expect God to heal the bleeding! Thank You, God. There was no more bleeding at all after that.

The benefits of knowing God's Word are so wonderful! Scripture songs are great too. Colossians 3:16 says: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

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LIVING STRESS FREE

More and more people live under stress. An October 2011 report from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) states that the rate of antidepressant use in USA (people ages 12 and older) increased by almost 400% between 1988–1994 and 2005–2008.¹ Government health statisticians state that one in every 10 Americans takes an antidepressant (23 percent of women in their 40s and 50s).

Does God intend us to live in a state of stress and panic with our stomach tied up in knots? No. He wants us to live in rest. True rest and peace can only be found in Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace. Jesus said: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

Jesus also said: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28,29). It is only in Christ we find rest in the midst of turmoil, difficulties, and the raging storm.

God also provides practical ways to reduce stress when we live the way He intends. He created a hormone to help us in our overwhelming, busy, hectic lives. Forgive me for isolating a hormone for God has created many hormones to help make our “fearful and wonderful” bodies function in tip-top form. We need each one of them as they all work together in perfect harmony. However, can we look at oxytocin in this article?

Oxytocin is made in the hypothalamus and released into the blood via the pituitary gland, or to other parts of the brain and spinal cord. This most “incredible molecule on the planet” is called the “stress relieving” or “calming” hormone. It reduces blood pressure, cortisol levels, fear, anxiety, and staves off psychological as well as physiological problems. They have even found it beneficial in treating Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and autism.

But that’s not all. This “molecule of motherly love” is called many names. It is called the “life hormone,” the “love hormone,” the “cuddle hormone,” the “bonding hormone,” the “empathy hormone,” the “trust hormone,” and

yes, even the “bliss hormone.” If it’s this good, how can we get it?

As I researched, I was amazed to discover that the ways to increase oxytocin mostly come back to family life. Let’s check them out.

1 Live in a Family

Especially a loving, happy, and stable family. When reading a big fat medical textbook on hormones (833 pages) I was surprised to read that one of the most important ways to increase oxytocin is to live in a family with people you love.² God, who created the family understands that this is the most stress-free way to live. It’s His eternal plan and at the very beginning of creation God revealed His plan for the nuclear family—father, mother, and children to live together in harmony and take dominion in the earth (Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:23; and 3:20). That’s why He wants everyone to live in a family. He wants the solitary person to live in a family (Psalm 68:6).



2 Touch, Cuddle, Hug, and Kiss

The more you interact physically by loving and touching your husband and children, the more you release oxytocin. And the more you release it, the more you’ll want to. When you hug, oxytocin releases into your body, lowering both your heart rate and your cortisol levels.

If you want to release stress, become a touchy, cuddly mother and a huggy, kissy wife. That’s why God tells the older women to teach the younger women to “love their husbands” (Titus 2:4). The word is *philandros* and means “to be affectionate and cuddly.”

This passage also exhorts mothers to “love their children.” The Greek word is *philoteknos* and means “maternal

and affectionate love.” Both words have the root word *philos* which is “friendship love.” The One who created us to be wives and mothers also shows how to live as wives and mothers.



3 Eat together as a family

Sit around the table for your meals. We didn’t have to find this out through scientific studies because God showed His plan way back in Bible times where He reveals the picture of a relaxed, happy family—the family He wants to pour out His blessings upon. What is the family doing? They are all sitting around the table together. Psalm 128:3 (NLT) says: “Your wife will be like a fruitful grapevine, flourishing within your home. Your children will be like vigorous young olive trees as they sit around your table.”

It’s not only eating food, but fellowshiping with others at the same time that counts. Children are not meant to eat their main meals in a car looking at the back of someone’s head in front of them. We are meant to eat meals facing one another and interacting together. When father comes home from work, smells the wonderful aroma coming from the kitchen, and sits down with his family to a home-cooked meal he also releases oxytocin and relaxes. He’ll be a much happier husband for the evening if you welcome him home with a lovely nutritious meal at an invitingly set table and with lots of happy fellowship and interaction.

4 Enjoy Love-making

Oxytocin is released big time during love-making and the brain floods with oxytocin during orgasm. However, research shows that the full blessing of oxytocin is only effective in a committed relationship where husband and wife are permanently bonded together. It is a blessing circle. Love-making releases

IN A STRESSFUL WORLD

oxytocin and oxytocin causes greater bonding and the bonding makes the couple more committed and want to make love more. The effectiveness of this hormone does not work in the same way for those who live adulterous and fornicating lifestyles and go from partner to partner.

God who created the human body and also His plan for faithful marriage with one man and one woman knows best how we can live stress-free lives.



5 Embrace Childbearing

Oxytocin plays a part in each one of us coming into this world. This hormone is necessary for the continuing of the human race. It is released during labor and giving birth and helps stimulate contractions. In fact, if contractions are not strong enough to complete a delivery, the mother is usually given pitocin (a synthetic form of oxytocin). The word “oxytocin” comes from the Greek word meaning “swift birth.” And what about the delirious “high” and “afterglow” a mother experiences immediately after giving birth? It’s oxytocin of course!



6 Breastfeed your baby

Along with prolactin, you release oxytocin when nursing your baby. Every time you put your baby to the breast you release these hormones and become more motherly. Oxytocin and prolactin cause you to be more motherly, more nurturing, more protective, more cuddly, and softer to everyone around you.

That’s why a mother with a new baby, not only falls in love with her baby, but falls in love again with all her children. I hear uninformed people say that they wouldn’t have enough love for more than one or two children. It’s the opposite. The more babies you have, the more love spills over to the rest of the family.

And, you’ll be LESS STRESSED OUT! Researchers reveal that breastfeeding women are calmer in the face of psychosocial stress than their bottle-feeding counterparts.

Therefore nurse your baby as much as he/she wants you. Don’t try to limit feedings. Don’t try to wean your baby too soon. Let your baby nurse until he/she is ready to wean. The more babies you have the blessing of nursing at your breast, the more you are blessed by this God-given hormone. In fact, the blessing of this hormone in a nursing mother changes her brain forever.³

Matthew 19:3-6 tells the incident of when the Pharisees came to Jesus to tempt him about divorce. Jesus replied: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female.” When Jesus spoke the word “female,” He used a word that is used only one other time in the New Testament (Romans 1:26). It is the word *thelus* which comes from the root word *thele*. The noun means “the nipple of a woman’s breast from which a baby sucks to find sustenance and to thrive.” The verb means, “to suckle at the breast.” Jesus reminded His listeners that in the beginning God created the female to be a “suckling mother.”



7 Sing for Joy

Read, listen to music, and sing. We are happy when we sing, aren’t we? Often we sing less as we get older and take on more pressures and burdens of life. I know I don’t sing as spontaneously as I used to. (My sister, Kate, who is proofreading this article, heartily

responded, “Praise the Lord!” She can’t stand listening to me singing off key!) We sing together as a family every morning and evening at our family devotions. I’m so glad we take these times to sing, or maybe I would forget during the rest of the day.

Music and singing are another way to release oxytocin. God, who created this “happy chemical” loves us to sing. The Bible is filled with hundreds of admonitions to sing to the Lord, to sing aloud, to sing for joy, to sing praises, to sing with thanks, and to sing a new song—and of course to praise and worship Him. The Bible makes twins of “rejoicing and singing,” “laughter and singing,” and “dancing and singing.”

We listen to a lot of music today. It is normal to see young people listening to music with their headphones, but how often do we actually sing? I remember growing up in a little town in New Zealand. Many men walked to work and you could hear them whistling as they walked? We rarely hear whistling today.

I remember my father telling me how that after a hard day’s work and evening meal, his parents hitched the horses to the buggy, and with the family and portable organ, trotted off to the neighbors to sing their hearts out together. They had no TV in those days and this is how they enjoyed their evenings. I am sure they enjoyed lots of oxytocin.

One of my favorite things to do is to gather people into our home for a hymn sing, especially with those who know the old hymns and sing them with gusto. We sing hymns together at our weekly prayer meeting. Many of our grandchildren come to the prayer meeting (often nearly 30 of them) and they are great prayer warriors, right down to the little ones.

We give thanks before each meal, but it’s nice to sing grace sometimes too. We like to sing when the whole family comes together. It is awesome when about 80 or more of the family sing thanks, especially when we get to the harmonies of the Amen.

As believers, we love to worship the Lord at church, which is great, but let’s bring singing back to the home. Everything should begin in the home. Therefore, if you want to eliminate the

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Avoiding Medical Myths

In the Summer of 2014, I found I was expecting our next baby! We had eight children and I had my last four via VBA2C, after saying “no” to unnecessary repeat c-sections. Soon after, we found out it was twins! Everything felt different than usual! I immediately committed to eating at least 160 grams of protein per day, trying to obtain 3000 high nutrient calories, and increasing my fat intake. The goal was to increase blood volume, and reduce the risk of prematurity and pre-eclampsia. It worked!

While the pregnancy was far more challenging than usual, (and I generally make big babies—my biggest was 10 lbs. 9 oz.) I suffered from no real complications. I began laboring at 37 weeks and delivered my daughter, Lorelei Rose, with only a couple of pushes at 12:38 am. She was 7 lbs. 10 oz., perfect and beautiful!

While I enjoyed her latching on the first time, my contractions started up again. Ezra Gideon turned from vertex to transverse, but my wonderful OB simply skillfully rotated him back to the head down position. He followed his sister by 14 minutes, and was born at 12:50 am., weighing in at 8 lbs. 1 oz. Most at the birth remarked that they were the biggest twins they had ever seen!

I am healthy and strong, and keep young as I enjoy the blessing of babies as long as God sends them! My big, healthy twins dispelled so many myths about multiple pregnancies, about closely spaced pregnancies, about older mothers, and about having many children. They are growing big and strong, and continue to melt my heart with every day!

There are a lot of medical myths and scare tactics surrounding pregnancy. Some of these myths are:

1. Pregnancies that are closely spaced are in danger and unhealthy.
2. Pregnancies that occur after the age of 35 mean poor outcomes and a high likelihood of babies who are “abnormal,” therefore they are not desirable.
3. Having several pregnancies means your body will be “worn out” and unhealthy and damaged.
4. If you are pregnant with multiples, you will likely have preterm babies, low birth weight babies, and need lots of pregnancy testing, intervention, and a c-section to deliver.

I can assure you that all of these myths are not true. These are the myths that have been conjured up by the feminist, birth control, abortion, and medical intervention machine to discourage pregnancy in the above circumstances.

These myths dissuade families from giving God the full reign to plan for their family.

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Andrea also wrote her testimony in Above Rubies #87 about having babies after c-sections. You can check it out at this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/NoGreaterInvestment>



Erik and Molly with their children: Drew (16), Zachary Jeremiah (5), Peter (3) and Hannah Verity (1).

PLACENTA
ACCRETA
WILL IT
HAPPEN
AGAIN?

“Another pregnancy would be a death wish, but I know your convictions. Please be careful.” My midwife’s words swirled around in my head. Do we continue to trust God with our fertility or is this God’s way of saying our family is complete? I thought that I would be finished having babies when I was in menopause, not at forty. What would we do for birth control? What does it look like to trust God in this situation?

My eighth pregnancy and delivery were perfect with no complications. However, the placenta would not deliver. I ended up having an emergency surgical removal to stop the hemorrhage and was diagnosed with placenta accreta. The surgeon warned my husband that another pregnancy would be even worse. We were so glad



Jeff and Andrea’s children are: Jackson (18 USAF), William (13), Emma (12), Abigail (10), Henry (6), Oliver (5), Samuel (3), Benjamin (22 months) and the twins, Lorelei and Ezra (6 months).



(14), Ella Jane (13), Daniel (10), Toby (8), David (6),

to leave the hospital with our precious son—and my uterus!

As my husband and I proceeded in this new territory, we prayed that God would give us wisdom. “Unless the Lord builds the house the builder builds in vain” (Psalm 127:1). We just didn’t feel good about taking things into our own hands. We knew that allowing God to continue to have control over my womb may mean infertility, miscarriages, or pregnancy that would be high risk. As I asked the Lord what to do, I felt Him encouraging me to nurse baby Peter.

I breastfed all my babies, usually until they were close to two years, and yet my amenorrhea only lasted about six months. I felt God telling me to breastfeed differently this time. I never let more than two hours go by without putting him to my breast and he slept with me. Whether he fussed or cooed, it didn’t matter, I nursed him at the breast. Sometimes I thought I was nursing him too much. I called out to God for direction and He showed me verses like Isaiah 66:10-13 and Lamentations 4:3. This was the only clear direction I received from God about how to proceed and my amenorrhea lasted for 19 months. I prayed that God would also heal my uterus.

When Peter was 20 months old I got pregnant. My husband, Erik and I did not go into this naively. We understood that this pregnancy would be different. We trusted God, but understood that it may be difficult. In my mind I thought I could probably have a c-section and hysterectomy at 36

weeks. I brought chocolate and flowers to my midwife and although I knew she wouldn’t deliver me, I wanted to at least start my journey with someone familiar. She directed me to a high risk maternal fetal medicine doctor.

To our surprise and delight the MFM told us that I may not have accreta again and that we would watch the placenta and see. Every day we prayed for the baby and the placenta. We had three high level ultra sounds and then at 32 weeks my doctor told me that I was accreta free and could deliver with my midwife.

My midwife made sure that there was a surgeon and lots of blood on standby. As I labored, I praised God for this life and thanked Him for the direction He gave us. He was so gentle

with me and the delivery was peaceful and almost pain free.

Wow! What a surprise . . . a baby girl, after a string of five boys. Everyone was so excited. Then, as I delivered the placenta, the room grew quiet and we all prayed. God was faithful. The placenta came out so easily. No bleeding. No abnormalities.

Tears of joy and gratitude flowed as we breathed a sigh of relief and marveled at the baby girl He graciously gave us. Hannah Verity means “gracious, merciful gift, truth.” The truth is that God is faithful. He never leaves us or forsakes us, and He gives good gifts.

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stress in your home—play beautiful music and sing more. Sing out loud. Sing as a family. Sing at your family devotions together. Worship the Lord with friends and family. Sing when you give thanks at the table.

8 Take a Walk Each Day

A good brisk walk, especially in nature, releases more oxytocin than going to the gym for a workout (although you’ll release endorphins with hard exercise). Remember, more oxytocin means less cardiovascular stress and an improved immune system.



9 Laugh More

Laughing and smiling increase oxytocin. Mothers at home have more opportunity to laugh without ever watching comedies! Our children constantly do and say the funniest things. And how can you look at your precious baby without smiling? And when he laughs, you laugh too. You smile and laugh off and on all day with a baby and little children around. Much more fun than sitting in a boring office in front of a computer.

The Bible of course backs the release of oxytocin. Proverbs 15:13: “A merry

heart makes a cheerful countenance.”

Proverbs 15:15: “A merry heart has a continual feast.”

Proverbs 17:22: “A merry heart does good like a medicine.”

10 Be Generous

Give money away and give gifts to others, not just for Christmas and birthdays etc, but to show your love. Give to charity, needy people, and ministries—and you’ll have an oxytocin boost. Once again, it’s a Bible principle. Luke 6:38 says: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

I doubt we’ll get much oxytocin by giving grudgingly or because we feel we have to. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says: “God loves a cheerful giver.”

Generosity is more than giving money. As a mother you are blessed to give love, give hugs, give wisdom, and give of yourself all day long (Mark 8:35).

Enjoy your oxytocin lifestyle!

NANCY CAMPBELL

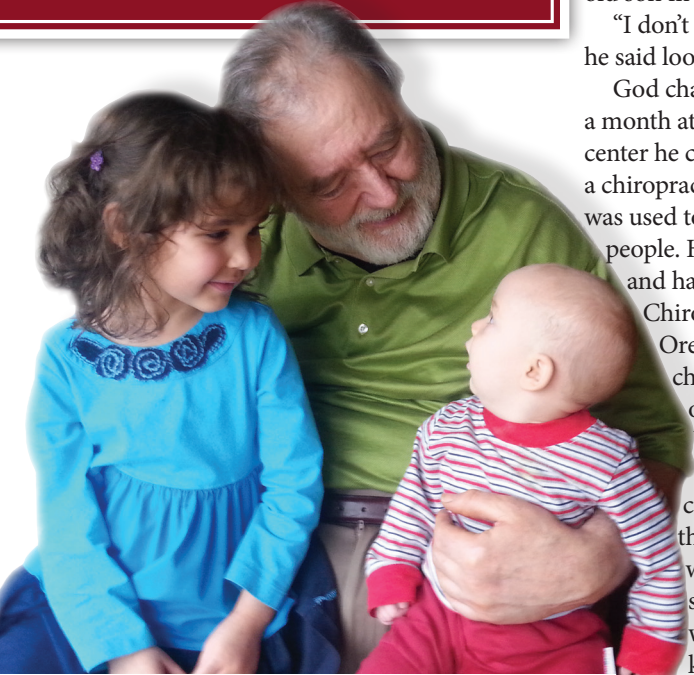
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BEYOND ALL WE COULD ASK OR THINK



"It was a bad bleed," said the doctor of my 54 year old father who had just suffered a stroke. "Because it was hours before they found him, his prospect for surviving is 50/50. His ability to function, if he survives, is even lower."

All six siblings from different marriages gathered in the OHSU trauma ward. My oldest brother Dan and I had been praying for his salvation for years. We'd made a pact together in high school.

"Whatever it takes, God, please show him his need for You," I prayed. I couldn't believe this was the end.

Dad was unconscious for 28 days. When I asked a Christian nurse about his chances for survival, she encouraged me, "You never know, people can be in a coma a long time and just come out of it."

"He doesn't know God yet. I'm sure God will have mercy," I replied. As I spoke, Dad lifted his hand and put it on my shoulder. It scared me, but the thrill of him making movement brought hope to my soul.

Once out of his comma, they moved him to a regular hospital room and within two days he was dismissed to a nursing home. He desperately wanted rehabilitation, but insurance would not pay for therapy unless he had a home to go to after rehab. "You are welcome to come live with us," I said wholeheartedly while holding our one-year-old son in my arms.

"I don't want to be a burden on you," he said looking at Levi, then back at me.

God changed Dad's mind, and after a month at the Good Samaritan rehab center he came home to us. After being a chiropractor for over 25 years, Dad was used to going places and meeting people. He was the life of the party and had been the president of the Chiropractic Association for Oregon. Now he was in a wheelchair with only 20 percent use of his right side. This would be a tough adjustment.

As we drove home, I couldn't help but rethink the occupational therapist's words, "Young children and stroke patients don't fare well together . . . nerves, you know." Great. Our house is all boy. My husband and our four boys aged seven and under were full of energy.

"What are you doing, God?" I thought, but this was the door He had opened. I didn't want to doubt Him without at least trying. Besides, this is

what we had prayed for . . . life. God gave Dad life and now I had an opportunity to bless him and be with him on a daily basis. His Scientology friends all ditched him. He and his current wife had divorced just months before the stroke.

My dear husband, David, prepared our home for Dad's arrival. We had just finished painting the nursery and hanging a pooh bear boarder on the wall only days before Dad's stroke. David moved the crib-sized bunk bed to the downstairs boys' room. It would be a little squashed, but they would manage. Instead, in went a hospital bed for Dad, right under pooh bear.

Dad adjusted well, ate every meal with us, retreated to his room as needed, and patiently worked with the in-home therapists. Longing for an outing besides a doctor's appointment, Dad joined us for church every Sunday and David made the sacrifice to treat us all to a meal out afterwards! Something about the combo made for happy and memorable Sundays.

"I'm not Christian, I'm just watching," Dad said to me one day.

"That's fine," I managed with a smile. By the end of the year he met with our pastor, a dear friend of ours. Pastor Rick answered his questions about Scientology and the Bible. They began meeting weekly. By spring he wanted to be baptized. With Pastor Rick and my brother Dan's help, they wheeled him into Hagg Lake. With



David and Melinda's children are: Josiah (21), Micah (20), Jesse (18), Levi (16), Andrew (14), James (12), Gideon (8), Bethany (4), and Caleb (5 months).

all his friends and family watching he professed the name of Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior that sunny March day. My soul leapt for joy to watch him cast off all that had meant so much to him to proclaim the name of Christ!

Dad has always been a giver, not a taker. So as soon as he was able he said, "I want to do the dishes at every meal." And he did, left handed. Being a busy mama of little ones, it wasn't always easy to get alone time with Dad. We made a house rule that while Gramps was in the kitchen, short of a necessity the kitchen and Mama were not available. It was in this setting that my dad began sharing with me the Bible stories he was listening to each morning.

It was exciting beyond words. I grew up seeing my dad only every other weekend. Now he was living in my home, doing my dishes, and telling me Bible stories. God was making up for the years the locust had eaten.

Soon baby five was on the way. I remember making Dad's bed when the phone rang. On the other end was a desperate plea from another family member. She wanted me to start taking care of her as well. Pregnant, out of breath from making dad's bed, and now completely overwhelmed, I prayed, "Oh, dear God, please extend her life and revive her. Give her more years."

God answered that prayer, allowing only what I could handle. Then it

happened. In the wee hours of a January morning in the middle of a snow storm, our sweet son Andrew was born. Dad held him that morning with joy. Without the stroke he would not be here for this precious moment. The weather kept the outside world away. But inside, God made up for lost time.

It has been 15 years since Dad's stroke. David built him an addition. Dad's health has improved a great deal. He enjoys cooking man style—smoking chicken or salmon for the family. Several of our little ones have learned to read by practicing with Grandpa. The other half of our tribe has been born since Dad moved in.

I thought he was coming to bless him, but that has changed. The other day he told me the reason God still has him here on the earth is to help us with our growing busy family. He still does our dishes and visits with me while we work in the kitchen together. I knew God was big but I didn't know He would work so specifically and practically in all of our lives. He deserves our abandoned devotion. For truly He can do exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

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From Bitter to Sweet

Barbara Rainey provides this insight: "You have to go through the rapids to get to the mature love—the kind of love that's satisfying—the kind of love that we got married for. You can't get to that unless you go through the hard times and make the choice that you're going to continue to learn to love, you're going to continue to learn to forgive, and you're going to continue to depend on God to give you what you, in the rapids, realize you don't have the ability to do."

It is with this in mind that I am thankful for my husband's deployment to Iraq and the difficulty we had upon his arrival home. It was bitter, but sure has made things sweet! God is faithful. I can't wait to go through the struggles of new adventures and seasons with my husband because I know that once they pass, our marriage, friendship, family, and most importantly, our faith will be stronger because of them!

JENNIFER KONIE

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FROM HATE TO LOVE

My husband and I came to the Lord 36 years ago. We had been married 10 years and were ready to get a divorce. He was a drunk, I was on amphetamines and we hated each other with a passion.



In September of 1979, a friend invited me to church and I went on a Sunday night. While we were listening to the service the pastor stopped the service and said, "There's a girl here who is near death, but tonight is her night for salvation." I knew it was me and stood up. My girlfriend also stood up and said, "This can't happen, she's Jewish." The pastor said, "Oh yes it can, I've seen her spirit." That night I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. My life has never been the same again. I went home that night and my husband starting speaking horribly to me. I told him he couldn't speak to me that way anymore because I was a now a child of God.

The next morning I stopped taking my pills after 20 years of addiction. My husband realized something drastic had happened. Even though I hated him, I invited him to church and asked God to get him a job. I also told him I was going to get water baptized.

That night at church the pastor said he would baptize all the people from the same family together. He had never done that before. My husband and I went under the water together and the Lord told us both: "You are not to get a divorce. I will heal your marriage."

God was faithful and healed our marriage. It went from absolute hate to absolute love.

We have been married 46 years now and we are best friends. He is an adoring husband, the husband I always wanted. No one can believe we once hated each other.

BONNIE WALSH

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Tom and Bonnie have five children (three married), six grandchildren, and two more on the way.

Bonnie has written a book about their entire story: "This Can't Happen, She's Jewish."

Available from Amazon.

The Best Decision... I KEPT MY BABY!

On my 17th birthday I found out I was pregnant. It was an accident, both the finding out and the getting pregnant.

It was December 7, 1999. I accompanied my friend to give moral support for an anticipated pregnancy test. She asked me to take one too since I was new to the world of adults and sexual activity. "Why not?" I thought. "I know I'm not pregnant, but it'll be fun to take a test!"

That day and that clinic are engraved on my memory. We were ushered back to do our business. I remember the smell, the cracks in the ceiling, and the dirty floors. And as I sat there thinking of the dirt in my own life, I poured a little bit of myself into a cup, and waited.

We waited, fantasizing about little bundles wrapped in pink or blue. Finally, the nurse came out with two results. Both of us were given two slips of paper. Mine was pink. Why do they pick pink anyway?

Pink slip at school: You'll be serving in detention this afternoon.

Pink slip at work: You're fired.

Pink slip at the state assistance office: No more financial aid for you.

Pink slip at Health Department: No more hope for you. Why? Because you're pregnant.

The nurse sat down next to me. I poured a little bit more of myself out in her office, this time through tears. She tried to comfort me while holding my shaking hands: "You're so young, with so much to accomplish. A baby will only get in the way. You don't have to do this to yourself. You can't take care of YOU, how will you ever nourish a child? You have no support. Your boyfriend doesn't even love you. You don't even really know each other. Do you think he'll want you after he finds out you're trying to trap him? Because that's what he'll think. You'll ruin your chances at any possible happiness."

I kept hearing the words, "You're pregnant." To make matters more complicated, it turned out my friend was not. My friend wanted a baby to keep her boyfriend's affections, while I? . . . The nurse was right. I didn't even want the responsibility of me most days.

We sped off in my friend's car. Tears poured. Where would we go? She knew of a place. It seemed cold and sort of dark, but the people, she said, were welcoming and very understanding. It was in a sketchy part of town where we frequented when needing to escape life, using narcotics to do it.

As we drove, my best friend repeated the nurse's words to me. She claimed to know the future too. She knew "he wouldn't want no baby to take care of."

But would he? I called the guy I had started dating less than three short months prior to this news. He was sincere and concerned. He asked me what I was going to do. I told him we were pulling up to the place that had the solution and I'd speak with him soon.

I sat in the car, parked in front of this large building that looked strangely like an aged, but magnificent house. There were no

cars on the street, save ours. All was quiet. That is, except for my friend. She knew I needed encouraging. She had heard the same stories I had heard. Stories of cold metal tables, coat hangers, and black markets. But this place was different. After all, it wasn't the dark ages anymore, right? There were even silk flowers and candles in the windows. I bet this place did things right.

I just needed to breath. I just needed to process.

"Can I just breathe for an hour, a day, maybe? Plus, I can't get this door to open. Silly handle. Actually, can I just get a handle first? We'll come back, I promise. Before anyone tries to process more paper, I just need to process my own emotions."

She pulled away, only this time with less optimism in her tone. She was angry. She said she knew if I didn't do it right away, I wouldn't do it and my life would be ruined. She talked about how we couldn't be friends if I had a baby, and how I wouldn't be able to hang out or go to parties anymore, because babies change everything. They are the game stoppers, the fun thrashers, the joy killers. The same girl who ten minutes before wanted the slip she was served to be pink!

I cried. My life was over. Everything outside and inside of me wept and pleaded for hope.

I looked at my friend. She sensed resolve in my tone as I said, "Okay. You're right. I can't do this! I don't need time to process a mistake. I need to just take care of it." Her reassuring tone was back again as we slowed to look for a place to turn around. I spotted another center in the distance. I motioned for her to turn. We pulled in and this time I jumped out of the car and ran to the door. She joyfully trailed behind.

I walked to the counter, noticed real flowers, and sayings scribbled on loose pieces of colored paper, something about promises and hope. A kind face asked why I came. I exclaimed, "I came to take care of my mistake. Your sign says you can take care of unwanted pregnancies." She handed me a clip board with a soft understanding smile. I filled out someone else's name, Samantha. I made up this girl in about five seconds flat. But she's who I was, and who I planned to leave behind when I left the building that day.

A woman ushered me to a room. She had unusually long blond hair and her handshake was warm and inviting. My handshake was . . . well, shaky. I knew that somehow she had all the right answers. I remember the room perfectly for some reason. There were two chairs, a small table in between them, and a TV. Pictures hung strategically about the room. They didn't look like Van Gogh's to be sure.

She motioned for me to sit down. I was comfortable. I felt assured before she even murmured a word. I leaned back in the pink floral upholstered chair as she sat her clip board down and made eye contact. She began to speak. She laughed as she noticed



BJ—Bryan Joseph (15), Benjamin (8), Lydia (6), Ella (4), and Nolan (2).



how I kept gazing at those pictures on the walls. That's when she must have explained her perspective of the art and the things I took away from that appointment.

I'm sure she spoke of a painting that had been planned from the foundation of the world, and that had begun a few short weeks ago, created by the Master Painter Himself. He had begun His work of redemption in the very inmost recesses of my soul. She expressed how there is no mistake about any of it, for this Painter makes no error in His strokes. No brush goes unnoticed and He lays no color upon any canvas by accident. This child was indeed the very best possibility of joy and fullness for my life.

I did feel like an empty canvas and desired to be filled with life and purpose. But I couldn't find the words to respond to her musings. I just looked into her eyes and hoped that, like a virus, she could pass to me what she clearly possessed. Maybe she didn't know it, but she poured into me, not aware of how truly empty I really was.

She scribbled something on her clipboard, again with that smile, and stood to her feet. She handed me a white sheet of paper and ushered me out back into the waiting area. I felt them watching me as I left the office. I felt their prayers, although I had never said or heard one before.

I cried as I walked toward the door. That sweet smiling woman had no idea that she gave me so much more than a piece of paper. Everything in me knew what I needed to do, maybe for the first time ever. My friend met me at the door and we drove away. I don't remember that ride home, but I imagine it was pretty quiet.

When I arrived home, I went straight to my room and plopped my things on my bed, along with myself. I remembered that piece of paper the lady handed me before I left and reached into my bag to retrieve it. I opened it up and I read the words out loud:

"Congratulations! You're a mother!"

At 17 years old, I delivered a beautiful eight pound baby boy around 36 weeks. I say I delivered him, but if I'm honest, I'm the one who was delivered on that humid Wednesday morning, before the birds picked a song to sing.

I would like to say it was an easy road from then on. That there were rainbows, butterflies, and endless rays of sunshine filling the days following that choice and the birth of my son. But to be honest, it wasn't easy. I developed something that I

would find out years later was called Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and struggled alone for some time with intrusive thoughts, accompanied with what I suspect was some postpartum depression.

I didn't have a support system during that time as both my parents were absent and I was not in school. The relationships I maintained were of a shallow nature and I had no safe place to run for support and guidance.

During the first few years, I learned to focus independently on someone else other than myself, something I hadn't had to do up until that point in my life. I had to do it alone and it was a painful process some days. But I'm happy to report that I did learn, and thankfully my son survived those fragile first few years of discovering each other.

Now, I look back on those days with a soft sort of reverence. I see the purging process I went through, a process that was truly necessary, even though most of us naturally rebel against it, at least at first. That season shaped the woman I am, and am still becoming, and I wouldn't undo or replace a single step that I took.

I was determined early on to set a standard for other girls who found themselves in a similar situation. After my son entered kindergarten, I enrolled in a course to obtain my GED and finish my education. I achieved that goal and the following ones I set for myself, which included building a support system to nourish and build up my little family. That was something I knew, and keenly felt, I needed.

It also included embracing Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and giving my life, my aspirations, all my plans, and moreover my past, entirely to Him. I was 19 years. Through His forgiveness I found the joy, the hope, and the restoration that I had tried to manufacture on my own. For so long, I looked to myself and to others for what only Christ can give, the One who made our hearts within us, the heart that so longs to be protected, loved, and cared for.

I still remember the day I was baptized. My son who was nearly three years old looked on from the front pew as I went down into the water. I came up, immediately making eye contact with him. At that moment I prayed that it would be a landmark for both of us, and that he would remember to look to me, as I look to Christ, our Lord and Savior.

The Lord graciously brought a boy I went to high school with back into my life at the most opportune time, and through what that boy saw in my life, he also accepted Jesus as his Savior. We married a year later in 2005. Eleven years later, we have been blessed with four more children. We moved to the quiet hills of Tennessee to raise our little brood to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

With each child, I've had to grab a hold of that same faith I was called upon to exercise in that room over 15 years ago. I can't accomplish anything in my own strength. I've had to embrace the very same hope, that what He has called into existence, He will bring to completion. And He has. Oh, He very much has, and it's so good. I'm so undone and redone because of it.

It's the hard things in life that give us the most inexpressible joy. Easy never made things good, or fun, or worth it. Period. I'm not sure what else gives us so much agony and yet the most unending joy than bringing a child into this world and carrying them through until they can carry themselves.

My first born son is the reason why I never gave up on my own life. Above all else, I want him to know with a certainty that he really is the one who gave me life. This 15-year old baby is the best decision I ever made.

ANGIE ALEXANDER

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Feel free to reach out to Angie on Facebook or stop by her blog at: AmatchlessLove.com

Do you wait with longing for the next Above Rubies to arrive? Don't despair. You can be encouraged every day.

ABOVE RUBIES FACEBOOK

Every day Nancy writes a post to inspire and strengthen you in your great calling of being a wife and mother.

Go to: <http://facebook.com/AboveRubiesUS>

ABOVE RUBIES DAILY BLOG

If you don't get on to Facebook every day and miss some of the encouraging messages,

Go to: <http://tinyurl.com/WomensDailyDevotionalBlog>

ABOVE RUBIES WEEKLY DEVOTION

This devotion comes right into your email box. It is a more meaty devotion than the daily Facebook posts, but will give you something to really get your teeth into. If I miss a week, it'll come the next week! To sign up, go to:

<http://aboverubies.org/magazine/subscribe-to-womens-devotional>

ABOVE RUBIES MINI EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Occasional mini Above Rubies E-mags to keep you going until the next magazine arrives. Also Updates and SPECIALS:

Go to: <http://tinyurl.com/SubscribeARNewsletter>





Trevor and Kirsten with their children: Madi (9), Trace (5), Bristol (3), Kash (20 months), and Kassel is still gestating!

Love, the CHOICE

My husband and I have been married for six years. When we started out, we were young, crazily in love, and thought we were ready to embark on a Christian marriage.

Looking back, I believe we married for the wrong reason. Love (the feeling) is nice, but it only gets you so far. Then you meet the real deal. Love, the choice.

We were in our third year of marriage when we crumbled. A shameful addiction so many men face, a lack of communication, and a wife whose heart had grown cold, made for the perfect storm. I was eight months pregnant with our third child, when one dreadful night my husband committed the biggest regret of his life.

Our sex culture and the icy cold of a wife's bitter heart is a destructive combination, even to the strongest Christian man. No one falls away over night. I'm speaking of myself too. How many nights did I choose to withdraw from my husband's heart? How many times did I choose to treat him based on his performance instead of seeing him with eyes of grace? Do I believe I drove my husband away? Yes, I absolutely do.

And so the rain fell on our home. Our young children lay helpless in the eye of this storm. A divorce filed. A family fell apart.

During this time, God would not let me go. I had made a promise to my God that I would love this man until I took my last breath, and I was still breathing. I was faced with a

choice—to fight for the very person who betrayed me. Lay down myself and love him without condition. Choose to crucify my self-righteousness and win his heart back again.

Looking into the eyes of my children, this choice became easy. Never in my life has God taught me more about the heart of Jesus, and the heart of the Father, who holds to covenant with a vengeance, regardless of what we've done. This is when I was first introduced to Love, the choice.

I made a decision to love my husband as God loves me. A love that says, "It doesn't matter what you've done; it only matters who you are and you're my covenant partner." A little faith and a lot of prayer began to turn things around. I won back the heart of my husband, but more than that, God won back my heart. When real trials hit and we're forced deep into the arms of our Father, we gain intimate knowledge of who He is, and who we are in Him. I am made in His image, therefore it is an honor and priceless privilege to mirror the heart of my God—a heart of mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

I'll never forget the night my husband came home. He's never held me so tight before or since that night. We cried together, and vowed a new life and a clean slate. Our past was behind us, as far as the east is from the west, to be remembered no more.

An added bonus. God put a desire in my heart for more children. As we sought to truly live for Jesus, we fell under the conviction to surrender my womb to God. We conceived our fourth child shortly after reconciling our marriage. Through him, God gave me a beautiful gift—a completely natural birth after three horrible c-sections. We are now pregnant with our fifth child and couldn't be more excited to see how many precious little arrows God has for us.

Today, my husband is my very closest, most treasured friend. He is my protector, my provider, my lover, an earthly manifestation of kingdom truth, and a reflection of Christ to me each and every day. He is a man after God's own heart. I am my beloved's, and he is mine. My husband cherishes me above and beyond what I ever could have imagined or dreamed. Today, my marriage is my absolute greatest blessing.

Do I regret everything we went through to get where we are today? This question haunts me at times. I can feel the breath of the enemy on my neck, and I choose to renew my mind in those moments. I have come to this conclusion: regret is our own inability to accept God's forgiveness of ourselves. I don't allow myself to come into agreement with regret. Sometimes we can only get beauty from ashes. My hope is that by the blood of The Lamb and the words of my testimony, others too can overcome.

KIRSTEN SENN
 Gilmer, Texas, USA
 tksenn@gmail.com



THE SECOND TEN COMMANDMENTS

Thou shall not worry,
for worry is the most unproductive of all human activities.

Thou shall not be fearful,
for most of the things we fear never come to pass.

Thou shall not cross bridges before you come to them,
for no one has yet succeeded in accomplishing this.

Thou shall face each problem as it comes;
you can only handle one at a time anyway.

Thou shall not take problems to bed with you,
for they make very poor bedfellows.

Thou shall not borrow other people's problems;
they can better care for themselves than you can.

Thou shall not try to relive yesterday for good or ill;
it is forever gone. Concentrate on what is happening
in your life now and be happy.

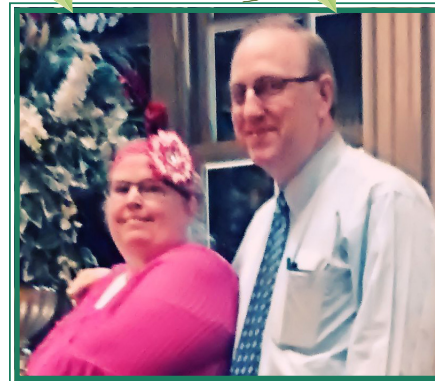
Thou shall be a good listener,
for only when you listen will you hear different ideas from your own.
It is hard to learn something new when you are talking.

Thou shall not become "bogged down" by frustration,
for 90 percent of it is rooted in self-pity and will only interfere with
positive actions.

Thou shall count thy blessings, never overlooking the small ones,
for a lot of small blessings add up to a big one.

Author unknown.

Conceived Through Rape



Six years ago, while on a trip home to visit my parents, I had the privilege to take a four-hour drive and meet a woman I have come to know and admire for her selfless love, strength, and act of courage in the middle of adversity—my birthmother.

Growing up, I always knew I was an adopted child. My parents did not keep it a secret. They loved me, it didn't matter if I was born into the family or adopted. My parents told me growing up that when I reached the age of 18, if I wanted to search for my birthparents, they would help me do it.

For many years I dealt with some medical issues and had a lot of questions which adoptees think about. My adoption was "closed," but in January 2008, I decided to get my non-ID information.

The day finally came when the packet arrived in the mail. I was nervous and excited at the same time. I waited until my husband got home from work to open it. That evening in January of 2008, I opened the packet, and we read it together. I read about my birthmother teaching children with cerebral palsy. I felt so proud of her!

The only information about my birthfather was, "Alleged Father." That is when I got the feeling that something bad had happened.

After my husband and I finished reading the information, he told me he wanted us to get to know my birthmother more, inspiring my search for her. I called my parents and told them I would continue to search for my birthmother.

I wrote her an outreach statement without any names and emailed it to my caseworker. Several days went by, days felt more like years. I wanted to know who she was so I could thank her for choosing life.

The day finally came when I received a phone call from my caseworker. My birthmother wanted to have contact with me! However, before the caseworker could give me all the information, she told me my birthmother wanted me to know the truth—she was raped.

When I heard I was conceived in rape, I chose not to become angry or bitter about my beginnings. I chose to love my birthfather. Why did I choose to love my birthfather, a rapist? Because Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins, as well as the sins of my birthfather. I chose to love him through the love of Jesus Christ. That day God also gave me a heart filled with so much love and compassion for my birthmother for what she'd endured.

Several weeks later after my birthmother was raped, she discovered she was pregnant. When she told her mother, she gave my birthmother three weeks to get out of the house. Her father had passed away in 1967 and she had no one to protect and defend her.

She went to live at a home for unwed mothers and it was there she began her healing process. What am I to do with this baby? she thought. She had to make a decision. She had no job, no permanent place to live, was not married, and had no support from family. My birthfather, of course, was out of the picture. In fact, she didn't even know his name.

Her aunt had an idea: she could arrange for her to have an illegal abortion with a doctor in Michigan (this was before Roe v. Wade).

However, my birthmother knew there was life growing inside her womb—life given by God. She told me her favorite verse is Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV): "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and

a future." She did not want to disrupt the plans which God had for the tiny life growing inside of her. When she decided to place me for adoption, her one request to the social worker was that her baby be placed in a strong Christian home.

When I was born, my birthmother had some complications. We both remained in hospital for a week before she went home and I was released to my foster parents' house. God blessed my birthmother with one week to love, care for, and hold her baby girl she'd named Rebecca Ann. We were released from the hospital on the same day, and she placed me into the hands of God.

The day I received the information from my caseworker that my birthmother wanted to meet me, a feeling of completeness came over me, as well as a great love for my her.

After almost 35 years, the day finally came when my mom and dad, and my husband and I got to meet my birthmother and half-brother. We met them at the hotel where we were staying, sat by the pool chatting, then went to a nice dinner. After dinner, we went to her house and looked at pictures of her when she was younger. I looked so much like her! It was surreal. Genetics are wild.

The next day was wonderful as well, spending the afternoon with her, touring her home town and looking at more photos. She gave me a picture to keep, as well as a copy of the family lineage, which is so precious to have! I felt so blessed to spend time with her.



COMING SOON! Re-edited copy of the classic book for mothers, **THE POWER OF MOTHERHOOD** by Nancy Campbell. This book is like a Bible for mothers (it is filled with God's words to you). You'll need it beside your bed, on your sofa, at your table, and wherever you are. **WATCH OUT FOR IT!**



Are We Truly Pro-Life?

She told me, “I have always loved you, and you were the beginning of my healing process.” She also said what a lot of people don’t realize, that the baby who is conceived out of rape becomes a strong healing force in the situation. Why? Because out of something horrific and traumatic comes a precious human being, and the Giver of Life brings healing to the one who suffers.

Yes, my biological great aunt wanted me to be aborted, but my birthmother chose life and saved me from an illegal abortion. God was faithful to her prayers and I was raised in a wonderful Christian home where faith was taught and it was real.

God has been so very good to me. He has blessed me beyond measure with amazing parents, a brother who also is adopted, a loving husband whom I adore so very much, incredible friends, and a tight-knit church family. I was conceived in rape, but I am loved.

SHERRY HENSLEY
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Baltimore, Maryland, USA



Many people confess they are pro-life, but make exceptions when it comes to rape and incest. Are we distorted in our thinking? Why does it become acceptable to kill a baby in the womb because it was conceived through rape? It is still a living human being. If someone was to murder that person at twenty or thirty years of age, would that be okay? No, the murderer would be guilty and charged with life imprisonment, or worse.

When mentioning this subject on an Above Rubies Facebook post, it prompted spontaneous responses:

“I was conceived in rape, but my mother chose to keep me. I am so thankful the Lord spared my life. I am made in the glorious image of my Creator and am able to serve God and raise up my own daughters to serve and love Him!”

“I was conceived in rape. I wouldn’t have two beautiful girls of my own and a loving marriage of 10 years if my mom had followed the world’s definition of the right to life.”

“I too was conceived from rape. There are so many of us, that if we all got together and stood on the steps

of the Supreme Court, it would shock people.”

“I have an adopted son who was conceived through rape. He is an amazing 22 year old young man now. I can’t imagine my life without him.”

Among the current candidates for presidency, only Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio agree with saving the lives of those conceived through rape. Every other candidate—Trump, Kasich, Clinton, and Sanders, would not be opposed to beautiful citizens of USA (such as those mentioned here), being murdered in the womb!

How important it is to vote intelligently, wisely, and biblically in order to save the lives of future American citizens. Who knows what amazing exploits they may do in their lives. They should have the same opportunities as every other conceived baby.

I think of Jephthah in the Bible who was born out of wedlock and ousted from the family (Judges 11). Yet it was not the home born brothers, but Jephthah who became the judge and military leader of the nation at that time.

NANCY CAMPBELL

Do You Have Peace and Rest?

The most important thing in this world is to have peace with God, your Creator and Savior.

You cannot have peace while there is sin in your life. Because God is holy, He must judge sin. But He loves you. He sent His only Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for your sin and take the punishment of your sin instead of you. Romans 5:8 says: “God demonstrates his own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Acknowledge and confess your sin. Thank Jesus for dying for you. He is the pure, spotless Lamb of God who shed His precious blood to atone for your sins. Hebrews 9:22 says: “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.”

Fall at His feet with repentance and accept His great salvation. This is your way to peace and rest. Psalm 32:1 says: “How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!”

ABOVE RUBIES CELEBRATIONS FOR 2016

Check www.aboverubies.org for additional retreats or changes.

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FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY AND LADIES TOO

Laguna Beach Christian Retreat Center, 20016 Front Beach Rd, Panama City Beach FL 32413
Contact: Daniel and Allison Hartman
Ph: 850-221-1222 * innerlight@yahoo.com
<http://arfamily.weebly.com/>

6 - 8 MAY, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

LADIES RETREAT at Summit Pacific Bible College

35235 Straiton Rd, Abbotsford, BC V2S 7Z1
Contact: Bridget Welch * Ph: 604-847-3309
* brwelch@telus.net
www.housefellowship.net/bcaboverubies/

3 - 5 JUNE, ALBERTA, CANADA

FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY AND LADIES TOO

Moose Lake Gospel Camp, Glendon, Alberta
(2 1/2 hours NE of Edmonton)
Contact: Mae Renfroe
Ph: 780-836-2055 * maerenfroe@yahoo.ca
Registration: www.albertarubiesretreat.weebly.com

8 - 10 JULY, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

FAMILY AND LADIES RETREAT

at Mt. Meadows Bible Camp, Redding
Contact: Connie Lewis
Ph: 530-776-5749 * connielewis72@yahoo.com
Or Contact: Dion & Cami Halkides -
Registration: 530-223-4775 * <https://aboverubiesnocalfamilyretreat.shutterfly.com/>

19 - 21 AUGUST, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

FAMILY AND LADIES RETREAT

Pine Valley Bible Conference Center, near San Diego
Contact: Gary & Trish Evans
Ph: 951-681-4858 * bondedtogether1@yahoo.com

7 - 9 OCTOBER, LOUISIANA

FAMILY RETREAT at Bethany World Prayer Center
13855 Plank Rd, Baker, LA 70714 (near Baton Rouge).

Contact: Les and Connie Lanford
Ph: 225 774 3801 (Home) * 225 953 1970 (Cell)
Email: lanfordlegacy@cox.net
To book, go to www.la-empoweringfamilies.com

14 - 15 OCTOBER, OREGON

Location: 6680 Thurston Rd, Springfield, OR 97478

Contact: Charity Jenkins
Ph: 503-871-9535 * kengjenkins@msn.com
Or Sonia Ramsay
Ph: 503-743-3002 * upsetmyapplecart@gmail.com

28 - 30 OCTOBER, NEW ZEALAND

FAMILY/COUPLES/SINGLES

Arahina Camp, Marton
Registrar: Michelle & Jason Campbell
Ph: 09 2320381 * nzcampbellclan@gmail.com

4 - 6 NOVEMBER, NEW ZEALAND

FAMILY/COUPLES/SINGLES

Woodend Christian Camp, (25 min. north of Christchurch).
Registrar: Naomi & Ian Wilson
Ph: 03 2053544/027 9140396 * ian.nomz@hotmail.com

9 NOVEMBER, GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA

LADIES DAY SEMINAR and MEN'S EVENING MEETING

Registrar: Jodie Higurashi
Ph: 07 5679 3914 * jodiehigurashi14@gmail.com
Or Val Stares at Ph: 07 5525 1970 * valstares@aboverubies.org.au

11- 13 NOVEMBER, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

FAMILY CAMP at Woodfield, Hobart

Registrar: Lynden and Andrea Ferguson
lyndand55@bigpond.com * Webpage: aboverubies.org.au

18 - 20 NOVEMBER, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA

LADIES RETREAT at Cedar Lodge, Dundurn, SK

Contact: Anita Johnson,
Ph: 306-522-7601 * jer924@sasktel.net
Or Theresa Vanderstoel
Ph: 306-345-2039 * ctvfarms@sasktel.net
<http://www.saskaboverubies.ca>

GOD IS BIGGER THAN YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES

"I have been young, and now am old,
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or his children begging for bread"
(Psalm 37:25 ESV).

Check out this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/CanGodProvideforBaby>

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I will walk within my house with a perfect heart"
(Psalm 101:2).**

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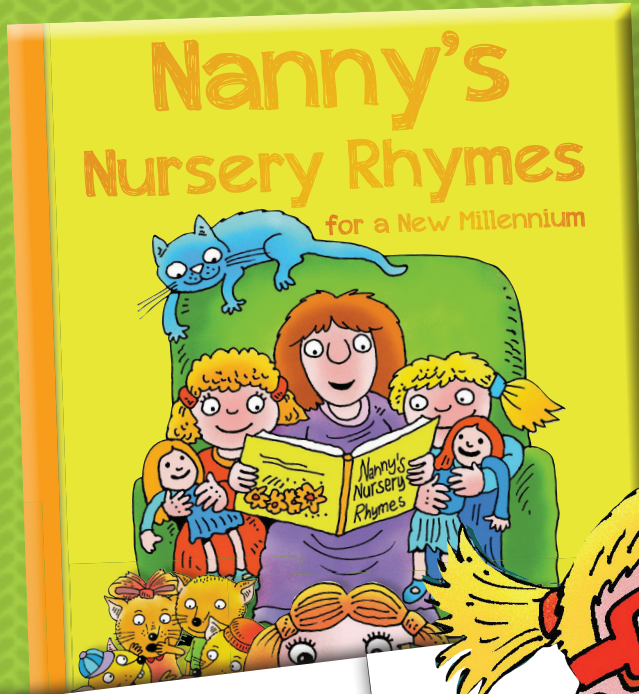
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~ Nancy Campbell



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