

Strengthening Families Across The World

ABOVE RUBIES

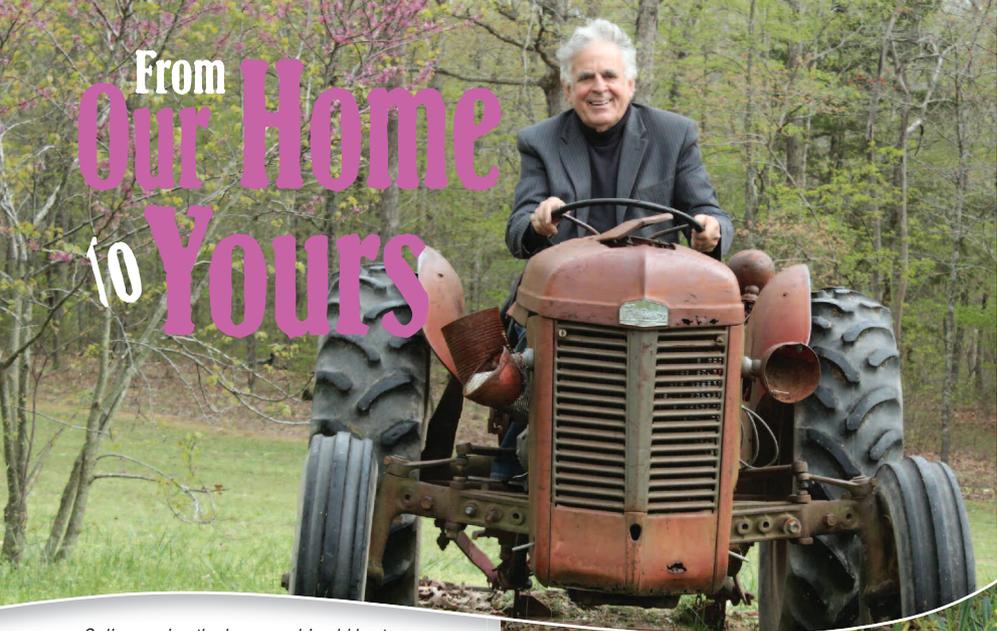
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Issue: Eighty-Seven

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From Our Home to Yours



Colin mowing the lawns on his old beat-up tractor—and wearing a suit! I have often seen him driving the tractor with a suit and tie!

I am looking out my window as I type this editorial. The fresh green leaves are filling the trees after the bareness of winter; they are so green they look iridescent. The newness of spring is such a beautiful time of the year. And on the big lawn grandsons are playing soccer which is a daily occurrence. Arden comes into the office, makes a couple of calls, and next minute there are 10 or more cousins on the field playing soccer. How many boys have such a privilege as this?

It's not only a beautiful time of the year, but a busy one—time to plant the gardens again. Everyone around here is busy planting. I'm planting, Evangeline is planting, Zadok and Sharar are planting, and Serene and family are planting.

With children and many grandchildren around, life is never boring for a minute. They are all involved in so many different things. I'll give you a tiny glimpse of life around here in a photo



gallery as a picture is worth a thousand words.

I guess life is busy at your home, just as it is at ours. But, isn't it good to know that even in the midst of busyness, we can still live in a state of rest? Did you know that God calls our home a "resting place" and does not want anyone to spoil it (Proverbs 24:15)? Are you involved in too many things outside your home? You have enough to do in your home without allowing "extra" activities to bring tension and strife. When you start to feel frantic, check what you are doing. The Knox translation of Hosea 11:11 says, "And in their own home, says the Lord, I will give them rest." Your home should



The beginnings of my garden for the year. I look forward to enjoying the harvest.

Evangeline came over to help, but after planting over 1,000 plants in her garden, she thought she'd do it lying down.

be a "resting place" for yourself, your husband and family, and also for God who wants to dwell in your home. We must watch that we do not become like Jeremiah 50:6 where God says, "My people... have forgotten their resting place."

The homes of God's people should be different to ungodly homes. Instead of tension and strife, we should enjoy peace and rest. Instead of depression and despondency, we should have joy and laughter. Instead of darkness and deception, we should have light. When the Egyptians experienced the plague of thick darkness which could be felt, there was light in all the dwelling places of the Israelites (Exodus 10:21-23).

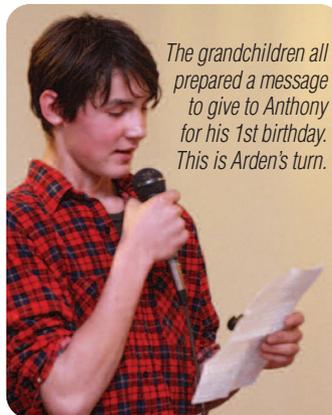
There is another very important thing that I believe we must not forget in

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Cherish and Breeze Allison with Sarah Corbitt (Above Rubies helper) from Georgia. Sarah is now into her 7th month of helping in the ministry of Above Rubies. We also have Rebekah from Idaho and Loretta and Jessica from



Australia with us at present (this is their second time to come). Becky just left who was from New Zealand. We are blessed to have the "cream" on the top with all these wonderful girls who come to live with us and help with Above Rubies.



The grandchildren all prepared a message to give to Anthony for his 1st birthday. This is Arden's turn.



Our lovely daughters, Mercy and Psalmody. Celebrating our grandbaby, Anthony's 1st birthday.



Sharar Johnson doing a one arm pull-up. Want to try? They also have a bar in their home between the kitchen and the family room so they can strengthen their muscles every time they go through the door! My, you want to see Evangeline do pull-ups, but she uses two arms!

"Zadok, the Natural Famer." Zadok and Sharar do bio-intensive gardening, using about 40 tons of compost an acre.



Rocky Barrett riding his dirt bike. Now the background music around our home is the roar of the motorbike, but I am used to it. Our sons, Wes and Steve rode Motocross bikes from the time they were young and didn't give it up until their mid-forties!

We even provide dirt jumps. Look out trailer! The next day after this picture Rocky lost control and rammed into our house, leaving a couple of holes! But, he was okay and out playing soccer a couple of hours later! And now the bike must be fixed, because I hear the "music" again!



Crusoe, Bowen, and Arden playing soccer. There were a lot more who didn't get in the picture. Oh yes, don't forget Chester, the Barrett's dog! He plays in every game of soccer, flying up and down the field with the boys.



I have to show a baby amongst all these pictures. Georgia Sky Campbell at seven months (Rocky and Monique's daughter). Georgia is currently our youngest grandbaby.



A little of Zadok's garden. He has already planted thousands of plants, and will be planting thousands more for Farmer's Market.

Our son, Rocklyn with their three boys at the Chess Super Nationals competition at Opryland Hotel, Nashville. With over 5000 children competing from all over US. Joshua placed in the top 50 of the country for his Grade 5 division. Harry was under the weather with the flu so he came out at 150, and Max is still in training. Rocky is their coach.

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 Dorniny,
Dorniny & Associates, duanead2@yahoo.com
PRINTING: Lithographics, Nashville, TN USA
FRONT COVER: Sahara Johnson (8 years) Picture taken by Rashida Johnson (www.facebook.com/RashidaLaelPhotography • www.rashidalaelphotography.com). Rashida also took a number of the pictures in the editorial. It's great to have budding photographers around the family, plus loads of amazing subjects.

Fill Your Home with Laughter!



Kevin and Wendy with their family: Chase (19), Holly (17), Macy (14), Justus (12), Elley (10), Amy (8), Lilly (5), Peter (3), Daniel (18 months) and precious 10th baby arriving at the end of the year.

“He will yet fill your mouth with laughing, and your lips with rejoicing” (Job 8:21 ESV).

One afternoon, my three year old son was very excited to get his “boy stickers” of tractors, helicopters, fire engines, cars, etc. When I placed the new sticker sheets in his hands, I assumed he’d know what to do with them since he’d watched his older sisters place theirs neatly on paper at least a dozen times. I shouldn’t have been surprised when, a short while later, I found all of his stickers adhered all over the top of our dining room table.

“Oh no, Peter!” I exclaimed, “Stickers are not for tables!” He ran over to me with the biggest smile on his face. “It’s OK, Mom,” he reassured me, “You can move them all to the chairs.”

We Need to Smile More

This year, I have made it a goal to find extra joy and humor in all things. I often find myself so busy accomplishing my daily tasks that I end up overlooking humor when it’s occurring all around me. I can easily laugh when I see a funny comedian, but when it comes to simpler amusements I just haven’t taken the time to do so. I need to smile more! Smiling is the beginning of laughter and, like laughter, it’s contagious. Charles Dickens writes, “There is nothing in the world so

irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humor.”

Philippians 4:8 ESV is a good reminder on keeping things in perspective. “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Humor Changes your Perspective

You see situations in a more realistic way. I concluded that if I’m not finding anything humorous at all in my everyday life, I am running my schedule a little too tight. Therefore, I’ve started to slow down and purposely seek out cheerful things to read and think about. Here are some funny one-liners I came across. Humor like this helps me not to miss out on the joys in common occurrences:

“You Know You’re a Mom When...”

Your diaper bag IS your purse.

You need to wash the bar of soap in the bathroom before you can use it.

You reheat your cup of tea twice before throwing a lot of it out.

You’re amazed at ALL the things you can do while simultaneously breastfeeding.

You have a perpetual basket of unmatched socks.

The toilet paper roll only gets changed if YOU do it.

You have winced from stepping on a Lego piece in a dark room in the middle of the night.

YOU are the one who falls asleep when you are reading your child a story.

You have memorized several of your children’s favorite books.

Your car ALWAYS has crushed cheerios, toys, and diapers in it.

Any items that get put into the car, rarely, if ever make it back out again.

Not only is laughter “the shortest distance between two people,” it also has health benefits! Proverbs 17:22 reads, “A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” Doctors and scientists have been steadily uncovering what God revealed in His Word centuries ago. The following are a few medicinal benefits their studies found about laughter:

Laughter is Relaxing

A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress and relaxes our muscles for up to 45 minutes afterward. We can't feel anxious, angry, or sad when we're laughing. Laughter is an instant vacation.

Laughter Supports the Immune System

Laughter increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving resistance to disease. Having a joyful heart increases the response of tumor and disease-killing cells and defends against respiratory infections.

Laughter is Good Exercise

Laughter gives a workout to the diaphragm, abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg, and back muscles. Our face muscles stretch, the pulse increases, and more oxygen is dispersed to our tissues. The shaking and jiggling associated with laughing also helps to clear waste from our organs.

Laughter is a Pain Reliever

Numerous studies have found that people who have chronic pain are less bothered by it when laughing. It might not cure the ailment, but can bring about some much needed distraction from it. Laughter helps the pituitary gland release its own pain-suppressing opiates.

How can we get in the habit of including more humor in our life?

Spend Time with Joyful, Witty People

These are people who routinely find humor in everyday events. I have two friends that never cease to amaze me with their wittiness!

Bring Humor into Conversations

Ask people what they find funny. Be witty yourself.

Keep Things in Perspective

Life happens to everyone, the difference is how we respond to it. A fresh perspective can bring many more smiles.

Pay Attention to Children

They are experts on being funny and laughing. Write down the things you hear them say and review them once in a

while. During the midst of a busy morning, my five year old daughter was busily writing out her letters of the alphabet. After a while, she presented me with a paper filled from top to bottom with the newly formed letters.

"Very nice," I congratulated her. "No," she immediately replied, "I want you to tell me what it says." "Oh, you wrote a story?" She enthusiastically nodded, yes! I looked more closely, scanning over the simple letters she had randomly put together. I couldn't find anything that was an actual word. I hesitated in my reply, not wanting to stifle her creativity. "I'm not sure..." I began. She seemed puzzled, and before I could add anything further, she exclaimed, "Mom! I thought you knew how to read!" How precious! I'm homeschooling her, and she thinks her mom can't read.

As Moms tend to do, I often find myself running through life at the break-neck speed of light. I talk fast, think fast, and move fast. I grin thinking back to my then four year old son's response when I questioned him on how long he had really slept for his nap. "It hasn't even been five minutes, yet," I told him. "I did sleep," he firmly protested, "I just slept faster." By default, I'd already been training my children to live life in the fast lane, too.

Thankfully, I read that humor works just as quickly. In less than half a second after exposure to something funny, an electrical wave moves through the higher brain functions of our cerebral cortex and initiates a positive response.

Ecclesiastes 8:15 ESV says, "And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun." And Proverbs 31:25 ESV says of the virtuous woman, "She laughs at the time to come."

Join me in taking time to savor the humorous situations in life and in glean- ing the extra joy out of any given moment. There is a treasure of joy some- where around us right now!

WENDY SHAW

Oakhurst, California, USA
psalm19eight@gmail.com

Wendy has written two very practical books for mothers...

THE MORNING SICKNESS HANDBOOK
(Nausea Relief for Queasy Moms)
and

BLESSING YOUR BABY
(How to Bond with Your Child Before it is Born!)

Available from www.MyMorningSickness.com

From Our Home to Yours *continued from page 3*

the midst of our demanding lives, and that is to take time for God. I am so grateful that we make TWO SPECIAL TIMES every day to come into the presence of the Lord, to hear His Word, and speak to Him. These times are our morning and evening Family Devotions. As we plan our day to make room for these special appointments, I always feel that it is the VERY LEAST that we can give to God.

If we don't stop in the midst of our activities to take time for God, what are we telling our children? Do they get the message that all the activities we are involved in are more important than God?

When we don't have these times together, we miss out hearing God's Word which changes us and our children's lives. We miss out on praising and worshipping God together, which is what we were born for. We miss out on

showing God that He is preeminent in our home. We miss out on the opportunity to pray for one another, for our nation, for Israel, for the persecuted church, and for many countries of the world. Satan knows the power of prayer and will do everything he can to cause all kinds of interruptions to stop us from this most powerful family appointment, unless we are determined!

We must set our course for God, keep on target, and let nothing interfere with what is best for our family. Isaiah 50:7 says, "For the Lord God will help me... therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

May God truly be the potentate in our hearts and homes.

NANCY CAMPBELL

Founder and Editress of *Above Rubies*
for over 35 years
www.aboverubies.org



Tale of Two Heartbeats

My husband and I married in May 2003 and we decided to delay having children until I finished my degree. However, when we decided it was the right time, the children came fast and furious! In June 2006 our first son, Samuel, was born. In October 2007 we welcomed his little brother, Vincent, into our hearts and home. May 2009 found us parents to a third beautiful boy, Theodore.

I became afraid of getting pregnant again. Nonetheless, in February 2010, I realized we were expecting again. I was not thrilled to be pregnant again so quickly and pushed my husband to get a vasectomy. He refused until after the baby was born. October 2010 brought us a sweet little baby girl, my heart's desire. We named her Eva, Breath of Life.

In November 2010 we found out about a little girl we could potentially adopt through the foster care system. Little J was exactly 10 months old when we first met her and we proceeded with the application and homestudy right away. Our homestudy was concluded in January 2011 and visits with Little J would begin February 2011. I would have five children under five years old!

In January 2011, I attended an

Above Rubies retreat in Surrey, BC. I was convicted that a vasectomy was not a good choice, but I was still very afraid of how another pregnancy would alter our family, especially with Little J set to move in with us in the spring. I thought that 2011 would be the worst year of my life and then it would be over. The children would be older and things would get better as time went on, as long as I didn't get pregnant again!

Despite the good teaching at the retreat, I was still so fearful that I made an appointment for my husband to get a consultation about a vasectomy. His consultation was set for February 3, 2011. He called me after the "consultation" to say that the doctor had offered to do it on the spot and he had accepted. A part of me was relieved that it was all out of my hands now and we could focus on the children in our care. Little J moved in with us on March 3, 2011. I was very, very busy. I thought five children under five was the worst thing ever. I had no idea what the worst thing ever was.

On June 17, we went camping with our church family. The weekend started out great with beautiful weather, good friends, and lots of little children running

around! That afternoon I noticed Eva's breathing had become laboured. I called our doctor who listened briefly over the phone and told me to take her straight to ER. When we got there her oxygen saturation levels were at 82! Very, very low.

She was diagnosed with pneumonia, admitted to the hospital, and put on oxygen and IV antibiotics. We called foster care and asked for respite care for Little J. We thought we would need it for three to four days depending on how long Eva would be admitted. Friday night Eva seemed to improve. However, her heart was being monitored as well and when she fell asleep it had a strange rhythm. The nurses and doctors were concerned and they decided she should be flown by air ambulance to the Stollery in Edmonton.

Late Sunday night, we arrived in Edmonton. I expected Eva to be made comfortable in a bed, and a doctor would be in to check her out in the morning. Instead, an echo of her heart was done immediately and she was sent to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). PICU is another world. Machines beep constantly. Children scream or cry at all hours of the day and night. I still didn't grasp the severity of it all, but when things started happening to Eva I was sure she was going to die and I couldn't stop crying.

In the morning there were five cardiologists in our room. No one knew what was wrong with Eva. They gave her a 33 percent chance of survival and started meds. She experienced many side effects and nothing could control that bad rhythm that was killing her. They decided to do a closed heart surgery. It helped, but not for long, as the deadly rhythm took over once again. They scheduled a second surgery, and success! The deadly rhythm was mostly gone and the rest could be suppressed with comparatively mild drugs. Wow! Our little girl would live after all! We were happy and scared when we left the hospital, although we still had to stay nearby at Ronald McDonald House.

Eva was in and out of the hospital the entire month of July 2011. On August 3, we got the all-clear to come home (five hours drive away). I couldn't believe I was driving away from Edmonton with my little girl safely buckled into her carseat. Euphoria! We would

only have to come back to Edmonton for check-ups! I spent the next couple of weeks loving on my sons who I had missed so much, cuddling my daughter, and making arrangements for Little J who was still in respite care. We didn't know what life was going to look like now, with Eva needing a significant amount of medical monitoring and care for her heart.

On August 15, 2011 we drove to Edmonton for the first of Eva's heart check-ups scheduled for the next day. We checked into Ronald McDonald House at 8 pm. At 8:10 pm I gave Eva her meds and at 8:30 pm, as her daddy was giving her a bath, she collapsed in his arms. I screamed and ran downstairs carrying the limp body of my child. Someone attempted resuscitation then an ambulance arrived. They administered several doses of epinephrine to try to start her heart again. It was a three minute drive to the Stollery and she was rushed into ER. There were a dozen nurses and doctors in the room all trying to resuscitate my daughter. At 9:10 pm the doctor in charge said that if there was still no response by 9:15 pm they would stop. That's when I finally understood. They would stop. My daughter would die! They brought me to her head and put her hand in my hand. I screamed and screamed her name "Eva, Eva, Eva" into her ears, hoping it would bring her back, somehow.

At 9:15 pm on August 15, 2011 my precious daughter was declared dead. I couldn't believe it! After everything she had been through and survived. She was dead! We found out later that the scar on her heart from the surgery had ruptured and she literally died of a broken heart.

When Eva's heart stopped beating my world crumbled. I felt completely hopeless. I wanted something to hope for. I wanted another baby. Nobody could ever replace Eva. Nobody. But babyhood was snatched out of my arms so suddenly and violently, I was reeling. I was still nursing Eva when she died. The next weeks were also physically painful as I

worked to stop the flow of milk I had spent so long trying to keep throughout Eva's stay in the PICU. I had looked forward to growing out of babyhood and selling the "baby items" at a garage sale. But, oh, when babyhood was snatched from my arms, I longed to hold Hope. I longed to feel the weight of a baby in my arms. I couldn't hold anyone else's baby without crying desperately. I looked with envious eyes at other baby girls and held close the clothes of my dead daughter.

When Eva went to Heaven I suddenly understood so much more clearly the sanctity, value, and eternity of Life. Eva was dead. I could no longer hold her physically, although I longed to do it more than anything in the world. She is in Heaven, but is still my daughter. That will never, ever change.

For months I couldn't reconcile the fact that we had a daughter whose name meant "Breath of Life" who died so young. How was this possible?

And, I wanted to be pregnant. I wanted a little Hope in my belly when everything seemed so hopeless around me. And we couldn't. All because of a permanent decision that we made back in February 2011, back when we thought we could see the future and all the good things it held for us.

And then, on January 24, 2012, we changed the course of our lives once again. We reversed a permanent decision. And I hoped and prayed for another heartbeat in our lives. I thought the meaning of Eva's name would be fulfilled in siblings that would never have had life had the heart of our little "Breath of Life" never stopped beating. The weeks passed, the months passed, and every month was hopeless once again.

We used to take our fertility so much for granted that we thought we would just cut it off and throw it in the garbage. How stupid. If there was one thing I regretted it was that permanent decision we made back in February 2011. We did our absolute best with Eva. We advocated for her. We prayed for her. We fought for her. We loved her. We held her. We slept with her. I pumped milk for hours and hours and hours in the PICU for her. But our fertility, and the hope of life for any other children, we threw in the garbage, like so much detritus. The

lives of our future children were of no value to us.

Eva changed our hearts. Sweet little Eva with her sparkling eyes and glowing smile. I will forever mourn the loss of my beautiful, sparkly baby. But oh, how sad the loss of the children that we couldn't have because we put no value on their lives. And, I grieved for those children too, and our loss of hope.

And then, one fine day, in July 2012, Eva's name was fulfilled. All of a sudden, there was a little Hope in my belly. The third week of July was strange as we absorbed the fact that maybe, just maybe, there would be another heartbeat in our family. Could it really be? Was it true? And my heart beat a little faster as I thought about it.

One day I woke up in August and my heart wrenched afresh as I missed Eva with every breath I took. But, when I went to have an ultrasound and saw that little flickering heartbeat at 169 bpm on the screen, I knew that Eva's name had been fulfilled. There was New Life because Eva lived and died. There was hope. We want to celebrate the life and heartbeat of our little hope baby because there are no guarantees and we don't know what the future holds. While we hope and pray for the outcome of a living baby with ten toes and ten fingers and a strong heart that beats and beats and beats much longer than my heart and Mike's, we also celebrate the fact that this little one exists at all. And we thank God for the gift of life.

Nothing can take away the pain and grief of my precious daughter until I see her in heaven, but I am also filled with gratitude. Gratitude to my husband for undergoing painful surgery to make right our mistake. Gratitude to God for undeservedly giving us another baby. Gratitude to Eva for her life and the life of the sibling(s) she has given us through her life and death. Gratitude and joy that our little hope baby is alive and kicking. She is a gift from God but also a gift from Eva, our little Breath of Life.

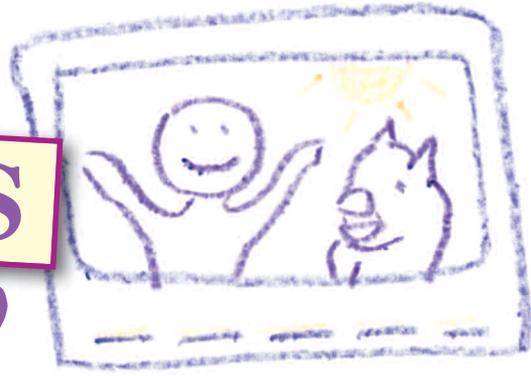
ANELLA JANTZ

Sexsmith, Northern Alberta, Canada
anellajantz@gmail.com

Mike and Anella's children are Samuel (6), Vincent (5), Theodore (3), Little J (3), Sweet Eva (October 15, 2010-August 15, 2011) and baby Nathan Evan, born April 14, 2013.



Who TEACHES Your Children?



As a parent or grandparent, you are already aware of the many forces at work, intent on attempting to shape the thoughts and opinions of the little ones in your family. For decades, psychologists have reported the critical stages of development in children. As the research progressed, it became clear that formation of personality and the foundations for learning occurred much earlier than originally thought.

Consider the following: 80 percent of children six and under, read or are read to in an average day. However, children spend an average of only 49 minutes with books in that same average day. This compares with two hours and 22 minutes or more in front of a television or computer screen. Children two years and under watch an average of one to two hours a day.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) made a “screen-free” recommendation for all children under age two years. The researchers wanted to study the benefits or harm in educational TV viewing for the same age group. They found that because educational television programs usually use content and context that doesn’t make sense yet to children under two, there is little, if any, educational value.

Unstructured Play is Best!

Unstructured play proved to be far better than electronic media for encouraging brain development. Through unstructured play children learn creativity, problem solving, reasoning, and motor skills. Unstructured play also encourages independence by teaching children to entertain themselves.

Little children learned best when they interacted with people and not a TV screen. Even when parents watch TV and videos with their children, to help them understand and learn, the children do much better from live interaction and instruction.

A television or radio in the background, can also do damage to a child’s development by distracting the parent and decreasing interaction with their children. Hearing these distracting sounds in the background can also have a negative effect on a child during his unstructured play time.

Television viewing around bedtime is especially negative because it causes difficulties in sleeping and sleep schedules. This affects a child’s mood, behavior, and learning. Many children with increased exposure to media have delayed language development after they start school.

One of the primary researchers, Dr. Brown, gave the following recommendation to parents: “In today’s ‘achievement culture,’ the best thing you can do for your young child is to give her a chance to have unstructured play—both with you and independently. Children need this in order to figure out how the world works.”

Because you’re concerned about what your children are learning, and their literacy success, pay attention to the warnings from AAP and consider reducing, or completely eliminating, heavy media use for children under two years. Instead, begin reading together with your child to better develop literacy and to insure their success in education and life.

To help in this battle, an online children’s magazine has been developed

where you can find new short stories to read to your children during the day or at bedtime. Each month, I also have two, new, original short stories in this magazine. You can find more information at <http://www.knowonder.com> and it’s free!

Readers are the Leaders People Follow!

And what about adults? The National Endowment for the Arts found that “reading has declined among every group of adult Americans,” and for the first time in American history, “less than half of the U.S. adult American population is reading literature.”

Reading can make you more effective as a leader of others. Evidence points to reading as a method for improving intelligence and leading to innovation and insight. Some studies suggest that reading makes you smarter through “a larger vocabulary and more world knowledge in addition to the abstract reasoning skills.” Reading increases verbal intelligence making a leader more able to communicate. Reading is also one of the best ways to relax. One study found that reading for only six minutes a day reduced stress by 68 percent. Other studies suggest reading may even help to fight off Alzheimer’s.

The reading habits you instill early in life will benefit your children and grandchildren for a lifetime. Remember, “Readers are the leaders people follow.”

MAX ELLIOT ANDERSON

Rockford, Illinois, USA

Mander8813@aol.com • (815) 877 1514

Books for Boys Blog:

<http://booksandboys.blogspot.com>

THE HAPPIEST GIRL IN THE WORLD

I have lived all my life on a farm in Namibia, a country just above South Africa, and known to many Africans as “the land of milk and honey.” Even here, in Namibia, *Above Rubies* is known and loved.

I have been asked the same question countless times. “What’s it like to have such a big family?” The answer is always the same. “It’s wonderful!” But, a big family? We’re only five children! To some people five children might seem a lot but it never seemed a lot to me.

Actually, we would have been only three children, as after my brother Daniel was born, my mom and dad decided that we were “enough.” However, God had different plans.

Ever since I can remember, I wanted a baby sister and started praying earnestly that my parents would have another baby.

When I was eight years old, we met a family with eight children, their youngest being a year old. Their mother gave my mom her first *Above Rubies* and we were soon stuck on it! We became very close friends and did trips and sight-seeing together. About a year later, my mother was pregnant! There wasn’t a girl in the world happier than me. I later heard my mother say that if we hadn’t met that family or received an *Above Rubies*, she probably wouldn’t have had any more children.

About 12 weeks into the pregnancy, something went horribly wrong. My mother started bleeding. I can still remember my dad telling us that mom might lose the baby and we would not be having school for a while as mom needed to rest and stay in bed. I was nine years old at the time and for a few seconds I was very excited about having a short vacation, until I realized the seriousness of it all. I went to my room and started praying before I was even on my knees. At that point, I didn’t yet realize the power of prayer, but I knew that nothing was impossible for God. I cried my heart out to Him, telling Him how badly I wanted to have this baby sister, as I truly believed it was a girl.

After praying, I got up and went to my parent’s room. My mom was lying on her side crying. In our home, you rarely

see my mother cry and it broke my heart. I went back to my room and prayed again. I even promised God that if He would give us this baby I would give something in return. I was willing to give up anything I could think of at the time.

The next morning my dad took my mom to the doctor. He did a sonar and by God’s grace he found a very active little baby kicking and boxing around! Our prayers were answered and to say that we were overjoyed would be an understatement.



From left to right: Therita (16), Eben (18), Francois (4), Hannelie (mother), Leoné (5), Leon (father) and Daniël (13).

gave me the most beautiful baby sister. The blood appeared to be coming from the placenta.

For two weeks my mother was on complete bed rest. I cooked as best I could, running up and down our long hall about fifty times a day, checking on how much salt I should add to the pasta and asking what I should do when the sweet potatoes started burning. We all helped wherever we could, praying for my mom and my unknown sibling the whole time.

In February 2007, when I was 10 years old, God answered my prayers and

gave me the most beautiful baby sister. My mom had a wonderful and very blessed homebirth and less than half an hour after she was born, I took my baby sister into my arms. My love for her had grown while she was still in my mother’s womb and the day she was born my heart overflowed. I wanted to take her with me everywhere to “show off” my baby sister.

Two months before Leoné’s first birthday, my mom was pregnant again! My mother didn’t want my sister to grow up alone, as she was 10 years younger than me and seven years younger than the youngest in our family. We were just as excited over this pregnancy. My baby brother was also born at home and was received with no less love or joy than my sister.

They are the light of our lives and I couldn’t imagine life without my little sister or baby brother. There is never a dull moment and constantly we are either laughing at the way my four year old brother entertains himself or cheering for my six year old sister when she successfully plays “Skip to my loo” on the piano.

I have a passion for toddlers and babies. My lifelong dream is to marry and have children of my own. At this point, I’m getting a lot of practice for when that day comes and I know that I’m going to be very thankful for all my training. I know every family is unique, but to me, mine is the best in the world!

THERITA SMITH (16 years)
Windhoek, Namibia, Africa
leons@mweb.com.na

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A Moose in my Marriage

Rory and Erin with their children: Joshua (8), Hezekiah (7), Simeon (5), Nehemiah (4), Justus (3), Benjamin (1) and Hadassah (9 months).

I was 18 and my husband 19 when we married. We were very immature and really knew nothing about how a marriage was supposed to work. We didn't know how to communicate in any way. From the beginning I believed God Almighty had given me a mission to change my husband in any way I could! I knew he would be the perfect man if only he would do as I wanted. We were both very stubborn, so I'm sure you can imagine what our marriage looked like. He golfed, and I fought.

Life was hard. I was lonely. I felt like I was the only one who was going through the kind of trials I was going through. I was hard pressed on every side, and it's difficult when you're in the midst of trials to realize that even though you're hard pressed, you're not crushed. I was confused about what was going on

and wondering if things were ever going to change, but I was never left without hope.

I love God with my whole heart and trust Him with everything in my life, including my heart. I think it's easy to trust God with most things, but as people who have been hurt before, trusting Him with our heart has to be the hardest. I am willing to do whatever it is that He wants me to do. I know that God will take care of me, and even if it hurts my flesh for a season, I know He knows what's best for me. This is what got me through the first few years of my marriage.

I can't change anyone but myself!

Somewhere during those first years, after crying out to God, a book jumped

out at me while in a Christian book store—*Is There a Moose in Your Marriage?* (renamed *The Politically Incorrect Wife*). I grabbed the book off the shelf and thought to myself, "Praise God! Finally God has answered my prayers. Of course there is a moose in my marriage, and his name is Mr. Rory Wolff." Finally I was going to get the help I needed, and my husband would finally be the husband I knew he should be.

The book talked about how in Alaska, once in a while a large moose will walk onto the road and just sit there. If you are trying to drive somewhere, there is really no way to get the moose out of the way. Not only are they dangerous, but I doubt most moose are going to listen to you honk your horn. I sat there reading the book with a goofy grin on my face, thinking, "I know this book was

written for me, and boy, she must know my husband.”

As I continued reading I soon realized that the author wasn't referring to my husband as the moose, but me! This came as a bit of a shock! Up until this point I had blamed him, his parents, and everyone else for the problems in our marriage, never realizing that it takes two to make a marriage and two to break a marriage. Sure, he had as many issues as I did, but I came to perceive that no matter what, I will never be able to change anyone but myself. And even in changing myself I came to understand that I really couldn't even do that on my own. I needed God's help. We are unable to do anything without God, but with God we can do all things through Him who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13). It was still very tempting to try to change him, but in changing myself and dying to my flesh, I changed.

I no longer had to have the control, because I knew God was in control!

When I finally changed, God delivered me from sins, past hurts, wrong ways of thinking, and many other bondages. For the first time I was happy, clean, and free. I no longer had to have the control, because I knew God was in control. I knew that if God was the one in control all would be well. This didn't happen overnight because everything in life is a process and a season. Just as most people aren't instantly transformed after they accept Christ as their Lord and Savior, most people aren't instantly healed or delivered.

I finally got to a point where I no longer had the need to change my husband. I wasn't 100 percent satisfied with him, but I knew God would do a much better job than me. It was at this point in my life that my husband started to change, as did our marriage. He started to trust me and really love me, and we started to grow into one flesh. It was never easy, but it was a million times worth it to lay down my hurts, sins, pain, and even my husband, and let God take the burden and fix it all.

There were many verses in God's Word that I clung to during those trials. One of them was Ephesians 3:20 NIV,

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.” Just think, God promises us that if we trust and believe Him, He will give us more than we ask for and imagine. In fact, He will give us immeasurably (without measure) more.

I think it's rough for Americans to get married because we are so used to having everything we want. We are selfish, and we have these incorrect expectations. We enter into marriage and soon realize it's not what we first thought, and then we want out.

When I first got married it only took a week for me to realize that it was no honeymoon. I asked God, “Why, after all the years of praying for the perfect husband and marriage, did You not give them to me?” I thought He had tricked me, or had allowed Satan to trick me. But, I clearly heard Him say that, like everything in life, if something is given to you without any effort or work, not only will it not be worth as much to you, but you will take it for granted. He answered my prayers, just not in the way I thought He would. He wanted me to have the best marriage, and He wanted me to hold it in high regard and never to take it for granted, but in order for that to happen I had to work for it.

Every day I dreamed big dreams that I would have the greatest marriage!

Once I got my old ways of thinking out of the way I used to imagine Rory and I happily married. I would tell God my thoughts in detail. I would tell Him that I imagined that I would one day be a great vessel for Him to use and trust and that I would be the woman of God that He created me to be. I imagined Rory and I would have the best marriage. We would be able to communicate. Rory would love me, and we'd have children, which at this time Rory didn't want. I would dream out loud to God all of the time. I always made sure my thoughts were in line with His Word and His will for my life. Then I would tell God, “I imagine really big, God, but You promise to do immeasurably more than I ask or imagine.”

My life isn't perfect, and I'm still imagining really big, believing God for bigger, but God has done exactly as He promised. He has taken me to heights beyond anything I could have dreamed. He has restored my marriage, given me a wonderful husband, seven beautiful children whom Rory adores, and has changed me in the process.

I still need a lot of changing. My heart isn't always right. I still struggle with selfishness. I'm impatient in life and sometimes toward my children, and I struggle with how to balance my time in a fashion that glorifies God. But, I continue day by day, to grow closer to God. I was willing to press through the hard things in life and have been tremendously blessed.

ERIN WOLFF

Nevis, Minnesota.USA

rewolff@live.com

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What Do You Pray for Your Children?

The following are the prayers that my husband and I pray for our children and their spouses, our grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and generations to come. We pray personally by name for each one. We do not pray for every one of these requests every day, but pray for different ones each day as the Holy Spirit directs.

I have printed out the following for myself, covered with plastic. Many times I like to lay it upon my heart as I am praying for our children so God can

see the longings and requests I have for each one as we bring their names before Him in prayer.

You may like to copy and print this out, too, to have as a guide in praying for your children. At certain times, you may like to look up the Scriptures and pray the Scriptures OUT LOUD before the Lord for your children. This is a very powerful way to pray for your children.

NANCY CAMPBELL

“Oh God, hear our cry for our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and the children who are yet to be born. We pray...

That they will have a real born again experience and come to know God personally (*John 1:12-13; 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:15 & Revelation 3:20*).

That they will have soft and tender hearts to hear and obey the voice of the Lord (*1 Sam. 3:10; Isaiah 57:15 & 66:2*).

That they will walk humbly before the Lord (*Micah 6:8 & 1 Peter 5:5-6*).

That they will love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength (*Mark 12:30*).

That they will love to read and meditate on God's Word and will receive revelation and insight as they read (*Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:9, 11, 18, 97, 105, 130; Ephesians 1:17-18; Colossians 3:16 & 1 Peter 2:2*).

That they will love to pray and be committed to prayer (*2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 55:17; Luke 18:1 & 1 Thessalonians 5:17*).

That they will be committed to the regular gathering together of God's people (*Hebrews 10:25*).

That they will love righteousness and hate evil (*Psalm 97:10; 101:3; Amos 5:15 & Romans 12:9*).

That they will stand strong against the wiles of the devil and never compromise (*Eph. 5:11; 6:13-14 & 1 Peter 5:8-9*).

That they will hate the spirit of this world and not give in to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (*1 John 2:15-17; Romans 12:2 & James 4:4*).

That they will hate lies and deception and seek after truth (*Psalm 51:6; 119:30,163; Proverbs 12:22; 13:5 & 19:9*).

That they will shine as lights in this dark and deceived world (*Isaiah 60:1-2; Matthew 5:16; John 17:18 & Phil. 2:15*).

That they will understand true justice and have discernment regarding good and evil, the holy and the profane (*Leviticus 10:10; Isaiah 59:14-15; Jeremiah 15:19 & Ezekiel 22:26*).

That they will seek God with all their hearts (*Psalm 27:8; 105:4; 119:2; Proverbs 28:5 & Zephaniah 2:3*).

That they will keep their whole spirit, soul, and body pure and blameless for the Lord (*1 Thessalonians 5:23*).

That they will keep themselves from evil (*1 Chronicles 4:10; John 17:15-16*).

That their faith will not fail (*Luke 22:32*).

That God will pour out His Holy Spirit upon them mightily (*Isaiah 44:3-4 & Acts 2:16-18*).

That they will keep themselves pure and holy (body, soul, and spirit) for the man/woman that God has chosen for them. (*Romans 6:12-13; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 & 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4*).

That God will even now prepare for them a godly wife/husband who will be committed and faithful to the marriage to the end of their lives (*2 Corinthians 6:14-18*).

That they will love and embrace children and establish a godly home (*Genesis 1:28; Deuteronomy 7:13; Psalm 127 and 128 and Malachi 2:15*).

That God will keep them from accident, harm, sickness, danger, and all enemy attack—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually (*Psalm 91*).

Amen.”

NURSING ADOPTED BABIES.

BEYOND ALL WE COULD Ask or Think

Little did I know that 17 years after the birth of our last child, the Lord would allow me to nurse our two adopted babies.

My husband, Don and I, were blessed with two wonderful children, Jarrod and Rachel who are now 19 and 17 years old and whom we love more than our own lives. When they were born we did not know anyone who had more than two children unless they were trying for a boy or girl the third time. We were in our mid-forties before we ever heard the message about being fruitful and multiplying, and at this point in our lives, it was too late to have more children.

However, in 2009 the Lord blessed us by allowing us to adopt a newborn baby girl we named Grace. The Lord blessed us again in 2011 when we were able to adopt another newborn baby girl we named Faith. We were able to bring our babies home directly from the hospital when they were just a few days old and, beyond all I could ask or think, the Lord even allowed me to nurse them.

When Grace was born, I knew I wanted to try and nurse her. At the first pediatrician's appointment, when she was less than a week old, I mentioned to the doctor that I was planning to try. He told me that I needed to take Fenugreek and Blessed Thistle and he gave me a prescription for domperidone which helps milk come in. A friend gave me a pump and I began to take the herbs and domperidone. I also drank several cups of homemade Mother's Milk tea each day.

A week or two after pumping I had milk! Not a lot, but there it was! It had been 15 years since I had nursed my last baby. I likened it to when God blessed the Israelites with the water out of the rock. There should be no reason for me to be able to nurse except the unbelievable goodness of the Lord. I was 48 years when nursing Grace and 50 years when nursing Faith and was able to nurse for more than three years. God is awesome and amazing.

I didn't have an abundance of milk and both babies had formula for their main nourishment. However, I was able to nurse Grace and Faith whenever they were tired, fussy, needed to go to sleep, or just wanted Mama. It was the most incredible gift to be able to hold them close and enjoy these precious and intimate times together.

I prayed that I would be able to nurse Grace as long as possible and that if the Lord blessed us with a second baby I would be able to nurse that baby, too, without a break between the two. Grace was now 22 months and down to nursing twice a day, before naptime and bedtime.

We brought Faith home when she was two days old. On her first night at 3:30 in the morning I had just changed her diaper and the house was quiet. I decided I would try and nurse her. I sat down and held her to me. She turned her little head, immediately latched on, and began to nurse. Over the next few months there were times I was even able to nurse them at the same time. Grace nursed for three years and Faith weaned herself at a year.

Specifically, I took eight capsules of Fenugreek every day, four of Blessed Thistle, drank a couple of cups of homemade

Mother's Milk tea which included red raspberry leaf, nettle leaf, alfalfa leaf, dandelion leaf, fennel seed, blessed thistle, fenugreek, cinnamon, and spearmint leaf. I took the domperidone for about a month even though my milk had come in already as I wanted to make sure. I started out pumping three or four times a day for 10 minutes and then once things were established I pumped morning and evening. I also drank lots of water and prayed.

People tell us our girls are blessed, but we are infinitely more blessed than they. Every messy diaper and fussy afternoon is truly a gift. Every tiny bear hug and squishy-wet kiss is overwhelming joy.

How do I describe how blessed we are that the Lord has entrusted these two precious babies into our family? Firstly, I tell people that I know in my head that I did not give birth to them, but in my heart I feel I did because that is how we feel towards them and how much we love them. Secondly, I tell people that we have four children, two of them were adopted but I'm not sure which ones. Lastly, I say that sometimes doctors have to do a c-section to take the baby from the mother's womb. Well, the Lord did a c-section with Grace and Faith and took them from my heart.

LAURA PALMER

Gulf Breeze, Florida, USA
thePalmerfamily4@bellsouth.net



*Don and Laura and their family:
Jarrod and Ashley (who now have
a little baby Elijah Edward, born
March 22, 2013), Rachel (20),
Grace (3), and Faith (2).*



As evening falls the warrior-turned-father sits alone in the burying field and holds his newborn babe against his chest. He is waiting for his son to die. The day has been long and the search for help futile. No one (doctors, nurses, and priests included), is willing to take this child that was born too early. He prays as he waits, pleading with a God he barely knows to intervene. "God, have mercy! Save my son," he begs as he looks down at the weightless little one sleeping in his arms. His phone rings, a startling noise in the silent graveyard, and he answers softly. The caller is a friend, and the friend has news. A few miles away there are people who might be able to keep his newborn child alive. God has heard his cries. He rises, cradles the child gently, and begins to walk, his strides long and purposeful. The graveyard fades from view and from his thoughts as hope springs anew.



We are three hours from home when I get her text, *Someone just brought a baby to my house. Mother died, baby is one day old and very tiny.* I text her back, *We are on our way.*

Our noisy car bumps along, but my mind is preoccupied with this wee one. *Is it a coincidence that this baby should come today?* I think to myself as I hold my seven month old daughter (our fifth biological child). We had just said no to another baby the day before, deciding against what could have been our seventh child (we were already in the process of adopting number six, a daughter). We are offered babies all the time in this difficult place where mothers die and food is not available, and it is not possible to take them all. Our desire is to walk with the families and help them raise their children, and this had been our decision yesterday as well.

I think back again to the dream, a dream I had had before ever moving to this remote area of Uganda. At the time, 18 months before, I had assumed it was just a random dream, born out of my longing to adopt and my desire to breastfeed even that one, the one born not of my womb. At the time I did not have a baby, nor was I pregnant. But, it

was becoming too coincidental to be just another dream.

The chair creaks as I rock slowly and bury my nose in my baby's sweet-scented

One Black & one White

hair. I look up at the frail, bent woman in my doorway, her ebony skin reflecting the fading light. She is holding out a baby, and I strain to catch her words.

"Please take my baby. I only have a few days left..."

And so I rock them both, one baby tucked in each arm, both nursing contentedly. My twins.



After the dream I told a few people, laughing about the idea of nursing "twins," one black and one white. It seemed like a beautiful dream, but not at all a possibility. And, then came the positive pregnancy test, a big surprise! We were just months away from moving to the middle of nowhere, the "bush." Not convenient on our agenda, but God has His plans.

Now, in the car, I began thinking, *Could this dream be from God?* I wonder again. It wasn't as if visions and dreams were common in my life. Maybe this was the reason I hesitated to fully believe God could be preparing me in this way. But the *similarities...* my baby girl, the one I didn't plan was the same age as the baby I was nursing in my dream, and now this baby. My heart began to pound with nervous energy. Maybe God had gone before me and had begun preparing my heart for this possibility I never would have consid-

ered on my own.

Our friends are waiting as we drive through their gate. The baby is smaller than any I had seen outside of a NICU, weighing about 2 ½ lbs. with a head full of curly black hair. We estimate he must be about 2 ½ months early, usually too early to survive without medical intervention, yet this one had come in a mud hut in the village! I hold him close and stroke his little fist. He is only a handful of a baby, quiet and sleepy, a typical newborn other than his size, and amazingly has no problems that I can see. Tiny, but perfect. What a miracle.

As we talk with the father, we find the family is strangely devoid of women or caregivers. The father has another wife who could possibly take the child when he's bigger, but there is no guarantee that she *will*. After all, she has her own children to feed. The warrior-father spends months away from home, driving his cows to find water and grass and will not be around to make sure that his son is cared for. He knows all too well that the chances of his child surviving in his village are very, very small. And so we agree. A few months with us until he's bigger, then we will try and return him to his home. My mother's heart already aches with the idea of this baby being mine for months and then letting him go, but nevertheless, this is the plan.

My head and my heart are full as we drive home. Two babies, just like my dream, one black, one white. I walk to my room in a daze, looking distractedly down at this new little brown baby I hold in my arms. *Should I try?* I don't really have a choice. I have no bottles, no formula, nothing at all to feed this tiny one. Besides, I know my milk is healthier for him than anything I can buy. *But can he even suck?* He is so small that his little mouth doesn't even look capable of latching on.

But he does it. No problem. And I am thrilled.



Our son recently celebrated his second birthday and enjoyed it thoroughly, laughing and clapping at the candles and singing. His father named him Acuka, and we named him Moses, a fit-

ting name for a child whom we are trusting will lead his people to walk in the ways of God. We tried several times to return him to his family, but his father refused to take him back. Despite his obvious love for his son he believes fully that we are the ones God sent to care for his child and nothing we say can refute that. We continue to have a close friendship with Acuka's family and see them often.

I nursed my daughter, Selah, and my son, Acuka, together for eight months and then Acuka alone for another ten. It was a joy and a blessing to be able to breast feed "twins." People have often asked me if it was strange nursing a child I did not birth, but the strange thing about it is really how normal it was. From the very first day, Acuka felt like my own child and I never hesitated to treat him as such. However, it was very strange to people here and I was often asked to "prove" that I was actually breastfeeding an

African baby. If you have never tried breast feeding while surrounded by a crowd of gawking people, you should try it. It's quite the adventure!

I feel so blessed that God has given me the opportunity to bond with my son in this way. Breastfeeding is such a special and unique thing with each child, and it was no less special with this not-of-my-womb child. When he looked up at me with his huge eyes I would forget he was not the same color as me. He was mine in every way.

God has done so many miracles in Acuka's life. From the dream that began preparing my heart to the perfect miracle he was at only 2 ½ pounds, God has had His hand on my child. I am thankful to be able to play a part in his story and can't wait to see what God has in store for his future!

If you are considering adoption, I urge you to seek God's direction. He has a plan for your family and is already, even now, preparing you for it. Be encouraged that He knows the desires of your heart and His plans are always good.

KRISTI WILLIAMS

Kaceri, Karamoja, Uganda
williamsinthewilderness@gmail.com
Kenneth and Kristi's children are Nevaeh (9), Rikot (9), Ezra (8), Zion (7), Israel (5), Selah (2) and Acuka (2).



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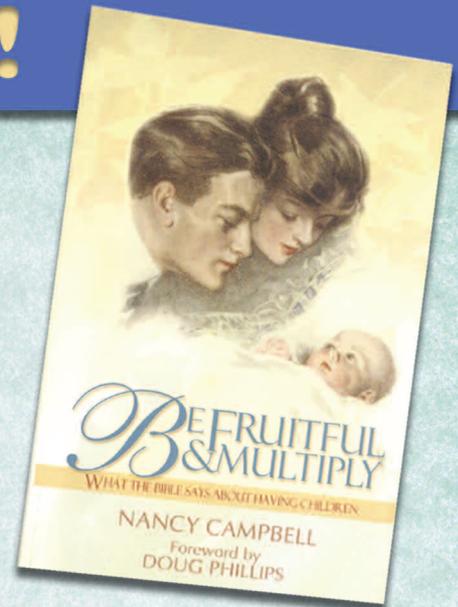
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Building a Home to Honor the Name of the Lord



Both David and Solomon had a burning passion to build a house to the name of the Lord God (2 Chronicles 2:4, 6). As mothers and homemakers, this should also be our burning passion—to build a home that is a dwelling place for God, and also for our husband and children.

We build this home, not for our own name and not for the name of our posterity, but for the NAME OF THE LORD. This is a HUGE vision, for God's name is far beyond our wildest imagination. God has so many names to describe Himself. One name is not enough to reveal all of His character, and even the revelation of each name is only a tiny glimpse of who He is. Because it would take a whole book to write about the names of God, we will look only at the eight redemption names of God. These names alone will give us understanding and vision to build our home to honor the name of the Lord, "who is the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15).

Jehovah-Jireh The Lord Sees and Provides

We read this name in Genesis 22:14. When Abraham was offering up his beloved son in obedience to God's command, God stopped him mid-track, and instead provided a lamb for the sacrifice. Jehovah-Jireh speaks of the greatest provision God ever provided for mankind, the provision of salvation and deliverance from our sin through the death of Jesus upon the cross, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. But, He continues to be our provision. Matthew 6:25-33 and Isaiah 65:24 tell us that

God sees our need even before we cry out to Him and He has promised to be our Provider.

How can we build a home to Jehovah-Jireh if we are always grumbling about not having this or that? How can we build a home to this name if we cannot even trust Him to give us another baby? God has promised that when we walk in obedience to His will, that He will provide all that we need. God revealed Himself to Abraham as Jehovah-Jireh because of his obedience (Genesis 22:1-19).

Jehovah-Rapha The Lord my Healer

This name is revealed in Exodus 15:22-26. The children of Israel had come through the Red Sea on dry land, but now they had been walking for three days with no water! Eventually they found water at Marah, but it was bitter so they still couldn't drink. Now they were complaining BIG TIME! God mercifully showed Moses a tree to throw into the water and it immediately became sweet. Then God made a statute and ordinance and said, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:25-26).

The full meaning of rapha is "to cure, restore, heal, and make whole physically, morally, and spiritually." God is not only faithful to heal us physically (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 8:17 and 1 Peter

2:24), but also to make our spirit whole and bring sweetness to the bitter experiences we face in life.

Are you building your home to Jehovah-Rapha? Do you continually run to the doctor or do you seek the Lord for what He wants you to do? That may require a doctor, but isn't it best to first go to the Lord for His direction and ask for His healing? Life is not perfect and many times there are misunderstandings and differences in family relationships. Do you allow Jehovah-Rapha to come into all your family experiences to restore, heal, and bring sweetness again? Do your children see you relying upon the Lord, or upon man's resources?

Jehovah-Nissi The Lord my Banner

The Amalekites came to make war with Israel. Moses commanded Joshua to gather warriors to fight with them while he went to the top of the hill with the "rod of God" in his hand, the wonder-working rod which brought the terrible plagues upon Egypt, opened a path in the Red Sea, and brought the waters of death pounding down upon the Egyptians. When Moses held up his hands, the Israelites prevailed, but when they became heavy and he let them down, the Amalekites prevailed. So Aaron and Hur stood on either side of him to hold up his hands. While he held the miraculous staff up high as a banner, Joshua defeated Amalek and his army. After the victory, Moses built an altar and called it Jehovah-Nissi, The Lord my Banner (Exodus 17:8-16).



The enemy is still alive today and comes to make war against your home. He wants to destroy marriages and families. Sometimes you may get weary in the battle, but never give up the banner of God's cause. Lift high the name of Jesus, continue in prayer, and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit. Help one another as you pray together at your morning and evening Family Devotions because this is how you strengthen one another's arms in the battle. Never let your banner drag in the dust. Never compromise God's truth. Never assimilate to the humanistic ways of society. Hold God's banner high and do not fear.

God's word to you as you face the battle with enemies bigger than and outnumbering you is, "Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you" (Deuteronomy 20:3-4).

Jehovah-Qadash The Lord my Sanctifier

God brought the Israelites out of Egypt with a mighty arm and great victory, but His people didn't yet know their God. They thought and acted like the Egyptians. They had no idea of how God wanted them to live and therefore He kept them in the wilderness for 40 years to teach them His ways and to sanctify them.

This name of God occurs in Leviticus, the book where we read of all the laws and statutes that God gave to

His people in order to show them how to be a people after His own heart. In Leviticus 20:7-8, God says, "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you." The word "sanctify" is qadesh and means "to purify, to hallow, to make clean, to sanctify, to set apart exclusively for God."

Are you building your home to the honor of Jehovah-Qadash? Do you seek to keep your home and your family set apart for God's purposes? Or does your home look like any other worldly home with TV blaring and arguments and squabbling?

God wants to sanctify every member of your family. He wants to sanctify them with the Word of God, the indwelling Spirit, and the blood of Jesus, just as Moses sprinkled the blood upon the people (Exodus 24:4-8). And as God sanctified the house Solomon built for Him, so He wants to sanctify the home you are building for Him. 2 Chronicles 7:16 says, "I have chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there forever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." God will put His name upon your home as you set it apart for Him.

We don't have to run off and hide in the bush to do this. We can live in the city with evil all around, and yet be set apart to God. This is the amazing thing about God. He is "separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26), and yet He bends down to the sinner to love him and lift him up.

He wants us to be the same—severed from the spirit of this world, but ready to go into the midst of the world to reach out with God's love.

Let's build a family that is clean, pure, and set apart for the service of the Lord. Encourage your children that they were born to be set apart for God's purpose for them. Anything else will be a waste of their life.

Jehovah-Shalom The Lord my Peace

Because the Israelites did evil in the site of the Lord, He allowed the Midianites to come against them and they became their slaves for seven years. They destroyed the fruit of their land, confiscated their livestock, and left them with nothing to eat. In their despair the Israelites cried out to the Lord and He heard their cry. God came to a man named Gideon and commanded him to rescue Israel from the Midianites. Gideon felt too helpless and weak in his own strength and wanted proof that it was really God speaking to him.

"Please don't leave until I bring you an offering of food," he asked the Angel of God. When Gideon came back and put the food on the rock, the angelic visitor touched it with the tip of his staff and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed everything. Gideon was full of fear that he had seen the Angel of the Lord face to face. But, "The Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee, fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-Shalom" (Judges 6:22-24).

Are you building a home of peace to Jehovah Shalom? Turn your home into a home of rest instead of restlessness. There will always be upsets to disturb your family life, but don't allow them to get on top of you. Look up to the Lord instead. My favorite Scripture is found in Isaiah 26:3-4, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." God is bigger than any trauma that happens in your life. When you look to Him and confess your trust in Him He will sustain you. Your circumstances may not change, but peace will reign in your heart and home.

Jehovah Shalom wants His people to “dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” (Isaiah 32:18). Not only when everything is going well, but the next verse says, “Even if the forest is destroyed and the city is annihilated, you will be blessed” (NET). This is the kind of peace we can have when we trust in His name, peace when everything is falling down around us.

Jehovah-Tsidkenu The Lord my Righteousness

We read in Jeremiah 23:5-6 that God’s name is, “The Lord our righteousness.” One day the city of Jerusalem will also be called by this name (Jeremiah 33:16). If the Holy God is dwelling in our homes, they should also be called, “The Lord our Righteousness.”

As we build to this name of God, we will constantly seek to banish evil and uphold righteousness in our home. Although God is a God of love and compassion, He cannot be God unless He is righteous. He demands exactness in weights and measures (Leviticus 19:35-37 and Deuteronomy 25:15). Anything less than perfection comes short of His holiness and that’s why we need the blood of Jesus to cover our sins (Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:7).

However, although we cannot be righteous except through the righteous life of Christ who lives in us, we should have the same essence about us that God does. He hates evil and loves righteousness and wants us to do the same. God does not tell us to tolerate evil, as is the popular opinion today, but to HATE it! Psalm 97:10 says, “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.”

Romans 12:9 says, “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” To “abhor” means “to shudder with horror, to utterly detest.” Is this how we feel about sin? Is this how we feel about evil in our home? Is this how we feel about the evil that is happening in the nation?

It is a powerful thing to build a righteous home. It is not easy. Evil finds a way to sneak into your home. Be watchful as you build your home to this holy name of God. As more and more families build righteous homes, the more we become a nation of righteousness. Above

everything else, it is righteousness that lifts up a nation. Proverbs 14:34 says, “Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.”

Jehovah-Ra’ah The Lord my Shepherd

How wonderful that God reveals Himself to us by different names. If we only knew Him by one name, we would not understand the complete fullness of who He is. We live in awe of our righteous, holy God who must judge all sin. But, then He reveals Himself to us as the Shepherd, the one who bends down to tend our needs (Psalm 113:5-9) and who protects us and gather us up in His arms (Isaiah 40:11). This name speaks of the intimate relationship we can experience with Him, for the word “shepherd” also means “to be a friend, a companion, to keep company with.” A Bedouin shepherd in Israel testified that even if he were blindfolded he would know each one of his sheep by feeling their faces. Our Shepherd wants to have an intimate and tender relationship with us. The psalmist calls God, “MY Shepherd,” and repeatedly the Great Shepherd of the sheep calls us “MY flock.”

As we build a home to the name of our gentle and tender Shepherd, we will teach our children that He wants to be their personal Savior and Shepherd. We will be careful not to do anything in our home that will grieve our Shepherd who wants to be intimately involved in everything we do.

Our Shepherd has a great shepherding heart and He wants us to shepherd our little flock in the same way He shepherds His flock. Shepherding is an enormous undertaking and from the Scriptures and the Hebrew meanings of the word “shepherd” we find that it includes the following tender and powerful ministries. You will see that a shepherd must be both brave and tender. Let God teach you as you read them.

It means befriending with an intimate relationship, binding and bandaging up the hurt and broken, bravely fighting off all enemies, bringing back the straying and wandering ones, carrying the lambs close to your heart, comforting, encouraging the weary, eliminating fear in the dark and anxious times, feeding, gathering in your arms and to your heart,

gently leading, guarding and watching over your flock, guiding your flock on the “right track,” healing the sickly, increasing the flock, keeping them safe, leading to rest and rich green pastures, nourishing, persevering until you find the lost, preparing a table, protecting, providing, rescuing when they turn to by-paths, restoring (renewing, reviving, and refreshing), ruling with wisdom and discretion, sacrificing and laying down your life for your flock, saving your flock, searching and seeking the lost ones, strengthening the weak, and tenderly folding your flock. My, what an amazing mission you have as a shepherdess.

Embrace this beautiful role. It is not insignificant. I would suggest you read the above paragraph over and over. It is too much to comprehend in one reading. Did you know that shepherding is talked about in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation? God chose two of the greatest leaders of all time from shepherding the sheep, Moses and King David (Exodus 3:1-10 and Psalm 78:70-72). God looks for parents who will shepherd after His own heart (Jeremiah 3:15). And because our little flock is really His flock, He requires them at our hand (Ezekiel 34:10). He wants us to diligently know the state of our little flock (Proverbs 27:23).

How can we be the shepherdess He wants us to be? We certainly can’t do it in our own strength and wisdom, but be encouraged for Micah 5:4 tells us that Jesus Christ will “stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.” If that is how He shepherds, that’s the only way we can do it, too. You can do it in HIS strength.

Jehovah-Shammah The Lord is There

We now look at the last redemptive name of God, another precious name. We find this amazing prophetic promise in Ezekiel 48:35, “And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there.” The temple was destroyed, Judah had been taken as captives to Babylon, and only a small remnant remained in the land. There did not seem any hope for the restoration of Israel or the temple. But God’s promise comes to give hope. Again He says in Ezekiel 43:7 that this

will be the “place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever.”

The understanding of this name is the holy and glorious presence of God. It is God in the midst! What could be more powerful? In the Old Testament God dwelt in a temporary tabernacle and then the temple. God said, “I have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle” (2 Samuel 7:6). But, when Jesus died upon the cross, the thick veil protecting the Holy of Holies was torn apart and now He wants to abide in your heart. He also loves to dwell in your home, because He is a dwelling God.

He wants to live and walk with you in your home. He wants to fill every room of your home. Because your body is the dwelling place of His Holy Spirit, every task you do is sacred. Mothering is a holy career. Nothing is mundane. When you are changing a diaper, scrubbing the floor, doing endless dishes and laundry, and tending to the myriad of needs of your little ones, God is with you. Every little thing you do is sacred and holy because God is with you.

God also wants you to reveal to your children the awesome understanding of Jehovah-Shammah. As you are home with your children and available to them, you show to your children this quality of the character of God. Your children learn that “God is always there,” just as you are always available and there for them.

May God pour out His Holy Spirit upon you as you build your home to honor the name of our holy God.

NANCY CAMPBELL

www.aboverubies.org

Check out the following:

Scriptures about holding up the banner:
Numbers 1:52; 2:2, 17, 34; Psalm 20:5;
60:4; Song of Solomon 2:4; 6:4, 10 and
Isaiah 62:10.

Scriptures about shepherding:

<http://aboverubies.org/shepherdingscriptures>

To read more relating to this article:

<http://www.aboverubies.org/IsGodAble>

<http://aboverubies.org/peaceinmyhome>

<http://aboverubies.org/mushies>

<http://aboverubies.org/foldyourflock>

<http://aboverubies.org/shepherdingflock>



What I Learned from Children

My first child taught me that life does not revolve around me;
it feels so special to have a little one in your arms;
parents thrill to become grandparents;
a red-headed child gets a lot of attention.

My second child educated me that motherhood revolves around them;
I have two arms to fill with love;
an older brother cherishes a playmate;
two red-headed children get even more attention.

My third child showed me that I can't parent alone;
I needed to teach the little ones to help;
the baby trumps every lesson in homeschooling;
a clean house does not necessarily signify a happy home.

My fourth child demonstrated to me that it is a joy to see pink, flowers, and bows;
a daughter captures her father's heart at a very young age;
four children are considered a “big family” by many;
boys love having a little sister to protect.

My fifth child illustrated to me that it feels amazing to hold a little one after seven years;
children are more important than free time and vacations;
little boys adore their mothers;
there is great blessing allowing God to determine family size.

My sixth child taught me that little girls love princesses and dolls;
an older daughter loves the joy of caring for a little sister;
hand-me-downs are a reminder of past joys;
a curly, red-headed little girl gets unending attention.



My seventh child showed me that pregnancy doesn't always mean a baby to hold;
the family can carry the load when mom is recovering from illness;
even a five week old fetus is a loved child;
every child is a blessing from the Lord.

My eighth child made me slow down to enjoy each day;
realize the time with a baby is short;
long for more time with my older children;
grateful beyond measure that God didn't leave me to my selfish desires.

What will I learn as a grandmother?

JANELL HERSEY

Coeur D Alene, Idaho, USA

janellhersey@rocketmail.com

James and Janell's family are Josiah and wife, Ellie and grandson due June 2013, Matthew (21), Nathan (19), Johanna (15), Thomas (7), Emma (6) and John Paul (4). Four red-heads in all!

My husband and I began our marriage using traditional forms of birth control in order to plan and space our children according to what “everyone who is responsible does.” While we believed children were a blessing, we followed the American Christian model without much thought. They are blessings if perfectly planned and spaced, sent to school when mom wants or “needs” to work, limited in number, and pushed towards college education as the qualifying

No Greater Investment



Jeff and Andrea with their family, Jackson (15), William (10), Emma (9), Abigail (7), Henry (3), Oliver (2), Samuel (6 months).

answer to whether or not you are a successful parent.

After our first child turned school age, we found ourselves expecting our fourth child within three years. My days were filled with taking care of home and children, and I felt fulfilled! I lost the desire to return to my college education or to leave my children for a job or career. We didn’t always have as much money as the next family with one or two children and two incomes, but we were abundantly happy.

However, although my husband and I desired more children, the voices around me of “You can’t just keep having children,” and “Don’t you know how to prevent that?” rang in my ears. Coupled with the financial burden of traditional medical care for pregnancies I succumbed to the lie of “We should be done... it’s the responsible thing to do.” I made all the

standard arguments about not wanting my time to be spread too thin between my children, about them being so expensive, about “God” giving us the technology to prevent pregnancy (with absolutely no biblical support of that idea), and that my body would suffer, etc.

Since I had a c-section for a transverse presentation with my third child, and we live in an area that bans VBACs, this next birth would be an unnecessary and forced repeat c-section. This was extremely terrifying for me, as I did not have good anesthesia during my first section, and experienced a lot of pain. With this looming before me, I convinced myself that I could not endure anymore repeat c-sections, and I must have a tubal ligation. I ignored the pull of the Holy Spirit to take this to the Lord in prayer, as well as my husband’s desire to not close off my womb. I held fast to the feminist mantra of “my body, my choice.”

At the c-section birth of my fourth child, the OB tied my tubes. I remember pretending not to care. Within a few months, I began experiencing a myriad of symptoms that I couldn’t understand. Before I even truly regretted the decision from a reproductive and spiritual standpoint, I began dealing with intense and cyclical migraine headaches, low milk supply (unusual for me), early return of menstruation that included a horrible flooding flow and terrible pain. As I researched, I learned I had PTLS (Post Tubal Ligation Syndrome). It is a very real, and largely dismissed disorder. It is caused by the closing off of the hormonal receptors through tying off the intricate communication system of the womanly reproductive system, thus throwing the woman into hormonal chaos. I had never experienced any hormone or cycle issues, and now it ruled my life.

As I learned what I had done, I confessed my rebellion to my Lord God and my husband. This was the beginning of the great change in my life. Now I realized that the desire to close the womb is a heart issue, and as we know, all selfish heart issues can indeed manifest themselves with physical ramifications.

My husband and I saved up and eventually I was able to have a reversal. We prayed for restoration, not just in

search of a “baby,” but to turn this part of our lives, the very foundation and reason for marriage, over the Lord. If He is powerful enough to save, He is powerful enough to provide and control every aspect of our lives, even the “challenging” and ways we don’t understand! It was now in God’s hands, the way it always should have been!

The next month I was pregnant! I was determined to allow my body to birth naturally and found a hospital in the next state with a great OB who promoted VBAC for healthy women. I delivered an 8 lb. 10 oz. baby boy, Henry, via VBA2C, with a normal and healthy pregnancy and labor. I praised God for restoring my womb!

A mere 15 months later we welcomed Oliver James—all 10 lbs. 9 oz. of him in our bedroom at a homebirth. Our seventh child, Samuel, arrived last June, and we find we are more committed to following and obeying the Lord with each new child.

Our children are the vehicles God uses to mold and shape this clay from selfishness into selfless servanthood. The comments about how we must be so busy are quite misinformed. We choose a simple life at home, and therefore find ourselves less busy than many families we know with one or two children who are over-involved with sports, activities, public school, etc.

It is sad and unfortunate that the world has no trouble “investing” money into material possessions, technology, trips, large homes, and fancy cars, but find children “too expensive.” Debt and a life lived for self-achievement is promoted through training children for college, but neglecting to train them in righteousness. There is no greater investment than the eternal! Fully mothering and raising children, whether you are blessed with no biological children and adopt, or have a house filled with young ones and a perpetual wardrobe of maternity and nursing wear, leaves its mark in the Kingdom in a way no activity, education, career, or possessions here on earth can do.

ANDREA ROLTGEN
Post Falls, Idaho, USA
sinnerforgiven@live.com

C-sections, Reversal, and Vaginal Births!

I married at 27 years and was anxious to begin my family. I was surprised I didn't become pregnant right away. Wasn't I in control of my womb? In time and through God's grace, I became pregnant. I was so happy. I had morning sickness and trouble with my blood sugar and complained about it. At 29 years, on April 14, 1985, my April "valentine," Kathlene Anne was born. I had planned for a vaginal delivery, but due to failure to progress had an emergency c-section. However, I was filled with joy over this new life and God proceeded to work in his quiet and powerful way in my life.

I wasn't sure I should have another child. I loved my little girl so much; could I love another one as much? I was so busy with one child; could I handle another? We already lived from paycheck to paycheck; could we afford another child? All the world's excuses to prevent God's miracle of life reverberated in my head.

By God's grace, I became pregnant again and had morning sickness almost every day of my pregnancy. Unfortunately, I didn't realize the honor of pregnancy and the blessing of children and complained of my morning sickness. During my pregnancy, well-meaning family members and doctors encouraged me to have my tubes tied for many reasons. I was 32 years old and fast approaching the end of my "safe" childbearing years. I had a hard time with pregnancy and delivery and we couldn't afford more than two children.

I had a check in my spirit about a tubal and started asking further questions. Some said no, but most agreed it was a good idea. Since I was having a planned c-section the doctor would do the tubal ligation at that time and save us money. There it was, the almighty dollar!

But nothing is impossible for God and He continued to work in his quiet and powerful way in my life.

On June 21, 1988, we welcomed our precious son, Matthew Lee into our family by a planned c-section and they tied my tubes. Again, well-meaning family members and friends said we were now the perfect family of two children, a girl and a boy. Again, I was filled with joy over this new life God had given us and dove right in raising our two children. And God continued to work in his quiet and powerful way in my life.

In July 1988, one month after my tubes were tied, a good friend gave me the book, *The Way Home* by Mary Pride. I was heartbroken. I had closed my womb to God's working. I wholeheartedly came to understand and believe that God

God continued to work in His quiet and powerful way in my life!

opens and closes the womb and we must allow Him to control if and when we have children. I prayed for reversal surgery and began saving a little each month for that someday.

On April 12, 1991, by the working of the Holy Spirit, networking in the homeschool community, and reading the Bible, I agreed with God that I was a sinner, believed that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins, and asked Him to come into my heart and save me! What joy filled my heart! I was 35 years old, but a new creation in Christ! God continued to work in his quiet and powerful way.

God miraculously provided the money to have reversal surgery and in



Charlene with her youngest daughters, Christine and Heather.

November 1998, my husband drove our family to Tennessee for the surgery. By God's grace and mercy, three months later I became pregnant. I again had morning sickness and trouble with my blood sugar, but determined not to complain this time as I now realized the honor of childbearing.

On November 21, 1999, our precious daughter, Christine Grace was born, a vaginal birth with a midwife after two c-sections. I was 43 years old and so blessed. God was so gracious! Was He done giving us children?

God gave us another miracle on

June 1, 2001 when our beloved Heather Candace was born, another vaginal birth at home with a midwife. Each one of my children's births have been special and life-changing, but my last was only surpassed by my salvation experience.

I celebrated my 45th birthday joyfully nursing my one-month-old daughter and watching a one-year-old playing with her adoring older sister (16) and older brother (13). To God be the glory!

CHARLENE HUFF

Pittsburg, Missouri, USA

chuff004@yahoo.com

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VBAC after 5 C-sections

I was pregnant with our seventh child and had to find a new doctor. The doctor who delivered our sixth baby by c-section had a stroke and could no longer practice medicine.

one we should take. It further eased his mind as he researched the subject of VBACs and discovered that the risk of uterine rupture, even after c-section, was actually lower than the risks posed

and prayed over me and the baby every night.

There are many health benefits for using essential oils but with these oils we focused on tending to scar tissue left from previous cesareans. I drank lots of water and took loads of vitamins. I also took Lemon essential oil in a capsule every night for heartburn and noticed this was the first pregnancy that my feet didn't swell and I didn't suffer from restless legs at night. I drank red raspberry leaf tea to strengthen my uterus and was so happy when I found it in capsule form because I did not like the taste of the tea. This was by far my best pregnancy and I felt great the whole time.

On Thursday, January 12, 2012 my oldest child turned 14, which was also my due date. Around 1:00 am on Friday morning my water broke. My contractions were ten minutes apart and I was scared that Bethany wouldn't get to our house in time. I was also excited that our baby was coming soon!

Around 5:00 am we texted Bethany to tell her my water broke and Dax sent me back to bed. When I woke Dax told me that Bethany and Laurel had left Kansas at 6:45 am, but by 9:00 am my contractions had stopped. Dax took me out to breakfast and when Bethany and Laurel got to town they joined us. I felt bad they had come all that way and my contractions had stalled.

We spent Friday resting, walking several different times, using a breast pump to try to encourage contractions, monitoring my vitals, monitoring the baby's heartbeat, and drinking lots of water. Saturday morning Dax cooked breakfast for everyone.

My contractions weren't regular and I was discouraged and tired. Dax and I went walking again right before noon and when we got back to the house I drank Sprite with castor oil in it. I used the breast pump again and not long after that my contractions became regular.

Dax was right with me trying to help me focus, breathe, and rest between contractions. We prayed constantly. It was a major spiritual battle.



Around the same time we became friends with a family who had delivered several of their children at home. During one of our visits we talked about homebirths and I mentioned that I would love to have a baby at home but it wasn't possible because I had to have c-sections. My friend, Wendy told me about a magazine called *Above Rubies* and how they often printed stories of VBACs. I subscribed and when I received the magazines I started reading all the wonderful stories, and after praying, made my decision to have a home birth after five c-sections! Now I needed to find a midwife and get my husband's support.

When I first went to my husband he was against it. He had heard horror stories and didn't want to risk my life. After reminding him that he risked his life in a similar way when he took mission trips to Africa, and was able to grow closer to God by doing it, he became convinced that this journey was

by having any kind of major surgery in a hospital. The hope of being able to do something that would require us to trust in God was motivating and the research put our minds at ease that we were not putting God to the test.

I researched several midwives in the area and contacted them. One I found on Facebook, *Precious Beginnings Midwifery Care*, owned by Bethany Wagler, was the only one who emailed me back, but she was about three hours away from us.

I was 6.5 months pregnant when Dax and I drove to Kansas for our first appointment with Bethany. We actually enjoyed the three hour drive and Dax came with me to each appointment. It gave us time to talk, read birthing books, and was much more personal going to Bethany than an OB GYN.

We prepared for the homebirth by reading, using essential oils, and praying. Dax rubbed Frankincense, Myrrh, and Helichrysum on my c-section scar

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We were so close to giving up and heading to the nearest hospital. The enemy kept putting lies in our minds, but we prayed through them, and God was with us.

At 7:30 pm my contractions became very intense and around three minutes apart. My scar started hurting but Bethany checked and everything looked fine. At 10:20 pm I got into the birthing pool. Bethany found I was fully dilated but wasn't all the way effaced. She asked me to either lean over the pool or get on my hands and knees to

help thin out the cervix. I chose to lean over the side of the pool. I had maybe three contractions leaning over the side of the pool and then I started to feel the urge to push. I was so confused because I couldn't believe it was already time!

At 11:16 pm on January 14, less than one hour after getting in the birthing pool, our beautiful baby girl came into the world. "I did it!" I exclaimed! I thank God for this achievement, for the courage, for a supportive husband, for Bethany who attends VBACs, for putting all of the

people in my life that helped make this possible, and for all those who prayed.

I encourage you to question the rise in c-section births in the United States, and I encourage you to support midwifery and home-births.

JULIE EWBANK
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA
jewbank8@gmail.com

Dax and Julie's children are Triston (15), Zoe (12), Xander (9), Evan (7), Jerah (5), Zeke (3), and Cora (15 months).



Manjit and Emma
with their little Asher

A Father's Bonding

We were looking forward with eager anticipation to the birth of our first child. Though an older mother, my wife's pregnancy had gone really well. During the pregnancy, I talked and sang to the bump in my wife's stomach, believing that God can influence a child while still in the womb. Frequently, I sang one of my favourite hymns to our baby, *He Who Would Valiant Be* by John Bunyan.

As my wife was over her due date the consultant pushed for her to be induced. This was not our plan. Our son was not ready to come out, but after a lengthy induction, and the threat of a c-section, she finally birthed naturally.

When I saw my son for the first time, he was blue and making very small whimpering sounds. The midwife quickly wrapped him, let my wife hold him for a few seconds, then whizzed him over to a special table in the corner of the room. An emergency buzzer beeped and about 10 people rushed into the room.

They told me to accompany our baby to the ICU, where the doctor and nurses were going to put him in an incubator and started talking about respiratory problems and antibiotics. All I could think was that my son needed breast milk, not drugs.

Suddenly everything went quiet and I was left alone in the room beside my son who was still blue and quite unresponsive. The thought came to me to sing to him. I began singing "his" favourite hymn, *He Who Would Valiant Be* and held his hand while I sang. Within minutes he began to turn pink and became more responsive. The Lord used the song to touch his heart and let him know how much I loved him.

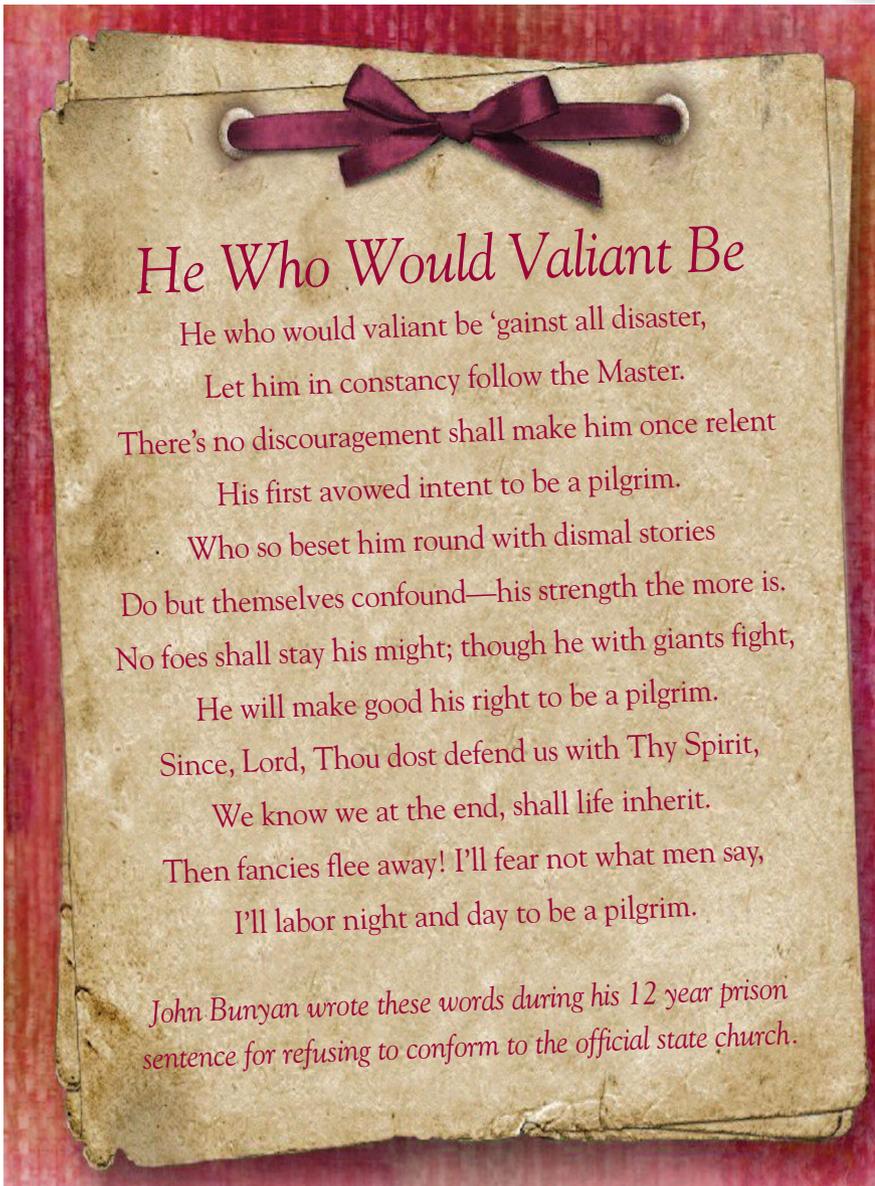
When the doctor returned, he took one look at him and exclaimed, "This baby seems to be fine now; take him back to his mother!" With relief we went back to the ward so that mother and son could really get to meet each other and he could finally get his breast milk!

MANJIT BIANI

Carmarthen, Wales, United Kingdom
emma.biani@googlegmail.com

**"Apart from God's Word
there is no basis or power
for obedience in the child."**

~ Norman V. Williams



He Who Would Valiant Be

He who would valiant be 'gainst all disaster,
Let him in constancy follow the Master.
There's no discouragement shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent to be a pilgrim.
Who so beset him round with dismal stories
Do but themselves confound—his strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might; though he with giants fight,
He will make good his right to be a pilgrim.
Since, Lord, Thou dost defend us with Thy Spirit,
We know we at the end, shall life inherit.
Then fancies flee away! I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labor night and day to be a pilgrim.

John Bunyan wrote these words during his 12 year prison sentence for refusing to conform to the official state church.

Who was Right?

I remember hearing the words of the preacher as he spoke to my fiancé and me. We stared at him as if he must be out of his mind. "What did he mean that the purpose of a godly marriage was to have children? Can't we have a godly marriage without children? Who's to say God hasn't created me to be something OTHER than a mother? I have NO desire to be a mother, so wouldn't it be irresponsible of me to have a child I don't want? I plan to have a career." All of these thoughts, and more, went racing through my mind as I tried to respectfully argue my case as to why I did not agree with him. As I look back, I realize that all his reasons were based on Scripture and none of mine were. Mine were simply based on the self-centered desires of a 20 year old spoiled girl!

Thankfully, the story doesn't end there. The preacher, for some reason, decided to marry us anyway, and five years later, my husband and I were living the life we had envisioned. We both worked, made plenty of money, and we were happy... sort of. Then one day as I headed out to work, I remember telling God I felt so far from Him and that if He was going to bring me closer to Him, He would have to bring me to my knees. I have become far more careful about what I pray as God brought my husband and me to our knees.

For starters, I found out I was pregnant and I thought my life was over. I cried and cried and the crying didn't stop for three months. I had always determined that if I got pregnant, I would give the baby up for adoption. This was not going to be my life! But then, by the grace of God, He turned my heart to this new little life growing inside me. He turned me to Him, to my husband, and to an ever increasing desire to be the best, most amazing mother this world had ever seen! I was going to conquer the world as... a MOM!

Secondly, I lost my job over circumstances beyond my control. As devastated as I was over that, I now look back and see God's hand at work. I would never have left on my own. God had to SHOVE me out. He had a plan for me and it was not what I had designed for myself.

I became a "stay-at-home-mom" and I LOVED it! Our first child was about

nine months old and so sweet and compliant. My husband and I thought that since we were such stellar parents, we should have another one! That's when God laughed and laughed at us! He then blessed us with our first daughter who was, well, less compliant. What a joy (and challenge) she was. We were happy and blessed and ready to call it "good" now that we had our boy and girl.

Then, God spoke into our lives again, this time through a friend who continued to challenge my thinking as to my reasons for wanting to limit how many children we had. I had all my reasons lined up. "I don't think I can handle any more. If God wants us to have more, He'll break through our method of birth control. We're being good stewards of what God has given us by not having more than we can afford, and on and on.

But, one thing kept nagging at me. All the reasons I came up with screamed of a lack of trust in the promises of God. I tried ignoring it, but God would not let me get away from it. I wrestled with it for years. Finally, after much prayer and study in God's Word, I realized that to be a follower of Christ meant to FOLLOW HIM, not tell Him where we were going and how we were going to get there. Now I had a whole new outlook on our future and that meant giving up not just some, but ALL control to the God who holds all things together. I was terrified!

All I needed to do now was present it to my husband. I needed God to show me what to do and He did. I finally talked to my husband and asked him some questions.

"To what extent of your life do you trust God?"



"Completely," he responded.

"Do you trust God when He says that His ways are higher than our ways and that He knows better what is good for us than we do?" He said, "Yes." I thought, "Good, we're on the right track, keep going."

"Do you believe God when He tells us that He will not give us more than we can handle?" At this point he began to get suspicious and, as we had been dealing with a separate situation, thought he knew what I was talking about. I assured him that he had NO idea what I was getting at!

My next question came with a bit more clarity as to the point. "Do you believe God when He tells us that children are a blessing and a gift from Him and that He is the only Creator of life?"

"Y-e-e-e-s," he answered cautiously. Now I laid it all on the line. I explained that I had been greatly convicted that we needed to let God decide how many children we should have and when we should have them. I told him I was not expecting an answer right then and would prefer it if he would pray about it

continued on page 27

Always Womb for More!



Jonathan and I met at church in July 2003, were married in December 2003, and welcomed a beautiful baby girl, Julianna into our family in January 2005. We loved being parents and decided we would try for another baby when she was only six months old. We got pregnant the first month and were so excited!

When I went in for my first prenatal appointment the midwife checked for the heartbeat, but there was none. I didn't know what was going on at that point, but they said they would do an ultrasound. I was excited to see our precious baby! But, there was no flicker. Our baby had gone to be with the Lord. We were heartbroken.

After we lost our little baby, we decided we would try again and thankfully we were blessed quickly. This baby grew healthy and strong and our first son, Justen was born in August 2006. We were pretty sure we wanted to have four children total, but wanted a break after having our son.

However, when he was five months old, we found out we were pregnant again. This was not expected because we were taking precautions. But, the Lord had a plan that was much greater than ours! In September 2007, our second daughter, Jillian was born.

Life seemed great, but a few days after Jillian was born, I started to have what is referred to as ocular migraines, seeing flashing,

jagged lights. They did MRIs and C-T scans and found at some point I had a small brain hemorrhage. Their best guess was that it happened during labor with Jillian. I met with a neurologist who said my body would absorb the blood and that I should be fine. He even said I could have more children, possibly even vaginally, with no complications. That was nice to hear, but we weren't sure we wanted to chance it.

We finally decided we were content with the children we had and Jonathan got a vasectomy in June 2008. We didn't second guess our decision or feel like we made the wrong choice. We had a big garage sale and sold all our baby things and felt like that chapter of our lives was over.

However, in January 2010, God started to work on my heart. I began to have dreams of being pregnant again with our older three children kissing and rubbing my belly, dreams of nursing a new baby while the older children sat on my lap or next to me, and dreams of a baby sitting on the floor in the middle of their older three siblings. There were times, when washing dishes, I would look into our living room and see these things as well, like glimpses or visions.

I had felt so complete, so sure that we were done, but God put a desire in me for

more children that was as strong as it had been before we had one child, if not stronger!

I knew in my heart what the Lord wanted, but I was very nervous to talk to Jonathan about it. After I knew for sure what the Lord was showing me, I told Jonathan about my dreams. He listened patiently but told me he felt our family was complete. I told him I had felt that way too, but to please pray about it. He agreed to pray. Within a couple days he came to me and said, "You are right, there's someone missing!" My heart soared! A couple days later he came home and said, "I think there may be more than one missing! I think we might end up with two or three more!"

Since we were both on the same page now as far as wanting more children, we start-



ed talking about how to make that happen. We discussed adoption and we also looked into reversals. I felt in my heart the Lord wanted me to be pregnant again because most of my dreams were about being pregnant or nursing. I talked to our pastor's wife and told her what was going on. She was so excited for us! She felt we were never supposed to have the vasectomy and sensed a reversal was what the Lord wanted us to do. She would be praying.

The next week we checked into reversals, and in one of our searches an organization named *Blessed Arrows* popped up. I clicked on it and couldn't believe my eyes when I read that they fund reversals! I read every word over and over again and showed it to Jonathan. We felt like this was the answer to our prayers.

We applied in April 2010. We were approved and put on the funding list in July 2010, and in August 2010, our fund was complete! Jonathan had his reversal with Dr.

David Wilson on October 19, 2010, but things didn't look very optimistic. Dr. Wilson saw clear fluid on both sides and only gave us a 70 percent chance of ever conceiving. We knew we had to keep our eyes on the Lord because He was the one who had brought us to this point. If He desired us to have more children, it wouldn't matter what odds were stacked against us.

My ultimate dream had been to be pregnant by Christmas and I was quite disappointed when that didn't happen. However, on January 7, 2011 I realized I HAD been pregnant on Christmas, I just didn't know it! We found out we were expecting our first reversal blessing and we were in awe! The first thing our children did when they found out was run over to me and kiss and hug my belly, just like in my dreams.

On September 7, 2011, Jackson Randall

Payne was born weighing in at 5 lb. 10 oz. We were so in awe of the Lord. After his birth, we continued to trust the Lord with our family size and, when Jackson was eight months old, we found we were expecting our next blessing. On January 27, 2013, our second little red-head, Jana Mae Payne joined our family weighing in at 6 lb. When we look at our little Jackson and Jana, we can't help but think that if we had not been obedient to the Lord, they wouldn't be here. We look forward to what the Lord has in store for our family and we are so grateful He changed our hearts.

JESSICA PAYNE

Granby, Colorado, USA

Jes4Jesus@yahoo.com

Jonathan and Jessica's blessings are Julianna (8), Justen (6), Jillian (5), Jackson (19 months), and Jana (2 months).

Who was Right? *continued from page 25*

himself and search the Scriptures to see what God wanted us to do. I made a commitment to submit to his decision.

I think I was somewhat hoping he would think this was crazy and I would be off the hook. Instead, a week later, I couldn't wait any more and asked if he had thought about what I had said. He told me that he had thought about it, prayed, studied, and decided he "didn't like me." I laughed and said, "Because I'm right?" He smiled and said, "No, because God is right."

He told me that he agreed with my conclusion and that we needed to follow the Lord with all our hearts, and in EVERY area of our lives. We decided right then and there to give our lives over to the Lord and we have been amazingly blessed. We have had two more beautiful daughters and now waiting for our fifth baby in July. We cannot

wait to see all that God has in store for us.

The most amazing part of this one decision is how it has changed the way we live for the Lord in so many other areas of our lives. Do we really trust Him the way we say we do? Are we really willing to put that trust into action? This is where the rubber meets the road.

What will your answer be to His calling to follow Him wherever He leads you? Will you submit to Him and reap the wonderful blessings that come from walking in the footsteps of the Savior?

May He bless you all as you live fully, recklessly, and whole-heartedly for HIM!

CHARITY JENKINS

Salem, Oregon, USA

kengjenkins@msn.com

Ken and Charity's children are Ethan (9), Belle (7), Faith (4), Ava (2) and baby due July 2013.

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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.
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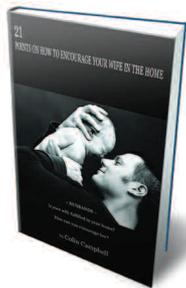


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PO Box 2798 Nerang DC 4211
Val Stares: valstares@aboverubies.org.au
Ph:/Fax: (07) 5525 1970

CANADA

PO Box 1946, Warman SK S0K 4S0
Michelle Kauenhofen: reachaboverubies@gmail.com
Ph: 204 355 7682 • www.aboverubies.ca
All new info and address changes to:
arnewinfo@yahoo.ca

CONTINENTAL EUROPE

14, Rue du General de Gaulle, 68510 Stetten, France
Kathleen Engelhardt: above-rubies@gmx.de
Ph: 0033 389 701072
AR Blog for Europe: aboverubiese.blogspot.fr

BELGIUM and THE NETHERLANDS

Maastrichtersteenweg 51, 3700 TONGEREN
Wilma Samyn: aboverubies@skynet.be
Ph: +32 12 394207

POLAND

Wojska Polskiego 48D, 43186 Orzesze
Alicja Sarna: ala-sarna@wp.pl
Ph:+48 32 2212623

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@xtra.co.nz
Ph: (07) 575 5787 Fax: (07) 575 2024

PAPUA NEW GUINEA and AFRICA

PO Box 2798 Nerang DC 4211
Val Stares: valstares@aboverubies.org.au
Ph:/Fax: (07) 5525 1970

SINGAPORE and ASIA (except Malaysia)

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

UNITED KINGDOM

(including Ireland, Iceland, and Greenland)
8 Catalina Row, St Eval,
Wadebridge, Cornwall PL27 7TJ
Lucy Higgins: hlucy752@ymail.com
Ph: 01841 540966

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