

Strengthening Families Across The World

ABOVE RUBIES

www.aboverubies.org

Issue: Eighty-Six

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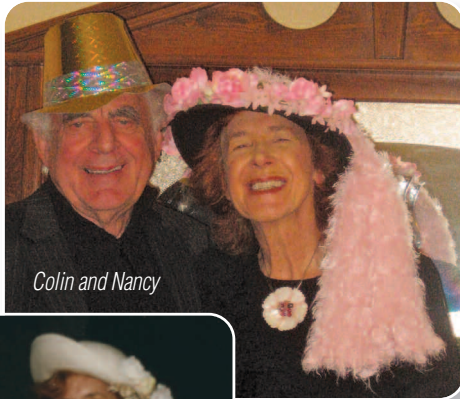
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Colin and Nancy

Another New Year begins. We are ready for action after lots of family gatherings from Thanksgiving to Christmas. This year, our granddaughter, Rashida, (our grandchildren are always coming up with creative ideas) decided that we should all come on Christmas Day wearing a hat—wild, funny, creative, or unusual, etc. I'll let you see a few of the pictures.

I didn't wear anything very creative, but decided to wear a hat with flowers. I love big flowery hats. In fact, I wore a hat to each of our children's weddings, using the same hat a number of times, but changing the flowers to match my outfit! I guess I am old fashioned enough to think that the mother or mother-in-law of the bride should wear a hat.

On the 9 January, our youngest daughter, Mercy celebrated her 21st birthday. What a fun time we enjoyed—just a LADIES' NIGHT! After our wonderful (and healthy) meal, each one shared all the wonderful things we love about Mercy. That wasn't hard to do. We had to curb people from going on and on! This is a tradition in our home for birthdays.

Dessert was also scrumptious, all TRIM HEALTHY MAMA

recipes, and we all ate more than we needed! We enjoyed lots of old fashioned games, too, such as Pass the Parcel, etc. Have you ever played this game? We love to do it at girl parties.

We wonder what awaits us in this New Year. I know there will be many joys, and yet many challenges—personally, nationally, and world-wide. How wonderful, that no matter what each one of us face, we have a God in whom we can trust. I was encouraged reading Jeremiah 31:11 this morning, "For the Lord has ransomed Jacob and redeemed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he." What a great promise for Israel, surrounded by enemies from Tunisia to Turkey, who would like to wipe them off the face of the map. But, God is able to deliver them from all enemies that are stronger than them.

We too, may face situations that are bigger and stronger than we are! Be



This is the hat I wore to Serene's wedding, adding new flowers to match my dress.



Sharar

Jireh, the drummer boy.



Arrow was the winner with his Christmas bell.

Arden's Christmas tree was too heavy to wear all day!



Crusoe

encouraged. God is stronger than your enemies. He is bigger than your difficulties. You can trust Him. Let's go into this New Year trusting in our faithful God, rather than in our own answers and resources.

This year, on March 2nd, Colin and I will celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. Can that be possible? It only seems a blink of my eye when I walked down the aisle as a young bride. I was totally committed to our marriage covenant and understood that marriage is "until death do us part." But, I wondered what it would be like to live with one man my whole life.

It wasn't always easy, especially when two very strong personalities came together, and one a redhead! We both had to learn and adjust along the way. Although I was completely committed to our marriage, I found that it takes more than commitment. You can be faithful and yet not live in the fullness of the joy God intends for a marriage. I found over the years that my attitude is paramount. When I purpose in my mind to serve my husband, to submit to his covering, to enjoy him, and to passionately love him, I am the one who gets blessed. I live in joyful bliss. Does that sound too easy or sentimental?

No, everything can come against having this biblical attitude, mostly my flesh that wants its own way. But, we either live in the flesh, or live in the spirit. We either live to satisfy our own desires,

Zadok arrived with his Christmas garden hat and two bowls of succulent salad greens, freshly picked from his winter garden. Zadok's business is called, Zadok, the Natural Farmer.



or live to satisfy the desires of our husband. Matthew 16:25 says, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." God's way always works. Nothing else does. After 50 years of marriage, it is hard to describe not only our commitment, but the love we have for one another. If earthly joys can be so wonderful, what will heaven be like?

And yet all over the land Christian marriages are ending. It is an indictment to Christianity which is a picture of Christ and the church. It is a statement of faithlessness amongst God's people, for if we are not faithful to our marriage, how can we be faithful to God? It is a contradiction. I realize of course that there are those who want to be faithful, but are devastated by an unfaithful partner. This is a tragedy. How we need to pray for faithfulness to come back to marriages.

A hard heart is also an enemy of a faithful marriage. I believe that one of the secrets of a happy and successful marriage is to keep a soft heart. Don't let hardness, bitterness, or unforgiveness creep into your heart. Your husband may say and do things to hurt you—many times he has no idea how much he has hurt you! You are tempted to harden your heart. But, let me tell you, it is the worst thing you can do. Hardness breeds hate, and hate leads to divorce, and every divorce is another victory for the devil.

You may think your husband is too hard to crack? The truth of God's Word is truer than your thoughts. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turns away wrath" and Proverbs 25:15 says "A soft tongue breaks the bone." Ask God to give you a forgiving heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to come into your heart and flood your spirit with His love. Ask Him for a soft heart.

When the Pharisees came to tempt

Rashida, Mercy, and Meadow.



Jesus about divorce, He told them that the only reason Moses allowed divorce was because of the "HARDNESS OF YOUR HEARTS... BUT FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO" (Matthew 19:3-9). It was never in God's original plan.

In the Greek, the words "hardness of heart" mean "stubbornness, obstinacy, perverseness, and destitution of spiritual perception." Now that's interesting. I am tired of hearing of women who leave their husbands and say, "God told me to do this." They are deceived and certainly destitute of spiritual perception.

It's easy to get hard, but much harder to be soft. Can we allow the Holy Spirit who dwells within us to work a soft and submissive spirit in our hearts? Can we allow Him to work in us the same attitude of Jesus, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8)?

We will never go wrong with this attitude.

NANCY CAMPBELL

Founder and Editress of Above Rubies
www.aboverubies.org

ABOVE RUBIES
PO BOX 681687
FRANKLIN, TN 37068-1687 USA
Ph: (877) 729-9861 (9 am - 5 pm Mon-Fri)
Web site: www.aboverubies.org

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."

EDITRESS: Nancy Campbell
GRAPHICS: Duane Dominy,
Dominy & Associates, duanead2@yahoo.com
PRINTING: Lithographics, Nashville, TN USA
FRONT COVER: Katrina and Krista Loudon
of Beausejour, Manitoba (Canada).

Bursting @ the Seams



Matt and Hilary with their precious children, Joseph (6), Gracie (4 1/2), Tucker (2 1/2) and Sawyer (2).

Have you ever been at a point in life where you had no hope or couldn't see how anything remotely good could come from a situation?

Rewind to the year 2005. After being married for a few years, my husband, Matt, and I were ecstatic to find I was pregnant. We told all our family immediately. Eight weeks later my husband and I mourned the loss of the little baby we would never watch giggle or learn to ride a bike.

A few months later, I was grateful to be pregnant again, but this time, remained very guarded and quiet. When we finally reached the end of the first trimester we told our family and friends. At 21 weeks I had an ultrasound that showed a healthy strong baby.

One week later, while at home in the shower, my water ruptured. I frantically called my husband at his fire station and told him the news. I met him at our doctor's office where they confirmed our worst fears—the water sac had completely ruptured and there was nothing that they could do. Our precious baby was alive, but with no amniotic sac to protect her. We refused to induce labor, but a week later the cord prolapsed and we had no other option but to deliver.

With hearts as heavy as lead, Matt and I drove to the hospital with my mom, Matt's mom, and a very dear friend. My time at the hospital was unbelievably painful, in more ways than one. The doctors informed us that our baby's heart had stopped beating and since there was no hope of her being born alive, no extra assistance (breathing machines, incubators, etc) would be brought in to help. All afternoon long I endured the same labor pains that a full-term mom goes through, only our outcome would not be a joyous one.

When our little girl was finally born

they handed her to me. In the midst of the emotional sadness I couldn't believe how perfect she was. I wish anyone considering abortion could see how developed a 23 week old baby is. She had perfectly formed feet and hands and even had my husband's chin and my long ankles.

The months that followed were some of the darkest I have ever been through. I felt like I was drifting in the wind—not sure what I was supposed to be doing with my life and still trying to come to grips with what had happened. Matt and I sought the help of specialized doctors, trying to see why I kept losing pregnancies and why my water ruptured. We were met with hopelessness and vagueness, although the prevailing prediction among all doctors was that I would probably never get pregnant again. If I did, I would never make it to full-term.

Matt and I had always desired children and had worked hard to prepare wisely for a family. Now, we were being told that we would never be parents! I couldn't believe my ears or wrap my mind around what life was supposed to look like. I was angry at my body for not being able to carry babies and jealous of other friends and family who were having children. It made me feel so inadequate.

A few months after the loss of our little girl, I called my good friend who had adopted and asked her about adoption. When I got home that night there was an email from her describing all the different ways to adopt (fost-adopt, international, domestic) and the contact information for the local Christian agency she and her husband had used. Matt and I were both nervous about the thought of adoption. There were so many unknowns and we didn't know what to expect. But, we both wanted to be par-

ents and took a leap of faith, believing that God would open a door.

The wonderful lady who ran the local Christian agency told us there were no fees, but no guarantee we would be chosen. More disappointing news, but we submitted our adoption profile.

Almost nine months later we received the news that a young girl who was seven months pregnant had seen our profile and wanted to interview us. Talk about being nervous! We were overjoyed that she chose us!

Over the next two months I took her to her ultrasound appointments and spent time getting to know her. The day the baby was born Matt and I were at the hospital and could not believe the incredible gift that was handed to us. Our son, Joseph will be six years old in December! He is a homeschooled first grader who loves cub scouts, Awana, and has a heart of gold!

When Joseph was about one year, his adoption was finalized at the courthouse. The local fost-adopt agency had put together gift baskets and wonderful mementos for all the adopting families. It got us thinking about that organization. We took some classes with them and obtained our foster-care license, hoping we would be placed with a baby that would be available to adopt.

Our dream came true a short time later when a four month old baby girl in foster care was ready to be placed with a family that had intention to adopt. I met her foster mom, who turned out to be an amazing Christian woman and who is now one of my very good friends! On

Matt's birthday in 2008, we drove to the foster mom's house to take our daughter home! Gracie is now a beautiful four and a half year old who enjoys being home-schooled in kindergarten!

A couple of years later, we received more wonderful news that a young girl was pregnant and looking for a home for her baby. When she and I met she asked me if I thought having three children would be too hard for me. I reassured her that we both loved the idea of a big family! A few months later we were again in the hospital, and this time, we were incredibly honored to be present at the baby's birth! What an amazing, healing moment it was to witness the miracle of life! Tucker is now two and a half years, full of smiles, and a fanatic about trains.

Around the time Tucker was born we were surprised to find out we were pregnant. It had been so many years! Convinced in my mind that it would be the same outcome as in the past, we didn't tell anyone and tried to prepare ourselves for the inevitable.

Around 16 weeks the doctor suggested putting in a cerclage to see if that would keep me from dilating early. As Matt and I sat in the doctor's room with our three children, aged three and a half, two, and newborn, the doctor said that I should not be on my feet at all and not lift anything. We all had a good laugh over that one! But, we took the advice seriously and with the help of dear family and friends, I was able to do light-duty bed rest.

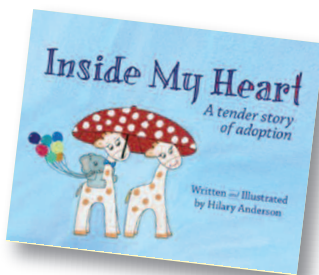
Every day I knew in the back of my mind that my pregnancy might not turn out well. One of the greatest gifts to me was feeling my baby move. At night, especially, I would lay back and watch my belly dance. It has to be one of my all time favorite memories of being preg-

nant!

At 35 1/2 weeks, my water ruptured again. Sawyer was only 4 lbs. when he was born, but today he is my heaviest and strongest child! The amazing irony is that Tucker and Sawyer were born six months apart, to the day! Irish twins, you might say!

Earlier this year I started writing a children's story showing the special journey of adopted children. But, also the incredible love and unselfishness a birth mother displays when she chooses adoption. With my husband's encouragement I practiced drawing and water-coloring every night when my children were in bed and am proud to say that all of the illustrations in the book were done by me. My self-published book is called *Inside My Heart: A Tender Story of Adoption* and is available through Amazon.

Seven years ago I was told that I would never have children. Seven years ago my world was spinning out of control. Today, Matt and I have our hands extremely full with four children under the age of six. All it takes is our family walking down the road for people to stop and ask how we have so many children so close in age. Each of those encounters is a perfect way to share how God has blessed us with our four miracles and an opportunity to show others the beauty of adoption.



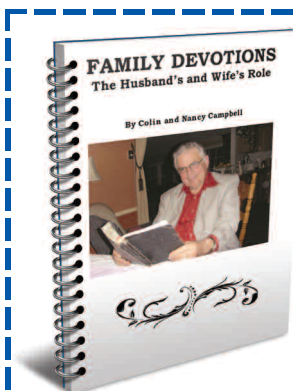
HILARY ANDERSON
Fiddletown, California, USA
fireman796@att.net

THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION OF YOUR LIFE

**“Choose you this day whom you will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
(Joshua 24:15).**

Have you made this most important choice in your life? So many marriages and homes are falling apart. It is only the lives and homes that are built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His commandments that will stand. How can you get your life on a right foundation and receive God's salvation?

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE** that you are a sinner. It is your sin that separates you from fellowship with God. (Luke 18:13; Romans 3:21)
2. **REPENT** of your sin and turn away from it. (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38,39; 3:19)
3. **CONFESS** your sin to God and He will cleanse you and forgive you. His forgiveness is complete. When He forgives, He forgets! (Psalm 32:;2; 1 John 1:7,9; Romans 10:9,10)
4. **FORSAKE** your own way and determine to follow God's ways. (Isaiah 48:18; 55:7; Mark 8:24-38)
5. **BELIEVE** that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is the Son of God. He is the One who has borne the punishment of your sin. (John 3:16; Mark 16:16)
6. **RECEIVE** His great salvation that He has purchased on your behalf. (John 1:12)
7. **BE BAPTIZED.** (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:38)
8. **THANK** Him for His great salvation and His blood that He shed for you. Receive Him gladly and ask Him to take control of your life.
9. **DETERMINE** that you and your household will all serve the Lord.



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Bring him Home!

Back in September 2000 I printed the following testimony in Above Rubies # 53. It is still one of the most powerful marriage testimonies I have read and am printing it for you again in this issue. Read how Connie waited 12 agonizing years for her wild, in-and-out-of-prison husband to return to her!

Jim and I met in 1966. He was 25, I was 18. He was wild and so was I. When we met he had already been in and out of prison for about seven years, and was going back again for two years. We married in the prison six months later. Soon after I had our son. A few months later I miraculously came to Christ. Because of the prison term I didn't live with my husband for another two and a half years. After being home a year he began a crime spree.

He deserted us over and over again. I had nowhere to turn except to God. No one knew where my mate was. Some of the time my heart would rage like a forest fire out of control. I would run and scream like a woman out of her mind searching for her mate in the raging fire. I'd scream curses at God only to faint from exhaustion and weep bitter tears of repentance. I'd get back up, begin running again and fall again and again until finally I'd surrender my will to Christ's will. And then I'd wait, maybe for another six months, knowing God was in control.

In the beginning I thought about divorce. Well, wasn't that what a woman does if her husband leaves her repeatedly? And yet Jim kept coming back and repenting. He would mysteriously end up at my back door after being missing for four or five months, looking like a mad man. But

beneath the dirt and sun-parched face he was still mine.

I'd bring him in the house, give him dinner, and speak peace and rest to him. I'd run the bath water for him to wash and feel like a man again. Compassion would rise up in my heart. I had the Lord, and my Jim didn't. I would reverence and praise him. I would shut the door on the world and be alone with my mate. No matter what he had done to me, we were still one flesh. He was my first and only husband—a terrible, ungodly, unfaithful husband, but he was still my husband. His healing came again and again as I forgave him and opened my love to him. I held nothing back.

There would be times when putting dinner on the table I'd notice he was awfully late. I'd listen for the car and begin running back and forwards to the window. The old familiar fear would rage, knowing that he had deserted me again. This happened about 30 times in the first twelve years of marriage. He would suddenly disappear without warning. The children would run in from play crying, "Where is daddy, where is my daddy?" I'd tell my little baby, Jimmy, "Daddy is sick, but Jesus is going to heal him." I taught my little ones to pray, "Thank you, Jesus, for bringing my daddy home."

His mother died and no one could find him. My prayers went out to God day and night, seemingly to no avail. The years went on and the crimes continued as if I had no God. I felt like a motherless and fatherless child. I was completely exhausted and my mate committed still another crime and went to prison for almost four years.

I loved him. I felt he was demon possessed, yet he was my husband. And, at times I hated him. Your arms and legs belong to you even when they hurt, you

can't cut them off. I was like this about my husband. I hated it when he deserted me, but I was married to him no matter what. Adultery to me was the worst of all sins. At night before I entered my marriage bed alone I'd cry out to God to keep me pure, even in my dreams, and that I would never dream of another man.

Many mornings I'd wake up and think, "Lord, why did you give me another day to live?" Often the world seemed so black to me, but sweet Jesus would come to me and speak life and joy into my tired and depressed soul. One day God supernaturally took all my burdens away. I forgot Jim had left me. It was so hilarious. I even wrote myself a note to remember to pray for him.

The day-to-day message from the Lord was, "Now Connie, you just get up out of that bed. You straighten your shoulders and you believe God. This problem isn't bigger than God. Don't you prepare your day as though Jim won't be home. You get up and prepare your home for a miracle." Each evening when my husband was gone I'd fix supper for him and put his plate at the head of the table. No one was allowed to sit in his chair and no one was allowed to bad mouth him. I ran the house as if he were home.

I survived and lived on the Word of God. I whispered His name all day long. He walked with me in the valley of death and guided me to a straight path.

All our phone conversations at the prison were censored. I'd speak faith into the phone and say, "I'll see you in a few days, honey. The guards thought we were planning an escape because Jim had been given a 10-year sentence!"

People laughed and said he would always leave me and be in and out of

Updated December 2012

In April 2006 my dear husband, Jim, died of a heart attack. As my six children and I gathered around Jim's hospital bed the Hospital Chaplain told me, "I have never seen a family so full of love." As the nurse told us Jim had passed, I whispered to each of the children to comfort and love each other. As we left the hospital room I left a chapter in my life.

I wish I could say that all went well after that, but grief is hard to understand, and unpredictable. Jim and I were married for almost 40 years, my first and only husband. I still live in our family home, garden, bake bread, cook from scratch, and try to practice what I preach.

Jim would often say, "Connie and the children are what I live for, but I try to put God first. My family is my life." When we would give our testimony to a church group Jim would look up from the pulpit and say, "If it wasn't for that little girl right over there I wouldn't be alive today. She was my guardian angel."

I now have nine grandchildren and they are a wonderful blessing. Had I given up on my husband I would have never known the joy of all these grandchildren. Praise the Lord.

Jim and I lived from one miracle to the next. To me, Jim and I were just two good forgivers as we all have feet of clay. Our love and life together was the most gut wrenching experience I ever had, but it was a one of a kind marriage. Would I do it all again? Yes, I would. Oh yes, it was worth it all. My marriage was tried in the fire many times but I came out with a testimony of love and truth. My marriage has a message, "If you don't give up you will see the glory of God."

Connie Hultquist

Photos by Denise Reagan Kidd, Nashville, TN

prison. The prison guards told me that Jim was institutionalized and was hopeless. Hopeless or not, he was my husband. I knew I could never forsake the Lord by not forgiving my own husband. Also, as a young wife I wanted to be a teacher of women when I got older and I knew I couldn't be divorced. I'd sing, "Keep me Jesus as the apple of thine eye."

The Lord would tell me to speak to the mountains in my life and not doubt in my heart. I would speak to the mountain, which was Jim. I would woo him and call him home with my prayers. Every muscle in my body cried out to God to save him. I fasted and prayed continuously.

Jim was healed in 1979. After he had been in prison for the last four years and home for about three months, he asked me to have another baby, our fourth. I was so fearful. I said No, I was not going to have another baby. I walked away from him and the Lord spoke to me. "Connie," He said, "You have come this far by faith. Don't give up now." After much heartache I obeyed the Lord.

"Yes," I told Jim, "I'll have another baby for you." I placed my future in his hands. When Jim saw that I still believed in his life as a human being something released within him. The fear left his eyes and He was delivered. He lifted up his hands to His Father and received the anointing of a sound and unfettered mind. He began to slowly give more and more of his life to Christ. He took over the bills and began to work steadily.

The Lord did exceedingly and abundantly more than I could ask or think. He gave me joy unspeakable. Satan had come in like a flood but the Lord raised such a standard against him. All Satan did was build me a grand testimony.

God gave me a new batch of fruit. I had David in 1980, Dan in 1982, and Mary in 1985. We now have six children. I was queen in my palace. I raised the

children for Christ and to honor their daddy. I taught them to jump when Daddy walked into the room. I taught them to get Daddy a cup of coffee or honor him in some way.

The guys at work say to my husband, "You don't go out and drink and party." Jim says, "I have a wife to go home to. I spend my time with my family."

One guy said, "Boy, when work is over you run home." The guy thought something was wrong with him!

I sit here thinking of Jim and the man he is now. He has been home sitting at the head of our table for 20 years! Who is this Jesus we serve? Surely He is the Son of the living God, a God who saw me crying and feeling so forsaken, a God who knew the very moment Jim would be healed. Jim is my walking miracle to always remind me that nothing is impossible with God. He showed me that if we don't give up we will see the glory of God.

Proverbs 31:11 says, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." A woman must gain the trust of a man such as this. His healing comes as he feels safe enough to give Christ his heart and his wife his heart. When Jim was healed he went from not seeing me to taking care of me. He turned from Satan and took dominion over his Eve. He came into his responsibilities as a man. I come under my husband and I don't desire to do anything else. I don't always agree with him and I tell him I don't. But in the end his word is final. I want to be as Esther and not as Queen Vashti.

Dear wives and mothers, don't give up on your husband. God sees your heartache. He won't leave you or forsake you if you trust in Him. I know. I've been to the other side.

CONNIE HULTQUIST
Marian, Iowa, USA
rubysfriend@yahoo.com

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Above Rubies Facebook?**

Don't miss out on the daily encouragement for you as a wife and mother. You will also keep up with new materials and what's happening in Above Rubies.

FIGHT

for the Preservation of Family

"Remember the great and awesome Lord, and fight on behalf of your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your families" (Nehemiah 4:14).



Exploding WITH JOY

My husband and I were married about a year and a half when we started to look into buying a house. Our first born Jem, was a chubby four month old boy when we finally bought a 100 year old house in the downtown area. It was extremely run down. The adventure of renovating an extremely run down house began the first week we lived in it. In the cold, mid-November climate, we had no heat or hot water. Add small children into the mix and you have a great recipe for, well, busyness.

This is a project I do not recommend for young families unless you want a crash course on selflessness, learning to work together, and contentment in ALL circumstances. I was thrown head long into learning to make a home in the midst of any stage of construction. I learned that the best way to keep a happy hubby was to ignore the mess he inevitably made and, instead, thank him for redoing all the electrical, thus preventing a major burnout!

Early this spring, in the midst of snow and rain, my hardworking hubby pulled all the old siding off our house, put in new windows, insulated the walls and

installed new siding. Talk about mud. By that time we also had another little baby to keep out of the mess.

Now that winter is here again and the outside work is done, we are starting to renovate the inside. Today, I looked down at my sweet nine month old daughter, Katie, and noticed how very filthy she was from crawling all over the perpetually dirty floors. They never stay clean for more than a few minutes so I have slightly adjusted my standards for the time being.

But, let me tell you something I saw when I looked at my not-so-clean children. They were HAPPY! There was a huge grin on Katie's dirt and droll streaked face as she watched her brother dancing to music. Or, rather stomping and kicking up the dust lodged in my kitchen rug. Guest what? They don't care about the mess, dust, peeling paint, or the insulation and wiring that is showing through the holes in the walls. I am sure my son would emphatically answer "NO" if I asked him whether it bothered him that he didn't have clean clothes because the laundry room is under construction. Never mind that

that is his standard answer to all questions, including "want a candy?" or "shall we go to the park?"

I was reminded today as I contemplated my messy house, to be content in all circumstances. For some reason this made me think of this quote that I had liked when I was still living at home in my parent's spotless home—We ought to live life exploding with joy as if we really believed Jesus arose from the grave!

No matter what our circumstances are, shouldn't we be overwhelmingly joyful, simply because Jesus lives, cares for us, and loves us? I really like the expression EXPLODING WITH JOY. Ever thought about taking the "ex" off exploding? You will end up with ploding, which, if you are a bad speller like me, means plodding. Sometimes I catch myself plodding through life. It is hard to plod with joy. Try it, and then please give up.

I think we are way too mellow about our amazing, incredible Savior. Let's explode with joy, no matter what the house looks like five minutes after you've cleaned up—I really need to work on that. By the way, I may be wrong, but I doubt that your grown up children will look back on their childhood and say, "Remember how we used to be able to see our footprints on the floor because of the dust and you could hardly see through the windows? Mom just sat around playing and reading books to us. She sure was an awful mom!"

Next time you stumble over the shoes to land square on a piece of Lego with your bare feet, remember to be content in every state of your home—clean or not. Do your best, and don't forget God never commanded us to have a spotless home, but He did command us to, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

RACHEAL ROOS

Chilliwack, BC, Canada
authentically@gmail.com

Devon and Rachael's children are Jem (2) and Katie-Anne (9 months) and hoping for many more!

"I never knew how much love my heart could hold until someone called me 'Mommy.'"

I was barely 20 years old, studying at a German University, six time zones away from my home. The dormitory hall phone woke me at 2:00 am as it reverberated loudly against the cinderblock walls and hard, tile floors. On the other end, I heard my mother's shaken voice mutter, "Your father has died." As I sat frozen in shock, my Mom relayed the details of the day. He had spent the morning at the local center for the disabled preaching the love of God to the overlooked and often unreached with thoughtful and clever object lessons. Often, he would preach with his sole reward being the enlightened faces of the residents who understood the gospel message for the first time. Upon returning home, he entered the living room of our house and collapsed to the floor, firewood scattered around him, dead at 47 years old.

With borrowed money, I was able to purchase a flight home. While sensing God's presence with me during my travels, I felt so alone when I got home. Everyone around me was grieving. Yet, I was numb and observed the events over those ten days strangely as an outsider. Returning alone to Germany, I found some solace in the Lord's presence through prayer and worship.

At 23 years, I was about to be married. My then-fiancé and I shared a common bond because his mother died only five years earlier from a long bout with cancer. As we prepared the ceremony, we did not want his mom or my dad overlooked. The Lord gave my husband a beautiful song to honor them and, as he sang it, there was not a dry eye in the church, except for mine.

By 33 years, I was a bitter young woman with a lot of anger towards my father. I grew up feeling neglected by a father, who readily served others, but reluctantly sought to know me. I wrongly made him a scapegoat for many of the trials in my life. My relationship with God was struggling and my joy in the Lord was gone. I remember walking through my living room and becoming so desperate to feel the Lord's presence again. I dropped to my knees and cried out to God.

God met me. I immediately saw a picture of my secret place, the place where I prayed and spent time with God. This time was different because I saw my dad enter. I knew immediately it was my dad, but he appeared slightly altered. For one,

Forgiveness is a Decision



Sal and Tina with their children, Isabella (11), Sophia (9), Julian (6), and Gabriel (4).

he was no longer balding. He had a full head of hair! He was also wearing his familiar work clothes, but they were clean and tidy. I further noticed he was trim and healthy, unlike his time on earth, where he often struggled with weight gain. In that moment, the Lord spoke clearly to me that my dad had been praying I would be able to forgive him (Hebrews 12:1-3).

The Lord got my attention and showed me that I needed to forgive my father. He had been with God for quite some time and did not need my forgiveness. At that moment, I realized forgiveness is not needed for the offender but for the beneficiary. I prayed words of forgiveness and finally shed the tears that were meant for the song on my wedding day.

Forgiveness is not pretending there was no wrong done, it does not prevent the consequences of wrong-doing, and it is not a feeling. On the contrary, forgiveness is a decision. Forgiveness is letting go of a debt while releasing the offender from our judgment into God's judgment.

First and foremost, I remembered that Jesus, our greatest example, forgave the offenses of those who crucified Him. How

much more could I forgive? Even more importantly, my relationship with God had changed dramatically. As many have observed, our view of God is greatly affected by our relationship with our earthly father. Since my prayer of forgiveness, the one truth on which God seems to be focusing is how much He loves me and wants to show me about His Word and Kingdom. What an adventure I have been experiencing with God!

If you want to determine if the above discussion is relevant to you, here is a simple checklist. Do you perceive that God the Father is absent, distant, uncaring, cold, harsh, critical, passive, or unconcerned. Or, do you feel that God simply tolerates or rejects you, or is eager to punish? Or, do you feel God sees you as worthless? If you answered yes to any of the above, you most likely have heart-wounds God would like to heal. Typically, unforgiveness towards a male authority in your life is the starting point for God's healing work.

Here is a sample prayer for you to pray: "I forgive my father for _____ (fill in the blanks as many times as you need). Father, forgive me for allowing my thoughts and actions to agree with the lie. I renounce the lie that my Father God is the same way and I receive your truth."

The prayer may be simple, but the heart process may not be so easy. Be prepared to "walk out" your freedom in the few days ahead. Continue to meditate on Scripture. Resist the temptation to pick up the yoke of unforgiveness again. When you hear the lie of unforgiveness, refute it with the truth of God's Word.

Here are some Scriptures to help you: Mark 14:35-36; Romans 8:15-17; II Corinthians 1:3-4; Galatians 4:6-7; Ephesians 1:5-8 and I Peter 1:2.

TINA OLIVERI
Franklin, Tennessee, USA
tina@saloliveri.com



One Person CAN Make a Difference!

A heartbeat. A tiny kick. The sight of a little face on ultrasound. From the moment of conception, technology allows us to see that life is real and precious before it even enters the world. It seems unthinkable that anyone could deny what is plain to see, and yet that is precisely the lie that has torn our world apart today. The issue of abortion is so huge, so monumental, that it has reached a point where many modern day Christians feel they cannot even begin to make a difference. The numbers are staggering, and it is easy to talk about it at the dinner table, then shrug our shoulders and say, "But, what can just one person, do about it?" I am here as living proof to tell you that ONE person CAN make a difference. One person can save a life. How much more when many "one persons" come together and form a body with a voice! One person speaking out saved me. The prayers of the saints saved me. I am a life that was saved from abortion by "every day" believers!

It was February 1992 when my mom found out she was pregnant. She was completely in shock. At the time, she had only been dating her boyfriend a short time. She was in school and lived a party lifestyle. She could not fathom bringing a baby into that life. She called her boyfriend, and the two of them decided their only option was abortion.

When her mother, my grandmother, found out that her daughter was pregnant and considering an abortion, she quickly leapt into action.

Immediately, she asked everyone she knew to ask the Lord to change my mom's heart and save the baby's life. Living in a different state at the time, she jumped on the very first flight out to see my mom.

My mom began having pain in her side a few days after taking the pregnancy test, and went to see a doctor. The doctor discovered she had an ovarian cyst, and performed a laparoscopic surgery to remove it. Despite tearful protests from my grandma, my mom went home and scheduled an abortion for February 14th. The day of the abortion, my mom and dad were met at the clinic by one of my aunts. She tried to block the door and begged and pleaded for them to reconsider, and save me. But, their hearts were hardened, and they went in.

The nurse began asking my mom questions about her health history, and found out she had recently had the ovarian cyst surgery. She said it was too soon to perform an abortion, and they rescheduled it for the next Monday. My mom went home that day with her mind resolved as ever. But, God had other plans.

Throughout this time, my grandma had been fervently gathering the saints in prayer, and reading aloud Psalm 139.

We are best friends and every memory we have together gets sweeter!

That night, as my mom lay in bed, she thought about the teaching career she so desperately wanted. She began to think of someday teaching a child who would be her baby's age. It was then that the Lord answered the ceaseless prayers of His people, and the words of the Psalms

echoed truth into a lost heart.

My mom's hardened heart finally broke, and she cried out to the Lord for the first time. She asked Him to give her wisdom, for she saw no way out. She woke up the next morning, full of the peace that passes all understanding, knowing with all her heart that she was going to give me, her baby, life.

On Monday, instead of going to the abortion clinic, my mom instead went to a doctor's appointment that my grandma had, in faith, previously scheduled for her. There, she heard my heartbeat for the first time. She said she was overwhelmed as she saw me on ultrasound. For the first time, she realized, "This is my BABY!" And now she could not imagine ending this life, this miracle she now knew beyond a shadow of a doubt was HER miracle.

She immediately called my grandparents and told them her decision to keep me. I cannot imagine the overwhelming joy that must have filled their

"This is my BABY!"

hearts, and the hearts of all the saints who had been praying. She told her boyfriend about her decision, and to her surprise and relief, he fully supported her and remained committed to raising their child together.

On October 15th, 1992, that little heartbeat on the ultrasound came in to the world: a baby girl, Bridget Myriah Muniz. I still tear up when I think of God's amazing sovereignty that brought us all to that moment!

The next 18 years that followed were full of mountains and valleys. My mother married her boyfriend, my father, and they had three more beautiful children together. Tragically, their marriage ended, but a few years down the road, the Lord blessed her with a godly husband

and four more children, with another on the way! Through it all, the Lord healed her heart from the pain of near-abortion, and grew her into an incredible godly woman. We have become best friends, and every memory we have together is all the sweeter for knowing the Lord special-

ly orchestrated our relationship.

My dad has always made it clear to me that he wanted me very much and has always loved me, even through many turbulent times. My grandma remains a huge part of my life, and I am forever grateful that she fought so fervently for my life! Every February 14th, on Valentines Day, my mom reflects back on

A silence for one life is a silence for generations!

that time of crisis and victory. She still feels pain when she thinks of how close she came to ending my life, and all that the two of us would have missed out on together. But each year, the bittersweet gets a little sweeter as the Lord reveals more of His purposes for our lives, and our family grows with new life. What the enemy meant for evil, the Lord redeemed for good! What Satan meant for death, the Lord grew in to a lasting legacy of LIFE!

In June 2012, my husband and I welcomed our first child, Judah. His name means "praise" and everyone around us joined in praising our Lord for this precious miracle. I will never forget one morning as I sat nursing him with my sweet mother next to me. She stroked his silky soft hair and gazed at him with the purest love. Then she said softly, "I

never considered the full impact that abortion has on life. It does not just stop one life; it stops MANY lives! If you hadn't been born, then your children never would have been either. What joy I would have lost."

What a concept! When we disregard a life, we disregard the LEGACY of life that child has the potential to carry on. When we are silent for one baby, we are silent for generations. Think of the impact you have when reaching out to a

mother in crisis. What would have happened if my grandmother had remained silent, not thinking she could make a difference as just one person? When you pray, when you minister, when your heart breaks to save a precious life, you are not just one fighting for one! You are fighting for a family!

Will you heed the call to defend the generations who are being lost? It was a child of God who interceded and spoke for me when I had no voice. Will you speak? It was fervent prayer that gave my children the chance to live. Will you fall on your knees in prayer? I pray that my story and the stories of others like me remains in your heart, a burning fire to leave a legacy of LIFE.

BRIDGET LESTER

Fort Smith, Arkansas, USA
lesterladybug@hotmail.com

Bridget and Landon's miracles are Judah Scott (6 months) and Baby Blessing #2, due June 2013!

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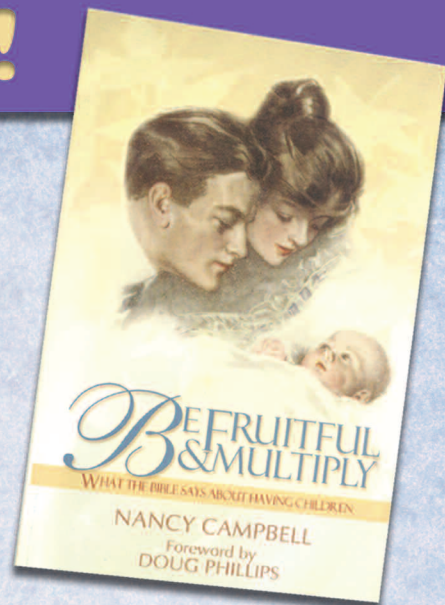
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Carry Them in Your Arms



Madelyn Lopez with baby daughter

How many times have you exclaimed, “This baby won’t let me put him down. He wants me to carry him all the time!” You feel frustrated, and sometimes even angry. You have so many other pressing things to do.

But, have you stopped to think what you are really doing when you carry your baby? You are revealing a glimpse of what God is like. You couldn’t do anything more powerful than that, could you? He is the tender Shepherd who loves to hold us in His arms. Isaiah 40:11 describes Him, “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.”

There is not a person who doesn’t love Psalm 23. We love to own God as our Shepherd for He doesn’t leave us isolated to cry on our own, but gathers us in His arms and carries us close. Not even a burly rough shepherd leaves a little lamb to fend for itself.

When you carry your baby in your arms, you are like the Great Shepherd of the sheep. It is not a nuisance. It is not time-wasting. It is God-like. It is so much part of the character of God, that He not only carries us when we are helpless babies, but right through our lives, even to our golden years. Isaiah 46:3-4 RAV says, “Listen to me, O house of Jacob... who have been upheld by me from birth, who have been carried from the womb: even to your old age, I am he, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.”

And let’s read Isaiah 63:9 also, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”

Have you noticed that babies, toddlers, and even little children love to be lifted up and held. The baby cries and cries, but the moment you lift him up, he stops crying. Why? Because he is meant to be lifted up and held close to you. Babies love to be up at our level. I remember staying with a family in Canada years ago. Like all little ones, their little boy loved to be held and would say, “Uppie Campbell, Uppie Campbell” until I lifted him up.

Talking about the nursing mother, Isaiah 66:11-13 NIV says, “You will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.”

Of course, I know that your arms get tired. We are not like our great Shepherd whose arms never get tired and of whom the Scriptures says, “Underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27). But, why not get a baby carrier? I think a baby carrier is indispensable for a mother. My daughter, Serene’s baby carrier is like another limb of her body! It’s amazing what you can accomplish in the home while wearing your baby in the carrier.

I find it sad that studies reveal that western mothers spend more time physically separated from their babies than mothers in non-western societies.¹ Another study is of Aka babies in Africa who sleep with their parents and are held and touched 99 percent of the time in a 24 hour period in contrast to European/American babies who are

Mad at her & Mad at Myself!

only held and touched 18 percent of the time.² Another interesting finding is that colicky babies are not found in non-western societies where babies are constantly close to their mothers and where the mother responds at the first sign of discomfort or unhappiness in her baby.³

But, I love the thoughts of some American mothers who have written to me...

"I hold my babies close to 22 hours a day. I sleep with the baby in my arms and when I can't hold them another family member holds them. My babies do not cry very often because their needs are met so quickly by mama, daddy, or a brother or sister." This is the blessing of larger families. It is a big job for a mother of her first baby to constantly hold her baby, but as the family grows there are more arms to hold the baby. Contrary to public opinion, babies in large families receive far more attention and are held much more than babies in smaller families.

"There is nothing like having your baby in your arms (or your sling) all day, always in your world, always learning and enjoying your closeness—and you don't miss a smile or a laugh!"

"I am guilty of carrying all my children more than many people think I should and nursing longer than some. However, I believe they are only small once and by the time they are two to three years old, they are running and playing and want less of you. I believe in carrying them and enjoying them while I can."

A grandmother writes, "Some people think it spoils children to constantly hold them, and there are obviously times when it's not possible. However, I've yet to hear a parent of grown children say they wish they'd held their children less."

"Spoil away! They are only little for so long."

I think that King David, the great warrior, must have been constantly mothered as a baby. His understanding of God comes from his own experience as He prays for Israel in Psalm 28:9 NLT, "Lead them like a shepherd, and carry them in your arms forever." I love the Century English Version which personalizes it, "Be our shepherd always and carry us in your arms."

Enjoy being like your Great Shepherd as you mother your little ones.

NANCY CAMPBELL

Read also Exodus 19:4; Deut. 1:31; 32:10-12 and Psalm 71:6.

Check out the following stories:

<http://tinyurl.com/LeftToCry>

<http://tinyurl.com/BabyChangedMyHeart>

<http://tinyurl.com/WhyDoBabiesSuck>

<http://tinyurl.com/MotherhoodBliss>

Studies cited in "Putting the Baby Down: The Roles of Physical Proximity in Mother Infant Vocal Communication" by Alanna K. McLeod

1. (Barr, 199; Hewlett & Lamb 2002; Konner, 1976, 1977; Le Vine et al., 1994; Lummaa, Vuorisalo, Barr & Tehtonen 1988; Small 1988)

2. Hewlett & Lamb, 2002.

3. Barr, 1999; Lummaa et al., 1998; Small 1998.

I remember the day I was sitting in the computer lab watching my boyfriend/future husband work on a school assignment. "How many children do you want?" I asked. "Four," he answered. "Me, too!" I happily replied. I entered motherhood with such confidence. I knew I would be a great mom! I had a good plan, a solid foundation, and a strong marriage.

However, I had not factored in one key element—the child. Oh, yes, the first 18 months were great! Then she acquired an opinion that she wasn't afraid to express! Thus began my journey into the fires of motherhood and parenting a toddler. I never knew I could be so angry. I would get mad at her, then get mad at myself for getting mad at her. Then I would be mad at her again for making me mad!

My oldest daughter was all I needed to prove to myself that I was NOT a great mom and did not have a good plan. A brother followed when she was two. I was so traumatized by her toddler years, that as he approached his toddler years I lived in denial that he needed time and discipline from me, and continued to treat him as if he were a baby. That was not so good for him.

By the time number three, a boy, came along, I was in trouble. I was dealing with anger issues. And I was not able to show my children love the way I saw other moms show love to their



children. Motherhood was not coming to me the way it seemed to come to them. After our third came our fourth, another boy. He was supposed to be our last. Yet, when I looked at the brochure on sterilization my doctor gave me, I could barely stand to read the words. The very thought of permanently cutting off my ability to conceive and bear children was repulsive to me. I didn't know why I felt this way, but I couldn't shake the feeling no matter how much I reasoned with myself. And I reasoned with myself a lot!

Finally the day came. I was ready. I was standing in the nursery changing the baby's diaper and I had the thought, "I'm good. I'm ready to be done having babies." Two weeks later, I found out I was pregnant. God is so good! He stayed our hand from sterilization until it was too late to turn back! We had our fifth baby and fourth boy in a row.

I continued to struggle through motherhood. But, things changed with number five. I found out that I was really in over my head and I needed help. I needed to turn to my husband more and rely on his leadership. Up to this point, I had foolishly tried to "shield" him from needing to help in the care and training of the children. In reality, I was depriving him of molding and shaping his children and family according to the vision God had given him. And just as badly, I was depriving my children of that vital rela-

tionship they needed with their father. So, out of necessity, I began to rely more on my husband. And things began to improve.

After our fifth was born, we had a big decision to make about birth control. Our previous method had obviously failed, since we were using it when we conceived our fifth. We had never discussed leaving conception to the Lord, except to dismiss it as something we were not interested in. However, a book I was reading prompted me to approach my husband with the idea. We read the relevant parts of the book. My husband put the book down and said, "Sounds good. Let's do it!"

My first thought was, "Wait! I thought we were going to have a discussion!" He was so sure that we were supposed to leave this in the Lord's hands. I was sure that we were going to have twelve children before we were done! I remember praying and asking the Lord to give me the assurance He had given my husband. The only words the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart were, "Trust your husband."

My fifth baby weaned at 13 months. I got pregnant at 14 months. Nine months later, my eleven year old daughter got the sister she had been waiting for. When I think I could have missed out on my fifth and sixth children, it grieves my heart. They have brought so much joy

into our home. They make every day exciting and help keep me from getting too serious about things.

All my children have brought more trial and struggle into my life than I would have ever wanted to have. But, I am who I am today because of that refining fire from the Lord. The Bible says that children are a blessing from the Lord. That is so true! Often they are not a blessing in the way we would expect them to be. They bless us by challenging us and forcing us to be more than we can possibly be. They push us into complete dependence upon God. They strip away our pride and leave us humble and broken before our Lord. And if we have any pride left, the Lord uses them to make sure it doesn't stick around for too long. I am so glad I have gone and am continuing to go through the fire of motherhood. It is the tool God is using to make me like Him.

If you are a young mom who feels overwhelmed by the demands of raising toddlers, please be encouraged. It may be hard right now, but it is so worth it! God's plan for your life is much more than you can imagine.

CHRISTAL STROUP

christal.stroup@gmail.com

Matthew and Christal's children are Rebecca (13), Daniel (11), Joel (8), Ethan (6), Aaron (4), Sarina (2) and two babies in heaven.

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The Ultimate Career

"The homemaker has the ultimate career.
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and that is to support the ultimate career."

~ C. S. Lewis

Do you Know the Answer?

If you receive the postal version of *Above Rubies*, you will miss the hymn quote on the back cover. It talks about "Homes where the altar fires burn and glow." If you read the quote on the back cover, do you know what it is talking about? What kind of homes are needed to make strong families in this nation? What are these "altar fires" that burn and glow? You'll find the answer in the booklet, *FAMILY DEVOTIONS, The Husband's and Wife's Role*. Check info on page 5.

COMING UP!

100 Days of Blessing
VOLUME 2

Keep watching Facebook for
this new edition of anointed
devotions for mothers.

When our first son was about 18 months old, I received a copy of an *Above Rubies* magazine. After reading it, I threw my birth control in the trash, and we started down a path that would forever change our lives. Everything about allowing God to control the womb was a foreign concept to me

Our first baby was a very content and healthy little boy. He was hospitalized with jaundice as an infant, but nothing serious. I assumed that because we were following God that we would have another baby shortly. It was three and half years and many prayers later that we welcomed our little girl. She was hospitalized, as well, with jaundice and was a very sick little baby.

Lots of tests, crying, and doctor appointments later it was determined she had a severe milk allergy. She was 17 months old when we found out we were expecting number three. I was filled with joy. The first ultrasound revealed our little boy had kidney problems. I was devastated. I had to have weekly ultrasounds the last trimester to monitor his kidney growth. However, God faithfully allowed me to carry him to term, and I had my first all natural birth at a hospital.

When he turned one year, we found our baby four was on the way. He too had the same kidney condition and was also born with a birth defect that had to be surgically corrected. I was heartbroken. I cried out to God, "We are trusting You and following You. WHY?" I felt God speak to my heart and say "I never promised it would be easy, only that I would never leave you." I felt a peace... for awhile.

In June 2012, Dalton underwent a major operation to save his kidneys. It was also discovered he had a heart murmur. Shortly after, we found out baby number five was on the way. But, on August 5th, 2012, I began to bleed, and I knew I would never see this baby this side of heaven. The miscarriage caused bleeding for three months.

During those three months, my husband lost his job. We were already broke from medical expenses and had no idea what we were going to do. The stress led to cardiac problems for me; thus, more medical bills. While waiting on some of my tests, I was nursing my



John and Melissa with their children, Christopher (9), Lily (5 1/2), Dalton (3), Will (1 1/2), and baby Joy praising God in heaven.

I ALMOST Gave up!

Will to sleep, and I asked my husband, "Would you consider having a vasectomy?" I think my question shocked him as he knew my passion for allowing God to be in control of my womb. I could tell he didn't like the idea. I quickly said, "Well, how about just a temporary preventative method. I really need a break. I can't do this anymore."

"And throw out our convictions, just like that?" he replied. My husband chose to not have relations together until we had a solution. He was not willing to compromise.

In the next few days, my Dalton asked me repeatedly, "Mom, is there another baby in your tummy yet?" My Christopher asked, "Mom, how long will it take before God sends us another baby?" My Lily kept praying fervently

for a sister. I realized I was the only one wanting a break.

Why did I feel this way? I realized at that moment just how weak my faith was. I was willing to trust God when times were good. I was even willing to trust God when things were difficult. But when it all came crashing down, I wanted to give up, and I almost did. I think my husband was pretty glad it only took a few days. We have not conceived again yet. But, I fully know and trust that each baby comes at God's perfect timing. Sometimes they are a surprise, and sometimes an answer of long awaited prayers. I am so thankful we didn't give up.

MELISSA SCHULTZ
Forth Worth, Texas, USA
missaann628@yahoo.com

Beyond our Wildest Dreams



Olivia, Havah, and Victoria clearing out brambles in readiness to plant trees in Israel.



I hear sounds of hushed bustling outside my bedroom door. It's 3:30 am.

Time to hop up and get moving. I jump in the shower before anybody beats me. There are five valiant young women, my daughter Victoria (18) included, preparing breakfast for a small army in my 40 x 10 caravan on the mountain heights of Israel. I take my superfood and vitamin C so I can keep up with my energetic comrades and join those gathered in the dark around the base for breakfast.

My oldest son, Brayden, leads us as we sing "Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melek haolam hamotzi lechem min ha eretz" (Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth) with great gusto for 4:00 am. We are truly standing on ha eretz, the Land of Israel. Brayden's family are still cozy in their caravan 50 yards away. Tali will join us in a couple hours after their two baby girls, Yael (2) and Keturah (1) wake up.

After breakfast, we gather in the tent for our morning word from my visionary husband, Tommy. He inspires us all with the ancient words from the prophets about the restoration of the physical Land of Israel. My third born son, Joshua (22),

then gives the work assignments for the day and the mass disbands to make it happen. I meet my second born son, Zac, on the way out of the tent who pulls me aside to discuss the tour schedule for the week. He, with the help of his wife Becca, direct the entire ministry, holding it all together. Asaph (nine months) plays at his parents feet, loving the freedom to get good and dirty. Nate (20), my fifth son, is sitting on the porch reading the daily Scripture portion with his soon to be betrothed, Katie. I'm living the life I've dreamed of and more, living and working with my children AND grandchildren all around me!

God has surpassed my wildest dreams. I thought I wanted to grow old on a farm and see my children build homes all around us. Now, I do anything but sit on a porch swing. We have been given the privilege of helping the Jewish farmers in the mountains of Israel restore the Land. Our family is constantly on the move. We agree with David, the Psalmist and King of Israel, "Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, or go up to the comfort of my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, Until I find out a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty God of Jacob" (Psalm 132:3-5 NKJV). God has lead us through the USA, Canada, Sweden, and Norway so far, and with all the family. When He

imparted the vision, we ALL got it! All of our children are as passionate about the restoration of the Land of Israel as we are, if not more!

It is no small undertaking to travel internationally with 17 people in tow. The expense is just one issue. We have to eat, sleep, travel, and do laundry somehow. Our Great God provides over and over in miraculous and mysterious ways. It is a testimony to all who have a desire to come to the Land and work along with their children.

There is no way we could orchestrate it on our own. Don't get me wrong, we don't sit on our hands and pray. We are on the offense. We all give it one hundred percent, all the time. There is nothing else for us. This is our life's work.

We have found it is IMPOSSIBLE to do this work without every single one of our children. *HaYovel*, Hebrew for "the jubilee," is a humanitarian organization committed to supporting the small farmers in Israel. This work was birthed nine years ago along with Mack Tanner, our youngest, who was two weeks old at the time. Tommy and I thought, why not now? We're not going to get any younger! *HaYovel* has grown just like our family. Tommy and I managed everything until it was more than we could do. We then started delegating. Now, our children carry the majority of the day to day tasks.

Tommy continuously reaches for more and spends most of his time as a liaison within the Jewish community. Even all of our children can't do it all. God is adding many capable others to our numbers because the work is so great! We were thrilled to host the Above Rubies ladies, Nancy, Val Stares from Australia, and Heather Jones from New Zealand this summer on the Mount of Blessing.

Over the course of this year's harvest, we hosted 200 people. My daughters, Olivia (16), Havah (15), and Tessa (10) prepared and served 22,000 meals, along with the help of harvesters from around

Serving the Lord as a FAMILY!

the world. Where could they get such training? Britt (13) and Mack Tanner (8) hauled literally tons of grapes out of the field, along with many strong young men, and played some pretty serious four square games.

I traveled back to Tennessee from Sweden midway through our tour to be with our fourth son, Caleb (21), and his wife, Kendra for the birth of their first child, Chayah T'zion was born perfectly in Savta's (Hebrew for grandmother) window of time and I was able to meet the family in Israel right on schedule.

A wonderful surprise awaited us after the harvest this season. We moved into Mama Jo's house. Tommy's mom lives four houses down from us and lost her husband, Pa Bill, during the spring. She invited us to share her home with her while we are in the States. Our married children took up residence in our home which situates us well for our busy lifestyle. What a perfect match in our restoration project! Not only do we have our children and grandchildren to love and share our days with, we have Mama Jo! Four generations dwelling together!

Many families want restoration but don't see a way to do it. Pray for a vision big enough for your family and direction to move together. It will be a fight. Everything worth anything is a fight. Fight to stay together. Many alluring opportunities will present themselves, but if they don't lead the way you want to go, don't give in to them. Your time together is worth so much more than money.

If your family would like to join us in Israel for the Harvest, check our website for dates and details at www.hayovel.com. You can see what Moses longed to see and touch what God's eyes are on all year round.

SHERRI WALLER

Mountains of Israel most of the time Leipers Fork, Tennessee, when home in USA • sherri@hayovel.com

Tommy and Sherri celebrate 30 years of marriage at the writing of this article. Their family are Brayden and Tali with Yael (3) and Keturah (1), Zac and Becca with Asaph (11 months), Caleb and Kendra with Chayah (5 months), Joshua (22), Nate (20), Victoria (18), Olivia (16), Havah (15), Britt (13), Tessa (10) and Mack Tanner (8).

Our Seven Young Children Came too!

James and Amy with their children, Rosemary (13), Judah (12), Adelaide (10), Boaz (8), Levi (5), Gideon (3), and Cyrus (1).

Boaz (7) hard at work.



Harvesting in the vineyards—James with son Levi (5).



My husband and I recently took our seven children to Israel for six weeks with *HaYovel*, to help harvest the vineyards of the Holy Land. We were thrilled with this chance to participate in the long-promised redemption. All but one of the Old Testament prophets foretold a long dispersion, followed by the return of the exiles to their promised land, the land that God gave to Abraham and his descendants as an eternal covenant. It is awesome to see how exactly He keeps His promises in every detail! My children are witnesses that there are no wasted words in Scripture! Because He keeps His

promises to the Jewish people, we know He will keep those He has made to us! Read Jeremiah 31:35-37.

In addition to all the spiritual lessons and blessings, Israel was a great place to take a large family! The Israeli people LOVE children, and large families are quite common. How delightful to be in a country where people appreciate the value of life, and understand our long-term vision for raising children for God's service.

The harvesting schedule started early—up and ready for a 4.00 am breakfast most mornings! However, the *HaYovel* staff is very familiar with families and small children, under-

standing about needed breaks, and days off to do laundry.

Our small children had such fun in the vineyards, not only picking (and tasting!) the grapes, but also collecting rocks, crystals, and ancient pottery scattered on the ground where we worked. The boys loved chasing small lizards and geckos, with the more rare chameleons being highlights for them. The older children enjoyed the chance to develop friendships with like-minded believers of all ages, and to live in community.

We worked in Judea and Samaria (what the news media calls “the West Bank”), and saw many amazing Biblical sites, both on working and touring days.

Now, when we read from the Bible, my children can call to mind Jerusalem, Hebron, Shiloh, Bethel, and the Mountains of Blessing and Cursing. It was inspiring to walk in the footsteps of the biblical forefathers, prophets, and our Messiah. No wonder the enemy wants to claim this Land!

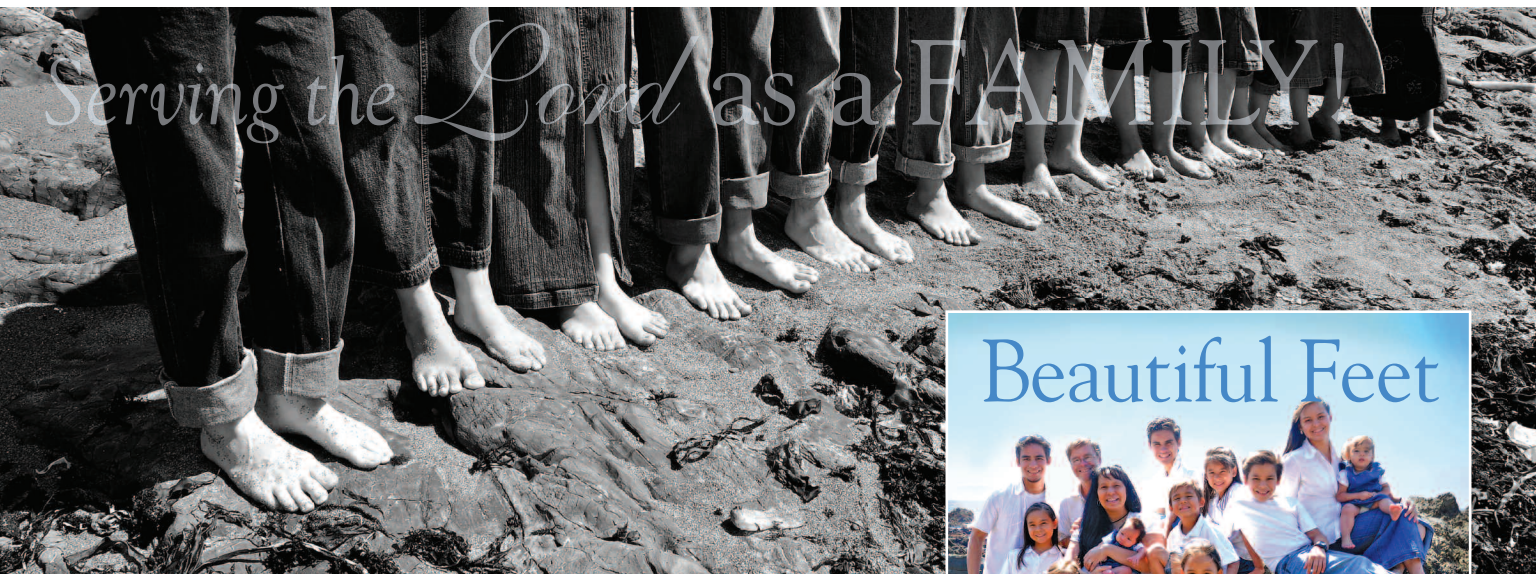
To those who would reflexively say, “We could never afford that,” we are living testimonies that where the Father guides, He provides. When we step out in faith, He will meet us and supply what we need. For almost every person in the camp, His financial provision was miraculously evident. Most of us didn’t have the funds to go on this trip when we

committed to it, but our Father poured out blessings when we followed His prompting and told Him, “Here am I, send me!” He also provided backup for us during our absence. My husband’s livelihood and our home were taken care of while we were gone, in a way that showed God’s hand at work.

We are so blessed to have had the opportunity to literally be His witnesses “in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria” (Acts 1:8). We would greatly encourage you to go, and take your entire family!

AMY MUCKLESTONE
Arlington, Washington, USA
mucklingmom@gmail.com

Check out these promises about the land of Israel: <http://tinyurl.com/IsraelEverlastingPossession>



“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace.” (Romans 10:15).

I knew in my heart that Jesus cared for the lost, but I rarely found myself sharing the Gospel with unbelievers. I could not count on one hand the number of souls I had personally lead to the Lord over my 40 plus years of being alive. However, last June, our family of 13, joined a team that shared the Gospel with over 21,000 people, leading over 18,000 to Jesus! Sound amazing? Truly—amazing doesn’t even come close!

It all started when my eldest son, then 17 years old, expressed God calling him to do mission work in Asia. That grew to include his sister, with several trips and three difference countries. We were blessed to see and hear about the

fruit of their labor, and we began to sense God prompting our hearts to take the whole family with the next team.

“How would that be possible?” we wondered. “The airline tickets alone would be more than our annual income.” Yet, I could sense a surety that this was the right move. I’ve always felt that, as Christian home-schoolers, our purpose in educating our children was not for the world’s systems, but rather for a heavenly purpose. After all, didn’t He form these babies and know them before they were in my womb?

Our education was not cookie-cutter education—not to bring the schoolroom



into our home, but to direct and propel our arrows into kingdom advancing activity. Cultivating their hearts in an environment to learn to share the Gospel and pray for the sick seemed to be the next step for our family.

For almost a year we focused and intentionally trained for our mission, trusting that was what the Lord would have us do. Each week our family would go out into our surrounding communities

for outreach, which included learning to pray for the sick. We chose to actively walk in risk/faith and obedience to reach out to the people around us. We practiced sharing our testimonies and prepared a salvation message.

Last June, our whole family (including eleven of our twelve children) was able to minister to the Filipino people for three weeks. The miracles that ensued as we trusted the Lord to lead and provide for us were absolutely AMAZING! We saw the book of Acts come ALIVE! In our three week visit, our family of 13 (out of a team of 30) shared the Gospel:

21,878 heard the Gospel

19,720 responded for salvation

6,796 received prayer from prayer lines

56 Bible studies started

14 churches started

Because some of the Filipino villages call upon witch doctors, there was receptiveness toward healing prayer. We shared God's Word at the crusades, and God often backed his Word with power—proving that only HE was the One, True God. Our family saw the blind receive sight, the lame walk, and captives set free. The amazing thing is that it was our children praying for the sick, too! We found that God is not a respecter of persons, and the same Holy Spirit that is in Brian and me is the SAME Holy Spirit that's in our children—not a midget or mini version of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when the children shared the Gospel, God used them as well.

Not a day went by that we did not see the hand of the Lord working in our midst. Our nine year old shares the testimony of how the Lord used her to heal a deaf girl, our 18 year old how the Lord used him to heal an elderly woman who was nearly blind, and our 11 year old how the Lord used her to heal a paralyzed woman who got out of her chair and walked to the microphone to share her testimony.

The WHOLE family participated—this was not an adult deal. It was all hands on deck. Brian, each of our young adults, and I learned and prepared a salvation message. When we shared a Gospel presentation in the public schools, we'd either go in teams of two or three from classroom to classroom, or share at a general assembly. The

EvangeCube was one of our tools—a folding cube type concept with the Gospel in pictures. We went on courtesy calls to pray over the mayor in a city, shared the Gospel in prison, and prayed for the sick in the pediatric cancer ward.

We were donated an exclusive one-hour radio air time to a TWO million listenership to share a Gospel presentation. Our younger children participated in speaking in the crusade program (a greeting, their testimony, announcing/explaining the prayer lines, etc.). Our family sang, danced, and ALL prayed for those who wanted prayer (for family, finances, health) and ALL of us either saw or participated in God healing or doing. To God be the Glory—He is mighty to save!

Today, we hear the follow-up from the villages that have heard the Gospel by our team. Several Bible studies have turned into churches, an illegal gambling den was transformed into a meeting place for a new church, new believers are disciplined to share their testimony and lead others to Jesus, and we're seeing second generation churches being planted!

Some of the things we learned along the way were:

Serving in missions as a family exposes an incredible kingdom dynamic to the native people—it is a picture of the Father heart of God.

When a family serves together, it gives opportunity to expose God's kingdom heart for families that many may not have ever seen or heard.

Serving in missions as a family is an opportunity to experience, first hand, God's power in the midst of darkness.

Serving in missions as a family has sharpened our ability to identify the

Lord's presence moving among us and has given us a sensitive heart for the people.

Serving in missions as a family confirmed that you CANNOT outgive God. One of our family's priorities is to not go in debt. We don't have a mortgage and we purpose to not let credit card debt hang over our heads. In the end, our summer trip was completely covered and paid for. We DID not have to go into debt to obey the Lord. What a mighty God we serve! He truly owns the cattle on a thousand hills!

Good news! We've been invited to go back by the Filipino people in 2013! This time, we believe the Lord would have us share with others about this opportunity to serve as a family. We purpose to train team leaders all over the nation to bring other families to share in the blessing. This is not a business, we don't get commission, and we don't charge for sharing what the Lord has given us. Our website, www.FamilyMissionsInternational.weebly.com has information that will get you started and envisioned and where we hope to have monthly podcasts of our training meetings.

Would you like to join us as a family?

CHARITY CALLIS

Central California (near Yosemite National Park), California, USA
bccallis@gmail.com

Brian and Charity's children are Jimella (23), Eden (22), Philip (21 and married to Ashley), David (18), Mark (13), Abigail (12), Meorah (10), Merry (9), Titus (7), Hope (6), Hanna (3) and Lilja (1).

Brian and Charity will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary 26 March 2013.

Turned Upside Down

It was January 2006. I was stunned when my Dad emerged from a phone call to his friend in Cooktown and informed me that he was going on a mission trip to Papua New Guinea and that he had permission for me to come too. My life as a homeschooled 14 year old, the eldest of three girls, on an 830 acre farm in north-west New South Wales was about to be tipped upside

down. To begin with, I did not even know where Papua New Guinea was.

Geoff Weingarh, vice president of the Australian branch of *Victorious Ministry Through Christ*, had fallen in love with the people of PNG back in 1996 on his first visit. In 2000 he returned with his wife, Poss on short mission trips to teach people about

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Abortion Story

As I share my story, I'd like to remind you that I am someone's daughter, a mother, wife, sister, friend, or perhaps the lady who may share the pew with you!

Please embrace me as one of these persons to you.

About 35 years ago, I had just graduated from high school and was looking forward to college and my 18th birthday. It was a summer to remember, or so I thought—one filled with dreams and hope. Little did I know that soon my life would take a dramatic turn for the worse, for it was later that summer I had an abortion. This event devastated me and left me with a bitterness that haunted me for decades to come.

It began on a hot, muggy, June afternoon. As my sister and I walked around our neighborhood, I shared with her my fear that I might be pregnant. How would my mother react if she were to find out? Later that day, my sister drove me to a clinic in a nearby town to have a pregnancy test. That car ride home was the first of two trips I would make from that particular clinic during the hot summer of '79.

On this particular trip my sister warned me to prepare myself for trouble when I finally told my mom. What followed was not pretty. As my sister foretold, my mother did not receive the news well. She quickly decided on a course of action. She said I would have an abortion and I would go to college, in spite of my pregnancy. She contacted the clinic and scheduled an abortion for the next week. She told me I was not to see my boyfriend until after the procedure was completed and she would drive me to the clinic. After returning home, she would call my boyfriend and tell him to drive to the clinic to bring me home. I was to pay half of the fee and he was to pay the other half. If I did not agree to her demands, she would have him prosecuted for statutory rape.

Over the next few days, my mother spent more time with me than at any other time in my life. Sadly, this was not because she wanted to share my few moments of pregnancy with me. Rather, it stemmed from a fear that if I spent time with my boyfriend, we would find a

way to not have the abortion.

No amount of tears changed my mother's mind. She was determined. And that was that! To make matters worse, as we headed for the clinic, I saw the father of my child at the corner of the entrance to the highway. The memory of seeing him like that has burned a scar on my heart that still bleeds tears.

The trip to the clinic was filled with pleading and begging, but no amount of pleading touched my mother's heart. Arriving at the clinic, my mother signed the paperwork handed to her. As we waited for my name to be called, I tried one last time to sway her, pleading, "Please mom! Please don't do this."

The nightmare continued as my name was called and I was led to a small office half way down a long hallway. The lady behind the desk asked me if I had any questions. As the last word left her mouth, I was on my feet. I ran down the hallway and threw open the wide double waiting room doors to again plead and beg for mercy. But, my mother was gone. I fell to my knees sobbing. It was then I felt my arms being pulled upward and dragged to a room where my baby was sucked away.

I awoke in the recovery room, my boyfriend sitting at the side of the bed. He held me in his arms until the nurse told us to leave. He tried to avoid every bump on the road on the quiet car ride home. When we walked in the front door we could smell the hamburgers my mother was frying. The smell nauseated me as it still does today. She said the subject was closed and not to be mentioned again. The heat and the humidity left little air to breathe as our hearts were broken the day our child died.

I soon realized that having an abortion does not solve problems. It only makes them worse. Soon after my abortion, I left for college. After two semesters, I left. My grades were not good. Instead of focusing on my studies, my

mind was consumed with how to correct my wrong, how to make this decision valid, how to block out the memories of the moments at the abortion clinic, and how to live with a gaping hole in my soul.

Several times since that year I have returned to college to work on my degree and upon each return I took with me the memory of what came before college. My mind always wondered about the what-ifs. I kept walking away from school, sabotaging my education. I stopped going to church and felt so far away from God.

Not only had the life of my child been destroyed, but now I was destroying my own life. The next few years of my young adult life are a blur of moments of which I am not proud. I wished to block everything and everyone connected with the loss of my child.

Along with the death of my child came the death of my spirit. I involved myself in relationships that were hopeless, abusive, and ungodly. I was afraid to love again. I felt a sense of disconnect and yet all I wanted was to be loved, chosen, and protected.

I eventually married, and out of that marriage came my two beautiful children. I felt unworthy to be their mother as I did not deserve these two precious gifts from God. I felt responsible for all the pain my children have endured.

I continued to live with the consequences of this nightmare for the next 30 years, constantly waking up to the pain, the void, the anger, the depression, the loneliness, and the self-destructive impulses I experienced every day. I was convinced that everything that ever went wrong in my life was a punishment for having aborted my baby.

I spent a lot of years in and out of therapy and never once did they discuss that my cry to be whole was the grieving over the child I had aborted. I was filled with such a sense of shame and guilt that even after I confessed my sin, I could not

believe that God could forgive me. But, God never ceased loving me.

Fortunately, God heard my cries and held me close, wrapping me in His embracing arms. One day, I shared with my pastor the pain that I walked in daily from the wounds of my abortion. He told me about a supportive, confidential, and non-condemning ministry called *Rachel's Vineyard*. He told me that it was a weekend retreat ministry for both men and women, and all the "other victims" of abortion. It was not only for the woman and the father of the child, but the parent who had forced their daughter to abort, a spouse, or the potential grandparents, brothers, and sisters—all who were denied the child. He explained it was a safe place to renew, rebuild, and redeem hearts that were broken by abortion.

At *Rachel's Vineyard* retreat, through the Living Scripture exercises and communal sharing, for the first time in over 30 years, I was able to share my grief, guilt, and anger. I was able to recognize

how the shame and regret had brought grief in my life and those close to me.

The mental health counselors and clergy who served on the *Rachel's Vineyard* team helped me to set in motion an end to my isolation. They aided in dismantling the toxic secrets and gave me tremendous support in breaking my struggle with shame. My preconceived fears of condemnation were transformed into blessings. My memories of abandonment, pain, and confusion were replaced with peace and reconciliation.

Despite my wrongs, I was able to recognize that God's mercy is so much greater than my sins. I found God's love, compassion, and forgiveness, not only towards myself, but for those who were a part of my experience.

I was now able to mourn my baby. I found peace as I honored the life that was once in my womb. I have the hope of one day seeing my child in heaven. I now think of my child with love and tenderness instead of pain and shame and I know she rests securely in the arms of

Jesus.

My healing journey began that weekend, a journey I continue to make even now as I lay my nightmare at the foot of the cross each and every day, trusting in God's mercy and the sure knowledge that I am forgiven. I live in the certainty that Christ bore my sins upon the cross and died for me so I could know His peace and love.

While my baby was only with me for only a moment, she has forever remained in my heart.

KELLY LANG

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

kellyshawn61@gmail.com

Check out: www.rachelsvineyard.org



Turned Upside Down *continued from page 19*

bondages and barriers to healing wounds and scars of the past, confession of sins, renouncing occult practices, spiritual warfare, and living a life of total commitment to God empowered by the Holy Spirit.

These simple teachings based around forgiveness had brought freedom into so many villages, marriages, and families in PNG, that it was time for a team effort to continue reaching out.

Our July departure date raced into view and we flew into the capital, Port Moresby, from where we flew to Lae, and later Popondetta. As Dad glimpsed rolls of barbed wire topping concrete fences, and banks guarded by machete wielding police, he began to wonder where on earth we had come to.

I began to wonder about things too, but not about this formidable country I had come to, but about things of the spirit that previously I had only read about in books, but never experienced. As we ministered in LaeBuimo Prison and saw the changed and joyful expressions of the prisoners, I realised that I was in more bondage than they were and that although I had grown up in a Christian

home, I still had people that I needed to forgive and sins to repent of, including pride.

This was just the beginning of the change in my life, as I learned about the Holy Spirit, and how to hear God's voice. I changed overnight from a shy teenager unwilling to say grace at dinner time, to a crazy young woman who would talk in front of a crowd of 500.

Needless to say, I was a changed teenager and when I returned home I set to work to record my experiences to inspire others, which resulted in "Dad and Me in PNG." released by Creation House, October 2012. It is written in the third person from a 14 year old perspective, designed to inspire those at any stage of life. It is available on Amazon.

In 2010 I had the opportunity to return to PNG and help conduct prayer ministry training schools to see even more people set free by God's power. I participated in a Healing of the Land seminar in a village that had seen the rivers turn red with blood during World War II.

After several days of teaching, the people repented of their sins, forgave

offences, dedicated their village to God and anointed the land, going from house to house praying over people and seeing miraculous healings. They burnt their idols in a central fire in the middle of the village. As we were preparing to leave we saw fish come back into the river that had not been there for a hundred years, and vegetables multiplying in size.

I am still crazy about PNG and other missions and as I am now married to Stephen Ainsworth who has himself travelled the globe in short term mission trips, I am sure we will be tripping off sometime in the future.

LIZZY AINSWORTH

Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

lsg-redeemer@hotmail.com

<http://lizzyaainsworthbooks.blogspot.com.au>



a BIGGER career

I was living with my boyfriend while he built his business and I worked as a hair stylist. We were partying hard, traveling, and living for ourselves with no plans of marriage or children. I wanted to own my own salon and travel the world. Through a series of events my boyfriend gave his life to Christ and no longer wanted to party. He began to pray, read his Bible, and go to church on a regular basis. I thought he was nuts! We had been together for six years and he was not the same person anymore.

We got custody of his eight year old daughter (who I quickly thought of as my own) and began going to church. Slowly the Lord opened my eyes and I realized that it wasn't a "religion," but a relationship. I asked Christ to forgive me and come into my heart and life. He did, and changed me and my desires!

We were engaged a few weeks later and married a month after that. The Lord showed us that children are an heritage of the Lord and I should be like a fruitful vine with children like olive plants around our table (Psalms 127 and 128). We decided to go off of birth control and one month later we were expecting our first baby.

The Lord also opened our eyes to the truth about our health, prescription and non prescription drugs, and the damage they do to our bodies. We began to organically grow, raise, and preserve a lot of our own food.

I had a great pregnancy, although working full time in a salon, caring for my daughter, and trying to be a wife and homemaker was difficult. I neared the end of my pregnancy and was exceptionally big! Our doctor said there was no way I could have this baby naturally. He wanted to schedule.

"Can't I at least try for a natural birth?" I asked. I did not want to be induced. I wanted my baby to come when it was ready. He refused, saying it was my husband's ego and my pride that I wanted to do it naturally. He insisted we do it his way or find someone else. We called other doctors, but no one would take a 40 week pregnancy.



Dwayne and Darci with their children, Sierra (13), Asa (3), Jett (2) and Adrionna (7 months).

We knew some friends who had a home birth and even though the idea sounded frightening, we went ahead and through our friends tracked down a midwife. We loved her. She said she would love to be at our birth, and reassured us that God put the baby in my womb and He would bring it forth. We trusted the Lord and two long weeks later I delivered an 11 lbs. 3 oz. baby boy in the comfort of our home on my husband's birthday! Gods timing is perfect!

I gave up my salon job to stay home and home school our 10 year old daughter and be with my new baby boy. I did not miss my salon job at all! Six months later we were expecting again. Another great pregnancy and much easier this time being at home with my children. At 41 weeks, by God's mercy and grace, we had another boy, 11 lbs. 5 oz. It was an amazing water birth on a mid-September evening on our back deck with only the light of the stars and two tikee torches.

Eight months later we conceived again, and experienced another wonderful pregnancy! At 41 1/2 weeks the Lord allowed me to give birth to a 9 lbs. 4 oz. baby girl in the early spring. It was such a peaceful labor, walking outside and back in the woods to speed up the birthing process. Sure beats hospital halls! I don't say this with pride! Each pregnancy, each birth, home schooling, and being a wife and mother all come with their own trials. Each new step was made in faith and the Lord taught me so much in each new situation! God's grace is sufficient! And last year, I was privileged to adopt our oldest daughter!

I don't miss my old life or my salon job with all the big dreams. I thank the Lord for the truth! He has given me a much bigger job! It is such an important task to be a fully dedicated mother raising the children God has given us! Our children are our future. This world needs people who have the truth. We

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Too Old for What?

Did you know that women are in the childbearing years until they reach menopause? "I beg your pardon!" I hear you retort. Well, if God wanted us to stop childbearing at 35 years, He would have planned for us to go through menopause at that age. But, instead God purposed our bodies to be able to conceive until menopause. Although the current statistics state that most women are infertile by the time they are 45, many women have the joy of embracing children in their forties. And to the amazement of many, the testimony of these women is that they enjoy their best pregnancies and their best births during their forties. God seems to give a special grace to childbearing women in their forties.

Awhile back, Michele Kauenhaufen, who writes with me each day on our *Above Rubies* Facebook wrote the following post: "Many people argue that they are too old for more children, and so they choose to not have any more. I often hear people say, "I do not want a teenager in the house when I'm in my sixties," or "I will be old and retired before they are even married," or "I'm in my forties; I'm too old for babies." The interesting thing is that these same people do not think they are too old for the workforce. They willingly work into their sixties, or even their seventies. Clearly, they are not too old to work. Most times they are not too old to raise children either. They have simply made a choice." Many women responded to this post. Here are few...

"The older we get, the more qualified we become to raise children. I had my last baby at age 43 and he's been the funniest yet!"

"I am 49 and have a four year old. I wish I could have 10 more to add to my seven. Children are a blessing from God!"

"Babies are WAY more awesome than work! They are labor intensive, but what a payoff!"

"I am 42, and have been blessed with nine beautiful children and one grandson, and am expecting our 10th child July 2013!"

"My husband is 63, I'm 46, and we have twin five year olds—best way to shock your adult children!"

"I am 49 and am blessed to be still nursing my 14 month old. We have seven children and pray Jesus will add more to our quiver. ALL my children are helpers and the more the merrier."

"We adopted our first child at age two when I was 47."

"My mother-in-law is 75 and her youngest is 16 by adoption. She also adopted my husband who was one of 15 adopted children, plus two biological."

"By the time my youngest is a teenager, I will be 58 and my husband 68! There are days when I feel like "I am too old for this," but the reality is that being with the children keeps me moving and busy instead of sedentary—they really keep me young!"

"At almost 51, I am the blessed mama of eight treasures, ages 19-3 years (two biological and six adopted). God placed the last two in our home when I was 49. At one point we had six children four and under. I never have time to feel old."

Nancy Campbell



Cam and Michelle's children are Bryson (21), Jacinda (19), Dalton (18), Brielle (15), lost baby Jewel, Logan (13), Havenne (12), Gideon (10), Jilissa (9), lost baby Mark, Tressa Leigh (7), Drayden (5), lost twin babies Jilea and Emmalene, Solana (3), lost baby Coco and baby Bean. Michelle is now delightfully expecting baby # 12 in July 2013 (pregnancy 17), when she will be 44 years.

Our Culture Robs Women

The joy of pregnancy in your forties is difficult to adequately express in words. I have had pregnancies in my twenties, thirties, and now my forties. In my twenties, the pregnancies were exciting, of course, but there were also anxieties and fears. Stepping into the unknown and the little understood was concerning.

There was also a tiny bit of sadness involved in my early pregnancies. The thought of losing that youthful taut waistline I held onto so dearly upset me. In addition, releasing my selfishness to the needs of a husband and children did not come to me without growing pains. I whined my way through the discomforts of sharing my body to nurture and grow another.

By my thirties, I learned that my body, although different now, was still in decent shape. I knew what to expect in pregnancy. The earlier anxieties and fears were replaced with, dare I say, almost an air of arrogance. I had this ridiculous sense that I would conceive and bear children endlessly, right up until menopause. How incorrect and silly! I made assumptions about my fertility that I had no right making. Pregnancies came easily and regularly. I looked at them as a normal part of my life as

they came around every second year to add new babies to our growing family. Hence, I took no true appreciation of the moments. I viewed them more as a necessary, and oftentimes, not always enjoyable means to an end. I had to “suffer” pregnancy in order to get the babies.

By my forties, I had lost a few pregnancies along the way, and could no longer assume anything. Even a positive pregnancy test did not guarantee a child to raise. Conception now took time. I was learning it could no longer be assumed. There was more longing and waiting than ever before, coupled with the regret of knowing that I had taken pregnancy for granted so many times. This caused my anticipation and appreciation to grow.

Now, pregnancies in my forties are definitely the most anticipated and prayed for pregnancies of all. The overwhelming joy of seeing a positive pregnancy test is much more intense and gratifying. The true appreciation of being blessed with new life again supersedes all other feelings. Any pregnancy discomfort is looked at with pure ecstatic joy, rather than inconvenience.

The physical side of the pregnancy is not more difficult with age, nor the delivery or postpartum period. In fact, the maturity and wisdom gleaned over the years make the entire experience more joy-filled. The impatience, lack of confidence, and negative self-talk that often accompanied my earlier years of parenting are replaced with a patience and an

understanding of how fleeting the seasons of life are.

I truly cannot express the joy and privilege a woman has when she has a baby in her forties. It is one of the best experiences life holds. All the fear mongering perpetuated in our culture is unfounded, and robs women of one of the greatest pleasures of her life—a baby at the end of her fertile years. Pure delight!

MICHELLE KAUEHOFEN
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada
ceducate xplornet.ca

Michelle is the *Above Rubies* Director in Canada. Phones: Home: 306 931 6697; Cell: 204 355 7682.

Our Little Cherry on the Top

My mother was finished having babies by the time she was 27. I thought that’s just how we were supposed to do things.

After my husband and I had our first two daughters, I thought we were “done.” Funny how God works. At the time I was a Christian and my husband was not. He thought something permanent sounded a bit too drastic, so I obeyed. It was not until five years later we had a son. Although five years sounds like a long, silent stretch, God was busy at work in our marriage and in our hearts. He has all the time in the world.

Three years later we had another son, and in three more years, a daughter. I

... birth to our third daughter at age 38 was a miracle. I didn’t know of many women who had ever had children older than that. Throughout those years, I also had five miscarriages, one at about 40 years of age. After that, things seemed pretty quiet. By now our oldest daughter

was married, and we were enjoying grandchildren.

However, when my husband and I were planning our belated 25th wedding anniversary trip to Hawaii, I began experiencing symptoms of pregnancy—we were to expect a baby on our 26th anniversary!

Nine months later, at age 46, I had my sixth baby! God has been so good to me. My pregnancy went smoothly and our baby is



healthy. I was able to continue exercising right up to the end. My labor was only three hours long and my body is fine.

I used my daughter’s midwife and had a beautiful water birth with all of our daughters being able to attend and greet their baby sister. I have lost all my baby weight, plus 10 pounds! Praise God, I am at the lowest weight I have been in 16 years. My husband and I HAVE to keep in shape and eat healthy if we’re going to keep up with all of our growing children. They keep us young!

Natalie is our “Little Cherry on the Top.” None of us can imagine life without her. She is such a happy little girl and so full of life. We are all better people because of her. Our oldest is 23, and we

Melissa and her daughter, Kelsie walking together with their babies.



have three grandchildren. As my husband says, "We've been having babies for four decades." Our baby was born right in the middle of our daughter's children. It is so fun to have babies right along with my daughter and have our babies play together!

THIS is the kind of fruit that is eternal. THIS is what LIFE is all about.

There is no earthly thing as sweet as the fruit from a family tree. I never would have guessed it would be this way in a thousand years, but we'd never trade it either! I am so glad God chooses our path, because if left to myself, I certainly would have chosen something different. God says in Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your

ways my ways, declares the LORD."

MELISSA COUCH
Raymond, Washington, USA
Mcouch85@yahoo.com

Brian and Melissa's children are David and Keslie Smith (+3 children), Kamirin (20), Gabe (15), Ben (12), Annalise (9), and Natalie (17 months).

My Heart Overflows

I am blessed to be a 49 year old mother of seven children. At one time, I didn't want children. I didn't think I would be a very good mother. I married at age 26 to a lovely man, had an excellent career, and made good money. I thought having children would get in the way of all that I wanted. Little did I know how wrong I was!

At age 30, I re-evaluated. Maybe I did want children! However, at that point in my career I was so busy I realized I would never see them. I needed to find a more mom-friendly job. Since both my parents had been teachers, I felt teaching would be a great job. One problem, I had a business degree, not teaching degree. The only way I could afford to go back to school was if my husband and I lived with his parents for an extended time, and that's what we did. We lived with them for two years so I could get a teaching certification.

At the end of two years, we were able to purchase a house. I substitute taught for almost a year and then was hired permanently. At the end of my first year teaching, I found I was pregnant at age 33. I was on my way to motherhood!

The first time wasn't so easy. At seven weeks gestation, I began bleeding and was sure I was losing the baby I had not even told my parents about yet. I called them on the way to the hospital to tell them I was pregnant with their first grandchild, but I was sure I was losing the baby. They arrived as I was having and ultrasound. Praise God, the ultrasound revealed the tiny beating heart of a baby due in early February.

I continued teaching but on

December 20 I again found myself bleeding at 30 weeks gestation, this time due to pre-term labor. After four days in the hospital, I was able to come home on strict bed rest for the duration of my pregnancy. Eight weeks later, our precious son Ellis was born on January 28, 1997.

I returned to teaching part time and going to school for my Masters of Education. After another year, I was pregnant again and due in summer, so I could finish the school year. Sweet Anna was born on July 9, 1997 (right on her due date). I was again blessed and in awe of a God who gives such good gifts to us! What more could I ask for? I had a son and a daughter and thought this would be my family. Thankfully, I was wrong.

I took a two year leave from teaching. I loved being a mother and staying home with my children. Soon I wanted another baby. Since he came from a family with four children, my husband thought another baby was reasonable. By the time it came to return teaching, I was in my third trimester of another pregnancy. Due to complete placenta previa, Braeden was born by C-section on November 21, 2001. He was a beautiful baby and again I thought my family was complete.

My husband, Joe was a good father and provider. He was satisfied with three children, but I began to long for another baby. I begged him; I nagged him, but he was sure three was his limit. After some wise counsel from some older women, I

chose to close my mouth and submit to my husband's wishes. Six months later, my husband told me he thought we should have another child. He knew it was the desire of my heart and didn't want to deny me.

This pregnancy was easy, no bleeding, no bed rest, no previa. Dear Kellen was born on March 10, 2004—our 14th wedding anniversary! What a gift.

I remarked to my husband that I was going to enjoy Kellen since he was our last baby. He replied that he didn't have to be the last baby. God had been working in my husband's heart, and he was feeling the desire to accept the children God gave us. So without too much trouble, we conceived again and our daughter Maebrey was born on May 23, 2006. I



Joe and Carol with their blessings, Ellis (16), Anna (13), Braeden (11), Kellen (8), Maebrey (6), Eilley (4), and Declan (2).

was 40 years old at the time.

After five relatively easy pregnancies, I assumed we would have another with no trouble. I conceived again, but after 10 weeks, I felt something was wrong. One night I dreamed of miscarriage and awoke to blood and cramping. An ultrasound confirmed that our sweet baby was already gone from my womb and in the arms of Jesus. How hard that was! I learned there is no comfort like God's comfort in times of loss and hurt such as miscarriage causes. I was 43, and did not know if I would ever have another child.

I turned 44 and still wasn't pregnant. Yet, somehow I felt God's whisper

that we would have another baby. My husband felt the same. Exactly a year later, I learned I was expecting another blessing. I would turn 45 before Eilley was born on December 30, 2008. What a New Year's celebration we had that year!

I guess I should not have been surprised when I found myself pregnant again at age 46. I had just had a baby the year before. I felt truly amazed that God should trust us with another child. My doctor wasn't surprised to see me. She knew we allowed God to open and close the womb. Except for the fact that I was older, more tired, and already had six children to care for, this was the perfect pregnancy. The older children helped

tremendously and sweet baby Declan was born on July 27, 2010. He is like the cherry on top of the ice cream sundae. We already had more than we could ever have hoped for and then we receive another blessing!

My heart is so full I can barely contain it. And before you start to wonder, yes I am often overwhelmed, overmatched, overtired and I lose my patience. But, God's grace gets me through the day—day after day.

Truly I am a blessed mother.

CAROL MADAGAN

Coatesville, Pennsylvania, USA
emadagan@aol.com

UNCOMPROMISING MANHOOD

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Child training

"Foolish fondness spoils many, and letting faults alone spoils more. Gardens that are never weeded will grow very little worth gathering; all watering and no hoeing will make a bad crop. A child may have too much of its mother's love, and in the long run it may turn out that it had too little. Soft-hearted mothers rear soft-headed children; they hurt them for life because they are afraid of hurting them when they are young... Children without chastisement are fields without ploughing. The very best colts want breaking in. Not that we like severity; cruel mothers are not mothers, and those who are always flogging and fault-finding ought to be flogged themselves."

~ Charles H. Spurgeon

NOURHISMENT FOR MOTHERS AND WIVES

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receive daily encouragement by going to:

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a BIGGER Career continued from page 22

need to educate ourselves about the truth—the truth about God, the Bible, our purpose as a Christian wife and mother, child training, and the health of our families. The health of our families is largely up to us wives. We are the ones who do the shopping, meal planning, and the cooking. Our family eats whatever we give them to eat.

John 8:32 says "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Ephesians 5:15-18 says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

We need to educate ourselves and then educate our children for a better tomorrow. We can make a difference, one family at a time. If we look at the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 we see that she redeemed her time with wisdom. She did not "eat the bread of idleness" (Proverbs 31:27). We don't need to go out looking for ministry. We are already in full time ministry! We are serving the Lord by serving our husband and children. It's the most fulfilling and most rewarding job there is! I thank the Lord for allowing me to have the best job in the world!

DARCI DAVIDSON

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
trimmaster23@yahoo.com

Success Without College?

What will it profit a girl if she gains the whole world but loses her soul, her lifetime financial freedom, her purity, her love of reading, her unique individuality, her entrepreneurial momentum, and four peak years of her life? A college degree may no longer be worth the world to us when we see what we have to surrender for it. The costs for that piece of paper—financial, emotional, spiritual, and temporal—rise higher with every graduation.

When we really think it over, a degree may not be necessary to equip us for our life purposes. Many college graduates discover later that a degree was not a prerequisite for their success.

Having to spend all one's time jumping through an institution's contemporarily-hip course hoops makes it very difficult to find the time to master domestic skills we will need as a First Lady in our future home. If a young woman spends four to eight years debating worldly philosophy and studying for a career, she is simply not going to possess as much competence in running a home and living a life of self-sacrifice for her man and her babies as the young woman who has been practicing those skills daily. College saps valuable time from preparing for the life many of us hope to live someday—that of a wife and mother.

Admittedly, college does have attractive benefits, but not without costs that most often far outweigh them. When family and friends say, "You're strong enough to keep your faith through college! You won't become one of those statistics!" how do you know? Satan fell from heaven and Eve fell from the Garden of Eden! Our hearts are deceitful, and they seek excuses to sin. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," warns 1 Corinthians 10:12.

Doug Phillips has said, "College is a trip through Babylon. If the academics don't get you, the dorm life will." Proverbs 16:17 declares, "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who keeps his way preserves his soul." Therefore, according to Scripture, the descriptive characteristic of the righteous is that they are set-apart and holy—not loitering and trying to survive in the midst of those who habitually practice sin.

If we truly believe that college is often a type of Sodom, then longing for it could be as deadly for us as it was for Lot's wife, when she looked back. Sodom, her home, was similar to college with all its attractions, stimulations, and ventures into the thrills of the world. She must have despised what was ahead of her by comparison—life in a cave. It was when she doubted the value of her forthcoming life of hardship that she longed for the familiarity she had with the worldliness of Sodom. She looked back when she stopped looking ahead to her reward.

We can take encouragement from the historical fact that the Messiah Himself stayed

home, subjected to His earthly authority until he was 30 years old! He neither moved out on His own, nor went to college. And we think it stretches us to be at home and single when we're in our 20's? The Author and Perfector of our faith did it!

The enemy desperately wants to get us young ladies out from the protection of our home. That is why we sometimes feel the draw to think that anywhere else would be more productive than being at home. He wants to destroy us, and cannot access us as easily while we remain under authority. Realizing this can help us feel validated at home, and help us move on to be productive (have entrepreneurial businesses and ministries, and exercise hospitality) from the hub of our home.

Skipping college does not imply that we give up on advanced education or perfecting our talents. Skills are vitally important to bring glory to the Name of God. Excellence is a work's glory. We look for unique ways to develop skills without necessarily conforming to the college cookie-cutter pattern. Training and education do exist outside the liberal college package.

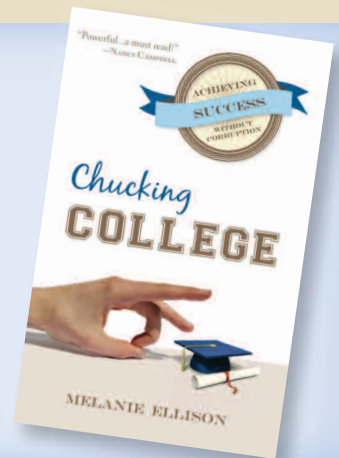
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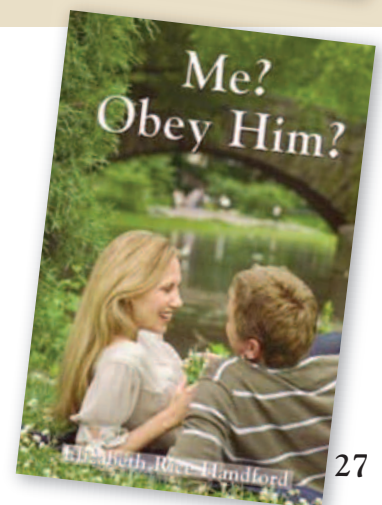


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Contact: Brenda Kremer • Email: kremerbrenda@gmail.com

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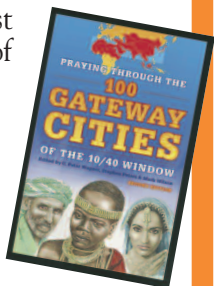
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AMERICA

PO Box 681687, Franklin, TN 37068-1687

Nancy Campbell: nancy@aboverubies.org

Ph: 1 877 729 9861 (between 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday, Central Time)

AUSTRALIA

PO Box 5604, Manly Qld 4179

Val Stares: valstares@aboverubies.org.au

Ph:/Fax (07) 5525 1970

CANADA

Comp 13, RR#4, Site 411, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3J7

Michelle Kauenhofen: reachaboverubies@gmail.com

Ph: 306-931-6697

MALAYSIA

No 1, Jalan USJ 13/1A, UEP Subang Jaya, 47630

Petaling Jaya, Selangor

Rosalyn Khoo: aboverubiesmalaysia@gmail.com

Ph: (60) 5638 3522

NEW ZEALAND

PO Box 4232, Mount Maunganui

Heather Jones: aboverubies@extra.co.nz

Ph: (07) 575 5787 Fax: (07) 575 2024

PAPUA NEW GUINEA and AFRICA

8 Burkes Road, Gowrie Junction, QLD, Australia 4352

Lisa Thorpe: lisathorpeclan@bigpond.com

SINGAPORE, SOUTH ASIA, EAST ASIA AND SOUTH EAST ASIA*

Marine Parade, PO Box 720, Singapore 914408

Jenny Png: abrubiesSG@gmail.com

SOUTH AFRICA

PO Box 3916, Durbanville 7551

Linnie and Christo Lues: linnie@aboverubies.co.za

Ph: 021 976 0883

SOUTH PACIFIC

PO Box 4232, Mt. Maunganui, New Zealand

Margarett Hartnett: hartnettfam@gmail.com

SOUTH/CENTRAL AMERICA, ISRAEL and MIDDLE EAST

Email nancy@aboverubies.org

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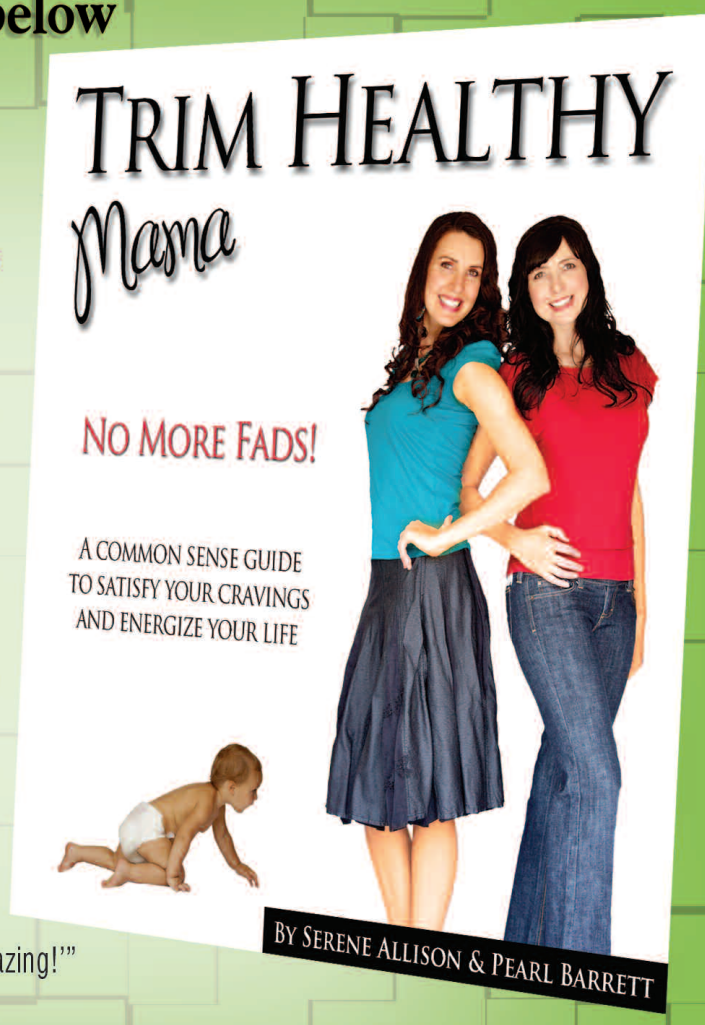
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