

ABOVE RUBIES

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Issue: Seventy-Three



Strengthening Families Across The World

From Our Home to Yours

I have recently returned from New Zealand to see my father, Ivan Bowen, before he passed away and attend his funeral. My sister and I flew out to New Zealand two days before Christmas. It was very hard to leave our four new adopted children and our big extended family at this special time of the year, but I am glad I made the decision. Nine years ago I missed seeing my mother before she passed away and I didn't want this to happen again. She died while in flight to see her!

After many hours of flying and then driving, I bounded into my father's home hoping he would still be alive. He recognized me and tried to whistle as he



He could shear a sheep in less than a minute!

After shearing a sheep my father would say, "Wool is the Queen of textiles, a miracle of nature, perfected by man. Wool is a living fibre and only sheep know how to grow it...Wool for health, wool for wealth, wool the wealth of Commonwealth... If it's not wool, forget it!"

reached out his arms to embrace me. He trained New Zealand sheep dogs for years. With his training rope and amazing whistles he could train a dog to perfect obedience within a week or two. When he arrived each year at Nashville airport for his annual visit, we would hear this unique familiar whistle and turn to find him! This time, his usually powerful whistle was feeble, but he still tried!

Along with my sister and brother and his wife, we were blessed to spend more precious days with him. He was not always able to communicate with us and was mostly sleeping, because of the morphine.

He was no longer eating and only having a little water but when I squeezed his hand he would squeeze back.

He had always been a very fit man and worked harder than any man I know, right up until he was bedridden a few months before the end. If it wasn't for the cancer (which he never acknowledged or even mentioned the word) I think he would have lived to 102! Instead, he passed away on the evening of 29 December as we gathered around his bedside, telling him we loved him. He was unconscious by this time, but they say the hearing is the last faculty to go and we trust he could hear us. He was nearly 92 years of age. He still had his rosy cheeks right up until he breathed his last breath. It was only then that the color gradually drained from his face.

It was so lovely to have him at home. After he passed away, we tucked the blankets around him and sadly went to bed. In the morning, he still looked handsome and lovely. After the embalming, we dressed him and placed him in the coffin. It was not the usual shiny coffin. It was made of rugged wood that suited this New Zealand man—a man who was not only the fastest shearer in the world in his prime, but the one who designed the Bowen shearing technique that is used today. He was a pioneer, a horse trainer, dog trainer, taxi-dermist, butcher, logger, saw-miller, bee-keeper and much more. One person expressed the sentiments of many, "A true champion—the last of a special breed in New Zealand history. We may not see his like again."

My father had many sayings, the most famous being, "A good man's never stuck." This has now become a cliché in our family. You can also hear it being repeated amongst the Agrodome staff, the tourist attraction in Rotorua where my father was the entertainer for many years. When he retired from being the Entertainer at 73 years, he didn't retire from Agrodome. Every day visitors would see a snowy-haired man walking in the fields with some sheep and a dog he was training. I often said, "He shored so many sheep in his life that he grew hair like a sheep!"



One day to glory! Although this was taken the morning before he passed away, you can still see his rosy cheeks.

But more than all his physical accomplishments, he was a man who loved God with all his heart and loved people passionately. He loved the Word of God and even in his ninety-second year continued to memorize chapters of the Bible, which he had done for years.



My parents, Ivan and Joyce Bowen, at their grand-daughter's wedding, where my mother sang a solo. They are both 80 years old in this picture.

He loved to pray. He loved to preach the gospel. He gave shearing demonstrations and preached the gospel all over New Zealand and Australia. Before we were married, we often joined him. Dad would do a shearing demonstration; my brother, Grant, would ride his one-wheel bicycles (one of them eight feet high) and play his harmonica; my sister, Kate, would sing and I would do the Maori long poi dance and recite. After this, my father would preach. Have you ever heard of such an evangelistic team? He would do anything to gather people to hear the gospel. These unusual entertainments were not done in churches, but in town halls or in woolsheds where the whole community would come out to see and hear "Ivan Bowen".

He was also a great encourager. He believed in me beyond my normal abilities. I am what I am today because he encour-

aged me. He was interested in everything we did, which continued with the grandchildren and his 46 great-grandchildren.

His funeral was a celebration of his wonderful life. As one person commented about the speeches, "They had good subject matter!" The Agrodome Entertainers carried him in his coffin to the front of the church to "Click go the Shears Boys." Towards the end of the celebration, they whistled in the sheep dogs (who are part of the Agrodome Show) who barked farewell to this man they had seen every day. He was carried to the cemetery in the Agrodome truck rather than a black hearse. We felt this was more true to the life of this New Zealand man of the land.



My mother, at another family wedding. She made all her own clothes, including her hats. She always dressed like a queen and my father was so proud of her.

It was such a blessing that my father was able to be in his home as he passed away. His "hospital" bed looked out on the hills which he so enjoyed. Some of the first words he said to me when I arrived were, "We live in such a beautiful country." But more than the view, he was in his home. I believe that, when it is possible, (of course circumstances don't always work out this way), each person should have the privilege of being born at home and dying at home. Home is the place for every aspect of life from birth to the grave. It was a privilege to attend to our dear father. Healing and grieving are more natural when you are involved in the parting rather than handing your loved one over to strangers.

We also experienced this when our son-in-law's father and our dear friend, James Allison, passed away. Sam and Serene, Colin and I and the little children were sitting on his bed as he took his last breath. We buried him the next day in a grave on the land and later that week had a big celebration for his life.

Even now, four years later, the blessing continues. The children wave and say Hi to Saba (his grandfather name) as they pass. When it is exercise time, Serene often says, "Run to Saba and back." He is still part of their lives, even though they know he lives in heaven. The adopted children, and the children who have since been born, feel they know him too because his grave is near their home.

As we have recently experienced death, we have also experienced life. Our 37th grandchild, Maxwell Lloyd Campbell was born into the world on the 27th January. This little one is Rocklyn and Monique's third son. He is our fifth Campbell grandson. You certainly need a lot of grandchildren to carry on the family name. Only five out of 37 so far!

January and February are filled with family birthdays. We started off with a wonderful evening at our eldest son's home to celebrate the 21st birthday of their eldest daughter and our eldest grand-daughter, Chanel. It's hard to believe where the years have gone. I'll never forget the moments of waiting for her birth. It is the most exciting and anticipatory moment to welcome your first child into the world. It is the same with your first grandchild. Chanel has grown into a beautiful young lady. We are very proud of her.

Apart from other family birthdays, we also celebrated Engedi's fourth birthday. Two and a half years ago she arrived from Liberia, an emaciated little toddler with legs so skinny and weak that she couldn't walk.

She had malaria and other



Chanel, with her great-granddad.



Ivan Bowen, with the sheep on the Agrodome stage, Rotorua, New Zealand. Nineteen different breeds of sheep walk up on stage at each show.

physical problems. She cried for months and had a darkness over her countenance. What a transformation to see this beautiful, happy, smiling and healthy child. She is an absolute delight and we all adore her.

Keep watch over your vineyard—your home and children. Remember that this is the sphere that God has given to you. When you are enticed away from this realm, you move out of God's perfect will. The Shulamite woman said, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard I have not kept!" (Song 1:6) Don't get side-tracked looking after other people's vineyards when your foremost task is to look after your own.

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ABOVE RUBIES

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

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More



Vehicle Space?

All little boys love vehicles that can be transformed into other vehicles. I remember how miraculous I thought it was as a child when I watched the car in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* turn into an airplane and soar high above the ocean. As the birth of our eighth child approached we were basking in the goodness of God. We were gradually coming out of poverty and into a place where we were almost paying all of our bills. However, I realized my Suburban would not accommodate a family of 10, and I needed a miracle of that magnitude.

I remembered seeing an ad for a company that installed seats in the back of SUV's to expand their seating capacity. I called a Christian man in our community who owned a salvage yard and he lovingly gave us a fourth seat that matched our interior fabric almost perfectly. After a

"The most obvious lesson in Christ's teaching is that there is no happiness in having and getting anything, but only in giving."

Henry Drummond

body shop said they couldn't install it for fear of liability, a well-meaning friend suggested we upgrade. I came home quite discouraged. I knew there was no way my husband, who worked long hours to provide for us, needed additional financial pressure of a car payment when our Suburban was paid for. Within a few days, a close friend's father-in-law volunteered to look at it.

As an engineer, he knew the safety implications of it being bolted in securely enough in the event of an accident. After dropping the fuel tank, and studying it for a couple of hours, he arrived at a plan that would make our Suburban safe enough for his own grandchildren. He installed steel plates underneath and connected strong bolts to washers on top, to ensure that it would stay in place. When I first saw it finished, I gasped. I felt butterflies in my stomach the way I had as a child in the movie theater watching that car in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* take flight.

The only issue now is one of child training: teaching the children to not quarrel over whose turn it is to sit in the cool new seat in the back. Inspired by the family in the book, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, we

declared our green Suburban to be "*The Big Green*."

I grew up in a culture that almost convinced me to invest my creative energy and giftings into a life outside the home to have more financial freedom. I could have missed out on this adventurous life had I bought in to the lie that having all the things we need the moment we need them is not God's best for His children. I am very grateful for the consistent opportunities the Lord provides for me to listen to His leadings and learn to make the most of what I already have. I've noticed my children are receiving the generational blessing of being even more resourceful than I know how to be, as this is all they've ever known.

CHACE SIMMONS

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Shane and Chase are blessed with eight children—Abbie (13), Emma (11), Jackson (10), Libby (8), Ruby (7), Ethan (5), Josephine (3) and Tate (1).

Chace has attended 16 Above Rubies retreats since the first one in Texas, November 1996.

I had the meanest mother in the whole world. While other children ate candy for breakfast, I had to have cereal, eggs or toast. When others had cokes and candy for lunch, I had to eat a sandwich. As you can guess, my supper was different than the other children's also.

But at least, I wasn't alone in my sufferings. My sister and two brothers had the same mean mother as I did.

My mother insisted upon knowing where we were at all times.

You'd think we were on a chain gang. She had to know who our friends were and where we were going. She insisted if we said we'd be gone an hour, that we be gone one hour or less—not one hour and one minute. I am nearly ashamed to admit it, but she actually struck us. Not once, but each time we had a mind of our own and did as we pleased. That poor belt was used more

on our seats than it was to hold up Daddy's pants. Can you imagine someone actually hitting a child just because he disobeyed? Now you can begin to see how mean she really was.

We had to wear clean clothes and take a bath. The other children always wore their clothes for days. We reached the height of insults because she made our clothes herself, just to save money. Why, oh why, did we have to have a mother who made us feel different from our friends?

The worst is yet to come. We had to be in bed by nine each night and up at eight the next morning. We couldn't sleep till noon like our friends. So while they slept, my mother actually had the nerve to break the child-labor law. She made us work. We had to wash dishes, make beds, learn to cook and all sorts of cruel things. I believe she laid awake at night thinking up mean things to do to us.

She always insisted upon us telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, even if it killed us—and it nearly did!

By the time we were teenagers, she was much wiser, and our life became even more unbearable. None of this tooting the horn of a car for us to come running. She embarrassed us to no end by making our dates and friends come to the door to get us. If I spent the night with a girlfriend, can you imagine she checked on me to see if I was really there. I never had the chance to elope to Mexico. That is, if I'd had a

boyfriend to elope with. I forgot to mention, while my friends were dating at the mature age of 12 and 13, my old fashioned mother refused to let me date until the age of 15 and 16. Fifteen, that is, if you dated only to go to a school function. And that was maybe twice a year.

Through the years, things didn't improve a bit. We could not lie in bed "sick" like our friends did, and miss school. If our friends had a toe ache, a hang nail or serious ailment, they could stay home from

The Meanest MOTHER in the World!

school. Our marks in school had to be up to par. Our friends' report cards had beautiful colors on them, black for passing, red for failing. My mother, being as different as she was, would settle for nothing less than ugly black marks.

As the years rolled by, first one, and then the other of us was put to shame. We were graduated from high school. With our mother behind us, talking, and demanding respect, none of us was allowed the pleasure of being a drop-out.

My mother was a complete failure as a mother. Out of four children, a couple of us attained some higher education. None of us have ever been arrested, divorced or beaten his mate. Each of my brothers served his time in the service of this country. And whom do we have to blame for the terrible way we turned out? You're right, our mean mother. Look at the things we missed. We never got to march in a protest parade, to take part in a riot, burn draft cards, and a million and one other things that our friends did. She forced us to grow up into God-fearing, educated, honest adults.

Using this as a background, I am trying to raise my three children. I stand a little taller and I am filled with pride when my children call me mean. Because, you see, I thank God, He gave me the meanest mother in the whole world.

Bobbie Pingaro ©1967



GRAMMY & THE FRIDGE



Who wouldn't want this adorable woman to move in with them? After much cajoling, bribing, begging and, finally, a little shove, she's here to stay. We've given her our guest room because it's long past the time when she should be living on her own in that big old house with all those stairs. She's finally ready to start a new life with us and we are thrilled!

I popped into the hot tub store the other day to pick up new steps for Grammy since the current ones are ready to collapse and swallow her whole. She loves her daily soak and it helps her legs work better. It made me sad when the hot tub guy said his wife would divorce him if he ever brought his Mom to live with them. I was sad for him, for his mom, and mostly for his wife. They are missing out on a very rich journey.

By "rich journey" I don't mean "nice, neat and tidy." Nooooooosiiiiirreeeee. A journey becomes rich when it is the melting together of the highs and lows, beautiful and messy, awkward and easy. My 20+ years getting to know my mother-in-law have been all of those things. But, during those years the two of us stumbled across a little secret experiment that has become the glue in our relationship.

It started out quite by accident. About ten years ago, she needed to live with us for a few weeks during radiation treatments following a tumor removal. SHE NEEDED ME. And I was fine with folding her into my daily routine of laundry, cooking and diapers because... I NEEDED HER! My peeps were toddler

and newborn. What a gift it was to me when she would cuddle and play with toddler peep early in the morning so the newborn peep and I could sleep. And how about being able to go grocery shopping without toddler and newborn peep in tow? THAT was better than dark chocolate, let me tell ya. The day she headed back home felt like the day my own Mama left me for the first time to fend for myself with newborn peep #1. "Don't leave me!" I wailed. "What if he cries?"

The Grammy and I have continued this little experiment of ours over the years. She folds my laundry and empties my dishwasher and I make her green smoothies and pick up her favorite yogurt and ice cream when I go to town. She plays board games and cards with the peeps and I help her in and out of the hot tub. This is how we roll. Is it cool! My heart would sink a little each time she headed for home after a visit with us. Not anymore. THIS is her home now! I find her in her chair by the wood stove every morning, Bible open on her lap, having coffee with Jesus. It's like she's always been there and will never leave.

I know I am fortunate. I like my M.I.L. I've liked her from the start. That doesn't mean I wanted her to live with me. No. You see, I was an uptight little newlywed. I had to have things "just so." Her refrigerator was way too cluttered for my comfort zone. And she liked to mix all sorts of leftovers together to make casseroles! We enjoyed one another's com-

pany just fine but danced the Mother-in-Law/Daughter-in-Law dance most of the time. I'd get the fridge ready before she'd come to visit and make sure all my leftovers were tossed in the garbage (and rolled out to the curb because I'd seen some of her garage sale "treasures" and figured she might not be above dumpster-diving.) She probably said extra prayers as well that she wouldn't bump into my easily-offended little self or get in the way of my household sterilization routine.

But I had children. Oh sure, I was still able to hold onto my Howie Mandel ways with peep #1. His whole little world was bleached and tidy. But by the time peep #3 came along this is what my fridge looked like—yikes!

The Grammy and I were fast friends and quickly learning how to suck the marrow out of our little experiment. Together

we have learned that much fruit comes from choosing to serve one another. I have learned that my dear husband is blessed when I love on his Mama. She has taught me that pausing for a cup of tea is much more fun than cleaning the fridge. And most, of all, she has taught me to pray unceasingly for the spouses of each of my children—wherever they may be.

I love what Paul says in Galatians 5:13, "Rather,

use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows."

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Mike and Holly are blessed with Ben (13), Jacob (10) and Mary (8).

You can read more about their farm and The Grammy at www.mclanefarm.com





On March 13, 1981, I gave birth to our first child, Jeremy David and on December 26, 1982 our second child was born, Jessica Danielle. Our children had several health issues from the day they were born, causing us to resent them just a little. We were very young and did not know the Lord. We had never known a family that truly nurtured their children, thus we had no example to follow. The world taught us to just “make it” until they were grown, and we were having a hard time with that! In the summer of 1983, we chose to have a vasectomy. Our family would be complete—a son and a daughter. What more could we ask for!

On March 11, 1986, my husband and I asked Jesus Christ to forgive us of our sins, asked Him to come into our hearts and made Him Lord of our lives. He began to remake our shattered lives.

On New Year’s Day, 1989, I got up and began to read my Bible, starting at Genesis. The usual eight to ten chapters didn’t seem to satisfy that morning. I kept reading. I was filled with anticipation of what God was going to tell me. I got to Genesis 25:24, “And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.” A satisfaction came over me and I was able to put His Word down. But I was baffled. Was God promising me another child? How could that happen? It was impossible. Yet, I believed this was God’s Word to me.

Every day I thought about the word I received on New Year’s Day and asked God to show me what He meant by the words I had read. I came to the conclusion that God must want us to adopt. He had changed our hearts regarding children to

the point of giving me the desire to have more.

A few weeks later, I was in a doctor’s office with one of my children when I glanced at a magazine and saw the headlines, “Vasectomy Reversals”. I had never heard of them before. I quickly picked up the magazine and began to read. It was incredible. It was also \$20,000, of which insurance would not pay. I put the magazine down. We had no money for something like that. In the days that followed, I couldn’t get the article off my mind and the fact that I was in “that” office at “that” time to see “that” article. Was God trying to speak to me?

A few weeks later, I was in a dentist office. Again, there was another article about reversals. In disbelief, I picked up the magazine and began to read. This magazine stated the cost of a reversal at about

\$12,000, still far beyond our means. A month later that my husband went to an urologist concerning side aches he had been having. After being examined, the doctor said, “I could do surgery and take care of this pain or you can just live with it.” My husband decided to live with the pain. We were getting ready to leave the doctor’s office when out of the clear blue sky, he said, “By the way, I noticed that you have had a vasectomy. If you ever decide to have it reversed, let me know.” There it was again, right in front of us. My husband and I talked on the way home but he was not convinced he wanted more children. The subject was dropped.

I began to fast and pray. I had to know if a reversal was God’s plan for us. I made a phone call to this doctor’s office and found that he was one of the leading reversal doctors in the country at this time. He practiced in a large city about an

hour away and came to our area once a week to see patients. To make a long story short, he agreed to bring one of his nurses with him and do the surgery at our country hospital. The cost would be a total of \$5,000! And they would allow us to pay the bill a little at a time until it was paid.

I brought the subject up to my husband once again. To my surprise, God had changed his heart. The doctor performed the surgery in March of 1989, the first of many more to be performed at that little country hospital. Although the surgery was a success surgically, we were told that my husband would probably never father children. His counts were way too low. The vasectomy had been done too many years before for it to be successful.

Through His Word, I believed God reassured me of rearing more children. On

Nearly Ten Years Wait!



Left to right: Jasmine (7), Jessica (25 married), Jeremy (26 married), Jireh (5), Jonathan (10)

January 4, 1990, I read Jeremiah 33:14, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord that I will perform that good thing which I have promised...” Two days later I read Psalm 145:19, “He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him...” December 9, 1991 came Song of Solomon 4:2, “...whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.”

I was told by a good friend to speak out what I had been promised to others. Little did I know it would be many years of standing on His promises and proclaim-

ing it to others before it would come to pass. A lady, upon hearing the promise God had given me, crotched a red baby blanket in April of 1990, as a gift for me.

I believe now that I know why I was unable to stop reading my Bible that January 1, 1989. I know why I was in those doctor and dentist offices on those days. I know why my husband had those side aches (which totally disappeared as soon as the reversal was performed). God is sovereign and His timing is perfect. It is our job to obey; it is His job to do with our lives what He desires to do.

On December 20, 1997, nearly ten years after my husband's reversal, we welcomed into our home our first reversal baby, Jonathan David Thomas. His birth was quick and easy. I was home within 12 hours after his birth. What joy! God fulfilled His promise to me. For years I had clung to Romans 4:21-22 (KJV), "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded

that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

I never dreamed that God would choose to bless us beyond the son He had promised. Yet, on August 24, 2000, God gave us another daughter, Jasmine Danae Jean. Then, to our surprise, on July 26, 2002, He blessed us with yet another daughter, Jireh Danelia Joy.

The story doesn't end there. In August of 2004, at the age of 42, I found I was pregnant again! My life, at this time, had become very busy with two married children and two grandchildren, the three little ones, serving in the church and a new area of our home based sewing business just getting started. I had just found out that our daughter was expecting her second child in March and now I would follow her two weeks later with another baby.

My husband and I both grumbled with discontent. What in the world was God doing? We were not ready for this. The very thing we had so desired from the

Lord now felt like a burden. Fourteen weeks into the pregnancy, I went to the midwife and found the baby was no longer alive. Immediately, God spoke to my heart and showed me how my husband and I had been like the children of Israel by complaining about the blessing He had chosen to give us. It was a sad day for me when I realized that God had taken back what He had so graciously given to us as a precious gift. I felt like David when he said in 2 Samuel 12:23b, "...I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

I will never hold our baby girl in my arms here on this earth, but I know that I will one day meet her face to face when I get to Heaven. Our little Annie renewed in us a right spirit of allowing God to be in charge of our childbearing years. How we long to hold another baby in our arms if He so desires.

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LAMINATE THE POSTERS

I recently ordered the poster pack from your website and had the posters laminated. They are right now hanging throughout my home. They are beautiful reminders of tenets we hold dear and goals we have for our family. It is good, especially for ME, to see them and reflect on them throughout my day.

PATRICIA DUNN
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TABLE REMINDERS

We have found a wonderful way to use the beautiful Etiquette posters available through *Above Rubies*. We use a piece of clear vinyl (available in hardware stores) on our table to keep from soiling our table cloth when we eat. Recently I tucked the posters under the clear vinyl. Now, while we are eating, or sitting at the table we can read and learn all about etiquette! At each meal I have the children switch seats so they can all get a turn sitting at a different poster. The vinyl keeps the posters clean, flat and beautiful.

REBECCA HUFF
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TThere was a time during my journey as a mother that I did not want any more children. My dreams and plans did not include more sleepless nights and runny noses. Two were enough for me. During this time, I went on a trip to Italy with my mother to do research on a novel that I was planning to write. I left Zoe-Mari (3) and Victor (18 months) with my husband, Robert, and a domestic helper. I decided, before the trip, to take the Pill to regulate my cycle so the trip would not be complicated by 'inconveniences'.

I had not been using the Pill for years because long term use makes me ill. We had been using other forms of contraception to make sure that no surprise would interrupt my 'dreams'. The trip was a wonderful time of attempting adventures and bonding with my mother. I took different types of medication during the trips for a variety of reasons—sleeplessness, stomach pains and nausea.

During one of these sick spells in a bathroom of a guesthouse in Rome, I had the fleeting thought, 'What if I am pregnant?' I immediately pushed the thought away and determined to enjoy the trip. It had cost so much to get here and my family were making sacrifices to let me do it. Little did I know what the real cost of the trip would be.

We were gone for seventeen days. I coped without my children by not allowing myself to think too much. It was wonderful to see them at the airport and to finally be back home. I immediately left the Pill so my body could get back into its own hormonal rhythm again.

Four days after returning, I started having heavy cramps such as never before. It was a Thursday and a visit to the toilet told me the awful truth. I held a precious baby covered in blood in my hand. The placenta was small, but perfectly formed, hiding a little child from my sight. Time stood still as I realized that I had been pregnant before the trip—before I took all the medicine to make the trip convenient.

I called Robert and he immediately said, "God, forgive me for not wanting more children!" Together, we put our tiny baby in a pretty little box. We clung to each other that night, each with their own feelings of guilt and shame.

The next morning we took the little box, went to Robert's mother's grave in the cemetery, dug a little hole on top of

In the arms of Grace

her grave, and committed our child to God. The arum lilies were not the only thing I left on that combined grave—I left part of myself there too.

It literally took years for me to get over what happened that Thursday night. I think, on some level, I will always grieve what could have been. I've learned many things from our baby's death:

I've learned that it is easier to say good-bye if you've had a chance to say "Hello." That is why I named him Simon. I allowed myself to acknowledge him, love him and let him go into God's hands.

I've learned that God is the author of life and death. If God wanted Simon to live, he would have lived in spite of my mistakes. I've learned that even in the shadow of death, God's grace is present.

I've learned that children are precious gifts from God. They are not an interruption of my life, but part of the fulfilment of my destiny.

I've learned that wholeness comes slowly but certainly. I went through a season where my other children became an idol to me. I idolized them because I couldn't forgive myself for what happened. When I realized that Jesus did not judge or condemn me for Simon's death, I was able to forgive myself and Jesus took his rightful place in my heart again.

I've learned that Simon was like a seed, a little person who gave his life to turn his father and mother's hearts towards their children.

And now? I still have dreams. I still want to write that novel, someday. But, now I know that my highest form of worship is to love and serve my husband and my children. That is a pleasing sacrifice to God, a sacrifice I give willingly and happily, knowing that I, my children and my dreams are safe in the arms of grace.



LISL FAIR

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Robert and Lisl are the parents of Zoe-Mari, Victor and Abigail.

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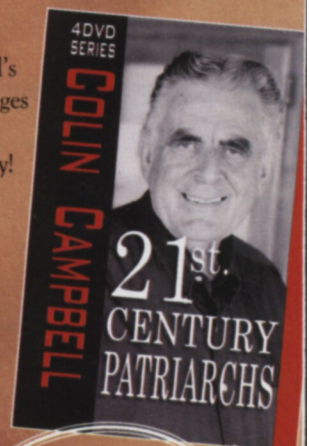
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*"The time to be happy is now.
The place to be happy is here." -Robert Ingersoll*

I have this quote on a flip calendar. To be honest, I used to look at that quote and be angry. I knew it was true, but I just didn't want to do it. I didn't want to be happy now... in this house...in this city...in this state. I would be happy later...when I lived somewhere else...when I had everything I wanted...but not now...and certainly not here.

I learned, though, that if we are not content with where we are, we will not be content elsewhere either. I found this out through a painful experience.

In June, 2003, my husband found himself without a job, beginning what turned out to be 25 months of unemployment. All because of me! I was miserably unhappy, had been for nearly 10 years. I was absolutely sure that moving to another area of the country was what I needed. Despite the fact that we had already, three years earlier, moved to another area of the country (from Florida to Idaho) I was still miserable. I was sure that this time it would be different. I would be happy, if only my husband would move me to Georgia!

Yes, Georgia! I badgered him, complained constantly, and made life so miserable for him that he finally agreed! He is a wonderful, loving husband who desperately wants me to be happy. He would give me

the moon if I asked! He quit his job, we sold our house, and, once more, made the long, cross-country drive.

But I WASN'T happy. I was still miserable. Only worse, now my entire family was also miserable. My husband was devastated because he could not find a job and provide for his family. Plus, he had loved Idaho and had not wanted to leave. He missed the mountains, and he hated the humidity! Every day, I could see how unhappy he was. My children hated it too. Everyone's heart was back in Idaho. Not only was my husband not finding a job, he couldn't even get an interview. It was a very bleak time as we lived on our home equity, with absolutely NO money coming in.

After three months we knew we were out of God's will. It had not been the Lord's intent for us to move to Georgia. It had been my plan. I had demanded my husband follow my leading (clearly NOT a teaching of scripture!), and yet I expected God to bless the plan. We determined that we needed to return to Idaho, to where God had placed us before we (!!) decided we (!!) didn't want to be there. I hadn't wanted to bloom where I was planted—another quote I used to hate because I didn't want to do it.

Three months after leaving Idaho, we made another cross-country move and came back. Do you know how expensive it is to move a house full of stuff 3,000 miles? Twice? We lived in a rental house, on our

quickly diminishing home equity, while my husband sought employment. But he did not get a job until July, 2005. He did some custodial work and some construction work to bring in a bit of money, but the Lord did not open a door for full-time employment in his career field for 25 months!

Naturally, with the expense of two cross-country moves and living expenses for a family of four (and a dog) with minimal income, our finances were a disaster. Our home equity, which had once been fairly substantial, was nearly gone. We estimated our monetary losses at least \$60,000 (probably more), thus our \$60,000, three month vacation.

I found out by experience that no matter where I go, I still have to deal with myself. My real problem is discontent! The secret to happiness is learning to be content with what I have, not having exactly what I want.

I also learned that God does not lead my family through me. He leads through my husband. If I badger my husband into doing what I want, not allowing him to lead the family, I cannot expect God to bless that endeavor!

I have now found we CAN choose to be happy right where we are, whether it be the country or the city, and we CAN choose to make our homes the havens we want them to be. We CAN choose to be content and to bloom where we are planted.

Yes, "The time to be happy is now; the place to be happy is here."

PATTI GARDNER

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Gary and Patti's children are Gabrielle (18) and Garrett (16).

Patti also wrote a testimony in *Above Rubies* # 69, entitled "I Left My Joy Behind".





A GOOD DAY

op while the children learn.

I never thought I would enjoy anything more than watching my babies take their first steps or hear them say their first words. Now, I have had the joy of seeing my fifth grade daughter understand long division for the first time. I watch my second grade daughter run to the map every time she hears of a new city or country she just "has to" find. I get to hear my kindergarten son read his very first words to me.

The joys of being a stay-at-home-mom have carried over sevenfold the past five years I have been home schooling. Most days don't go this well. In fact, there have been times when I felt like sending them to school. Then a day like today comes along and I wouldn't trade home schooling for anything else in the world. We have made so many friends and have done so many things together we would have missed. The children have learned to learn for the sake of learning, not only to pass a test.

We have learned to stop and see

God's creation all around us. We actually found larva hiding under a rock. We watched a Finch family eat sunflower seeds right out of the big sunny faces of the sunflowers we planted together this past spring. We watched a tadpole week after week as it changed into a frog. I love to watch my children's faces light up as they discover something new. I love to hear my girls read books to their brother. I have fun finding the answers to all their questions as we discover them together. Most of all, I can share my faith in God with my children everyday as a part of school.

Yes, this has been a good day. I am blessed to be a home school mom.

AIMEE GUZMAN

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*Dan and Aimee are blessed with Lyxi (13),
Madison (11), Jadon (9) and a special reversal
baby Emmitt (7 months)*

Today was a good day at our home school. The girls practiced their instruments and Junior Bible Quiz. We got some chores done and now all four of us are sitting down to do school work.

Gone are the days of bulky swings in my family-room and stepping on rattles and Cheerios. I've traded that in for maps on my family room wall and stepping on math books left out. Gone are the days of chatting with moms at McDonald's Play land while the children play. Now, I chat with other home school moms at our co-

God loves you!

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

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

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

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

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

Pray this prayer now: "Lord Jesus Christ, I repent of all my sins.
I accept your sacrifice upon the cross for the forgiveness of my sins.

I welcome you into my heart right now as my Lord and Savior.
Thank you, Lord Jesus for hearing my prayer. Amen."

“ don't have time to do everything I'm supposed to do." It was unanimous. All the moms in our home school group raised their hands when I asked them if they agreed with this statement. The all too familiar frustration and exhaustion was mirrored all around the table as we contemplated this issue. There must be some way to get off the fast-paced, never-ending treadmill that constitutes life in the 21st century.

It hasn't always been like this. The sharp contrast of slow-paced pioneer life captured my attention while reading the Wilder book "Farmer Boy". I was impressed by how resourceful and hard-working they were. In addition to raising their own food and manufacturing all of their own goods, they had no running water, no electricity and no washing machines, plus they usually had many more children to care for than we do. What really caught my attention was the relatively calm pace displayed throughout their orderly lives. Without exception, they rested all day Sunday, gladly took impromptu days off when the weather was unsuitable for farming and didn't make a habit out of being pressured by deadlines or worried about not being able to finish their formidable list of chores.

It has been said that our modern lives afford us the equivalent of fifty full-time servants in the form of time-saving devices and equipment! Why, therefore, is this generation of God's children so overwhelmed with never-ending to-do lists? This is a complicated problem with many factors, but at the heart of the matter are two lies to which we 'modern' women have fallen prey.

In her book, "Lies Women Believe and the Truth that Sets Them Free", Nancy Leigh DeMoss has much to say about this deception. Lie number eighteen in her book reads: "I don't have time to do everything I'm supposed to do!" She argues that "every area of bondage in our lives can be traced back to a lie and that believing and acting on the Truth is our means to freedom." Speaking to believers, Jesus said, "If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

How much of what we seek to accomplish is what God wants us to do?

Consider what Jesus accomplished in His few short years of ministry on earth. Did you ever marvel at the fact that He had a pretty limited amount of time to accomplish the entire plan of redemption? He was able to say with full confidence to His Father, "I have brought you glory on earth by **completing** the work You gave me to do." (John 17:4, emphasis mine). You see, Jesus didn't finish all the work that the crowds of people wanted (there were always more people to heal), or even what his disciples wanted (to overthrow the Roman government). He completed what God set before Him to do. How much of what we plan to accomplish each day is what God would have us do?

This truth brings to light a second and related lie that states: "I can do it all." It goes something like this: I can be the ideal wife and mother, keep a tidy house, prepare healthy meals on time, be active in my children's education and in my church and community, stay physically fit, keep up on current events, drive the children to their many outside involvements and have a full-time job outside my home." The truth is that any woman who tries to wear all of those hats effectively is setting herself up for defeat because it ISN'T POSSIBLE! What a relief to know that I can't do it all and that I'm not expected to.

Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Mathew 11:28-30)

I have found that I need to give the first-fruits of each day's time and energy to God. Speaking from first-hand experience, I can now predict the outcome of my days and weeks based solely upon the regularity of my time with God each morning. I don't mean just getting the tasks completed, although that does seem to fall into place more easily, but attaining the meek and gentle attitude I so desire, taking time to enjoy my children as well as learning how to rightly prioritize my life.

Armed with the knowledge that God is top priority (hence He gets my first time

in the morning), then husband, children and everything else (extended family, friends, church service, work etc) it is time to act! I have found that it takes ongoing, diligent effort to keep from overextending myself and the children with activities and responsibilities outside the home. While there is nothing inherently wrong with soccer games, music lessons or teaching Sunday school, there are seasons when these things are NOT what God would have me do. I believe that one of the missing elements of modern life is time spent together as a family unit.

The missing element of modern life is time spent together as a family!

It takes wisdom, coupled with hard decisions, to successfully guard precious family time. This can mean declaring as "off limits" certain times of the day. The dinner hour belongs to our family! Whenever I feel guilty about what my children are missing, or sorry for myself because of what I can't manage, I remind myself to look ahead. I will have ALL OF ETERNITY to see, enjoy and experience fully what will be so amazing that "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9) My God-given agenda is not to "do it all" here on earth. Just the opposite. Jesus commands us to "Store up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Mathew 6:20)

To assist me with these tough decisions, I enlist my husband. God has placed me under His authority to protect me. When the phone rings to ask me to take on a task, or the children ask to go somewhere or join up for something, I do not answer right away. Instead, "I will talk it over with my husband and get back to you" is my calm, guilt-free reply. We talk about it, consider the impact on our family as a whole, pray about it and THEN I give an answer. It is never a valid reason to serve because "no one else will do it if you don't!" Sometimes my answer is "not now" and later the same opportunity arises and this time it is clearly what God would have me do. My new motto is: When in doubt... DON'T!

What's the Rush?



If our children spend all their time being taxed out of the home, how will they learn to enjoy home and family life as adults?

I remember feeling guilty about staying home with my young children and not involving them in activities (like swimming lessons) outside the home when a wise friend of mine said, "Don't forget that enjoying home life is a lesson your children are learning that will greatly benefit both them and their children some day!" If our children spend all of their time being taxed out of the home, how are we to expect them to settle down and enjoy home and family life as adults?

In Exodus 20:8-11 God lays down the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy. We are now under the new law of grace, but there are some pretty insightful principles on rest and guarding family time found in these verses. What do you think an entire family who is not permitted to work does once a week? They rest... TOGETHER! If God Himself took a day off to rest after creating the universe (talk about a long to-do list!) this principle is worth considering. Just because stores are open on Sunday doesn't mean we have to consider Sunday a work day like any other. Maybe we could organize and plan our schedules (as our parents and grandparents

did) to eliminate the need to shop on that day? Maybe we could take a stand with our children that Sunday is a day where sports activities are out, enabling the family to make it to church regularly.

I am no longer concerned that my to-do list differs from others around me. My situation (age, health, number and age of children, personality, weaknesses and strengths, husband's desires, extended family) is unique, so why would my priorities look the same as my friends? I certainly hope they differ from those who do not claim to be a follower of Christ! Armed with the truth, and acting upon it, I can gladly say that the bondage of daily anxiety is being broken, along with the harried, stressed-out, hectic lifestyle!

I am glad to be living in the 'slow lane', enjoying the scenery and cherishing the small-town atmosphere in my life. The slow-lane is not restricted by geography or dependent upon population. It can be accessed by any and all who seek it. Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

ROBIN HERMAN

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Ron and Robin are blessed with Rebecca (8), Naomi (6), Gregory (4), Abigail (2) and Daniel (3 wks).

Ministry DEFINED!

Secretly you came—
Stealthily
By night
You crept into my rounded cove
And bedded down.
I didn't know
It was determined
That a seed
Dividing, multiplying,
Taking what was "mine"
Would rob selfishness
In order to enrich me.

Though baffled and unskilled
I soon excited!
You were
What I dreamed of
Years ago
Before some aired voice
Told me it was foolish
To waste time
On treasures of eternity.

Your little person lit my purpose
And cleared a direction
For full speed ahead
With ministry defined.

As God brought forth
Our firstborn child
Heaven answered the
"What do I want to be
when I grow up?"

A mother!

JANET CARLTON

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Janet wrote this poem for her first born son. Janet and her husband, John are now blessed with nine children, Ken, Emily, Sarah, Joel, David, Mark, Carol, Seth and Isaac.

My passage into womanhood was wrought with shame, pain and isolation. No one is really to blame. My mother lost her mother when she was 13 years old and had no one to guide her into the intricacies of womanhood. When my first period started at the tender age of ten, she was at a loss of what to do. She shoved a book into my hands, "What Every Girl Should Know" and from there on I was more or less on my own.

In my late teen years God gave me a revelation of what womanhood means to Him. He turned shame into glory and isolation into a growing confidence that I belong to Him—body, soul and spirit. In my early twenties He gave me a Godly husband who loves me just the way I am. He affirmed my womanhood.

When our first child was a girl, I was initially afraid that I would not be able to pass along God's vision for womanhood to her. I underestimated God and Zoe-Mari (now six years). She is intensely feminine and beautiful.

Zoe-Mari was around four years old when I fell pregnant with our third child. She was fascinated. The changes in my body astounded her and she spent many hours playing 'mommy' with her baby doll tucked under her shirt. We looked at books with photographs and diagrams of prenatal development and she quickly understood that the baby was growing in my womb.

One of the defining moments during this pregnancy came when she asked me to explain to her what a 'womb' is. God helped me to explain that a womb is like a nest in a woman's body that receives and nurtures a baby. I explained to her that she also has a womb and that in the right time, God will give her a husband and babies too. She listened to me with wide eyes, stood for a while and then leaped onto the bed yelling, "I have

Femininity REDEEMED



a womb! I have a womb!" while jumping and waving her arms. Just after her sister, Abigail was born, I found Zoe-Mari crying in the night. When I asked her what was wrong, she replied, "I am so sad because I can't be a mommy yet!"

I'm thankful to God that He chose me to "Raise up the foundation of many generations and to be the repairer of the breach." (Isaiah 58:12) I have the privilege to help establish my girls in Godly womanhood. When the time is right, I'll explain to Zoe-Mari that her womb prepares itself to receive a baby every month and if she does not conceive her period will start. Shedding blood is the womb's way of 'cleaning out the nest' when conception does not take place. What a privilege to teach my girls that women are truly fearfully and wonderfully made.

LISL FAIR

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Robert and Lisl are the parents of Zoe-Mari, Victor and Abigail.



How do I manage?

My children are all downstairs taking their daily two to three hour naps. I am upstairs enjoying what I call, my "Sanity time!" When my husband and I married four and a half years ago, I won't say it was exactly our idea to move so rapidly from two to six! I came from a family of nine children, spaced evenly and naturally at 21 or 24 months apart. I never envisioned that it would be different for me. Our little ones all came at one year or 15 month intervals!

On the many occasions that people comment, "You have your hands full!" I reply, "Yeah, I do, but we have a lot of fun!" I sometimes feel like a child that never grew up, especially when my children and I are out slip and sliding, swinging, making cookies, or squirting each other with the hose. On the other hand, having a little "day care" like ours takes lots of work! Here are a few tips on how I manage.

Schedule

I have never been one to handle a lot of noise. During the times when two or maybe even three are crying at once, I feel like my brain will burst! Because of that, a schedule works out well for me. Our mornings, however, are fairly unscheduled, up until lunch. The children get up in the morning at their own times, each waking and rising of his own accord (unless of course, another sibling has awakened him). When they are all up, we have breakfast together.

After breakfast, I load the dishwasher and clean up the kitchen while the children play. If the weather is nice, we all head outside for some fresh air. The rest of the morning is usually spent tidying up the bedroom and bathrooms, then playing, reading, coloring, etc. Story times follows after lunch.

Sanity Time

Children need naps! My children become irritable and crabby without a good, afternoon nap. After play time (hopefully outside) and lunch, we sit down and have a story. After story time, it is time for every-

one to nap. This plays a big part in the routine because it gives them time to wind down and relax. By the time we are done reading, they are usually very sleepy or already asleep. If you are beginning this habit, it may take a week or two to get them on schedule. For the first few days, they may toss and turn for a long time, but eventually, they WILL fall asleep. As I do this every day at the same time, their bodies get used to it. While the children sleep, I clean up the living room, catch up on laundry, and get dinner started. It also gives me some time for Bible reading, or catching up with friends by phone or e-mail. By the time the children are up, things are pretty much under control and the house is fairly clean.

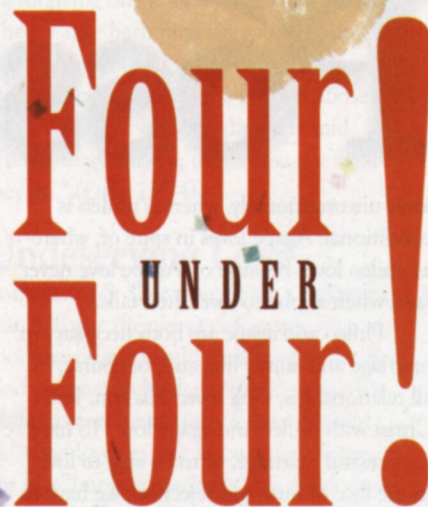
Housework

As far as house work goes, I have found that doing some quick cleaning every day keeps things fresh and I never have a day where I have to do big time cleaning. A few times a week, in the mornings, I take a can of *Scrubbing Bubbles* and hit the bathrooms. During the in-between days, I use a damp cloth or Clorox cleanup wipes to wipe the tile floors and dust off bathroom window sills. Toilets at our house, especially when toddlers are using them, need a quick spray down with bathroom cleaner every day. This all takes about five minutes per bathroom. The bedroom is the same. I try to keep the dresser surfaces uncluttered so dusting is a breeze. I vacuum once a week.

Collapsible laundry baskets help keep things organized. We keep one in each bathroom. The boys are learning to put their dirty clothes there at bathtime and other items during the day. I also highly recommend the stain remover, *SHOUT*. It has saved many nice clothes!

I try not to allow eating in the bedrooms or living room. The children must eat at the table, or in the highchair. Snacking is done outside or in the kitchen. This helps eliminate dirty handprints on the walls, couches, and everywhere else. After meal times, I try to clean off sticky hands as soon as they are finished eating.

The living room cleaning is always last. I do that while the children nap. I can do it twice as fast that way and there is no need to keep it clean when they are awake and playing! Order and cleanliness are good for children to learn, but I don't want them to feel like they can't play. Most



Four! UNDER Four!

of the children's toys are kept in our upstairs bedroom in a large toybox. The children can run up and play there and the mess stays out of sight.

I am currently working on, (and probably will be for some time) training my children to pick up and put toys away. While I tend to err on the "clean freak" side, I realize my children need to be able to play and enjoy life! I am trying to be moderate about this. After all, a clean heart is much more important than a clean house! On the other hand, teaching our children good work ethics will greatly impact their future, and their children's future. My own mother taught us to work and enjoy it! The reward of having a clean house is well worth the effort. I believe that part of teaching children to work is for them to see us work! When they see Mom and Dad working hard and enjoying it, they will pitch right in and help too!

I am amazed at the little tasks our toddlers can do! They put their sippy cups in the sink when done with a drink, fold dish cloths and wash cloths, put away their own clothes, (if the drawers are easy to open) take out the bathroom trash, and do many other simple chores. Before I was married I helped a friend out who was married and had several small children. I remember being very impressed to see her four-year-old daughter get a load of laundry out of the dryer and fold it!

Meal Times

We try to eat healthy, home-cooked meals for the most part, but it can be challenging to get the meal on the table by five thirty, especially with the dozens of interruptions that we mother's face! I try to stick with 30 to 60 minute dishes; spaghetti and salad, tacos, chicken and apple salad, grilled cheese sandwiches, meatballs, rice, and salad, Fajita's, etc. I am blessed to have a husband who is the opposite of picky and eats gratefully whatever I serve. I am very thankful for my dishwasher that faithfully washes a full load of dirty dishes per day.

Training

The most important aspect of running an orderly household is training our children. While I know that discipline and correction are necessary, I believe that treating our children with respect and dignity helps them live up to the ideals we expect of them. I would much rather have my children obey from the heart than from fear of punishment! If we would have our children to respect us, we in turn should treat them with respect. If we desire our children's friendship, we in turn must treat them as we would treat a good friend.

My husband often reminds me, "We're raising men, not boys!" I struggle at times to keep my voice calm and firm, but have seen much more favorable results this way than when using an angry voice. A verse the Lord has impressed on my heart lately is, "Thy gentleness has made me great." Just as the Lord is gentle, merciful, patient and forgiving toward us, so we also should be toward our little ones.

I know the Lord gives special grace to those of us who have small children close together. We have been blessed with babies who travel, eat and sleep well! I attribute this to the grace of God! He is faithful and bears us up on His everlasting arms!

Motherhood is a great challenge but a big adventure in life! Someday I hope to present our children to Christ as faithful servants who loved and served him. They will be my offering to Christ!

CECILY CARROLL

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Our darling little ones are Gabriel (3 1/2), Joshua age (2 1/2), Sarah (1 1/2) and Michael (5 months).

How

do you get on with love? It is easy to love people when they are nice to you, isn't it? It is easy to feel "in love" with your husband when he is amicable to you. It is easy to love your children when they behave the right way. But what happens when friends and family say nasty things behind your back? How do you feel when your husband is argumentative, or even hostile? Or perhaps even disinterested in you? You don't feel he loves you any more and your love for him has gone out the door. What about when your children are driving you crazy? What if they disrespect you, or even abuse you? What do you do then?

If love was dependent upon how people react to us, it would not survive. Many relationships are difficult. Sometimes it is easier to feel hate rather than love. But without love family life would fall apart. I am sure you are familiar with the different Greek words for love. The first is *eros* which is sexual love. It gives pleasure to the senses. It is a God-given love but this kind of love is not enough to hold a marriage together for life. It takes other kinds of love—*phileo*, *storge* (which is similar to *phileo*) and *agape*.

Phileo is tender affectionate love. It is the love we feel with our emotions. When Paul exhorts the older women to teach the younger women to "love their husbands and to love their children" he uses the word *phileo*. God wants wives to be affectionate to their husbands. He wants them to be best friends. He wants mothers to tenderly love their children, to nurture, comfort and nourish them. Some marriages live happily together all their lives when both show *phileo* love to one another. But when *phileo* love turns off in either the husband or wife, then there are problems. It is then we need another kind of love.

This other kind of love was rarely mentioned in Greek literature until Jesus came. He introduced a love that goes beyond natural feelings and passions. *Agape* love is God's love. It is the very character of God. It keeps on loving even when abused and hated. It keeps loving even when the person is ugly and horrible. *Agape* loves because it wills to love, whereas *phileo* loves according to how we feel. *Agape* loves indiscriminately, whereas *phileo* discriminates. *Agape*

Is it Possible?

loves unconditionally, whereas *phileo* is conditional. *Agape* loves in spite of, whereas *phileo* loves because of. *Agape* love never fails, whereas *phileo* love often fails.

Phileo and *agape* are both necessary in marriage and family life, and, of course, in all relationships. God loved His son, Jesus Christ with *phileo* and *agape* love. To have a successful marriage, or to be able to love in the face of hurt and rejection, we have to add *agape* to our *phileo* love. *Agape* love is needed for the long haul.

Peter urges us to add *agape* love to our human affectionate love, "Add to godliness brotherly kindness (*philadelphia*); and to brotherly kindness love (*agape*)." (2 Peter 1:7 and 1:22 and 1 Thessalonians 4:9)

Agape love is not in you or me! *Agape* love is only in Christ. 1 Timothy 1:14 and 2 Timothy 1:13 speak about "the love which is Christ Jesus." The amazing revelation is that Christ Jesus lives in you and me! Because He lives in us by His Holy Spirit, *agape* love is in us! In Christ we can love with *agape* love! This is supernatural. Can you believe it? As we believe it, affirm it, confess it and walk in it by faith, we can love the unlovely, love when abused, love when rejected, love when spitefully used. Oh the power of redemption. Jesus Christ not only redeems us from our sin, but indwells us by His Holy Spirit with all His love, joy, peace and longsuffering.

Agape love cannot be described in one word. As I read through the New Testament I found over thirty descriptions of *agape* love. Join with me as we discover more of what *agape* love is all about.

Unfeigned Love

Agape love is not hypocritical. The Knox translation calls it "unaffected love." It is unaffected by circumstances or the behavior of the person.

Genuine and Sincere Love

Romans 12:9 says, "Let your love be sincere." (Also 2 Corinthians 8:8)

Serving Love

"By love serve one another." (Galatians 5:13) The word *serve* is *diakoneo* which means to serve like a slave. We don't serve because we are a slave. We serve because we love. Many times you can feel overwhelmed by the tasks you face as a mother. There is so much work to do. Every sweet little child adds more work. Your husband expects you to do this and do that. Change your thinking. Don't think of yourself as a servant. Think love. Love loves to serve. Love serves with delight.

Forbearing Love

"Forbearing one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2) *Forbearing* means to endure and put up with those who are difficult to put up with! It means to bear patiently with idiosyncrasies that annoy you. This kind of love bears lovingly with the weaknesses of those in your home. I love the Way's translation of 1 Corinthians 13:4 which says, "Love is long-forbearing." (By the way, Arthur Way's translation is a very accurate translation, printed over 100 years ago).

Edifying Love

"Love edifies." (1 Corinthians 8:1; Ephesians 4:16) Love does not pull down. It builds up. *Agape* love builds up and encourages your husband even when all you can see are his faults. Love looks beyond the faults and finds good things to affirm and encourage. *Agape* love delights to build up and encourage each one of your children.

Abounding Love

"Abound in love one toward another..." (1 Thessalonians 3:12) Agape love is not average love. It is not even a "full to the top" love. It is "flowing over the top" love! The word Greek word, abound is *perisseuo*. It is an amazing word. It means to 'super-abound, to be excessive, to excel, to increase, to have enough and to spare'. This reminds me of something I read years ago, "If a little bit of love isn't effective, increase the dose." A little bit of love is not enough for many situations. You can only have the victory with massive amounts of love. It is only abounding love that overflows.

Comforting Love

Philippians 2:1-2 talks about "Love's comforting power." Oh the bliss of comforting love.

Knitting Together Love

Agape love has the power to knit cold and estranged hearts together. (Colossians 2:2) Try it!

Laboring Love

Love is not just a nice feeling. We prove our love by working hard to bless those God has put in our family. Paul calls it a "labor of love" in 1 Thessalonians 1:3. Be encouraged. When you feel worn out because you have been working hard to care for your family, remember that your hard work is a labor of love! Work is love; and love is work! It is not in vain. God notices. Hebrews 6:10 says, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." We can also be encouraged from John 3:18, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." The word deed means 'to toil'. This is how we show our love. By toiling and laboring hard for those we love. The Way's translation calls it, "Your toil born of love." The Knox translation says, "Let us show our love by the true test of action..." We could also call it "actionary" love. It is not just words, but actions.

Pure Love

The consummation of God's commandment is love that flows from a pure heart. 1 Timothy 1:5 Way says, "The end and object of God's commandment is the kindling of

love, such as springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith." 1 Peter 1:22 enjoins us to love one another with a pure heart.

Forgiving Love

"Be ye kind to one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32) Love is not love that does not forgive. Even when Jesus faced the greatest abuse that any human could endure, He said, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

Undeserving Love

Romans 5:7-8, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God loves us, not because we deserve His love, but because He is love. God's love dwells in us by His Spirit, therefore we also love, not because people deserve it, but because we cannot help loving. We love in spite of whether the person is worthy of our love. This is agape love.

Fervent Love

1 Peter 1:22 tells us to "love one another with a pure heart, fervently." Also read 1 Peter 4:8. Other translations help us to understand more of what fervently means—heartily, intensely, earnestly, deeply from the heart, wholeheartedly with all your strength, as if your lives depended upon it." Agape love is not insipid. We don't love half-heartedly but whole-heartedly!

Never Giving Up Love

We see this love revealed in Jesus when it says in John 13:1, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." It is easy to love someone at the beginning, but when they become difficult, defiant or refuse to receive love, it is tempting to give up. Natural love easily gives up. It is only agape love that keeps on loving until the end, no matter what.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:15, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved." Maybe you have experienced this also. You pour out love but it is not reciprocated. Don't give up. Keep loving. Better still, increase your love.

Walking Love

Ephesians 5:2 says, "Walk in love, as Christ loves us and gave himself up for us..." Love is not stagnant. It is not something we leave behind when we start each day. It should walk with us into the kitchen each morning. It should walk with us all through the day, especially when situations become difficult. It should walk with us wherever we walk. I love Way's translation, "Walk, in ways of love, love like Messiah's love for us..."

Leaping Love

2 Corinthians 8:7 says, "Therefore, as ye abound in every thing... and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." Once again I sight Way's translation of this Scripture, "Full you are to overflowing... of the love that leaps from your hearts to mine..." What an exciting description of love. I think of a frog jumping from one rock to another. Can you get the picture of love leaping from one heart to another within your family? This is even more than Walking Love. Leaping love is vibrant, pulsating, overflowing. It can't stay in the heart. It constantly leaps from one member to another within the home. Pray that God will fill all your hearts with leaping love for one another. This is what you call exciting living!

Disciplinary Love

1 Peter 1:22 in the Knox translation says, "Purify your souls with the discipline of love..." Love takes discipline. To live an undisciplined life is selfish. It is not thinking of others but only of one's self. To sleep in late, to let the household chores pile up, and to let the home get disorderly because of an undisciplined life is not love. Disciplinary love makes sure meals are ready on time. It makes sure meals are tasty and nutritious. It makes sure the home is orderly so everyone enjoys living in it. Even though it takes effort, true love will be disciplined to keep things in ship shape for the blessing of everyone in the home.

Sacrificial Love

1 John 3:16 says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Jesus revealed pure agape love when He, who was God, laid down His life for us who were sinners. This is the

greatest sacrificial love. And yet, in the same way, He asks us to lay down our life for others. This certainly does not come naturally, does it? It is only when we allow God's agape love to operate in our lives that we can walk in sacrificial love.

Conquering Love

Romans 8:37-39, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." There is nothing that can separate us from God's love. Neither difficult circumstances nor difficult relationships! But even more amazing, if we are born again by the Spirit of God, this conquering love is in us. Nothing can stop it.

Patient Love

"Love suffers long." (1 Corinthians 13:4). The Greek word for longsuffering love is *makrothumeo* which means 'to be longsuffering as opposed to be given to hasty anger; to endure patiently as opposed to despondency; and is used of exercising patience towards people.' How easy it is to get impatient with those we love. They don't come up to our standards. They take so long to do something. They can't grasp what we are trying to teach them. They exasperate us. But God's agape love that resides within us is full of patience. Instead of waiting in despair, it waits in hope, believing that God is working and will work to fulfill His purposes.

James 5:7-10 gives the illustration of the farmer who has "long patience" to wait for the harvest of his seed. In the same way, we often need long patience as we wait to see God work in those we love. Instead of getting impatient and despondent, claim the promise of Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Every day, thank the Lord for the good work He is doing in your husband and your children.

Kind Love

"Love is very kind." (1 Corinthians 13:4) The word in the Greek is *chresteuamai* and means 'to treat as one's own family, to show oneself useful, to act benevolently.' One

writer said, "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving." Love gives! Constantly gives. Love gives tangible gifts, but love also gives reassurance, encouragement, smiles and cuddles. And perhaps the biggest gift that love gives is time! Time is a love-gift. "Love ever gives, forgives, outlives, and while it lives, it gives! For this is love's prerogative, to give and give and give!"

We must also remember to give kind words. The testimony of the Proverbs 31 woman is that "in her tongue is the law of kindness." (Proverbs 31:26) It is the law of love. The word kindness in this Scripture is the Hebrew word *chesed* which is one of the most important words in the Old Testament. It relates closely to the word 'grace' in the New Testament. It describes God's unfailing love, kindness, devotion, favor, mercy and grace toward us. This is the kind of vocabulary that should flow lovingly from our tongues. May God help us!

Humble Love

"Love envieth not, love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5) Humility is the revelation of love. It was love that caused Jesus, who was God, to make himself of no reputation, to become a servant, to humble himself and to become obedient to the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:7-8)

Polite Love

"Love is not rude." (1 Corinthians 13:5) Love does not speak rudely but is always polite and sweet. It is always courteous and does not have course manners.

Unselfish Love

"Love is not self-seeking." (1 Corinthians 13:5 NIV) The New Living Translation says, "Love does not demand its own way."

Non-provoking Love

"Love is not easily provoked." (1 Corinthians 13:5-6) It does not get irritated easily. It does not fly off the handle. It is not touchy or prickly. It refuses to take offence.

Ungrudging Love

"Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love does

not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth." (1 Corinthians 5-6 NIV) This is a challenge, isn't it? The flesh enjoys remembering the hurts and spiteful words that have been spoken, but agape love forgives and forgets. It clears the record. Sometimes it has to clear the record daily. Maybe more than once a day!

Protecting Love

"Love bears all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) The word "beareth" is *stego* which comes from a root word meaning 'to roof over, to cover with silence, to protect or preserve by covering, forbearing.' True love is not wishy. We may not always be popular with

The First Priority!

God, the Eternal God, is Love. Covet therefore that everlasting gift, that one thing which it is certain is going to stand, that one coinage which will be current in the Universe when all the other coinages of all the nations of the world shall be useless and unhonoured. You will give yourselves to many things, give yourselves first to Love.

Henry Drummond

our children when we restrain them from watching certain movies or stop them from going certain places but we love their souls too much to allow them to be deceived by the allurements of the devil. We protect them (not only their bodies, but their minds, emotions and souls) even though we may have to bear the brunt of their complaining attitude.

Believing Love

"Love believes all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) My dear father (who recently passed away) always believed in me. He believed that I would walk righteously for God. He

believed that I would do great things for God. I didn't believe in myself, but he believed in me. His faith in me helped me to rise above my own inadequate feelings of myself. Agape love believes in your husband and children, even when you cannot see any evidence in front of you.

It takes faith to walk in agape love. We cannot do it in the flesh. Many times we have no feelings of love left. They've flown out the window! Don't worry. We can now clock into God's love to speak love, give love and smile love. Yes, even when our flesh feels the very opposite. We have to speak words of love by faith. There are many times that you may not "feel" in love with your husband, but in faith you can say, "I love you" anyway. As you confess love, your feelings will change to love. Do not gauge love by your feelings. Agape love has nothing to do with feelings. It is a commitment to love.

Faith and love are twins that go hand in glove. Galatians 5:6 talks of "faith which worketh by love." The word "worketh" in the Greek is *energeo* from where we get our word "energy." In other words faith is energized or activated by love. Love is energized by faith.

Hoping Love

"Love hopes all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) We love in hope rather than despair. Love never regards anyone as hopeless!

Enduring Love

"Love endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) Do you notice that it says all things? Help! Does that really mean ALL things? That's what it says. Phileo love may not endure the long haul. It may endure some things but it has a limit. Agape love endures all things. We would not see so many marriages falling apart in the church today if couples realized that God's enduring agape love can rule in their hearts. I know a very dear couple who have been married for over forty years. The early years of their marriage were traumatic, hurtful and despairing. But they stuck it out. They did not believe in divorce. God honored their endurance and over the years God's love blended their hearts together. They now reap the reward of enjoying a beautiful love/friendship marriage in the latter years of their lives.

William Barclay's translation of this Scripture says, "Love can stand any kind of treatment" and The New English Bible says, "There is nothing love cannot face." Wow! Natural love fades away when there is abuse

from a husband or even children. It is only agape love that can take it. We have to keep reminding ourselves that agape love is God's love and if we are born again by the Spirit of God, it abides in us! It is ours!

Never Failing Love

"Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:8) I cannot make a better comment than the J.B. Phillip's translation, "Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that stands when all else has fallen."

Abiding Love

"And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13) Abiding love does not hate one day and love the next. It remains the same and remains to the end, despite feelings.

Fearless Love

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear." (1 John 4:18). Agape love does not fear to love. It does not fear for itself. It continues to love in the face of situations that would naturally cause fear. In her article, *A Different Road (Above Rubies # 72)* our daughter, Serene talks about fearless mothering as she loves with God's love in the face of circumstances that could easily make her fearful. The Knox translation of 1 John 4:18 says, "Love has no room for fear; and indeed, love drives out fear when it is perfect love...The man who is still afraid has not yet reached the full measure of love."

Holy Spirit Love

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Romans 5:5) If you are born again, the Holy Spirit indwells you; if He indwells you, the love of God is shed abroad in your heart. The word 'shed' comes from the Hebrew word *shad* which means 'breast'. It speaks of the pouring forth of sacrificial and maternal love.

Why not stop now and affirm these words out loud, "The love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit." Did you notice that it says, IS? It does not say, "It might be." It does not say, "one day when you get to heaven." It says that it IS shed abroad in your heart right now! Yes, even when you are feeling the opposite. It is important to confess this wonderful truth

out loud. As you do, it will become more and more your personal experience.

Reactionary Love

We have reached the last point. I have been convicted of each one of these revelations of agape love. But more than all the others, God is speaking to me about reactionary love. What do I mean by this? I want it to become my habit in life to react with love. To react with love to every vibe, word or action that is negative, abusive or hurtful. What a challenge! When a glass is bumped, what spills out? Whatever is in the glass! In the same way, what is inside me will immediately spill over. My longing is that when I am rubbed the wrong way, when things don't go my way, when words are spoken that would ordinarily make me mad, that I would automatically respond with love.

Jesus gave us the example. He reacted with love and forgiveness. He told us to react to our enemies with love. (Matthew 5:39, 44)

Paul gave us the example. When he was reviled, he reacted with blessing. (1 Corinthians 4:12)

Peter tells us to not pay back injury with injury, or hard words with hard words, but to react back with a blessing instead. (1 Peter 3:9)

How can I do this? I certainly can't with my earthly nature. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit. The amazing truth is that I am filled with the love of God because of the Holy Spirit who lives in me. Therefore it is possible.

NANCY CAMPBELL

Further Scriptures

Unfeigned Love,

Romans 12:9; 2 Corinthians 6:6 and 1 Peter 1:22.

Abounding Love,

2 Corinthians 8:7; Philippians 1:9; and 2 Thessalonians 1:3.

Sacrificial Love,

Romans 5:8 and Ephesians 5:25.

Believing Love,

Ephesians 1:15; 6:23; Colossians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:6; 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:3 and 1 Timothy 1:5 and 2:15.

Reactionary Love,

Leviticus 19:18; Proverbs 20:22; 24:29; Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14, 17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

“I Want a Baby!”



It was a sunny fall afternoon [2002] as my husband and I walked hand in hand through the streets of a quaint shopping village. I took a deep breath and summoned up the courage to tell him, “I want a baby.”

“Then get one,” he responded, thinking I was referring to the over-priced realistic looking baby doll I had been cradling in the store. I tried again, “No, I want a baby.” He sighed, “They’re kind of creepy looking but if you want one, get one.” “NO,” I retorted with more energy, “You don’t understand, I want a baby.” I had definitely gotten his attention. I could tell by the reddening skin tone on his face that he now understood what I was saying.

“You want a what!” he exclaimed. “Are you talking about a real baby?”

“Yes” I smiled sheepishly.

“Mish,” he said, “are you forgetting that I had a vasectomy so we wouldn’t have any more babies. You agreed to it and I am not going to have a reversal!” I

walk down the street in silence and I decided to not bring up the subject again.

Eventually, I brought up the subject of adoption with my sweet, patient husband. He tolerated my bantering for awhile and then kindly told me that he was not open to the idea of adoption and was happy with the two children God had given us. I backed off and began to pray that God would either change his mind or take away my desire to have more children. Even the children were praying that God would soften Daddy’s heart towards adoption.

One day, out of the blue, he came home from work and announced that he wanted to adopt. My children jumped up and down with excitement and I closed my eyes and thanked the Lord. We met with the adoption attorney the next week and within two weeks we were matched with a birth mother in Ohio. Seven months from the day we decided to adopt we were holding our new baby girl in our arms. Joy of all joys! My aching arms held a baby again!

For the next couple of years I kept busy raising our three children, homeschooling and trying to fight my chronic health problems. It was during this time that we began to truly lean on the Lord and ask Him to lead our lives. Every night after family devotions Tom and I asked the Lord to show us our hidden sins. One by one God revealed them to us.

First he showed us that we were not caring for our temples and needed to make some healthy changes with our diet. We began by clearing out our kitchen of anything that contained hydrogenation or artificial colors. The health benefits these changes brought had us hooked and before long we were buying organic food, eating all our meals at home, taking supplements, and making homemade bread.

Next, God began to open our eyes to the sin of birth control. We knew that we had made a big mistake getting a vasectomy and wanted to put the control back into God’s hands, where it belonged. I dearly wanted another baby but I was fearful of becoming pregnant. I wondered what would happen to my body if I stopped my four prescription medicines.

Finally, Tom came to me and said, “Misha, we have to first take a step of



Tom and Misha with their children, Eileen (11), Corbin (9), Lydia (4), Josiah (8 months) and Nadra (7 months).

Where there is a really great man there was first a good mother.”

J. H. Jowett

remembered. The events of the past several years flooded into my memory. I remembered the joy when we became new Christians. I also remembered my chronic health problems and growing number of prescription medications I was taking. Finally, I recalled our decision that it would not be “healthy” for me to have any more babies. We continued our

faith by scheduling the reversal appointment. Then, I know that God will deliver you from your medicines and ailments. We scheduled the appointment and little by little the acid reflex, migraine and restless legs medicines went down the toilet. By the time we pulled into the doctor's parking lot I was free of all medications, feeling better than ever. One evening I sat with a room full of friends sharing my repentance, my desire to have more children and my husband's plans to have a reversal that July [2005]. I shared my fear that I would be too old to have any more babies and feared that I had ruined my family by agreeing to let my husband get a vasectomy. A sweet friend of mine encouraged me that if I would be faithful to God He would restore to me the years the locusts had eaten. I held on to that promise.

The reversal surgery was successful, but one year later I still wasn't pregnant. Eventually I did become pregnant, but miscarried. We were back to square one. The next month I became pregnant and on June 6th, 2007 I gave birth to a healthy baby boy, Josiah.

What a joy now! I had another baby to hold, love and nurture. When Josiah was two weeks old I told my husband I definitely wanted God to bless us with more biological children but I also was interested in adopting again. Two weeks later, as we sat around the dinner table, my 11 year old daughter asked her Daddy if we could adopt a little black baby. He looked at me and asked if I wanted to. I said yes. He got up from the table to call the adoption attorney and request the needed paperwork, specifying our desire to have a black baby.

I smile now as I recall how excited we were to adopt while holding a crying four week old! We thought it would take months to be matched with a birth mom. Two weeks later I received a phone call from our attorney telling us that a black baby girl was just born in our state [Indiana] and available for adoption. I was shocked and excited. We already had a little baby but how could we possibly turn down an opportunity to receive this precious gift into our home and hearts? We told him we were definitely interested. The next day he called to tell us that the birth mother had signed the papers releasing the baby to us. We could come

and see the baby whenever we wanted.

We packed up our car and drove to Evansville, Indiana. We spent a memorable weekend getting to know the newest member of our family. We named our beautiful new daughter Nadra which means "precious." On Monday the court approved Nadra's release from the hospital and our happy family headed home. It has been a joy and an adjustment learning to take care of the "twins" who are just six weeks apart in age. She has taken to nursing like a pro and is gaining weight well. She is 8 pounds [at 7 weeks

of age] and he is 15 pounds. They don't look like twins but I know they are going to be the best of friends.

Do I want more children? Definitely! I have learned that when I follow God's leading He blesses abundantly and exceedingly more than I ever anticipated. Five years ago I never would have guessed I would be healthy and have three more beautiful children in our family.

MISHA EADS

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It's only Little!

For a long time we kept hearing a strange noise in our vacuum cleaner. In vain we kept hoping it would go away and miraculously repair itself. We continued to ignore the noise and vacuumed week after week. Until one day, the engine seized. What may have once been a simple fix became a big expense.

My son got a little rip in his jeans. I hate sewing, so I ignored it. It won't get any bigger now, will it? I just won't look at it. Ignorance is bliss, right?

Last night I noticed a leak in the back of the bathroom sink. My husband's response was to turn off the light and declare that he didn't know what was wrong. Procrastination! We all do it from time to time. We ignore the problem and hope it will solve itself somehow in the night. The vacuum cleaner problem only got worse until it no longer functioned and will now cost a small fortune to repair. The tiny tear in my son's jeans has become a gaping hole that cannot be fixed. I have to replace his pants.

If we don't call a plumber immediately, the leaky pipes will only get worse until the whole wall and flooring needs to be ripped out and replaced.

If only we'd do the simple repairs right away! You know the old adage, "A stitch in time saves nine!" It's true! Simple routine maintenance and immediately fixing problems can prevent major problems later on.

This is true in our hearts as well. It's only a little grudge. Only a tiny bad atti-

tude. It's not going to hurt anyone. Nobody will notice! Only a bit of bitterness. I don't want to deal with it right now. I'm not ready. And besides, they're the ones who hurt me. I didn't do anything wrong. I have a RIGHT to be angry... Maybe it will just go away in the morning.

But it doesn't! If it is not dealt with immediately it can grow, corrupt and eat away at our souls like a cancer until we are utterly destroyed. The Bible tells us to "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23)

Don't put it off. If something is eating at you, get to the bottom of it NOW. Do regular maintenance and check ups of your heart. If there is something that should not be there, do not ignore it. Don't assume it will heal or solve itself! Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Do not procrastinate! Go to God in prayer. Ask Him to cleanse your heart.

If your heart is broken, He can make you whole. Ask Him to create in you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you. (Psalm 51:10) Every single day, make sure your heart is right with God. Keep a vigilant watch over your heart for that is where your life is!

WENDY WEIBE

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Brian and Wendy's children are Brianna (11), Bethany (9) and Benjamin (7)

My Role as an Encourager

I'm a Helpmeet

The first part of my role as an encourager is as a helpmeet, not only to my husband, but also to my children. I consider that praying for, loving, and serving my family diligently is encouraging them. This takes courage and commitment. Being their helpmeet is my God-ordained place and therefore I have peace, contentment and confidence in God that I can do it with His help. As a helpmeet, I assist my husband and children to achieve what they have to accomplish in day-to-day life. This goes beyond obvious physical needs, but also includes their studies, employment and walk with the Lord. In doing so, I am blessed in their achievements.

I Believe in Them

Another part of my role as an encourager is to believe in my husband and family. Believing in my husband, and what he does, encourages him to keep going when the going gets tough. Children need someone to believe in them and the work God can accomplish through them. Believing in my children and the destiny God has given each one helps them to believe in it themselves.

I'm a Coach

I believe part of my role as an encourager is to be a coach. This means challenging my family to do their best and more, to go beyond what they think they are capable of. They have to set achievable goals and not lose sight of them. I help them try again when they fail and encourage them to continue when it is hard. I can guide my children through situations in which they may feel awkward or unsure about what to do and encourage them to focus on the right issues. As a coach I am able to provide that persistent, gentle guidance, advice and Godly counsel to help my children fulfil their capabilities.

I'm an Example

My husband and I have taught our children to love God, pray, serve and love others by teaching them to love and seek God with all their hearts (Matthew 6.33). Our children learn by our example. It is a great

encouragement to know we have a loving Heavenly Father. Therefore, our desire for the children to know Him is very strong. Knowing their heavenly Father is the best relationship our children can have.

I Keep them Focused

When my son was studying Graphic Design and finding the computer coding a challenge, I watched him grow depressed and disillusioned. I prayed and encouraged him. I made sure he didn't give up even though he thought about it. He very seriously wanted to walk away from it all, a few times. Paul and I continued to pray for him. We had to stand against our son's discouragement and not be intimidated by his negative behaviour.

I needed to see him and the situation as God saw it and act accordingly for my son's good. If he walked away from this, he would also be walking away from God, because we knew this was God's plan for him. Paul and I could see that it was an attack of the enemy on his mind although it was hard for him to see it. I asked him

to recall what he had said in his high school graduation speech. In that speech he said he wanted to study animation. He needed the Graphic Design diploma to be able to do that. This re-focusing and bringing things into perspective helped him decide that there could be nothing worse than living with the regret of giving up.

We must keep our children and young men and women focused on their goals and continually encourage them to keep going. After some months he was able to shrug off the attack on his mind, defeat the enemy and successfully conclude his studies. There were things we had to do and he had to do, to bring about a successful conclusion to his diploma, but he did it. Two years later he has completed his second year of his Bachelor's degree in Animation.

Cast your care on the Lord and never give up. Faint not and your husband and family will rise up and call you blessed.

LEONIE JOHNSON

Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
pmjl@ozemail.com.au

Paul and Leonie are blessed with five children – Leon, Paul, Nina, Dean and Erin.



On a warm, summer day in 2006, I headed off to the doctor's office. I was anxious. I knew something wrong with me, but I didn't know what. I had spent the last 24 hours worrying about what my future would hold. I was blessed to be the biological mother of five and the adoptive mother of three from Liberia. However, I had a very strong desire inside to birth another biological child. I desperately wanted my Liberian children to witness how I care for my babies. I felt it would fill in some of the gaps from their life and they could watch how a mother naturally bonds with an infant child.

I prayed and I asked the Lord to give me wisdom as I waited in the doctor's office. My name was called. I wasn't able to see my regular female doctor, but had to see a male doctor. This added to my anxiety. After examining me, he explained that I had a severe prolapsed uterus/cervix.

"How do I express to him that I want to have another baby?" I thought. He started talking about the surgical procedure. It all sounded a bit scary to me. When he stated that he could do a hysterectomy at the same time I mustered up the courage to say, "But I was hoping to have more children." He said that pregnancy would make my prolapsed uterus worse and it could also cause my bladder to fall out. His recommendation was that I have surgery, but if I wanted more children, that was my decision.

I went home feeling very discouraged. Ever since attending my first *Above Rubies* conference back in 1999, I believed that I should be willing to have all the children God wanted for me to have. I loved the freedom of letting God plan my family size. But, this new-found information planted seeds of doubt into my soul. I cried and prayed a lot. I thought about how unappealing I would be to my husband with my body falling apart more and more with each future child. I started thinking that it was my responsibility to keep myself in the best shape possible for my husband and that meant that I shouldn't have anymore children. Most people I talked with recommended that I have the surgery.

Then something amazing happened. I had not told my children why I went to the doctor. I never go to the doctor unless I am pregnant and my oldest biological

A PROLAPSED UTERUS

daughter must have thought I was. All of a sudden my children started praying. I read prayer letters my children wrote to God begging Him to give us another baby. My heart was tugged. The more they prayed, the more my heart softened. My husband let me know he would love me even if my condition worsened. Through much prayer and meditation with the Lord, I came to the conclusion that I wasn't letting God be in control. I repented and asked the Lord to forgive me and help me to trust that He knows what is best.

In January, exactly one year after bringing home our Liberian children, I discovered I was expecting a baby. This, in itself, was a miracle as I had asked God to give me one full year with my new Liberian children without being pregnant. I felt they needed that bonding time. He answered that prayer to the week.

During this pregnancy, I faced harder challenges than any time in my life. Doubt after doubt rose as crises after crises happened in our lives. I have never been through as many heart-ripping, emotional crises at one time in all my life. While I loved my unborn baby from the moment I found out I was expecting, I wondered why I was bringing another life into this sin-filled, sick world. Satan was doing everything he could think of to make me feel like the biggest failure in the entire world.

Isaiah 40:11 became very real to me, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Through all that was going on, I sensed God's presence in my life. I could feel him gently carrying me through each minute.

I worried about everything! I wondered if my baby would come out alright since I was such an emotional wreck. I wondered how we would afford anything since my husband was unemployed. I wondered, worried and repented of worrying over and over. But each time I started to worry, I claimed Isaiah 40:31, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

On October 10, 2007, I gave birth to a gorgeous little fellow, at home. We named him Nathan Christian which means, "God has given a follower of Christ." He is healthy, strong and alert. He is my easiest baby I've had yet. He is happy and smiles all the time. He is a healing balm to our family. I cannot imagine life without him. I would have missed out on God's blessings and healing if I had not chosen to let God be in control instead of the doctor and his surgical procedures.

Then the most miraculous thing happened. I went for my six week post partum check-up. My regular doctor was able to do the exam. Imagine my surprise to hear that my uterus and cervix were very high. They didn't even budge when I coughed. She said that she believed I was healed! She explained how that many times a pregnancy will actually correct the prolapsed uterus. She said it's not something that most doctors advertise, but she has seen it happen many times.

I think this should be advertised. I was ecstatic. I couldn't wait to come home and tell my husband—and everyone for that matter. While God was knitting together my precious baby boy, He chose to knit me back together too. The baby who was supposed to ruin my body was the instrument God used to heal my body! I praise Him and give Him all the glory.

HANNAH BABIAK

Pell Lake, Wisconsin, USA
Rhbabiak13@charter.net

Bob and Hannah with their children, Leah (14), Kaila (13), Robert (13), Sarah (12), Michael (10), Rachel (8), Kendra (6), Jared (3) and Nathan born 10/10/07.



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"Jonathan is missing."

I was showering when I heard these words. I knew God was telling me we were going to have a son and we were to name him "Jonathan". Only a handful of times in my life have I heard God's "still, small voice" speak to me like this.

It was about this time, when our third child was a baby, that God also led us to surrender to Him the number and spacing of our children. This was an act of obedience. It was the scariest thing I have ever done! 2 Corinthians 5:15 became very real to me, "And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again." I have since come to see how stepping out in obedience brings great blessings even when we don't see it at the time.

Less than two years later, our fourth child was born. Surprise! It wasn't Jonathan, but Sarah Joy. Nineteen months later, Susannah, our fifth, came along. Still no Jonathan. Both girls were very special gifts and we were thrilled. I was sure I had heard God, but wondered why He had told me so soon.

Almost two years later, December 27, 2003, Jonathan entered the world! We all so enjoyed having another baby around the house and he loved the constant attention and praise of his big brother, sisters, Daddy and Mommy, grandparents, relatives...and anyone else drawn to his radiant smile and charismatic personality.

When he was 17 months old we found out another blessing from the Lord was on the way. We were excited, but I felt overwhelmed. I struggled enough with being a good mother to six precious children—how was I going to be a good enough mother to seven? God settled my fears one nauseous Sunday morning during our worship service. That "still, small voice" spoke again to my heart, "I'm not doing this to make life hard on you, but I have a greater plan than you can know or understand." All fears were immediately put to rest. God had spoken and I believed Him. I rested in the truth that this new baby was part of His perfect



Jonathan, one month before the Lord took him home.

plan. What joy filled my soul! I felt these words were not only for my present state but also preparing me for what was soon to come.

About two weeks after Jonathan turned two (two weeks before baby number seven was to be born), he suddenly gripped his head and began to cry. In a few minutes he was vomiting and then fell unconscious. My husband arrived before the ambulance. We all prayed over him and waited. I sang to him all the way to the hospital, though he never gained consciousness. The emergency room staff said that Jonathan's condition was very serious and prepared him to be flown to a more equipped hospital. I didn't realize just how serious. My husband and I drove there and were met by my parents and some very dear friends.

Throughout that sleepless night we received reports from the neurologist. He was diagnosed with an AVM—arteriovenal malformation. It had burst and there was much hemorrhaging in the brain. They tried all they could but finally told us nothing more could be done. In between procedures, we sang to him, touched him and played the game we always played—telling him of all the people, and mostly God, who loved him. He never regained consciousness and was on life support. About eighteen hours after he first held his head and cried, the machines were unplugged and his body stopped.

I had never really understood what

NO LONGER MISSING

grace meant until this event. I see a little more clearly now. Our hearts were rent in two and the pain felt almost unbearable. But we were able to trust in our loving, sovereign Lord and, by His awesome grace, we were able to surrender Jonathan to His perfect will—a greater plan that I had not known.

The hospital room in the PICU became full of loving friends and family but even more so, the Presence of the living, loving God! What a time of worship we had even as the machines were unplugged and I held our little son whose spirit had already departed into the hands of our Savior and Lord. How our hearts ached for him!

By God's awesome grace and through the prayers of our brothers and sisters in Christ, we never fought Him over His perfect plan. In Isaiah 45:11 we read, "This is what the Lord says—the Holy One of Israel, and it's Maker: Concerning things

to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?" Jonathan belonged to God. We were blessed to be used by God to create this eternal soul who will worship our Lord and Savior for ever and ever. We got to nurture, love and teach him while he was on the earth, but he (and each of our precious children) belongs to God, not us. We are stewards for the King who makes no mistakes. What joy comes from total surrender to the One who alone is worthy!

God has blessed our children with a beautiful healing, though they still love and miss their brother. He has graciously given us an "eternal perspective" which we didn't have before. God is good and His ways are perfect. How could we want anything different than His perfect plan, even if it is difficult? I pray that we will always surrender everything we hold dear to the One who has a better plan that we can ever know.

We know that Jonathan is not missing anymore. He's right where he is supposed to be.

Eight days after Jonathan went home, God filled our hands and our hearts with his baby sister, Johanna Glory. On Jonathan's first birthday after his death, we were able to tell his siblings that God had another gift on the way. Josiah Newman was born September 5th, 2007. God's plan is uniquely designed for each family and person to bring Him glory and accomplish His specific purposes. It is always good and perfect.

CHRISTINE JOSEPH

Lexington, Virginia, USA
josephds@vmi.edu

Dan and Christine and their children, Jacob (13), Micah (11), Rebecca (9), Sarah Joy (7), Susannah (5) Jonathan in heaven (he would be 4), Johanna Glory (1) and Josiah (4 months).



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True LOVE

I saw true love today,
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No passion clogging reason,
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I saw true love today
Walk through a waiting room
Where I was sitting by myself,
Disguise I did assume...

An older man, an ugly man,
Tall figure, worn and bent;
No dashing prince with golden crown
To beauty's side was sent.

A woman who was fat and grey,
No fairy princess she,
Moved by the side of that old man—
She wasn't much to see.

And yet, they caught my notice,
The quaint and ancient pair,
They took my full attention
Though they were unaware.

For as they lingered by the door
He held her coat for her
And then he went and fetched the car—
The ice made her footing unsure.

And when he brought the car around
For her, the door he gained
And placed a step before it
That her body not be strained.

They drove away that morning
And though they could not know
They left me with a picture
Of how true love should go.

I saw that day no handsome prince;
No princesses were seen,
But in the realm of Truest Love
I saw a King and Queen!

MARY BETH HACKETT
Faribault, Minnesota, USA

ABOVE RUBIES

RETREATS AND SEMINARS

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

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

-- Camps for 2008 --

14 - 16 MARCH, WASHINGTON

LADIES RETREAT, Black Lake Bible Camp, Olympia

For all registration questions: Lisa Strickland
slstrickland96@hotmail.com Phone: 360-297-2717

For all other retreat information: Heather Bryant
hbbry91@msn.com Phone: 360-638-2838

28 - 30 MARCH, WISCONSIN

10th WISCONSIN FAMILY CAMP, Inspiration Center, Williams Bay

Contact: Roger and Jackie Thelen, Ph: 262-723-6557
safehaven@pensys.com

4 - 6 APRIL, LOUISIANA FAMILY CAMP

Rocky Creek Conference Center, Pineville LA

Contact: Angela Decoteau, Ph: 225-715-1587

Email: calmdec@cox.net • <http://www.laaboverubies.org>

18 - 20 APRIL, TEXAS

LADIES RETREAT, Highland Lakes Camp & Conference Center
Spicewood, Texas (NW of Austin)

Register online www.texasrubies.com

Contact: Jeanette Watje Ph: 830-608-0880 • retreat2008@texasrubies.com

2 - 4 MAY, MANITOBA, CANADA

LADIES CAMP, Camp Cedarwood, Pinawa Bay,

140 km NE of Winnipeg

<http://www.cedarwood-yfc.com/site/site.htm>

Contact: Susan Halladay, Ph: 204-253-6059

rsmanyblessings@hotmail.com

Or: Patricia Sawicki at patooty@shaw.ca • Ph: 204-222-2621

16-18 MAY, EAST WASHINGTON/IDAHO

LADIES RETREAT, The Peniel Ranch in Omak

Contact Darlene Delano: penielranch@hughes.net

Ph: 509-633-3649 ext. 100 • Go to: www.penieleranch.org and
www.penieleranch.org/pb/wp_9165c46e.html?0.04374603755730333

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LADIES RETREAT in Minden Nevada

Contact Tanya Streeter Ph: 775-465-2909, tany123@aol.com

This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots,

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or Dawn Lee Ph: 775-265-5927, montereytahoe@yahoo.com

18 - 20 JULY, OHIO

LADIES RETREAT in Cincinnati

Contact: Maureen Schinkel

Phone: 513-521-5025 • CinciAboveRubies@aol.com

Informational website: <http://cinciaboverubies.blogspot.com/>

22 - 24 AUGUST, CALIFORNIA

12th ANNUAL FAMILY AND LADIES CAMP

Pine Valley Bible Conference Center, 45 minutes east of San Diego

Gary and Trish Evans, Ph: 951-891-9038 • gtkdz@empirenet.com

5 - 7 SEPTEMBER, NEW YORK

FAMILY CAMP at Odosagih Bible Conf. and Retreat Center, Machias, NY.

Contact Kristen Renz, Ph: 585-227-5793 • joyfulmama6@frontiernet.net

19 - 21 SEPTEMBER, EAST WASHINGTON/IDADO

4TH FAMILY CAMP, Pinelow Park on Deer Lake, near Clayton, WA

Contact: Laura Neal, Ph: 509-891-9038

Email: lkneal@q.com or sotazzy@yahoo.com

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Arkansas 4H Center in Little Rock, www.arkansas4Hcenter.org

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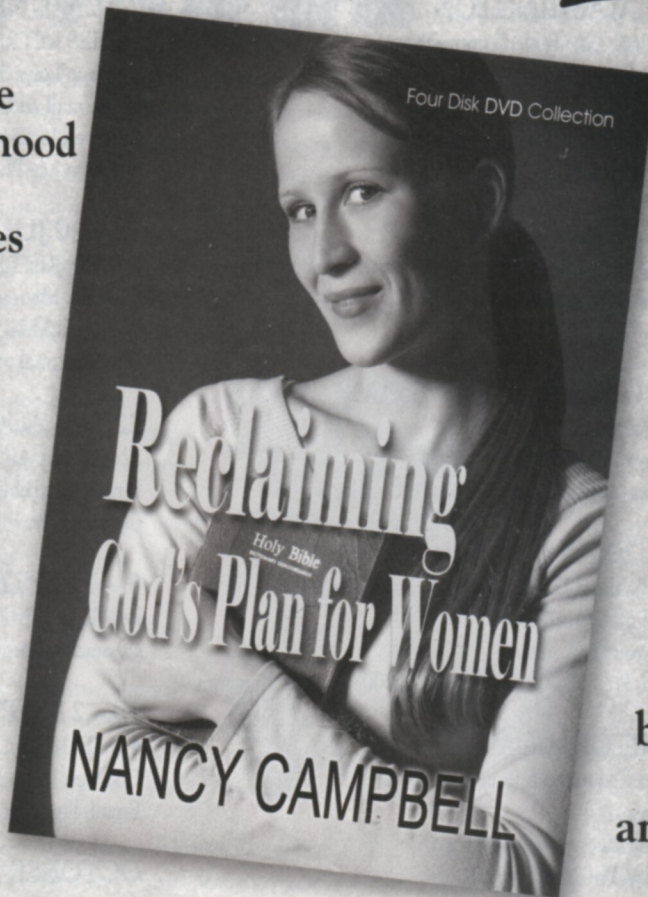
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Goats or Sheep?

Matthew 25:31-56

“It is the *Son of Man* before whom the nations of the world shall be gathered. It is in the presence of *Humanity* that we shall be charged... Those will be there whom we have met and helped; or there, the unpitied multitude whom we neglected or despised. No other Witness need be summoned. No other charge than lovelessness shall be preferred. Be not deceived. The words which all of us shall one Day hear, sound not of theology but of life, not of churches and saints but of the hungry and the poor, not of creeds and doctrines but of shelter and clothing, not of Bibles and prayer-books but of cups of cold water in the name of Christ.”

Henry Drummond from “The Greatest Thing in the World.”