

Strengthening Families Across The World

ABOVE RUBIES

www.aboverubies.org

Issue: Eighty-Eight



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From Our Home to Yours



A daily harvest from my tomato plants

As I type this in the office this evening, there are over 20 older children and teens in the next room (the *Above Rubies* packaging room) enjoying a Games Evening. Ashley, one of our *Above Rubies* helpers organized it and they are having the most wonderful and outrageous fun together. It is amazing that you can have so many young people come together without sending out invitations—just the grandchildren and cousins who are currently staying with us. It's so great.

We constantly enjoy celebrations and gatherings at our home. No need for organization. Just call the families and we

Uncle Wes and nephews fixing one of the motor bikes.



have a huge crowd with loads of fun, antics, and fellowship.

This magazine celebrates 36 years of publishing *Above Rubies*. What a faithful God we serve. I never dreamed when I started this magazine so many years ago in Palmerston North, New Zealand, that I would still be faithfully working on it here in Tennessee today. I have just kept plodding on and on, aware that the need never goes away for wives and mothers to be encouraged in their divine calling. I feel my responsibility as an older mother to strengthen, encourage, undergird, inspire, and cheer on the mothers of this generation. You are doing a great work and you need affirming as you labor in your high calling of determining the destiny of this nation.

Last magazine I shared how our young grandson, Rocky, got his first dirt bike. He started a trend. We now have four bikes roaring around our place. They have made a track through the trees with ravines which enables them to do lots of jumps. Their Uncle Wes brought out his

Uncle Wes with budding motor bike riders.



Moto-cross bike and they love it when he rides with them. He helps them fix their bikes, because they are all second-hand and need plenty of adjustments. Granddad (my husband, Colin) has been traveling all over the countryside with a carload of grandsons as they collect bikes from different places.

Life seems to be a repeat of when our boys were young—music and motor-bikes. Strange combination, isn't it? Not only did our boys love to race on their Moto-cross bikes, but Wes became a drummer, organized a band, and practiced in our garage, much to the despair of neighbors! Wes and Stephen went on to own and manage the Newsboys. Now, in a shed where they fix their bikes, our grandsons practice for their worship band, *Freshwater*.

The latest news is that four of our grandchildren, Zadok, Sharar, Crusoe, and Arden are all going to Israel to help harvest the vineyards on the hills of Samaria in the West Bank. They will be working with hundreds of other volunteers from nine different countries. How amazing to be part of fulfilling Bible prophecy. Isaiah 61:5 says, "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers." And Jeremiah 31:5 says, "Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria, the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things." Check out www.hayovel.com

I had just planted my garden when we sent out the last issue of *Above Rubies*. Don't you love living out of the garden? For a few weeks we

My Daily Cucumber Recipe

Cut cucumbers in thin rings (I leave the skins on when they come straight from my garden) and fill bowl.

Add onion rings cut finely according to taste.

Add salt and pepper, stevia, and apple cider vinegar to taste.

Stir around frequently in order for all cucumbers to receive the flavor.

Selah Godfrey cutting the potato leaves the Liberian way. We usually chop on a chopping board, but they have a special way of cutting which they do so quickly and very finely. Selah is Serene's eldest daughter and she has two little ones, Sammy and Eureka. Yes, Serene is a grandmother!



Enjoying my two great-grandchildren, Sammy and Eureka.

lived on all our different types of let-tuces—salads twice a day, and making green drinks, especially *Earth Milk*, which you can read about in *Trim Healthy Mama*.

Now, I am harvesting loads and loads of tomatoes and cucumbers every day. Apart from eating them raw, I make lots of puree to freeze for winter soups, chili, and casseroles. I also make delicious tomato soup, whizzing up tomatoes with hot peppers, onions, and garlic. I then simmer it on the stove, adding salt and pepper and either butter or cream. And the children chomp up cucumbers like eating apples.

I am also harvesting my okra. I started growing okra when our children came from Liberia as they love it. Okra originally comes from Africa and we cook it the Liberian way, rather than frying it southern style. Even our *Above Rubies* helpers love it this way (and some haven't eaten okra before). I sauté onions and hot peppers out of my garden in red palm oil (we like things HOT). When they are cooked, I add thinly cut rounds of tender okra and simmer until ready, adding extra red palm oil as needed. I like it swimming in the palm oil. I add salt and pepper to taste and usually

I think there must be a lot boys living near this clothesline!



some Nutritional Yeast. Yummy.

I also grow sweet potato leaves, not only for harvesting the sweet potatoes, but in order to enjoy eating the potato leaves throughout the season. This idea came from our Liberian children and we cook them much the same way as the okra. It's one of our favorite dishes.

The hot peppers of all varieties are ripening and our son, John collects his hot habanera peppers each day. He can't eat anything unless it's really hot. He turns up his nose at jalapeños.

Enslaved or Free?

Horace Greely stated, "It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible reading people." And yet, we are being mentally and socially enslaved. More and more, the majority of this nation are becoming enslaved to humanism, feminism, socialism, and progressivism. And this is not only in the secular world, but in the church as well!

We are no longer a Bible reading people. Even "Christian" families are not fervent Bible reading people. But, change starts with families. It is what we do in our families that determines the course of the nation.

Do you gather your family morning and evening to read the Bible to them? This should be the least we do each day. Unless we, and our children, know the

Freshwater Band singing a worship song they wrote at Meadow's 18th birthday. From l. to r. Arrow Johnson, Rocky Barrett, Crusoe Johnson, Arden Allison and Jireh Johnson. They are singing in our *Above Rubies* Storage shed which we opened up for the night.



Meadow singing a song she wrote for her 18th birthday.



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

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truth of God's Word we will not have the ability to discern what is truth and what is deception. Deception often looks so good and wise. Satan convinced Eve that the fruit was "pleasant, to be desired, to make one wise" and yet it resulted in death. Worldly wisdom can look wise, but if it is not the wisdom of God's Word it will lead us down a wrong path.

Do you remember reading about Jonadab in the Bible? Jonadab gave certain commandments to his family that he wanted them to keep throughout ALL THEIR GENERATIONS AND FOR-

EVER (Jeremiah 35). Can you believe it? After 250 years, his descendants were still keeping to the commandments of their patriarch, to the absolute letter. Not just some of them, but every one of them—husbands, wives, sons, and daughters.

What a testimony! Can you imagine your descendants still talking about you and keeping to what you said 250 years down the line? It seems that we often fail in passing on God's ways to children in just one generation! I think of how the standard of holiness amongst God's peo-

ple has degenerated even since I was a child! What about 250 years of generations?

God wants us to be faithful in imparting His Word and His ways to our children so that they will be so ingrained in them that they will pass them on to their children, and their children to their children, continuing down through the generations. Read what Isaiah 59:21 says, "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the Lord: 'My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring,' says the Lord, 'from now AND FOREVER.'"

May we commit to being Bible reading families, Bible believing families, and Bible obeying families.

NANCY CAMPBELL

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Our current wonderful Above Rubies helpers: Ashley Pomerantz, Naomi Byrne, Mariah Cameron, and Sarah Corbitt.

If You Need Encouragement, Here's the Way to Get it!

This magazine you have in your hands is the main ministry of Above Rubies. However, read the following to find other ways of being blessed in your great parenting role.

ABOVE RUBIES FACEBOOK

You will be encouraged by the daily posts to inspire and strengthen you in your great calling of being a wife and mother. You don't have to waste time on this page. Get your encouragement for the day, sign off, and get on with your great career of nurturing and training your children.

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

ABOVE RUBIES DAILY BLOG

If you don't belong to Facebook or if you miss some of the encouraging messages, you can get them on the Above Rubies blog.

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

MINI EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Every now and then I write a mini Above Rubies (with testimonies, plus updates on Above Rubies, or any SPECIALS that are going) that will come to your email box.

Go to: <http://aboverubies.org/subscribe-to-ar-newsletter>

ABOVE RUBIES WEEKLY DEVOTION

This devotion comes right into your email box. It is a more meaty devotion than the daily Facebook posts, but will give you something to really get your teeth into. It is supposed to come to you weekly, but please forgive me if they don't come on time!

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

ABOVE RUBIES PINTEREST

You will love the beautiful family pictures and many other interesting features on Above Rubies Pinterest.

Go to: <http://pinterest.com/aboverubiesmag/>

MEAT FOR MEN FACEBOOK FOR HUSBAND AND FATHERS

Colin Campbell (Nancy's husband) writes a post for men each day.

Go to: <http://www.facebook.com/MeatForMen>.

MEAT FOR MEN BLOG

Men who don't belong to Facebook can still receive

Colin's powerful messages by going to:

<http://tinyurl.com/MensDailyDevotionalBlog>

ABOVE RUBIES BOOK AND MUSIC STORE

Go to this link to purchase BOOKS, DVDs, and CDs to inspire and encourage you—and loads of DOWNLOADS too:

<http://bit.ly/AboveRubiesBookStore>

ABOVE RUBIES WEB PAGE

Explore the Above Rubies webpage filled with information, articles and testimonies to encourage you as a wife and mother:

Go to: <http://aboverubies.org/Articles-Stories>

I grew up godless and delighted in indulging myself with whatever my heart desired. In September 2002 I began my junior year in high school, and at the age of 16, became pregnant. I was terrified. This could not be happening to me. How will I tell my mother? Her motto was, "Get pregnant in my house and you get out." (I love my mother and our relationship has since been redeemed).

Abortion was never a thought in my head, even though I knew it meant I would have to leave home. I was around six weeks pregnant and faced extreme pressure from family to abort. I was told that my life would be over, I would amount to nothing, and any chance I had at success would disappear. Still, I maintained my stance. I would not terminate.

I went in for my first check-up and I experienced the shock of my life. There were two heartbeats! I was carrying identical twins! I experienced confusion, excitement, fear, and elation all at the same time.

Upon leaving the hospital, I informed my parents I was having twins. Their disappointment was unmistakable. However, I felt peace and was confident I was making the right choice. I went home that night and imagined the tragedy if I had given into the pressure and aborted. I would have killed not one, but two precious lives. I was so grateful to not live with that on my conscience.

My mother stuck to her word and because I did not abort, I had to leave. I was homeless and no one in my family knew where I was living in my sixth month of pregnancy and when winter was in full effect, I went to live with an aunt and am very thankful for her taking me in. Despite the stress of pregnancy, homelessness, and attending school, I persevered.

At 35 weeks I went into labor. On Wednesday, May 22, 2002, I gave birth to two healthy little girls. It was a day that I will not soon forget. My mother eventually came around. She was there for the delivery and she and my father are a part of my children's lives today!

I went on to graduate high

"Better to live on the roof than share the house with a nagging wife" (Proverbs 21:9).

school...one year early! In addition, I married my high school sweetheart, went on to college and graduated in 2007. It can be done. Currently, I'm enjoying homeschooling, homemaking, and living to glorify God!

My twin daughters are now 10 years old and recently wrote my husband and I a letter thanking us for not aborting them! These are two little girls understand the gift of life and that babies are a gift and a reward.

My husband and I finally came to know the Lord in 2011. God had a plan for me all along, even when I did not acknowledge Him. He protected and comforted me in my darkest hour. He was the peace and confidence I felt when I made the decision not to abort. We have since turned all the details of our lives over to Him.

I have been immensely blessed through my twins and succeeding children. I did not sacrifice anything in my life by giving birth to my girls. I am so grateful for God's will and His plan for the lives of my children.

Our twins have their own testimony on abortion at 10 years old! They are very grateful for their lives and contribute to the pro-life cause. I have been told I should mind my own business and let women choose what is best for them. However, I believe the words of Jesus who said that we are the "salt" and "light" of this world. I believe my purpose is to encourage women to seek the Lord in all things and lean not on their own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6).

I encourage mothers who have aborted to seek God's redemptive and forgiving power. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

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Twins Saved from Abortion



Vernon and Kristina with their children, Anya (10), Aiyanna (10), Amanda (4), and Noah (11 weeks).

I am Popular!

I'm in my home, in constant demand,
 Called or touched by some small hand,
 My husband needs me, the baby too,
 The teens, the middles, it's quite a crew!

I have people wanting my attention all day,
 There's barely a moment of peace to pray,
 The chaos, the work, constant conversation;
 I cannot think of a more gratifying station.

I'm as popular as I can possibly be,
 And this life I live is the best for me!
 To daily mother and manage our home,
 Makes me feel like I sit on a throne!

To be so needed, so loved, so crucial,
 There's nothing else could be as special.

I'm popular? Why, yes indeed!
 I'm in my home planting good seed.

MICHELE KAUEHOFEN (Mother of 12)
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God is the Originator & Restorer of Marriage

Photos by Rick Adams, www.ThruRicksEyes.com, used with permission

My Stubborn Will

At 18, I was your typical American cultural Christian, having been raised going to church, seeing my parents live out the Christian life, learning to talk the talk. I left home and joined the Air Force. I enjoyed it so much that I earned the nickname, Pearl while in BASIC by my TI because I was always smiling. In 1998 I was assigned to Shreveport, LA working as an Air Traffic Controller, the most prestigious career in the AF!

In 2000 I married my husband within two months of our first date. Though a little sudden for most, he was without a doubt, the man of my dreams. He was full of integrity, could make me laugh, and very easy on the eyes. He also fit my mold of whatever faith I was comfortable with.

You can imagine my surprise when within the first year of our marriage he got “saved.” My bubble busted. Now it was staring straight in my face that I was lost. All along, I knew the truth, but kept running from it, trying to balance what I wanted to do and what I had learned and observed as a child. This was the beginning of the toughest five years of my life and our marriage.

Matt was given an overseas assignment for 15 months and I had to finish out my assignment stateside. We were separated by an ocean and had two completely different hearts. Our marriage began to crumble and I gave him every reason to be rid of me. I loved him desperately, but knew I could never live up to the standard he was now setting. I began pushing him away; he began seeking me harder. Over the next year and half, we saw each other three times. Each visit began great, but we would wind up fighting. Looking back, I was trying to

make him miserable so he would be the one leaving. I wanted to be the victim.

In 2001, on completion of Matt’s overseas assignment, the Air Force took us to North Dakota. I was no longer on active duty, which I missed, but was now in the tundra trying to survive not only a hostile exterior environment, but a hostile home environment, which I created. In the next three years I became the worst wife a man could ever wish for. But, each step I took away from Matt he took two to get me back. He became the modern day Hosea. I have no idea why he continued to seek after me. He had every biblical reason to divorce me and find a wife more worthy of his love, yet he continued to pray for me, forgive me, and love me beyond anything I deserved.

Despite our unhappiness, I managed to become pregnant. For a short time, we put our problems behind us and pretended things were okay. However, 10 weeks into this pregnancy I lost the baby. I was convinced it was my sin and rebellion that caused the miscarriage and God was punishing me.

A part of my story I’ve left out ‘till now was that I was post-abortive. Earlier, I had become pregnant and killed the baby that was the result of a sinful relationship. I now had an overwhelming need to replace the baby I tossed away. I thought I was the cause of the miscarriage and determined if I was “good,” I could manipulate God into giving me children. I became fixated on being pregnant again and thought God would give me a baby because Matt deserved it. Instead, we lost five more precious lives. The ache inside was unbearable at times. The longing for the babies I had lost and the one I had discarded left me emptier

than ever. During my grief I saw a joy in my husband that was unexplainable and unachievable in my mind. Looking back, I see how God used each stage of my marriage to eventually draw me to Him, and used my husband to soften my heart.

We moved to Monterey, California for Matt to obtain a Master’s Degree from a Naval College. While on the trip west, I became pregnant yet again. I tried to not get excited, but for some reason I felt more connected to this baby. Months passed and this baby sustained! We were in a new city, a new church, and a new life growing inside me. I decided this would be the time for real change. All along I had loved my husband, but why would he want me? In order not to lose him I became the “good church-wife.”

Over the next nine months we had the picture-perfect life. My belly grew, our relationship grew, but there was still a hole. I still wanted to control my life. I figured the baby inside me was living because I had changed. I was living better (on the outside). I was being a nicer wife, I was going to church, but I was just as lost as I was the day at the abortion clinic, only with a different face.

For the past five years, Matt had prayed for me diligently. I’m sure he knew my changed exterior was just a front. Yet, his actions towards me never changed. He loved me on days I was good at faking it, as well as on the mean days.

Jackson Paul was born in April of 2005. I was a mom! I had finally carried a baby to term and felt the peace that comes from a baby suckling at my breast. To say I was happy was an understatement. But then again, happiness isn’t joy. My husband had joy, an emotion that wasn’t based on circumstances as my happiness was. The longing for the baby I had forsaken still haunted me every day despite the new little one in my arms.

Guilt and sadness overpowered me with each passing day.

Then one night while Jackson was sleeping in my arms, I felt the Holy Spirit speak to my heart, calling me out of depression and guilt into a saving knowledge that not even my sin was out of Christ's realm of forgiveness. I fell to my knees and humbly realized I had never been in control. The babies I had lost, a husband that forgave me when I didn't deserve it, the baby I was holding now that I didn't deserve, were all God's way of calling me to him. From that moment on my heart belonged to Jesus. The guilt of past doings was unloaded onto the cross. God turned my heart back towards my husband. My limited ability to love had always been self-serving. Now I love my husband in a way that is a picture of Christ and his bride. I long to be lovely, pure, honorable, and worthy of my husband's love.

The day I gave up control of my life to Jesus, I gave up control in all areas, including how many children we would have. I am no longer trying to replace the baby I disposed of, but see children as the blessing they are. Since my conversion, we have had four more children who will greet me in eternity! God not only saved me from the pits of hell, but He saved my marriage and has blessed me beyond anything I deserve with the love of a righteous man, a home full of laughter, and a promise of eternity with Him!

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Major Matthew Stratton and Teresa with their children: Jackson (8), Brooke (6), Joshua (4), Wesley (2), Violet (6 months) and seven little ones in heaven.



Restored Through Thanksgiving

"I Love You." Rick looked me in the eyes and waited for a response. It was awkward to say the same in return. It felt like a lie. All I managed was, "Thanks."

We'd been married seven years and had four little children aged six and under. I was struggling to say the least, and not because of the children. Several years prior, my husband, Rick told me he would like to go to university and study engineering. I began weighing the options, and wondering if it was possible. It would mean living on welfare. It would mean Rick would be in and out of lectures and home a lot more than usual. It would mean he'd need some peace and quiet to concentrate for assignments and exams. Quiet? With four little ones in the house? Hmmm. I decided I'd support him, though I knew this uni adventure could be quite a strain on our marriage.

Rick turned out to be VERY successful in his studies. He was winning awards, getting top marks, and having other students ask him for help with assignments. Naturally, when you're good at something it's easy to delve into it and devote a lot of time to it. But, what about our children who wanted someone to play with them? What about when, at the end of the day, I wanted to talk to my husband instead of him shutting himself up to study?

Somewhere along the line, I'd picked up a shovel called "pity" and started digging myself a pit. As I washed dishes, I'd be seething! My mind concocted all sorts of imaginary conversations where I'd argue with Rick about what a bad father and husband he was. When you give into those fiery darts, it paves the way for even bigger thoughts to consume your mind! The pit became deeper. Now I was falling into bouts of sadness, depression, anger, and snapping at Rick. And, as most of the battle was in my mind, Rick had no idea what he'd done wrong!

I wondered if I could take the chil-



Rick and Racheal with their children, Aaliyah (8), Micah (6), India (4), Charlotte (3) and Jeremiah (1).

dren and go live somewhere else until the degree was over. I wondered if we ran away, would he even notice we were gone? I wondered why he didn't just marry the degree instead of me! Then I began to compare Rick to other fathers and husbands. I felt like I couldn't talk about this to anyone. I didn't want to gossip, and family and friends were already making remarks about how Rick wasn't spending much time with us. God hates divorce. I wouldn't allow myself to consider it. I'd recently seen two Christian mums I knew go down that path for no good reason. It wasn't pretty.

One morning a friend asked if I had any prayer requests and I burst into tears. We prayed together and waited to see what would happen. God, being eternally faithful, answered those prayers.

I talked to Rick one day about why I was such an emotional mess. He had no idea it was so bad. He told me he couldn't imagine life without me and that he loved me (and he's not the sort of person who'd say anything like that unless he meant it).

One day after reading a testimony, the challenge came to start writing a list of everything for which I was thankful. It came easily. I went a bit further. Okay, how about writing things about Rick that I'm thankful for? One by one the list grew, and my attitude changed. Instead of feeling like I'd been dealt a terrible lot in life, I saw how incredibly blessed I was and realized the problem was with me. If I'm grouchy and ungrateful, of course my husband would rather hit the books than hang out with

the family!

The habit continues and has become a regular part of our day. Before lessons start in the morning, the children and I sing “Count Your Many Blessings” and go around the table each naming something for which we are thankful. Seething away while doing the dishes is a distant memory now. There are almost 40 verses in the New Testament talking about thanksgiving, and for a good reason! It opens a wellspring of life that brings healing, restoration, and joy.

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God Intervened

Harry and I met when we were both 16, dated for three years, became engaged for a year, then happily married on June 5, 1992. We both worked retail and I finished college. We knew we wanted children and after a friendly game of cards with some friends, I “won” our first baby. Holley Marie was born on October 3, 1995. Life continued to move right along taking us through job changes, financial loss, and kidney stones. We were active in our small local church, but later moved to a very large church. I felt quite overwhelmed in such a large congregation, but we soon became involved with a small group and found great friends.

Harry left his job in retail and began local truck driving. Satan used this job to bring another woman into Harry’s life. I was about four months pregnant when I knew something was wrong with our relationship—the “classic” signs he was having an affair. One morning I decided to check his wallet while he was in the shower to see if he had any money. He had told me he probably wouldn’t be home for a few days and I didn’t want him to be gone from home without any cash. I had never checked his wallet before and haven’t since. What I found took my breath away! A picture of her!

I confronted him immediately. He brushed me off and went to work. I went to my parents for a few days. I was raised in a

wonderful Christian home and my parents were very supportive. I returned home and went to church for comfort and prayer with friends. He worked every day, seeing her while on the job. I prayed he would see what was happening to his growing family. He came home every few days for a shower, a meal, and clean clothes.

I talked with a counselor at church and then consulted a friend who was a family law attorney. Though it cut my heart out, I filed for legal separation. I couldn’t bring myself to file for divorce. I held out hope that when Harry was served the papers it would be a wake up call and he would come home for good.

I prayed in earnest, crying out, begging God to break through to Harry. I had never felt so close to God in my life. It was like He had His arms around me, carrying me when I couldn’t take another step. I kept a journal, writing out prayers and hymns that were as close as my next breath. I felt like I lived in the Psalms with David in his times of hardship. Family and friends surrounded me and spoke truth to Harry.

Harry was home the weekend before my scheduled induction. I gave him the date and time and asked him if he would be there. He was unsure as there had been a change in his work schedule and he would be leaving for Texas on Sunday. His second daughter was to be born on Thursday. At work, his dispatcher knew what was going on. He was a smart man and sent Harry on this trip give him a chance to clear his mind.

It worked and he pushed himself to get back in time to welcome our new baby. He came straight to the hospital. I was fully dilated and pushing with my eyes closed. When I opened my eyes Harry was at the foot of the bed. One more push and we had another baby girl, Bobbie Carmen Faith on March 4, 1999. Bobbie Carmen had already been chosen as her name, but I added Faith. It was my faith in God and in our marriage that kept her and me alive. I knew I was never alone. I had God, I had Holley,

I had family and friends, and during the darkest loneliest times my baby depended on me to give her life. She came into this world happy, healthy, and beautiful, just like her older sister.

Our marriage had been struggling for six months when Harry asked me to work it out. I cautiously accepted. We used an unusual method of working it through. He began long haul trucking and the girls and I went with him. On our first trip together, we were gone for 18 days. We would either get along or kill each other. There were still many trust issues to work on and we both relied on God to heal the wounds.

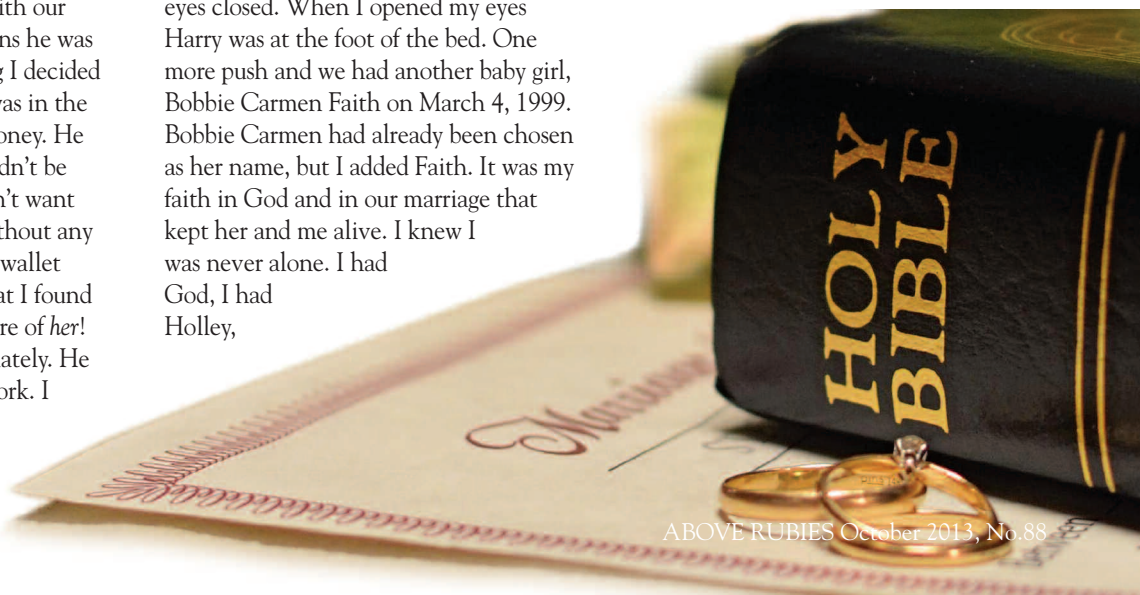
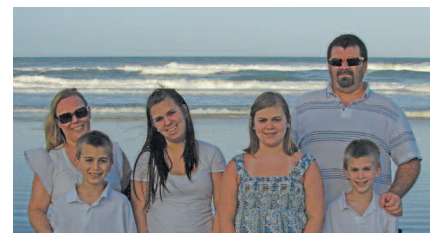
Harry and I have now been married 21 years! We have since added two boys, Jonathan and David (yes, they are best friends). After David was born, Harry was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and “retired” at the age of 32. He is disabled now and home with me and our children. He is still mobile and actively involved in parenting. Now that the children are older and we can leave them home without a babysitter, we really enjoy dating again.

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Harry and Nancy with their children: Holley (17), Bobbie (14), Jonathan (11) and David (9).



I was diagnosed in 1979 with cystic fibrosis and, under the best of circumstances, the life expectancy at that time was just 18 years. I responded well to treatment and became a healthy happy toddler who was an “only.” I asked my parents for a baby brother or sister. They wanted more children, but faced with the hereditary odds of having another child with CF, they were scared. Who wouldn’t be? I was doing well, but maybe another child wouldn’t be so lucky. How would they provide for all the health and emotional needs of another child like me?

Then came the 1982 Great Strides walk/run for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Our city hosted this major event and many people came from all over the country to participate. Host homes were needed and my parents volunteered. We were given three young men, one of whom was Don Pfendner who was about to change our lives forever. He was a Christian and he also had CF. He was in his early twenties and wise beyond his years.

My parents confided in him their desire and fears. Don replied, “If God Himself came to you and said, ‘I have chosen a child for you, but she comes with a lot of extra challenges, hard work, and pain.’ would you look Him in the eye and tell Him, ‘No. I do not want the child you have chosen for me. I want an easier one?’” My parents’ response was a resounding “No. We absolutely want what God wants for us!” Then he asked them an even more heart-piercing question, “Is Holly worth it? Is she worth the fears, the hurt, the struggle, the uncertainty?” “Absolutely! We wouldn’t trade one moment of our life with her!” they cried.

“Then, what is stopping you?” he answered.

About nine months later, my younger sister, Vanessa Elizabeth Dawn, was born. I was thrilled. I was, and am, a big sister! Things did not start out easy. She was premature and sick a lot during her first year and we were very afraid for her life on several occasions. She was



Holly and John with Murren (11).

Holly's sister, Vanessa is married to Brian Lofton and they are blessed with Brigid (5.5), Katrin (2.5) and new baby Liam born April 21.

We Love Life

tiny and frail, but she didn’t have CF. Even if she had, God would have made a way to care for the child He chose.

The story continues today. My sister has two beautiful, healthy daughters and a delightful, tiny son. She has faced her own challenges. But, we both confess, “WE LOVE LIFE! Our lives are worth it. All the hardships we have face and all the pain we suffer are worth it to live. My life is not worth less than hers because I will never be “healthy.”

Anyone who thinks they are sparing themselves or their child suffering by denying them life is deluded. To live is to suffer and hurt, be disappointed, and to make sacrifices. Just because a child is born “perfect” does not mean they will never get cancer, lose a limb, suffer permanent brain damage, or die prematurely. And these are hardly the only ways to suffer.

My pastor says that ultimately all our fears are based in the fear of death, but as Christians, death has lost its sting. Christ has conquered pain, suffering, and death. Our risen Lord sits at the right hand of the Father holding our promised life. This is the power of the cross. No matter what I suffer now, God has made it finite and purposeful. One day I will

look through new eyes in a glorified, perfected, imperishable body at the suffering I once endured. In the meantime, God uses it to draw me closer to Himself, to shape my faith and my witness.

He has used this to shine His light into other lives, too. Is that worth it? Yes. The life worth living is the life God gives.

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Holly has written previously for *Above Rubies*. Here are the links for her articles:
<http://aboverubies.org/TheWrongDiagnosis>
<http://aboverubies.org/TrustingGodInFertility>
<http://aboverubies.org/JesusIsEnough>

ARE YOU RAISING A RIGHTEOUS FAMILY?

“Righteousness exalts a nation:
but sin is a reproach
to any people”
(Proverbs 14:34).

We can’t have a righteous nation
without righteous families.



The sun rises this morning, cold and veiled. The mist hangs heavy and the frost covers the earth in a heavy icy grip. I feel it to my very core. My bones ache with the heaviness I carry. I wish I could just lay in bed long enough to not face what lies ahead. I know the day holds a tiny box, a damp, dark hole in black, cold earth. Only three will stand to acknowledge the life that should have been.

Seven tiny boxes in just over that many years... how does a heart bear such grief?

The "open-womb"... it echoes in my heart and mind today.

I am familiar with the comments of being breeders; the need to ensure that you "know what causes this," the fiscal irresponsibility, not to mention the environmental disregard that people like this cause. Are you trying to keep up with "that family on TV?" It is so "throw-back," definitely not a modern or educated way of life.

If you really want to follow in the "open womb" understanding you will have a large family. Are you sure you want to do this? What about your health? What about your pocketbook? What about college? You can never afford it! How can you build their self-esteem? It is irresponsible. We have the methods and means to control this now. Why would anyone not use the tools available to them?

Yet there are those that stand in complete dedication that the "open-womb" is what God called us to do—the three mandates: Have children, take dominion, receive what God graciously gives!

Is that all that "open-womb" entails? I think we miss what "open-womb" really means. In the Scriptures we read that God controlled the womb, and while there has

always been "methods," the rise of accessible birth control in the 1960's took the womb from God's authority to man's authority. Now couples "plan." Single women can be sexually vibrant with little thought to the consequences. We keep it closed until our desire for children determines our actions to open the womb.

Open womb means that we totally yield to God in this intimate and personal area of our life. We trust Him to open the womb and fill our homes with children. It is a journey and there are moments of questions, but we come back to the feet of Jesus and yield. We give control of the womb back to Him. Our hands are lifted high in anticipation, and as He places children in the womb, we receive them with joy.

But what happens when our hearts are yielded, our hands are raised in anticipation, and they remain empty. What if year after year the womb remains closed, courses flow, and no life issues forth? What if instead of a child, soft and pink and precious, my hands receive a tiny box, a life too soon ended, and fading hopes?

In the allegory *Hinds' Feet on High Places* by Hannah Hurnard, the main character follows the Good Shepherd on a journey. As she travails He teaches her lessons. One of the first is "acceptance with joy." Do we accept what God gives us with joy, regardless of circumstances? It is easy to believe that God gives us good things, but not easy when He allows difficult circumstances, tragedy, or struggle. Can we accept these with joy?

As I think to what lies ahead today, my heart struggles to find joy. How does one reconcile the character of God to a tiny box and a dark, cold hole? How does a heart continue to yield when the grief is

strong? Even the phrase "open womb" implies that God should and will open the womb and bring forth life.

As the torrent of emotions rages, I ponder what should be different? How could things be changed? I simply cannot do this again.

I stop short as I realize all my questions are still about control. How can I not hurt? How can I bring the consequences I want? I realize that open-womb is not about mandates and numbers and full homes of crazy, busy children. Maybe it should not be called "open womb" at all, as it gives rise to ideas that we can still control the outcome by somehow labeling it so God must give to us.

Maybe it should be called the "yielded womb." Is that not the real idea? A heart and body yielded to the will of God and whatever journey He asks us to walk. When we are yielded with no expectations, is it there that we can live in "acceptance with joy"? Is it there we can find peace and truly grasp the hand of our Savior?

I realize how wrong my thinking is. I am reminded of Job. He lost everything—his possessions, wealth, health, and his beloved children. What is his response to the overwhelming tragedies? "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10 NKJV).

I lift my hands again to the Father. I feel my husband's come up under mine. Open, yielded, in the size of a newborn child, and I surrender.

"Lord, you know the hopes and expectations. You know the grief and disappointment. Please use these open hands. Fill them as You see fit; fill them with service to You. Help me not to close them against your will or raise my hands in demands and accusations. Let me find Your hands always holding mine and willing to accept both good and adversity. May I truly be your handmaiden to accept with joy."

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Timothy and Andrea are blessed with seven treasures on earth, Elijah (19), Gabrielle (18), Josiah (16), Zachariah (13), Judah (9), Rebekah (7), and Koliah (3) and eight children in heaven, seven in the last eight years.

What Kind of Atmosphere are you Creating in your Home?

Mommy's Deliberate Heart

I have to admit, my home is not always the most tidy. I'm working on it. One thing I find even more important than organization is the atmosphere of my home. I discovered these two are not one and the same, and that it all begins with me.

I do not believe you can truly have the atmosphere your family needs unless you really internalize the role you are to play as a wife. It took me way too long to figure this all out. I used to feel that I was "stuck at home, wasting my talents, losing my career, etc." by filling this role. It was not until I began to listen to wise counsel on the biblical definition of a wife and keeper of the home that I realized it was my attitude that needed to change first! To me, the mother's attitude is the biggest influence on how the home feels. We are to create a peaceful home, to be a loving wife and helpmate for our husband, and to show our children the love and compassion the Lord shows to us daily.

I rise each day before the rest of the house. Sometimes that is really early! I make sure I have time to shower, get the coffee going, make and pack my husband's lunch, and spend some time in God's Word. This allows me to relax a little and get my attitude in check before rush hour! I have my children's breakfast ready and they are always really excited to get to the table for "breakfast with mommy." I do everything with them, including eating, and I think they will appreciate that, especially when they are older. Some mothers do house work while the children eat, or put them in front of the television, but to me, mealtime is a special bonding time.

Some of my main goals in creating the atmosphere of my home are love, encouragement, and acceptance. If I am doing a load of laundry, or sweeping the floor, and one of them wants to read a book, I do it. If they want to play a game,

or work on some learning flashcards, I do it. Cleaning and organizing is something I try to get done, but my children are not going to look back on their childhood and think "wow, our windows were really clean growing up." They will remember how more important they were than a perfectly polished floor!

God has blessed me beyond measure with a husband that makes it easy for me to want to serve him. I have his coffee ready when he gets up, when he gets home from work, and even in the evening. I figured out that this is one of the best things I can do for him. Ask your husband what is important to him. You may be surprised!

I always have dinner ready when he arrives home. When we hear Daddy coming in the door, the children scream his name and scamper over to give him hugs. There's something about having some good, fragrant food cooking and people that love you at home to help

"In the last analysis, home happiness depends on the wife. Her spirit gives the home its atmosphere. Her hands fashion its beauty. Her heart makes its love. And the end is so worthy, so noble, so divine, that no woman who has been called to be a wife, and has listened to the call, should consider any price too great to pay, to be the light, the joy, the blessing, the inspiration of a home."

~ J. R. Miller

take the stress of the work day away.

We, as a couple, have decided to nip bad attitudes and misbehaviors in the bud. We don't allow them in our house. I know every child is different, and may need different forms of discipline, but however it is dealt with, it needs to be effective. This means not allowing my children around some friends' children because I do not want certain attitudes or behaviors brought into our home. The amount of parental and sibling disrespect allowed in some homes is very saddening.

We monitor what our children watch on TV (which is minimal any-

way.) When it comes to music, I have changed what is played in our home. I used to listen to secular music almost exclusively. It was never very "bad" per se, but why waste my mind on things that do not uplift my spirit? We only play either instrumental or Christian music now. It makes such a difference. It is so wonderful to hear my three year old child



Josh and Charlotte with their little ones, Nate (3 ½) and Millie Claire (14 months).

singing praise songs while he is playing (even when the music is not on)!

We put great emphasis on eating dinner together. My husband and I agreed when we were first married, that when we were blessed with children, we would eat all our meals together around the dining table. It is a wonderful way to share about our day, and pray. My son prays for each of our meals and already understands how important it is to thank the Lord for everything He has given us.

Being a keeper at home is an exciting role. Your children are going to be the greatest reflection of you to the world. No job has greater value. You get to show them the love of Christ, and prepare them to go out into the world to proclaim their faith. Once your attitude is in check (I still have to re-check mine, now and again!), you can begin to create the peaceful atmosphere your family deserves.

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Scott and Jennifer with their children: Emelie (19), Eden (17), Elias (15), Ethan (12), Emmett (10), Ella (6) and Ezra (4).

Creating a Culture of Loveliness

When you walk into our home on a good day, you will smell the lovely scent of lavender and will be greeted by shining windows, clean floors, and pretty throw rugs. Strategically placed on a low shelf are small baskets of toys available for the entertainment of the little children. I will ask you to sit on a stool at my counter and offer you an iced coffee, while the children run outside to swim or check out the variety of small animals, including ducks, chickens, and goats that live here on our little farm.

If you show up on a busy school or food processing day I may have to close the laundry room door to hide the stack of dirty laundry and there may be dirty dishes in the sink, but we strive to have good home habits in order to welcome a guest into our home at any opportunity.

As we care for our children we have the awesome opportunity to raise world changers. Part of our world changing vision as a family is that our children will redeem and reform the world around them through the power of the Holy Spirit. Although I want my children to be wild about Jesus, I want them to be a civilizing influence on the earth and that starts at home.

The first area of dominion is the inside of your home. Teaching children to wipe down the bathroom daily, clean fingerprints off the windows, and make their beds are part of the small details that make a home a comfortable and lovely place to practice hospitality. As our children become habituated to a clean life they will carry these redeeming habits into their own homes.

It is so much easier to develop good habits than to let things fall into chaos

“The attitude in your heart will determine the atmosphere of your home, which in turn will affect the actions of everyone in your home.”

~ Nancy Campbell

and try to fix it. Making basic cleanliness and order a matter of daily practice will make keeping a lovely home, even a home full of young children, a reachable task. As you work toward good habits, reward your children with special time by reading a book aloud or baking something together so that you balance chores with togetherness.

Another area of dominion is the outside of our home. We want to regularly welcome families to our home so oth-

ers can catch a vision of the joys of loving God and discipling a large family. As we welcome people to our home, we honor God and others by showcasing His gifts. Pretty shrubs and flowers, with vegetables and seating areas interspersed, provide room to visit and inspire. It is easy to find little and inexpensive ways to add ambiance to your surroundings. Many of my plants have come from cuttings. I find pretty candles in jars or fresh paint on salvaged outdoor furniture go a long way towards creating a lovely outdoor living area. We also make sure to regularly pick up trash and pull weeds outdoors to keep our yard looking cared for.

The third and most important area of dominion is the spiritual atmosphere of the home. When we keep singing praises to God throughout the day we chase away discouragement. Psalm 146:2 says, “I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.” Regularly opening our mouths to read God’s Word and worship Him helps to bring an atmosphere of joy and peace.

Although there are many habits we develop to uphold the beautiful atmosphere of the home, if our house looks like a spread in *House Beautiful* but there is no joy or enjoyment of God, it will repel our children from our vision of reformation and loveliness. Make enjoying God and each other a priority. Encourage your children, as part of the team, to bring the vision to reality.

Although there are many days when a sick baby or other needs call our attention away from caring for our home, taking baby steps toward joyful upkeep of the atmosphere of the home and teaching our children to do so as well, pays off. Being free to show hospitality to others and sending your children into the world prepared to redeem their own sphere of influence are wonderful goals to keep in mind as you work on creating a culture of loveliness in your home.

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What Kind of Atmosphere are you Creating in your Home?

In Genesis 2:7 we behold God forming man and breathing into him the breath of life. This new creation is full of the living breath of God, a fully alive being. He does not put him in a desert, but in a beautiful garden made by God Himself. Not just any garden, but a garden of “delight.” We can almost feel the euphoria of Adam as he walks amongst this wonderland. Imagine his senses being fully awakened as he turns his head to the array of trees and plants, all of varying shapes, sizes, colors, and fragrances. Could it be God’s hint to us not to hold back, but rather enter into the joy of letting our creativity loose as we add physical ambiance to our home.

It can be as simple as taking a pot of paint, and painting an old chair or table with your favorite color. Or, perhaps pulling the old stained carpet off the stairs and splashing the sub-floor with a brilliant color, topped in verathaine. Tired of the old stained carpet on my stairs, I ripped it off with great gusto one day and a dear friend painted them black with a splash of red. How pleasing it is to the eye, not to mention more hygienic!

“I love the red!” I hear this comment quite often when people enter my

A Splash of Color

living room. They are referring to an old discarded piece of furniture I found outside a storage unit. Home it came! With a fresh coat of rich red, it looks as good as new. And, I must say, it adds a special sparkle during the Christmas season when 30 plus women squash into this little room for our annual Christmas celebration. Red seems to be my splash of color!

How about purchasing a packet of



wild flower seeds and throw them into a little garden patch as an entrance into your home. I have these growing along my garden path on route to my front door. I take great delight in cutting a bouquet to bring the outside in! Or, buy some cheap pots and plant nasturtiums. These flowers flow out of the pot in an array of color—and you can eat them! The ideas are limitless. And, they do not need to bankrupt your account! If you need inspiration, take a peek at Pinterest!

God bless you in your endeavors. Remember, God planted a garden of delight in which he placed the man, with trees “pleasing to the eye.” God is a brilliant Creator, full of endless variety. Nevertheless, He is also a master psychologist. Beauty in our surroundings lifts us up and brings pleasure to our eyes. He created us to enjoy beauty. Therefore, let’s make our homes beautiful.

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Kate and Terre are blessed with Promise (10), their precious daughter adopted from China. (Kate is Nancy’s sister).



I often tell my children that our home is a training ground. Not one of these souls is placed in our family by accident, and each fulfills a purpose not only in and of themselves, but also to help the others grow spiritually. As the mother, I believe that

The Dream or the Reality

my role is integral in this growth. I can create an atmosphere in which they’re most likely to fulfill their purpose, or I can send them running to the world for direction.

When I was younger, I had visions of my intent for my future family. I would keep an immaculate home. I would create an ambiance of peace, love, and comfort—a haven for my family. My family would enjoy a hot meal, complete with joyful fellowship, and my children would be lulled to sleep by the fragrance of lavender on their pillows.

One can imagine how my husband reacted when during my early mothering years, while in the middle of cleaning my kitchen with a cherished new bottle of lemon essential oil, I saw my dear

toddler covered in finger paint and my preschooler teasing the dog with an unraveling roll of toilet paper. After having my idyllic dream crushed, I called out to them, “NO! STOP! I JUST CLEANED THAT! Just go to your room until I’ve finished,” all the while thinking in my mind, “Don’t you see what I’m trying to do here? I’m trying to make this a haven for you! I want you to feel COMFORT and PEACE and LOVE! Why don’t you appreciate what I’m doing?” Needless to say, my attempt at creating the atmosphere of my dreams was completely squashed.

It wasn’t until later that day that I read Proverbs 14:1, “Every wise woman builds her house: but the foolish plucks it down with her hands.”

What Kind of Atmosphere are you Creating in your Home?

I understood the value of the mother at home and thanked God for the opportunity to be at home with my children, raising them up in His admonitions. But, the ideal in my mind didn't line up with reality. My children didn't care if my kitchen smelled of fresh lemon or if their towels smelled of lavender. Yes, I wanted them to enjoy small comforts, but how comfortable would those memories be if they only conjured thoughts of the woman who fussed at her children all for the sake of a few drops of oil?

I'd read Proverbs 14:1 many times and strived to be the wise woman who built her home, but it was the second part of the verse which struck my heart that day, "the foolish plucks it down with her hands." In the past, I had read this part as simply warning against the foolish woman who possibly fills her day with time wasters or who is contentious; but on this day, I suddenly felt the conviction of being capable of tearing down my home

with my own two hands. I didn't need an accomplice and if I wasn't careful, would destroy the very atmosphere I wanted to create.

I believe that a mother's heart and attitude are so important that she has the ability to completely alter the atmosphere of her home. I've often noticed that when my husband has a difficult day, my attitude can either drive him away or bring him comfort in a dwelling that envelops him in peace. I see this in my children as well. My own words and tone can create anxiety in children dealing with uncertainty, or it can create calm and reassurance in the midst of an emotional storm. My family looks to me as an anchor, always looking well to the ways of the household (Proverbs 31:27).

I've learned that my actions mean more than seeing an immaculate home; that my attitude has a bigger impact than always offering fresh-baked goodies; and that having an encouraging, uplifting, and

joyful mama-heart provides true pleasant memories for them, enabling them to fully live out their God-given abilities, talents, and gifts.

Moving beyond the dream of a picture-perfect family and home, my new vision is seeing my children fulfill the role God has for them and witnessing their impact on this world. And in order to see this reality, my own heart and hands are prayerfully readied to turn theirs to the One who created them—to ignore what the world says is perfection, and focus solely on the One who is perfect.

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*Andrew and Sara's children are: Morgan (11),
Jared (9), Elena (7), Camden (4),
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"The lack of atmosphere may be detected at the threshold of the house one is about to enter, and when one has crossed this threshold, no amount of interior decoration can make up for its absence.

It is present in a home when kindly words are spoken; when the members of a household live in right relations with each other; when all speed is used to right a wrong or to ask forgiveness for the word which should not have been spoken, or for the deed which should not have been done: most of all, this atmosphere is ever found where He is present, who being in such a home is the Unseen Guest and the Silent Listener to every conversation."

~ Wilbur Chapman

Which Road are you Traveling



Bill and Shari with their children, Emily (18) and Daniel (15).

As mothers, we are the caretakers of our home. As such, we have the opportunity to change the course of our children's lives and future generations by the choices we make within our homes.

We can travel one of two roads. The first one is where we don't put much

thought into the condition of our home. We may let housework slide, skip meals around the dinner table in preference to sitting in front of TV, or we have a "me first" attitude. When we speak sharp words or neglect Family Devotions the house is no longer a home.



The second road is where the mother follows the leading of the Lord. Proverbs 31:27 NIV says, “She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.” We arise in the morning to put our relationship with the Lord first, having devotions and prayer time with Him. We ask Him how he would like us to manage our home and what ambiance He would like in our home for this day.

Our words set the tone for the day. When we speak sweet words like honeycomb, they bring peace to the hearts of all our family. Our words have the power to bring life or death.

Another way to keep a positive atmosphere within our home is to keep

our home clean, clutter free, and chores up-to-date. This lessens the chaos and gives family members the chance to focus on other things.

A carefully thought out décor can change the whole mood of the home. Family pictures carefully placed, candles lit, comforting blankets on the couches and chairs, and peaceful music playing in the background create a home that family members desire to live in. They can relax and be renewed instead of turning to outside influences of the world.

A major factor in changing the heartbeat of the home is the kitchen, the heart of the home. Healthy meals and scrumptious desserts made with love, fill the home with wonderful smells and

memories we leave on our children’s souls. It’s where we gather as a family around the table and share the day’s events.

The kitchen is also the springboard for setting up the most important factor of the home—Family Devotions. There is nothing more important to creating a beautiful ambiance and peace than making Christ the center of the home. Once the evening meal is completed, it’s the perfect place to end the day reading God’s Word and drawing near to our Father.

Which road will you travel, dear mother? The one that brings chaos and breaks down the heart of the home, or the one that brings peace and life to the home? It’s up to us to choose the right way, the Lord’s way. When we do, Proverbs 31:28 rings true, “Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.” Let’s do our task well. We can be the turning tide that moves following generations towards the Lord and his kingdom.

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“The atmosphere of the home is breathed in by the child, and exerts an influence in his training more, by far, than all other things put together. The child receives more by unconscious absorption than in any other way. He is all ears and eyes and open pore. He is open at every angle and point and direction, and all between. He is an absorbing surface; he takes in constantly; he takes in what is there; and what he takes in make him. The spirit of the home then is the one thing on which the keen mind and earnest heart of the father and mother will center most, for the child’s sake.”
~ S. D. Gordon

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Chorus:
In that home we knew we were safe
To be young enough to dream
To find the faith to believe
And in that home love it had no end
That's where we learned to forgive
In that home.

When I first read *The Dream Giver* by Bruce Wilkinson, I could relate to the main character, Ordinary. He lived in the Land of Familiar, went to his Usual Job everyday, and then returned home to sit in his recliner and watch his box every evening. One day he started waking up to his Big Dream; something that seemed exciting but unusual, dangerous, and impossible.

When I was growing up, I lived a very ordinary life and had ordinary dreams—go to college and become an elementary school teacher. I decided to take a year before college to do a missionary training school with *Youth With A Mission*. I thought I was going to be learning about evangelism, but instead I started learning about God's passion for marriage and children. Through teachers and families that I met, I realized that being a wife and mother was the most amazing, exciting adventure a woman could have. It was my desire to give God control of my whole life. Naturally, I wanted to give Him control of my fertility as well.

As I read *The Dream Giver*, I could finally put into words the Big Dream which awakened my heart many years ago in that pivotal season after high school. It was the Big Dream I was made for... to accept EVERY child that God brought to me... to be a mother of many!

Leaving the Comfort Zone

My missionary work came to an end and it was time to for college. However, God spoke something to me I was not expecting. He told me to go home. One month later, I became engaged to the man of my dreams, my high school sweet heart, Chris. It was time to leave my comfort zone and pursue my Big Dream.

Border Bullies

Then, I encountered my Border Bullies, just as Ordinary had when he quit his regular job and headed out into the unknown. They were actually our pastors who did our pre-marital counseling. We loved them and looked up to them. They loved us. They told us it was very unwise to get married and not use birth control. My parents, my doctor, and eventually my fiancé also agreed with them. Instead of believing the words that the Dream

Giver had spoken to me and praying He would make a way, I immediately gave in and went on the pill. I figured I must have been mistaken. I turned back from my Big Dream and stayed in the Land of the Familiar.

The Waste Land

After two years on the pill and a move from Pennsylvania to Colorado, Chris and I decided we were "ready" for a baby. Our sweet girl, Areli Endura (Heroic with Endurance) was born, and I began the walk of faith as a stay-at-home mom. Areli was such an easy baby, and I conceived again when she was only 10 months old. Our second child was a boy, Cole Patric (Victory of the People, Nobleman). He was a more difficult baby and again, I turned away from my Big Dream.

God knew the great destiny He had planned for me and He didn't let my fear stop Him. When Cole was a year and still waking through the night to nurse, our third child Cadin Christopher (Confident Follower of Christ), got through natural family planning methods.

At this point I felt tired and sick, being pregnant for the fourth time and having three little ones to care for. I also felt ashamed that Chris and I didn't have the money to move out of our two bedroom townhome. I had forgotten the excitement I had originally felt when I thought of being a mother to many.

Our fourth child, Ashlyn Autumn (God's Vision for the Harvest) was born with several problems and spent two days in the NICU. Six weeks later we were told she had a rare chromosomal abnormality. No one knew how she would be affected or what her future would be like. Doctors also told us that any future children could possibly be born with this syndrome. Within a span of six months Chris lost his job, I gave birth to a special needs child, our church leaders brought false accusations against us, and we were kicked out of our church. It seemed that all of our dreams had died, even my Big Dream.

Strangely enough, this was the time God broke through our fear and gave us peace. He was in control and EVERY child was a blessing! The Dream Giver began to wash away the fear, shame, and

rejection of the Waste Land. And our Waste Land hadn't been a waste! We learned so much through it! That was a good thing, because when Ashlyn was 10 months, I became pregnant again. Ashlyn was healthy and doing well, and we were excited about another child. I began to homeschool and enjoy doing it. I decided to have a home birth. It was fast and supernaturally easy.

The Valley of Giants

Baby number five was Chai Eric (Healthy and Powerful). Before he was six weeks old, we packed up everything we owned and drove from Colorado to Pennsylvania. Chris had accepted a job with the church we had grown up in and we felt like we were finally entering our Promised Land! Just like Ordinary, we had wandered in the Waste Land for a long, discouraging time. Perhaps we were getting close to being that joyful, powerful, victorious family I had envisioned in my YWAM days.

Giant No. 1. Finances

Along with a Promised Land, there are ALWAYS Giants! Chris worked two jobs for many years, trying to provide and pay off the enormous debt we had unwisely incurred during our time in the Waste Land. We still believed that if God gave us children, He would provide for them. We had little Cooper Yale (Carrier of God's Vast Provision in our Land) in the midst of paying off \$70,000 in credit card debt and negotiating a seller's agreement for a four bedroom house that we had no way of paying. We outgrew our minivan and purchased a 12 passenger van. When our seventh child, Calvin Ajani (Victorious in the Struggle) was born, we were still miraculously paying for the house and van, and paid off all our credit card debt! When Calvin was two years, we were totally debt free except for our mortgage!

Giant No. 2. We Were Not Perfect Parents

Every day we failed. Our children were growing older and picking up bad habits from us. They were not perfectly behaved or superior in their school work as I had imagined they would be. We felt totally inadequate as parents. The dream of our children being mighty world changers

My Big Dream



Oh the joy of a new sibling!

seemed very dim. Thank goodness, God made it clear to us that He wasn't dependant on our perfection to make His promises come to pass. A Big Dream is a Big Dream because it is impossible. Only God can do it!

Giant No. 3. Pregnancy

A huge Giant for me has been the way that I feel when I am pregnant. The eighth pregnancy was my worst. For many months I hardly left the sofa, feeling wretched and useless. I almost told the Dream Giver, "NEVER AGAIN!" In my darkest moments, His sweet presence came close and His beautiful voice spoke so clearly, "I need you. Without your willingness, I could not bring this child of promise into the world." Then I saw a vision of this child's descendants influencing the entire earth! The names of our children remind us of what God had brought us through and the victories we have won. Our eighth child, Courage Justice, was born in 2013. What supernatural courage God formed within us!

Living the Big Dream

Just like Ordinary, I had looked forward to the time I would live out my Big Dream. One day, I woke up and realized I

was in the midst of my Big Dream all along! It was more mundane and more miraculous than I had expected! It brought more suffering and joy than I could have ever imagined. There is no place I would rather be! Here is something I wrote while pondering the wonder of my newborn babe.

"I have seen the majestic beauty of Pike's peak. I have beheld massive waves pounding the shore. I have walked in the morning mist of a tropical jungle. I have experienced stunning architecture, hundreds of years old. But, never have I had a view as great as this. The perfection of each tiny toenail, the softness of his skin, the engineering of his ever developing brain, the shimmer of his auburn hair. And when his eyes light up with joy and his cheeks burst forth in a dimply smile, the sun pales in comparison! All the

music of a thousand symphonies, here in my house! All the wonders of the universe, here in my home! How is it that I am entrusted with the crowning jewel of all of God's creation, Courage Justice,?"

Of course, I felt this way about all my newborns, toddlers, children, and now teenagers! My husband has just started living his Big Dream, being a business owner and we are facing the Giants all over again! However, we have learned much and we are overcoming. Only God knows how many children we will have and how they will change the landscape of this earth and eternity. That is all part of the amazing adventure!

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Amy Devita Photography

Chris and Anne with seven of their children. Left to right: Calvin (4), Cooper (6), Cadin (11), Chai (8), Ashlyn (9), Areli (14) and Cole (12). Courage was born after this picture.



God's words to Joshua as he was about to lead God's people into the Promised Land were, "Be thou strong and VERY COURAGEOUS." It was not enough to be courageous. God needed him to be VERY courageous.

As he was nearing death, King David encouraged his son, Solomon with these words, "Be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man" (1 Kings 2:2). The Holman Christian Standard Bible says, "Be strong and be courageous like a man." I like the Knox Version. Whenever it talks about being strong and courageous, he translates it, "Play the man." In other words, to act like a man means to be strong and courageous. It is the essence of manhood.

How old was Solomon when he became king? Some commentaries say 12 years old. The historian, Josephus says 14 years old while other commentaries say 20 years old. Whatever is correct, he was a very young man, and yet expected to be strong and courageous to take on the governing of a nation, a nation that became the richest and most prosperous nation in the world at that time under his rule (1 Chronicles 22:5; 29:1).

What are your Expectations?

We have lessened our expectations for young men today. In fact, it seems this nation wants to dumb them down. They are frowned on for doing manly things and babied into their twenties. Yes, mothers, we'll mother and smother our little baby sons, but as they grow, we'll take our hands off, let go of fear, allow them to grow into men, and let them be adventurous—at a young age!

Why do so many young men get into trouble in their teens? There's never meant to be a teen stage. By the time they are 13, they should be training towards manhood, have opportunity to do manly things, and act like men. Jewish boys have their Bar Mitzvah at 13 years and it is called a coming of age ceremony. They should be learning to face life with tenacity, courage, and strength.

Provide and Protect

They should seek to find jobs and earn extra money for "things they want" instead of expecting their parents to pro-

Are we Raising Wimps or Warriors?

vide everything. To provide and to protect are God-ordained giftings of manhood and they should begin this training early. They should be preparing to think about providing for the future. Young men can begin a home business with something that is a passion in their lives. Sometimes this business leads to their future livelihood.

I remember visiting with a dear friend in New Zealand, Lois Jordan, who was the artist for *Above Rubies* when we began this ministry 36 years ago! She shared with me how that as they home-schooled their son, they noticed he was very interested in horticulture. They encouraged him in his passion and he began to sell his plants and produce and did very well. By the time he was 18 years, he already had \$20,000 in the bank in readiness to provide a home for his future wife and family.

Training Brave and Courageous Leaders

When we read about the young men of the Bible, we are amazed at their courage and bravery. They portray a different picture from many young men today. Let's look at some of them...

Othniel (Judges 1:12-13; 3:9-11). God raised up Othniel as the first judge of Israel because he was a young man who loved challenges. When Caleb put out the challenge that whoever captured Kirjath-sepher (which was a stronghold of giants) could have his daughter to be his wife, he was the one who conquered it. Othniel delivered Israel from King Cushan-rishathaim whose name means "double wickedness." He rose up against great evil and delivered his nation.

Shamgar (Judges 3:31). He slew 600

Philistines with an ox-goad! He was only a peasant and didn't own any weapons of war, but just used what he had at hand! An ox goad is a long pointed stick which they used to poke the ox and goad it to move. The back end often had a shovel-like instrument to clean the plow. That's all he had to face 600 armed Philistines!

Jashobeam (1 Chronicles 11:11). He killed 300 men with his spear in one battle.

Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:23). They were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions.

David (1 Samuel 17:34-37). David was not afraid of lions and bears. If they captured one of his lambs, he would rescue the lamb right out of its mouth. If it turned on him, he'd catch it by the jaw and club it to death. He wasn't afraid of giants and killed Goliath (believed to be 9' 6" tall) while in his youth (1 Samuel 17:33) and won hundreds of battles for Israel. And he was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

Eleazar (1 Chronicles 11:12-14). One time the Israelites were fighting against the Philistines in a field full of barley. The Israelite army fled in fear, but Eleazar and David, on their own, held their ground in the middle of the field and fought back the Philistines, and gained the victory.

Abishai (1 Chronicles 11:20). He also slew 300 men with a spear.

Benaiah (1 Chronicles 11:22-23). He himself was the son of a valiant warrior. Mighty warrior fathers raise brave warrior sons (Psalm 127: 4-5). He did many heroic deeds including killing two Moabite champions who were "lionlike men." He killed an Egyptian warrior who was 7 1/2 feet tall and whose spear was as thick as a weaver's beam. He wrenched

the spear from his hand and killed him with his own spear! And one snowy day, just for something to do, he chased a lion down into a pit and killed it!

Zadok (1 Chronicles 12:28). He was called “a young man mighty of valor.” The word “young man” is *na’ar* in the Hebrew and means “from infancy to adolescence, a child.” It is translated child 51 times, lad 33 times, and young or youth 21 times. It is even translated babe in Exodus 2:6, talking of baby Moses. These Scriptures talk about young men, not older men.

Here are some further descriptions of the young valiant men of Israel.

“Among Benjamin’s elite troops, 700 were left-handed, and each of them could sling a rock and hit a target within a hairsbreadth without missing” (Judges 20:16 NLT).

“Valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skillful in war” (1 Chronicles 5:18).

“Mighty men, helpers of the war. They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow” (1 Chronicles 12:1-2).

“Men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains” (1 Chronicles 12:8).

“Mighty men of valor... ready armed to the war” (1 Chronicles 12:21-25). Over and over again the Bible tells us about “mighty men of valor” (1 Chronicles 7:2-11, 40; 8:40). They were not only men of valor, but MIGHTY men of valor! God chose courageous men to deliver Israel from their enemies, not wimps. How would you like to be the mother of “outstanding men, brave and valiant warriors (Hebrew: *gibborim* and *chayilim*), and distinguished leaders”? (1 Chronicles 8:40). The Message Bible describes them as, “responsible, excellent in character, and brave in battle—good leaders.” This doesn’t just happen. It takes prayer and training.

“Expert in war” 1 Chronicles 2:33-36). We could go on and on telling the stories of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and so many more (Hebrews 11: 32-40).

Standing for Righteousness

It wasn’t only their physical prowess that made them courageous, but their stand for justice and righteousness. I think of the courage of Phinehas. In the midst of God bringing judgment upon the Israelites because of their committing whoredom with the daughters of Moab, a prince of Israel brought a Midianite woman into his tent! Phinehas rose up with righteous indignation, went into the tent after them, and thrust them both through with a javelin. His righteous act caused God to stop the plague and Phinehas was blessed with the promise of God’s “covenant of peace” and “an everlasting priesthood” (Numbers 25:1-18).

What about Josiah? He was made king of Judah when he was only eight years old. At 16 years, “while he was yet young, he began to seek after God” (2 Chronicles 34:3). At the age of 20 he rose up in the authority of His God and began to purge the land from all the evil practices. He demolished all the altars of Baal, cut down all the idols, and beat the graven images into powder throughout all the land of Israel (2 Chronicles 34:3-7).

God not only commanded Joshua to be very courageous, but to observe and do all God’s commandments, to be focused, and “turn not from it to the right hand or to the left” (Joshua 1:7-9).

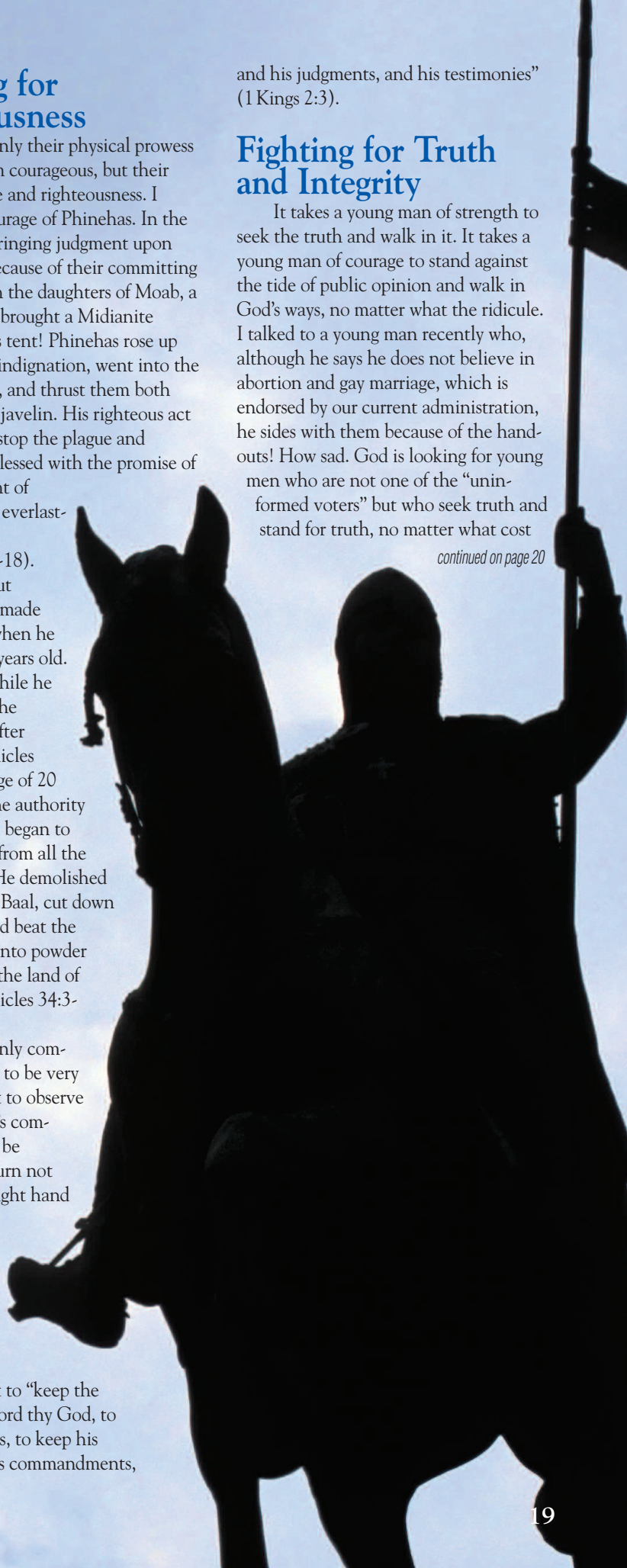
King David not only exhorted his young son, Solomon to be courageous, but to “keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments,

and his judgments, and his testimonies” (1 Kings 2:3).

Fighting for Truth and Integrity

It takes a young man of strength to seek the truth and walk in it. It takes a young man of courage to stand against the tide of public opinion and walk in God’s ways, no matter what the ridicule. I talked to a young man recently who, although he says he does not believe in abortion and gay marriage, which is endorsed by our current administration, he sides with them because of the hand-outs! How sad. God is looking for young men who are not one of the “uninformed voters” but who seek truth and stand for truth, no matter what cost

continued on page 20



Where is my Helper?

Sarah is a teenage neighbor who visits our home regularly. What a blessing she is to me! The first words out of her mouth are usually, “Mrs. R, is there anything I can do to help you?” She doesn’t mind playing with the children so I can take a breather. She doesn’t mind stirring a pot on the stove, folding laundry, or doing any other simple task. How I have wished for such a great helper to be a permanent part of our household.

I’m sure you can relate—little children underfoot, a mountain of laundry waiting for your attention, another meal needing to be prepared. Perhaps you, like me, have cried out to the Lord from this overwhelmed state and asked, “Where is my helper? Who will help me accomplish all that I need to get done?”

The Lord recently spoke to me



about this issue of wanting a helper. The first thing He brought to mind was training. Right now my children are young. But time passes quickly and they will soon be the age of Sarah, our neighbor. God challenged me with the question “What are you doing now to teach and train them to be good helpers?” Too often, I focus on the tasks my children are too small to help me with that I forget the many things they can do right now. Letting go of my perfectionism and involving them in the household chores trains them to be good helpers down the road. Somebody taught our neighbor, Sarah, to have a servant’s heart. Am I training my children to be that way, both now and as they grow up?

God also spoke to me in another way about this idea of a helper. He

reminded me that early on in our marriage, we followed the world’s “wisdumb” to use birth control, to delay having children until we had finished school and had more money, and to focus on ourselves for a few years. Looking back now, I realize that if we had welcomed children during that stage of life, I could possibly have a child Sarah’s age now. I could have the permanent, live-in helper I was crying out for. Instead, I am reaping what I’ve sown. I didn’t want children at that stage. Now I do not have an older child (or two) that could help with the younger children and other household duties.

The final reminder God sent my way about this notion of a helper was from John 14. The Holy Spirit of God is our comforter and helper. He was sent in Jesus’ name to teach us all things, to remind us of what God has said, and to bring us peace. When I feel overwhelmed, I need God’s peace. I need a reminder from God’s Word of what is of utmost importance (and it’s not the laundry!). When my perspective has gotten off-kilter, I need God’s help—the only One who can bring true and lasting peace in the midst of a noisy, chaotic household. I need God in the midst of my daily-ness. And He has promised to be with me always. He is the

permanent helper I long for, not necessarily to help me accomplish all that’s on my to-do list, but to help me be the person He’s created me to be on the inside.

I encourage myself and I encourage you to train up the helpers you have in your home (your children and to bear children who will be future helpers), and to not neglect the Helper that God has already provided for you, the Holy Spirit! Remember, God has already given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

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Bruce and Shannon are blessed with Naomi (9), Corban (5), 3 children in heaven and a baby due December 2013.

Raising Wimps or Warriors *continued from page 19*
to themselves.

Let’s raise young men who will keep the charge of the Lord and walk in the ways of the Lord in the midst of a deceived society. Let’s raise young men who are not weaklings, but who are training for spiritual warfare. 2 Timothy 2:3-4 says, “Thou therefore ENDURE HARDNESS, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” Let’s raise men, not wimps!

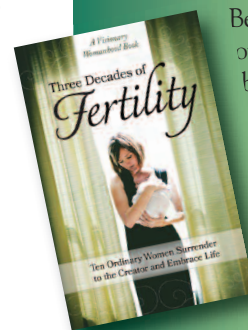
What about our daughters?

Where do our daughters come into this? It is interesting that when the Bible talks about men of “valor” it is the Hebrew word, *chayil*. It is noteworthy that they translate this very same word as “virtuous” when speaking about women (Ruth 3:11; Proverb 12:4; 31:10, 29). This word is also translated as “able, mighty, power, strength, including 54 references to war and armies.” Although we want our daughters to act femininely and like princesses of the King of kings, we must also raise them to be brave and courageous. We are not raising insipid, wimpy youth, but young people who are strong—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

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Move Into the Next Gear!



It is easy to live our lives in neutral, isn't it? We fit in with society. We are normal, mediocre, status quo, average, and consequently boring! But, this is not an hour for complacency or compromise. We will never turn this society to Christ or back to God's ways by being middle of the road. Nor does God intend us to live this way. We must shift into a new gear.

1. It is not enough to be courageous; God wants us to be **VERY COURAGEOUS**. When God told Joshua to lead the Israelites in to conquer the Promised Land, He told him to be strong and "*VERY courageous*" (Joshua 1:7).
2. It is not enough to be righteous; God wants us to be **UNCOMPROMISINGLY RIGHTEOUS**. Proverbs 14:19 (Amplified) tells us that the wicked will come to a screeching halt at the gates of the uncompromisingly righteous.
3. It is not enough to avoid evil; God wants us to fight, expose, and **REPROVE ALL EVIL** (Ephesians 5:11). It is not enough to be a flicker-

ing flame; we must be a huge flame, shining God's light on darkness, deception, and evil (Isaiah 60:1-3, Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:14-15).

4. It is not enough to bring forth fruit; God wants us to bring forth **MUCH FRUIT**. Jesus said in John 15:8, "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear MUCH fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*"
5. It is not enough to give half-hearted obedience; God wants **WHOLE-HEARTED OBEDIENCE** (Deuteronomy 28:1, 15; Judges 2:1-5; 16-17; 1 Samuel 15:1-35; John 15:14).
6. It is not enough to speak for the Lord; God wants us to **SPEAK BOLDLY** (Acts 4:13, 29-31; 9:27; 14:3; 19:8; Ephesians 6:19-20; Philippians 1:20).
7. It is not enough to rejoice; God wants us to **REJOICE EXCEEDINGLY**, and this is not when things are going great, but when we are being persecuted (Habakkuk 3:17-18; Matthew 5:11-12; 1 Peter 4:12-13).
8. It's not enough to hold our ground; God wants us to **PRESS FORWARD** (Philippians 3:13-14; 1 Corinthians

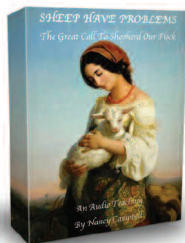
9:24; Hebrews 12:1-2).

9. It is not enough to pray; God wants us to **PRAY FERVENTLY** (Colossians 4:12; James 5:16). And also **CONTINUALLY** (Acts 6:4; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 1:16; 6:18; Colossians 1:3, 9; 4:2, 12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:3), **PERSEVERINGLY** (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 1:4), **EARNESTLY** (James 5:16), and **EXCEEDINGLY** (1 Thessalonians 3:10).
10. It is not enough to work for the Lord; God wants us to work **ABUNDANTLY**. 1 Corinthians 15:58 tell us to be "*ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD.*" The word abounding means to "*excel, superabundant, more than is necessary, above and beyond.*"

Are you ready for the next level?

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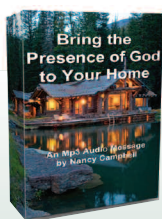
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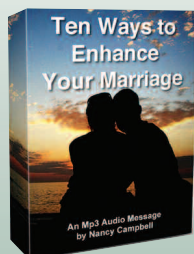


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Raising Godly Sons in an Ungodly World

While watching my precious little boys play amongst the trees and thistles in our backyard, I find myself wanting to



Greg and Nicole with their children: Jacob (7), Benjamin (6), Joshua (4), Annabelle Philomena (2), Lillian (17 months) and new baby Abraham born 20 August, 2013.

immediately step in, scoop up my cherubs, and tell them, "No! No! You might get a thorn in your foot or your hand. Come, play over here where the lilacs are." However, before I have the chance to intrude on their world of make believe I find myself allowing them the freedom to explore and find out for themselves where they ought not to tread. After all, the yard itself is safe, there is no immediate danger, and mommy is here should they need a thorn removed and a kiss on the cheek.

Today's society is much like the thorny thistle. As mothers we would like to hover over our little men--wipe their brow from sweat, lace their shoes, and remove stones over which they might stumble. But, we know this is not possible. We are not able to protect our little sons from every crack and crevice, nor should we try, lest we raise insecure, incompetent little boys who we should be training to become men.

Society today suggests that men are

incapable pea brains that must be led around by the nose by their wives. It would also have us believe that little

boys should be hovered over and pampered so we don't damage their fragile spirit and self-esteem. However, the Bible tells us something different. The Bible states that Josiah was only eight years when he began his reign in Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 34:1-3 NIV says, "Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles and idols." It doesn't say Josiah struggled with his responsibilities because he was such a tender young age. It says he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, ruled fairly, and while still a young boy sought God!

Cowardly boys will become cowardly men!

The Bible tells us exactly what we can expect from a man and uses words like "firm" and "strong." 1 Corinthians 16:13 ESV says, "Be watchful, STAND FIRM in the faith, ACT LIKE MEN, BE STRONG." In today's world, young boys are encouraged to forsake their manliness under the guile of being "metro-sexual." Biblical manhood is under attack. It is being attacked by the devil, the world, and the flesh. But biblical manhood is also being attacked in an even more covert way, by falsifying what should be expected of our sons.

The enemy knows that in order to pervert God's plan he must strike while the iron is hot! Proverbs 22:6 KJV says, "Train up a child in the way he should

go; and when he is old he will not depart from it." Satan is a liar and a manipulator but he is also clever. What better way than to plant the seeds of deception in our little boys from the very start? Fearful cowardly boys will become fearful cowardly men.

We must let our boys be boys. Let our sons tinker. Let our sons explore. Let our sons play without mother hovering and watching their every step. Let our little boys help daddy whenever they can. Teach them to stay diligent and disciplined to the end. Teach them that they are men in training!

Our sons must learn the value of hard work, the stamina and patience required of a godly man, and the discipline to obey authority as the Bible calls us to do. We see this commandment given to our children in Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Lastly, we must allow our sons the freedom to make mistakes as well as to succeed.

I remember in the fall one year my husband saying he thought our oldest son was ready to start helping him stack wood and prepare for winter. Being his mother I wanted to protect him from the hard work, but held back from protesting. Later on I heard my son tell daddy he was tired and didn't want to help bring in the fire wood. I was about to interject and ask him to come join me for some hot chocolate and get warmed by the wood stove when I heard my husband's voice.

I watched my loving husband put down his hatchet for a father/son talk. He explained that it was okay to be tired, and there are many times he is tired. But, this is why God gave men bigger shoulders than women. He then continued, "When you are done with the wood, then you may rest. You must learn to stay diligent in your responsibilities now, because some day you will be the daddy and won't be able to stop until whatever you are doing is completed."

Teach them not to quit!

At the time I thought our son was too young to understand it--he was barely six. However, some time later he was raking leaves with one of his brothers (who at the time was five) when I heard

his brother ask, "Can't we stop? I am tired." It was then that I heard my oldest son reply, "We don't quit. We persevere." They finished the raking that day just as they finished the wood some weeks before.

Our sons are ready and willing to step up to the plate. They are looking for guidance and reassurance as to what is expected of them. The real question is not whether our sons are ready to handle becoming men in training. Rather, are

we capable of teaching them all God wants them to be?

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A Whiteboard and a Rocking Chair

Let me paint a picture of an average moment in my life a year ago. Lunch finishes and children scatter, all five to different parts of the house where each creates a mess a tornado could be proud of. When boredom sets in, they change to another room producing more tornado like behaviour! Before I know it, my post lunch cup of tea has led to 10 messes spread throughout the whole house. All manner of disasters from toddler doodles on the walls, little girls' dresses all over the bedroom floor, and boys experiments with water leading to a bathroom flood! I'm left with a kitchen to clean up and mess in every other room. Aghh!

I asked God for help and strength but as I still had my human strength I tended to rely on that. The tidy up begins and as quickly as I tidy they made another mess. With five little whirlwinds I could never keep up. It suddenly struck me I was doing it all, all the cleaning, and all the tidying. Then a thought came to me. If I should find myself expecting again I would have to toughen up a bit and get them helping, but how?

It was soon necessary to start figuring out an answer as baby number six was now on the way! Within days of finding out I was pregnant the exhaustion set in. There wasn't a moment in the day for the next eight months when I didn't want to crawl into bed, plus enduring the dizziness and nausea. God had me right where he wanted me, for when I am weak He is strong.

I asked God again for help and it came through a friend at church who gave me an old portable whiteboard. This whiteboard and my rocking chair became "household HQ." After every meal I would write up all the little messes I could see around me. I broke them down into child-size pieces and they could choose which to clean up. We had

a system to make it fair. The youngest three got to choose the easiest jobs first and the two eldest would take it in turns to pick a job off the list. I put their initial next to the job and they crossed it off when completed. It included tasks such as: clear table, wipe side, laundry

learn.

Now, the scene in our house after lunch is much prettier. The children are keen to choose their jobs and get them done, then it's free time. If they didn't want to work, they would get an extra job. This kept them motivated!



Phil and Vicki with their lovely children: Christopher (10), Jonathan (8), Madeleine (6), Elizabeth (4), Matthew (2) and Hannah (6 months).

on, empty tumble drier, pick up five toys, empty bottom of the dishwasher etc.

The key elements of this system were small jobs, choice for the children, and consistency. Ironically, my exhaustion was the best thing that happened to me as now my children know how to clean up after themselves. I had no choice but to step back and let them

I used to wonder how I could keep up with lots of children while pregnant, but God showed me that when I am weak He is strong. To my friend, it was just an unused whiteboard, but God used it to answer my prayer for help.

VICKI GOLDBY
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I am all about getting things done. And getting things done ahead of schedule? Let's just say that's a really good day. Therefore, three years ago when I graduated from my family's homeschool at age 17 and completed my bachelor's degree at 19, I was ready to take on the world. The possibilities were endless! There was so much to do, yet so little time. I immediately got busy. Master's degrees whirled in my head, piano certifications kept ringing out, and books were at my fingertips. I found a love for writing that I never knew existed, and that's what I wanted to do—write books, articles, classes, studies, literary criticisms. You name it, I wanted it. *New York Times*

my race to make a name for myself—me—I. My, oh my, how did I wrangle myself into that form of thought? I was falling into the world's shallow, naive view of what “home” meant, further what “mother” meant. Gradually, I am coming off the “career high” by watching my own mother demonstrate just what it is to be a keeper at home, a homesteader at heart, and altogether a Mom.

It is simply amazing the complexity that is interwoven in one profoundly simple, easy to spell, baby's very first word, “Mama.” Watching my own mother day after day is a precious gift that I almost passed up. To keep a home and to nurture

fectly for their brood. Any mom of a large family knows the doctor's drill for just about any ailment: bumped head, swelling mosquito bite, peaking fever, anything! Supremely though, mom is the only doctor I know that can test a fever without a single thermometer; it only takes a hand to the forehead for mom, a look at flushed cheeks, or a lethargic, whiny attitude and, there you have it, mom's thermometer—consistently spot-on.

Yet, “mom” doesn't stop at doctor or caregiver, Mom is also the chef that cooks gourmet meals on a penny-pinching budget, a budget that would push most chefs to hysterics. Not mom! Beans and rice never tasted so good nor were served with such pleasure and love. On top of that, there's no such thing as the “dinner rush” in a mom's book; it's more along the lines of breakfast dash, then snack time scurry, then lunch, followed by afternoon snack, baby's feeding and—ah—sweet supper time. Tasty, healthy, cheap, quick, and meaningful—mom considers it all, stirs it around, and produces meals that five star restaurateurs don't know they're missing.

Yet, the chef's entire job is centered around preparing meals. Not Mom! In between those meals, Mom is in the counseling business. Mom's the counselor that can see right through an artificial smile or a hidden smirk. Nothing gets past Mom; there's no need for a counseling consultation at all! Moms know just when her children need a hug, and when they need a stern “snap out of it; move on; drop the attitude at the door.” What is more, there's no such thing as client-counselor privilege in Mom's book, as everything goes through Dad for approval.

When Mom isn't tending, doctoring, counseling, or cooking, she's breaking up toddler hysterics, wrangling cows out of gardens, femininely chopping snakes to smithereens, and turning the car into a fruit dehydrator. Whatever it is, Mom's up to the challenge and her job description is limitless.

Yet, I never would have dreamed that Mom is the writer I always hoped of meeting, moreover studying. Mom is writing a story in the lives of her children, the very first chapters of her children's lives are much her creation. Most authors would be willing to concede that the first chapter of any book is the most important; it's the chapter in which you hook

Mama! Her Description is Limitless!



Mark and Mary with their children: Hilary (writer) Tyler (17), Sarah Beth (4), John David (2), and Callum (10 months).

Bestseller, here I come!

Without even realizing it, I was sucked into the feminist trap; I believed that I had been trained, equipped, and schooled for so much more than homemaking hum drum. Laundry? Gross. Scrub bathrooms? Even more gross! The dog did what? And you want me to do what? Super gross! What was the meaning of it all, anyway? I had bigger, better, and more important plans than all of that; I was writing books, creating studies, publishing articles, making money! The homemaking skills that I had been brought up to cherish, learn, and one day recreate were standing in the way of my feigned career,

children is so much more than our culture is willing to let on. The word “mom” is an all-encompassing term that actually means, well, everything.

Mom's day begins much earlier than ours, although we don't realize it. I am the oldest child in a family of seven and boy, oh boy, can our days get busy. Mom is constantly on call, day and night, always ready to soothe a restless sleeper, to greet an early morning riser, to get started early on her day's tasks. Her job began 20 years ago and hasn't given her a day off yet. The medical profession is a well-respected and glamorized profession, yet moms have the science of medicine figured out just per-

your reader or bore them, introduce them or confuse them, keep them reading or close the book for them. This is exactly the chapter that Mom is writing in the lives of each of her children.

Mom is writing our childhood, teenage years, young adulthood—teaching and modeling what it means to live a life in complete surrender to Christ, to love imperfect people, to face life with unfaltering bravery, hope, and purpose. Even more, Mom's story is so much more than that New York Times bestseller. Hers will not end with the passing ages of literature for mom's story is never outdated. The story that Mom is writing in the lives of her children is far more lasting than Robert Frost's poetry, Martha Finley's fiction, or Mark Twain's parody. Moreover,

this writing is going to continue for generations to come, by God's grace becoming with each generation more and more fervent and plenteous as her story multiplies exponentially.

Not only is her story lasting, meaningful, and vital, Mom has been commissioned by the Creator of the world and the Author of the universe, to write the first chapters in the lives of each of the children He has granted. Now, that's an editor to impress; that's the editor's approval I am willing to spend an entire lifetime pursuing.

With each toy she picks up, each story she reads, each meal she pulls together, and yes, even each bathroom she cleans, Mom is writing a story that will never fade or be discarded. You see,

she's training up her children in the way that we should go. It is my prayer that when we are old, we will never, ever depart from it. Right now, I'm realizing just what a blessing it is to be able to study under such an author as Mom. Maybe someday I will be that writer. However, until then, I'm finding value and contentment in simply learning underneath this doctor, counselor, chef, cow wrangler, snake chopper, toddler referee, and wonderfully eloquent author that we call Mom. And maybe, just maybe, I'll get the inside scoop on that Mom thermometer trick... who knows?

HILARY HERRING (20 years)
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Trim Healthy Mama is on the move!

Have you purchased your book yet?

"THM not only helped me to lose weight and feel great. It changed my hormones so after five years of failed fertility treatment I am 16 weeks pregnant! Forever grateful!"

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"Less pain and inflammation from arthritis and more energy."

"I haven't had a migraine in 3 months!"



<http://tinyurl.com/TrimHealthyMamaUS>
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Are You a Praying Family?

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

When will we see healing in our nation? When families make time to pray together each day.

Victory Over Postpartum Depression

Because friends have asked me for prayer and advice on how to overcome depression, I decided to write a personal letter to the many women who are suffering from depression and yet are looking to the Lord for hope and real answers. You are not alone and there is freedom for you!



Photo by Randy Foster, Nashville, Tennessee

Dear friend,
I'm very sorry that you have been suffering! Depression is just awful, for sure! However, I'm assuming you love God and know you are called according to His purposes. Therefore, you have His promise that he will work all things, even this depression, for your good! I'm believing that promise for you today!

Where will I begin? I experienced mild postpartum depression after my first son was born, although I was too ashamed to tell anyone at the time and was in denial. I then suffered severe PPD with my second son, which I definitely couldn't hide or deny. It was so severe that I'm sure people would have suggested I should never have another baby! That is why I am so thankful I listened to God and not to the enemy and I chose to continue to have children despite fear of the depression coming back.

When I became pregnant with my third son, God gave me his name, Graceson Peace. He told me His Grace and Peace would be with me in a special way. I felt Him speak to my heart that it would be different than before, and it was! I even had a super easy 2 1/2 hour labor. Despite having some blue and anxious feelings for about a month after Graceson was born, I was not overcome by them and God enabled me to walk in victory. I call Graceson my victory baby!

Almost two years later, when I had my precious daughter, we named her Kindness. God's kindness was certainly revealed to me

after her birth. I didn't feel blue at all, just totally normal and happy. It wasn't even a struggle. Praise God. He is so very good!

Placenta Capsules

There were a few things that helped me have victory over depression and have a good experience during my last two postpartum times. Firstly, I took placenta capsules. Have you heard of this? It is amazingly effective, natural, hormone therapy that more and more women swear by. Google Placenta Encapsulation Specialists in your area.

I also used natural progesterone cream. I started using it about a week after my deliveries, when I was sure my milk was in. I heard it could interfere with milk production and waited a week. It didn't seem to affect my production at all and my third son nursed for 15 months and my daughter is still nursing at 9 months. I used the Emerita brand from my health food store. It is marketed to menopausal and perimenopausal women, but I had heard of postpartum women using it to help with the extreme drop in progesterone after having a baby. It really helped me.

Exercise

I also started exercising a lot more after my midwife told me that people who struggle with anxiety should exercise six days a week. I not only struggled with PPD, but also postpartum anxiety, and OCD as well. No fun! The only exercise I had been doing was taking all

three children for a walk with one in the carrier and two in the stroller. Not very stress relieving! I started going to the gym and was amazed how it helped me to feel better. Exercise has been proven to be a great natural mood elevator.

Eating Healthier

I also started eating healthier. Less sugar, more protein. I know when you are depressed that making dietary changes is the last thing you want to worry about, but here are some simple things that helped me. 1) Eating two eggs every morning (farm fresh is best). They fight depression. 2) Drinking a big healthy smoothie with whey protein powder in the afternoons. Whey helps fight depression too. 3) Taking fish oil in some form. Omega 3's help with anxiety. 4) I also tried to get to bed earlier and get up earlier.

Faith or Feelings

The mental/spiritual side of things was just as important. I believe depression is a liar because it says to you, "You've always felt this way and you will always feel this way." That's a lie. You haven't always felt this way and you won't always feel this way! When I was in the throes of depression/anxiety I was upset at God because I would pray and pray that He would take the bad feelings away and heal me and it didn't seem to happen.

I finally learned how to take my thoughts captive to Christ and stand upon His

Word, truly walking by faith and not by feelings. I learned to believe and agree with Him and not my feelings. For example, I would have a thought, "I'm a terrible mom," or "I hate my life," or "I just can't get it all done today," or "I never get to do anything fun anymore." etc. When those thoughts entered my head, I replaced them with Truth such as, "Everything God wants me to do today I can do!" "I only have to do what I see my Father doing." "God will provide all my needs." "Rejoice in the Lord always."

The War

I hope this doesn't seem glib or cutesy to you. It was nothing short of war! It's one I'm still happy to be winning on a daily basis. To believe God and take Him at His Word is something we are all called to do for the rest of our lives, but it comes much easier to me now than it did then!

Which Way?

One thing that was NOT helpful was the local medical clinic and medication. And yes, it is super annoying when the only answer many people give you when you is meds! The doctor's office treated me terribly and prescribed an antidepressant which I took for

three days. It made me feel drugged and awful. Plus, I wasn't at all convinced it was safe for breastfeeding even though they said it (probably) was.

On day three I sat on my couch feeling drugged when God whispered a simple phrase to my heart. He said, "Sweetie, this is the world's way." That's all He said. He didn't tell me it was wrong to take the meds, or that I shouldn't take the meds. He simply said it was the world's way. I threw the pills away. I share this testimony with fear and trembling because I don't want people who feel they need anti-depressants to think I am passing judgment on them. I'm not. I've been desperate too. But, surely God desires our healing!

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to share my story. I hope it encourages you to look for the tools that God gives you to fight this battle and win! You will come out strong on the other side. We don't always know what they are, but God HAS the answers to every problem in the universe, including the problem of depression.

Psalms 34:10 promises, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

KRIYA CROW

THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION OF YOUR LIFE

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

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

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

Let's Build Together!

Mothers are the want of this unhappy world,
Especially as onslaughts at the family are hurled!
Alas, in many ways the mother has become
A stranger in the life of her daughter and son.

Humanist deception is the reason, and blinded by its lies
The families are suffering; can you not hear their cries?
It's our precious children of such tender years
Whose lives are being ruined; can you not see their tears?

And so we ask for your help to build and restore
The honour of the family, ordained by God's eternal law.
To encourage godly parents to be the heroes of our land
Won't you generously dig deeper and give a helping hand?

Publishing costs money; without your aid we cannot print!
With postage and packaging, it adds up to quite a mint!
But, as we work together to build God's way into the nation
We'll birth a great revival of true family restoration.

~ Val Stares (Australian Director of Above Rubies)

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225 288 1463 (Cell) • Email: lanfordlegacy@cox.net
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ANNUAL LADIES RETREAT, Cedar Lodge, Dundurn, SK
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Cell: 306 931 6697 • Home: 204 388 6015
Registration forms available at aboverubies.ca

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LADIES RETREAT at Camp Little Light in Royston, GA
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Or Sarah Bowers • dllbowers@hotmail.com
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Or Pam Fields • pamrfields@gmail.com
Ph: 503 363 0579 or 503 932 1729

2014

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Contact: Ali George • faraboverubies@hotmail.co.uk

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Email: brwelch@telus.net

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aboverubieshouston.com

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Contact: Paul and Eileen Allen • pauleen7@hotmail.com
Ph: 386 423 7413 or 386 314 1255

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Email: sarah@happyhealthyblessed.com • www.happyhealthyblessed.com

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Contact: Connie Lewis • 530 776 5749 • connielewis72@yahoo.com
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LADIES RETREAT at Upper Missouri Ministry, Epping, ND (near Williston)
Contact: Pam Rinas • kprinas@gmail.com • Ph: 425 737 2068
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~ Kate Douglas Wiggin

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