The Best of Bonded Together

The publication of the *Above Rubies Camps* of California and Beyond

You are Not Alone!

Welcome to Bonded Together; a newsletter to encourage families and Above Rubies Retreat Coordinators in their calling in raising their families and reaching others for Jesus Christ. This special supplemental issue has been compiled to highlight articles from past issues. It is our hope and prayer that you will be blessed and uplifted by these stories and that you will be awed, as we continually are, by the great ways God is working amongst families in our time. *The Evans Family*

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Would Anyone Come?

By Trish Evans

I initially called Nancy Campbell about the possibility of putting on a retreat in Southern California back in 1996. I never dreamed in a million years that the voice saying "Helloooo" on the other end of the phone would be hers. I had, what I thought, was a pretty logical mental picture of the situation; a magazine such as ***Above Rubies*** that went out all over the world surely had a nice office in some industrial building somewhere with friendly staff to answer calls. Someone would direct me to the appropriate "other" staff person for handling and processing. Who would think that the editor's home phone number was listed in the magazine? And that she would actually answer rather than screening calls on an answering machine?

Here's some background prior to that call. I had been a very anti-child person with no real desire to ever be a mommy. But I did want to be married and the man that God chose for me happened to think children were part of the whole deal. Gary and I have been together since I was 16 and he 19. A few years later he became a Christian and shortly afterwards I became one, too. We were living together and after about a year of being told we were in sin by the non-believers we were witnessing to so fervently, God arranged a wonderful wedding for us. Now having been together since '83, and married since '88, Gary thought it perfectly reasonable to have a baby. I didn't, and fought that off for 2 ½ more years before grudgingly "submitting". When Mackenzie was born in December '91, God began changing my heart towards children. I still didn't really want more, or many more at least, but certain "giants" in my life that I had said "never" to began to fall. Long term breastfeeding, cloth diapers, home education, family bed were all things that I was never going to do. When Mackenzie was two a friend gave me The Way Home by Mary Pride and God had prepared my heart in such a way that it all made absolute perfect sense. I became pregnant with the twins, who were born at home on Gary's birthday and then our opportunity to share with folks about children really took off.

For those that have never had twins, suffice it to say that the parents and children suddenly become public property and no question by a stranger is off limits ☺ That was fine with us, as we were ready, to give them more of an answer than they bargained parents could come to a conference setting where the children would be welcome. Watching small children being given over by their parents each week to a ministry worker and watching them cry and scream for their mom or dad had really saddened me. This can't be the way God wants it was all I could think.

The only retreat or conference that I could find that welcomed our family was the Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa Mothers with Babies retreat. The first two years I went it was held a hotel and I didn't stay overnight. Then it was at the Calvary Chapel owned Murrieta Hot Springs and we went as a family even though we were an oddity. These retreats were where a vision developed for what a retreat should be; meeting the needs of the mothers or fathers, but open to the family to come together and use their own wisdom and discretion as to how they could best meet the needs of their members. About this time I had ordered all the back issues of the then defunct HELP for Growing Families newsletter that Mary Pride was publishing. One of their back issues was a copy of Above Rubies for a month when they were in a pinch and had no time to publish. Hmmm…I thought as I read through the pages, this lady seems to be someone I can relate to. I immediately wrote and requested any back issues or subscription information "they" could provide. I was surprised to receive a personal letter back from Nancy with 5 or 6 back issues. I eagerly poured over them. And then I got to thinking…a dangerous thing, I know ☺ If they were having these "camps" in Australia and New Zealand why weren't

there any here in the U.S.? Little did I know that a lady in Texas was thinking the same thing and already organizing what was the first American camp in November of 1996. So I called to find out what one had to do to have an Above Rubies retreat organized in our area.

Nancy explained how the retreats work; a willing host family finds and books a place and Nancy will come speak. I still don't think I really understood what that entailed but I was willing to give it a shot. I went to Arrowhead Springs Conference Center and almost contracted it at 80 people minimum for $112 each. YIKES! That didn't seem like a big number to me at the moment. What's $8,960 anyways? Thankfully a wonderful woman involved in the ministry of organizing retreats returned my call from a week earlier the day before I sent in my deposit check and signed in blood contract. She offered some excellent wisdom, advice and relating of past experiences where someone was stuck paying off a debt for overbooking for a retreat. That really opened my eyes! I called Oak Glen the next day and took the date they had open for what I had thought was too small a number (40). I figured God would provide room if we needed it. There were 34 women at that retreat, 4 dads and 24 children. We would have been 42 adults short of the Arrowhead Springs contract, amounting to $4,704 to be paid them for non-existent attendees. I cringe at the thought and thank God for having that person call when she did!

That summer I felt like the Little Red Hen as I found out that the support that I expected to come from everywhere to help make crafts, notebooks, etc. was not materializing from the church we were involved with at the time. I did have a couple of faithful friends who did what they could and an AR reader who couldn't attend because she was expecting her first grandchild at that time made a nice craft to place in the ladies' rooms for their arrival. I should also mention that Gary was away at CHP academy in Sacramento that summer which was hard on our children who have shared the family bed with him and been very close to him since birth. He was injured shortly after the retreat and had to resign and go back to his previous employment with Edison and we sometimes joke that God had to get him out of the way so I could do the retreat and learn whatever lessons I needed to be taught. At the end of the retreat, as I was just beginning to breathe easy again, it was suggested in a small conversation that I start a newsletter for the ladies who came. I said, "Fat Chance!" I had done enough work and it was over!

God has an interesting sense of humor, however, and I found myself with a title to this not-going-to-happen venture filling my mind upon awakening Monday morning. Should've known by now to never say never ☺

The retreats are not put on by ***Above Rubies*** or by the Campbell's. They are totally organized by the mother or family that has prayerfully chosen to sponsor it. That means that all the finding of a location, contracts, bills, printing, folders, crafts, brochures, Nancy's airfare and room, scholarships and anything else associated with the retreat is their sole responsibility. This is what the "conference fee" added to the registration costs of the camp is for. In some cases it does and some retreats have been able to bless ***Above Rubies*** with the extra. It all depends on how many attendees and what the expenses are. Some camps have been able to add a lot to the lodging cost as they are in parts of the country where the centers only want $50 per person. We have a high cost of living here in Southern California. This means passing up some nice retreat centers in order to keep it affordable for everyone, but still finding ones that can meet our group's unusual needs (and, yes, by their industry standards, we are unusual). Financial accountability is very important in any ministry and I have great respect for those who want to find out what goes on behind the scenes. This newsletter is not put out with retreat money.

To think this all began for us with a phone conversation between Gary and myself where he said, "Book her and they will come." We knew nobody that was going to come besides two friends and had no idea what we were getting into. As for the future; As long as God continues to direct our family in this we will continue to have retreats here and where God leads and do whatever we can to help others who are being raised up to host retreats in their states. Nancy has a vision to see a retreat in every state. I'd like to see this vision attained and extended to include every region. The world is becoming increas-ingly hostile to families, let's do whatever we can to support and encourage one another.

Bonded Together is published 3-4 times a year by Trish Evans, with careful, scrutinizing proofreading by Gary Evans. Its purpose is:

-To Glorify God through encouraging parents in raising their families for Jesus Christ.
*-To support the ministry of **Above Rubies** magazine and Colin and Nancy Campbell through the publishing of Above Rubies retreat information*
-To have a forum where mothers (and dads, too!) can share their experiences, joys, struggles and ask for help and prayer from others.

Suggested donation for **Bonded Together** is $7 per year to Trish Evans. The issues are black & white; the color in this issue was made possible by a donation from Office Depot. To submit anything for **Bonded Together**, please email: gtkdz@empirenet.com or send to **11096 Pala Place, Mira Loma, Ca 91752**. Email is greatly preferred as it makes putting this together much quicker *and hassle-free!*

Mothers Are Refreshed and Renewed in Louisiana

Well, the first Above Rubies Ladies' Retreat is now history. It was absolutely the most wonderful experience of my life! Nancy is such a wonderful motherly person, and so wise, that I could sit and listen to her all night long. Many of the women were so very touched and convicted by what they heard that surely positive changes are taking place in their homes. It was amazing! The Lord was so close that it seemed heaven had come right down and embraced us.

I guess the story really starts before the retreat. My 10-year-old van with 160,000 miles began to make a terrific squeak and I began to wonder if the belt we had limped along for so long would hold until I got out of the driveway! Jane (the other co-ordinator) called early Friday morning to tell of strange occurrences at her home, too. First her email disappeared. Then from 11pm till 2am her phone rang and rang but no one was on the other end. She finally had to unplug it. We prayed for God's hand of protection upon us and set out for the retreat. Jane was to endure two more sleepless nights, though, because of asthmatic type symptoms in her children-one different child each night.

After about 30 minutes into the 3-hour drive to Alexandria it became evident that a terrific storm was brewing. The wind blew the van so forcibly that I thought we would tip over, then the rain came down so hard that we could barely see the road. We continued to pray in our hearts for protection. We knew that the Lord wanted this retreat but couldn't help wondering if this was Satan's final attempt to destroy the weekend. When we finally arrived at the retreat center - a full hour late-we jumped out of the van and hustled to the administration building to get Nancy's key and check in, only to discover the building locked. We were to arrive before Nancy while my friend, Jane, drove Nancy very slowly from the airport therefore allotting us enough time to prepare Nancy's room before she arrived. That morning the Lord must have known

what I would need for the day because the verse "Be still and know that I am God" was given to me. This verse comforted me upon arrival and during the one-hour wait for the administrator to arrive. It was 1:45 when we finally raced off to prepare Nancy's room. Jane drove into the parking lot at 1:55 as we were calmly walking back to the van for the supplies needed to prepare the other 20+ rooms. God has perfect timing.

Everything was finished before the first arrivals at 4:00 thanks to mine and Jane's children who prepared all of the rooms while Jane and I –along with Julee (who had ridden with Jane)-placed flowers, tablecloths, books, and snacks in and around the conference room.

I suppose one of the greatest things that happened is that our worship leader had never heard of Nancy Campbell and had no idea what she would speak about. This was my fault although in this instance as in so many others while we planned this retreat God used my insufficiencies to show His glory. So that even though Dana had never heard of Nancy, the songs she chose, through the Lord's guidance, were absolutely perfect. Tears flowed as we poured our hearts out to God in song and we can truly say we entered in to worship. Once when Dana was so touched by God that she could not sing, the ladies never faltered, they continued to worship the Lord in song. It was so beautiful. We weren't there to be entertained by someone on a stage. We were worshipping. And the voices of the ladies seemed as if we had switched places with Dana and instead of her ministering to us, we were ministering to her. It was a true picture of Christianity and motherhood where others take our mantle when we are unable to go on.

Dana had had a tubal some years ago and was waiting on God to tell her what to do next. Well, needless to say she heard from God that weekend. Many women were touched by what Nancy said. I think one of the greatest revelations for many of the women is the importance of keeping a peaceful, Godly atmosphere in the home. As a result, many of the ladies are restructuring their homeschooling and unplugging their telephones. One woman described her weekend as a mothering experience. She said she felt "mothered" and "refreshed".

Would we do it again? Most certainly! In fact, we are thinking about having a family retreat next year at one of the many state parks. What happened to the van and Jane's children? The van quit squeaking before I went a mile down the road and Jane's children slept well Sunday night and have not had any further asthmatic symptoms.

I have learned that God is in control, and when you work for Him there is nothing to worry about or fear. Though adversities may come, He shines victorious in the end. Also, that he can use anyone if they are willing to lay down their desires for His desires and be willing to serve under His guidance. You really can't fail because the more inexperienced you are the more He fills in the gaps. ***~By His Grace, Angela Decoteau***

What's in a Name?

In Australia, the term for meeting at a center to hear teaching and enjoy fellowship is a "CAMP". In America, a camp is what you do in the woods with a tent so we call it a "RETREAT". But that implies getting away from it all and we also have similar gatherings at hotels and call them a "CONFERENCE". So basically we have different terms to describe an event that is focused on instruction, fellowship, renewal, and commitment.

From 1996 to the end of 2001 there will have been over 40 Above Rubies Camps attended by over 2000 mothers and families in the United States and Canada

In Search of The Perfect Retreat Center

By Trish Evans

It's 5 p.m. and darkness has fallen across the barren plains of monotonous landscape that is characteristic of the drive north on Highway 79 from San Diego to Riverside County. The youngest two boys are asleep in their car seats and the other two boys are in the back discussing how far it is to Souplantation in Temecula. Our daughter is riding up front with dad trying to figure out why people think the world is too crowded to support more people when we are traveling through all this nothingness. We just spent the day driving to Julian to check out possible retreat sites. It was a fruitless day, except to say that now we know what they look like so we don't have to worry about calling back to inquire next year. Beds too small and hills too steep at one, unable to book until the sponsoring church has its pick at another, and the third only has room for 35 adults and even less room in the diner. Such was our expedition.

So what goes into finding a spot for a retreat for such a "strange" (by retreat center standards) group as ours? First I check out the Christian Camping International web site to locate prospective camps. When I find something that's a potential I check out their personal web site and/or call to get more specifics. This knocks out most of them. These are some of the things I've found that eliminates them from a possible visit.

***No private bathrooms** or not enough rooms with them; I know many pregnant Mommies do not desire to hike out in the middle of the night to find a toilet, especially if they have to share it with the local wildlife.

***Beds too small** or too many in a room that we are expected to fill. Mommies come in all shapes and sizes, some of them have health conditions such as back problems. Some are bringing babies to snuggle with in the bed and a cot that's half the size of a twin mattress (which is what the majority of the camps are offering these days) just won't cut it.

***Meeting rooms that double as the Dining Hall**, requiring us to vacate the room a half-hour before mealtimes. At most camps, the largest group gets the best meeting room. This makes perfect sense, but sometimes our group needs it more because we have all this baby paraphernalia such as strollers and playpens coming in the room with us and so to be relegated to a small side room meant for 40 adults is not going to cut it for a comfortable weekend.

***The BIGGIE: Price**. I have found a few really nice conference centers that would be perfect for an Above Rubies retreat except most of the people couldn't afford to come.

Many camps make their money on youth groups and/or "normal" adult groups and don't need to have all the things that we'd like to have. Some have good adult pricing, but lousy children's pricing. Some places don't have anywhere for Nancy (and our family) to sleep that is separate from the rest of the group. I'm not picky, but I don't think your husbands would be too keen on all of you sharing a cabin with Gary, even if it was in separate bedrooms ☺

Then there are small side issues to weigh; is there enough parking? Is it easy for a mom with a stroller or a very pregnant

mother to get around? Steep hills for hiking up and down is not ideal. Is it easy to drive to and find for a mom on a Friday night?

All the San Bernardino camps in the mountains are lower on my list because I don't want to scare off any women who do not wish to tackle that grade without their husband driving. Palomar has a similar slope to climb up, but it is still a very nice center. Do they have a sound system or do we need to bring our own? What is the food like?

You get the idea. By the time I get to the point where I'm going to ask Gary to take time out of his life that he could be doing something else on a day off to haul us for a tour of a camp, I better be sure that it is pretty close to what we want.

Then we put in the "Ethan Barf Test". When we visited Mt. Palomar, Ethan threw up near the end of our tour for no reason. And here I was explaining to the nice man giving us the tour that our whole group is comprised of families similar to ours and that some come as a family or moms bring their babies or toddlers. I could just see the wheels turning in his mind about what to expect from our group over a weekend ☺ When we went to Julian and stopped at the first camp, the main one we were there to see, Ethan again barfed about midway through the tour. Mackenzie and I took it as a sign that we weren't supposed to have a retreat there. The rooms at that place had already scared me away, but I wasn't going to rudely announce we were leaving until we'd at least finished looking over the rest of the place. Thankfully, both of the camps that Ethan barfed at we were outside and not in a room at the time!

Some might wonder why we all go together at all to visit. I want to see how we manage a quick tour to determine if it is feasible to do a whole weekend there with children. The boys are my best advisors in how they behave somewhere and it really helps me see things that I might overlook on a quiet outing by myself. It is also a good gauge of how the staff will view our group over the course of the weekend. Are they considerate and polite or do they look at us like why on God's Green Earth are you here with all these children? While inquiring at Northern California retreat centers, I had one lady on the phone tell me that she has watched moms "yacking" and not paying attention to their children at a retreat (not one of ours) and that she wasn't about to lose all they've worked for because a child drowns in their lake and a lawsuit follows. Basically I got the "subtle" impression that she hoped I'd call elsewhere. Another camp in Arrowhead told me they don't have children's pricing at all because they don't want children there. That was pretty straight-forward and I wish she hadn't felt the need to mince words.

So there you have it. There's more to choosing a site than meets the eye and we hope we are serving everyone's needs as best as possible when we choose a place to gather and fellowship.

By Sherri Leiter

My first experience with a ladies retreat was in April of 1998. I traveled with Nancy to St. Louis, MO. It was such an encouraging and uplifting time for all present. I had been asked to give a workshop on organization, however before I began, Nancy asked me to share our testimony. It was the first time I had shared our testimony publicly since our son's death in September of 1997. (For testimony, see Above Rubies web site under reversal stories.)

I was amazed at how the Lord could use our story to encourage and uplift others. Since I was 5 months pregnant at the retreat, He brought hope to a lady whose baby had died during birth just 1 month before. This was just one of the many great things the Lord did that weekend.

I went home inspired and very excited about the first TN Above Rubies Retreat coming up in October. I had a great team of ladies that were helping with the planning but most importantly, praying. I can't emphasize enough the importance of prayer for the retreats. I know Colin and Nancy come under attack before retreats and I can't speak for other organizers but my family and several other families involved in the retreat came under attack. Satan doesn't like it when mothers become committed to their high calling and families get strengthened.

The October 1998 retreat was wonderful. 130 ladies attended. We had filled up the campground 2 months prior to the retreat and so we started putting ladies in hotels 20 minutes away. We had a banquet on Saturday night and Sunday after the meeting was over, several shared in music. It was an awesome weekend.

In September before the retreat, Nancy encouraged me to begin planning a retreat for the next year so we could announce it at the upcoming retreat. I called a different facility (bigger) to see about booking a date. They were already quite booked but had the last weekend in September of 1999 available. My husband began praying about it but couldn't come to a peace. We knew we would be moving soon (our house had sold 2 weeks after Sarah was born in August and we'd probably be building a house that next year.) I reluctantly told Nancy I couldn't host a retreat in '99.

During the retreat I phoned my husband to see how he and our son were fairing and he informed me he had found our temporary home. He had purchased a 30' travel trailer that we would live in while building. We moved into the trailer the end of November, began building our basement in January '99, moved into the basement in May and I delivered Mary Beth the LAST WEEKEND IN SEPTEMBER!!! (Just an encouragement ladies to listen to your husbands:)

I received a call in July of 2000 from Tamie Krawczkski asking if I could help her with the TN retreat coming up in September. I got the go ahead and began finding out what I could do to help. However, 3 weeks before the retreat due to a family illness, Tamie had to leave the state and was unable to finish the retreat.

Nancy was going to finish up the retreat but believe me Nancy doesn't need another thing on her plate! How this lady manages to accomplish all she does never ceases to amaze me. My husband gave the OK for me to finish up the retreat. Nancy did so many extra things to help. She is such a blessing. (She even had a car accident the week of the retreat and miraculously wasn't hurt.)

The September 2000 retreat was also great. We had about 80 ladies and our Saturday night share time was incredible. Many had strongholds broken that had been there for years. Nancy prayed over and encouraged the young ladies present to keep themselves pure until their wedding night.

My husband and I were already praying about hosting a family retreat in 2001. We were having trouble locating a facility. (I appreciated Trish's last article regarding finding a perfect site. Until you have tried, you have no idea how difficult it is. I would say it is the hardest part of planning a retreat.) We wanted to have a spring retreat but since we didn't find a facility until January it didn't leave enough time to get the word out so it became a fall retreat.

The first TN Family Retreat is scheduled for October 12-14, 2001. We are already more than 1/2 booked. My husband and I are very excited. We have a vision of a retreat twice a year in the spring and fall. We really see such a blessing in having the husbands and wives hear the same message at the same time.

If your state or region hasn't yet had a retreat, please prayerfully consider organizing one. Your life will never be the same.

Sherri Leiter, Tennessee Above Rubies Retreat Coordinator

Sherri can also be contacted for help with planning a retreat.
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Birth and Life

The following stories are not about proving where the best place to have one's baby (or babies) is. Although my husband and I are very committed to homebirth under normal and semi unusual circumstances, we both believe that there is a time and place for modern medical technology. I also believe that all parents are motivated by love for their child and truly want what's best for their family when they choose where to give birth. The choice is not an easy one. A small percentage of births will end with a "bad" or undesirable outcome, whether they happened at a hospital or at home. There are things in life that are out of our control and totally under God's and no modern marvels can change that. Birth is part of Life. And Life is a risk. We do not know what a day will bring. Thankfully we can know the One who does, and He is in control and in Him we can put our trust, not the natural process of birth or the wonders of medical technology. I hope no one will read these stories and think in any way that we look down at them for choosing to birth their baby (ies) in the hospital. On the other hand, I want to point out that there have been conditions of births that I have read or heard of where the parents praised the medical team that saved their child's life and these conditions might have been entirely caused by the fact that the babies were born in the hospital in the first place. The same circumstances might not have occurred at home. Unfortunately, it's impossible to have the same birth twice in both environments in order to see which would have been better and we can only do our best to make prayerfully informed choices and live with whatever happens. It's called personal responsibility, and judging by the number of lawsuits in our society, it is a term that seems to have gone out of fashion.-*Trish Evans*

Our Journey to Birth Freedom

By Moira Bell

We were privileged to welcome a new son (our sixth child) into our family in September 1996. Truly the hand of God was all over his birth and I share this story in hopes that it will encourage you.

Let me explain where we had come from. I have a rather diverse obstetrical history. My first 3 children were born by c-sections all for different (and I now believe non-essential) reasons. Baby #4 was a hard fought battle with an OB/MD who I had searched out because she declared herself willing to work with me to have a successful vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC). Amazingly, on the OB appointment on my "due date" for that baby, she announced without warning, "I have scheduled you for a c-section tomorrow a.m."

I sat up full of indignation, thinking I was staring Benedict Arnold square in the face and fired back, "What are you thinking? I have 3 children ages 3 and under! Do you think I can just drop everything and have major surgery in the morning? Besides, I hired you to work with me to have a VCAB! This is only my arbitrary 'due date'. What's the rush? If you are in some kind of hurry, can't we even try an induction first before racing to a c-section? For heaven's sake, what's come over you?"

Needless to say, she realized I was not going to cooperate. I left that day and didn't return for a visit for two weeks. She again voiced the need to "hurry things along" and I replied by saying I would gladly sign a waiver releasing her from all liability in regard to my birth and I insisted she understand that I was paying her to perform a service for me, not to interfere with the normal course of my birth. I did not return for another prenatal visit for two weeks which put me at 44 weeks gestation by her calculations. I agreed at this point to have a non-stress test to check on the baby and an ultrasound to verify the health of the placenta, mostly to get her off my back and avoid legal hassles from her over the issue of child endangerment. She didn't exactly threaten me with the latter but was clearly becoming more agitated with her loss of control of my birth.

The non-stress test went well. I had an active baby within, felt great, and had no personal worries about the baby or placenta. On Wed, Feb 26th the ultrasound tech stated, "Everything looks fine and it looks like about an 8 pound little girl!" Less than 36 hours later I gave vaginal birth to a 10 1/2 pound baby boy. The entire hospital scene would have made a good "Airplane" style comedy movie. When I told the nurse on duty that I needed to squat to get this baby out, she said, "You can't do that," to which I replied , "Sure I can, watch!" and proceeded to turn sideways on the skinny delivery table and get into a deep squat. As you can imagine this caused no lack of uproar for the staff as I was breaking all their policies but my body was driving me to squat. In two pushes he was deeply crowning so I quickly repositioned so someone could catch him.

As soon as we could we gathered up our little son and got out of the hospital that morning. The whole experience sealed for me once and for all that our days with hospital birth were over. I was a registered nurse by profession, so this was a significant breaking with my past.

Two years later we had our first home birth, for baby number 5, in the care of a local midwife. This was by far the best birth we'd had, and another big baby- 10 lb. 15 oz. Interestingly, she also came "four weeks late" by regular due date calculations- and with no tearing, no signs of post-maturity, and a fabulous recovery. The only drawback was a lack of spiritual unity (between the midwife team and ourselves) at the birth. (The midwife was into goddess worship and completely blinded from the truth of salvation in Jesus.) I learned sometime later that my dear husband had met her at the door when she arrived for my birth and escorted her back to her car to remove and leave several pieces of jewelry (pentagram necklace, crystals, etc.) in her car and not pollute our home with them. (I still pray for this midwife as she remains locked up in witchcraft.)

Two years later we were eagerly awaiting the birth of baby number six. I had shared my "due date" of August 31st with two

other friends at church who each gave birth to healthy sons and I still waited. We had had three very casual home visits from a like-minded midwife who took an interest in us as a "friend of a friend" over the summer. She initiated these visits and very kindly prayed over us, measured me for fun, answered some questions I had and furnished me with a few handy supplies. (She worked in a hospital and had access to anything we needed.) Although we never discussed it directly, we had wondered if we might want her to attend our birth, but that question was supernaturally answered for us.

On Labor Day weekend, she called us to say she was leaving the area to go work on an Indian reservation where the midwife had broken both her arms in a severe accident. Her planned absence exactly matched my "due date window" so we knew she was out of the picture. In retrospect, her presence in our lives was more like an angel's.

I enjoyed those weeks of finishing projects and feathering my newborn's nest. Three weeks later I awoke at 4:30 a.m. and got up (as pregnant women often do during the night ☺) and realized I felt "different". Unable to fall back to sleep, I read and prayed and soon realized that my contractions (which I'd had off and on for three weeks now) were being organized and consistent (for once) and that I had never had them in the morning before! Hurrah! These were good signs!! When my husband awoke, I told him that this was the day and we both agreed he should go on to work and I would call him when things got interesting. (He works less than a mile from home.)

I waited to the socially acceptable hour of 8 a.m. to call a godly older woman who had asked me if she could attend my birth as part of her requirements for becoming a certified child birth educator, something God was calling her to since her children were grown.

Answering the phone she asked me, "Are you calling to tell me you're having that baby today?" I hesitantly replied, "Yes." And she joyfully came back with, " As I prayed earlier this week, God told me to clear Wednesday for you, so I'm completely free. I'll take a shower and be right over." As I hung up the phone I laughed and said, "Thank you Lord, today is the day!"

Literally moments later, another precious friend called. She was the only friend who I had told that we were "on our own" with this birth, and even that I had only divulged to her two days earlier. (We had not wanted to stir up a dust cloud of unbelief, anxiety, and pressure from among our friends and family.) My friend hemmed and hawed a little bit and finally told me the reason for her call, "I'd really like to come and help in any way I can when you go into labor."

I smiled and told her I was in fact in labor right now, and if she could arrange child care for her own little ones, she was welcome to join us. I called two other very close friends who had had their babies at home also and both indicated they would love to come and could be here after lunch. "Thank you Lord," I again whispered as I hung up the phone. "The baby won't come until later in the day." I felt like all of heaven was conspiring to put this perfect day together for me.

My husband came home at 1:30 for lunch and stayed with me as things were heating up. His mom, my precious mother-in-law, arrived shortly thereafter. We passed the time doing housework (there were many helping hands who needed something to do), setting up a few last minute supplies, praying, and enjoying each other's fellowship.

Around 4:30 p.m., labor became intense requiring my full attention. Near 5:00 p.m. I "tossed my cookies" and took this as a good sign that I was entering transition (the last stage of labor.) The older woman who had come early in the day is known as quite a prayer warrior and at this time she was out in the living room praying specifically against satanic attack and meditating on the passage about the fiery darts in Ephesians chapter 6. As she sat there, my normally very quiet 4 year old son (who did not know this lady at all) walked up to her and said, "You know, the arrows can't hit the target.. They'll just fly right over the top.. They won't hit." The woman just stared at him in amazement as he delivered such a powerful prophecy specific to her prayers. She knew God was assuring her of the full protection of the blood of Jesus over us. (Out of the mouths of babes!)

We had been deeply moved to prepare for this birth spiritually and God had directed us to do some unusual things- get rid of some children's books which had subtle dark overtones and also to delete a computer game that had come preloaded on our computer and which featured several pagan religious symbols. The biggest lesson of our last birth had been to have a spiritually unified atmosphere at the birth. This was the only lingering dilemma for us because we had a dear friend who does not share our faith who had often expressed a desire to come to our birth. We had remained completely noncommittal on the matter but I keenly did not want to reject or hurt her by not inviting her to the birth. We were concerned, however, that it wouldn't be spiritually prudent to have her there. Let me tell you how this worked out.

We did call her to let her know baby was coming today, but left things very open-ended as to whether or not she should come. In God's providence, she showed up around 5:50 when I was getting very uncomfortable (and noisy). Without her ever entering our room, or anyone telling me she had come, I was suddenly gripped by a spirit of fear. Unbeknownst to me, she had actually poked her head in, taken a quick look at the situation, then had gone out to speak to others elsewhere in the house and voice her own worry and fear to all of them.

Amazingly, the phone rang just then and she answered it. It was the husband of one of the dear friends who was there for my birth. He was waiting for his wife to pick him up from the commuter train station and was wondering what was going on. At that moment I had moved on to our birthing stool in a deep squat and his wife was applying warm olive oil washcloth compresses to my perineum - she really couldn't just up and leave at that moment! My fear-riddled friend on the phone to her husband offered to go pick him up and shuttle him home. All this is unknown to me at the time. I'm just wrestling with a spirit of fear, asking everyone to pray, and not aware of what has so drastically changed our peaceful birth environment.

The fearful friend left at 6:20 to get the stranded husband. At 6:22 I had a powerful urge to push. Without a midwife to check that my cervix was fully dilated, this was another step of faith for me to trust what my body was telling me and go ahead at push. Five pushes later at 6:33 p.m., precious David was in my arms. The children had stepped into the room to see him born, the placenta delivered in two more pushes and Daddy cut the cord.

My girlfriend arrived back in 1/2 hour to see me snuggling my big healthy baby (10 lb. 4 oz) who had been born with no tearing! God had taken care of my concern about whether or not she would be at the birth- she was and she wasn't!

Another fabulous aspect of this story concerned our six-year-old daughter. Early in the day as people had begun to arrive, and the energy in our home was building, she had come to us and asked if there was any other place she could be for the day. I believe that God who knew her sensitive nature and tender age and knew that she would not respond well to seeing her mommy in the throes of labor. We called another dear friend who graciously stopped by around 10:30a.m. and took her for the day. Around dinner time at this other family's home, my daughter suddenly announced to my friend, "I think we should go home now, I'm sure the baby has been born." My friend was understandably taken aback and rather hesitant to just show up unannounced, let alone call and interrupt us, not knowing what was going on at our place. On faith, she brought my daughter home as requested. She walked in the door within minutes of David's birth and was there to see his cord cut and for first pictures. God is so merciful- even to 6-year-old girls!

I was exhilarated by this birth. I took a quick shower (seated on a plastic chair a friend had washed off and put in the shower stall for me), hopped in bed, enjoyed some pizza and cherished my son at my breast. The next morning I was up and about feeling no more loss of strength than if I had spent the previous day in heavy housecleaning. That week several families brought meals to us, and at our request, they stayed and ate the meal with us so we could visit, share David's awesome birth story, and the children could have some unusual play-filled evenings with other friends here.

My husband and I felt that this experience jettisoned us forward in our faith, our respect for the miracle of birth, and our love for each other.

Then we were finally readied by God's gentle leading to have a home birth on our own with Matthew, our seventh blessing. Our pregnancy with him was joyful and uneventful. We didn't need to make any lifestyle or diet changes, nor was there a leading from God to seek prenatal care of any kind. We both reread Carol Balizet's book "Born in Zion", every issue of New Nativity 2 we could get a hold of, and Lynn Griesemer's book "Unassisted Childbirth" as it was hot off the press. We prayed daily for God's protection, mercy, and provision of all we would need at the birth.

As with our other home births, we pursued a ruthless spiritual housecleaning; similar to the children of Israel's Passover deep cleaning for every last speck of dirt, we took a detailed inventory for any spiritual dirt which may have crept into our home (any literature, tapes, art, music, clothing- or anything which we sensed displeased the Lord and was not representative of his rule and reign in our home.) It was interesting to hear God point out things we had forgotten, or casually allowed into our home (many as gifts or hand-me-downs since our last home birth). Looking thoroughly through our home, with a willingness to part with anything that doesn't belong there, is a powerful spiritual experience. He speaks so clearly in these situations because He wants us to be free and standing upright on solid ground with no footholds of the evil one in our lives as we approach such a spiritually significant time as a birth.

As noted in our birth story about David- we had seen the utmost importance of only having people at our birth who were full of faith, cast on the Lord, and willing to remain under God and Greg (my husband)'s authority as the birth progressed. These criteria drastically reduced the list of who we might want to come.

Our best estimate of Matthew's due date was October 25th. Since all my vaginal births have been 3-4 weeks after my calculated (and medically verified) due dates, I think I had finally learned to quit caring about "due dates" and rest in the joy that God had my baby's birthday already chosen. I felt quite a lightness of heart that my loving Father who created this child
inside me to begin his earthly life, would also bring the baby out at the right **time (Just as Isaiah 66:9 assures us- "Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring forth? says the Lord: Shall I cause to bring forth and shut the womb? says thy God.")**. We did not discuss due dates with others so as to avoid an onslaught of fear or anxiety.

In the last week before Matthew came, three friends asked me separately if they could come to our birth. One had attended David's birth and been a lovely help, one had been at both my earlier homebirths and I had been to two of hers, and the last woman was pregnant with her third child and was
investigating homebirth. As Greg and I prayed about it, we felt a "wait and see" about who, if anyone, should come which is what we told the three friends.

On Thursday morning, November 12th, shortly after breakfast, I began having frequent organized contractions. This was new for me. Up until now, all my little bursts of contractions had been late at night and short-lived. As these kept up at a good clip, I called Greg at work and told him, "This is the real thing". Since he works only 2 minutes from the house, I didn't feel he needed to come home. My older daughters (11 and 8 years old) helped me straighten up around the house and assemble birth supplies.

Lunchtime came and went and I faced a dilemma. My 2-year-old son normally nursed to sleep for his afternoon nap and I was concerned that his nursing would increase these contractions so much it would be a struggle to hold andsoothe him to sleep. I prayed and felt a definitive leading to lay down with him and nurse him without fear. Not only did he settle right down but the contractions weakened (or quit, I'm not sure) and I got a 2 1/2 hour nap as well. **This was miracle of rest #1.**

Awakening refreshed and with dinnertime approaching, I wondered whether or not I should eat. The contractions were back, a little less frequent, but stronger. Again I sensed clear leading, "Eat"- so I did. After dinner we called the 3 friends and told them we were underway but did not ask them to come. We felt that God would prompt them and work out their family schedules if they were to come. We had a pleasant evening as a family. Contractions required more of my attention but were still quite manageable.

Around 9:30 p.m., I realized I was facing the same dilemma of a 2-year-old who would want to nurse at bedtime and it might kick-in strong labor which would make it tough to settle him. Again God poured a soothing calm over me to proceed with our nightly routine without fear. We put all the children to bed and fell asleep ourselves for 3 hours. **Miracle of rest # 2.**

I awoke at 2 a.m. with a strong contraction. Getting up to the restroom I had another one that took my breath away. As I sat down on the bed, a third nice strong one came. I sat through one more, then gently woke Greg and said, "This is it." I called the three friends and said we were "on" and left it with them whether or not they came.

Within 15 minutes, two of the three arrived. Greg and I had put finishing touches on the supplies and we had awakened the children who had asked to attend. I was ready to get into a deep squat position on our birthing stool with Greg on a chair behind me. (This position makes Greg the back and arms of my birthing "chair"). Squatting to deliver was one the best freedoms of homebirth- it really opens up the pelvis and lets me use gravity as I bear down and push. I asked for a warm olive oil compress to my perineum, which felt great, and gave me a place to focus my relaxing.

Shortly thereafter I felt the "ring-of-fire" tingling sensation which I knew was my cervix at its maximum stretch as baby came into the birth canal. One strong push and he was crowning. Daddy quickly moved into a "catch" position and my friend slipped in behind me as my "chair". Dad kept gentle pressure on Matthew's head through two more contractions and lovingly received our precious new babe into his hands at 3:30 a.m. **Matthew took right to the breast and I was shouting my joy and hallelujahs.**

Greg and I were both shocked at how fast he had come. He fixed me a big glass of juice as the friends straightened up. One friend commented, "What a proper tidy little birth! One small wastebasket of soiled chux pads, and one load of laundry in the washer and you'd never know someone just had a baby here!"

I took a quick sponge bath, drank a second tumbler of juice and climbed in my clean bed to nurse and snuggle little Matty. Since birth, I'd had no more serious contractions so I had not delivered the placenta. Experience had taught me that I needed to be well-hydrated to deliver the placenta so I downed one more big glass of juice and quickly fell asleep. **Miracle of rest #3.**

Two hours later, I awoke feeling fully rested, and got up to use the restroom. In one bearing-down effort I delivered the placenta. How simple and tidy!

The third friend arrived around 6:00 a.m. with breakfast cake and juice. We attended to Matthew's cord and diaper, took lots of pictures (each child holding him) and kept praising God and recounting all the peace and miracles of this shockingly easy birth. Another friend called and came over to take our older six children for a fun excursion. Greg and I snuggled up with Matty between us and took a three-hour nap together. **Miracle of rest #4.**

I felt so relaxed, rested and terrific that our family decided to go ahead with our plan to attend our church's potluck leader's meeting that night. No one could fathom that Matthew was only 15 hours old! **I was smiling from the very core of my being and finding all new personal meaning in the scriptures from Hebrews 4, "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own labor, as God did from His. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."**

Our lives are deeply blessed by Matthew. He's now nine months old, 23 lbs., walking, and smiling with a six-tooth grin. The big kids keep asking, "When are we going to have another baby?" My 10-year-old son continues to ask that we have at least three more. One of our many joys is the loving interaction between the siblings in our homeschooling, homebirthing, drug-free, worship-filled, spiritually clean home. We believe our children, raised in these ways and kept out of the secular systems will one day be uniquely able to minister to people who have no imprint of how a loving healthy home works.

More from Moira: ³I would happily correspond with any sincere seekers who have questions and need encouragement about homebirth. Besides my own four home births, I have attended some for other friends and have many insights to share. email- MoiraBell@aol.com

Our Birth Memories Will Last Forever

By Melanie Uselinger

The birth of my dear Camelia was anticipated with such joy and happiness as were my previous four births. But remorse set in soon as the birth began and I knew in my heart I was not in the right place. I was also injured at this birth and am waiting for a miracle healing of what seems to be permanent damage over a year afterwards. I hope the Lord can use me from this experience in helping other women make very good, well-researched, and prayerful decisions regarding the birth of their blessings.

I thought a good medium was using a "mid-wife" in the hospital to breech the home or hospital question. The only problem was that my body did not go into labor fast enough for hospital measures to wait for God's delivery time. Even though they were "midwives", they were still under doctor's orders.

I was induced every time I had a baby in the hospital. Now I will never know if it was coincidence or providence but the two babies I had at home came just a lovely few days early.

I have had four successful births. I thought I was the birth queen. Two hour labors, home or hospital, no problems, no epiosiotomies, no tears. I even felt great as soon as baby was born. Until baby number five. Baby number three had been born at home and was only 4 pounds for no known reason. (Not premature, he had been small for dates the entire pregnancy.) Even though that child was fine I was scared back to the hospital very reluctantly.

Well baby number four was a whopping nine pounds and induced at two weeks over due. Now just because it works doesn't mean it is safe. And just because everyone is doing it doesn't mean it is good or safe as we well know as Christians in every area of our lives. But thus far it had worked for me.

So I succumbed to the suggestion to have my water broke at one week over due with this one. As I sat in the hospital room I just couldn't go through with it. I almost went back home but the midwife and my husband just thought it was the right thing to do. I will never know why but as soon as she broke my water I felt a remorse set in that would last long after the baby was born. I felt remorse as I did my two-hour labor and got my beautiful baby girl in my arms. I felt remorse as I lay in the mother's room for the next two nights. Three days later was my 40th birthday. God may have brought her on my birthday, I will never know.

I grieved, cried, and reviewed how in the world I had been brought to this decision. Not only was I in mourning over the birth, I was badly hurt. I sustained a tear and a ruptured birth canal that may never heal though I am continually waiting for a miracle over a year later. During this year I have completely researched safe birth facts in many, many books that I may pass down to my children and other mothers.

For some reason safe birth facts are not something we run by with out a lot of effort. And almost as revealing as these wonderful books are, I started my own personal survey of every mom I ran into, be it at the pool, at the park, or wherever.

Women love to recount their birth stories. And they are burned into their memories all of their lives. This is one of the reasons our birth experience should be the best that it can be. As we plan our weddings with much prayer and preparation in order that all may go well, in a similar way we should be planning our births.

Try a survey of your own. And encourage expectant mothers and future expectant mothers to conduct their own survey. I have heard the wildest stories. More than any other story I have heard is that these dear ladies were told that their hips were not big enough to pass a baby through. And some of these are large ladies that I follow up with the obvious question of how big was the baby after all? And the answer is usually a 7 or 8 pound baby. And they believe this!

Well I got hurt, so now my only hope is that the Lord will use me in any way possible in the lives of others. I know what a great birth experience is. It is a miracle and in all ways brings glory to our Lord and Creator. And now I know what a disaster birth is and how far it can take us away from the blessing it is supposed to be and rob us of the joy intended as that new little blessing arrives on the scene. To God be the Glory.

E-mail me at JoyMelanie@aol.com for any more information on great birth books to research or to share with me your joys or griefs that you may be carrying since one of your births.

By Vyckie Bennett

Just thought I'd let you all know that I've tried everything to get this baby to come and now I give up. The reason I've been so anxious to get labor started is because the CNM (Certified Nurse Midwife) is going to a midwife convention in Alaska on May 5 and if my baby isn't born yet I will be stuck with the OB who did 3 of my 4 cesareans. So .... here's what all I tried -- not all at once, but over the past two weeks: Start Up tincture (black & blue cohosh, pennyroyal, beth root), Master Gland formula (from NSP -- supposedly helps your glands function better to produce the hormones that start labor: according to **"A Naturally Healthy Pregnancy" by Shonda Parker** this formula has not failed to bring on labor), Goldenseal (only used this for one day and then started retaining water -- a good indication that my liver & kidneys were getting tired of all these herbs), walking till my feet hurt, membranes stripped twice, electric breast pump, Cascara Sagrada bark (supposedly causes diarrhea like castor oil), went to chiropractor for adjustment. And what did I get for all my efforts? Lots of cramping, low back pain, some mild contractions, sore feet, stressed out household (including Mom who wants to help), a few drops of colostrom, and NO CHANGE in cervical dilation or effacement -- I'm still at 3 cm and 80 %.

So on Thursday, I was having lots of contractions, thought I might actually be in labor since I'd lost a lot of bloody mucous -- but the contractions were light and nothing really productive seemed to be happening. **So I whined to the CNM (Gail) because I was just sure that I wouldn't actually get down to business until sometime on Friday when the back up OB would be out of town and Gail would not be permitted to attend me at the hospital --I'd be stuck with whatever OB happened to be on call.** Gail offered to solve my whole dilemma by admitting me to the hospital and inducing with pitocin. I agreed. Got to the hospital about 12:30 p.m., got my hospital tag, hospital "gown", external fetal monitor strapped on, IV started, pitocin started about 1:30 p.m. In one hour I was reduced from a normal, healthy pregnant mom who felt great to a semi-human "patient" who felt lousy -- the IV was inserted in a weird position on my wrist which was very uncomfortable (as if an IV could be comfortable!), the monitor belts kept sliding around on my tummy and we kept losing the baby's heartbeat so even though I had the telemetry monitor which is supposed to enable the mother to walk around it didn't work out for me to move much because it was such a hassle. Plus, it just didn't feel right to walk around with all that gadgetry attached to me and cords to mess with and pole to tote around -- I felt like "The Borg" -- half human, half machine! So I sat upright on a bench and "put up" with the pitocin-induced contractions every 2 - 3 minutes. The contractions were very strong, but not unbearable. I did this for about 4 and a half hours.

Then Gail showed up to check my progress -- none. I wasn't surprised. By now it's about 6:00 p.m. and we're all thinking that something more has to happen if I'm going to deliver before the OB leaves town the next morning, so Gail wanted to break my bag of waters. I almost let her talk me into it -- but (thank the Lord) I decided to wait a while longer. After everybody cleared out of the room**, I sat there thinking to myself that the whole reason I wanted this baby to come before Gail leaves is because I want to have a natural delivery -- but there I sat with "the works" -- monitor, IV, no food, and pitocin!!!** Well, my rational brain finally returned to me and I pushed the nurse's call button and told her to unhook me because I was leaving! I told Gail over the phone that I could make this kind of progress (i.e., zero) in the comfort of my own home. Half an hour later, I was back to my normal self, wearing

my own clothes, walking upright and headed out of there! Mom & I stopped to pick up something for dinner and then I came home and went to bed. The interesting thing is that the pitocin-induced contractions didn't stop until about 10:00 p.m., but they did not bother me at all when I was walking around like a normal human being (having food in my stomach was also helpful).

The whole experience was completely bizarre considering that I've had a totally natural homebirth and I know that my body is fully capable of giving birth all by itself -- no need for all this "technology". Now, I am not going to do another thing to try to get labor going. Let the baby pick his or her own birthday! And if Gail happens to be in Alaska then so be it – I don't need her to get this baby out. I feel so much more peace now and am not going to allow myself to get pressured into hurrying things along any more! Oh Joy**! I love the freedom that I feel now just knowing that this baby and this delivery are in the Lord's hands -- not mine, not Gail's, not Mr. Pitocin's! ☺**

Postnote: I think it would do us all a world of good to remember that God has His own timing for the birth of our babies, and we must be patient and allow Him to have His way with our bodies. BTW, Lydia Jean was born May 6, 2000 at 12:35 a.m. after a quick, easy, and natural labor -- my water broke about the time that the CNM boarded the plane for Alaska ☺

Check out Warren and Vyckie's web site at:
www.familiesthatflourish.com

Warren and Vyckie's reversal story, "A Tough Conviction", can be found on the Above Rubies web site as well as in Nancy Campbell's book, "A Change of Heart", which is a compilation of reversal stories.

Vyckie with Andrew & Lydia

"I Have No Peace About This"

By Helen Sullivan

We had just had our 5th baby, Samuel. I was sure that we had filled our quiver, and my husband was also sure that we had plenty of children. Ok, now we should stop right? Well, my husband didn't want to go for a vasectomy, so that left me. He was all for me to have my "tubes tied". Our son was weeks old and it was very hard for me to arrange for this to be done. It was like I was saying to my son, "I love you but I don't want any more like you." So I searched the Bible to see what I could find about not having more children and taking this matter into my own hands. What I found was was to be blessed. Well, my husband was still sure about no more children, so I said to the Lord in prayers, **"I have no peace about this. Give me peace and I will obey my husband and have my tubes tied."**

So things were set in motion. I had three doctor's appointments and a pre op; blood drawing, etc. I was ready. Early one morning we make the trip to the surgery center one hour away from our home. I wasn't ready on the inside but on the outside I was ready. I have an I.V in and I was just about to get the anesthetic when my doctor shows up ready to perform the surgery. He asks**, "Are you ready "? To which I respond, "I guess." The doctor looked at me and said, "You are not ready. " "What?" I said. The doctor said that when he asks that question the woman usually responds with a resounding YES !!!** He told me I wasn't ready. He called my husband in to see me. I was still confused because all I had said was "I guess." My husband and I talked and because my husband said he wanted me to go ahead and have the op. I told the doctor (when he returned to see what we had decided), "Yes go ahead." The doctor still said no. He said, "You are just not ready." So he told me to go home and think about it then come back when I was ready. Remember I had prayed for peace? Driving home the peace came I was so thankful to God for the doctor. I know the Lord used that man.

I had not told any of my friends about going to have my tubes tied because everyone has their own opinion about such things and many have had it done or the husband has had a vasectomy. I wanted to hear from the Lord. A short while after this Sheri Circo came to visit me. I never said anything to her about the past events. **When she visited she gave me a copy of Above Rubies. It was an answer to prayer! This was all my questions answered. A God Send.**

Now what? After many talks and a lot of prayer, I was praying for the Lord to show my husband what I had now seen so clearly. I read to him from the Above Rubies and he agreed with all that I would share with him. **My husband is the voice for our family when people ask if we are going to have more children. He tells them it is up to the Lord!!! What a change. The Lord can only do that.**

When I was pregnant with Olivia I had morning sickness for 4 months really bad. I was not able to do much around the home. And I was already dreading the delivery pain. I go so fast when I go into labor that I always pray that I will get to the hospital in time. Someone told me about a book called **Supernatural Childbirth by Jackie Mize**. The lady told me that she had delivered her baby pain free naturally. I told her that I have had 5 children and none were born without the pain. Well I ordered the book when I was 7 months pregnant, read it in a day and found it hard to believe. I felt like the Lord had made me aware of this book for a reason. So I made up my mind that, yes, I could have the baby pain free. I went over the chapter in the book about fear many times. I am very fearful when it comes to labor pain. I let my husband know what I wanted to do, but to be honest I don't think that he listened to me. The book said to find two people who would pray for you to have a pain free birth. Well, I found one friend who said she would pray. I didn't tell many friends about it because what if I told everyone, and then I had a very painful labor?

OK, first of all I am praying that I will make it to the hospital on time. I was feeling very energetic and couldn't fall asleep. I was two days over my due date so I thought this could be it. It was 12.30am and I sneezed. OK, what happens when a 9-month pregnant woman sneezes? I needed to go to the bathroom. I suspected that my waters had broken, but I was not sure. I finally went to sleep, then I woke up at 3.30 am and I knew my water had broken. My husband woke up. I let him know what was going on and that I felt like we could wait until 6 am before leaving to the hospital, so he went back to sleep. How

he could do that I don't know?

We have 5 other children so Michael called the sitter at 5:30. We left for the hospital at 6.30 I was in labor but had no pain. We arrived and the nurse in charge didn't think I was close to delivering or in labor until she checked, and yes I was in labor. We were left alone and I felt the baby move down. I didn't feel pain. I felt like someone had turned the heat up in our room. I told Michael to let them know that the baby was coming. I had gone from 3cm to fully dilated in one contraction and was ready to deliver the baby. There was a doctor on call but he wasn't in the hospital yet so I was asked to hold on. Huh? How do I do that? I did. **Olivia Grace Sullivan was born at 10.08 am. PAIN FREE. No drugs, no yelling, no squeezing my husbands hand. And no after birth pain! I am truly blessed and who was my spokesperson? My husband!!!** He told everyone as he made the calls, "It was a piece of cake". He told them about the book and birth. By the way, the book is full of scripture and the one I held on to through the birthing was **"Perfect love casts out fear." "Perfect love comes from the Lord." "For God so loved the world…" John 3:16.**

Once Olivia had arrived and I was holding our little baby girl the love of the Lord was so close .I know all blessings are from Him. **Thank you all for your ministry and don't forget to share Above Rubies with others. *–Helen Sullivan, Newberry Springs, CA***

Birth and Breastfeeding Resources

Born in Zion by Carol Balizet. Homebirth midwife, **Blessings of the Breast** by David & Kathleen Arns. Both available from Spirit-Led Childbirth P.O. 1225, Oakhurst CA 93644. (888) 683-2678 birth@sierratel.com http://www.efn.org/~djz/birth/spiritled/ This is also a birthing supplier. Christian Midwife Homebirth Service of San Diego also is a supplier and resource. (858) 273-2049**.** http://members.truepath.com/midwife/ **The Joy of Natural Childbirth** by Helen Wessel. Apple Tree Ministries, PO Box 9883, Fresno, Ca 93795. Magazines: ***Above Rubies*** address above. ***The Blessed Mother***, 10353 Trabuco St. Bellflower, CA 90706. theblessedmother@juno.com, http://www.bigfoot.com/~theblessedmother ***Open Arms*** PO Box 225, Middlefield CT 06455. http://openarmsmagazine.com ***The Mother's Companion*** 412 N Mulberry, Loda, IL 60948. ***An Encouraging Word***, PO Box 599, Idabel, OK 74745.
Teaching Natural Birth by Jan Whitcomb. Christian author, for childbirth educators. PO Box 152072, San Diego, Ca 92195

Christian Parenting and Childcare, The Ministry Of Parenting Your Baby, & **The Birth Book** by Dr. William and Martha Sears. **Womanly Art of Breastfeeding** by LLL. All available through La Leche League International **A Good Birth, A Safe Birth,** & **The VBAC Companion** by Diane Korte. **Silent Knife** & **Open Season** by Nancy Cohen. **Homebirth** by Sheila Kitzinger. All great birth books, facts and help. Not from a Christian worldview

Standing Up For Life

Thank you so much for sending me the newsletter, "Bonded Together." I just received it in the mail today, and am enjoying reading the encouraging stories. It is nice to know that there are other moms out there like me, who have big families, and values to raise them in Godly ways. It is not easy to do in today's society. Even my family does not understand, and they look down on me for having more kids.

*I have found that most people in the church feel that way too. It is hard to find support on ANY front, in or out of the church. When people come to the door they ask, "Are you Mormon?" When I go out, people ask, **"Are they ALL yours?"** And the one I hate the most, **"Don't you know what causes that?"** As if some stranger had the right to come up to me and ask personal questions.*

I know that all mothers of big families hear the same comments, and get the same looks of reproach from people that they do not know. It can be very discouraging. But I am grateful to God for my big family, and all of my children are a blessing to me.

My oldest son is 16, and I must say, I have never seen anything more wonderful yet, or more miraculous, than the change from child to man. He is growing in God, and becoming more like a mature man every day. It is a beautiful transformation. I thank God every day for my TEENAGE son! I know many have had, and know many who do have, great struggles with their teens, (I have five more to wait through!) But this one is truly a blessing. Thank you again for the newsletter!

Angela Reece, New Mexico

I've included this as a prelude to the next segment that is an email dialog between myself and a Christian friend. God has used this man as an example to other Christians and non-believers in the workplace by his high work ethics and giving spirit. His children are all grown and married and he has one grandchild. He has been serving in an evangelical church setting all his days as a believer. When my husband told him we were expecting another blessing, he too responded with a "Don't you know what causes that?" To which Gary answered, "Yes, God." That really hit him, as he had never heard anything like this before. Following is an apology he emailed us with my response:

Gary and Trish,

Please consider my heartfelt apology for the irresponsible and insensitive remark I made to Gary over the news of your present pregnancy; and please know that I greatly regret having offended you. I had known that you love kids, and that you embrace one and all - even future ones - but, I really had not a clue as to your passion on the whole experience.

It was a senseless, stupid, male macho, "I don't know what else to say," remark, which demonstrated

my lack of depth and a total disregard for your feelings. In my extreme ignorance, I simply thought that you refrain from practicing birth control strictly for a personal biblical interpretation to which you were held hostage, and simply made "do" with the results: I didn't realize that you are truly committed to as many kids as God permits. I have done you a great injustice.

Your article certainly cleared that up for me. I read with great interest your dissertation, "What About Children," and under-stand more your enthusiasm and your related concerns. It was very, very, professionally well written, and expertly covered all arguments originating from the godlessness of "man's wisdom." I must admit that I was not totally aware of the insidious opposition to large families; neither was I aware of the host of sound reasons in favor of them.

Obviously, God has put it on your hearts to have lots of kids. For whatever reason, (his wife's name) and I are equally convinced that He has not done so with us. Even so, that is no excuse for anyone to take lightly or make sport of something so dear to you; especially between brothers and sisters in Christ. Even though I don't entirely share your enthusiasm for large families, I am very sincere when I say that if you are happy and blessed, I am very happy. God has given you a worthy commission and you have embraced it with great character.

To which I responded:

Actually I was not that "offended" because I'm used to the "mindset" you reflected. I not only deal with it everyday, but hear about it from many parents across the country. It has been an incredible blessing and privilege to meet so many families from all denominations and backgrounds that have had the same convictions placed on their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Some totally apart from anyone else sharing with them on this sensitive and complex issue, just a husband/wife thing, being led by God into an area of total trust on Him for all aspects of their lives….

I would also love to share my own testimony in this area since I was very hostile to having children (ask Gary about this sometime!) and God did a totally radical transformation in my heart in this area. The neat thing is that it was all Him, not a ministry or person, just some scriptures, further study, and a heart makeover that took time. I went from telling others that Noah only had three sons over hundreds of years (tentative to embrace the possibility of a large family), to actually desiring a large family and seeing each child for the extremely precious creation of God that each is.

This holds true for all children, regardless of their parents. It's hard to understand a single mom of 8 who's on drugs and each child has a separate father, but God created those children despite the circumstances and has a hand made plan for their lives (including the parents). Far be it from us to second guess His wisdom (Isaiah 55, "MY ways are not your ways sayeth the LORD...). I recently read an article about a mom who cleaned up because she didn't want her last 3 children (of her 8) to suffer the way her first ones did and she's in programs with them. It was because of things her 6th child said to her that none of the others had ever said. Wow! What if that child had been aborted? What about the next two siblings who will grow up somewhat normally now and have the possibility to have a great future and contribute to society in marvelous, yet unknown ways. We just don't know. All our wisdom is foolishness to God….

…Our country has been twisted by the lies of the Enemy, whose goal is to kill, steal and destroy all life. He is against everything that God is for and since this same attitude is so prevalent today, we should wake up and smell the coffee and recognize who's behind the scheme. If it were of God, wouldn't the other areas of life in this country be blessed accordingly? Rather the opposite has occurred. I'm so sick of hearing how they want more of our money for school bonds to counter high failure rates and shootings, etc. The disease in this country is fostered by Selfishness. Small families that don't tell their children what blessings they are and how thankful they are for them, instead they belittle them, stick them in some sort of outside care ASAP, get rid of them at church to someone else to "minister" to them. Go out on trips, "dates", etc. without their kids because they are a nuisance that "get in the way". Send them to school for 8 hrs a day and only spend an hour or two at home with them, and that's mostly watching TV or helping them with homework. Getting them ready for bed (in another room so the parental sleep won't be disturbed), etc, and they wonder why kids are the way they are.

Yes, we've chosen a difficult path. Sure would love to sit on the beaches of Cancun and get skin cancer and read a book without being constantly on guard that someone will wander off into the ocean and drown. But Jesus said, They that lose their lives for My sake shall find it." and I don't miss all that other stuff so terribly. Someday I'll be your age and my youngest ones will be finishing up homeschool high school and Gary & I can go to Epcot center and look at all the exhibits if we want without taking someone to the bathroom or taking time out to make sure they've eaten. And in those days I hope to reap what we've sown by being with our children 24/7 and being there to constantly reaffirm God's everlasting love for them and all the lessons and time we've invested into them. Likewise I pray that society reaps the benefits of what we've done as well as our children move out into the world and share Christ with the lost or discover cures for diseases or create great works of art or entertain people in a Godly, edifying way, etc. Reach for the ground and that's as far as you'll get, reach for the stars and hopefully you'll at least hit the tops of the mountains…

(For those of you who go on date nights or put your children in Sunday School or public school, or private school, please don't get upset. I think you can see what I was getting at about folks who will do anything possible to get rid of their kids as

often as possible. No conviction was directed at anyone in particular and if any was felt it was entirely unintentional ☺) This is his letter back, in italics, with my responses to him interjected in bold type:

"Now… You responded to my apology with so much passion that it merits a lot more than a spontaneous reply. I wanted to take time to sift the issues for myself, as I understand and interpret them, before getting back to you at length. Actually, I'm not sure whether you feel you are being prejudiced because of the reality of your large family, or because you openly choose not to blueprint the size - or both

I'm not much into feelings. I have seen the prejudice come from all angles against us and others like us so that's not really my "issue". At this point I hardly consider our family large since in comparison we know folks with over twice as many children.

Yours is my first indoctrination into your particular position on the subject. I just assumed that everyone has some sort of a family plan based on a variety of input. (Trust God? What a concept!)
Your treatise on the subject is very sound and the issues were eloquently and accurately presented. Even so, I don't think I'm quite ready to join the crusade. If you are interested in my input, for what it's worth, here are some of my thoughts on the subject.

Would you not agree, though, that in God's economy, there are certain ministries and walks of life that are just not for everybody: those for which God gives special calling, enabling, and blessing above certain others? I dare say that the successful doctor or dedicated nurse, who trusts God implicitly, and who confesses a call to the remote mission field, would come under similar scrutiny and criticism, even from Christians, that you experience in your endeavor to follow His will. (People just naturally have their own plan for everyone else's life.) So, you are not alone when it comes to persecution from those who seriously take up His cross and follow Him to a noble cause. Unfortunately, it comes with the territory. I'm convinced that all associated criticism and reproach are vindicated under the promise of blessings obtained when being "persecuted for righteousness sake." Nevertheless, there is joy and peace and security in the knowledge that He has chosen you for a distinguished purpose and that you have chosen to obey. Precious few can share that testimony; least of all, me.

Funny thing is that I'm not looking for the blessings that come from persecution but the ones that are tangible here. God says over and over that children are a blessing from Him. Funny how I never see anyone balk from the blessings of money or health. A lady had a vision that God was in Heaven wrapping up packages. He spent lots of time carefully and gently preparing the gifts. Then she saw Him go to the door of several houses with the gifts. Most doors just slammed in His face. Others took the gift, looked it over, shook it and then handed it back and shook their heads. Precious few actually embraced the gift and hugged the Giver and thanked Him for it. What an incredible mental picture of what is actually going on today. Men have called Evil good and good Evil and have been completely brainwashed into accepting what the Enemy has subtlety brought in over this century. It started with just birth control, then abortion, then infanticide (yes, it's very much here as well as in China), now the fight is on for euthanasia. Let's kill them all. Satan hates Life and God is the Giver of Life from conception to the grave. Are we on God's side or Satan's?

But, just as everyone has not been chosen for the mission field, or the pastorate, or other full time service or sacrifice, I am persuaded that not everyone has been called to raise large families.

I don't believe that we as married Christians know whether or not we are called to raise a large family. Noah did not use birth control and was only blessed with three children as far we can tell from scripture. Likewise, many other people mentioned in the Bible had small families without human intervention. What I am trying to promote is not necessarily large families, but an implicit Trust in the Sovereignty of God. I hope to list many scriptures, not only for you, but for others that don't have time to read any books on the subject, just as I did the secular pamphlet. There are many books & sermons on this concept that never touch on the "natural" result of marital relations. It is my hope to show that this subject goes hand in hand with the theology that we already have learned and not some new idea.

I do believe, as you also pointed out, that there are those in this "camp" for lack of a better word, who actively pursue many children to the point of legalism. Those who would forsake breastfeeding because it might interfere with the number of children due to the God-given ecological effects on child spacing due to the hormones that it involves that prevent ovulation depending on the individual and the frequency & character of the nursing. There are those that wear head coverings and dresses due to a true God-given conviction that this is His will for their lives and there are some good scriptures to support it. Likewise there are those that preach & teach and compel others to wear head coverings from a purely legalistic viewpoint. Convictions can bring freedom, rules can bring bondage.

A careful search of scriptures shows that there are no true hard fast rules for using birth control and so one can easily argue that there is freedom in Christ and that God has given us free will. That is very true, although many Christians also

jumped on my case during the time I chose to abstain from meat due to health concerns. I wonder if anything that is done that is set apart from the societal norm doesn't come with great persecution merely because it is different and forces others to feel looked down upon for not doing the same as the "different" one.

I still believe it is a calling - not a duty - and that's what makes it special for you, and a nightmare for others. Even Paul, himself, stated in one place: " Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry." He further expressed the desire: "I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that." I take that to mean that it is OK if God has not chosen me to enjoy the "blessings" (and endure the heartaches) of a large family. Would you not agree that neither tenet would be fruitful or otherwise effective if they embraced either assertion outside of His will?

Paul is clearly speaking of the gift of marriage here. He goes on to talk about married believers being more concerned with the cares of pleasing their spouse than God. That doesn't change no matter how many children God blesses a married, believing couple with. Also, before he says what you quoted, he also says," But I say this as a concession, not a commandment." Verse 17 says, "But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk." This after speaking of staying with the unbelieving spouse in order to sanctify the children that Paul *assumes* have been a product of the marriage. Our choice here is not whether or not to have children, but whether or not to marry. Paul says we can serve the Lord more efficiently and whole heartedly if we do not. As married believers we are to bow to God's will for our marriage and how He wants to use us
that way, be it having children to train up or not if God chooses not to give us any. That would be the fulfillment of God not choosing you to have a large family.

Not all who rely upon God in this area have large families. We know a few. You mention the heartaches. You assume there will be some, but as you know they happen no matter what the family size. I would further argue that they happen less in large families that are actively serving the Lord because there is usually less selfishness and more comadrie. Ask the Colorado parents of 22 (12 natural, 10 adopted). It has been my experience so far with the families I have met among this "movement" that there is little teenage rebellion among them and the kids are entering the mission field. Most of them are homeschooled as well, which I'm sure contributes. There are a lot of factors that affect how the children "turn out" and it is not all influenced by the number of them. Look at Franklin Graham. How many siblings did he have? One, I think, a sister, but I could be wrong. A great case study is the Jonathon Edwards family. They had 13, I think, and there's a list of what all their descendents turned out like. There's also a list on another family from the same era that all the descendents turned out to be losers. I pray hard and do what I can to insure we are in the first category and not the second.

It is interesting to listen to married believers who are postponing, limiting, or disregarding childbearing as a calling from God. If it is truly their calling not to have children than God will show that out as He has in many couple's lives who didn't know it was their calling when they married but have failed to produce offspring no matter how hard they try. As one who can agree on the "mechanics" in some senses, however, I will contradict myself by saying that I've studied nutrition and even, "Biblical" nutrition long enough to check out the organic causes before entirely ruling out whether or not God has chosen not to bless them with children. God can overrule our diets and the chemicals that bombard our bodies from living in a fallen world as He chooses. He can also overrule those that have messed with the plumbing (and from what I've read He has overruled this many times, much to the dismay of those who got "broke" thinking they were getting "fixed"). He also works within our choice and our diets are our choice as well, even if they cause destruction to the "temple of God". We have freedom in Christ to eat and be undernourished enough to cause reproductive harm.

Another nagging quandary relating to the whole topic is the total absence of birth control. It is one thing to plan a large family with a certain number in mind based on all the obvious factors, but quite another to just abstain from all control and "let the chips fall," so to speak. There are many divine laws in the universe involving "cause and effect" that we would never think of challenging. So why is this one so different?

Because there are so many scriptures relating to God's opening and shutting of the womb. God doesn't add anything extra to scripture that is not necessary for our learning and edification. Try this verse on for size " Before I formed you in your mother's womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you and I ordained you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah 1:5. I'm sure you are familiar with that one, but had you ever stopped to ponder what God was saying in this context. If God knows each of us before the foundations of the world, before we were ever conceived then can it not follow that He has partaken in our creation? If we, in our free will, attempt to thwart God's plan for creating new life, and especially using those that He has already chosen for Eternal Life as parents, are we not going against the very hand of God? Yes, we can be forgiven for

this just as all our other sins of omission and commission, but if we willingly continue to do it after God has revealed it to us then just what are we guilty of? Does God only form us after initial conception? Or does He actually select the exact DNA to create the person He wants to form? Makes you think twice about what you thought of "ugly" people, huh?

What about the laws of cause and effect

when God made the sun stand still for Joshua? Or the waters part for Moses? Or the ground open up and swallow those that opposed Moses? Guess He can overrule His own laws anytime He wishes. Just a thought.

I know that God has forgiven me from my past life of despising the thought of childbearingand parenting, as a believer, mind you, because when He revealed this sin in my life to me I embraced His will for me, although somewhat trepidly, and went ahead, knowing that this was clearer than day. Since He works in all our lives differently, just as He healed all those that came to Him during His earthly ministry differently, I know that there are those that this will never be an issue or a knowing sin to. God has other things that He knows are important to work on in molding and making them into the image of Jesus Christ. We all run a race and all have the same goal and high calling. My point here is that you never heard this presented before and now due to an off-handed comment that slipped out, God has begun showing you something quite new. For what purpose I do not know. It might have to do with issues that are totally unrelated to childbearing or large families that He will show you. We do not know our hearts until God opens them up to us and shines His light on each area He wants to change. And we all have areas! ☺ No one has attained.

The question that plagues my mind becomes: Is it definitely <u>not</u> God's will to practice responsible birth control?

Aha! What is "responsible"? Did you get that from scripture or from being indoctrinated into the world's system of economy? What do the scriptures say? Are there scriptures that permit a couple Biblically to use birth control (And who is in CONTROL anyways? I thought as Christians we were to give up Control of all things to Him who redeemed us?) "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the *mercies of God*, that you *present your bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your *reasonable service."* Romans 12:1

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? *For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's*." 1 Cor 6:19-20

Also, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 on that same thing. We are whose? Who should be in control? The logic that follows your argument, that I heard a prominent pastor's wife say off the cuff when asked about birth control, was that "God gave us common sense." Sounds reasonable. Let's match it up with scripture on our sense.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9

..."with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Matt 19:26, Jesus speaking to the disciples on salvation comparing it to the camel entering the eye of the needle.

"...I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent...Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" 1 Cor 1:19-20

So what is God trying to say here about our wisdom and our common sense? Is this the same thing as having the "brakes on the car" or is this an area that we have imposed our wisdom because we vainly think we know better than the Creator of the universe and all life herein. He that knows when a sparrow hits the ground and bites the dust. He that says how much more He surely cares for us than that bird, that we can "plan" our lives, and yes, our families, better than He does? We, who use only a tiny fraction of the brain God gave us and even then, not so efficiently at times ☺, know better than God?

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." Jer 29:11. Some translations substitute "plans" for thoughts. Interesting? Reread it in context of family "planning".

How about 2 Cor 5:17? The "old" has passed away, behold the "new" has come. Are we holding on to old ideas that originated in the Garden and were espoused by someone other than God? Although herbal concoctions and primitive methods of birth control have been around for ages, you don't hear about God's people wanting it or rejecting children until this century when Ms. Sanger actively promoted it and started getting church councils to change their stand that had stood for 1900 years. We are no longer of the world's mindset, why do we embrace it so readily in so many areas concerning children? Could it be the enemy's concerted effort to destroy families?

Do we presume upon His grace and wisdom by attempting to dictate our own will in that area? Or do we do what we think is appropriate and let Him overrule? I truly do not know. Yours and Gary's arguments are very compelling, but I also think that that line of reasoning carried to its logical extreme would have us taking the brakes off our cars: If God wants me to stop, He'll stop me.

Funny you mention that. Have Gary tell you the stories of two times when the brakes didn't work. The first was in Seattle getting off at Mercer during peak morning traffic and he was driving our elderly saint friend, Margaret's, little Ford Escort with two other believers that we met on our Israel trip to meet another guy whom we'd met. God stopped the car. The second was when we were transporting a group of Miller's Outpost teenage employees that didn't know the Lord to Calvary Costa Mesa for Greg Laurie's Monday night study and were in the carpool lane of the 55 freeway in our first Suburban. Again, God worked it out and when we took that puppy to the shop the next day we were horrified to find out that there were basically no brakes left. So, I guess God does stop us when necessary.

It's not like we removed the brakes purposely, if that was your next point. God has instituted perfectly good brakes (and ignition) Himself: puberty and menopause. He has also used certain child raising practices, such as breastfeeding and children sleeping in close proximity to their mothers, in order to give the woman's body a rest between children. Funny how these laws that we have violated this century have been scientifically proven to be beneficial for mothers to prevent cancer.

Obviously, God creates children. However, there are those who would argue that God created the mechanism for reproduction, but did He really intend to be totally responsible for the unrestrained consequences? I'm not questioning you, per se: I'm just trying to work my way through the controversy.

Working this out is difficult as you see. You have contradicted yourself here by knowing that God creates children and then struggling with the mechanics, just as I mentioned the breastfeeding caused child spacing and the physical reasons for lack of conception. It's not easy is it?

On the other hand, I'm also convinced that He can reverse my will in spite of my "selfishness," or rebelliousness, fear, or lack of faith. (That's a scary thought to one who is faithlessly committed to none or a limited number of children.)

Gee, you sound just like me a few years ago. Even after Mackenzie was around for a couple of years. Amazing what God can do in our lives, isn't it? Actually, if Gary thinks back, I'm sure he could quote me saying things right exactly like that.

I'm not sure of your ages, but I can easily calculate seven or more children in the future for you before your childbearing years are curtailed. Or, do you have a large, but potentially limited number in mind? That's between you and the Lord, of course, and I'm not even suggesting that you are or should be accountable to me or anyone else: I'm just thinking on paper.

No one knows what a day can bring. I'm 33 and he's 36. We could have more twins, too, you know, if God wishes, or He could stop us off as He did with Leah (read all those verses with God saying how He opened and closed her womb each time). There were almost exactly 4 years between the boys and Ethan. We have no limits in mind. Would you limit God if He said He wanted to bless you with a certain amount of money? No thanks, God, I'd rather have $100,000 than $1,000,000.

God knows exactly who is to be born into this family. Likewise, have you ever considered the horrible thought that He knows exactly who is going to die in this family and when? No one ever thinks about that when they have one or two children. What about the family that was wiped out in a wreck, all 7 of them, and only the baby survived? We assume and presume way too much, don't we?

And timing? Do we know when our child that we thought came too close to the previous one is going to witness to a certain person? Or be there for that older/younger sibling during a crisis? We know nothing about the future, do we? I can't drive home that point enough.

Furthermore, I do not have a problem with the prospect of overpopulation, as far as global natural resource consumption, human resource depletion, the upset of ecosystems, food production, pollution, or other physical reasons. As I write this, my mind dwells on the many minority young women that I frequently see walking everywhere around town who have four or five "stair step" children starting with one in arms, and no obvious resources. In a perfect world, these would be the future contributors to society, but that's not what I see. What I do see is society's future problems. I know that when God guides, God provides, but is God guiding this? Or are these people caught up in "cause and effect?" Man's irresponsibility manifests itself in many ways, and God doesn't always choose to intervene. It's no secret that many, if not most, of these people continue to have kids purposely so they can secure more welfare, putting added burden on those who do contribute.

Does God create "welfare children"? In the sense of the word of parents who are in these circumstances by choice. From what my study of scripture says, the answer is, yes. Does that mean that's where God wants them to remain? No. Jesus said, the poor you will have with you always. What man means for evil, God can and often does, use for good. I can tell you countless stories that I've been coming across about "crack" babies that have grown up and done incredible things for God. Do we see the parade from God's Goodyear blimp view? No, we see it one float at a time and don't know the last float

until the parade is over. Has God ever seen a pregnant lady walk the earth and say, oops, how'd that happen? No. He knows all and creates all. He is the Creator, not man. He gives life, we only get to participate. Does He create those who will ultimately reject Him and be thrown into Hell? Yes. We all have a choice, and even though He knows what we will choose, He gives us Life, and that choice. A multitude of people are necessary for the functioning of society, not only saved ones. Doesn't it bug you to watch someone use their God-given skill and not know Who gave it to them?

He causes all conception to occur, yes, even the high tech kind, for reasons totally beyond our realm of thinking, because He has a purpose that we can't even begin to *conceive* (pun definitely intended ☺). If we believe Genesis 1:1, why can't we believe that God creates all life?

I know you have heard all these arguments and sentiments before, and I know this is not what you wanted to hear from me. No doubt, you have worked your way through all the "Yah, but's" of the "nay-sayers." Please bear with me, though, if I do not personally share your enthusiasm for - for lack of a better term - "unplanned parenthood." (I sincerely hope this is not an offensive term to you. No offense is intended.) Please don't be offended or disappointed with me.

Please allow me the freedom in our friendship to differ agreeably in the future, even though I got off to a bad start. And, please know, for what it's worth, that in your zeal, I have been educated, and am certainly not opposed to large families as such; neither do I reprove you guys for your convictions in that area. If, indeed, this is a special calling just for you and for those who share your convictions, you are to be envied and supported.

I have a friend who always gets irked at the term special calling or "that's great for you guys" thing. If it's a special calling, such as the doctors in the mission fields, than how come there's no directive to couples to get out of childbearing? The only even close scripture would be 1 Cor7:5 about not depriving one another except for a time of prayer and fasting. Now how many Christians do you know that set apart a week each month, say when they are fertile, to pray and fast about not having children?

It's a tough subject with no easy answers - for me, at least. I guess I just wanted you to know that I have since given a lot of thought and meditation on the subject, which has given words to thoughts that may have always lain beneath the surface of my off hand remark that generated your reply; hence, this response. It's impossible not to feel the (God given) passion you so ardently express, and as young people with such persuasion, I applaud and support you. Obviously, the Holy Spirit has placed these convictions on your heart: I'm not sure about all others…"

What Does God Want?

Recently I sent out an email containing a letter from a lady about the "privacy of the womb" from her web site. Here is one response: "Thanks for forwarding the letter. I only WISH someone could convince me to only have a set # of children!!! I have felt overwhelmed with our 2 Bdrm/1 bath house and only 2 boys!

I thought she had a great point in encouraging wives to submit to their own husbands. My husband, like yours, believes in letting God plan. I recently tried to change his mind and suggested Natural Family Planning. He prayed and did not think this was best. I was not entirely convinced in my heart, but just not wanting to go through another pregnancy right now...So, I pray daily and ask the Lord to give me just 4-6 more months pregnancy free! I am offering up my desire. At the same time I realize that this life is not all about us at all. It is about giving God the glory. He sees the infinite whole picture, and I see just my pea-sized view--if that!

I think there are MANY verses that emphasize that children are a blessing and that God opens and closes the womb. I wish there were convincing scriptures to say to be silent and keep the womb issue private. I think we have done that, and that is why Christians are not bearing many more children than those in the world. It is an easy thing to conform to the world on because having children builds our character and requires sacrifice--a lot of it! Our homes do not look much different, and that is really sad. Our children, ourselves, and our husbands are suffering for it.

Having said that, I do believe that the soil of the soul must be cultivated before our beliefs can be received. I think pressuring someone or trying to make them feel judged is not productive. Our lives and our choices will speak loudly. We must be dependent upon the Holy Spirit to speak to those he brings our way. I myself heard about this trusting in God for children through a college friend of mine who did not push, but answered my inquiries.

As I said before, I WISH and have PRAYED that someone could change my heart on the matter. It would be nice. I ask Christian women whom I respect what they think OFTEN. NO ONE has been able to offer me a soul-satisfying response. I think ***(the person who wrote the letter I sent out)*** is right in the aspect that God gives us free will and will not love us less if we make another choice. We all are given the freedom of choice in many matters. But, we must be careful not to let our Americanism get in the way of our higher calling. Who knows? Maybe my future or present child will be one of the last prophets! Heaven forbid that I should keep my life comfortable and prevent that child from being born!

That is my response at this time in my walk with the Lord. I am always open to hear different ideas!

I have gone to a counselor at our church and spoken to her about this. She did not see it as a black and white issue. She thought that more Christian leaders would not opt for vasectomies, etc. if it were so clear in Scripture.

None of her responses were really satisfying to my heart. I would love for someone to convince us otherwise, but so far no one has been able to make a good Biblical argument for birth control.

I do find myself wondering if I am just being an overachiever in this area and requiring more of myself than is necessary, and therefore trying to please God this way. I know that it is a heart attitude. Aaron does not try to win points with God by performing as I do as a general rule, and he does not see it this way.

Also, regarding the home birth, radical mama stuff (that is more comfortable to me as I was born into that mindset), Do you think that it is just another case of trying to impress others and be SO different from even the mainline Christian?

My thoughts lately have been along these lines: **Is this approach and belief system what God really wants? Or, is it a matter of my approach to others?** I know the Lord wants us to be attractive to unbelievers and a fragrance of life to those who are saved, and I just think such radicalism can be repulsive. It does not draw anyone. Love and grace do. I have been praying for help with this. A lot of women I respect use the diaphragm. I am not looking to do that--we definitely desire more children beyond our current 2. I have **read Full Quiver, Blessing or Burden, and The Way Home,** as well as Nancy's books. I'm not really looking to change our conviction, but do desire to have a healthier approach and to follow God in it. ***-Kim Cromer, Phoenix, Arizona***

Family Resources

Full Quiver (Family Planning and the Lordship of Christ) by Rick Hess, Jan Hess (The original 1990 Wolgemuth & Hyatt edition, ISBN 0-943497-83-3, is now out of print.) A current, reprinted edition is sold directly by the authors for $10 postpaid USA. Rick & Jan Hess 7014 Chandler Acres Dr, Bellevue NE 68147. Telephone (402) 731-6654
God's Vision For Families ($12)**, The Power of Motherhood** ($18)**, & A Change of Heart** ($12) by Nancy & Colin Campbell. Available from *Above Rubies* PO Box 681687, Franklin, TN 37068. Please add 10% shipping. **Abortion in the Church** by Pastor Max Latham. $8.95 + 10% shipping from *Above Rubies*
Children: Blessing or Burden by Max Heine. Now out of print.
Letting God Plan Your Family by Samuel A. Owen, Jr., **Yes, They're All Ours** by Rick Boyer, father of 13.
The Way Home ($12.99) & **All the Way Home** ($13.99) by Mary Pride, and **The Bible and Birth Control** ($4.95) by Charles Proven. Available through Home Life, 1-800-346-6322, PO Box 1250, Fenton, MO 63026. Add 10% shipping.
http://www.quiverfull.com/ A forum for those with large families or those interested in the topic to share thoughts.
Unless The Lord magazine 27959 Mellman Road, Hempstead, TX 77445, http://www.unlessthelordmagazine.com

Open Arms Magazine http://www.openarmsmagazine.com
http://www.joyfullnoise.com/ ***Joyfull Noise Magazine*** P.O.Box 160, Sartell, MN 56377

Tetanus Vaccination

*By **Dr Robert S. Mendelsohn, M.D.** (The People's Doctor Newsletter1976-1988)*

You have every right to closely question me on the tetanus vaccine, since that was the last vaccine I abandoned. It wasn't hard for me to give up vaccines for whooping cough, measles, and rubella because of their disabling and sometimes deadly side effects. The mumps vaccine, a high-risk, low-benefit product, struck me and plenty of other doctors as silly from the moment it was introduced. Arguments for the diphtheria vaccine were vitiated by epidemics during the past 15 years which showed the same death rate and the same severity of illness in those who were vaccinated vs. those who were not vaccinated. As for smallpox, even the government finally gave up that vaccine in 1970, and I gave up on the polio vaccine when Jonas Salk showed that the best way to catch polio in the United States was to be near a child who recently had taken the Sabin vaccine. But the tetanus vaccine exercised a hold on me for a much longer time.

As you point out, I gave up belief in this vaccine in stages. For a while, I still held onto the notion that farm families and people who work around stables should continue to take tetanus shots. But in spite of my early indoctrination with fear of "rusty nails," in recent years, I have developed a greater fear of the hypodermic needle. My reasons are:

1) Scientific evidence shows that too frequent tetanus boosters actually may interfere with the immune reaction.

2) There has been a gradual retreat of even the most conservative authorities from giving tetanus boosters every one year to every two years to every five years to every 10 years (as now recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics), and according to some, every 20 years. All these numbers are based on guesses rather than on hard scientific evidence.

3) There has been a growing recognition that no controlled scientific study (in which half the patients were given the vaccine and the other half were given injections of sterile water) has ever been carried out to prove the safety and effectiveness of the tetanus vaccine. Evidence for the vaccine comes from epidemiological studies which are by nature controversial and which do not satisfy the criteria for scientific proof.

4) The tetanus vaccine over the decades has been progressively weakened in order to reduce the considerable reaction (fever and swelling) it used to cause. Accompanying this reduction in reactivity has been a concomitant reduction in antigenicity (the ability to confer protection). Therefore, there is a good chance that today's tetanus vaccine is about as effective as tap water.

5) Until the last few years (from newsletters 1976-1988), government statistics admitted that 40 percent of the child population of the U.S. was not immunized. For all those decades, where were the tetanus cases from all those rusty nails?

6) There now exists a growing theoretical concern which links immunizations to the huge increase in recent decades of auto-immune diseases, e.g., rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, lupus erythematosus, lymphoma, and leukemia. In one case, Guillain Barre paralysis from swine flu vaccine, the relationship turned out to be more than just theoretical.

In preparing my courtroom testimony on behalf of a child who allegedly was brain-damaged as a result of the DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus) vaccine, I reviewed the prescribing information (package insert) for the Connaught Laboratories product which was administered to this child. The 1975 and.1977 package insert information which measured seven-and-a-half inches long listed three scientific references in support of the indications, contraindications, warnings, cautions, and adverse reactions to this vaccine. By 1978, the length of the insert had grown to 13 1/2 inches, and the number of scientific references had increased to 11. By 1980, the package insert was 18 inches long, and the references numbered 14. Of those newly added references, seven (three from U.S. medical journals and four from foreign medical journals) dealt specifically with reactions to the tetanus DPT portion of the (toxoid) vaccine.

An article in the Archives of Neurology (1972) described brachial plexus neuropathy (which can lead to paralysis of the arm) prom tetanus toxoid. Four patients who received only tetanus toxoid noticed the onset of limb weakness from six to 21 days after the inoculation. A 1966 article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association reports the first case of "Peripheral Neuropathy .following Tetanus Toxoid Administration." A 23 year old white medical student received an injection of tetanus toxoid into his right upper arm after an abrasion of the right knee while playing tennis. Several hours later, he developed a wrist drop of his right hand. He later suffered from complete motor and sensory paralysis over the distribution of the right radial nerve (one of the major nerves innervating the arm and hand) One month later, no residual motor or sensory deficit could be found.

Reference is made to an article in the Journal of Neurology, 1977, entitled "Unusual Neurological Complication following Tetanus Toxoid Administration." The author reports a 36-year-old female who received tetatus toxoid in her left upper arm following a wound to her finger. Five days later, she noticed a weakness first of the right, and then of the left and later of both legs. She complained of dizziness, instability, lethargy, chest discomfort, difficulty in swallowing, and inarticulate speech. S staggered when she walked, and she could take only a few steps. Her EEG showed some abnormalities. After a month, she was discharged without neurologic disturbance, but she continued to feel weak and anxious. Examinations during the next 11 months showed continued emotional instability and some paresthesias (numbness and tingling) in the extremities. The medical diagnosis was "a rapidly progressing neuropathy with involvement of cranial nerves, myelopathy, and encephalopathy."

The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, 1973, carried an article entitled "Hypersensitivity to Tetanus Toxoid," and in a volume entitled "Proceedings of the II International Conference on Tetanus" (published by Hans Huber, Bern, Switzerland, 1967), an article appeared entitled "Clinical Reactions to Tetanus Toxoid."

A 44-year-old article in the Journal of the American Medical Association (1940) was entitled "Allergy Induced by Immunization with Tetanus Toxoid." That same year, an article in the British Medical Journal reported on "Anaphylaxis (a form of shock) following Administration of Tetanus Toxoid." In 1969, a German medical journal reported a case of paralysis of the recurrent laryngeal nerve (the nerve to the voicebox) after a booster injection of tetanus toxoid. The patient developed hoarseness and was unable to speak loudly, but the nerve paralysis subsided completely after approximately two months.

Should your doctor reassure you that tetanus vaccine is completely safe, or that "the benefits outweigh the risks," or that you should have a shot "just in case," why not share these citations with him? For further study:
http://www.whale.to/vaccines/mendelsohn.html

National Vaccine Information Center
512 W. Maple Ave., Suite 206, Vienna, VA 22180
(703) 938-DPT3 PHONE, (703) 938-5768 FAX
1-800-909-SHOT, email: **info@909shot.com**
http://www.909shot.com

The National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC) is a national, non-profit educational organization founded in 1982. It is the oldest and largest national organization advocating reformation of the mass vaccination system and is responsible for launching the vaccine safety movement in America in the early 1980's. Located in Vienna, Virginia, NVIC is dedicated to the prevention of vaccine injuries and deaths through public education. NVIC provides assistance to parents whose children have suffered vaccine reactions; promotes research to evaluate vaccine safety and effectiveness as well as to identify factors which place individuals at high risk for suffering vaccine reactions; and monitors vaccine research, development, policy-making and legislation. NVIC supports the right of citizens to exercise informed consent and make educated, independent vaccination decisions for themselves and their children.

http://www.vaccinationnews.com is a web site by Sandy Mintz of Alaska dedicated to posting daily news from around the world on the issues of vaccinations and related health and safety topics.

Breast Cancer Conquered

By Sharon Gilbert

In 1997, the Lord gave me a special Scripture. **"Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing." Psalm 92:13-14.** The day after the Lord gave me that Scripture, I was reading my Women's Bible study and that very Scripture was in it. At that moment I knew without a doubt that the Lord was telling me that I would be healthy in old age and I would have more children. At the time, I was pregnant with my son Andrew.

1998-Megan, Cassandra, Laura, Buck, Sharon, James, Andrew

When I discovered a lump in my breast in April of 1999, I was not concerned that it was cancer because my mind always came back to my special Scripture. June 14, 1999 changed my life as I was told by the doctor that it was indeed invasive breast cancer. My faith was severely put to the test during the next few months because I felt betrayed. But who was I betrayed by? I knew it couldn't be God. Within a week I had had surgery-a partial mastectomy. I agreed to a course of treatment-8 rounds of chemotherapy, followed by a month of radiation. This treatment was almost certain to make me sterile. After this, I would take a drug called Tamoxifen for 5 years. This drug would make it impossible for me to become pregnant even if I wasn't sterile. The doctor advised me to never become pregnant again lest the cancer return.

The doctor never talked about curing me but always referred to "5 year survival rates". I just could not reconcile what the doctor was telling me with what the Lord had already told me but I just knew I had to do whatever I could to be around for my 5 children.

Breastfeeding came to an abrupt end. Andrew cried and so did I. I received my first round of chemo in July and when I went in for my 2nd treatment, my immune system was so severely depressed that they couldn't administer the 2nd round. I had to have special shots to boost my white cell count to an acceptable level. With each chemo treatment, my "numbers" got worse. After the 3rd treatment, I began to doubt if what I was doing was right. You see, in December of 1998, just 4 months before my diagnosis, my brother, Arthur, died from the effects of his chemo/radiation treatments. He had Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma and during his treatments, the tumor had shrunk quite a bit, but his body became so toxic that his organs began to malfunction. His chest cavity began to fill up with fluid and eventually his lungs. I saw my own health deteriorating and I couldn't get that Scripture out of my mind.

I began to pray real hard about my situation and my heart began to be open to looking into "alternative medicine". A family friend sent us a web site from Dr. Lorraine Day, who had healed herself of terminal breast cancer without surgery, chemotherapy or radiation. **She went on a diet of 85% raw food with no meat products and 8 cups of carrot juice and 4 tablespoons of a product called Barleygreen daily.** She happened to be speaking in our local mountains the next day so my husband, mother and I went up and listened to her. She taught that no matter what illness you have, **you can be cured through God's diet described in Genesis 1:29. "And God said 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.'"** That was in September of 1999 and my family has been on this diet ever since. We have seen virtually every health problem disappear as promised. My husband and mother no longer have heart problems. They were able to get off all their medicines in a matter of a few months or less. My sister, Linda, was told by her doctor at one time that her thyroid was "dead". After seeing the change in my family's health, she decided to give the diet a try and as a result, she has been able to decrease her medicine from 137 micrograms per day to 50 micrograms within a 6 month period. She is in high hopes of getting off it completely. My friend's father was diagnosed with "terminal" lymphoma in January of 2000. After being on this diet for 1 year, the doctors can no longer find any trace of cancer.

In February of 2000, I found out I was pregnant. I was ecstatic because I knew the chemo had not made me sterile. My period had only returned to normal in January so to be pregnant in February was incredible. Sadly, the baby died at about 8 weeks gestation. Recently I heard a seminar by Charlotte Gerson of the Gerson Institute and she mentioned that when chemo patients go on a cleansing diet such as I am on, the chemo starts to be released from the body about 6 months later. I believe this is what probably killed the baby since I went on the diet in September and the baby died in April.

Now I understand how the Lord could tell me that I would be healthy in my old age. I was not betrayed. As for bearing fruit-we shall see. I did have 3 chemotherapy treatments but all things are possible with God. After I'd been on the diet for a while, I discovered that Dr. Day isn't the only one who teaches this way of eating**. Dr. George Malkmus, of Hallelujah Acres**, also cured himself of colon cancer on the same diet. As I began to research, I discovered that this information has been around a long time. It's not so well publicized, however, because, let's face it-no one's going to make much money on a bag of carrots! I once heard someone say "Don't doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light." Even if things look impossible, God is always true to his Word! If God has given you a special word to encourage you, hold onto it with all your heart. Don't let the passage of time erode it's meaning. **And best of all remember, 2 Tim 2:13 "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." God *is* faithful, even when we are faithless. Good thing, huh?**

"***If you would like more information on this diet refer to the***

resources box on page 18. If you are interested in purchasing Barleygreen, contact Sharon Gilbert at 909-359-4884. Or e-mail her at sharong1117@about.com. She also has a web page telling of her experience with the raw-food diet. It's: pages.about.com/sharong1117.

ABOUT OUR MINISTRY

We believe the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God and that we have liberty in Christ to eat all things "for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." 1Tim 4:5.

We also concur with a growing body of scientific evidence suggesting that a low-fat diet devoid of animal products, with the liberal use of raw fruits, vegetables and juices, is most conducive to health and least conducive to disease.

More and more we have seen people forced to drop from ministry due to health problems. It is our desire to see the Body of Christ strengthened through improved health that we may be able to serve the Lord more effectively.

Therefore, it is the purpose of this ministry to be a source of support and information to those desiring to improve their health through nutrition.

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health just as your soul prospers." 3 John:2

Your servants in Christ,
Buck and Sharon Gilbert

The Banquet Table

"...Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died." Romans 14:15b

At the 1999 Southern California retreat, MaryChris Stephenson gave a workshop on diet and nutrition. Both of us get a lot of questions about how we eat due to our apparently radical eating habits. In this article we will both list just what we eat. Please note the usual disclaimer that anything we say is not meant to "treat, cure, prevent, cause, shed truth on, or bring light to any disease or other physical problem." Also, we ask that anything we say cannot and will not be used against us in a court of health law. Please seek God and your husband for any lifestyle changes that will affect his happiness, health, and pocketbook. With all that out of the *Ethan is a serious juicer* way, here goes:

***Trish*- BREAKFAST**- 48-ounce supersize cup full of fruit smoothie. I fresh squeeze orange juice as a base (I tend to drink the juice as I'm making it ☺) and add a combination of fresh/frozen fruit. Bananas, kiwi, pineapple, mangos (these last two I get at Trader Joe's-"TJ's" from here on out- already frozen), berries, apricots (frozen from our tree), peaches, kiwi insides (cut in half and scoop out the fruit), leftover watermelon & juice, grapes that are slightly squishy so no one wants them fresh, etc. Freezing the fruit yourself is as easy as cleaning, peeling, or depitting it and tossing in a Ziploc freezer bag. Or you can put it out individually on wax paper on a cookie sheet; freeze it, then put in storage bag. Don't forget to peel those bananas first! Lemon juice, grapefruit juice or a pre-made juice can be used with the orange juice, or in place of. Orange juice can also be squeezed in large quantities on one day and frozen in small size storage containers to be defrosted the night before using. To this I add spirulina powder and/or soy protein powder (TJ's) while the blender is on. Currently we are not taking many supplements, but when we do these are some of what we have used: Take One multivitamin (Natrol), B-100 complex (Nature's Way). B vitamins are very important for proper functioning for woman's health. For more on that see, **"Fertility, Cycles, and Nutrition** by Marilyn Shannon, available through the Couple to Couple League. See Bibliofind.com for a used copy. 400 i.u. Vitamin E, Gingko Biloba; Chromium Picolinate; COQ10; Kyo-Green powder mixed in; Herbal Iron (Natureworks); Garlic tablet; Lechitin; Beta Carotene; sometimes Herbstability (only available through distributer); and TJ Clarks colloidal minerals (not to be confused with abbreviation for Trader Joe's).

LUNCH- Depending on Gary's schedule I'll have my carrot/apple juice first (made in a Juiceman. If you don't have a juicer, Juiceman Jr. is at Costco for $60 and Wal-Mart for $70. Check the Recycler magazine/web site for a used juicer and/or Vita-Mix blender as they show up quite often). Or I'll have a salad; romaine, green/red leaf lettuce or organic mixes from TJ's, White Wave firm tofu; best brand I've found; great texture/taste. Some days we substitute a can of black beans for the tofu. Large avocado, red onion slices, cucumber, bell pepper, etc. I use a slice of bread, toasted, for croutons and or crumple a handful of tortilla chips. Gary also has olives and tomatoes on his salad. I make his to take to work in a storage container when he's on swing shift. He also has a freezer supply of healthy, organic frozen meals such as those by Amy's from the co-op. They are pricey, but still cheaper than fast food. Mackenzie and I use Nayonaise, apple cider vinegar and mustard for dressing and Gary uses Cardini's Caesar. Our other condiments are fruit juice sweetened ketchup and sauces that have short ingredient lists with real food in them.

We also have almond shakes sometime during the day or evening. These are made in the Vita-Mix, but I used to make them in the blender and they weren't too crunchy. Raw almonds, walnuts, pecans (these all from Costco, sunflower seeds, pepitas (green pumpkin seeds, both from TJ's), frozen bananas, strawberries, raspberries, Pacific Foods Multi-Grain milk, pure maple syrup (Grizzly Gilmer's from Costco),

honey dates; pitted, and cinnamon. If using fresh fruit, be sure to add ice cubes. Measurements are approximate based on the quantity desired; around a half to a cup of nuts for 8 cups of liquid.

We own a manual wheatgrass juicer and have that a few days a week. A flat of wheatgrass at the Farmer's Market is $5 and it lasts 4 days, making 24 ounces to split between us (Morgan & Ethan are the only children who care to taste it, so it's just Gary & myself). When the weather is nice I can grow it back for a second round of cutting. While putting this issue of BT together I had wheatgrass juice after not having it for a month. I was amazed that the first night I stayed up until 2 a.m. without even feeling tired, or tired the next day! I make 2-4 ounces and swish it in my mouth for 5-20 minutes for maximum absorption. The kids always laugh as I walk around answering their questions with "Hmm, hmm" while it sits in my mouth.

I still crave sweets heavily after a meal. Sunspire grain sweetened carob chips, stored in the freezer are great. I have a few handfuls after a meal. Rice Dream cookie pies are just as good as ice cream. Soy Delicious (TJ's) is also very good. A bowl of Healthy Bites cereal (TJ's) with multi grain milk usually works, too, as does a waffle with maple syrup.

Dinner- Here I'll switch to what the children eat since this meal will fall under their diet. What I listed above is mostly what Gary & I eat, just at different times depending on his shift. Other things we eat are baked potatoes stuffed with sautéed mushrooms, avocado and salsa. Whole wheat tortillas with sautéed vegetables, tofu, avocado and salsa. Black bean enchiladas. Thai pad noodles from TJ's with vegetables. A good cheese substitute is Almond Cheese by Lisanatti. Dairy is OK if it is organic and minimally processed. It is the addition of growth hormones, antibiotics, pasteurization and homogenization that destroys it as a food and makes it dangerous for our health. My lifetime asthma disappeared when I stopped having dairy on a daily basis.

The children all eat differently based on their preferences. I know many of you would not be able to do this whether your family is large or small, but it works for us. Mackenzie & Ethan enjoy plain goat's milk yogurt (Redwood Hills Farm) with maple syrup; Noah can't stand the stuff, but he loves almond shakes and the other two won't touch them. Ethan eats it all. If it's food, he consumes it! The twins used to drink carrot juice as toddlers. One day Noah gave it up, Asaph followed three months later. In the summer of 2000 I resumed having them drink it and now they are finally taking their own glasses and following through with some prodding and encouragement. It might not be such an issue if they would eat more vegetables, but they don't, except for potatoes, baked or cut into french fries. Mackenzie has been drinking it somewhat grudgingly for five years. She still doesn't care for it much, but she understands the health benefits of it. I remind her that I used to have to force her to drink her orange juice as well, but now she guzzles that down willingly.

They all have fresh fruit in the morning, such as cantaloupe, grapes, watermelon, apples, strawberries, etc. depending on seasonal availiblity followed by oatmeal. We buy organic oats in 25# bags from co-op for $13.35. To the oats I add (after cooked); multi-grain milk, liquid lechitin, essential fatty acids oil by Child Life, maple syrup, raw wheat germ (Arrowhead Mills), cinnamon, & raisins & occasionally walnuts that are fine chopped in a Black and Decker mini chopper.

Later they'll have more fruit and then nut butter & jelly sandwiches. I make the nut butter in the Vita-Mix on a weekly basis with the same nut combination as in the shakes and some safflower oil. The jelly is usually organic and fruit juice sweetened. We use Ezekial 4:9 bread by Food for Life, because it's packed with power, protein, and sprouted grains rather than flour. TJ's has whole grain bagels. Pasta is just something every family has to experiment with to find a healthy but pleasing texture. Quinoa spaghetti (Ancient Harvest), corn elbows, and whole wheat pasta from TJ's has worked well for us.

Morgan is carrot juice grown!

I use the Vita-Mix to make flour for pancakes using an assorted combination of oats, wheat, millet, quinoa, kamut (very nutritious), flax seeds, wheat germ, and chopped walnuts, multi-grain milk and Rumford baking powder. I make up a huge vat, cook them all on every burner and then freeze them on wax paper lined cookie sheets to store in freezer bags for later microwaving. These same basic ingredients also work well for muffins with the addition of a can of pumpkin puree. Asaph and Ethan like cucumber slices. Lifestream flax waffles are nice to have on hand for a quick meal before going somewhere when there is not enough time to prepare something. On trips we have a bag of TJ's organic tortilla strips (chips) in the car and a few Clif Bars and some Barbara's Fig Bars to snack on. Fuji Apples are a cartrip and home staple. We go through 3-36# cases a month between eating and juicing. Mountain People (food co-op) has them for .41# during season.

Currently we are not doing children's vitamins, either, but when we do we have used the following: liquid vitamin E (Twinlab), liquid chlorophyll, liquid B (both by World Organics), Natrol children's liquid multivitamin, liquid garlic (Kyolic), grapefruit seed extract, Herbal Iron (Natureworks), colloidal minerals (TJ Clarks or Innovative chocolate flavored). At night we might have a zinc lozenge (Twinlab), Ester-C chewable (Natrol) and calcium (Barth's Stone Age kids) after dinner. Never take zinc or iron on an empty stomach! Nausea will soon follow. When we have a specific health concern we use herbal tinctures, mostly by Herbs for Kids, and a cleansing diet of fruit

to speed up healing. **Never drink tap water! Chlorine causes cancer and miscarriage and fluoride causes decreased fertility, cancer and a multitude of other health problems. Showering in it is worse.** Buy a filter if able.. A cheap filter is better than none at all. Sprite makes a shower filter and is working on a bath filter; it is available at Home Depot.

Besides food, there are so many other toxins and pollutants that are bombarding our bodies in this world we live in. Chemical deodorants, shampoos, cleaners, paints, carpets, mattresses, pillows, clothing dyes, auto exhausts, the list goes on and on. It is impossible to live completely pure in a fallen world so don't knock yourself out trying. Just do the best you can with the knowledge God gives you of specific things in your family's life that need changing.

For more recipes there are a multitude of healthy eating cookbooks and resources (see text box). The bottom line: Eat whole foods in as close to their natural state as possible. Include lots of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Get organic as much as possible and feasible. Careful supplementation when able or as needed. And most importantly, have a great attitude of thankfulness for whatever we have to eat that God has supplied, even if it's not a 100% "perfect" diet.

MaryChris Stephenson:

Here is a typical day for me.
***Morning**: Half of some type of melon Ex: honeydew, galia melon, cantaloupe or some watermelon. Fresh squeezed O.J. with 1 T. Very Green (from TJ's) or Kyo-Green and 1 T. Flax seed oil. I drink these and take my vitamins which include Multi vitamins for pregnant/lactating women, CoQ10, B complex, chromium and any herbs I might be taking at that time. About 20 minutes later I have a large glass of fruit smoothie, approx. 20 to 32 oz. I give this about one hr. to digest and then I may have some whole grain pancakes or waffles with real butter and real maple syrup. Other times we might have whole grain raisin toast or oatmeal.*
***Lunch**: Glass of fresh carrot/apple juice 16 to 20 oz. Later, I'll have an almond shake 20-32 oz. If I feel hungry, which is almost always for me, I have a nice big salad with tofu. I make my own dressings. I like to have tortilla chips or sourdough with this. For dinner I might have another salad with a veggie burger (Boca Burger & Yves are tasty brands with a pleasing texture) and some fresh-made French fries.*
***Dinner** is the only meal in our household that is what you might call more conventional. For a snack I might have some fruit or maybe some non-dairy dessert.*

I do not do any calorie counting, fat content watching, protein content counting or carbohydrate watching or anything of that nature. I feel that if you eat a nice well balanced diet of fresh natural foods, this is not necessary. That is not to say I never eat junk, but I do try to limit it has much as possible. I try very hard not to ill-combine my meals. Which means, I try to not eat a concentrated protein with a concentrated starch. Example is meat and potatoes or pasta and meat. If you want meat do not eat with a starch. Have instead some veggies. If you want the pasta, avoid the meat. This is just what I try to do and what seems to make me feel the best. I have studied many different styles of diet and the effects they can have over time on the body and feel this is the best.

One thing many people do not take in to consideration when trying to change their style of eating is the effect it will have on them in the long run. Some styles may work well for you in the short term and make you feel great, however, there maybe some effects in the long run that are not very healthy.

Remember that no matter what style of eating you choose, there is always room for improvement and flexibility. My advice, for what it is worth, is to try whatever sounds like a reasonable diet and give it a try. See how you feel after about a month or so; that is a fair amount of time. Good luck to you all on your search for a healthy lifestyle for you and your family.

Reading & Resources

Prescription for Nutritional Healing by James F. Balch, MD. **Smart Medicine for A Healthy Child** by Zand, Walton, & Roundtree. Both are A-Z reference guides for specific illnesses along with much general nutrition and supplement info. **How To Raise A Healthy Child in Spite of Your Doctor** by Robert Mendlesohn, MD. **Healing Yourself During Pregnancy** by Joy Gardner, **Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year** by Susun Weed. Both specific to pregnancy. Not from a Christian worldview .**Guide to Diet and Salad** & **Fresh Vegetables and Fruit Juices** by Norman Walker, lived to be 109 yrs. old. **Fit For Life** by Harvey Diamond. **Back To Eden** by Jethro Kloss. **The Wheatgrass Book** by Ann Wigmore. Juicers: http:///www.juicersdirect.com
Gerson Wellness Center http://www.gerson.org, Hallelujah Acres online http://www.hacres.com, http://www.notmilk.com & http://www.realmilk.com are two sites for studying dairy.
http://www.gti.net/mocolib1/kid/food.html is a food timeline.
Weimar Institute - Cardiovascular and diabetic patients are seen by Christian physicians. http://www.weimar.org
Dr. Lorraine Day at www.drday.com **Food Co-ops** *Mountain People's Warehouse*, Auburn, CA 1-800-679-8735, Auburn, WA 1-800-336-8872.
Tucson Cooperative Warehouse 1-800-350-2667.
http://www.tcwfoodcoop.com Food: http://www.living-foods.com
Trader Joes, inexpensive, popular health food/grocery store
1-800-shopTJS, http://www.traderjoes.com