

Strengthening Families Across The World

ABOVE RUBIES

www.aboverubies.org

Issue: Eighty-One



From Our Home to Yours

It is time to start preparing the soil for our gardens here in Tennessee. How we look forward to the time when we begin eating from our garden again. I can't wait to harvest fresh lettuces and other vegetables daily. I may have told you before, being rather eccentric, that after eating the last tomato from my 70 plus tomato plants that I don't purchase another tomato until I enjoy my own harvest again! You certainly get spoiled from your own garden produce.

You may be thinking that it's nice to hear about gardens but you don't have any room to make a garden where you live. I would encourage you to prepare a small garden, or even grow produce in pots on your deck. A little garden is better than no garden at all. Many have forgotten in this modern society in which we live that gardening is part of home-making. The first home was called the GARDEN of Eden and God established this first home as the prototype for all future homes.

God intends us to grow produce to help feed our families. In years gone by this was necessary for survival. If you didn't have a garden, you didn't eat! But I don't think it is much different today. If we want to eat healthy produce, we need to grow it ourselves! Most commercial produce is heavily sprayed with chemicals and a high percentage are genetically modified.

Photos below by: Davita Hungate

Of course, you can purchase organically grown produce from co-ops or a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) but very few can afford to do this.

Even when the Jews were taken captive to Babylon, God told them to continue His original plan to build houses, plant gardens and have children! And this was in captivity! You can read about it in Jeremiah 29:4-9. You may even like to read these Scriptures too: Genesis 1:29; 2:15; Proverbs 6:6-11; 12:11; 24:27; 27:18; 28:19; 31:16 and 2 Corinthians 9:6. God is very practical, isn't He? He does not leave us in doubt as to how He wants us to live.

But it doesn't just happen. We have to work at it. I've had people say that it's all very well for us to have gardens here in the country as we have plenty of room. Actually, where we live on our hill, there is no suitable soil. We had to purchase our soil to fill our 13 long raised beds.

Evangeline, our daughter, has the most magnificent vegetable garden to feed their large family of 10 children. I have to concede that her garden is now better and much bigger than mine! Her garden

didn't suddenly appear either. I am amazed every time I look at this huge garden space knowing that it was hewed out of trees and bramble—a jungle that looked impossible. But Evangeline had a dream which she made happen. It reminds me of my favorite saying, "Things don't just happen: you have to MAKE THEM HAPPEN." They got "stuck in," cut down the trees, dug out the roots and with back-breaking effort broke it up into soil. Evangeline is crazy about her soil. She puts everything that is needful into her soil and it grows the most wonderful harvest.

This year, not only Evangeline is get-

Tiberia Johnson in the igloo the children made during one of our Tennessee snowfalls.



Celebrating a Valentine's Dinner together with our daughter, Mercy prepared for us.

Howard and Evangeline, celebrating 18 years of marriage and 10 wonderful children.



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ting ready, but all the older children too. They will all have their own gardens and Zadok is preparing new ground to plant an organic market garden. He has also planted a field of winter wheat on a parcel of land which he rented.

Currently they are tapping their maple trees and boiling the syrup. I tasted some last night. It is the most beautiful maple syrup I have ever tasted—just like caramel! The boys received great answers to prayer yesterday. Three times it started to rain while they were boiling the syrup (which would have been ruined if the rain had come). The boys prayed and each time God stopped the rain! They were encouraged in their faith!



The Johnson family on Thanksgiving Day where each family came dressed up. Not to be outdone, Evangeline came as a Viking! Can you see her antlers? Their children are Zadok (18), Sharar (17), Rashdia (15), Crusoe (13), Jireh (11), Arrow (9), Tiveria (7), Saraha (6), Iqara (3) and Saber (1).

The grandchildren are now getting into horses. My father, who passed to glory just over three years ago, was a great horse man and would have loved to see his great-grandchildren embracing his passion. Chanel, our oldest granddaughter owned a couple of horses when she was younger, Now Arden, Serene and Sam's oldest son, has three horses—Freedom, Jewel and Spice.

Not to be outdone, Evangeline and Howard purchased a lovely horse for their children for Christmas. I've never seen anything as amazing as when Howard rode up with this horse and the children realized it was for them! The young boys were literally shaking with excitement. They all love to ride Shakor. But God gave them a double blessing. A friend arrived a few days later with a little miniature horse. What fun they have on Jessup, jumping on and falling off, but as he is so little, none of them get hurt.

Don't you love the front cover of this issue? Ashley and Mamie Braddy are celebrating 53 years of marriage! What a testimony in this day and age when many give up on their marriage so easily. It is not always easy to live together in harmony and to keep a soft and humble attitude to one another, but it is worth every effort. We reap what we sow! When we sow good things into our marriage, we reap a harvest of blessing. If we sow selfishness, pride and "I'll do it my way" we reap a harvest of

destruction. Couples should think more carefully about divorce. Not only do they wreck havoc in their children's lives (no child of divorce is exempt from heartache) but they destroy the continuity of the family for generations to come! To gather tools to help you build up your marriage, make sure you download the e-Book advertised on the back cover.



Arrow, Crusoe and Sharar Johnson and cousin Cedar Allison stirring the maple syrup.

Please forgive me. I said in my last editorial that Serene and Pearl's new nutrition and cook book would be ready in the New Year. Sorry, it's still not ready! But it's coming! And it's going to be worth the wait! They now have their final name for the book—Trim, Healthy Mama!

Keep building up your marriage and family.

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Cherish Allison having fun on Jessup. Crusoe Johnson riding Shakor through the woods.

ABOVE RUBIES

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

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FRONT COVER: Ashley and Mamie Braddy of Oak City, North Carolina, USA—celebrating 53 years of marriage! Don't they look great!

Be Still

It was a Tuesday on a hot July afternoon in 2007. I hurried home, excited to show my husband the photos I'd received via email of my best friend's wedding dress. Ann had been battling cancer for the last two months but was doing so well that she and her fiancé decided to have their wedding on schedule. We were in full-fledged Wedding Day countdown.

All the way home that afternoon I thought about my own wedding day, my sweet husband Steve, our six years of marriage, and our tiny girl, Rachael, who was just 16 months old. Happy tears filled my eyes: I was so excited for Ann and all the wonderful things in store for her.

I arrived home to find my husband was at the computer, as usual. He was taking Accounting courses online while simultaneously working at a small T-shirt printing shop. As we talked I logged into my email to show Steve the photos of Ann's beautiful wedding dress. We talked about our friends, their upcoming wedding, and how glad we were that they were going ahead with their plans despite Ann's unsure prognosis.

I'm not exactly sure what made me glance down at the bottom of the photo browser, probably the Holy Spirit, but I noticed that at the end of my photos I still had the option to go forward. Again, it must have been the Holy Spirit. I clicked on the arrow to advance through the photo browser . . . and my life was forever changed.

To my husband's credit, he never tried to deny that the pornographic photos on our computer were his. He knew he'd been caught. The photo browser had stored images that had been recently viewed on our computer. These pictures were on our computer; in our home . . . that filth had been in my home!

I ran from the room, suffocating from the shock of what I'd just seen. I had to get out . . . I didn't know what to do. Everything within me urged me to jump

in the car and drive away, but I couldn't leave my daughter! I got on my knees and pulled weeds in the garden as I cried out to God.

I prayed and waited, hoping Steve would tell me that someone else had been there; that it wasn't him and that he'd been faithful; that they weren't his pictures; that it WAS NOT HIM! I asked God for the right words to say to my husband, because the enemy was shouting accusations in my ear: "It was my fault; I drove him to it. I wasn't attractive enough anymore, he was cheating on me, sleeping with someone else, he was going to meet her tonight."

"No!" I cried aloud, "NO!"

As I cried out to my Savior in the midst of those first chaotic moments, I heard it deep in my soul, "Be still." The other messages tried to overcome that still, quiet voice, but I heard it again, "Be still."

I decided to go back into the house and demand that Steve pack up and leave. Again, the gentle words came, "Be still." Frustrated, I shook my head and yanked at another dandelion. Next, I decided that I would after all. I would just head north alone and not look back . . . but there it was again, "Be still."

I knew that I had to follow the Lord's instruction. Tearfully, I prayed and went back in the house.

Instead of confronting my husband, I kept quiet. I felt like stomping around, letting him know I was angry. I did not speak to my husband, but I also didn't glower at him. I took care of myself and Rachael for the evening, put her to bed, and went to bed myself.

I got up before he did the next morning to shower. I stayed soft and quiet, though I was still battling anger. I cried in the shower, then gritted my teeth to maintain the stillness the Lord required of me. I prayed and fought to keep my mind on the Lord.

Finally, I saw Steve in the kitchen making his lunch for work and I saw him for what he truly was: not a pervert, but a hurting man who made a mistake and in need of forgiveness. He was a man who was struggling to cover up pain with earthly pleasure, a man who was an addict and

needed help. In that moment the Lord gave me the grace to reach out to Steve. I placed my hand on his shoulder as I leaned past him to place a dish in the sink. At that gentle touch his strength gave out. He turned to me weeping, apologizing and relieved that I didn't hate him, and we wept and prayed together.

Over the next day I fought the desire to leave Steve and finally went to see our old pastor—the one who had baptized us two years before. The Lord arranged that miraculous meeting. The pastor just happened to be in his office and just happened to have recently spoken with a Christian counselor who worked with men with sexual addiction. Only the Lord can arrange miracles like that!

I took the business card home to my husband and though he was hesitant at first, he made arrangements to see the counselor that Friday. I attended the first meeting with my husband and the counselor insisted we treat the situation as an emergency. I had seen what alcohol addiction had done to my father and I knew that as time went on an addict needs more and more of the drug to get a "high." I shudder to think of what could have transpired if we hadn't gotten help immediately!

Through the pain of those first few weeks we learned that God's grace IS sufficient, and have learned to live the truth that, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NIV).

Now, after three and a half years and adding two precious little boys to our family, we're on the mend. Our marriage isn't perfect, but it's been touched by God's boundless grace. We're more in love than ever before. My marriage, and your marriage, is worth fighting for and the Lord WILL have the victory!

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Steve and Allie's little ones are Rachael (5), Robby (2) and Reece (5 months).

Fifty years ago this fresh young bride was carried over the threshold! Quite a feat when you consider that the old Queenslander farmhouse was typically up on high stumps. My beloved hero bravely staggered up those 14 steps and triumphantly deposited me inside with the same aplomb that he would have had I been a heavy sack of fertilizer—whew! But he would never have kissed a smelly sack like he kissed me then... which proves he did have a romantic streak. Did!

The years passed with the transition from farmer's daughter to a pineapple farmer's wife, from wife to mother, passing beyond the proverbial seven-year-itch with no more than the usual hitches—but all the romance was well and truly in the past! No longer did his fingers reach to entwine with mine on the few times when we went out, and if I ever tried to hold his hand, I was abruptly halted with a "We're married!" as if that put a legal end to any display of affection in public! Ouch!

So, here we were three children later, (yes, he was romantic in the privacy of our bedroom!) and I was now a full-on born-again, Spirit-filled Christian, married to an unbeliever! He was still the farmer, picking pineapples with his brothers, six or more days a week, and for a few years I was needed to steer the tractor while they picked or planted. It can become very monotonous moving at snail's pace down those endless pineapple rows, half a mile an hour, stop/start, through our hot summer afternoons. Quite often I nodded off, only to be rudely awakened with a shout from one of the men! It was then I began to memorize Scriptures and even put them into verse just to stay alert! I was renewing my mind with the washing of the Word! Splash! I had to keep that tractor straight and on track!

By this time, I was part of a very active church family, loving it and being loved, but something was missing. From reading *Above Rubies* I knew I needed an older woman as stated in Titus 2:3-5, "These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, to live wisely and be pure, to work in their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then they will not bring shame on the word of God."

So God gave me Jean. Jean was a support and when things were tough, she was

there on the other end of the phone. Jean was a challenger. She would get me thinking about some news snippet or new ways of being creative in my home. Jean was a wise woman. From experience, I knew that if Jean ever said that she felt God was telling her to share something with me, I'd better listen, 'cos it was from God!

One day after we had put the world headlines in right perspective, she casually asked if I ever gave my Les a kiss as he left for work in the morning. No, I didn't. I hadn't done so for years! He would finish breakfast, pick up his pineapple-picking gloves and his heavy, well-worn knife to take the tops off the pines, pat the dog and head for the Ute (pick-up) and was gone for the day. No, he didn't get a kiss from me. I was always on my way to doing the dishes or hanging out the washing as he left.

"Joan, I feel God is saying to be there and give Les a kiss as he goes to work." Okay! So I had to kiss Les as he went to work!

Next morning, I was there beside the side door. He picked up his gloves and knife where he always left them, absently patted the dog and headed for the door. I was ready with a bright "Bye, Darling!" and went to kiss him. Missed! He was in the Ute and off! Oh well! Always tomorrow!

The next day I lined up at the door with a smile and another bright "Bye, Darling!" I once again aimed a kiss. This time it felt as if he turned to avoid that kiss. Ouch! The day-old whiskers that brushed my lips hurt, but the rejection hurt more! Tears sprang behind my eyes as I turned to do the dishes. Later that day dear Jean rang to see how I was getting on. "He won't even let me near to kiss him!" I sobbed. "It's early days yet! You are doing well! Keep at it"

Hey, he's my husband and the father of our children and he doesn't even want a kiss!

"Be there for him!" Okay! If I have to! Jean is doing her Titus Two thing! This has to be a God thing!

Every morning I was there to give him that kiss. Every morning I would get that same glancing brush-off! Each day it was the same. Yet each day it was different. Les shaved twice a week so twice each week I had the cycle of smooth cheek, sharp, short bristles then softer longer

whiskers brushing my lips—so close yet out of reach. My poor lips and cheek! It hurt so much!

As he came to the side door where I faithfully waited, I could pick up the smell of his work clothes—the ripe old juice from the pineapples and the almost tea-like softer fragrance of the leaves themselves. Sometimes there was the lingering of his Old Spice aftershave that he loved to splash on whenever he went to town... but still I hadn't landed even a peck of a kiss!

The Kiss

The weeks turned into months! Two, three, four months went by. They were long months and without my faithful "older woman Jean" there to encourage me, I'm sure I would have given up! Five, six, seven months and counting!

Seasons changed from picking to ploughing to planting—dusty jobs... and the smell of his clothes changed from old juice to dusty. But I was there by the door waiting with that well-practiced, bright "Bye Darling!"

every morning! And let me tell you, I'd be lying if I didn't admit that sometimes I could have thumped him good and proper!

Then one morning, at about the eight or nine month mark, I missed him. I'd had to race out to the laundry because I could hear the washer wobbling ominously as it spun out of balance. As I hurried back toward the kitchen to catch him I could see he was already in the Ute driving out toward the road. Then the Ute stopped. What has he forgotten? His gloves, his knife? I couldn't see them by



Joan, enjoying a joke at her 70th birthday celebration.

the door, so it must have been something else.

Back to those dishes with a lump in my throat, trying to hold back the tears of regret that I hadn't been there for him! Savagely attacking the pile of plates, I didn't hear the door slide open. Suddenly I was grabbed from behind, turned round and kissed fair and square on the lips! Then he was gone! Back in the Ute and out the driveway! I was stunned! And stood there, tears streaming down my face, filling the sink, it seemed! He'd kissed me!

The next morning as I stood at the side door ready with my "Bye Darling" he kissed me! And the next! More and more he would seek me out just to drop me a kiss! The drought was broken!

Something else was broken too—that un-written law about holding hands! But the miracle is that the older we got, the more we fell in love, with more and more of those delightful spontaneous displays of love until Parkinson's took him, nearly seven years ago.

Only a few weeks ago my precious children and grandchildren joined with me for the celebration of what would have been our glorious Golden Wedding anniversary. To be honest, as I looked back down those years, it was a time of ups and downs and there were so many times they were not what a girl dreams of, but what a change!

To quote dear "Titus Two Jean"—"It must have been all those long months of loving-faithfulness-without-complaint that wore down his stubborn resistance." Was all that bruising of lips worth it? You bet! God first gave me Jean and through her godly ministry He gave me back my husband—sealed with a KISS!

JOAN WESTAWAY

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Joan shared this testimony at our *Above Rubies* retreat in Queensland September 2010. We were all so blessed that I asked her to write it for us all. She also shares that soon after Les was admitted to a nursing home with Advanced Parkinson's, plus dementia, that during a glorious window of opportunity, he gave himself to the Lord. Nancy.



We are a family of six who homeschool our children. In 2009, it became clear that my husband's management job was under serious threat. Very reluctantly, (because I believe God led us into homeschooling), I decided to check if there were any jobs available in my field of experience. Prior to having our children I had enjoyed specializing in the field of Occupational Therapy, assessing people for wheelchairs. Fifteen years ago, only a handful of these jobs existed in the UK. Imagine my surprise to find the exact job specification about 35 miles from home. It seemed like the Lord's leading. My husband, knowing his job was coming to an end, agreed to home-educate the children while I applied for the post. He planned to find another job soon, if possible, so I could return home.

The interview went well and I was accepted. But from there on, things went downhill. The hospital told me they would reduce the salary. I was expected to work three months without pay to upgrade my skills. Finally, after more than 1,000 miles travel in order to do this, the promised reimbursement was refused. Christians were getting into trouble with the authorities because of sharing the gospel with colleagues or patients. On top of all this, my six year old was upset.

"Why can't Daddy do your job, Mummy, and you stay here with me?" she asked day after day. The children were starting to argue and get at each other much more than normal.

My husband was doing a marvelous

job of teaching the children, cooking for us all and looking for work, but it was difficult for him. When I talked about work, he wished he was the one going instead of me.

During this time Colin and Nancy Campbell stayed with us during one of their tours. Unaware of their beliefs about women in the workplace, I shared the pressure I was experiencing as we sat at the supper table together. Nancy looked me straight in the eye and said simply, "Do you realize that by leaving the home and going out to work that you are blaspheming the Word of God?" I was profoundly shocked! I loved Jesus and was horrified at the thought that I could cause God's Word to be blasphemed. Yes, that's what it says in Titus 2:3-5 NKJV, "But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, home-makers, good, obedient to their own husbands that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

Colin turned graciously to my husband and said, "You know, you can't afford not to have your wife at home." He outlined some of the possible consequences and dangers of the wife being absent from the home

- 1 The children need their mother to teach them what is right and to give them nurture and security.
- 2 If the wife earns the money, she may

Is God Sufficient for our Needs?

feel she should have more say in how it is spent. That thought had already crossed my mind!

- 3 What happens if the wife is offered promotion or relocation; do you then follow her career instead of being the main breadwinner?
- 4 There are pressures and temptations in the workplace that the wife should not have to deal with. You, as her husband are to protect her from these.
- 5 It is the biblical role of the husband to provide for his family and it affects his self-esteem when he is not the provider.

Together, my husband and I checked the word “blasphemed” in the Greek. It means “to rail at, to revile, to speak contemptuously, to slander, defame.” We prayed seriously about whether I should withdraw from this job even before my husband found any employment. As we prayed, both my husband and I felt that if we stepped out in faith to obey God’s Word that God would provide work for my husband. We went ahead in faith and I withdrew from the job, tremendously relieved to be home with the children. The children were glad too and their strife gradually reduced.

Six days, less than one week later, the Lord honoured our faith and obedience by giving my husband another job, an even better paid job than his previous one. We were even able to have a week’s holiday as a family which the Lord provided supernaturally and which was much needed after a year of considerable stress.

We are filled with thankfulness to the Lord for His faithfulness to

us. He lovingly sent Colin and Nancy Campbell from another continent to bring His word to us in our own home. Not many have that privilege, but most of us have His Word in our homes already.

I had unquestioningly accepted the world’s view of women working outside the home. On reflection, it seems that women in the workplace make things more difficult for men. If more women were at home with their families, husbands would more easily be able to obtain the work they need to support their families.

When I told one of the ladies at work of my decision, she acknowledged that she regretted her choice of the workplace and told me that research shows that

children benefit from having their mother at home with them. Since then I have talked to many other mothers who yearn to be at home with their family but who feel they do not have “permission” from society to do so. I am thankful that I have my Heavenly Father’s permission to stay at home with my family.

JOANNA O-CONNELL

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Gerry and Joanna’s children are Daniel (15), Annelise (13), Glen (10) and Charissa (7).

God’s Provision through Un-employment

KATHY CLEMONS

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Sam and Kathy have eight children and five grandchildren.

I never envisioned myself as a mother of eight children. My heavenly Father sent each blessing one at a time, and with each pregnancy He provided the grace, as well as the physical and financial means to care for them. Although society proclaimed that having children was a financial irresponsibility, we trusted in the principle found in Matthew 6:33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Each pregnancy tested this Scripture. My first baby was born while we were still

in college. Surely we were too young! I found out I was pregnant with my second child at the same time my husband was laid off from his job! This was the beginning of a trend. Each time I was expecting, my husband would be looking for another job. But God used these lay-offs and firings to lead my husband to his present vocation.

Now he owns his own business and is very involved in the lives of our home-schooled children. What looked like financial disaster to the world was our Heavenly Father leading us into His best plan for us! And “all these things” such as food and clothing were faithfully provided along the way.

The Clemons recently featured in the film *Entrusted with Arrows* which documents the lives of six homeschool fathers who trusted God’s provision to start their own businesses in order to be more involved in their family’s lives. Go to www.entrustedwitharrows.com

Full Time Mom & Proud of it!



Evan and I were very young when we got married. Can you believe it? I was 14 years and my husband was 16! I turned 15 a few months before our first son was born. Life was not easy. Evan tried his hand at selling vacuum cleaners to support us and did fairly well until the company shut down and left town without paying! By this time my husband was 18 and could get a job that paid better money. When I was old enough to go to work, I did. Our son went to a baby sitter and then started school.

We decided to have another child. We stopped the Pill and a few months later I got pregnant. Nine months later we had our first daughter and six weeks later I was back at work. We thought all was well, but God started to work on my heart. I missed my children.

“Why do I have to work?” I kept ask-

ing myself. The answer of course was that we had to pay bills! I prayed that I could stay home with my children. I prayed that I could be a FULL TIME MOM. I sat at my desk and prayed all day long for about six months and then it happened.

My daughter cried and cried for me all day long, so my husband and I took that leap. I was now a full time mom! I have a sign that sits at my sink that says, FULL TIME MOM AND PROUD OF IT! I pulled my son out of public school

and we started to home school. It was a big leap and we had a lot of debt. Our bills piled up and we thought we made a mistake, but we decided to trust GOD completely and He made a way for us.

We still ate three meals and snacks as before. We still had a home with lights and heat. We still had cars, but we managed them differently and together. Instead of eating out five times a week, I started cooking at home and we ate healthier. We didn't buy chips and sodas

Mice-Infested Farmhouse to Five-bed-roomed Home!



It was 2002 when my husband, Nathan and I welcomed our first son into the world. I had just made the prayerful decision to be a stay-at-home mom and felt like I was jumping into a great abyss with no parachute!

Nathan worked long back-breaking hours at a local warehouse. Desperate to provide for us, he started working overtime, even on Sundays. My husband loved Jesus since he was a little boy, but the pressure to provide often seemed too much for him. I preached at him about being in church on Sundays. My words were harsh and not helpful and we began to fight!

No matter how hard Nathan worked, we were always short. The money coming in only afforded us a poorly-insulated, mice-infested old farmhouse near a

at the convenient store but ate fruit and healthier snacks. We purchased a car we could afford instead of two brand new cars. We learned to turn lights out when leaving the room.

We still live this way and we now have five children, not two. We still have one income and my husband doesn't have a high paying job. He has the same job that he had 14 years ago. He just works hard to provide for us and I work hard to save for us. We are a frugal family. Our children also pitch in by turning out lights and by not always asking for things at the store. They know that if we have extra money we will ask them if they want something. They appreciate that more than if they had it all.

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Evan and Tia's blessings are Ryan (15), Aeriona (11), Zoe (5), Annabelle (3), Alex (18 months) and new baby due fall 2011.



Frightening but Exhilarating!

I grew up as an evangelical feminist. I got married at age 27 and married a man studying to become a pastor. Theologically, I thought myself conservative and I suppose I was to a large degree. But in the area of patriarchal headship, being a keeper at home, the high calling of motherhood and the giving over to the Lord my family planning, I did not embrace the teachings of Scripture. I was a public school teacher when my husband and I married. It wasn't until five years later that we had our first child.

When we first got married, I didn't want to have children. The love for children was not cultivated in my early years and being an only child, I didn't have younger brothers or sisters to nurture. But, I believe there is an innate calling within women to motherhood and it is only a special call to singleness or a conscience deadened to God's purposes that crowds it out.

I gave birth to our first child in 1996. I was completely satisfied and determined that this child would be our one and only. As far as I was concerned, we were through. I was an only child and I figured I turned out okay. My daughter would be able to have so much more...more of her parents, more privileges, more money. If there were no one else to share it with, she would have advantages that other children did not.

I had heard many times the verses in the Bible which say, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory," how God "owns the cattle on a thousand hills" and that "nothing is impossible with Him." I thought I truly believed them. I suppose I was one of those people who had the knowledge, but not the faith. Sometimes, it takes going through the valleys for God to do His greatest work of making us more like Him. It was that way in my own life. I stayed home with my daughter her first year. But when she was a year old, circumstances surrounding my husband's employment changed and I was fearful we

trailer park. Once, I even had to fend off a swarm of yellow jackets in our kitchen with a broom! This did not seem like "happily-ever after" to me!

Then I remembered Jennifer, a homeschool-mom, who I met at the library where I worked all through my pregnancy. I thought that going to Jennifer's church would be really good for us! If only Nathan would agree to take one Sunday off! I realized that all my nagging and cajoling had only hurt my husband! Instead, I kept on praying!

Out of nowhere, Nate began to speak with great conviction about how we really should go to church, even if it cost us! Soon after, not only was he taking our family to church, but we were cheerfully giving! My friend, Jennifer introduced her husband Peter to Nate and they instantly got along. Peter's grandfather offered Nathan a great job. Nathan's job record and hard work

quickly qualified him for paid training as a Natural Gas Mechanic.

God's favor blesses us time and time again as we continue to put our trust in God's Word and remember to "seek first the Kingdom of God." Eight years and four children later, my husband now works as a Supervisor for a large natural gas utility company outside New York City. We own our own five bedroom home in a good neighborhood where I happily homeschool our delightful growing family!

Nathan takes great joy in providing so well for us, but most of all, we are forever grateful to the Lord, our true Provider.

IVY HOYT

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Nathan and Ivy's blessings are Isaiah (8), Joshua (6), Josiah (3) and Lianna (1).

could not make ends meet without my income. I went back to work.

It was a difficult time for me. No matter what feminists say, you cannot have it all. You cannot be the kind of wife or mother God intended by devoting so many hours of the day to someone else's agenda. I felt the pain of being pulled in so many directions and never succeeding in any. It took another year of separation from my daughter and seeing her become more attached to a caregiver than me to make me realize I could no longer fool myself into thinking this was beneficial to our family.

My husband felt led to finish his degree in Biblical Studies at Southeastern College in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He quit his job and we moved to our hometown of Fayetteville, North Carolina. We moved in with my parents and I got a job as a librarian in the school system. My husband spent the week at school, worked part-time in the cafeteria and commuted to be with us on the weekends. Our main income was provided by my full-time job. But, I became increasingly dissatisfied. I knew things would never be right until I obeyed God's Word and became the wife and mother He had called me to be.

I sat down with my husband and told him of my desire to resign from my position at the end of the school year and he was completely supportive. We had no earthly idea how God would provide, but we knew He would be faithful. It was both frightening and exhilarating at the same time. On top of this, we knew God wanted families to be together and not apart. We decided we would all move to Wake Forest in the summer. No job, no stash of money, no lasting health insurance... just an overwhelming peace that the God who calls is the God who provides.

We were determined not to accept government assistance and to stay debt free for college. We knew that only God could work a miracle like that! After we moved to Wake Forest, God began pouring out His blessings. My husband got a job at Sam's Club at night, went to school full-time during the day and was the interim pastor at a small local church. I did whatever odd jobs I could find while remaining a wife and mother at home. I assembled jewelry at home, did some transcribing in the evening, taught a few piano students and even found a job picking up some children from school and watching them briefly

until their mother came home. My daughter, Joy was always by my side.

Once I obeyed God and began embracing my calling as a help-meet to my husband and a full-time Mommy, God began increasing my desire for more children. At 37 years old, I remember telling my husband I wanted another baby. He was a little apprehensive at first. He told me that we were barely scraping by with the three of us. But God had increased my faith at this time and I told him that this would be God's child, and He would provide. God certainly did—and in miraculous ways. We didn't even have money for maternity clothes and one day I got a knock at the door from a woman I knew. In her hand were two bags of maternity clothes my size!

Our second child was born in 2001 and I can still recall the utter joy of giving birth to our son. While I was holding him in my arms I looked at my husband and said, "I want another baby!"

He smiled at me and said, "Can we at least pay off this one first?"

Our out-of-pocket expenses for this pregnancy and birth ended up being over \$5000.00, but we paid all of it off. After my husband's BA degree, he knew God was telling him to complete his MDiv. By the time we left school he was beginning his career as an Army Chaplain. I gave birth to our third child at 39 years old. I had two miscarriages before her, so we named her Joanna Grace because it was only His grace she was given to us. Two more children came, my last baby at 42, and I look back at those wonderful days.

I am now a homeschooling Mom of five blessings and my deepest regret is not the career I gave up, but the time wasted doing things other than what God called me to do. Those faith building lessons were priceless. My husband and I grew much closer. We now had the same vision as we embraced God's blessing of children and it has brought such joy to our lives.

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Jonathan and Jackie's blessings are Joy (14), Josiah (9), Joanna (7), Joel (6) and Julia (4)

What Matters

I was working for three years when I became pregnant with my first child. I had no intention of quitting my job when he was born, but during the pregnancy I rededicated my life to Christ and fell deeply in love with my husband. Previously, I was neglectful and disrespectful to him. I started going to church and tithing on a regular basis.

I went back to work for six weeks after my son was born and cried every night at work as I knew I needed to be home. I obeyed the Holy Spirit and gave my notice.

It was not easy at first. I really loved being home and spending time with my son, but I missed all the things I had given up. At work I was very social and we always had more than enough money. However, I was sad I had gone back to work because I stopped breast feeding and now I was home I regretted that decision.

I learned a lot of life lessons the first year of being home. I had to learn quickly how to budget our spending. I couldn't always run out and buy whatever I wanted. Previously, we ate out a lot because we both worked 12 hour shifts; now we ate at home. I learned to depend on my family for emotional support and friendship and also got involved with a group of mothers at church. The first book we read was *The Power of Motherhood* by Nancy Campbell. This book, and the Bible, was the structure on which I built my mothering.

Elk & Wild Berries!

When my husband and I were married in May 2004 we made up our minds that as soon as we had children I would be a stay-at-home mom. I was working full-time for a radiology company and the position moved us to Sydney, Australia

ABOVE RUBIES March 2011, No.81

Most!

Through this group I gained many new perspectives and friends. I finally had a support group of woman striving for the same goals and keeping me accountable.

My son was about six months old when I got another job offer. I was tempted to take this job and see where it could take us financially. I even went as far as having an interview and submitting a resume but realized it was not what I wanted. I knew God had something greater in store for me.

In October that same year my husband ran into an old friend who was working for his dad who owned his own business. He told my husband that they were looking for more workers. My husband applied immediately and the job was his. It was perfect timing because one week after he started the new job all the people on his old shift were laid-off.

This job has been such a blessing for our family. The job consists of cleaning up and repairing foreclosed homes. People leave a lot of belongings behind when they leave and it either goes in the dump or my husband and his co-workers take it home. Everything I've asked the Lord for I have received. My husband has found and brought me a brand new crock-pot in the box, a treadmill, children's toys, microwaves, a gas range stove, kitchen table and chairs, a sleigh bed, a shower and much, much more.

God has showed me the meaning of this verse, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, 'If I



will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" Malachi 3:10.

In February 2009 we celebrated my son's first birthday and in June found out we were expecting again. God continued to soften and warm my heart. I gained more appreciation and respect for my husband and family. Growing up I had a rocky and distant relationship with my earthly father, but now it is growing in leaps and bounds and I have come to respect and adore him.

My daughter was born March 2, 2010. With each child the Lord opens up new insights and softens my heart even more. I love that I'm able to stay home and maintain the household so that my husband can come home and relax and enjoy the children. He has a very physical and sometimes exhausting job. I believe staying home has given me a humble, servant's heart and my life has been simplified down to everything that matters most. I truly feel as though I have been saved through childbearing as it says in 1 Timothy 2:15. I'm so grateful and my heavenly Father is so amazing and worthy of praise.

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Wesley and Rebekah's blessings are Rowan John (3) and Remington Jane (1).

in July 2004. My husband worked on his acting career and had a few successes but nothing that could financially support a family. In early 2006 Thomas was offered a part-time job working for the same radiology company and shortly after we found out we were expecting our first child to arrive in December of that year.

When our daughter was born we real-

ized due to visa laws, we would be forced to leave Australia if I quit working for the company that sponsored our visa. Thanks to the Lord, I was able to stay home with my daughter for the first six months—three months of accrued holiday pay and three months of working part-time from home. After that my husband and I worked out a schedule that allowed one of us to stay

Is God Sufficient for our Needs?

Answered Prayers!

Over the years we have learned to be very specific in our praying for the daily needs of our family. We have grown deeper in love with our Heavenly Father through witnessing His faithful and creative provision. For example, one winter years ago, I was especially craving some fruit, but payday was many days away and we were coasting on what food we had in the house. I shot up a quick prayer as I went about my daily tasks, "Lord, could we please have some fruit?"

A day or so later, I prayed another quick little request. A friend had taught our children how to knit and their little projects were all over the living room. I prayed, "Lord, could we please have a wicker basket to put their knitting in?" and went on with life.

The next day, a car pulled into the driveway. Several workers from our local grocery store were bringing thank you gifts to their best customers. In their arms, delivered right to our door, was God's sweet provision—a wicker basket full of fresh fruit!

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Tom and Sharon are blessed with Tyler who is married to Jessica, Brennan who is married to Amanda, Kelly (20), Joel (18), Nathan (16), Anna (15), Carrie (12), Lauren (11) and Shannon (8).

home with our daughter at all times. This put a strain on our marriage relationship as we rarely saw each other.

We prayed for a way out. Just before our daughter turned one year we were given the opportunity to return home to the USA, as my department was expanding to the headquarters located in my home town and they needed someone

Breastfeeding

AGAINST THE ODDS

The tears rolled down my face as the breastfeeding counsellor stood in front of me, sadly shaking her head. "I'm sorry, but if your milk hasn't come in by day 10, it's not likely to."

This was my fourth baby and the fourth time I'd felt like a failure because I couldn't breastfeed. I had been certain that this time I would succeed. I had the latch perfect, I fed on demand (which was



basically constantly) but still the baby lost weight and didn't get enough milk. That was when I discovered I had PCOS (Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome), affecting my fertility and milk supply. It didn't seem likely my body would ever produce enough milk to allow me to breastfeed.

A year or so later I was expecting again (quite a miracle in itself) and this time I researched all I could. Having PCOS affects your breast development, and you don't always have enough mammary tissue to produce plenty of milk. (Other PCOS sufferers can experience an over-supply and with some others it doesn't affect their milk supply at all.) I decided that I would try, but be prepared to supplement with formula early on to save some of the stress and exhaustion I'd experienced previously. I also asked for a lot of prayer, from the *Above Rubies* UK email list and from Nancy herself when she came to the UK.

Abigail Mary was born in February

2010, a fairly straightforward, drug free birth but she was not interested in feeding at all! On the very first day of her life the midwife advised me to give her an ounce of formula as I was planning on mixed feeding anyway. I did as advised and sadly resigned myself to the thought that this would be another baby I could not breastfeed.

On day three, as I sat in bed cuddling my baby and my wonderful husband was sorting out breakfast for the other children, I looked at Abigail and thought, "Let's just have another try." She latched on like a pro—and has loved breastfeeding ever since!

It has been a long hard journey. We still had to supplement in the beginning although I was careful not to give her too much formula. I was a little worried that she would prefer the bottle to the breast but it never happened. She always preferred the breast and completely gave up the formula on her own. In fact, she refused to take the bottle!

Breastfeeding has been an amazing experience. It's so totally different from formula feeding and I'm very thankful that God was gracious enough to give me the strength to persevere and provide the support I needed, I would encourage any mother having problems to persevere. Because pregnancy and breastfeeding develop mammary tissue, I am trusting that if God blesses us with another dear baby I will be able to exclusively breastfeed from the beginning!

SARAH DAWES

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Damian and Sarah with their blessings:

Bethany (9), Matthew (7), Rebekah (4),

Deborah (3) and Abigail (1).

Sarah has organized two *Above Rubies* retreats in the UK, a Ladies Retreat and a Family Retreat. Damian and Sarah will be organizing the *Above Rubies* Family Retreat in March 2012.

there to help organize it. We moved home in December 2007 just in time for Christmas and were given a house to live in by my wonderful parents.

My mother was so excited to be a grandmother (my daughter being her first grandchild), that she happily watched our daughter three days per week while my husband and I worked. In early 2008 we discovered we were expecting another child to arrive in January 2009. When our second daughter was born, my husband was offered a full-time position with the same company which allowed me to be away on maternity leave for three months and then return to work part-time.

In December 2009 we found out we were expecting our third child in August 2010. I could not see myself leaving three babies to go off to work, so my husband and I prayed for an opportunity for me to finally stay at home full-time. In March 2010 I still had not yet informed my co-workers I was pregnant and was praying for the right time to make this announcement. One day, while shopping with my girls, I suddenly had the overwhelming feeling that I needed to go to the office right away and announce that I was expecting another baby and would not be returning to work after the birth. I received loads of excited congratulations from my co-workers as well as comments about how much I would be missed.

Five days later I was called into the office for a surprise departmental meeting where it was announced that our entire department would be moving to a new headquarters in Arizona and we would either be let go in May 2010 or could choose to move to the new location. I praised God that my announcement was made only days earlier when it was still my decision to quit and not one that was forced on me.

We now feel the pinch of a single-income budget. However, the Lord is faithfully providing. Early in the year I planted my first garden; although small, we continue to enjoy the bounty. I was also able to pursue my favorite hobby—picking wild berries. I made my supply of huckleberries and blackcaps (aka black raspberries) into delicious home-made jams, syrups and pies to share. I went hunting for the first time in nine years

I Fell in Love!

and shot a deer just 30 yards from our house. This has provided much sausage which we can also share with friends who are less fortunate.

I've learned, without fail, that once one hardship is overcome there is sure to be another. I can either worry my way through or trust God to carry me through! We are now outgrowing our tiny, two bedroom mobile home and have no idea how we will accommodate our growing family. However, I can now say that I will completely rely on the Lord for our provisions. I am grateful that the Lord placed in me the desire to devote myself to my husband and children as a stay-at-home mom and I have no regrets about leaving my job position. It never ceases to amaze me how God can soften my stubborn heart.

The greatest lesson I have learned throughout this entire journey is to rely on the Lord and trust Him with everything and for everything. Trusting the Lord has brought me to the place where I no longer have to hear my four-year-old say, "Mommy, I wish you were here with me all the time."

ANGELA STEWART

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Thomas and Angela's children are Aliyah (4), Makayla (2) and Isaac (5 months).



If interested, check these links to Thomas' films for men and pastors.
youtube.com/watch?v=-stn9X_Jvk0
sermonspeice.com/product/16654/iwitness

I met Nancy Campbell at a Christmas party in December of 1999, just days before our first child was born. Nancy exuded God's joy and peace—and truth. It's that last quality that God used to begin turning my life upside down.

I was a 35-year-old professional woman who had just married the year before. It was my career that had brought my husband and me to Nashville and mine was the larger salary. My whole pregnancy had been a leap of faith, sparked when I heard a Christian radio host speak about the Scriptures that clearly declare children to be a blessing from the Lord. My husband, the peacemaker, wanted children, and I did not. But when I heard from the Lord through that radio program, I was convicted about my selfishness and suddenly knew it was wrong to try to prevent God's blessings. I stopped taking the Pill, which I later learned is abortifacient, and within six months, we were pregnant!

As the Lord molded my husband and me during my pregnancy, I realized, in theory, that He would want me to stay home and care for our baby. But there was no way we could make our finances work on one income.

Enter Nancy Campbell, who affirmed my suspicions that I needed to stay home with our baby. I explained to her why this could never work and she (and the Holy Spirit) scaled my defenses. I was in tears by the time we finished talking and angry inside. Nancy graciously and gently reassured me that the Lord is big enough to overcome any obstacles and took my address with the promise to send me one of her magazines.

I never received the magazine, but God is so very gracious and patient! When Isaiah was born, all my theories went out the window. I fell in love and my world was totally wrecked by this little person. I sat and nursed him and reeled. I look back and praise the Lord because I was virtually clueless about motherhood and had suppressed all my motherly instincts to the point of having none—until Isaiah was born. I instinctively nursed him whenever he wanted to nurse. We tried a few times to put him in a baby bed, but his crying was

heart-rending, so we brought him into our bed.

Our journey continued as the Lord peeled back layers of women's lib ideas I hadn't even realized I'd espoused. While I was on maternity leave, my husband came home from work to find me crying about the prospect of leaving our baby to return to work. Finally, we prayerfully decided that I should quit my job. I haven't worked since, and God has abundantly provided for us and our four children! Yes, He has blessed us with four children (plus two who are in Heaven, lost early in pregnancy), the last born when I was 43 years old! And, at 46 years old, we would be overjoyed and awed if He saw fit to bless us with another baby.

The *Above Rubies* magazine finally came, five years after I met Nancy, through a friend I'd met in Kentucky, where we had moved! My friend passed on some magazines to me that were dear to her. Imagine my amazement when I opened the top magazine on the pile and saw Nancy's picture smiling at me! I remembered her well from our providential Christmas meeting years before. God's timing is perfect. My heart laughs with joy to see how intricately He weaves the fibers of our lives together for His glory. Had Nancy sent me an *Above Rubies* at the time I met her, I might have burned it, so radically alien to me were her (and the Lord's) ideas about families. But He is so patient; and at just the right time, He sent me exactly what I needed and brought this story full circle.

He continues to draw me nearer and teach me His ways and give me His wisdom, which is foolishness to this world. He has taught me that my precious husband is the leader of our home. He has led us to homeschool our children. He has blessed me with a peaceful assurance that my career as wife and mother is His perfect design and mission for my life. All this blessing and joy He has given to me, an undeserving, independent, wise-in-her-own-eyes (extremely foolish), single (until the age of 34) woman who saw children as inconvenient. The Lord truly is able to do miracles!

RANAE WYNDER

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Return to Parenthood!

My husband, Charles Daniel Two Hats and I have been married for 32 years. We have four grown children, three of whom are married and they have blessed us with four grandbabies. As the chief of our little tribe of Shawnee, my husband gets a lot of strange phone calls from members asking for help or advice. The strangest of these was from the county hospital last July. When he arrived at the ER, my husband was handed a little bundle—a two month old baby boy who belonged to a young lady from our tribe who had made some very bad life choices. Child Protective Services gave the child to us to care for while his Mama got her life straightened out.

Thus began our odyssey back into parenthood. We were living in an RV, due to mold in the old mobile home we had lived in for years. We were building a new home—slowly, without a mortgage, and out of scraps and cull material.

The little one was thin, had difficulty breathing, severe colic and woke every two hours. He was diagnosed with Inter Uterine Growth Restriction due to his mother's tobacco, drug and alcohol use while she was carrying him and had spent the first week of his life at Riley Hospital



for Children.

We fell in love with the little guy and made room for him in the RV. In the wee hours of one morning, as I fed and burped Little Dude (as we nicknamed him), I looked down the length of the RV to the open door of the bathroom and the mirror. There stood an old lady holding a tiny baby—ME! “Dear God,” I prayed, “What are we getting into—at our age and with no place to live?”

Li'l Dude went back to sleep. When he woke early next morning I changed him and asked, “What are we gonna call you? I don't want to call you by your legal

name, and Li'l Dude is just a nickname, not a REAL name.” Then the Lord spoke to me, just as clear as if it were my Hubby in the same room, “His name is Isaac. And you will see my provision.”

And we HAVE seen His provision in so many ways. We are now living in a house, built by us, with no mortgage. God has guided us through all the heartbreak and frustration that a mentally unbalanced biological mother and CPS can hand out (including visits from the sheriff and the baby's disappearance for a week or so at a time). Through it all God has been faithful. He has taken care of every need (even making a way to pay the legal bills)!

He protected Li'l Dude when he was away from our care and in real danger. In September 2010, the court made Isaac James Jumping Deer our adoptive son. He is small for his age but developing at or above his developmental level. He is happy and outgoing and brings lots of fun and laughter (like his name!) into our home.

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A must for every mother!



From the Brink of Destruction!

Proverbs 14:1 NKJV says, “The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.” Last year, I was that “pulling down” woman. After twelve years in a tumultuous marriage I decided to quit praying about it. I had given up believing God was ever going to change our relationship. Often depressed, I had recurring thoughts of suicide. As a Christian, I knew that I would never go through with it, but I soon made a series of decisions that brought destruction to my front door, nearly ruining forever everything I loved.

I began to listen to the world’s way of thinking. I abandoned reading God’s Word in lieu of listening to humanistic audio books throughout the day. I will never forget one title I heard while watching an author being interviewed on a popular daytime talk show. A woman leaves her husband to travel to different exotic locations searching for “deeper meaning” to life. While watching that program, I received my first warning from God: “If you read it, you will leave your husband.”

Last summer, as I held a copy of the book in the library, I remembered God’s warning. I scoffed, chalking it all up to a “vivid imagination.” Less than three months later, I left my husband.

I declared that I was through being “dominated” by men. I danced to pop songs that glorified women overcoming men, not needing them anymore. I sheared off my long hair, reveling in my new-found “freedom.” I took the children and moved thousands of miles away from the family home I once called “our Eden.” I followed the advice of unbelieving family members who had often criticized me for homeschooling our two children. I put them into the public school system and set out to find myself a “real job.”

At first, my husband sold many of our things, since I swore I wasn’t coming back. I told him that I wished him well, but felt nothing towards him anymore. Fortunately, he took that to a “Higher Authority.” He sought out a church for counseling and the answers to what seemed like an impossible situation. He found prayer and the faith to believe God for a miracle.

He had his vasectomy (he once insisted on) reversed, even though I wasn’t talking to him at the time. He fasted and prayed. God spoke to him about giving me

everything he had. He transferred his savings into my account and bought us new furniture and toys to replace what he had sold in our absence. His financial support allowed me to resume educating the children although it took some time to reverse the damage that occurred from leaving their dad behind and embracing the world’s views.

My husband flew into town to attend family court for a custody hearing I filed against him several months earlier. He had grounds not to come, but he showed up anyway. He was not sure of what I would say or do, but he believed that God would restore our marriage. His trust moved me. I knew that I was in rebellion to God. I repented that very day and withdrew my petition on the spot. It was the day before Valentine’s and the Judge looked like an angel, smiling at us and wishing us well.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 NKJV says, “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: a wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.” God has blessed my willingness to forgive my husband by supernaturally restoring the passionate friendship we had in our youth.

Although we reconciled, I still had to fulfill the lease on my apartment for several more months. My husband took care of us the entire year we were living apart. It

was a hard, lonely time living for phone calls and e-mails, but it deepened our resolve to obey God’s word by keeping our family intact. Once my lease was up, the children and I moved back to Kaiserslautern in Germany (where my husband was currently stationed), to live as a family. We will remain here until he transfers to his next assignment in Washington.

God mercifully rescued me from my foolishness and delivered us from the brink of divorce, bitterness and total despair. I used to think that the goal should be to attain a perfect marriage without any conflict. I see now that doesn’t exist on earth. God is glorified when I respect, honor and obey the husband he has given me. I must do so with joy despite how hard it may sometimes feel.

We are continually grateful that God has completely restored our family.

ERIN NELSON

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Xalavier and Erin’s children are Xalavier Jr (13) and Erin (8) and believing for more!





Quintessentially



I read these beautiful words, “quintessentially feminine” in Song of Songs (The Message Bible) and was arrested by them. What does it mean to be feminine? I don’t mean feminine according to society’s standards but rather what is quintessentially feminine. It means the perfect embodiment of who God originally created us to be. It is who we are in our purest form. Instead of looking around us to see what other women are doing to find our standard, we should be looking at the plumb line of God’s Word or even at our inherent inclinations which God has

divinely put within us.

One of the most beautiful aspects of femininity is pregnancy. The pregnant figure is beautiful. In this awesome time of a woman’s life, she has the privilege of housing and growing a new life, a life that will not only be born into this world, but an eternal soul that will live forever.

Absolutely nothing in this world is more powerful than nurturing an eternal soul. This season of a woman’s life is only for a certain time. It is her time of visitation which is only about 20 plus years of her whole life, not many years when you consider that most women live into their eighties and nineties today. It is the privileged time of a woman’s life when she can be visited by God to conceive life.

Every conception discloses a visitation of God. Mere man cannot give conception. After Hannah dedicated her firstborn Samuel to God and took him to live at the temple, God “visited” her five more times and gave her five more children (1 Samuel 2:21). Genesis 21:1 also tells us how God “visited” Sarah and she conceived.

There are only two kinds of human beings in this world—a man without a womb, the male; and a man with a womb, the woman. The womb is distinctive to God’s female creation. ¹To embrace our womb is to embrace who we are; to reject the function of the womb is to

not only reject the true essence of femaleness, but to reject our Creator who designed us. Does the handicraft disown its Craftsman? Isaiah 29:16 (RSV) says, “You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay; and the thing made should say of its maker, ‘He did not make me’; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding?’” Have we become so shaped by a godless society that we no longer understand who we are? What perversity! ²

Motherhood is also part of our innate femininity. Noah Webster’s 1928 dictionary describes quintessential as “the highest essence of power in a natural body.” Motherhood is primal, powerful, protecting and permeating—not only in our children’s lives but in all of society.

Motherhood is not something we perform at a certain time of our life. Motherhood is who we are as a female. When we reject mothering, we reject who God created us to be. The desire to nurture is divinely inherent in every woman, even those who seemingly reject motherhood. Those who refuse to embrace children into their arms will usually have a cat or a dog, which they nurture like a human baby!

To embrace motherhood is to embrace quintessential femininity. Motherhood is the highest career in the nation. It is a divine mandate. It is the glory of the nation. We read in Hosea 9:11 how God told Ephraim that He would take away their “glory” as punishment for their sins. What was their glory? Conception, pregnancy and birth!

Not only is motherhood innately within us, but it reveals the nature of God. One of the names of God is El Shaddai which reveals God as a nursing mother. Motherhood is not something we “have to do” but it is the revelation of the nurturing heart of God. Webster (1913) describes quintessence as “an extract from anything, containing its rarest virtue, or most subtle and essential constituent in a small quanti-

ty.” We are not El Shaddai, but a little “shad” revealing to the world the rarest virtue of motherhood. When we embrace and live in the glory of motherhood, we show to the world what God is like. When we reject motherhood, we deprive the world of seeing this characteristic of God.

There are some women who cannot conceive naturally. Are they denied motherhood? No. When a woman expresses her nurturing instinct to mother the hurting and needy, the elderly, the orphans and widows, or even to adopt a child, she finds her fulfillment in mothering. The most renowned mother of our last century was Mother Theresa, a woman who never

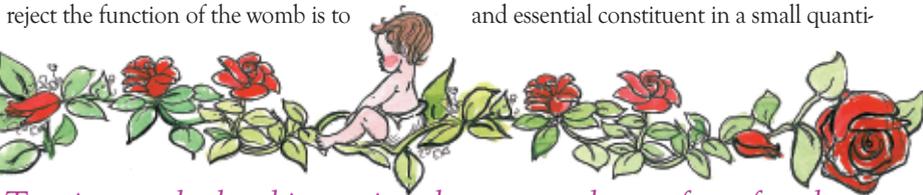
It is not just loving our children, but loving and embracing the role of motherhood that releases us into the joy and glory of our divine career.



birthed children, but she was the greatest example of motherhood as she poured out her life for the downtrodden.

There are some mothers who deny themselves the privilege and joy of nursing their own baby, and yet this is primal and quintessential to being female. ³The Bible tells us that “Even jackals offer the breast, they nurse their young; but the daughter of my people has become cruel like ostriches in the wilderness” (Lamentations 4:3).⁴

We find that our daughters naturally behave femininely as they haven’t yet been conditioned by society. They love to mother. That’s all they want to be when they grow up, until society re-programs their brains. They love babies. They love to dress like princesses, which is another area of our femininity we have lost. As we look around today we see most women in the uniform of the day—jeans and top. I am not into legality and would not say that you should not wear the “uniform” but does it really convey who we are? When my little granddaughters go to my dress-up box, what do they want to wear? Each one of them wants to be a princess. They look for the princess dresses,



To reject motherhood is to reject the transcendence of our femaleness.

Feminine



The ultimate quintessence of motherhood is the revelation of God's maternal heart to the world.

and if there are not enough to go around, they create them out of sheets and old curtains! I have never noticed that they want to dress up in a business suit!

One of my *Above Rubies* helpers shared with me that she and her sister sewed civil war time dresses with hooped skirts for a historical fair they were attending. They had to run some errands, and rather than changing into street clothes, decided to wear their dresses. They were amazed that in every store, both workers and shoppers, stopped to exclaim, "Oh you look so beautiful!" or "What beautiful dresses!"

I was thinking about this when traveling some time back. Delayed in a long line at an airport, I decided to look around for beautiful women. Every woman wore the "uniform" but I spotted one lady who stood out from everyone else. She was dressed in a flowing apricot-colored sari with scarves flowing around her. She looked gloriously feminine and I feasted my eyes upon her as I waited. How sad that we have degenerated so far from our intrinsic femininity that we can only wear a dress that makes us feel like a princess or a queen if we "dress up in a costume!"

I believe a woman also reveals her femininity in her home. This is the domain that God has planned for women—to make her home a restful place where God's presence dwells, to raise and nurture her children, to create a delightful atmosphere her children will remember into the next generation, and to be a successful home-maker and gardener. Proverbs 24:15 calls the home a "resting place." Hosea 11:11 (Knox trans.) says, "In their own home, says the Lord, I will give them rest." It is easy for a woman to lose her femininity when she works in the secular world, but she can also lose her rest. When we lose the anointing of rest upon our lives, we need to get back into the home.

In the home a woman can also bask in the provision and leadership of her husband. She loses her femininity, her grace and her peace when she rules her husband. A truly feminine woman trusts in her husband's provision and authority. This does not mean that she is a doormat. God has given to the woman a sphere of leadership, not to rule over her husband, but to govern the affairs of her home (1 Timothy 5:14). It is her prerogative to efficiently administrate her home and garden. This is not an insignificant task. It is a full time career, especially as God blesses the couple with more children.

Gentleness and meekness are also the inner essence of being female. 1 Peter 3:3-4 (Williams) says, "Your adornments... must be of an internal nature, the character concealed in the heart, in the imperishable quality of a quiet and gentle spirit, which is of great value in the sight of God." These qualities in a female are very precious to the heart of God, and to husbands. In fact, they are a woman's charm. They are called an "unfading charm" in the Amplified Version. Is it weak to have a gentle and quiet spirit? No. It is a woman of strength who keeps a gentle spirit in the face of harshness and rebuke. It is a strong woman who keeps an even temper when she feels overwhelmed and angry. Have you tried being meek for a week? This is certainly not a challenge for the weak!

The anointing of gentleness on a mother is beautiful to behold. Motherhood is equated with gentleness. And yet it is more. Just as Jesus was revealed as both a Lamb and a Lion, so too, God has put within the woman a gentle anointing, but also a "lion-like" spirit which rises up to protect her children, or to resist the enemy that would come to attack her marriage or home (Revelation 5:2-6).

This "quiet and gentle" spirit is also revealed in our speech. Soft and gentle

words exemplify femininity. Sweet words are becoming to a woman. If I start to get on my "high horse" my husband will say to me, "Nancy, you've got to be sweet to me." Oh my! I don't have a chance to get harsh! Sweet words endear us to our husband. Sweet words bless our children. Sweet words personify our femaleness. Shakespeare's famous words are apt for us: "Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman." Solomon, speaking to his bride in Song of Songs 4:11 says, "Your lips, my bride, drip honey; honey and milk are under your tongue." Could your husband testify that every time you open your mouth sweet words drip from your lips?

In Song of Songs chapter 7 (Message), the Bridegroom is overcome as he admires every part of his bride. And then to describe her completely he exclaims, "Quintessentially Feminine." He cannot think of greater praise. We have come so far from God's original intent for us, His female creation. Can we allow God to work in our lives to bring us back, little by little, to the original glory He planned for us? Can we no longer measure our lives by the world around us but by God's original design?

NANCY CAMPBELL

Art work: DEBBIE BONZON
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1. Go to www.aboverubies.org, click on *Articles and Stories*, then *Motherhood*, then *Protect Your Womb*. This is an important document which every woman should read.
2. The Hebrew word for "you turn things upside down" or "you turn things around" is *hophek* and means "perversity!" Read also Isaiah 45:9-10; 64:8 and Romans 9:19-21.
3. To read more about the blessings of embracing motherhood and femininity go to www.aboverubies.org, click on *Articles and Stories*, then *Motherhood*, then *Preserved through Motherhood and Fully Female*. You can also read *Preserved through Motherhood* in *Above Rubies # 77* which is still available. Contact *Above Rubies* to receive a copy.
4. See also Job 39:14-17 and Isaiah 49:15.



Do You Like TO SIGH?

Change every sigh into a Hallelujah!

A sigh escaped my lips as I stood over the dryer folding yet another load of laundry. While listening to the squabbling of my three and five-year-olds and being paged by the baby, I felt overwhelmed with the never-ending barrage of tasks demanding my attention. The sigh I released was not the type of sigh that expressed anything positive. It was the kind of sigh that says, "I'm tired, I've had enough, I'm annoyed." The Lord convicted me right then and there about the matter.

These sighs rob all the motivation

and positivity from my life. They express my disappointment to everyone within earshot. They seem insignificant, yet their message is loud and clear. And my husband detests them!

They also signify a lack of contentment and motivation on my part. When I sigh like this, I am not expressing any form of thankfulness to God. Rather, I am filled with negative emotions, including plenty of self-pity. The example they give to my children is not one of a willing servant, but rather a grumpy slave.

There is a reason that sighs are likened to groans in the Bible. They are two of the same thing! You cannot utter praise and thankfulness as you sigh in frustration. Now there is a difference between taking a deep breath and preparing for the moment's challenge and allowing a defeated sigh to escape your lips!

There are also contented sighs that come once in a while too—like after a delicious meal, or as you soak in a hot bath or crawl into your warm bed. The Lord made it clear to me as I folded my laundry that all of my sighs should be contented sighs! All other types of sighs only tear down my mood and the atmosphere of my home. It was a real eye-opener for me! I had never really given it much thought before, nor thought that my sighs were anything but harmless. Even when my husband expressed his dislike over them, I minimized it when I really should have listened.

Now I have no excuse! If I catch myself in the act of sighing, I immediately bring to mind something for which to be thankful. For example, as the children create a sticky mess all over the kitchen and I wash down the counters with a sigh, I instead thank the Lord for having the children here to make the mess in the first place!

I haven't broken the sighing habit yet, but when one escapes my lips, it reminds me to praise God for something and to see the good in the situation. This is a start to a much more productive and up-building habit! Why sigh in frustration and aggravation, when I can praise God and be thankful? Why tear down when I can build up? Isaiah 35:10 says that "Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." May my sighing flee away!

MICHELLE KAUEHOFEN

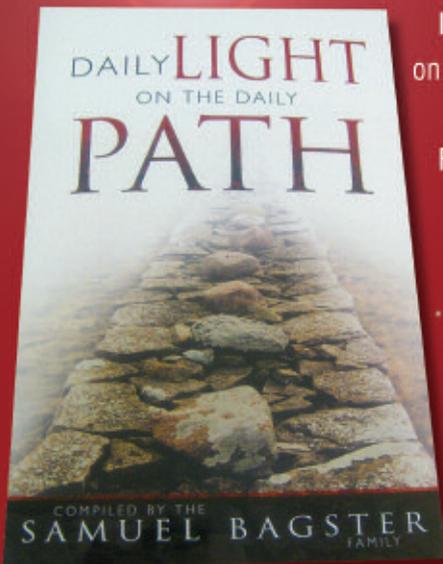
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Cam and Michelle are the blessed parents of Bryson (19), Jacinda (17), Dalton (16), Brielle (13), Logan (11), Havenne (10), Gideon (8), Jilissa (7), Tressa Leigh (5), Drayden (3) and Solana (1).

Michelle is the Canadian *Above Rubies* Director and also, along with Nancy, hosts the *Above Rubies* Facebook pages. Go to <http://facebook.com/AboveRubiesUS>

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Can Children Flourish in Large Families?

No Longer on Meds

When Robby and I got married we wanted a large family, but knew that I had unexplained infertility and might never have children of our own. So when our daughter, Christi, came along we wanted her to have everything. I went to Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPs) meetings, scheduled weekly play dates, and enrolled her in gymnastics. I looked forward to her fifth birthday because she would be old enough to take piano lessons. I kept her busy. Of course, that meant we never stayed at home. I thought she was getting everything she deserved as an only child. What I didn't realize was that she was missing out on the most important gift I could give her—my time. We were so busy running around visiting friends and participating in organized activities that our quality time together was spent in the car. Not much quality time with her strapped in a car seat while I listened to the radio or talked on my cell phone.

We were delighted when I found out I was pregnant with child number two. We believed Samuel was another miracle and we would not have any more children. Therefore, I started planning what activities to get him involved in. I continued our very busy schedule believing that taking them to various activities was the best way to parent.

When child number three came along, I was getting pretty weary of all the running around. By this time I had added homeschooling and a homeschool co-op to our list of things to do. Keep in mind, I didn't want my children to miss out on anything the world had to offer. Unfortunately, I was severely depressed and on medications.

My dear husband, Robby, was very concerned. We had figured out by this time that God had healed my infertility and we decided to let God determine our

A young mother, who has not yet experienced the joys of a large family, complained that she would not want a big family because there would not be enough time to spend with each individual child and the children would miss out on many things that children of two-child families receive.

Is this thinking true, or a fallacy?
Enjoy the following testimonies...

family size. I realized that if I was going to regain my sanity and get off the meds, things had to change. Through my husband's prayers and prompting, along with a well-timed reading of *Managers of their Schools* by Steve and Teri Maxwell, I finally listened to God telling me to STAY HOME. I kept thinking about a particular section in the book. The message basically stated that homeschooling means "schooling at home." I was so busy taking our children to various activities that we didn't spend much time at home. I argued with my husband and God that if I stayed home, our children would miss out on so much—gymnastics, karate, music lessons, play dates, sports, etc. God and Robby didn't give up, and I finally accepted that God had called me to be a stay-at-home-mom. That meant I needed to stay at home.

We now have five beautiful children. I no longer worry that they are missing out. Best of all, I am not on any meds!

I've come to realize that it is a worldly mind-set that thinks having a big family means the children will suffer. Media, friends, and well-meaning family all tell us that small families are best. We are continually bombarded with propaganda to put our children in every activity that the child thinks he wants to do. We are led to believe that with only one or two children we will have more money to provide the latest toys, fancy vacations, the best private schools, music lessons, and more. We

are also led to believe that with a small family we will have more quality time with our children. May I remind you that time in the car is not the best quality time! The media fails to point out the loneliness children might have because they have no siblings to bond with or the selfishness too much stuff can create.

We have chosen to see our family through God's eyes. God says, "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth" Psalm 127:4 (NKJV). Think about going to battle. If you are in a battle, you want lots of ammunition (arrows) to defeat the enemy. With a larger family, we are training many arrows to spread the Gospel of Christ as instructed in Matthew 28:19-20. Therefore, we will have a greater impact on society. I alone can only tell so many people about Christ. But, depending on the number of children I train up in the Lord, I can multiply the number of people impacted by Christ through my family.

Children of large families may miss out on what the world says they should have, but they do not miss out on God's plan for them. I no longer have to take my children to weekly play dates. They have each other to play with. They are very close friends with each other. We have chosen not to put them in team sports right now. The five of them are a team. They learn that working as a team means the chores get done faster, leaving them with more time to play.

No Loss of Playmates

Growing up as the fourth child in a family of eight, I guess it's hard to deny that my mom didn't have the same number of hours in the day for each individual child as she would have if she had stopped at just two. But every single need I had was always met. I KNEW my mama loved me. I KNEW that if I wanted to talk all I had to do was ask. I KNEW that if I had a need, she would meet it.

The needs of a child in a large family are actually different than the needs of a child in a small one. When I walked home from school with my sister, she and I talked about the troubles we had each faced during the school day. When mom would ask, "How was school?" she usually heard, "Fine!" or "Oh, so-and-so was mean again," but the issue wasn't critical because I had a companion helping me sort it out before my mom even asked the question. I was never at a loss for a play-

mate either! If I was mad at one sibling, I could always find another who would play with me, even if it was the baby.

There was plenty of family time around the kitchen table. We went to the neighborhood pool together, a Six Flags theme park (family season tickets actually constituted cheap entertainment for a family of our size!), and to the homes of other large families. But instead of thinking of it in terms of one-on-one time (which actually requires the exclusion of other family members), we thought in terms of FAMILY time, and there was PLENTY of that!

My family never had a lot of money, but God always provided above and beyond just our needs. Because others recognized the challenges of raising a large family, we were constantly provided with hand-me-down clothing. Our church organized a free bread delivery to families who

could benefit from it. Oh, how I loved seeing that truck pull up to our house loaded down with things we shouldn't have been eating anyway! I loved those Danishes! While I'm sure my parents had to learn humility in all of it, aren't those lessons that parents of just one or two children ought to learn anyway? We are called to humility!

I like the way I grew up. If we have more than the three we have, I would be happy for them to have the kind of childhood I had. It wasn't without flaws and heartaches, but I've never met a single person who can say that theirs was. It's just part of life—parents do their best, and God takes care of the rest. Children ARE a blessing. Even though there's challenge in having many children, there is also so much blessing.

JANIS MUNOZ

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Carlos and Janis' olive plants are Isaac (3), Isabel (1) and new baby due August 2011.

Some may argue that by not putting them in various activities my children will not be properly socialized. Trust me. Children in large home-schooled families socialize with all ages and with a variety of people. Our children have learned that things do not bring happiness. They can be selfish at times, but as a rule, with so many people running around the house there is no room for an "it's all about me" attitude. There is always an opportunity to teach them to share and think of others first.

There is never a boring moment in our home. Sometimes I wish I could have a moment of peace and quiet, but when I get it, I don't know what to do. Each child has his or her own personality providing every day excitement and challenges. And the best part of having many children is the abundance of hugs and kisses.

BARBARA SMITH

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Robby and Barbara's arrows are Christi (10), Samuel (5), Joseph (3), Peter (22 months) and Hannah (5 months).

Never Lonely

I vividly remember a couple summers ago; I was helping at a VBS in a small town not too far from where I live. On the very last night, I talked to one of the boys who had also helped. He asked about my family, and when I told him there were six children...and my mom was pregnant with twins, he freaked out.

"Wow! Haven't your parents heard of birth control?" he asked. Even though I presented a calm and reasonable answer at the moment, I later thought this question through. I knew that my parents had used birth control for quite some time while having the older children in our family. But, I

wasn't sure why we now had so many children. I'd never talked about it with my parents. The next day I did.

My mom and I had a great discussion. What I was most amazed to learn was that my mother never really wanted children, much less eight of them! But after having Jason before marriage, she and Daddy knew they had to deal with the

consequences of their actions. I'm so happy they did; my brother is one of the most wonderful people in my life. Mom said that they used birth control after Jason as they didn't feel the same way then that they do now. During a period of twelve years, they only had three of us. Not until after having a miscarriage did they realize that God wanted them to place the control of their children in His hands.

After that, my parents had five wonderful, beautiful, intelligent



Brett and Deanna Chatterton with their children: Jason (23), Joshua (19), Brittany (15), Josiah (10), Bailey (7), Brenna (5), AnnaMary and Hadassah (1).

children that are fairly close in age.

I know that a big part of my strong beliefs about abortion and birth control come from my parent's wisdom and teachings. But I've also realized how different things would be if abortion and birth control would have played out differently in my life. I have a brother (and a couple of close friends with similar stories) that could have easily been aborted.

I recently talked to a friend of mine who said she only wanted a couple children. I pushed her to consider her beliefs about birth control. She didn't fight me. She said something that I hear much too often from girls my age: "When I am with your family, I just feel like everything's complete. When I'm with mine, I feel like there are people missing." If we don't let God plan our family, there will be people missing for whom He had a great plan!

Being part of a big family has been such an incredible blessing to me. I learn so much from each sibling. I don't have enough room to list all the character traits I learn from each one. My twin sisters both see me as another Mommy (they call me "Mama J"), and those two relationships are just mind-boggling. I never thought such a blessing would be mine! I have a bond with my ten-year-old brother, and seven and five-year-old sisters that I can spend an entire night with any of them, talking and falling asleep together. The instances when my parents don't have time for me, I can always find that time with an older sibling, or even a younger one. There's always someone to be there

for me, and there's always someone that I can be there for.

All of my friends that don't have large families (which is most of them) tell me how wonderful mine is, and that they always have so much fun when they are with us. A friend once told me, "After watching *19 Kids and Counting* and spending all weekend with you guys, I really think I want to have a big family. You guys are all so close to each other and you really have what I want when I have my own family." I almost cried when she said that!

Along with my firm beliefs on the "rights and wrongs" about family planning and such, I think it might even be more important to realize that it really is God's plan for families to be big (when possible).

But what about evangelism, you ask? Aren't we winning souls to Christ through evangelism? The truth is that the majority of Christians have come to Christ because their faith was passed down through their family. Fewer have been saved through evangelism. Evangelism is good and important and God commands us to preach the gospel to the entire world. But raising a quiver full of children to be warriors for Christ is just as, if not more, important. It is the devil's plan for us to be having fewer children—he's happy to see it. How many of us are going to fight that and do what the Lord commands of us?

BRITTANY CHATTERTON (15 years)
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My Children want more Siblings

I am a 36 year old mother of two. When I was in my twenties I had two miscarriages and then the Lord blessed us out of the blue when we thought all was said and done. He gave us a wonderful baby boy delivered by c-section. Six months later I was pregnant again and God gave us a beautiful baby girl by c-section. At that time everyone around us were having two children and the husbands were getting vasectomies. So, after two babies back to back, we joined the sterilizers.

We were also scared into thinking we shouldn't have any more because of the two c-sections. Now I read about mothers

who have nine c-sections!

Three years later, I have deep regrets for following the crowd. I am surrounded by large families where we live now and witness first-hand the joy they experience together and the tightness to one another. My children see what it is like to have many siblings and they love the relationship the larger families experience. They are always asking for more siblings.

JEANETTE (Last name withheld because of security).
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Greg and Jeanette's children are Logan and Kyla.



A Continuous Party

I am not a mother of a large family (only two so far), but I am the oldest daughter in a family of 18. My parents adopted seven of these children so we are every color of the rainbow. I have absolutely NO regrets coming from a large family. It was such a wonderful blessing and I hope I can pass on this blessing to my own children. Every time we found out my mom was expecting (or an adoption was probable) we rejoiced. Everyone from my oldest brother to my two-year-old sister loves babies and family.

I was always puzzled reading parenting magazines and books as to why there was so much concern about "sibling rivalry" or enough attention for each child. I thought, "They haven't seen a large family in action" because there is attention from everyone everywhere you turn. For instance, what two-year-old doesn't love to have a roomful of clapping and cheers when they leave the bathroom after a successful potty break? How many teenage girls wouldn't love to have a group of girlfriends who are always there to talk into the night, laugh, go shopping with, and give fashion advice? How many boys would kill to have a "ready-made" team every time they pick up a basketball? Even in difficult times, such as we are experiencing right now with the loss of my father, my family stands united and strong. We can laugh with one another and grieve with one another.

The experience I gained in being the eldest daughter was invaluable when I had my own little ones. I had loved on babies all my life and therefore it was natural to know what to do with my own. I also had a mom who had experienced everything under the sun. She gives me such wonderful advice and encouragement!

The blessings have continued into the second generation. My children, nephews, and nieces all love to get together and play with their aunts and uncles. Many are the same age. There is attention being given everywhere! It's a party all the time!

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Nathan and Ashley with TJ (3).

God's Perspective

I often think about the family in which God chose His beloved Son to be raised on this earth. Mark 6:3 tells us about Jesus' four brothers and his sisters. Sisters? That's plural. He would have had to have at least two sisters, but he could have had three or four sisters. That means Jesus grew up in a family of at least seven children! Or, maybe he grew up in a family of 10 or more children.

If God, the Creator of the universe and

all mankind, thought that there were negatives about large families, He would not have allowed His Son to be raised in such a family. Yet God chose for Him to be raised in a large family. This is how God intends children to be raised.

If it was good enough for Jesus, it surely should be good enough for our children!

NANCY CAMPBELL



JD and Nancy Hiett with their children: Morgan (14), Benjamin (9), Joseph (5), Madison (3) and Sarah Beth (1).

I am a 14-year old girl and you could say I come from a "large" family. I am one of five, so far. And you know what? I LOVE being a big sister and a helper to my parents. I have been given the amazing responsibility of investing in their lives for the glory of God. Perhaps, if you were my age you would not see washing dishes, folding laundry, changing diapers, rocking the little ones, helping supervise their schoolwork, organizing crafts, playing matchbox cars in the dirt or pretending to be princesses as a great experience or "the life." But you truly would not know what you were missing out on! Since I am homeschooled, for which I am incredibly grateful, I spend every blessed day with my family.

I wasn't always homeschooled, though. I attended a Christian academy through third grade before my mom and dad decided to take the radical step and homeschool me. I only had a three-year-old brother at the time, and my parents were amazed at how much closer we drew together. He became my best friend. Before, I was interested in my friends from school, now I boarded the amazing ride of a lifelong friendship with my wonderful brother.

Many wonder how my parents give each of us enough attention or one-on-one time. I think this is often thought of in the wrong manner. What many people don't realize is that you can spend one-on-one time with your child even if you are in

your home surrounded by others. Mom doesn't have to take me out for the day just to spend one-on-one time with me. Going out with my mom is wonderful! Yet, I get to spend a lot of time with her at home—we often exchange hugs throughout the day. She encourages me with uplifting words and is always available to talk. The best one-on-one time my mom and I experience is our own personal talks about our struggles, challenges and joys.

My siblings also receive attention throughout the day. Because they have each other, there is always someone to spend time with. In fact, when my mom was expecting baby # 5, she was afraid that perhaps she would not be able to give the baby enough attention. After all, she already had four others who needed her attention too. Would this baby be brushed aside? Absolutely not! When Sarah Beth was born she had so many hands ready to hold her—all the children loved her. I think she received more attention than previous babies just because there were more children ready to give it.

I know this may seem odd, but I would love it if the Lord would send more children to our family! The more, the merrier! Yes, there are hectic days, but I never would want to exchange them for a day without my siblings. They bring so much joy. I could never imagine being an only child! There would be such a void in my family's life if even one of these precious children weren't with us. I thank the Lord for each passing day and for my wonderful family!

MORGAN HIETT (14 years)
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An Adventurous Ride

Why not just have one or two children? For us, it boiled down to submission. Were we willing to allow God to make decisions for us, trusting in His goodness and plan for our lives or take control ourselves? It was a gamble, as faith always is. Giving up what's known to walk towards a land that is just a hope like Abraham was called to do can seem preposterous to many. As tempting as it is to choose a smaller family and larger house I'm here to advocate the larger family and the house that God provides. Why? How does one manage the demands?

Recognize that life is seasonal

We won't always be pregnant, nursing, or trying to maintain order during the years of toddler mayhem. There will be a day when you mourn the loss of your fertility, wishing that you'd have one more child.

Recognize that God provides

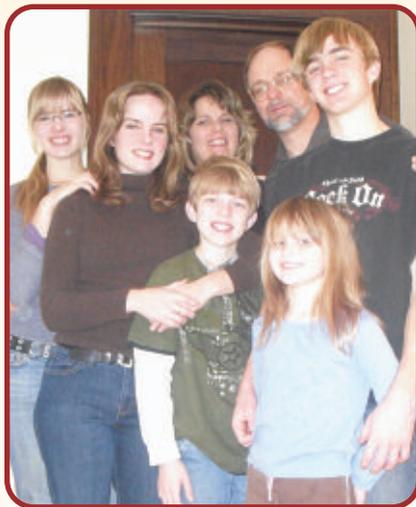
Helpless babies are His people. I remember praying, when I was "surprised" by the realization of carrying our first child, "God, you will have to provide for this baby. We have nothing and we aren't prepared in any way!" He has, for the past 24 years, provided clothes, food, furniture, opportunities, even a four-year college scholarship!

Realize that children grow

Children grow into and out of stages and ages, become more mature, learn to read, cook and take out the trash. As your family grows, so do your resources! I honestly don't think I bathed our fifth child ever, or tied the shoes on my fourth. These tasks were always done by siblings and they sang the same shoe-lace tying song that my husband and I sang to them! Now that we have more adults than children in our family, we are constantly and pleasantly surprised at the resources and friendships they introduce us to.

Realize that once you submit in one area to God's sovereignty, the easier it is to submit in others

The more you allow your faith to seep into every area of your life, the more opportunities. We are like stewards in a King's court and those who steward well their resources are trusted with more. The challenge continues to grow! The adventure expands!



Realize what is most important

At the end of the day, and our lives, what is of utmost importance? Is it money, prestige, power or work? It boils down to people and our relationships with them. When we are in trouble, need help, or are weak, we lift each other up.

Last year was one of the most difficult of my life. Our family was burned out of our house and within a year both my 48 year old sister and 74 year old father died, leaving my younger sister and me as the remnants of my family of origin. I struggled with deep sorrow throughout the year. My husband and children, over and over again, read Scripture, prayed and encouraged me when I myself was discouraged to the core. Their faith built me up. Their friendship sustained me. Ecclesiastes 4:9 states that, "Two are better than one for they have a good return on their labor." More children means more on every level: more groceries to buy, more challenge, more demands on time and energy along with more creativity, more love, more hands to hold, more of life to embrace and more heart friendships to bring forth good return.

Having more children allows the children you have to learn to live with moder-

ation and sacrifice. I remember years ago a friend with one child came to visit. I'd baked a chicken for dinner. The only child, aged nine at the time, took a chicken breast and a thigh for himself, leaving the other eight of us to divide what was left. I realized that my children will never struggle with unaware greed. They are trained to ask if someone wants to share the last of whatever it might be. They are trained to look creatively for resources and to share the resources they have. They are trained to give as well as receive, to serve, as well as be served. Living in a large family gives them the opportunity to understand that the world doesn't revolve around them.

Having a large family is challenging and demanding. When I feel overwhelmed and burdened, it's usually because I am forgetting that life is seasonal and I start assuming that I'm called to do everything, all at once. It's usually the Holy Spirit, letting me know that there are areas of my life that are out of balance or that I need to change some things around, reassign chores or the work load, rely less on myself and more on Him

I would encourage you to say "Yes" to the wild and glorious life God waits to give you. Our culture chants the mantra of Me, Me, Me, demanding that living a life that is stingy and self satisfied is "normal" and that children are an expensive burden. Embracing children into one's home and family is about selfless living and embracing the One who has infinitely more than we need, who breathes adventure and invites us to join Him on a grand and glorious ride.

LISA NEHRING

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David and Lisa's children are Rachel (24), Kendra (20), Derek (16), Ethan (11) and Hannah (8).

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The First to Arrive & the Last to Leave!

I do not have to look back very far in my family tree to see how righteousness, or the lack thereof, has played a crucial influence upon the succeeding generations. My grandfather Campbell on my father's side died indirectly through alcohol and I am told all his brothers did likewise. They say their mother was always late with the meals and in order to placate their impatience would offer them alcohol until she dished up the food! Perhaps it was part of the Scotch tradition, and being Campbells it kind of fits!

On a positive note, my father's grandmother on his mother's side (although her husband owned a brewery) became a Christian, and as time went on became a mighty prayer warrior. The power of this righteous woman's prayers has influenced seven generations of my family to this day, including my father's conversion.

My grandfather Brown on my mother's side was a very gracious and godly man. His wife died early in their marriage and he never remarried. He later became a Christian, lived a godly life and was a very righteous influence to the nine children in my family as well as to my cousins. I was blessed to hear him share from the Bible most Sundays at our small church and he would join us occasionally on Sunday afternoons if he thought the family needed to hear more of God's Word.

Grandfather Brown had an amazing conversion and he and his brother were baptized at the same time. They became regular attendees at church. Sadly, some offense caused his brother to stop going to church and his godly influence didn't take long to diminish. Marriage break-ups have blighted their family and many no longer walk with the Lord. His wife kept attending church faithfully each Sunday but the negative effect of her backslidden husband took its tragic toll on the family.

Now, five generations away from my grandfather Brown, his side of the family is still walking in great blessing; the other brother's side has many a sad story to tell.

Righteous parenting has great power and influence. A vital part of this parent-

ing is the faithful attendance at a church fellowship, whether small or large. Together as a family we can absorb the anointing of God's presence, the power of the spoken Word and the fellowship of the saints. This keeps us from falling.

Do not even let it enter your brain that it is okay to stay away from church without serious consequences to your family and the following generations. Talking about Jesus, Luke 4:16 tells us that "as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." God chose His beloved Son to be raised with the habit of going to the house of God each week. He didn't go when he felt the urge, but because it was his custom. Not only was it his weekly habit, but the Scriptures also tell us that he was consumed with zeal for God's house! (Psalm 69:9 and John 2:17) How can we expect our children to be filled with zeal for God's house if we don't establish the habit of weekly attendance at church? Even

Where would America be today if there was no church?

the singing of hymns and worship songs enables truth to enter our hearts. We cannot bless God with our lips and not have Him minister some reward back to our souls. I always find it easier to bless and worship God in a corporate setting than on my own.

If you find your church or fellowship dry and boring, first of all check your own heart. Do you have a critical spirit? Are you easily hurt? Are you too touchy? Are you a discontented murmurer? And what sort of example do these attitudes give your children?

Maybe there is some way you could make your church better. Before we get too critical of the church and take off to be a problem somewhere else, we need to ask ourselves, "Am I the problem or am I adding life to the fellowship?" Of course, God can lead us to another church where we could be more useful and perhaps find more help for our souls, but we must always remember the old saying, "You will

never find the perfect church, and if you do, when you walk in it will be flawed!" We are all imperfect people, and in many cases, easily offended. We cannot blame the church, for it is we who are the church! If you do move to another church, maintain warm-hearted fellowship with the folk you leave behind.

It is true that many churches need revival, lack power and hospitality and are boring and unattractive. But with all their faults and failures, I believe it is still important to set a good example to your family with regular church attendance. The same problems exist in families as in churches and we certainly do not advocate staying away from family life for the same reasons.

What would it be like if all the Christians in the nation used their different excuses to stay away from church? The nation would soon deteriorate spiritually and morally—and eventually collapse. Honestly, would you like to live in a coun-

try where no one goes to church?

We should never set the example to our family that it is alright to be a recluse or a loner. Church is all about loving and ministering to one another. When we gather together, we have opportunities to fellowship, encourage and assist each other. 1 John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." And 1 John 3:16 says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

I believe that God-fearing families will want to go to church somewhere. Why do I say this? I say this because the Holy Spirit who lives in us loves His people and He wants to love them through us—with all their faults and failures. Just as each member of our family makes the family brighter with their gifts and personality, so we make the church fellowship brighter with the blessings and contributions that we and

“The first and primary key to your family’s spiritual health is a commitment to the weekly public worship services of the church.”

~ Terry L. Johnson (*The Family Worship Book*)

our children bring.

Perhaps you and your family could take care of an elderly widow. You can be a blessing to other families in your fellowship by inviting them to your home for a meal and finding out ways to bless them. It is a blessing for your growing family to invite people to your home who have godly children that you feel would make good companions for your children. If you reply, “We can’t find these families in church,” all I can say is that you are less likely to find them outside the church!

Some churches give time for their congregations to share encouraging testimonies or special needs for prayer. This is very positive and you and your family should make the most of these opportunities to lift up and encourage other families.

If you want to see more spiritual fire in your fellowship, make sure you and your family conduct Family Devotions—daily reading God’s Word and praying together. When you arrive at church, people will sense the spiritual fire that arrives when you walk in!

If we don’t praise the Lord at home during the week, we will not be exercised to do it at church. If we do not fill ourselves and our family daily with God’s Word, we will bring dryness instead of richness to the gathering. If we do not pray together as families throughout the week, we will not bring the spirit of prayer with us to church. And is not God’s house to be called a “house of prayer?” Our churches should be filled with a spirit of prayer. If they are not, it reveals we are not praying at home.

Church should be the culmination of the week of Family Devotions. As each person arrives, filled with the Word and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, they bring a powerful deposit of the presence of God. This makes for gatherings that no one would want to miss. Church was never meant to be the one source of spiritual food. Your family would soon starve if they only received physical food once a week.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so

much the more as you see the Day approaching.” If we forsake gathering together, it stands to reason there will be no context in which to consider one another, stir each other up to love and good works and to encourage one another. This exposes that we really do not practically love God’s people and the church is deprived.

Let’s consider the following points:

- 1 Church services can easily switch in temperature from “down” to “up” in just a week. This is often caused by attitudes in the pulpit or the pew as well as lack of prayer and waiting on God.
- 2 We should make allowances for different types of personalities, whether they be old fashioned or cool; loud or quiet; introverted or extroverted; intelligent or ignorant; good-looking or plain Jane or wise or foolish. Try your best to be a blessing to all of them.
- 3 Are you in your fellowship to serve or to be served? It is fine to sit and receive during times of suffering and loss, but this should not be forever. The more mature attitude is one of giving and blessing.
- 4 When looking for a church for your family, check out what they believe doctrinally. Are they compromising the truth? Can you and your family be uplifted spiritually?
- 5 Do they encourage and practice hospitality to one another? If not, you could start the ball rolling. Invite a family or lonely person home with you after church. Hospitality is contagious.
- 6 What is their stand on morality?
- 7 Are there other families that you and your family could be benefited mutually by getting together?
- 8 Do they encourage family life? Do they have negative attitudes about having babies? Do they welcome families, both large and small?
- 9 Does the leadership practice what they preach? Are they humble or proud?
- 10 Are they interested in outreach to the community and the world?

If you cannot find a church fellowship with even some of the above points, perhaps you could find three or four other families in your area that are like-minded who would be interested in starting a home fellowship. Pray about it first, of course. The downside of having church on

your own is not gathering with the saints in order to bless them.

With all my heart I believe that regular church attendance is a most important tradition to keep alive in your family. Despite all the faults and failings of the church, the positives far out-way the negatives.

Regular church attendance is not only wholesome for your family but also for the nation. It would be a sad day for America if churches were closed down and it was illegal to hold a church service in your home. Where would America be today if there was no church? I remember when living in Australia that our city by-laws forbade all home churches. We should make the most of the freedoms we enjoy.

Get your family up and dressed and be the first ones to arrive and the last to leave!



COLIN CAMPBELL

The blessings of being in the Lord’s House:
Psalm 26:8; 27:4; 36:8; 42:4; 52:8; 55:14; 65:4; 69:9; 84:14, 10; 92:13-14; 93:5; 101:7; 116:14, 17-19; 122:1; 134:1-3; 135:1-3; Isaiah 2:3; 58:13-14; Zech. 8:21; 1 Cor. 16:2 and Rev. 1:10.

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Go to www.aboverubies.org and click on *Articles and Stories*, then *Family and Church*, then click on the following articles: *Should Children be in Church?* and *Children in Church: How can we keep them Quiet?*

HELP!



Asking a friend or family member for assistance makes the hair on the back of my neck stand on end and the blood boil up to the top of my forehead! I have this strange problem. I'm fine asking for help when I think it will come as a surprise to the one I'm asking, or if I'm sure they'd be delighted to oblige and I don't appear needy or desperate. But, if I think someone thinks I need help and things appear out of my control, my asking or accepting ability is paralyzed! In my distorted thinking, if they already think I need help, I should act like I don't need any so they won't think I actually do.

I am married to an extremely helpful man. He starts the car for me on frigid mornings, shops for groceries, carries sleeping children in from the family van, does dishes and laundry... you name it. I have the most helpful human being I

know ready and willing to help me with anything imaginable and I can't even bring myself to ask him to help me open a sticky jar!

What is wrong with me? I know what it is, but it's hard to admit. It's pride. P-R-I-D-E. Ouch. Maybe I have too much pride to ever think of myself as a prideful person. It's an ugly word, named in the Bible as a downright ugly sin. I've fooled myself all these years, thinking I was just feeding my need to feel capable without asking for help. A twisted part of me thrives on carrying 10 bags of groceries into the house in two runs or less, all the while balancing a diaper bag and an infant car seat. I revel in the moment as if I've just done this grand and noble thing like a martyr in a great tale. Granted, even with my heart drenched in pride, I cherish the sight of my husband greeting me on the front

steps with eager hands ready to lighten my load.

A shocking and sad realization has come to mind. My desire to be a help to others, whether they look needy or not, is that same help others wish to bestow upon me, but to no avail. They may hear, "I've got it." Or, "I'm used to it, I can do it." And, "No thanks, it's easier if I just do it." My need to feel capable and strong has unknowingly squashed another one's need to feel helpful and needed! Upon asking God to forgive this shortcoming in my life, I decided to become a Yes Woman when it comes to humbly admitting I do indeed need help. The Bible says in Proverbs 11:2, "When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom."

I can now hear myself saying, "Yes, there is something you can help me with." And, "Yes! Would you mind chopping up some carrots for the salad?" And, "Oh yes, it would be great to drop the children off while I run to my appointment, thank you!" You see, with my new attitude put into action, I will not only be receiving some much needed assistance but I will be allowing someone else the satisfaction and blessing of giving it.

AMANDA BACON

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Jeremy and Amanda's blessings are Drew (9), Gavin (7), Morgan (5) and Annika (1).

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~ William F Buckley, Jr.

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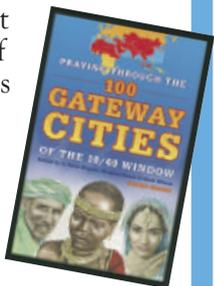
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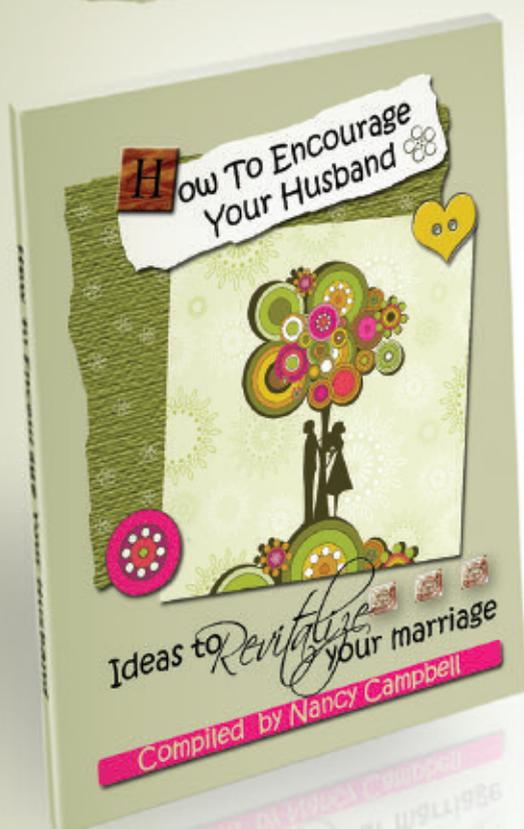
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