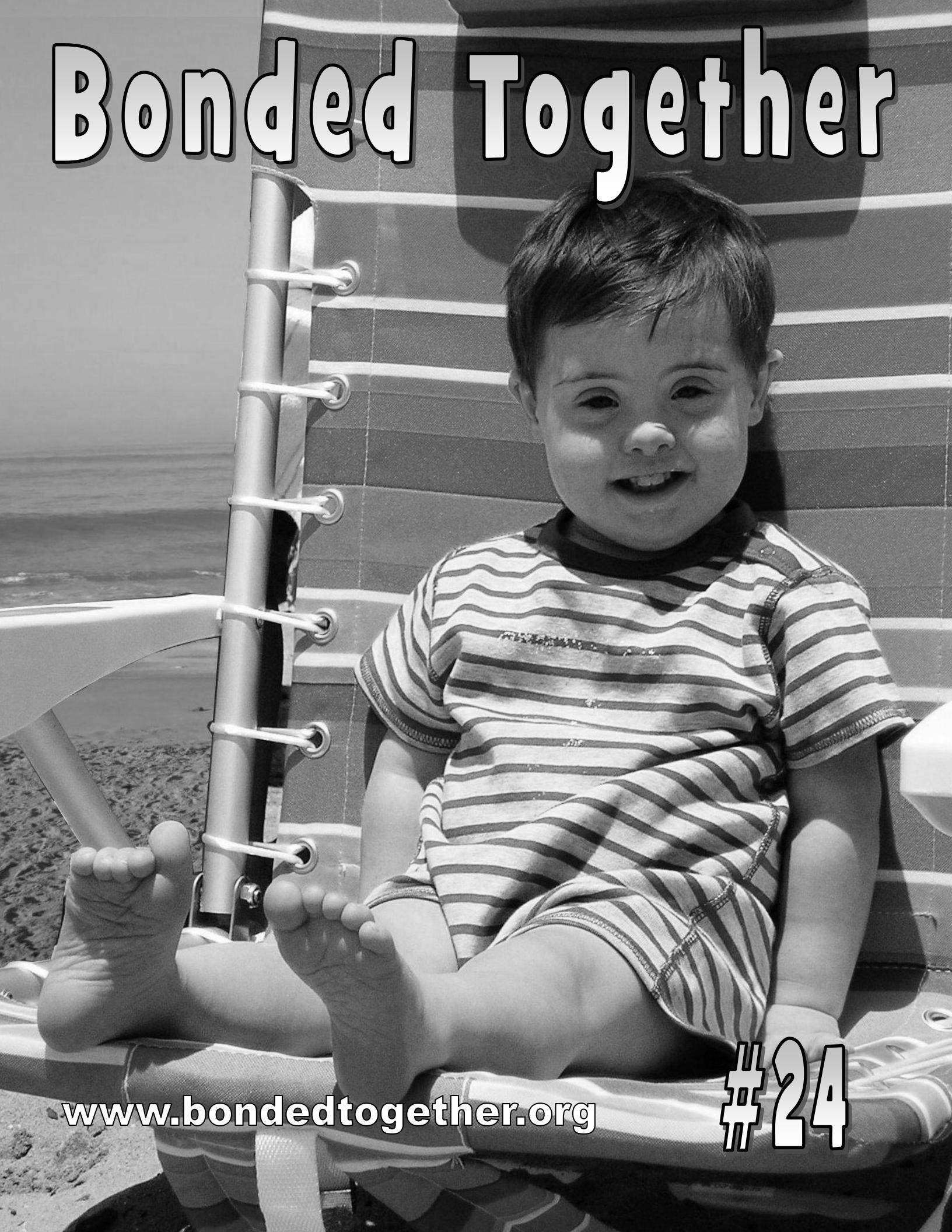


Bonded Together



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#24

Bonded Together

"...that their hearts may be encouraged, knit together in love..." Colossians 2:2

Issue 24, August 2008

Musings From The Midnight Oil

It's been two years since an issue of Bonded Together has graced your mailbox. God has done lots of exciting things in many of your lives during that time. Some of your families have been moved to new locales and embarked on new adventures. New family members have been added through birth and adoption and life continues to blur by at an incredibly fast pace. Emails fly back and forth between friends; a greeting here, a new study or news report there, Family photos at Christmas that show off the children, a bit taller and with sunny smiles. And again, life continues on. In May, Gary said to me, "You need to get an issue of Bonded Together out. I'll take the kids somewhere for fun so you can work on it." A few days after announcing that, he severely sprained his ankle merely stepping down off a pickup truck while unloading stuff after the annual Homeschool Fair that we help coordinate. Sigh. But he had put the bug in my ear to get this out and I asked for articles and pictures and everyone responded. So here it is. An effort put forth in the evenings between the hours of 11 p.m. and 1:30 a.m. The days are just so full of fun and more of that life stuff, like feeding a crew of hungry boys, using computer time ordering more food to feed them ☺, reading to little people, helping others with computer questions, answering the phone, supervising, laundry (a friend refers to the laundry as "Mount Neverrest"), you get the picture because you are all doing the same things!

We added a precious new daughter since you last heard from us, Jordan Brooke. She is making life interesting as well. God waited 16 years to bless me with a girl again because, by golly, no matter what the feminists tell you, girls are created different than boys! My boys at least, seemed to just like contentedly nursing, wherever and whenever. But Jordan requests a higher level of mental stimulation and entertainment . And I have to say, whoa, I got me a GIRL here, oh yeah, that's what they are like. I don't know if I would have been up to the challenge a few years back. God had to wait until I was "older and wiser" (no, really, I think I might be starting to get there a little☺) to stir things up a bit and work on my patience once again. As far as family dynamics go, I've joked that Mackenzie came first so all those boys can see what a bossy woman can be like since she is always having to direct them in some way and now He sent Jordan to teach the boys how to nurture a woman since she is always needing their help and entertainment (*although she is a lot bossier than Mackenzie*). Hopefully between the two sisters they get a grasp of womanhood as a whole and have an advantage over other gentleman when it comes to being a suitor themselves someday.

Recently I finished reading the first book I have read in years...and it had nothing to do with nutrition. God used "Me, Myself and Bob", by Phil Vischer (Veggie Tales creator guy), to teach me some new things, confirm things I already knew, and encourage me. The last two chapters for me were one of those, "wow, I really get it" things. You know the kind where someone else might read it and say, "huh" and you're going "But, but, don't you just GET IT!?" I am one individual person on one giant adventure in God's Universe. We all are. And all around us are ministries and businesses and telling us we need to have goals and plans and purposes. God's purpose, though, is to walk with Him daily and He will direct your paths and give you His purpose in His time and with His goals. We don't have to conjure something up to be right in the center of his will. We can just kick back and love Jesus and hang out and He'll work out the rest. Pretty cool, huh?

I hope you will enjoy this edition. I don't know if it will be two years before the next BT or not. I'm not working on a timetable. I want to hang out with my family and have fun. Just keep sending me your birth announcements and changes of address where God takes you and we'll just take it from there and I'll try to keep up on the new website. May God continue to bless all of your families! ~Trish

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Jordan, Hope, & Abigail

ALMOST ON THE COVER: It didn't seem like a difficult project. Three friends, one having her 5th, one having her 6th and one having her 7th baby all within a couple of weeks of each other wanted to take a picture of the little blessings together.

We're experienced with all this baby picture stuff! We are moms of many! Get set to capture those gummy grins!

The only problem was that the BABIES were not experienced in the group posing department. When the group was about 3 - 4 months old, we sat them on the couch. Who would have thought that our cooing, gurgling wonders would not cooperate? Well, one might grin while the other two cried or shut their eyes at the snap of the camera. But there was no great group photo.

So, as life progressed and Trish's production of this Bonded Together got pushed back, we had a chance to get the girls together again. Let me assure you, if babies won't smile at the same time at 3 months, they won't at 8 months, either!!! Separation anxiety was very evident! These little sweeties, having to look at their mommies at the distance of

4 to 5 feet away - it was so traumatic for them!!! And then there was the baby that likes to push the other ones down - and the one that wants to try to pull hair. . . . Photographed separately, I guarantee that these babies can pull off some absolutely charming smiles. But we wanted them *together*, a celebration of God blessing our three families at the same time with darling girls. And so, here it is - the evidence of a blessed September 2007 for our families and a determination to raise these precious girls to know and love our Lord Jesus. ~Kristen



The Next Decade of Adventure

By Trish Evans

In 2007, Nancy ran a small photo of the two of us together with a caption noting that we had coordinated 15 retreats in the past ten years. I received a few emails from friends trying to reconcile the math since there were more retreats than years (*we also had coordinated retreats in Washington, Northern California, a Men's Retreat with Colin and a Ladies retreat the same year as a regular Family Camp*). Going over the numbers and looking back over the years was fun as I got a chance to reflect on the fact that God had given us the privilege of being involved in this ministry for so long.

That reality hit me again while gathering birth announcements for this issue as I did my own math and saw that one couple had three children in the last three years. When we started doing these retreats, this particular couple were not our peers; they were the kids of our peers! They were teens who were coming with their moms to hear Colin & Nancy. Then they grew up and got married and now have a family, a big family by current U.S. standards. When did they go from teens to peers? I hadn't noticed the time going by. Gee, am I getting *old*? ☺?

While looking at their family, I thought about a few things God has taught me in the last eleven years through coordinating these camps; First, that He's perfectly capable of bringing who He wants to a retreat and ministering to them Himself- In fact when I am contacted by someone interested in hosting a retreat I try to reassure them that even though there is some work involved, basically they run themselves once the weekend begins. Secondly, He has shown me that He will do the work He is intending to do in families' lives despite whatever is going on in the world around us. And this extends far past a simple Above Rubies retreat and this is what I saw when I stopped and looked at the big picture of the lives of the families I've been blessed to meet each year.

God is not limited by our economy. God is not limited by our lack of ability. God is not limited by what the medical community thinks is best for someone. God is not limited by international borders, or domestic ones. He grows families in whatever way He sees fit. And the "growth" is not always in size, it's in character and in the likeness of Jesus. God's timing in all matters is His own and is not dependant on our circumstances, and He is never late and never early. And in these lessons I can be rest assured that come what may, God is totally in control and is indeed, working *all* things for good whether it appears that way or not and will continue to do so for the rest of eternity.

Lambs Sent from On High

Due to the time passed between issues of Bonded Together, the children's ages listed in the birth announcements were at the time of the birth. Also, for the purposes of posting the pdf on the website, some info and birth announcements have been changed as per the family's request.

Clayton Thomas Lamar came into the world May 25, 2006.... 18 days late, but who's counting. He tipped the scales at 10 pounds 15 ounces -- a new Lamar record. He was the fourth natural VBAC after the first pregnancy ended in C-Section. Tom & Keri Mae along with Paige-8, Logan-6, Claire-4, and Molly-2 welcomed him. (please see birth story pg.14 & announcement for new sister pg.6)

Eric Jacob Tiscareno was born at 11:39 a.m., Monday



July 31, 2006 and was 20 1/2in. long and was 9lbs 14oz!!!!!! Big sisters Andy-17, Sophia-7, and Olivia-5 are excited. Baby Grace-16 mos, a bit jealous. Big brother Luke in heaven, I am sure, blessing us all. Rigo and Connie are delighted to have this new blessing! (Tiscareno kids at left)



Ann Gladys Dixon "Annie" joined our family on September 17, 2006. Annie adores her brothers and sisters, who are: Simon-2, Lydia-4, Adrienne-7, Jonathan-10, and Aaron-14 and loving parents, Elijah & Melissa. (Annie at right, story pg.13)

" His Name Shall be John"

John Quinton H. joined the family at 9:32 p.m. Sunday October 8, 2006 . John weighed 8lbs. and 3 oz.. John means "God is Gracious" and Quinton speaks of five. John Quinton is our 5th son. He joins parents Dale & Laura and siblings, Michael-20, Emily-18, Daniel-16, Hillary-14, Trina-12, Leah-11, Benjamin-9, Timothy-7, Rebecca-5 and Laura Rose-2 (John at right.)



Josiah Valor Rodriguez was born on October 17, 2006 into the Rodriguez family. He weighed 9 # 7 oz. and was welcomed by big brothers Canaan & Elijah-5 and sister, Anaiah Grace- 2, and loving parents, Alida & Huatzin.. (Josiah at right, please see birth story pg. 11)



Sara Jane M. was born October 25, 2006 at 11:16 pm. She was our littlest baby, weighing in at 6 lbs. 8 oz. and measuring 19 1/2 inches. By God's grace she was born at home after four days of anticipation (that's another story). Our two middle girls, Mary (17) & Emily (15), were home with us and assisted in various ways. Emily was called upon to hold Sara Jane as soon as she was wrapped up, and Mary shortly after as we cleaned up and got settled. Aaron (12) and Ellyn (9) greeted her the next afternoon, snuggling on the bed with Mom and baby. Aaron was very taken with his little sister, declaring her to be pretty cute, and is alert for opportunities to hold her. Ellyn is the amazed and very attentive big sister. Biggest sister Laura (23) and biggest brother Tim (21) were home the Sunday that birth looked imminent staying with the girls while we went to the hospital to make sure all was OK late Sunday night. We returned home to find our four oldest curled up on the sofa with pillows and blankets, semi-alert to hear what was happening from Dad anytime he called, then happy to have us home with the "all's well". It was apparent that they had been in the Word and in prayer together. Monday they left early to return to classes at their colleges. They kept in touch by phone, with Mary and Emily calling their older siblings just after she was born. They returned home that first Saturday to see us and cuddle their littlest sister, with a borrowed digital camera in hand for the pics (classmates were waiting to hear and "see" little sister, praying for us as well). We have experienced so many blessings in connection with this little one and her birth! God is indeed faithful, and we have much for which to praise Him. Thanks so much for praying for us!! The prayers of the body of Christ have been the greatest blessing.

~Jill M.

Luke Turner Bowser was born on December 7, 2006 at 6:51 PM. He weighed 8lbs even. Lance & Heather welcomed him along with Briar-14, Katie-12, Jacob-11, Molly-9, Emma-7, Nathan-5, Ethan-4 & Tucker-2 (Luke at right)



Daniel William C. came into the world in December 2006 and he was 7 lbs. 2 oz. He was born at home with no complications shares his mom, Michelle,



Hope Noelle Callis born December 21, 2006. She makes ten peas in a pod and joins parents Brian & Charity and siblings Jimella-17, Eden-15, Phillip-14, David-12, Mark-7, Abigail-6, Meorah-4, Merry-3, and Titus-18 mos. (*Hope at left*)

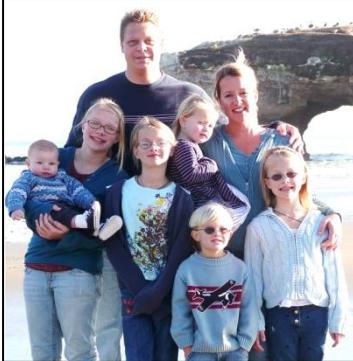
Asher Joseph Ambrose Qualls, born 1/2 in water and 1/2 on land on February 10 2007 at 6:00 p.m. weighing 8lbs and 8oz. with a back pack (cord wrapped twice around neck and around both arms like a back pack-very very scary). He joins parents, Eric & Cindy and big brothers, Levi-5 & Judah-2.

Joshua Todd

Carpenter born on August 14, 2007 at 5:00 a.m. He weighed in at 8 lbs. 13 oz. and 20 inches long. He joins sisters Emily-12, Sarah-10,



Hannah-7, Sophia-3 & brother Jonathan-4 and parents Wes & Shannon. (*Todd at left, Carpenter family above*)



Jordan Brooke Evans

joined the family on September 21, 2008 after 22 hours of labor. Mackenzie kept leaving for her regularly scheduled activities so Jordan and mom kept waiting on her to be home ☺ She weighed 8 # 11 oz. & was 21" long. She joins Gary & Trish along with Mackenzie-16, Asaph & Noah-13, Ethan-9, Morgan-7 & Josiah-nearly 4. (*Jordan left*)



Hope Alexandra Weiss entered the world on September 24, 2007 weighing 8 # 11 oz. and was 21". She joins parents Jonathan & Laura and siblings Micah-14, Judy-8, Itzhak-6, Aidan-nearly 4 and Connie-17. (*Hope at right*)



Abigail Kathleen B. We were pleased to welcome our 6th blessing on September 29, 2007. Abigail Kathleen joined our family at 10:01 am in the peaceful setting of a birth tub in the bedroom. Weighing in at 10 pounds, 6 ounces, she was 22 inches long.

My pregnancy with her seemed a little extra long; I think the heat, combined with a return of "morning" sickness and the birth of two friends' babies (who announced their pregnancies a while after I did!) made the days go by very slowly. However, it was God's grace that kept my baby protected inside me as our family battled a terrible

respiratory illness at the beginning of the month and we were all healed before Abigail came. I also had a blessed time in the Word anticipating her arrival and, while this was by no means my easiest labor it was the first where I felt really close to God throughout the whole thing. I know that He strengthened me and supported me as I gave birth to my biggest baby yet!

Abigail was welcomed by Robert and Kristen (aka daddy and mommy), Aleesha-10, Isaac-8, Amanda -6, Ian-who turned 4 on the day Abby was born - they are "birthday buddies", and Anneliese-2. We are so blessed to enjoy our happy little family and the older siblings had a hard time getting enough of their baby sister! (*Please see her hospital story pg.24*)



Jonas Michael Wiswell

Born on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 22, 2007 10:30 a.m. 6 lbs, 3 oz, and 20 inches He joins Erica and Josiah and big brother Josiah Jr-2. (*please see birth story*)

Mike and Brenda Weatherly proudly announce the arrival of their 6th baby,

Josie Rose Weatherly

Josie was born on February 26, 2008 at 3:17 a.m. She weighed 8 lbs 4 oz. and was 20 1/2" long. She was 10 days overdue and after several days of being extremely uncomfortable, I decided to drink castor oil to induce contractions and lo and behold! It worked- Contractions kicked in 10 hours after drinking castor oil and Josie was born 3 hours after that. She was my first baby to not be born in a hospital, but at a birthing center supported by midwives. It was an awesome experience to be able to labor in positions other than merely on my back, especially since I had back labor. I delivered Josie on a birthing stool and while delivering, I had forgotten that my water bag was still intact, so to my surprise

while I was in the middle of pushing, I heard this loud, "POP!" and all of the water went splattering out onto the ground and Josie rode the wave out with it! Thankfully, the midwife had quick hands to be able to catch Josie as she emerged so speedily. Josie has been welcomed by her older siblings: Andy (15), Tiffany (10), Kaylie (8), Isaac (5) and Lillia (3). What a blessing she has been!



Aiden Christopher Smith

entered the scene with fanfare on May 28, 2008 weighing in at 6 # 13 oz. He joins Trever and Amy and Andrew-10, Riley-7, Dylan-6, Josiah-4, Liberty-3 & Justice-17 mos. (*Aiden at right, please see birth story pg.9*)





Ruby Mae Lamar was welcomed by the Lamar family on June 13, 2008, the best Father's Day gift ever! She weighed 9 # 11 oz. She is a blessing to her family, Tom & Keri Mae along with Paige-10, Logan-8, Claire-6, Molly-4 & Clayton-2 (*Ruby at right*).



Shona Eileen S. was born November 22, 2007 weighing 9 lbs 6 oz. to parents Michael & Helen and joining Sean-19, Megan-17, Isla-13, Michael-11, Samuel-9, Olivia-7, James-5, & Liam-3. (*Shona at left*)

Kephas Cathal E. weighed in at 7 lbs 9 oz, 19 inches long when he was born May 4, 2008 at 3:45 a.m. Unassisted home birth. He joins Malachi-12, Josiah-10, Kateri-8, Chiara-6, Mirianna-3, & Lily-1 and parents Robert & Kimberly.



Arielle Michele Lennick was born July 20, 2008 at 8:30 a.m. at home, weighing 7 # 13 oz. and 20 ½ inches long. She joins Brent & Jeaneen's other children are Grace-7, Havilah,-6, Grant-4. (*Arielle at left*).



Stuart & Jessie Hughes have been blessed with **Selah Faith H.**, born on November 22, 2006 , weighing 8 lbs 7 oz, and

Sidonah Jane H., born on November 29, 2007., weighing 7 lbs 15oz. They join big brother Cadence, who turns 3 October 24,



In 2008. Selah's birth announcement read, "In God we have boasted all day long, And we will give thanks to Your name forever. Selah." Psalm 44:8. Godly Grandmas Cindy and Linda are very blessed by their grandchildren! (*Cadence with Selah above left, and with Sidonah, right*)



Jared-4 ½, & Jesse-2. (all pictured above).

John Terry G. born at home on June 3, 2007 to Keith & Jamie, one day after brother Jesse's 2nd birthday! Lots of love and kisses from big brothers Joel-7,

Owen Baxter S. joined our family 2 ½ weeks earlier than expected on August 13, 2006 at 10:19 a.m. He weighed 7 pounds, 12 ounces His parents, Brian and Kristin, and siblings Gavin - 3 ½ and Maddie-2, thank God for this new blessing.

This pregnancy started off hard with terrible morning and all-day sickness. Nothing I tried (or anyone suggested) worked to erase the nausea. Thankfully, it was my husband's off-season at work so he was home to help care for our two little ones as I was barely functioning some days! After the severe nausea passed, the rest of the pregnancy was great. I had energy into the third trimester and time passed quickly.

I was due on August 29, 2006 (my mom's birthday) and since my other kids were born late, I was waiting until the last minute to wash baby clothes, install the car seat, etc. On August 12, we spent the evening at a campfire on the beach with extended family. I had some fairly strong contractions while we were there but I attributed it to toting towels and toddlers across the sand.

After we got home and put the kids to bed, I laid down and the contractions slowed. However at 1 am, I awoke again with painful contractions. (I was in denial that I could possibly be in labor this early, but I knew these were more than Braxton Hicks.) I went downstairs to get a snack and wait it out. By 3 am, I woke my husband and called my mom to get ready to come stay with the kids because we had an hour drive to the hospital where my midwife practices.

By the time we arrived at the hospital, (5:30 a.m.) my labor had stalled and the nurses almost decided to send me back home! However, since they knew the distance I had traveled; they agreed to keep me "for observation." I was having contractions anywhere from four to ten minutes apart (not considered active labor), but in an hour-and-a-half, I went from three to six centimeters.

I was still very comfortable. The contractions were painful and I had to relax and concentrate to get through them, but in between, I felt fine. I was walking around the room, looking through baby magazines, eating, drinking, etc. We called home around 9 am and told my mom not to expect the baby for a while. At 7-8 centimeters, the midwife wanted my water broken. Transition passed quickly – no more painful than before, but very intense. Contractions came every 2 minutes and I would get hot flashes at the end of each one.

About an hour later, I felt a strong urge to push. My husband ran into the hall to call the nurse and midwife. Just a few pushes later (less than 10 minutes), Owen Baxter was born. My husband and I both got to reach down and help pull him out and up to my chest – such an awesome experience. He weighed only 7 pounds, 12 ounces, much smaller than my other 9 pound babies. My midwife commented that he would have been quite the whopper had I gone to term.

I was on such a high after the birth – the nurses were all impressed by how easily the labor had progressed. Hooray for natural labor! Once it was over, the pain was gone. I didn't even feel sore!

Gavin (3 ½) and Maddie (2) are so in love with their little brother. Although they both insisted throughout my pregnancy that I would be having a girl, neither would trade him for the world! Owen spoils us. He is a content little guy. Loves to sleep, loves to nurse. At his two-week check up with the pediatrician, while most babies have just regained their birth weight, Owen was a pound-and-a-half above his! God is so good! ~Kristin

I have a funny thing God shared with me, when I was about to birth my daughter Olivia (#5). I was waiting to get in the car to go to the hospital, so I pulled out my bible and said "Lord, I need to hear from you right now" and just popped open my bible, put my finger down and my eyes lit on the following verse: "Your labour is not in vain."

I just about bust a gut laughing!! Does God have a sense of humour? You bet He does! ~Allison Gobbell

AM I DEPRIVING MY CHILDREN?

By Lorrie Flem

"Do you know what causes this?" asked the lady who thought she was asking an innovative and witty (Believe me. Neither is true.) question while looking at our 6th sweet baby, Kiley

At times you want to avoid an uncomfortable question, one you would rather not answer for one reason or another. Maybe it's too personal; "Are you going to have any more children?"

Perhaps it would require too lengthy a response; "Well, we were going to add on to the house but then Jim fell off the roof and broke his . . ."

Or you are afraid the answer may offend the one who asked the question; "Do you believe women should wear pants?" asks the nice lady wearing slacks.

A good way to divert a question and possibly avoid answering it entirely is to ask a question of your own.

Recently I was questioned about the wisdom of having such a large family in today's economy. The questioner was concerned that we were probably depriving our children of vital things. Let me ask you a few questions. Not to circumvent the answer to her question, but in order to answer it.

Am I depriving my children of social interaction?

Recently we had a family with 6 children stay with us for 2 nights and 3 days. Randy and I knew this other couple well and loved them dearly. However, we had never met any of their children.

Our older children were apprehensive about this family they didn't know coming to visit in our home. Later, I heard from our friends that their older children had had the same concern. After they had been here about 30 minutes it was very apparent that everyone was getting along famously. Jay, the father visiting us said, "And they worry about our children not getting enough socialization."

Our own children live in a family with 8 brothers and sisters and a mom and a dad. They have a grandma and grandpa that live across the street and 2 more that spend a few days with them at least once a month. They go to church twice a week, if not more often, and we have a weekly Bible study in our home. We have swimming, piano, and Spanish lessons weekly and participate in a weekly homeschool co-op.

We have found that time spent with a variety of ages, like God designed the family, is healthier for positive, unselfish attitudes, than in artificial environments with children of all one age group. So am I socially depriving them by surrounding them with these people and activities?

They learn on a daily basis the fun that can be had with people of all ages and the give and take that goes with it. They are learning to understand that their activity desires are not always going to be met. Sometimes what they want is not the best choice for our family. They are learning about real life.

Am I depriving my children of love and attention?

I make sure to have some one-on-one time with each of them weekly. John loves to keep me up with current events. Levi and I can wash dishes together. Drew often accompanies Jay and I on errands. Dessaly folds laundry with me. Kiley and I go high and

low together and get the dusting done in half the time. Haley likes to walk up to the mailbox with me. Luke loves to sing songs with me. During all of these we have time to talk alone together. I give them individual attention whenever one of them is hurt, disobedient, or tells me that they need it either verbally or non-verbally.

Perhaps the best answer to this question would be to tell you that each time we have had a new baby the other children embrace the newborn with open arms. They argue over the honor of holding him and later playing with him. My little ones look up to their older siblings and the older ones happily help care for their needs, most of the time with no parental prompting. They learn from living in a large family that their needs are not always going to be met as soon as or in the way they want. They are beginning to learn that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Am I depriving my children of a 'normal' family life by having a large family?

Soon after James was born our nearly sixteen-year-old son, John answered this question eloquently, "You know Mom, before James was born I was nervous about our big family. We already stick out so much in public and another baby would even make it worse." I'll remember this poignant moment the rest of my life, then he lovingly gazed down on his fourth brother closely cuddled in his arms against his chest, "I hope we have a whole bunch more."

In a large family children learn that life does not revolve around them, their desires, or their preferences exclusively. They learn that mommy and daddy's love for them, and their love for each other is not diluted by having more children, but that it is a given they will always be able to count on. They are learning about real life.

Am I depriving my children by having them eat a banana or an apple for a snack instead of a bag of potato chips?

I try to feed them the best fuel for their growing bodies. Which of these is superior? Child obesity is a problem on the increase in the United States. By cutting back on just a single bag of potato chips each week you will save \$104.00 a year and make the better choice. Their taste buds do not always call for the best decision. They are learning that what we want is often not the wisest choice. They are learning about real life.

Am I depriving my children by having them drink water with each meal instead of milk, juice, Kool Aid, and soda?

Americans don't drink nearly enough water. Besides, who made water? Do you want to argue with Him? By cutting out just one glass of soda per person per day would save \$136.87. For a family of our size with 9 drinkers – well of soft drinks – \$1231.83 a year would be saved to say nothing about our health. They are learning that the smart financial decision does not always involve large sums of money; a penny saved is a penny earned. They are learning about real life.

Am I depriving my children by not taking them out to eat at fast food restaurants very often?

The quality of this food is appallingly low and the caloric content is atrociously high. Not to mention the mixed message I send by trying to teach them to make healthy eating choices by encouraging them to snack on carrot sticks and then feeding them French-fries.

Am I depriving my children of a 'normal' family life by having a large family?

Besides, I am blessing my children with a healthy marriage relationship. By not grabbing a bite to eat for lunch or a pizza on the way home even once a week at \$10.00, I save \$520.00 a year and Randy appreciates that. They are learning that a woman can be a helpmate to her husband in the decisions she makes. They are also learning that the advertising we are surrounded with is not necessarily showcasing the smartest thing to buy. They are learning about real life.

Am I depriving my children by not buying them every toy they like?

Do I let 3-year-old Lukey eat all the chocolate he wants? Not unless I want him to be sick! I don't give my children everything they want. It isn't good for them and as a mother who loves her children, I try to give them what is good for them rather than what they want. Besides, watch them and you will see that they tend to play with a few favorite toys over and over. They are learning that often less is more. They are gaining a valuable life skill, the joy that comes from sharing your blessings. They are learning about real life.

Am I depriving my children by not purchasing each new piece of attire they see and want?

Do I buy them the sweater that "everyone else has?" Not if I want them to learn that Godly attire is more often than not, not "like everyone else's." Just like with toys, they tend to wear a few beloved pieces of clothing anyway and they are learning how to carefully pick what to spend money on. They are learning that new clothes are new whether they come from the local thrift store, a friend, or a trendy department store. They are learning about real life.

Am I depriving my children by not buying them each a car or paying for each of them to go to college?

Speaking from personal experience here, buying them a car does not come with a guarantee that they will learn to give it the best care so that it lasts long and serves them well. And 4 years of private, liberal arts college education does not ensure they will learn well or even appreciate the opportunity being handed to them. And a college degree does not equip you with the most important knowledge, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In fact, it probably has the opposite effect. Cars and a college education are probably more effective when they are paid for, at least in part, by the student. They will become more aware of what a dollar is really worth while learning that you have to work for what you want. They are learning about real life.

Am I depriving my children by choosing to stay home with them?

I don't work outside of our home in part to protect them from the detriments that come from having lots of interaction with children of the same age, multiple cans of soda pop, bags of potato chips or Big Mac's a week, expensive (not necessarily the best because expensive is not synonymous with better) toys and clothing, and becoming latch-key children.

If I were to go to work so my children can have these things, the world would not consider me to be depriving them by being out of the home. If I become so active in church and other commitments outside of the home that I am not there to kiss Haley's owies and listen to Drew's jokes, even most of my Christian acquaintances would not consider me to be depriving my children. But I know the truth. I would be.

So am I depriving my children? Am I aware of what causes this?

Thank you for asking and yes, I most certainly am.

Lorri Flem is the publisher of: **TEACH Magazine**
18016 W Spring Lake Dr . Renton, WA 98058,
www.teachmagazine.com

For Ciarra

By Michelle Harmon



I wish the world could see you as I see you
Wish they knew the joys you've brought to me
So many people quick to judge us
and see you as someone who shouldn't be

They tell me that your life is not worth living
if they were I, they would have never let you live
They cannot know the thing it is that we know
They will never know how much you have to give

They talk a lot of sacrifice and burden
They imagine that your being is our loss
How can they know you saved me when you found me
when I never even knew that I was lost.

True enough, my world has changed forever
nothing in it is as it was so long ago
Your entry in our world has changed so many things
but none so much as they have changed my soul.

Why do we live our lives at all, then
if there is some race that we must finish first
Why do we deny ourselves it all when
we drown so that we may quench our thirst

You taught me to stop and smell the tulips
they are different than the roses, this is true
their scent is in my every pore now
I never would have known them without you

To all the many people who would not choose you
who think your life is somehow tragedy
I say you have outlived them and outlived them
I am grateful God chose you just for me

You love your life and everyone that's in it
you shine your light without knowing that you do
Illuminate the darkness with your sparkle
my child, my love, my life, thank God for you.

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Amy and Aiden's Great Adventure

By Amy Smith

It never ceases to amaze me how completely different all of my labors and deliveries have been. Our latest experience was no different in that respect. Aiden Christopher Smith was born on May 28th at 7:02 am. And weighed in at 6 pounds 13 ounces and was 20 inches long. He also happened to be our first baby who was not born in your typical hospital setting. We decided to have him at a birthing center in Savannah.

It was a rather tricky decision for Trever and I to make, because I have had two very fast labors, and we were concerned about the very real possibility of delivering our baby off of the side of the road on the one-hour trip to the birthing center. God definitely must have a sense of humor here. On the night of May 27th, I told Trever that I was having occasional contractions and was in no pain, but felt "pressure". He decided it would be better to be safe rather than sorry and we made the one hour drive down to the birthing center to get checked out by the midwife.

She asked all the typical questions but I could tell she was looking at me and thinking, "Lady, this is your seventh baby. Don't you know by now you are NOT in labor?" Still, I insisted I was feeling pressure and she decided to pacify me by doing a cervical check. Her eyes widened and she said, in classic Georgia drawl, "Well hon, the reason you're feeling so much pressure is because you are dilated to 8 centimeters!" Trever danced a little jig and I went into denial. 8 centimeters? No way. I just wanted to go home and go to bed and I was fully expecting her to tell me I was at 4 and to get some rest. I tried to convince her I should just go home and get some sleep but that didn't fly. I didn't particularly feel like having a baby right there and then but at the same time I kind of thought, well, if I'm already at 8 cm, and it doesn't even hurt, how hard can this be?

The thought that pain might come caused me to think about popping some vitamin c, as insurance you might say. So after doing that, Trever and I started walking to speed things along. We walked. And walked. And walked. And just for a change of pace, we walked some more. Just about the time I had used up all the miles on my new balance shoes, the midwife decided to go ahead and give

me some homeopathic herbs to bring on some stronger contractions. I was supposed to take a dose every 15 minutes for 2 hours. That is,

unless they picked up right away and I didn't need all the doses.

Yeah right. So two hours later I finished my last dose and the contractions picked up. OK, they were starting to hurt at this point and I was fantasizing about an epidural. I started feeling a little pathetic knowing they didn't give them at the birthing center, and started trying to recall all the reasons I wanted a natural birth. Would you believe I couldn't think of one right then and there??? Trever was wonderful through all this. He walked with me, brought me drinks, rubbed my back until I threatened him within an inch of his life if he dared touch me again, and stayed by my side through the entire thing.

The days dragged on (OK hours, but it FELT like days!) and I was running out of things try. I had worn holes in my tennis shoes, sat on the labor ball (who says squatting speeds labor!?!?) gotten into a shower and as a last resort, I got into the whirlpool tub they had dubbed the "quadural". They bragged that it took away at least HALF of the pain. Yeah well, that would have been good right about then. Lies, lies I tell you. Transition hit me hard in the tub of torture. I do believe at one point I looked at my husband and asked him to hold me under until I lost consciousness, but he refused to comply. Talk about not coming



The Smith Family

through when you need him to!

After sitting in there for about 20 minutes, I decided I would rather die in the bed, so Trever and the midwife helped me to transfer. I laid there and effectively ignored anything the midwife told me. (Why they feel they need to talk so much at this stage I will never understand.) She suggested several position changes, which I ignored completely, until she tried to help me move, at which point, in typical exorcist fashion, my head started spinning around and I spewed projectile vomit across the room. OK so not really but I did yell with amazing force DON'T TOUCH ME! I think at this point I started grunting and pushing and having had delivered a baby or two before mine that darn midwife seemed to know exactly what was happening and wanted to see what was going on. This was when my husband betrayed my trust completely. I think she knew what with my adrenaline rush she was no match for me, so she enlisted his help. She told him to hold my leg so she could see. I yelled out "TREVER DON'T YOU DO IT! DON'T TOUCH ME!!" He looked back at the midwife, scared to move no doubt. She said "Trever hold her leg." And he did! Traitor!

Aiden was crowning and I had forgotten completely I

was having a baby since I was certain I was being torn in two or ripped apart by wild beasts or some other such fate. My body took over and apparently I was pushing too hard or too fast or something because Jill started saying "Amy, Amy , Amy slow down- stop pushing or you are going to tear." Right. Didn't care at this point. She held his head in a little so he didn't come out too fast but in two pushes his head was out, followed by another push for the shoulders. He started crying but he couldn't compete with me. I was bawling like a baby and it was not from being sentimental. I was exhausted. It was 7:02 I in the morning and I had gotten to the birthing center, dilated to 8 cm., at 10 pm. The night before. It had taken almost 8 hours to go from 8 to 10.

Remember how we were afraid to give birth off the side of the road? Pretty funny huh? As a side note, he is beautiful and sweet and wonderful and worth it all. Being able to take him home only hours after birth, to not be hooked up to an IV or confined to a bed, all that was great. But I still think it will be a little while before I can sit around a group of women and have them tell me I have a higher pain threshold than they do or how their labors are just too hard for them to not have drugs or some other such nonsense. It hurt like a son-of-a-gun, and quite honestly thinking about doing it again too soon kind of scares the heck out of me. I admit it, I'm a wuss. But at least I'm a truthful wuss. A truthful wuss with a gorgeous baby boy... Again ☺

P.S. We now have 6 boys and 1 girl! God is good.

who needs turkey when you can have a large game hen?

By Erica Wiswell

At 7:50 am, I woke up to a considerably strong contraction. I wasn't sure if it was the beginning of labor, but I was sure that it was different than the cramping I had been feeling in the previous weeks, and it was stronger than a Braxton Hicks contraction. I tried to go back to sleep.

Within ten minutes, I'd had a second contraction. I woke up my husband, Josiah, to tell him that I thought I might be in labor. We both decided that I should take a shower, to see if I was really in labor. I went into the bathroom, sat down on the toilet, and sent my mom a text message to let her know that I was probably in labor. Then I called our midwife, Katie, to let her know.

We were in charge of mashed potatoes for Thanksgiving dinner. We already had the potatoes peeled and cut from the night before, so I told Josiah, "Maybe we should start the potatoes." He laughed and told me, more or less, that I was nuts! Josiah Jr. came in five and a half hours, so we were expecting a quick labor this time too. There was definitely not time for potatoes!

Before I even got in the shower, I was sure that my labor was in full swing; my intestines emptied out, and assured me

of that (sorry for the lovely information)! I told Josiah that he needed to get out of bed to start getting things ready. Two-year-old Josiah Jr. woke up then too, but thankfully, he was happy to watch *Finding Nemo* and let us take care of things.

My contractions continued in the shower, but I was able to relax well through them. The warm water felt great! I didn't want to get out, but I needed to, so that there would be enough hot water left to fill up the birth tub.

When I got out of the shower, I was able to blow dry my hair between contractions. By the time I was finished blow drying, my contractions were getting really close together, and they were getting quite intense. I headed to the bedroom, but had to stop to lean on Josiah to get through the contraction. I already the urge to push, and did push a tiny bit during that contraction.

I put on my nightgown, lay down in bed, and told Josiah that I needed to get in the tub as soon as possible. I continued to labor there, but my contractions were getting incredibly intense.

Josiah called Katie to see if I could get in the tub, and he let her know that I was already feeling the urge to push. Josiah couldn't check the water temperature because our thermometer wasn't working, so Katie didn't want me to get in until she arrived, which would be soon.

At about 9:45 a.m., Katie arrived. She asked me to wait until she brought all of her equipment in to get in the tub. I was having a really hard time waiting for the water, but I knew that she was worried I'd deliver in the tub before she was ready.

When Katie had brought everything in, she took out her thermometer to check the water; her thermometer wasn't working either! She came in to tell me that, because she couldn't check the water temperature, she really didn't want me to get in the tub, for my safety and for the

baby's (if it was too warm, we ran the risk of me hemorrhaging; if it was too cold, we ran the risk of the baby trying to breathe underwater). Because our heater is out of commission, the room was cold, so she didn't think that she could accurately test the water temperature with just her finger. She said that I could labor in the tub, but delivery was going to have to happen on dry land. I wasn't happy about the news, but I decided not to get into the tub, because I knew that I was not going to want to get out, and I was going to need to push very soon.

In the meantime, my contractions continued to get more intense, and I had a couple more small pushes. I knew that we were getting close, and was trying not to stress about not being in the tub.

My mom and sister had arrived shortly after our Katie, at about 9:55. At some point, probably around 10:10, it was decided that my mom would run to the grocery store (less than a mile away) to get a thermometer.

At approximately 10:15, I had a very strong contraction, gave a good push, and my water broke. I announced to Katie that it was breaking as it happened, and then that I felt the head coming (I found out later that she found my labor narration rather amusing). I told my sister that it was time to grab the video camera, because the baby was going to be arriving shortly. Someone called my mom to tell her to forget

about the thermometer and come back, or she was going to miss the birth. With the next push, the baby's head was crowning. I had a good ten minute break before the next contraction.

I just rested as much as I could, and prayed for it to be over soon! I was lying on my side, and Josiah was holding my leg up in the air. It was uncomfortable, and I told my midwife, "Katie, it hurts!" Trying to cheer me up, she said, "Well, sweetie, having a baby usually *does* hurt."

The next contraction came, and with one push, the baby's head was out. I reached down to feel his head, and kept saying, "That feels so much better!" As the baby's head rotated, Josiah looked at him and said, "Hello!" Josiah Jr. called out, "Mananas!" (his word for nursing) thinking that the baby was surely ready to nurse already.

I didn't have to push again yet, but Katie asked me to start pushing. I told her that I didn't want to, but she said that I needed to anyway (I found out later that the baby was making respiratory efforts, and because of that, she wanted him out right away; if he had tried to breathe on the perineum and was unsuccessful, he might just give up, and then need to be resuscitated after delivery).

I gave two good pushes, and the baby was out! My mom announced that the baby was a boy, and I picked him up, amazed at how tiny he was! We later realized that we forgot to check the time of birth, but based on some phone calls that had been made (thank you Lord for modern technology and cell phone call logs!), we decided that he was born at 10:30 a.m.

Josiah Jr. was very excited about his new brother, and came over to give him kisses. He kept sweetly saying, "Baby, baby."

I'd had my eyes closed since my water broke, so I didn't realize until after I was holding the baby that our friend Tiffany had made it just in time to take pictures. Apparently, she had walked in just as the baby was crowning! I was so happy, because I really wanted there to be pictures, especially of those first few intimate moments after delivery.

The baby latched on for the first time with a perfect latch! He nursed for a while, happily, and it was just wonderful.

When the cord had stopped pulsing, Josiah did the honors of cutting. Around 10:50 or so (again, we forgot to check the time), I had a contraction and delivered the placenta. I announced that one too!

Everyone and everything was just perfect, despite the minor change of plans with the birth tub. The baby was 6 lbs, 3 oz, and 20 inches. He had perfect color and a wonderful cry. He was (and still is!) just beautiful!

My perineum was perfectly intact, but a deep pocket tear from Josiah Jr's birth opened up again (it had not healed correctly), and needed to be re-stitched.



Josiah Jr. & Jonas

Thankfully, it healed perfectly this time, which is what we prayed for! I never thought I'd be happy to tear during childbirth, but I was blessed by this one!

I cannot say enough how perfect this birth was. It was a huge blessing to have a midwife that prayed for us and with us many times during our short labor, and after. She even prayed for healing after the sutures were in, which was a huge encouragement. I truly believe that she was ordained by God for our birth, especially because of the situation with the tub. Because our baby tried to breathe on the perineum, I personally feel that he surely would have done so if the water were too cold, which would have been a scary situation.

Our little one went five days without a name, but we finally decided on Jonas Michael. We were between names, and on the way to the pediatrician's office, I prayed for God to give me a sign, so that I would have a name besides "baby Wiswell" for the nurses to put on the charts. I was driving with Josiah's grandmother, but I hadn't told her about my prayer. She told me that she saw a dove as we were driving; the Hebrew meaning of Jonas (Jonah) is dove!

I read recently that Jonas also means "peaceful being". That could not be more true for my little boy! He is the happiest, most peaceful, most content baby that I have ever met. We are all so in love with him, and we thank God every day for our little Thanksgiving baby!

PUSHING ALL THE WAY

By Alida Rodriguez

I had been praying/researching having an unassisted homebirth/waterbirth. My dear husband was not at all interested in that, but understood the importance of laboring at home to avoid unnecessary medical intervention. With this pregnancy I have felt so private. The thought of being monitored, poked and prodded and bothered during labor seems SO unnatural and NOT at all ideal. I REALLY didn't want to end up at the hospital with bad nurses, or offered drugs or bothered in anyway.

He agreed to me laboring in a birth pool, but wanted to end up at a hospital for delivery. I had the high hopes that he'd get into me laboring at home and just decide to deliver at home. I had all the supplies on hand Just in case we decided the hospital was too far 😊.

Monday evening I was having contractions that fizzled out. I called my mom to let her know we may need to drop off the kids in wee hours of the night should labor arise. Early Tuesday morning around 1:27 am I started having more contractions. I had been cleaning the last few hours

and had a spotless home and felt quite prepared. I listened to the Hypbirth CD once or twice more and tried to sleep (very difficult). I looked over at hubby sleeping peacefully and was envious.

Around 3:00 am I was having contractions that just felt like the real thing. I called my mom to tell her hubby would drop off the kids. We got the kids into the van and hubby dropped them off around 3:30 am. I got into a nice warm bath and relaxed a bit. I started tidying up again and feeling very pleased with my efforts. :-)

Hubby got back and couldn't get back to sleep. He faithfully started setting up the birth pool. The contractions were pretty intense from the beginning, but not unbearable. I could sleep through some of them... I was pretty tired from the lack of sleep the last few days of being sick and not getting rest. I was regretting my cleaning spree and wishing I'd had slept instead of obsessing over how things looked.

I laid in bed a felt a gush and thought my water had broken. It was my mucous plug. 5:30. I hung out on the toilet for awhile upstairs sitting backwards on the toilet with a pillow facing the wall. Hubby watched movies.

I alternated between different beds in our home and leaning on the toilet as I was very uncomfortable and felt a lot of pressure. Pool was all set but I waited to get in so as not to slow down labor. Finally around 8:30 a.m. I slipped into the pool. Hubby had been boiling water and filling it with a hose and was ever so careful to keep it at just the right temperature! What a sweetie. He took a nap. The contractions were coming every 2-6 minutes and I was irritable. Time just seemed to be standing still. Throughout the day I went from the beds upstairs to the bathroom and pool, to walking outside in our yard and in our small downstairs bathroom, with my back against the toilet, head down, leaning against the walls, with the lights out (very calming). The contractions/surges seemed very intense. I was breathing through each of them and trying to visualize my baby coming down the birth canal. I would imagine my body going limp and numb during the contraction. This worked ok for most of the labor. Hours started going by. I started feeling panicky. If labor was this intense now, I feared how it would be in transition. It bothered me that hubby could eat, and I couldn't stomach one bite. He also could watch TV when it just seemed to agitate me... then seeing him nap while I was breathing through a painful contraction... Arrggg. It didn't seem fair at all.

The pool seemed too hot. I got out, laid on the couch... all of the sudden I felt this slight odd sensation... I jumped into the pool. The next contractions were HARD! I couldn't think or concentrate. I started crying/whining a bit, then what I did next freaked my husband out. I started pushing. He started freaking out telling me to stop. I told him I

wasn't. My body was doing it for me. I was very much in transition.

He started running around throwing the bags in the car. I couldn't move. I was paralyzed with the thought of moving during a contraction, or having a car baby ☺.

I stripped out of wet clothes, threw on a robe, NO shoes, and we hopped into the car. I didn't think we would make it. Contractions still came every 3-5 minutes apart, and each time my body would give a little push. (The urge to push was SO strong) In fact it seemed that the involuntary push was the only thing that caused the contraction to go away for a few minutes! I didn't see HOW

we would make it there without me delivering this baby.

We finally pulled up to the hospital me stark naked but with a robe on, no shoes mind you... and leaking... In the hospital waiting room! I barked that we're in labor and I was pushed in a wheel chair to labor and delivery. They didn't seem to catch on that we were ready NOW until I told them I was going to start pushing. This turned into a hysterical comical scene about 5



Alida Rodriguez & children

women running around like chickens with their heads cut off in every direction... The nurses were setting the room up. One of them said, "I see a head!" The urge to push kept coming so I'd push, and each time I'd push they'd all in unison scream "NO PUSHING! BREATHE!" It was so funny!

I didn't care. I was not waiting for anyone. My doctor came down and enthusiastically threw gloves on and told me to do whatever felt right. They were all amazed that my bag of water was protruding out; so the whole way there what I felt I was pushing out was the bag (I actually thought it was the head). It would come out a bit, and then go back in. She asked if I wanted to touch the bag, and I just said NO, though now I wish I had taken pictures. ☺ They cut the bag and my body started to push him out! I think his head was out in one or two contractions! Almost immediately my doc asked if I could push the shoulders out... My body instantly began. I joined in with what my body was doing and he easily slipped out! It was over SO quickly! The placenta just came out on its own a couple minutes later. My little guy was so precious!

In hindsight, I wish hubby would have filmed it... but we were literally at the hospital about 5-8 minutes until I pushed out the baby. I got many cheers from all the nurses there. I was quite the story about how I came in pushing ☺. We are home the next day. I had NO tears, not much bleeding and felt GREAT! I didn't even FEEL like I delivered a baby (with the exception of the contractions I still got) God has been SO merciful to allow me to labor completely at home in water as I wished. It has been an unforgettable AMAZING experience! To God be the glory! My husband was such the trooper! and the kids were fantastic.

ANNIE'S BIRTH STORY

By Melissa Dixon



Annie & Adrienne

It's been over 7 months since Annie's amazing arrival, and I am finally getting around to writing it! I'm still in awe of the way God came through for Annie and me, and answered my prayers for her birth.

As usual (for birth stories, anyway!), my birth history influenced a lot my decisions and choices during Annie's

pregnancy. I've had one c-section (almost 15 years ago), three home VBAC's, a

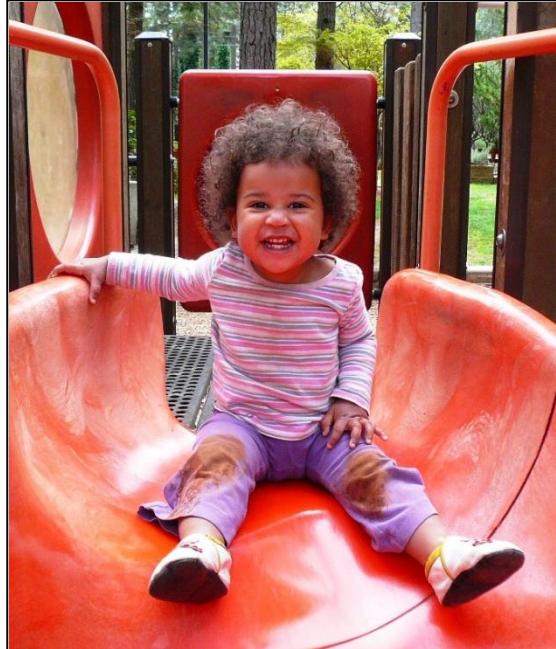
planned home VBAC turned hospital transport that ended in a nice, unmedicated VBAC, and Annie's recent home VBAC. My previous labor with my three year old, Simon, was an excruciating twenty-two hour ordeal, mainly because he was in a posterior/asyntotic position, and after that I honestly wondered if I ever wanted to have any more children. None of my labors have been what I would describe as painless or easy, but Simon's was *really* hard. So, when my cycles came back when he was around 18 months old, we actually tried to use NFP (loosely), as I really did not want to think about another pregnancy/birth at that point. It seemed to be working fine, and then in January, my period was late. I waited for it to start for ten days (obviously there was some denial going on!), and finally went out and bought a pregnancy test, which turned positive the moment I used it.

I have to confess some feelings of surprise and apprehension as I stared the positive pregnancy test-thinking back to Simon's birth and feeling a sense of dread at the thought of another labor. This time I was determined to do everything I had ever read or heard would help with good baby position and shorter labor, and I did! I walked two miles per day five-six times a week, had weekly adjustments with a chiropractor starting in the twenty-eighth week of the pregnancy, *never* sat in my recliner-always sat upright and faithfully slept on my left side, prayed for a nice birth (constantly!) and of course ate healthfully. Still, though, I constantly had to push down the fears that kept rising when I thought about labor. I felt God saying to me "I am doing a new thing" throughout my pregnancy, and tried to cling to Him and trust Him, but I still struggled. I have to confess that I even struggled with the temptation to just go to the hospital and have a c-section (which is really weird for me, as I never even considered that with my other pregnancies!), but I knew deep down that I should plan another home birth. I'm just so grateful that God is faithful when we are faithless and that He was always there, leading me along even when I was so blinded by fear and anxiety I could barely think straight!

My due date of September 12th came and went uneventfully, which surprised me-I thought that with all the walking I did, my

baby would surely come on or before her date! I had a prenatal appointment on the 14th, and on the drive home I started having regular, noticeable contractions, but nothing I would describe as painful, more like a tightening, pulling sensation. Those continued throughout that day, and the next day. Friday night (the 15th), the contractions started getting stronger, but I was still able to relax and sleep (for the most part, anyway!). On Saturday my husband and kids had planned to do some shopping (part of his idea to stock up before the birth!), and while my original plan had been to stay home and rest, I decided to go-I thought it might be good for me to get out of the house, instead of sitting around alone with my thoughts. I have to confess that

at that point I was a little nuts, desperately trying to push away fears and thinking of every bad birth outcome I'd ever read or heard of. So I went shopping with them, and that afternoon (while sitting in the car in the Best Buy parking lot!) I felt a weird discharge, so I reached down



Annie Dixon

to see what it was (thank goodness I was in my van when it happened!), and saw that it was my mucus plug. We went home shortly after that and I spent the rest of the afternoon/evening resting, although I was too "keyed up" to really sleep.

So my husband fixed dinner for all of us, we got the kids to bed around 8:30 PM, and then he gave me a great back rub, which was SO relaxing that by 9:00 PM, I was ready to go to sleep. So we turned off the lamp, and right after that I had a rather strong contraction that I felt down into my lower back. I immediately thought, "uh oh, those aren't going to peter out", and I was right. So my husband turned the lamp back on (even though I told him he could just go to sleep-he was too excited!), and he read and every 15 minutes when I had a contraction, I'd get up on my hands and knees and he pressed my lower back. The contractions were far enough apart (15 min.) for me to doze in between them, which was nice. So that's how I spent the first 4 hours of my labor, dozing and then getting on all fours for contractions, and it really seemed to fly (never a bad thing!). The contractions were strong but not horrible, and the hands and knees position really helped.

At 1:00 AM, I told my husband to just go to sleep, as I could handle my labor by myself, and I didn't know how long it was going to last and I didn't want him to be exhausted (plus I actually really wanted to labor alone for a while). So he went to sleep, and I took a blanket out to the living room and laid on the couch (using a pile of clean laundry for a "pillow"!) and rested, and during contractions I rolled onto the floor on my knees and

rested my elbows on my kids' rocking horse ☺. So I labored like that for a while, in my living room with just my cat (who was looking concerned as I was pretty loud during contractions!), and by 3:00 AM the contractions were intense, although not terribly close together (maybe 5-10 min. apart). I called my midwife around 3:00AM, and told her that I was in labor, but that I didn't think I was "close" [to the birth]. I had to put the phone down during a contraction, and when she heard me, she said that she would come on up. So I woke my husband up and told him, "I'm not doing too well, don't be upset if I want to go to the hospital". Can you say IRRATIONAL???? I was thinking that I was going to be having those intense contractions all day! So he got up and reassured me that I was doing fine and said "let's just wait till Paula [midwife] gets here and see what she says". So he started putting pressure on my lower back during contractions, which really helped, and at 4:00 AM Paula got here.

At that point I was really glad to see Paula, as the contractions were intense. So Paula checked baby's heart tones, which were great, then at my request did a vaginal exam, and got the strangest look on her face and said, "I can't find your cervix!". What great news!! I was complete with a thin anterior lip-that gave me the boost I needed to keep going. I labored for a little while in some different positions (standing with one leg propped on the couch, sitting on the birth stool, and then my favorite, all fours), and Paula asked if I wanted to get in my tub. Yes, I did! So she filled it while I labored in my bedroom, and by that time the contractions were so intense that I was sweating and having trouble breathing through them (I got light headed after one of them, but was fine after a minute). I got in my tub and had another contraction which felt so much more manageable in the hot water! So I positioned myself with a jet on my lower back and had a few more really intense (OK, painful!!!) contractions, but the water was very helpful and relaxing in spite of the pain. Although it didn't stop me from whining "I can't do this" several times ☺.

Then, when another contraction started, I felt pressure, so I gave a strong push, felt my tissues burn and fan out, and my baby's head was out!! I was shocked and ecstatic-I reached down to feel her head, which was still inside the intact bag of waters so it felt like it was in a water balloon, and I thought, "I'm about to see my baby!".

My husband laughed and my midwife was shocked that it happened so fast; then I gave one more push, and there she was! I immediately lifted her tiny, curled body and said, "it's a girl!" I was trying to lift her up, but her cord was around her neck, so Paula said, "wait a minute, let go for a second!", and she unwrapped the cord and I lifted her up to my chest and admired her and talked to her as she opened her eyes and looked up at me. Such wonderful bliss. After a few minutes I started nursing Annie, who was a nursing champ from the beginning! She latched on like the pro she was and nursed for a solid 1 ½ hours! Paula wanted to drain some of the bath water so she could more accurately measure my bleeding (which was fine, she just

wanted to make sure), and after a bit we ended up just draining the tub and putting a chux pad under me. My husband woke all the kids up and they came in to see their new sister, and of course were surprised and excited as could be-they went to sleep and woke up to a baby! Oh, Annie was born at 5:45 AM, 1 hr and 45 min. after Paula got there, about 8 hrs and 45 min. after the first "real" contraction! Praise God, I prayed for an 8-10 hour

labor all during my pregnancy, and in His incredible mercy and grace He answered my prayers!

After an hour or so my behind started to hurt from sitting in my bath tub with no water, so my husband & Paula helped me out of my bath tub and onto my bed-without Annie ever unlatching! So I nursed in my bed for a while and we all visited and made the wonderful phone calls to our families to announce Annie's arrival, and after about 2 hours my husband cut the cord, and I *finally* unlatched Annie and let my husband hold her while I sat on the birth stool to push the placenta out. It came out without any problem, although I hate having to push after a birth-it

doesn't seem fair! Then Paula did the newborn exam, and we found that Annie weighed 7 lbs even, was 20.5 in. long, and had a 13.5 inch head circumference. And in spite of a lightning fast pushing stage, I had no tears! We were and are so thankful and overjoyed for such a wonderful, happy birth and beautiful baby-and to think that if I'd gone to an OB, I would've had no other choice but to schedule a c-section at 39 weeks! Oh, and I have posted some photos from Annie's birth and a recent family pic in the photos section under "Melissa D." If you made it this far, thanks for reading, and I sure hope this will encourage someone, just to be reminded that our bodies can work in spite of our fears!

www.dixonfamilyblog-melissa.blogspot.com

From Weeping To Reaping: Our Fifth Child

By Keri Mae Lamar

...kept by the power of God through faith...Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations...1 Peter 1:5-6

These are the words I read on the 23rd, and I pondered how even though I was being sorely tempted to give up and just schedule surgery, the job I was being given was to "greatly rejoice", not react in doubt. I was also reminded within the greater passage (1 Peter 1:3-10) that I do love Jesus (v.8), and that He has already given me a lively hope (v.3) and lots of grace (v.10). That is the place I tried to park at until "real" labor commenced. Labor begins (again)

Tuesday night. A contraction wakes me up, demands its hourly attention, and then lets me go back to sleep. Wednesday morning finally greets its arrival with contractions 10-20 minutes apart that last the entire day. We have



another uneventful non-stress test (other than the test of laboring in a moving vehicle to and fro to the hospital), and spend the day at home. Our dear friend Karen had been spending days and nights with us, taking care of the children and preparing

Keri Mae & Clayton

meals. She wears a grandma-sized halo these days. By Wednesday evening, I am just worn out and weary, especially given all the false starts earlier in the week. I call a friend to ask for prayer and break out into tears that I didn't even know were there.

Our doula comes over to spend the night and to help Karen. I am skeptical that this labor will last.

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. (Ps 30:5)

Wednesday night, I am tired. All I want to do is sleep. Our doula (Michelle) encourages and presses me not to rest, because when I lie down the contractions space and slow down ("So what?" I think!). She gently moves me to be upright, vertical, walking, sitting. My legs give out in exhaustion. Tom and Michelle take turns holding me up, and finally, at 2 a.m. my contractions are 4-6 minutes apart.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. (Ps 126:6)

Two hours later we go to the hospital. I am too hot to gown up and too spent for modesty. I mentally give up at this point and lie down to rest--my body physically gives up with me and lets me, spacing out my contractions and slowing down labor again. I expect to putz out. I don't even care.

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it...(Phil 1:6)

Sometime between 8 or 8:30 a.m. on Thursday morning I have the idea I may want to just get this over with and push the baby out. It is the only way I believe I will ever have relief. I have no concept of time, not even of pain. I have no idea of when I have a contraction. The hospital monitor breaks so no one can tell me when I am even having one. My midwife/labor coach Peggy presses on my belly and tells

me "now" or "you can push again--it's still there." Everything moves backwards if I get it wrong. I am wrong a lot.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...(Heb 2:2)

There is a saying that it wasn't the nails that held Jesus to the cross, it was love. I wish I could say that it is true of me, that love for this baby keeps me going. But about 9 a.m. I completely give up.

I have nothing. I am told to "reach into your inner core," to "birth your baby," to "listen to your body." My core is empty--my body speaks nothing. I ask God, again, for mercy, like someone who has not had water in days. I hear Tom and the doctor shouting "Go go go go!" Even after the head comes out, I honestly believe the body never will. At 9:21 a.m., the baby is mercifully delivered into Tom's hands, and I am delivered as well. I remember in the fog that Jesus gave up his spirit, too. I ponder why I think of that.

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. (Isa 40:31)

Tom puts the baby onto my chest to be examined. I am covered in a heavenly veil of peace. I use up whatever strength I am gifted to have at that point to sing to my newborn babe "He Covers Me" and allow myself to be bathed in God's glow of loving care. I sense a room crowded with angels, all moving air with their wings.

*Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
Amazing love
Now flowing down
From hands and feet
That were nailed to the tree
As grace comes down
And covers me.
It covers me.
It covers me.
It covers me.
And covers me.*

The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace. (Ps 29:11)

homesteadblogger.com/kerimae

I Was Born To Be Their Mom

By Kari Fobar

I met my husband Mike, over 10 years ago. He told me when we first started dating that he was adopted and wanted to adopt someday. I tucked that away in the back of my mind. After all I wanted children of my own with Mike. I had one daughter from a previous marriage, Laura, who Mike adopted after we were married. I felt my biological clock ticking, I was so old when I got married, 27 (ha!ha!). I thought we should start a family right away.



The Fobar Family at Justin's adoption

After being married for a year, we were pregnant. Hailee was born on March

17, 2001. We were thrilled to have our daughter. We found out shortly after giving birth that something was wrong. She had apnea, a condition in which her brain would tell her heart to slow down and stop, then she would stop breathing. She was placed on an apnea monitor to come home from the hospital. After about a year, she out grew the apnea.

Then another frightening condition took over. Every 3 months like clock work she would start vomiting for six hours or so, then go into a coma like state for 2 days. We at first, like the doctors, thought this was the flu. But after years of this cycle and what seemed like a 100 different tests we knew that it wasn't an illness. Hailee was finally diagnosed with cyclic vomiting syndrome with mitochondrial DNA disease, when she was 5 years old. This is genetic and I pass it on to my children. We made the decision to pursue adoption when Hailee was 3, long before we knew what she had.

We decided to go through the County of Riverside for our adoption journey. We started our adoption journey with them in 2004. In May 2005 we were placed with our first foster son, Josiah. We had every intention of adopting him. We found out sadly, about six months later, that we were going to lose him back to his birth mother. In February 2006 Josiah was returned to his mother. This was devastating for our family. We took a much needed vacation after we lost Josiah. We needed to reconnect as a family and pray for what God wanted us to do. We decided after we came back that we would go back on the adoption list to try again.

That was in May 2006. On August 31, 2006 we received the phone call for Joshua, a 15 month old boy that was living at the time with his biological grandmother. She decided, after having him for 6 months, that she did not want him any longer. He was placed in our loving arms that very day. Joshua did not walk or talk at the time. He was drug exposed to meth and crack at birth. 24 hours after we brought him home, he took his first steps. A week later he was walking and talking. Joshua's adoption was final on May 2, 2007. He

is not developmentally delayed. He is a very active 3 year old. Even though we have our share of problems, (let's face it, all parents do) I would not change a thing. He is such a joy and a blessing. On June 1, 2007 we went back on the adoption list.

On August 3, 2007 we got the phone call for Justin, a newborn, relinquished by both parents. We took our little bundle home on August 4, 2007. Justin's adoption was final on April 18, 2008. People ask me all the time why did you adopt? I feel that it is my mission from God to take care of the children. All over the world millions of children will grow up without a family. In Riverside County alone 5,000 kids are in foster care; half are eligible for adoption. As of today, the county only has 25 eligible families to take these kids. God has truly blessed me through my journey. I wouldn't change a thing. I knew from the time I held my sons in my arms I was born to be their mom.

Kari is putting together a resource packet on adoption options for individuals and churches. For more info please contact her at kfobar@hotmail.com

**For more Adoption Resources, see:
<http://www.davethomasfoundation.org/>**

[http://www.familylife.com/site/c.dnJHKLNnFoG/b.3210773/k.A6A5/Hope for Orphans.htm](http://www.familylife.com/site/c.dnJHKLNnFoG/b.3210773/k.A6A5/Hope_for_Orphans.htm)

The Yogurt Sermonette By Amy Smith

My daughter is beautiful. Really. she is the cutest little girl I have ever seen in my life. Okay. I recognize that I am extraordinarily biased. But this morning, I saw the faintest glimpse of how irresistible I might be to God. Let me explain how this all connects.

Liberty followed me into the kitchen this morning, and watched me pull a container of strawberry banana yogurt out of the refrigerator. A huge smile spread out on her face. she immediately turned around and raced to the table and climbed up into her high chair. I watched her as she sat patiently, grinning from ear-to-ear. Then it hit me: She assumed I had gotten the yogurt out for HER. Well. she was so sweet. I didn't have the heart to disappoint her. I pulled out a second yogurt and served it up with a spoon. You would hardly find a happier one-year-old.

As I watched her, the gentle thought from the Holy Spirit flooded my heart: If only we (as God's children) would patiently and sweetly wait for Him. He would bless us too! Perhaps when He sees the expectancy of our hearts, waiting for His blessings in complete trust that He plans to give us good things. He would

find us equally irresistible. As Liberty's mother, I want to give her good things and make her happy. I love to see her little face light up. How much more does God love His children?

The Bible echoes this concept in Matthew chapter seven: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Why is it that so many times I have asked my Heavenly Father for something, but doubted He would want to give it to me? Surely God does not give us all the things we want. Neither would I give Liberty everything she wants. Cute as she is, I still know as a loving parent that there are things that she may want that are not good for her, or that would spoil her character to receive. So in her best interest, there are "gifts" I lovingly withhold. But, at the same time, I adore my daughter, and want to bestow on her all manner of wonderful things.

I am God's daughter, and this morning was a reminder to me that God is not some distant being millions of miles away who occasionally peers in on my life to see how I am plugging along. He is a loving parent, intricately and consistently involved in my day-to-day life, who adores me and wants to bless me. He loves to see my face light up after receiving a blessing from His hand. He is terribly biased when it comes to His children. And, if you are also one of His offspring, you can count that privilege of blessed biasness as your own. He's crazy about you. Trust Him today.

Let's practice waiting in sweetness and expectancy. He just may not have the heart to disappoint us.

Liberty Smith



Baby Shower Blessing

By Rhonda Gordon

I am not the most creative person in the world. In the past, I've thrown baby showers for friends but the way I "threw" them together was easy—just go online and find a few baby shower games, prepare or order some good food and open presents!

My dear friend Sheryl is pregnant with her second child. She is a very unique woman, not your ordinary person when it comes to anything. For instance, she uses cloth diapers, eats vegan and tries to go as organic as she can. Since she is so special, I shouldn't have been surprised when she asked me to change my baby shower style. She felt this pregnancy was too special to just have some silly games and she had a read online about a method called "**Baby Blessing**".

At first, I was intimidated. I tried to reason with her that the games were what the women liked. We had just had a baby

shower for another friend a few weeks ago and everyone enjoyed it so much. She gently reminded me that this party was for her and not me and that she just didn't feel comfortable with the norm.

So thus began my search to make the "perfect" party for my dear friend—one that would bless all who attended. The anxiety mounted...

I decided to go online and see what scriptures and poems I could pull up about motherhood. I was surprised how many there were online. Some websites had sections just dedicated for blessing new moms. Nancy Campbell's site, Aboverubies.org had a whole section with tons of poems and I began to print them out. Since it was near Mother's Day, I was able to save and print a lot of e-mails circulating the internet that relate to motherhood.

Then, I went to the store. I had never been to a fabric store before—hard to imagine? Would you believe I walked in to find this beautiful scrapbooking paper and cards especially designed for baby showers? I grabbed a few and a basket.

Again, I had never scrapbooked in my life and I wasn't sure how to go about it. I used it as a teaching opportunity for my daughter and me. We sat on the floor with scissors, glue, the poems, scriptures, and some mothers' magazines. Since my friend is very into the "natural", it seemed fitting to cut out pictures from a natural mothering magazine. Then, we picked patterns, cut and pasted and "Voila," we had a scrapbook tailored just to my friend's personality. You can tailor the book to your friend's personality. For instance, if she's into fashion, get your hands on a good fashion magazine.

But the party became more than a baby blessing, we decided to make it a "big sister party" too! My friend Lisa chipped in and went to pick up beads and strings so that at the party, we could make necklaces for Sheryl and the Big Sister.

We decided to do the party the same day we did a woman's breakfast/bible study. Our host, Holly's husband made the breakfast for all of the women. We had women from all walks of life and all ages. Some were mothers with grown kids. One had an adopted child from China. Another had lost a baby after giving birth but was blessed to conceive again. One had just given birth to her third. One was pregnant with her third. One had five boys and another 10 children. Yes—ten blessings!

After breakfast, Lisa, our bible study teacher and elder's wife gave a bible study about how God instructs us to teach our children when they lie down and rise up. That may even mean in the car on the way somewhere. She also taught about the wisdom, Solomon's mother left in the Word.

After the bible study, my daughter and I presented the scrapbook to our friend and read some of the poems inside. Then, others were encouraged to either read a poem or scripture they brought or if they didn't have one, talk about their birth experience or about the first time they met Sheryl. The conversation really stirred up emotions. Many were teary-eyed. One woman who is pregnant with her third child, read some of the poems and said, "WOW, I didn't know this kind of encouragement for moms existed!"

While people were reading the poems and scriptures, I had a tub of water for my friend to soak her feet. Then, I presented with her with some Hawaiian smelling, organic

wash, scrub and lotion. She travels to Hawaii frequently and I thought the aroma could take her back there at least in her mind. The foot rub could relax her while she listened to the others talk.

After everyone shared, I handed out the baby shower decorated index cards. Everyone was told to put a character trait they wished for the child to have, write it on the card and drop it in the basket. I mixed up the cards. Then, everyone picked a character trait and prayed for that character trait for the unborn child. We were going to send everyone home with the card to continue to pray but Sheryl asked that she could keep all the cards because they were so beautiful. Some wrote the prayer write on the cards. So we gave her the cards and the basket.

Next, everyone surrounded Sheryl to pray for her, her family and her unborn child. The children who were there saw this and later that day, they all surrounded her daughter to pray for her too. Children learn by imitation.

We pulled out the beads, charms, and strings to make necklaces. The children especially loved making them. Originally, I was planning on having each person just add one bead to represent "unity and strength around the mother" but the kids were having so much fun making the necklaces to bless their friend. Also, some kids brought presents for their friend, in addition to the mother's.

At last, we opened presents. But I think the prayer and encouragement were greater than any gift that was given that day. I was surprised, but I shouldn't have been—if God is invited to come to something, he will always make it more special than if we planned it ourselves. Didn't he surprise the bridegroom when he gave the best wine for last? Of course, the best gift of all is the gift of motherhood.

Rhonda Gordon, Jewess4jesus@ca.rr.com

Helpmeet to Cyril Gordon, Blessed children, Gabriella, 5 and

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Rowdy Boys

By: Michael Pearl

Question: Do you have any cures for rowdy boys during school? It's almost always in fun, but is always disruptive."

Yes, there is a very simple and final solution. You just throw the boys away and get all girls. This will also end all wars and stop all competitive sports. I might add that the termination of the male population will likewise put a stop to great architecture, canals dug thought the swamps, irrigation projects, highways through the mountains, and the invention of machines that make life easier.

I know mothers don't expect their little boys to display the male aggression so early, but little boys are just baby men. I know that young boys don't have the wisdom and self-control to sensibly direct their hormonally driven drives. They are often

rowdy and hyper. If there could only be a drug that could make them act more sedate like the lovely female population, or maybe a drug that would just postpone their development... But wait, I have heard that there is such a drug. It is called Ritalin. The government, which is committed to a sexless society, is encouraging and promoting the use of this and other drugs to subdue the young male population.

You gave birth to a boy; you will have to deal with him as such. If you wanted something that purred and laid around the house, you should have gotten a cat, not a boy.

God created the male race to work outdoors in a garden environment. Man's nature and role are to subdue. Each man needs his own independent domain to conquer and dress. That's why we see so many overworked yards in the subdivisions. Those tiny plots of buildings, grass, and shrubs are each man's Garden of Eden. With an assortment of steel tools, he conquers his resisting frontier. His incessant overworking of such a small kingdom reminds me of a tiger going out for a stroll in his twenty square foot cage.

Most men are finding some form of expression and release in work and sex. But young boys placed in classrooms become like tiger cubs scolded for tumbling with their fellows. Such confinement and restriction is against nature. Have you noted the primary activity of any young animal? It is to playfully attack the members of his family. Boys are made to run, tumble, goad, and respond in kind. It is not natural for a boy to sit in a cage. If we put him in real bars, it would be easier for him, but to force him to continually respect limits that are against his nature is torturous indeed.

Homeschooling should not be an attempt to reproduce the classroom setting. The Bible defines the context in which we should teach our children. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (Deuteronomy 6:7)." In other words, our teaching should be part of our ongoing daily activity, not a special event that demands long periods of withdrawal from the real world.

But our questioner is still waiting for a practical response to the question about how to prevent rowdy boys from disturbing the classroom setting. Provide release and expression for their boyishness, and do so with sufficient frequency and intensity so as to "decompress" them. That is, keep the classroom down to, say fifteen minutes, with work or hard play between times. If you feel you must have a longer time of instruction or practice, have them jump up and do 100 side-straddle-hops before they resume. Have them sing out a chant or count real loud as they exercise. You may have to study a military sergeant's manual. Provide a reward for the fastest ten laps around the house. Have them do their math while standing on one foot. Make them place their tablet on the wall and write while standing up. Keep them alert, interested, and exhausted. Don't try to contain and teach a tornado. Give it a time and place to expend its energy, and then teach when it is a little breeze. One hour of fun schooling is worth more than eight hours of drudgery.

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TROPHY CHILDREN

A Father's Challenge By James McDonald

I read the quote below today. It is from J. R. Miller's classic book, *Home-Making*, originally published in 1882:

What we want to do with our children, is not merely to control them and keep them in order-but to implant true principles deep in their hearts which shall rule their whole lives; to shape their character from within into Christ-like beauty, and to make of them noble men and women, strong for battle of life. They are to be trained rather than governed. Growth of character, not merely good behavior-is the object of all home governing and teaching. Therefore the home influence is far more important than the home laws; and the parents' lives are of more significance than their teachings. Whatever may be done in the way of governing, teaching or training-theories are not half as important as the parents' lives. They may teach the most beautiful things-but if the child does not see these things modeled in the life of the parent, he will not consider them important enough to be adopted in his own life.

I believe it is crucial that we embrace these principles, regardless of the time or season. However, in light of recent trends, it seems we need a more urgent reminder. I have mentioned the heartbreaking statistics tabulated by many denominations: 70 to 80% of Christian children leaving the church by the time they are 20. When children from Christian households leave the faith, we should always ask the question, "Why?"

Many parents, rightly concerned, have turned to home education and seen great improvement. Many have wisely sought family-integrated churches where the whole family can grow and worship together.

Though the casualties are considerably less in homeschooling families who learn and worship together, we still hear stories of "good homeschooling" children walking away from the faith. Only, too often, we are afraid to ask why because we are afraid of the answer.

I believe the root cause of this young adult exodus from even the covenantal branch of Christendom is found in the heart of the father, the man who does not live or teach the faith. Many men will put on the church "game face" on Sunday, yet live like the world the rest of the week. Yes - even homeschooling fathers. I have also observed dads who are more concerned with a child's conformance to the "law of the house" rather than their spiritual transformation to the Lordship of Christ. Even in family-integrated churches.

The reality is this: the Christian faith is difficult to live and maintain—that is, when we try to do it on our own strength. The call of discipleship is one of denying one's self, of taking up the Cross, of losing one's life, of living in such a way that we do not deny the reality of our Lord (Mark 8:34-38). And, friends, fathers, we cannot do this alone, relying on our power.

The same is true of our children. Sure, we can get them all to line up in an orderly row. We can force them to sit quietly in church and not hit one another—at least most days. We can convince them that it is better to obey, because to disobey would mean facing the wrath of dad.

But, if we raise our families all wrapped up in having the right image, we may discover we've sacrificed relationships. We may wind up creating some sort of trophy children - children who look the part, who go through the motions, but children whose hearts aren't there.

And what happens to trophy children when they turn 18? Will they follow the rules of the home? Or will they leave in the exodus observed in most evangelical denominations?

The real question should this - what are we doing to train their hearts? How are we teaching them that the true basis for their obedience should not be the fear of chastisement, but their love for Jesus?

As Miller so eloquently describes - we do this by modeling the reality of our relationship with Jesus before them. Our lives are to present the reality of the Gospel. Paul told us in Philippians 4:9: "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." We are to live in such a way that Jesus is received by our children not only in the things we teach, but in the things we say and do. And this only occurs when we also know that the Father accepts us, not by what we have done but, by the One in

which we have put our trust. Our ability to model Christ is found in our relationship with Him.

Jesus Himself said in John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments." We could use this verse as a litmus test to see if our children love us. We might infer, "If they really love us, then they will do as we say." But we also need to understand that even our ability to love Jesus comes from Him. And with that ability to love, comes the ability to obey. It is all about Him.

Friends-fathers, we must forsake the pharisaical desire for trophy children, children who obey so that we can look spiritually

successful. We must, by God's grace, seek to be spiritually successful - not so we can look good, but so that we can teach our children the way of wisdom - by being an example that authenticates our rule. And when they fail, and they will, we should show them that their sin can only be overcome by the power of the Cross. Use every failure-every sinful action, not as a time of discipline or anger, but a time of discipleship! These are God-ordained opportunities to share the richness of the grace of God in Christ.

If we not only teach Christ, but live Christ, we will not be concerned about having "trophy children;" we will see the promises of God manifested in the hearts of our children, for generations.

Lastly, if you are the parent of a child who has walked from the faith, take hope! The arm of the Lord is not too short to save. Even if we have failed, even if our children are walking contrary to the Word, He is the One who opens the heart. He is the Captain of our salvation. Consider where you may have failed in the past and repent. Remember that God has ordained your steps and knew your child would stray before he was even born. Pray that God would use your own repentant heart to bring your child to like repentance. Take it to the Lord in prayer, in faith, knowing that He can bring the prodigal child home-knowing that it is all for His glory!

Family Reformation Ministries, founded by James and Stacy McDonald, is committed to extending the Kingdom of Christ through the strengthening of Christian families. If you would like to host a Family Reformation Conference at your church, or would like to know how you can join us in this work, contact us at: <http://www.familyreformation.org>



Covenant Keepers

By Angela Decoteau

Twenty two years ago when we held our recent blessing in our arms we just knew that she would be ours forever. When we took Lela home from the hospital we were committed to her care and training in the Lord. We homeschooled, mom stayed home and Lela and her siblings enjoyed many days playing in the garden and walking to their Grandparents' house. We had the joy of watching her graduate high school and go on to complete a college degree. We looked forward to all that the Lord would accomplish through her during her single years.

Little did we know how quickly that would change. Although we thought we were prepared, when Michael called for our daughter's hand in marriage, we found ourselves with lots of unanswered questions of how to apply Biblical principles in guiding the relationship. As parents we knew that the answer to that question would affect many people in the generations to come. We also knew that we wanted God's best regardless of what it cost us. We began to study God's word and found in it the answers to our questions. We realized that preparing one's children for matrimony is a long term affair, beginning from the time they are small. It was comforting to know that Lela already embraced such valuable principles as a desire to honor her parents and a strong desire to maintain physical and emotional purity. We also learned that God's way of building a relationship between two people that led to matrimony required parting from the status quo. Nevertheless, we decided to "keep covenant" by helping Lela and Michael understand and maintain God honoring principles in their relationship. So began a journey that has become the most rewarding of our lives.

Michael and Lela first met at Verity where they were pursuing college degrees. Lela arrived for orientation as a Distance Education student while Michael was living on site. When Michael first saw Lela he was sure she was the one for him. It would be two years later before he would tell anyone other than his Dad. It was then that we got the call. With the guidance of both sets of parents a beautiful story evolved. This story of mutual respect and honor was a witness to family and community that covenant keepers reap blessings.

First, the bride and groom honored their parents by waiting to share their hearts with each other until they received a wholehearted consent from both sets of parents. This demonstrated the depth of their faith in an Almighty God who is well able to work through God-given authorities to bring about His ultimate will... and as God has promised, it is well with them (Eph. 6:2-3).

Second, they honored each other by maintaining a pure and holy relationship all the way to the altar. Their decision to maintain a no-touch commitment until their wedding day created an atmosphere of grave respect and honor in both



parties. For Lela it means that her heart can safely trust in her beloved who unselfishly protected her from defrauding acts. He also demonstrated by his actions that Lela held a position of invaluable worth in his eyes. For Michael, he realized he was about to embark upon a life-long commitment with an admirable partner whose virtue rivaled that of the Titus 2 and Proverbs 31 woman. Their actions demonstrated their mature knowledge of true, unselfish agape love. In this fertile ground of mutual respect and honor grew a love that few have ever witnessed.

On their wedding day, the spark in their eyes as they held hands for the very first time confirmed that their reward was well worth any previous sacrifice. Later, their first kiss cast the final blow at the enemy of our day. They had made it. Victory was sweet.

The rest of Lela and Michael's story as well as more of the timeless principles that Clayton and Angela discovered are compiled in the book, Preparing Sons and Daughters for Marriage due to be published some time during the summer of 2008. Check the website: www.preparingsonsandaughtersformarriage.com for updates.

Green Smoothies, Green Grass, and the California Happy Cow

By Trish Evans



What I love about studying nutrition is that the information is not static, it's a changing dynamic and there is always new information. Just when you think you know-it-all, something new comes along that shatters your previous theories and leaves you eating humble pie once again or at least enjoying the new foods changes bring, for the time being, until yet another new thing comes along and the cycle starts all over again.

There are the basics. God made whole foods. God wants us to enjoy His creation and the variety of foods He has made without obsessing over them to the point of losing track of what's really important in life. "Evil" man corrupted God's foods to make them taste "better" and last longer on the shelf. Our bodies do reap what we sow depending on lots of changeable factors and we are what we eat.

With that said and out of the way again, I hope you are now asking so what's new on my agenda to share with you this time. Back to the title.

Green smoothies. Some good raw foodist friends of mine, and some not so raw but otherwise healthy, had been trying to share with me the wonders of green smoothies for about a year now. Not me, I replied. I like my smoothies the way they are every morning, packed with fruit and I'm not changin'. After all, I juice plenty of veggies, that's what those colorful green things are for, balancing out the color of my carrot juice so I won't turn orange. Why in the world would I want to ruin a perfectly good smoothie by putting nasty old greens in them? So I reasoned.

One dear friend came over and took over my Vita-Mix while visiting one day, under the guise of having to feed her kids (I think she had it planned all along because she could see I wasn't going to budge on this one on my own-I'll try a liver flush on a

whim because someone else tried it, but don't mess with my FRUIT smoothies ☺).

So she blends up this nasty looking concoction that was probably 85% spinach and sticks a glass in my face and says, "here, drink this". I felt like the nameless character in Green Eggs and Ham being bombarded by Sam-I-Am and she was going to persist no matter what train or boat I tried to escape on. So I caved. I pinched my nose and took a swig. I counted to 30 and I hadn't turned in to Dr Hyde yet. "Gee, I like Green Eggs and Ham" I said. She informed me I was reading too many children's books and should try out some novels for people my age. I told her I didn't have any of those kind of books in the house and informed her I was getting a shirt made that says, "Cleverly disguised as a responsible adult."

Point being it tasted fine. I couldn't even taste the spinach despite the green color and probably none of the rest of you will, either. To make a green smoothie you grab a handful of greens, please don't ask me for exact measurements or recipes because I don't deal in that. If you're afraid of the taste, use spinach and parsley or one or the other. If you want to go for more variety and nutrition; kale, chard of any color, dandelion, the green tops of bunch carrots or beets, collards, kale, etc. I've used small amounts of broccoli at times, I've tried Bok Choy, asparagus, radish tops. Some are stronger and will change the taste of the smoothie no matter what fruit you use.

Start out with small quantities of new ones so you can see what it will taste like. We like cilantro and that sounds strange but it's actually refreshing. My kids drink these, too, and I don't make them any "weaker" for them. Important note is to rotate your greens as blending them up is like a power boost of their nutrition but repeated use of the same ones over and over can have a negative effect as some have natural plant toxins designed to make predators sick. I try to buy different ones each week, some I have more than others. For more info on this go to <http://www.rawfamily.com> and read their smoothie section or buy their book Greens For Life.

Grass fed beef. Here is another thing that has really gone over well for myself and our older children. If you aren't familiar with the differences between grass fed and grain fed beef, here are the main factors:

Conjugated linoleic acid or CLA is higher in grass fed beef. CLA has been shown to prevent cancers and reduce existing tumors, reduces body fat, delays the onset of diabetes, and combats clogged arteries. CLA levels are 30-40% higher in grass fed beef and CLA levels drop dramatically in feed lots where cattle are fed grain and other byproduct feedstuff. Omega 3 to Omega 6 levels are in the ratio that humans need and is a great source of omega 3

that is not polluted with mercury like some fish oils and fish are. Grass fed beef is not irradiated nor has any other additives, preservatives, etc. If anyone is interested in trying the place I get mine from, here is the link to use:

www.grasslandbeef.com/StoreFront.bok?affiliate_no=521
(If you use this link the first time you order I will get a kick back, note there is an underscore between "affiliate" and "no").

They send out a coupon code in their email newsletter once every three weeks that is good for 15% off an order under 40#. 40# and up orders receive 25.00 off. I order their 50# box of hamburger patties and use that discount. We love their beef snack sticks and use those as "outing food".

They aren't cheap, but it is cheaper and healthier than fast food and can be packed in a cooler along with other healthy snacks, saving gas and time driving to a drive thru window. The meat comes to my door the next day, frozen solid. Shipping is always a flat 7.50 as they have built that into their meat prices. I get exactly the cuts I want. I know of other families that go in on a whole cow and that works out well for them and there are companies online that offer that as well so that is another route to check out. With organic produce and grass fed meat, it is more than just getting no pesticides, the nutritional value is higher. Bulk purchases thru co-ops can usually make everything comparable to most grocery store prices and the money saved on doctor bills and co-pays from a healthier diet makes the food pay for itself in the long run.

Several years ago I ran an article in BT from the Notmilk.com web site. Vyckie Bennett sent me an email afterwards asking me to check out the Realmilk.com web site. I glanced it over but wasn't really interested. After all, dairy had caused much of my health problems in life and cow's milk is for baby cows so why would I bother. We haven't had fluid cow milk products in this house for 13 years. Now that doesn't mean we were totally anti-dairy. After all, we had pizza for every birthday party and ice cream. And we had organic sour cream and butter as a staple....and cream cheese...and an occasional block of organic cheese, you get the picture. But by golly, we didn't have cow's milk in a jug on our fridge shelves. It was a major yucky no-no!

Well, when my now formerly raw foodist friend who hoodwinked me into green smoothies started talking about raw dairy delivered to my doorstep I figured I'd save her some gas money and try it on my own this time rather than make her bring it to me. The week we got our first delivery was the week of the recall for the company we were getting it from. Sigh. Other friends wondered if I would throw it out. Well, I hate

to waste money so we drank it instead and took our chances. After all, we had spinach in our fridge the week of that recall as well and didn't toss it out. Some folks get their kicks jumping out of perfectly safe airplanes for fun, we play Russian Roulette with recalled food products for a thrill, the odds are about the same.



GRASS FED BEEF

*4 Times More CLA Than Grain-Fed Beef

- *CLA Benefits Include:
 - Anti-Carcinogenic
 - Increased Lean Body Mass
 - Prevents Arteriosclerosis
 - Slows or Halts Diabetes

*Ideal Omega 6:3 Ratio of 2:1 is Equal to Fish - Without Mercury

*High in Branch Chain Amino Acids

*Risk of E. coli Bacteria is Minimal Due to Low pH of First Stomach

*2-4 Times More Vitamin A & E Than Grain-Fed Beef – May Reduce Risk of Cancer & Heart Disease

*1/3 LESS Calories Than Grain-Fed Beef

*No Solutions Added, No Animal By-Products, Non-Irradiated, No Antibiotics Fed, No Hormones

GRAIN FED BEEF

*nsignificant Amount of CLA

*Omega 6:3 Ratio of 20:1 is Very Adverse to Health

*More Total Fat & Saturated Fat

*Less Vitamins A & E than Grass-Fed Beef

*1/3 MORE Calories than Grass-Fed Beef

*Acidic Digestive System From Grain Diet Leads to Greater Risk of E. coli Bacteria Presence

*Antibiotics Added to Daily Feed Ration

*Growth Stimulating Hormones Routinely Used

*May be Irradiated

*High Starch Diet

Not only did the milk not make us sick, but it made the smoothies really creamy (in a short time they went from fruit only, to fruit & greens, to fruit, greens, and raw milk). And boy the almond shakes were tasty. We still don't drink raw milk, except the two older boys will with Mercola's chocolate whey powder in it, we just blend it up. So I've been on that research tangent because I need to know everything there is to know at this moment so I can share it with everyone until new information comes out otherwise ☺. We get our milk from Organic Pastures, <http://www.organicpastures.com>. Their web site, along with the realmilk.com site and a book titled The Untold Story of Milk: Green Pastures, Contented Cows and Raw Dairy Products by Ron Schmid will give you plenty of information. Mercola.com is also a great source of info on raw milk and grass fed beef.

The recall? Oh, the powers that be in the state and county health departments crawled all over their farm for a couple weeks testing, testing, testing. No bacteria whatsoever was found anywhere, not in the recalled bottles, not in the bottles from the homes of the four sick children, not in their processing area, not in their manure, not in the grass growing green on the hillsides. None. If you ever doubted the safety of raw milk, the recall actually dispelled many myths and made me feel safer than ever drinking it because I know there are corporates out there in the conventional dairy world that wanted "something", anything, found so they could point fingers and shout from the media rooftops, "See we told you it wasn't safe!".

If you want to know why raw is different than pasteurized organic, *"After pasteurization, bacteria found naturally in milk are killed. During the high temperature heating process, cell bodies of these bacteria are ruptured and their contents are spilled, releasing histamines. This causes many milk drinkers to suffer allergic reactions. Almost all of these same consumers can drink raw milk and not have allergies. The high levels of bacteria permitted in milk intended for pasteurization are still found in pasteurized milk; they are just dead and not removed by the process."* ([Organic Pastures web site](http://www.organicpastures.com))

And of course, these cows are California Happy Cows. They munch grass on the sides of hills and play Marco Polo in the Tule Fog. They don't eat grain, organic or otherwise so their omega acid ratio is in proper proportion and they are milked in the fields by a million dollar traveling milk "barn" rather than being disturbed and brought into a concrete barn area every day. We also are buying raw cheese from Organic Valley (not Organic Pastures although they sell one as well) thru our United Natural Foods co-op (<http://www.unfiw.com>). It can also be obtained thru health food stores but is more expensive there.

A supplement made from milk from grass fed cows is available thru Dr. Mercola's web site (<http://www.mercola.com>). It's called Pro-Optimal Whey and has no junk ingredients in it whatsoever. It tastes great in smoothies. Jay Robb also sells an egg powder for those that are dairy sensitive and whey powder. Find it at: <http://www.jayrobb.com>

In closing I would continue to encourage everyone to find what diet works best for their metabolism and for each of their family member's metabolism, keeping with the basics of fresh fruit and vegetables and juices made with both, clean meats, clean fish and eggs, whole sprouted grains and healthy snack foods and be the diligent kitchen nutritionalist of your family, nurturing everyone who gathers round your table! Bon Appetite!



Mona Vie



Mona Vie is a multi-level marketing (MLM) product that is becoming a very hot nutritional supplement. Due to it being an MLM, there is a business opportunity for those so inclined. My personal interest is from a nutritional standpoint. I have read studies from doctors and researchers that are very impressed with how Mona Vie is helping people and I have copies of those articles I can email to those interested with all the technical language about the antioxidant activity levels. The juice is a combination of several very high antioxidant fruits including acai berry, pomegranate, kiwi and others. Because it is not pasteurized, there are small amounts of two preservatives in it to maintain freshness. There are two formulas and one has glucosamine (plant source) and esterified fatty acids in it. This one has gained a lot of attention as it has had some pretty amazing results among users. I personally know people who have had knee problems and fibromyalgia clear up while taking Mona Vie. It helps me have more energy (if that's possible as people already think I'm the Energizer Bunny!). We and friends have taken large doses at a time to stave off impending illnesses coming on. My kids love the stuff and ask for it so it might be something that families who have children who do not eat a lot of fruit due to availability where they live or have trouble getting children to eat fruit might try just for that (please use the "purple" version without the glucosamine for young children). Many people are put off by the pricetag. There are ways around that. First, do the MLM thing and make it pay for itself and maybe earn some more money in the process. The other way is to get other close proximity friends or family involved and have one person sign up, split the cost of that, and do a huge order and split it up co-op style, bringing the price per bottle down quite a bit. If you are interested in more info or the studies, please email me at gtdz@uia.net Trish

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<http://www.bhcoop.org>

Alternative Breast Cancer Treatment

I have some important information about my experience with a breast cancer lump and taking IP6 and inositol. I had a lump appear in my breast in June of 2007. I took IP6 and Inositol and within a couple months it had disappeared. The lump was never diagnosed as cancer however it grew at a rapid rate over several weeks just like the one I had on the other side that was operated on to remove. I took the powder form as follows:

IP6 6800-7200 mg per day, Inositol 1200-1800 mg per day.

I broke it up in 3 or 4 doses throughout the day. I'm not telling anyone else how to treat themselves but this is what I did for myself and I felt I should share it.

If anyone has any other questions, please feel free to ask.

Sharon Gilbert Sharon_lee_gilbert@yahoo.com

Drugs Not Tested For Use With Kids

*Off-Label Prescription;
Children and adults don't metabolize
medicine in the same way.*

By Julie Deardorff, Chicago Tribune

Whenever I write about nutritional, natural or alternative treatments, a skeptical conventional doctor inevitably asks for studies showing that the "remedies" are effective.

It's a puzzling double standard.

For decades, over-the-counter cough and cold medicines have been recommended by some pediatricians, even though they haven't been shown to be safe or effective in children. An expert panel of the Food and Drug Administration now says they shouldn't be used in kids younger than age 6.

Even more worrisome is that most Western docs pride themselves on using "evidence-based" practices. But two thirds of prescriptions drugs prescribed for pediatric use have not been tested in children, which means the risks and benefits of the treatments are unknown.

There are no FDA-approved sleep drugs for children, nor clinical guidelines for their use, yet one study found that 81 percent of doctor visits for children with sleep difficulties resulted in drug prescriptions. The FDA also has yet to approve a medication to treat autism, yet 80% of children diagnosed are on at least one psychiatric drug.

And if your child is in the hospital, here's a figure you might want to know: Nearly 80% of hospitalized children received drugs that have been tested and approved only for adults, according to a study by researchers at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

The researchers found that 28% of patients in the database received morphine, though the FDA has not approved it for use in children. Children treated with morphine have been shown to have worse outcomes and more adverse events, such as bleeding in the brain, than children who don't get it.

This is sound science?

In fact, doctors wrote more than 100 million prescriptions in the U.S. in 2001 for reasons that

had "little or no scientific support," according to a study in the Archives of Internal Medicine.

Prescribing meds without good data is all

justified under a common practice known as "off-label", which means once a drug has undergone rigorous clinical trials and is approved by the FDA, it can be legally prescribed for different conditions and for patients in other age groups.

This ensures that while the FDA can call a drug "safe" or "effective", it can't tell us what to use it for. That's the doctor's job.

Drugs can be used off-label as a last resort, when very ill patients don't respond to standard treatments or there is no approved treatment.

Proponents say the practice also helps keep up with the rapid pace of medical discovery: Clinical trials are costly and involved, and in some cases doctors would be doing more harm by withholding a drug simply because it had not gotten rubber-stamp approval.

But past mishaps have shown that children and adults don't metabolize drugs in the same way and that it's dangerous to extrapolate children's dosages from adult studies.

And the drug-approval process is lengthy for a very good reason, said Samir Shah, an infectious-disease specialist at Philadelphia's Children's Hospital and the lead author of the study showing most children in U.S. hospitals are given medicine off-label.

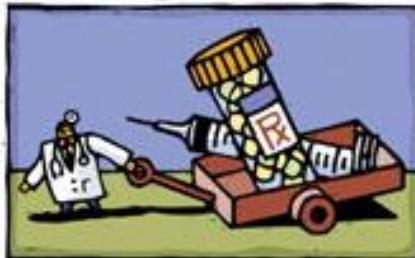
"The goal is not just to make sure the drug is safe but to understand risks and benefits," Shah said. "There will always be some off-label prescribing by the fluid nature of medicine, but it would be nice if most drug use was not off-label--especially with kids."

It would also be nice if drugs weren't the first treatment choice. But pharmaceuticals enjoy special consideration in the mainstream that alternative treatments, including nutritional changes, do not.

Some parents and doctors, for example, say they have seen incredible changes in autistic children after wheat and dairy are removed from the diet. But in a new report, the American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend using a gluten/casein-free (wheat and dairy free) diet because there is "little evidence to support or refute this intervention."

Medications, on the other hand, are OK for autistic kids, according to the AAP, even though they are all prescribed off-label.

Only one drug, Risperdal, is approved to treat symptoms of irritability.



Abigail's Story

By Kristen B.

Our journey into this began Thanksgiving morning. This is a bit of a synopsis for everyone to hear a bit of my perspective and reflections.

During the week leading up to this, some of us had a day with a stomachache or headache - nothing big. So, when Abby had a few times of throwing up with many hours and nursings in between, we weren't overly concerned. I just kept her close, kept feeding her and watching her. However, Wednesday night she began having non-stop diarrhea and was becoming too lethargic to nurse. I knew she was getting very sick but I also wanted complete assurance that we had made the right decision once we stepped into the hospital. I prayed for that assurance and then my daughter (7 ½ weeks old) opened her eyes which were now sunken from the onset of dehydration and looked at me with an expression that said "help me." For the first time in our parenting journey, I knew we had a situation that needed immediate help.

We waited for someone to come watch our others, and then went to the Emergency Room. Our daughter was surrounded by a team that immediately got her IV set up for rehydration and began taking her vitals. It seemed rather quiet - I guess a holiday morning is a good time to seek medical help! Though she continued to go through diapers, it seemed that all would be well once the fluids took over. But, that didn't happen, and we were admitted that evening. We started out in a room with several others but, after my husband, Bob, had a talk with the charge nurse we were moved to our own room. (It is very interesting that they would put us with others when several days later we would be on contact isolation for the remainder of our stay. Whoops!)

The next day, still in basic care, they continued to run IVs with boluses to try to get her fluids under control. I was changing non-stop diapers and taking care of green vomit. Blood draws and lumbar puncture were difficult, presumably due to her dehydrated state. Finally, about 1 a.m. that Friday

night/Saturday morning, after she was still not catching up on fluids, I was awakened by a parade of various doctors coming in to examine her. The attending physician admitted that he'd stayed late, hours past when he was supposed to be off, because he and the GI doctor were very concerned but not sure what was wrong with my baby. They called in the radiologist and I was holding my baby's hand at 3 a.m. as they ruled out intestinal blockage with an upper GI. We were then taken to the PICU and I began an education that I never wanted as my daughter was given an incredible level of medical care.

Abigail continued to have volumes of green liquid diarrhea but, with double IVs and eventually a PICC line, she finally got the fluids replaced to stabilize her. She was put on multiple antibiotics and subjected to testing for any possible disease that could cause these symptoms. The doctors were stumped; after her diarrhea didn't resolve after several days, she was started on a medication and nourishment through TPN (Total Parenteral Nutrition, she hadn't nursed really since before we'd brought her in). The diarrhea continued for probably about a week and a

half before it noticeably slowed down. This was really throwing off the doctors as test after test returned negative and, since she wasn't eating, she shouldn't have any stool. Her stool was measured and replaced with fluid every four hours; once she was in PICU, I would go home to sleep at night since she was carefully monitored and there was nothing I could do for her. The other children appreciated the chance to see me, even for a short time. The nurses ended up sedating

her most nights because she was not able to sleep. Later I realized that she was having her blood sugar tested

every night after the TPN was replaced - I would have been cranky, too, if someone woke me up to poke my heel! I woke up early to make sure that she would see my face when she opened her eyes each morning. That was really important to me and I'm so thankful it was possible.

Her time in PICU was a roller coaster ride of unknowns. There was so much drama during our time there and every day brought different issues that we needed to work through. Even routine blood work was a drama and at one point we went over 48 hours without having any samples to check her electrolytes and other important information. We were given some options that were very hard to imagine, including her being on TPN (IV nutrition) for many



The other children visiting Abigail

weeks or months until she was "better". The only conclusive tests were the scopes that revealed irritation and inflammation throughout her stomach, intestines and bowels. The assumption was that the irritation was causing the continual production of fluids that she was emitting. When it finally slowed to a minimal amount (at her highest measurement - which was really not accurate until in ICU and already getting under better control - she was at over 800 ccs in a 24 hour period, then slowing to 600, 400, 200... until she was finally averaging about 5 ccs per hour) we were into a new week, with a new attending and a new GI doctor. By that point, my daughter had been seen by all 4 of the Peds GIs - 3 on staff and one visiting from UCLA. I was finding the opinions to be different, but none more than the final two - the UCLA doctor with the thought of long term TPN and the final doctor on Monday telling me that the only way we'd know if she was ready to eat was to feed her.

That second Monday night she was to be given some Pedialyte and then possibly the special, pre-digested formula or MAYBE breastmilk. Abigail had already refused the nipples that the hospital had (she finally took a pacifier several days into the stay after a friend brought in various kinds and just prior to her being referred to Occupational Therapy) so it was no surprise that she didn't take the bottle of Pedialyte. The nurse tried to put some through her NG tube but it didn't work. I heard him go out to talk to the attending physician to find out whether he should put in another tube, should I go get a bottle to match her pacifier, or what??? The doctor said to let her nurse and see what happened.

OH!! I was excited and terrified at the same time. I had been relentlessly pumping in anticipation of this. But, if she didn't tolerate it, how would I be able to hold her when she knew what to search for again??? As with every step of this journey, prayers were poured out as my dear daughter latched on perfectly and nursed for 15 minutes.

After 3 hours, with no recurrence evidenced through her rectal tube, I was allowed to try again. I went home that night, hoping that our PICU time was close to ending and knowing that I'd need to stay with her once she was nursing and back in the basic care.

The next morning, she was allowed to nurse still and - what joy!!! - she had a poopy diaper!! I never imagined what joy a dirty diaper would bring!!! As she continued to produce poop and nurse, we were transferred. We had three additional nights to stay in basic as they monitored her output, weaned her from the TPN and finished her antibiotics.

Our whole family was praising God when Abigail was home and healed. I know that so many prayed for her and I can't even express how grateful I am for that. We also had incredible help as our pastor's wife

arranged care and meals for our family through those weeks so that I could be with Abigail as much as possible and not worry about the rest of the children. How amazing it is to be blessed by the body of Christ.

The big question is - WHY? The final assumption seems to be that she had something that happens occasionally to little ones - a virus swept through her system and ravaged it. The illustration would be a hurricane or tornado - it quickly passes through but the damage is there for a long time. Of course, any other cause needs to be ruled out but without any positive tests this is the final thought. I am so thankful for the doctors and nurses who journeyed with us in restoring our dear Abigail to health. It is so interesting to reflect on God's perfect timing even for when certain doctors and nurses were involved in her care. My children were well fed and well cared for in mine and Abigail's absence and everything fell back into place. After a time like this, there is a new "normal" - a greater appreciation for what we have in so many ways.

Abigail's smile fills me with joy and we are just so thankful and blessed. Thanks to everyone who was there with us, physically and spiritually.



Abigail

FORCED VACCINATIONS

Musings on what the road to Hell is paved with

By Sandy Gottstein

Scandals - 11/21/07

Call me naive, but I don't think that most people who unquestioningly promote vaccination as the end-all and be-all of preventive health care are evil or have evil intent. In fact, other than a possible select few, I think most ardent vaccine supporters honestly believe they are helping humanity.

Perhaps they are. And if properly designed studies ever are conducted, time will tell. Regardless of their intent, however, I do not view their unwavering support as benign, fair-minded or responsible. For as the saying goes, the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.

In the past week, pavement of that road has appeared to bring us closer than ever to that wretched place. I am referring, of course, to recent efforts to force vaccination in Maryland by threatening parents with jail.

There are so many aspects of this story that are alarming, it is hard to know where to begin. But let me start with what I once said in a speech, from which I will be quoting: **"We parents deserve the right to choose what we feel is best for the children we love, and for whom we are responsible. No one else will be expected to care for our children if the vaccines or diseases maim them. No one else's heart will be broken like ours if they are killed or otherwise harmed."**

No one, indeed.

Of course, the all-trusting supporters of vaccination will argue that vaccine damage is minimal and that the benefits outweigh the risks. But as anyone who has read my column knows, from what I can tell and have provided credible evidence for, those studies that purport to show zero to minimal damage are based on flawed research, which includes, in part 1) improper comparisons between vaccinated groups and the failure to include any never-vaccinated people as controls, 2) outright dismissal of virtually all anecdotal and other evidence, as well as failure to properly follow up on any of it, and 3) dismissal of biological evidence in support of damage claims.

But even if vaccines had been genuinely shown to be mostly safe, there are some very insidious things going on here. As the National Vaccine Information Center has aptly warned, **"If it happens to your child, the risks are 100%"**. Thus, implied in the argument that

damage is minimal is a dismissal of the harm done to some children. I would submit that the amount of harm vaccines do is unknown. But even if it were small, the implication is that vaccine damage or death is less important than disease damage or death, or that all that matters is sheer numbers. And although most would not say this directly, also implied is that vaccine-harmed children are less important than disease-harmed ones.

Vaccine-damaged children are also often treated like drafted casualties in our war against disease. It is as if being drafted for this purpose is inherently a good thing, an honorable thing, that vaccine risk is obviously a risk well worth taking. Even if it were a good thing, however, isn't it a risk that the parents of the potentially damaged child should be allowed to take? Is it right to force vaccinations on anyone? Does the end justify the means?

And isn't the very subtle implication that only death or harm from disease is "bad"; that death or harm from a vaccine is somehow okay or "good", because it is in support of the "cause" of "public health"?

Also implied in the argument that it is okay to force vaccination is the notion that "you", an unwilling vaccine participant, should be forced to vaccinate your child(ren) to protect "my" (the one who seeks protection) child(ren) from disease. There are two major problems with this argument; first, why should someone be required to risk their child for another? What makes the child being "protected" more important than the "protector"?

Second, if the vaccines work, anyone choosing them will be protected. If they don't prevent the spread of the disease to the vaccinated, why are we vaccinating? It hardly seems right that those who don't want to be vaccinated should have vaccination forced on them because vaccines don't always work.

And to whatever extent vaccines are being required because the 'immune suppressed' cannot be vaccinated, and are more vulnerable to the adverse effects of disease, while my heart goes out to such people, they are not more important than children who are harmed by vaccines. Nor should the notion that vaccination may in itself be creating immune suppression be left out of this equation.

Besides there is documented proof of outbreaks in 100% vaccinated populations. The irony is, of course, that even if they don't

recognize it, those who support forcing vaccination are doing so precisely because they don't believe in the effectiveness of vaccines. Besides, where is the sense of history, the recognition that medicine as practiced and promoted has often been found to be lacking or even just plain, dead wrong?

But even if we were to assume virtually 100% effectiveness and safety of vaccines, is forcing vaccines in a free society ever justified? As I said in that speech, "I also consider any notion of 'public health' to be suspect, which sacrifices the individual to some alleged higher goal. Many of us find it way scarier that the state would sacrifice children to someone's idea of the common good, than to take our chances with Mother Nature. Who decides? What's the right number? Who's counting? Even in wartime, the draft of adults is only used very judiciously and sparingly. We also go to considerable effort to avoid enemy civilian casualties. Yet we seem to think nothing of sacrificing our own innocent children."

Our brave soldiers have fought and died, and will continue to fight and die, in order to protect us from tyranny which threatens our freedom and way of life, including what the Declaration of Independence "hold(s) to be self-evident", the right to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness". Do we really want to force vaccination and violate this most basic American right? Do we really want to pave that road?



For more on vaccination, including a document on opting out of vaccinations legally, please see the following websites:

www.SayingNoToVaccines.com

www.drtenpenny.com

www.vaccineexemptionlaw.com/index.jsp

www.mercola.com/article/vaccines/legally_avoid_shots.htm

www.vaccineinfo.net

www.vaccinationnews.com

www.vaccineexemptionlaw.com/index.jsp

The real dangers of soda

By Dr. Joseph Mercola, with Rachael Droege

How many sodas have you had today? How about your kids? The average American drinks an estimated 56 gallons of soft drinks each year, but before you grab that next can of soda, consider this: one can of soda has about 10 teaspoons of sugar, 150 calories, 30 to 55 mg of caffeine, and is loaded with artificial food colors and sulphites.

This is an alarming amount of sugar, calories and harmful additives in a product that has absolutely no nutritional value. Plus, studies have linked soda to osteoporosis, obesity, tooth decay and heart disease. Despite this, soda accounts for more than one-quarter of all drinks consumed in the United States.

Teenagers and children, who many soft drinks are marketed toward, are among the largest consumers. In the past 10 years, soft drink consumption among children has almost doubled in the United States. Teenage boys now drink, on average, three or more cans of soda per day, and 10 percent drink seven or more cans a day. The average for teenage girls is more than two cans a day, and 10 percent drink more than five cans a day.

While these numbers may sound high, they're not surprising considering that most school hallways are lined with vending machines that sell, of course, soft drinks. It's not uncommon for schools to make marketing deals with leading soft drink companies such as Coca-Cola from which they receive commissions--based on a percentage of sales at each school--and sometimes a lump-sum payment.

The revenues are used for various academic and after-school activities, but what activity could be worth devastating the students' health, which is exactly what consuming all that soda is doing? Getting rid of vending machines in schools--or replacing their contents with pure water and healthy snacks--could make a big difference, as vending machines can increase the consumption of sweetened beverages by up to 50 or more cans of soda per student per year.

Let's take a look at some of the major components of a can of soda:

- Phosphoric Acid: May interfere with the body's ability to use calcium, which can lead to osteoporosis or softening of the teeth and bones. Phosphoric acid also neutralizes the hydrochloric acid in your stomach, which can interfere with digestion, making it difficult to utilize nutrients.

- Sugar: Soft drink manufacturers are the largest single user of refined sugar in the United States. It is a proven fact that sugar increases insulin levels, which can lead to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, weight gain, premature aging and many more negative side effects. Most sodas include over 100 percent of the RDA of sugar.

- Aspartame: This chemical is used as a sugar substitute in diet soda. There are over 92 different health side effects associated with aspartame consumption including brain tumors, birth defects, diabetes, emotional disorders and epilepsy/seizures. Further, when aspartame is stored for long

periods of time or kept in warm areas it changes to methanol, an alcohol that converts to formaldehyde and formic acid, which are known carcinogens.

- Caffeine: Caffeinated drinks cause jitters, insomnia, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, elevated blood cholesterol levels, vitamin and mineral depletion, breast lumps, birth defects, and perhaps some forms of cancer.

- Tap Water: I recommend that everyone avoid drinking tap water because it can carry any number of chemicals including chlorine, trihalomethanes, lead, cadmium, and various organic pollutants. Tap water is the main ingredient in bottled soft drinks.

- Soda is one of the main reasons, nutritionally speaking, why many people suffer health problems. Aside from the negative effects of the soda itself, drinking a lot of soda is likely to leave you with little appetite for vegetables, protein and other food that your body needs.

If you are still drinking soda, stopping the habit is an easy way to improve your health. Pure water is a much better choice. If you must drink a carbonated beverage, try sparkling mineral water.



Find more research and in depth articles on this and other health subjects at: www.mercola.com

Newsflash

For those of you who love soda, there's a reasonably healthy alternative that uses stevia as a sweetener, has a different carbonation process, and no artificial ingredients. Zevia. www.zevia.com

Bonded Together is published by Trish Evans as the Lord leads and provides to encourage families in Jesus Christ.

To submit articles & birth announcements or for Paypal for retreat registration or donations, email gtdz@empirenet.com. For checks for the retreat or ***Bonded Together*** donations, please make payable to Trish Evans, and mail to: P.O. Box 381, Norco, CA 92860. Please note that ***Bonded Together*** is not published on a regular basis and donations go towards each issue and not a subscription. www.bondedtogether.org is a work in progress, please check it out.



Gary, Mackenzie holding Jordan, Asaph & Josiah, Noah & Morgan, Ethan & Trish

OUR NEW FLOOR CLEANER!

Ain't she a pretty one! ☺
When I was pregnant with Jordan my grandmother blessed me with a Roomba for my 40th birthday. It came with a rebate deal to get a Roomba Dirt Dog (the garage version) for free. Since we have no carpet I just use the "Dog" in the house along with its more expensive counterpart (the "Dog" works just as well if not better). These were great back savers during the pregnancy and I really recommend them. But now I don't need them for I have a crawling baby. Her own unique style is swimming; she puts both hands forward and drags her body along the ground, picking up every piece of dirt on the floor as she goes. When her cycle is up and she's all done we just put her in the washer before her nap ☺ ~Trish



Jordan Evans

Above Rubies Family Camp

August 21-23, 2009 in Pine Valley, California

Pine Valley Bible Conference Center is 45 minutes east of San Diego and two miles north of Interstate 8. Come join us in this picturesque setting and fresh air as we fellowship and grow closer to the Lord and to our families. Our weekend features teaching from Colin and Nancy Campbell, editors of Above Rubies magazine (<http://www.aboverubies.org>). Colin is a pastor in Tennessee and both are conference speakers in the United States and Internationally. They have six grown children and 33 grandchildren so far. Their topics include: *Fulfilling our roles as Mommies and Daddies in raising our children to know and serve Jesus wholeheartedly.*Building Godly generations that can stand firm for God in an uncertain world. *Equipping Fathers to lead and Mothers to follow and the whole family to work together as a team.*Providing our families with physical and spiritual nourishment.*Living abundantly and continuing to serve one another when faced with the challenges of life unique to families. Sessions for the husbands and wives are timed to allow the parents to coordinate their own family's care rather than having outside child care. This gives each parent a special time with their children to explore the conference grounds and activities. There will also be combined activities for the entire family as well as plenty of free time to be together or share time with other families.

Lodge and Cabin rates are for two night's accommodations and Friday night dinner through Sunday lunch. Bedding is provided in lodge rooms (not cabins) and consists of sheets, blankets, towels and pillows. Bring your own pool towels. One bedroom lodges have one double bed, one twin bunk bed and a bathroom and can sleep 3-6 people depending on ages/sizes of children. Two bedroom, one bath lodges and cabins (each cabin has its own bathroom) can be used for larger families.

Families with three children or less will be placed in one bedroom lodges until full. Cabins have six twin bunk beds (12 beds in all) and are available for families coming with four or more children or for smaller families if they are the only rooms left. More info, Gtldz@empirenet.com, (951) 681-4858, www.bondedtogether.org (the coordinators), www.pvbc.net (the conference center) www.aboverubies.org (the magazine and speakers)

2008 prices listed here, changes to be announced! **Couple-\$350.00** for one or two bedroom lodges, **\$280** in cabins. **Adults over 18 years old** are \$175 in lodges, \$140 in cabins. **Children 2 & under- Free; 3-12 yrs: \$75** in lodges, **\$58** in cabins, **13-17 yrs: \$150** in lodges, **\$115** in cabins. Conference Fee included in the couples & singles price. **Day Rates (for those not staying overnight):** \$12 per day adult, \$6.00 3-12 yrs + \$20 conference fee per adult over 18 and any meals taken; Breakfast \$6, Lunch \$7, Dinner \$8 ea. for persons 3 yrs & older.

Registrants coming without a spouse and/or children will be roomed in lodges or dorms based on number of others attending this way. A group of moms can request a room together. There is a cabin designated for moms coming alone or with girls or small children. RV's pay the same as cabin rate. There are no hookup sites. Add \$10 late fee to adult rate if registering after August 10. Installment payments in order to reserve space are accepted and encouraged. Please make checks payable to: Trish Evans, P.O. Box 381, Norco, CA 92860. Paypal accepted with 3% surcharge added to your total, email us for info.

IF RECEIVING THIS AFTER 2008 FAMILY CAMP, PLEASE CONTACT US FOR INFO REGARDING FUTURE CAMPS

Bonded Together
P.O. Box 381
Norco, CA 92860