

Children are God's solution to this world's problems—if **responded** to in the way He intended us to.

By letting a child **change** your focus, and **attention**, and bring **love** into your life, you will begin activating the **solution** God intended for that little one to be for you.

—CO



By Chariane Zuille

To My Fellow Warriors of the Bravest Kind—Parents and Caregivers,

When you get a second in your busy life of caring for your darling little ones, and you feel you need something to give you a “pick-me-up”, let me offer you a cup of “Coffee 4 Carers.”



This is in no way a polished book. I’m a mother of three lively and wonderful boys—I don’t have time to get each comma right, and I probably misspelled or missed a few words here and there. But chances are that if you are as occupied and focused on the care of your children as I am, I trust you will be able to over look the flaws and enjoy what is written.

You are doing the most difficult, yet most important, job in the world. If it weren’t for mothers, fathers, and caretakers of children, nothing else would be necessary. Raising the future generation and bringing life to this world—and doing a hearty job of it—is the duty that will yield the highest dividends with the farthest reaching results.

This book contains some courage-lifting thoughts I had along the way through the struggles and joys of caring for my little ones in 2010-2012. Enjoy!

Chariane

[When I get to Heaven, I will be saying Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Not because it's so beautiful, but because all the questions that I know that you don't know, and nobody else knows, will get answered.]

- 4 YRS

Olympics for Mothers (& Fathers)

Location: Wherever you are

Date: Today (and tomorrow, and the next day, and the next...)

Medals given for:

--Who can smile the most, even when in the most patience-trying or stressful situation?

--Who can bravely put aside, yet again, that bit of fun, book to read, friend to chat with, dream to be realized, while letting the greater needs of a youngster be fulfilled?

--Who can encourage, compliment, praise, notice and say the good, first and far more than correcting or pointing out flaws in the children or others?

--Who can mind the feelings of a child or someone else more than their own embarrassment or feelings in front of others?



--Who can put loving reactions, deeds and words above "getting things done," having the house in perfect shape, doing what you had planned, or appearing "together & on top of things" to other parents?

--Who can forgo something you have convinced yourself that you really need in order to maintain "sanity", if or when it just doesn't work out, and make things great for a child else instead?

There are so many heroic, great things parents and caretakers do each day, that God alone knows, but if medals were given out and hung up, the walls wouldn't have space for pictures!

Then there are the totally "unsung" daily giving and helping tasks that really should be in the Guinness book of records! As they've done more for furthering the human race than just about anything else listed in there:

"Most pieces of laundry washed & put away"

"Most times breast-fed a baby"

Jesus called a
little child unto
him, and set
him in the
midst of them.
And whoso
shall receive one
such little child
in my name
receiveth me.

Matthew 18:2,5

“Most patience-trying situation taken gracefully & calmly”

“Most times been asked ‘why’ and answered courteously and informatively”

“Most dishes washed”

“Most prayers prayed”

“Longest time stayed awake caring for sick children or colicky babies”

“Most meals cooked”

“Most little girl’s hair brushed and fixed”

“Most potties emptied”

“Most diapers changed”

“Longest time gone without your own basic needs met—while needing to tirelessly give your time to care for others”

..The list could go on and on... as do the parents and caregivers in their daily giving. And medals will be given out, of the most meaningful, rewarding kind, in the best way, at the right time, to

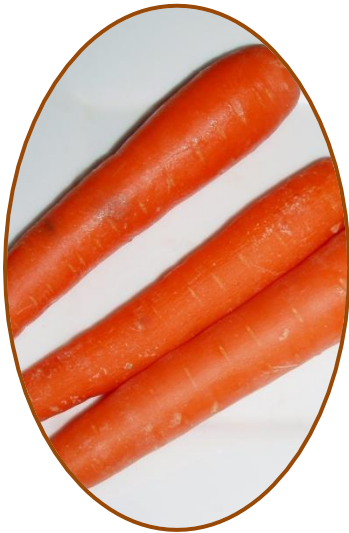
each one for the daily acts of loving and caring for God little creations. He'll see to it! With wonder we'll discover how nothing has gone unnoticed by Him.

Concert with a Carrot

There's those times when words fail—you either laugh or cry, or both. But to “let it all out” in a way that not only amuses, but benefits those around, now that's a challenge and test of control and creativity.

The beds—all of them—had been wet on in the night. Finally, I got around to changing the bedding and hanging out the blankets, sheets, covers and all (being the coldest month of winter).

Feeling like we were getting on top of things I go out of the room for a minute to work on breakfast, leaving my husband with the three boys. I come back in, and well, I felt beyond words. My young son had a large drinking water bottle (that had been full) and was pouring the entire thing over the now bare mattress!



A little later on in the day: What?! My 4 year old decided to play dress up or just was in a silly mood. He managed to climb up, take the drying bedding off the line and strut around the muddy yard with it, like a cape on a king.

This talent for creativity, ingenuity, and putting their mind to a difficult task and seeing it to completion, will benefit them greatly in their adult life. For now, it can be a challenge to see the positive in the various ways it's expressed!

“Mummy, Mummy! I drew a veery beauuutiful picture. When you see it you are going to say, ‘That’s so beautiful!’” I sensed my then 2 year old son trying to put the words into my mouth, bracing me for what I was to see.

A wall mural! ...Uh.. numerous wall murals! (Thankfully this time he'd chosen to use sidewalk chalk—rather than the whiteboard marker or crayons.) We had a family activity then, washing a wall in every room in the house that had been decorated!

So on a day like these, topped with the growing pile of dishes to wash, the living room covered in toys & laundry to fold, the dirty



**[Smiling helps
bring the love
back to me. Did
you know that
smiling is fun for
me? I try to
make the best
smile!]
- 3 YRS**

clothes dominating the laundry room, every floor in the house crying out for cleaning, a proper dinner waiting to be cooked, and a baby with constant needs...

I had reached “pick up a carrot and sing” stage. The kids loved it. It took away the building stress & frustration. I stood on a chair and gave them a show. We had a good laugh.

That single carrot was a microphone, an electric guitar, a violin (with an added spoon), a drum stick on a container. I sang opera, rock, melodically, wildly, softly, changing style and instrument demonstrating with each phrase of the song.

And it was the words of the song I was singing that brought the relief, “One day at a time...” With it then ringing in our head, we kept bravely facing the challenges, and learning to love the ride of life.



One Day At A Time

Music & lyrics: Michael F.

One day at a time,
One step closer to Heaven;
With love as our guide,
Each mountain we'll climb,
One day at a time.

Before us lies an unknown way,
But beside us is our Guide,
And He's there day by day.
He'll fight for you when ya just
can't fight,
And He'll whisper words of
comfort,
No matter how dark the night;
Sometimes a day seems so long ,
When the heart's no longer
brave,

And the battle's so strong.
Even the sun sinks at night ,
But it rises in the morning
With a glorious light.

Where God's finger points,
There His hand will make a way;
He will never lead us down a
path that's not been taken.
Don't worry 'bout tomorrow,
And all of its cares.
And even when we fall, my love,
His loving arms will always,
always be there.

Elements of a lovely day

Take heed
that ye despise
not one of these
little ones; for I
say unto you,
That in heaven
their angels do
always behold
the face of my
Father which is
in heaven.

Matthew 18:10

Forecast for rain, it started off sunny. It was the one day of the week when we invest the day in whole-family activities. We go on outings and what not. But by the time we got to the bank of the river for our play and picnic the rain was starting, the wind blowing, and the baby was asleep in the car.

I sat there enjoying the quiet moments, while my husband took the boys for some sand play, 'til the rain got too hard to continue. The “imperfect elements” of the day were many. But we had a great day! I think it was due to the buoyancy and joy that our children felt, no matter what happened.

--The attempt at flying the kite, which didn't work due to lack of enough wind, ended in smiles, as our son was grateful his dad tried, and was amused seeing his dad run so much trying!

--The rain that ended the outdoor play shorter than intended allowed for mummy to have a bit of indoor exercise at the gym, and the perfect timing for the boys to see a “new car carrier” unloading cars, as they drove home with daddy. A fun and rare sight!



--The biting wind and cold rain for mom's walk back home didn't faze her much, as she pondered in awe how an unexpected car missed hitting her when she crossed the road.

--Their daddy had to leave for a couple days on a trip, and so our "family day" was going to only be half a day this week, but it was packed with fun, focusing on the children's enjoyment. The housework left for later. They felt loved and happy.

--But while daddy was packing the car, mummy making a start on dinner, the boys sat in the car, make believing they were on a trip. And then—and how they did it, we don't know—but they managed to accidentally pull the rear-view mirror down! Since daddy was running late (having given so much to his family) we now had to get it up, and fast. Together we attempted. With his screwdrivers in hand, and I holding the fussing baby, using my other hand, we managed to make it work enough! We laughed together. It wasn't our choice of "bonding together" before being apart, but laughing together on a project was fun—attitude made it so.

--After a bubble bath, their favourite video, (and though interspersed with putting the baby back to sleep several times due to “baby belly blues”) the dinner was great, and happily eaten.

--The day ended in smiles and stories, though the kitchen & bathroom were yet in shambles.

Nothing would seem “perfect” to an onlooker. But that wasn’t important. Each element to make the day wonderful was in place: Seeing the children smile regardless of what turns the day took, and my husband and I making the choice to laugh instead of reacting stressful as each event unfolded, was more than perfect for me.

I’m reminded of the saying: “Your day goes the way the corners of your mouth turn!” Attitude and reactions seem to make or break a day, and having the joy of helping others smile adds a sparkle to any day!

I was thinking, while they were enjoying the play in the spring wind and light drizzle, that if the children only had sunshine, at all times—in body and in heart—they would lack so much more experience.



**[Mummy, you
look real nice
with that shirt —
like a giraffe!]**

- 4 YRS

I'd rather they know how to smile through the rain that is interspersed through our life, then only experiencing the perfect "sunny" days. Being able to "bounce back again" through unexpected and difficult moments is a wonderful gift to have.

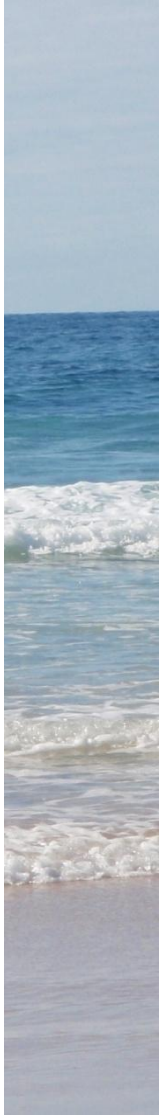
So no matter how hard I try to make things as ideal as possible, there is so much that escapes my wishes. I just have to brace up, face the wind, and keep walking—and help the children through their child-sized storms and challenges.

Unique ways children said "I love you"

Child: Mummy, why is your nose running?

Mum: It's the cold air, and I don't have a tissue right now.
(While at the park.)

Child: You can wipe your nose on my sweater sleeve!



*I need you to hold my hand, because you are “the hero next door”. (If your child is into the children’s show “Fireman Sam” you’ll know what this means, and it’s a BIG compliment!)

*Mummy, if you were a puppy, I’d feed you grass. I’d take care of you!

*Children and daddy come home: “Mummy, we got you a hard hat (dress-up) so you can be on our construction team!”

*I love you a kajillion!

*Child: (Hugs mummy) I love you soooo much! Even when I don’t like you, still I like you. Even if you are sad I love you. I love you anytime.

*Doing things together with you is the thing I like best.

*I love you to infinity and forever!

Treasures in unexpected places

They brought young children to him, that he should touch them. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

MAR.10:13,16

I like to train myself to react to each unexpected disruption as an opportunity to get to do or learn something I wouldn't have, had things gone as I wanted. To notice and retrieve something new and positive from a difficult situation helps to take the "bite" or pang out of it.

One memorable time was a night when my children were sick and having stomach pains. They must have taken turns waking every five minutes throughout the entire night, crying and needing to be cared for.

It would have been pointless to consider getting any sleep myself. So I got my laptop, and sat on the floor beside their beds, and worked through the night on a new project. It is something that I will use and be grateful for, daily, for at least the next 10 years. I thank the Lord for the gift of that wonderful night!

The treasure from that long night is what I call, "The Character Calendar". Do you ever feel overwhelmed by all the things you want

to teach and impart to the children? The skills you'd like them to get a chance to begin learning? The character traits and moral development you'd like to be a part of their personalities? The languages they might be so glad to know or be familiar with? The extracurricular activities to have as part of their learning and development?

So, in-between their waking moments that night I wrote lists of all I'd like to be included in their lives during these years that I am training and raising them. Next, I divided them up and pegged them to different months of the year, choosing what would be the focus of each month. For example every time "October" rolls around, we'd continue working on and learning what's listed for that month. Stress free!

Now if anything starts to get to me, and I start to get the, "We should be teaching our children... and they should get a chance to..." type of overwhelming thoughts, well, they will! --All in time. It's slotted and planned for! Ah, if it wasn't for that long and sleepless night, I would have been far too busy to do it.



[There is one thing that we don't have to learn, mummy! –We don't have to learn how to be a child! We already know that!]

–,5 YRS

Another memorable treasure was a child story series, and other individual stories. Over the past few years my children have had sleep-disturbing health issues. It's been difficult. To deal with it, stories really helped. New stories, entertaining ones, character-building, faith-strengthening stories.

After a year of verbally making up the stories each night, the boys who are addicted to their “Berry Beary Kind” stories (a kind Bear who helps others, and uses all types of vehicles to do his job), urged me to type them up and read them, so we can have a record of them. It's a fun project, and it's now being made into illustrated books!

But had we had only “clear skies” and stormless days and nights, we'd probably never needed stories so much, and missed out on this fun, bonding, memory-creating side of our time together as a family. Like that saying, “The pain passes, the beauty remains.” They've forgotten the tears of past hard times, and only remember the great stories. It's something that they treasure.

Difficult time? Could be something wonderful in disguise.

Crawling Up Life's Pathway

To him it seemed a total “road block”, a problem he couldn't get past. I was sitting on the low step outside, in our backyard. My nearly one-year-old was crawling on the concrete pathway towards me.

He really wanted to come, but his face winced. He lifted up his hand to move once again. Nothing doing. He couldn't go. He didn't know what was causing the discomfort, too much so to move forward.

I saw it. I wouldn't have thought it was anything worth noting, but it was enough to make him feel unable to go forward. A very small rock was on the pathway, right where his hand was being placed. His weight pressing into it was too uncomfortable for him. In one second I brushed it out of the way, and he was happily able to meet me.

Mobility has been great for him. Since learning to crawl he's been so much happier. I'm sure those of you with a crawling baby



Jesus ...said
unto them,
Suffer the little
children to
come unto me,
and forbid
them not: for of
such is the
kingdom of
God.

Mark 10:14

know what it's like. Although it can make it nearly impossible to do much of anything else for awhile, trying to monitor his new ability and the safety factors now in play.

I was thinking how the problems that come into my pathway seem like that to me—too hard to go forward. But to the Lord they are as nothing for Him to brush out of the way.

We just need to look to Him, tell Him what we are feeling. Some things are just part of the learning-and-exploring process of life. But if something is too hard for us—it's very easy and simple for Him to remove. We just need to ask.

Unsung Hero

Here is a wonderful song my husband wrote the words to:

Verse 1

I saw you when no one noticed,
I watched you from day to day,
Observed your humble spirit,



Admired your simple ways.
I wondered what it had cost you
To so willingly play your part?
Until I could not hold back
The words that filled my heart:

Chorus

You are the unsung hero
Letting your hopes and dreams go
That other lives may find what they're dreaming of,
Giving yourself to the uttermost,
Holding on no matter what the cost.
In all the world there is no greater love.

Verse 2

I've wanted so much to tell you,
But words seem so hard to find
To show the admiration
I feel so deep inside.



All of those unseen labours
That nobody seems to see
Are making your crown in Heaven
That will shine eternally.

Bridge:

I couldn't do what I do.
Without you there to help me through.
Our lives would know an emptiness
Without your love and faithfulness.

The Length of a Proper day

Some have estimated that to have a well-balanced day, and do all that we “should” do in a day, it would take 48 hours! I would venture to say that for a mother of small, or many children, it would take more! With that in mind, if we get around to even half of the

**[Doing things
together with
you is the thing I
like best.]**

- 5 YRS

things on our list of “top priority” and “important” we are doing the max for a 24 hr day! Feel better?

I just have resigned to the fact that the “do daily’s” are to be done every few days or so. Some days are primarily “a clean house” days. Other days are great bonding with the children days. Other days I care for myself (good exercise, grooming, “good hair days”).

Other days are for computer work getting done. Other days are for friendship time, or focused time with my husband. Other days are for going out and having a great time as a family. Other days are for a sparkling kitchen and extra great meals. Other days are for times of relaxation, book reading, online friends, a game of scrabble. And so on, and so forth.

I can’t do all the “balanced life” activities, as well as accomplish a lot, as well as be the “attentive to every detail and need” type of mother, as well as tend to the “self-maintenance”, plus have all rooms & closets & drawers in the house spick ‘n’ span ‘n’ tidy, plus

be a fun “seize the moment, and flow with it” and “enrich the children’s lives in all that I do, giving them my all” person, all in one day!



Take this therapeutic stress-relieving exercise too (like you have time to...). List all the “you’ve gotta do it every day”, things you and/or others have deemed so, things you have mentally adopted as “must do’s”. Estimate the amount of time you’d need for your main job (be it at home or out) and related “homework” or prep for it, travel times, plus all your family needs, or personal needs, or educational ventures, or house and yard care, and see what you come up with!

You’ll see that there is no way you, or anyone, can practically do ‘em all each day! So let’s stop berating ourselves for being unable to get around to many things on our “to do” list or have perfect days. Let’s do the best we can with today, and then chill about what just can’t happen.



More ways children said “I love you!”

*“I like your earrings! You look like a chandelier.”

*“You shared your hat with me, so I’m sharing mine with you!” (A funny looking dress up hat.)

*“I can be your friend, Mummy.”

*“I’m going to take care of you. I’ll use you for jobs that I could never do. If I did all the jobs that would be silly.”

*My 5-year-old boy had 90% of the toys... and 3-year-old was trying to build something with the few little remaining pieces of duplo.) Five year old just has to have yet another piece or two that the 3-year-old has, and starts to do an animated crying scene about it. After a while, 3-year-old says, to his brother, “Here you can have the whole thing that I made. It’s a surprise for you. I will never stop loving you. I love to infinity.”

A little while later he comes happily bounding to me, “We worked it out! I gave him the piece that he needed, and he’s happy now.” More happy to have his has-too-many-of-the-toys brother

That our sons
may be as
plants grown
up in their
youth; that our
daughters may
be as corner
stones, polished
after the
similitude of a
palace.

Psalms 144:12

glad, than to have the pieces of duplo. Now that's love. (The conscience of the 5-year-old then stimulated, builds his brother something.)

*Three-year-old washed a strawberry in a cup of water, and brought it to mom. "Here, mummy is a surprise for you, to show you appreciation for teaching the Bible book to us! It's a fresh cup of water and a strawberry! I washed the strawberry for you." (*Hmm... looking in the cup of water handed to me it's clear the strawberry was washed! Ha!*)

*Five-year-old had built a very tall tower out of duplo blocks, his brother knocked it down once (brother was upset), then twice (yet more upset, and builds it up), when it's knocked down the third time I was holding my breath. Five-year-old brother just says, "I love you more than my tower." And promptly forgives, and does something else, rather than rebuilding right then. I was shocked. Would I have the grace to do that?

*Three-year-old: “I’m going to do all the chores in the house for you, so you can just rest. I’ll do all the dirty jobs.” *(He said while vigorously sweeping the carpet with a broom!)*



Have a Laugh!

“Don’t worry, there are more smiles than tears!” I said to a young couple preparing to have their first baby (waiting for it all to begin—being thrust into the challenge of parenthood). They were visiting and hearing my, then two-year-old, crying about something.

Sometimes the difficult moments and “dramas” that happen daily can be rather intense, and make us take less note of the calm, happy, laughter-filled, cute moments. But really, if we were to take a tally of each side of the coin-of-life with events in life with our children *(and if we are doing what we can to make each day the happiest-hit-the-mark day that we can)* then there really will be more joy than tears. How could there not be?

[I'm not tired,
I'm big!]

-2 YRS

[Daddy's talent
is knowing how
to play.]

-4 YRS

Little children are angels fresh from Heaven. Let's notice and revel more in the fun and sparkles that they give each, if we're aren't too busy trying to always "right things" or make everything be just perfect and what we wish they'd be!


Here are some cute-kids-comments I was able to write down from my three and four year olds... there are so many more! As I'm sure you've discovered in your own little ones.

*I have an idea! We can take a little pieces of paper and photocopy them, and then there'd be two. That way we can save paper!

*"If it knocks me down, I'll bop that gravity away!! What if I bopped gravity all the way to another country?" (*Not wanting to fall and get hurt.*)

*"I make mistakes sooo good." Three-year-old boy said, somewhat lamentably.

*"I'm so happy, I'm impressed!" (*Trying to use a big word he's heard*)



*(Said very excitedly emphatically while doing dress-up:) “I’m an astronaut and *I found the solar system!!*”

*For his 3rd Birthday someone gave my son a Lego cherry picker. He calls it a “chicky perry”. Today I helped to lift him up to reach some toys that were up high. He laughed and said, “You are my chicky-perry!”

* “A lot of children at the park were shy at me. But a lot of them I asked what names they were, but they didn’t know what names they were.” (3 year old boy)

*“It’s very scary to fly without wings!” (*While pretending to do so on the trampoline.*)

* “Do you know how good I am at science? I’m so good at it that I even grew up a little bit!”

These words,
which I command
thee this day,
shall be in thine
heart: And thou
shalt teach them
diligently unto
thy children, and
shalt talk of them
when thou sittest
in thine house,
and when thou
walkest by the
way, and when
thou liest down,
and when thou
risest up.

Deuteronomy
6:6-7

Waking “Uncharged”

To wake in the morning feeling refreshed and rearing to go, ready with all our might and vigour to begin another wonderful day is great thing! But what if that stays in the “dream” department? Morning is there, and the lively little ones as well, and you feel you wish you were at the beginning of a long night’s sleep.

Your battery hasn’t charged, you’re running on empty, but run you must, as the day picks up speed, and the needs around you multiply by the minute.

I love the ring to this phrase from a Bible verse that says, “waxed valiant in fight” (from Hebrews 11). In the dictionary the word “wax” is explained as: to grow gradually larger, more numerous, etc.; increase in strength, intensity, volume, to become; grow. And “valiant” is described as: full of or characterized by valour or courage; brave, resolute; determined.

So for me, this small, empowering phrase means that as I get on with the challenges and “fight” of the day, I will “wax” and gain the strength, fortitude and all I need as I do it! I will become what is needed as I go forward, one step at a time.

Whenever I’ve reached the point of crawling tiredness I often recall a memorable day. I was exhausted and needed a good and long sleep, but instead faced a short and stop-start type of night. My (then) one-year-old had woken often with crying, and then at 4:30 am for the final wake.

I felt I couldn’t move, I was so, so tired. The marathon continued. I was compelled to be up and moving and doing and caring for him and the other needs of the day, without rest or break for what ended up being the next 16 hours.

It seemed like something impossible. But I made it and lived to tell the tale.



It wasn't an isolated rare occasion either. But it was a specific day I logged in my mind as feeling, "I can't go on another step. I need sleep so badly" but I did, for many more hours than I thought physically possible.

Remembering one of these "I did it before; I can do it again" moments helps me take one step after the next on those mornings that I feel just can't. It seems to always work. I perk up, and carry on for the next 14-18 hours or whatever it takes in a given day.

The promise in Deuteronomy 33:25, always rings true, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."



Wisdom from Fathers (Part 1)

"You can tell the parents from the non-parents, by the looks you get when travelling with your twin toddlers on an international flight." A father of eight told me, while our children played at the park. He continued to expound with his take on things, words to the effect of:

[The cliff is like
our problems
and Jesus is like
the rescue
helicopter.]

-3 YRS

“Before having children, I would look down on other parents of small children while noting the imperfections, mess, and so forth. Since my first wife had two children already when we got married, the youngest five years old, I missed the whole ‘baby’ stage.

“When I started again from the beginning, and was caring for my first baby, it shed a whole new light on what it was like to parent children. I felt like phoning my dad and saying, ‘Thank you’. I was getting to see a bit of what he’d given to me, a bit of what it cost.”

This man recounted a time several years ago while travelling with their whole family. The youngest was a pair of twin girls. The long flight, the ear discomfort, and so forth added to the drama and made the 10-month-olds very uncomfortable—and the rest of the travellers experiencing the long and difficult night along with them.

While the rest of the passengers quickly left the plane upon arrival, this team was the last to gather everything up and collect the energy to carry on. A young man, also one of the last to leave, commented on the drama of the night as he made his exit.



“That was the worst night of my entire life!” This dad recalled what he’d wanted to say, to humour him, but held his wise tongue. He was too exhausted to make a conversation of it:

“Stick around with me and I’ll show you nights! Nights that will make this one look like a walk in the park!” Ah, he’s “been there, done that” and given his children his best.

* * *

“Za Shilldren, zey set za reezum” (the children, they set the rhythm) a wise dad seemed to have learned over time, with fathering his young ones. The story was recounted to me by my husband after coming home with the children from the park. He’d had a good chat with a fellow-dad. They were travelling and camping for the summer. They set aside 2-3 months for it. We were trying to tackle, maybe not as much distance, but camping and a good amount of driving, in 2-3 days.

Trying to do too much, in a short a time, builds up the stress, rather than benefiting from the change of pace and relaxing in new surroundings. Well, sometimes there isn’t much of a choice—with

Feed the flock
of God which is
among you,
taking the
oversight
thereof, not by
constraint, but
willingly; not
for filthy lucre,
but of a ready
mind.

1 Peter 5:2

constraints of time and appointments and finances. But hearing how another dad was coping was a refreshing concept.

He didn't try to "hurry up and have fun" or "get his kids on a good schedule", but went at their pace. When those "life happens" things happened, he just flowed, putting the needs of the children first.

The Determined

My young son had just turned one years old, can't yet walk... but that was no obstacle.

Attempt #1: "I gotta put my hands in the sink to play in the water." (Crawls, manages to pull himself on to the little step-stool, stand and balance, on tip-toes, trying to reach the tap. I rescue him before he falls on to the hard tile floor. The stool is put out of tot's way—in the bath tub.)

Attempt #2: “Now where is that handy stool? Oh, I see it, in the tub! I’ll just crawl over there, pull myself up to a standing position while holding on the side of the tub. Okay, now I know it needs to be on the floor or I won’t be able to reach the sink.” (Succeeds in pulling it out easily and attempts to place it on the floor beside the sink. Thankfully didn’t master the art of getting it standing right side up before catching him. This time...)



Attempt #3: (Now able to toddle around a bit) “Hmm, the stool isn’t anywhere in the bathroom, not even in the tub. There’s gotta be another way to reach the sink. Ah! The drawer!” (Pulls open the bottom drawer of the sink closet.)

“Mummy come quick!” I hear my three-year-old say. “He’s standing in the drawer in the bathroom!” Yep, standing in the pulled out drawer, holding on to the sink. Just the right height to reach the sink. Obviously the goal wasn’t to find an easy way to get down from the sink again.

Give him hand for undeterred-by-circumstances, resourceful determination, and success! –At one-year-old, and 2 months. I dare say the excuses I give myself for not doing a task would look pretty lame comparatively.

We can learn a lot from our children—when we look past the seeming silly behaviour, and value the quality character traits behind the childish appearances.

Jesus did say: “Except ye... become as little children...” (Mat.18:3)

The Gardens—Which One Comes First?

When younger, I remember my sister telling me the saying, “You always have time for what you do first.” But I face the challenge every day—“Since whatever I do right now, first thing in the day, will get done, which do I chose?”

I find that if I let the children “go” and tend to themselves for too long or first thing in the day, while I’m trying to satisfy my yearning for a nice tidy house or personal grooming, then the day




**[He's alone. I
will be his
friend. I will be
brave. I will be
his friend.]**

-3 YRS

starts off rough. –They feel unchallenged, get on each others' nerves, and feel like they aren't treasured as more important to me than a house. It's a time of the day that shapes their feelings and reactions for the day.

If I've put their needs before my own, and put first in their day what means most to them—connecting with them, and us all connecting with the Lord together, reminding ourselves afresh of Jesus' loving care for us—they are much more channelled in the right way, more content, obey cheerfully, and so forth, as the day progresses.

Perhaps you face this dilemma too: If I let the house go, while I tend the garden of the children's hearts and minds, they flourish and we all are happy. I have that rewarding feeling of "Ah, this is the way it's meant to be". –Challenged, inspired, on-target, happy children, getting great input, and coming up with good idea themselves, the words they say pleasant and a joy to hear...and on goes the happy list.



But then the physical needs doing too, and if I choose to primarily tend to the garden of the house and my other to do's , the weeds grow quick in the garden of the children's hearts and life and show up in the words they speak and the feelings they have, and the day takes a downwards spiral.

Things don't actually get any tidier. Because while I'm trying to do this or that, they have to be busy-busy too, and the things they come up with can mess in a second what took an hour to clean!

Yesterday I got all 12 containers organised. Each contains a little-pieces toy set (Lego, blocks, tea set, small building toys, etc). Then, while I was busy in the kitchen, my son decides to make a "tennis net" and ties a rope on to the cupboard that these are all stacked on top of.

He pulls the rope, the cupboard tips, all containers slide off (most lids come off)... you can imagine the floor and the time it took to fix it all up again.

Neither as being
lords over God's
heritage, but
being ensamples
to the flock. And
when the chief
Shepherd shall
appear, ye shall
receive a crown
of glory that
fadeth not away.

1PE.5:3-4

Quickly I think of something positive to say... “Good thing they fell—if they didn’t you might have kept pulling and the cupboard would have fallen on you! I’m glad you are safe.”

We clean things up a bit, and then do something *together*. “People before things...” as my motto goes.

Wisdom from Fathers (Part 2)

My father’s words still ring in my ear. I think it was one of the best and most-remembered comments he could have ever said. I was a teen at the time.

“I’ll always love you—no matter what you do, or become.” And listed things that I subconsciously thought would have made me ineligible for future love. *“Even if you were to become the worst criminal... I would love you just the same.”* I don’t remember every example, but the concept stuck.

Demonstrating and expressing our unconditional love for our children fortifies the foundation for them to build a good life on. They can't see God—we have to reflect this concept of His love to them as best as we possibly can. With His help we can.

These children are His creations, His children. In many ways we are but the stewards of His property. May we show the love and care as He'd want to do, were He in our place.

I asked my husband before Christmas day, what would be his ideal day; if there were things that would be meaningful or important to include. "A non-stressful day..." was his only Christmas wish.

So we didn't try to keep to some "perfect Christmas day" schedule or ritual. It felt good to have his permission to not be under pressure to make things be a certain way, at all costs.

The way I handle life, react and carry myself is more important to my family than the great things I attempt to do for them. I need to remember this.



“Perfect” or “Best” ?

I was sure I knew what was best for the children. I wanted to give perfect care. They’d been fighting a cold. We all were. They’d missed sleep, and were tired. All things were in place for a wonderful, early night to bed. --Or so I thought. They were tucked in for the night.



Then the oddest thing happened. A second wind seemed to kick-in, and there was no sleep happening in the children’s department—not even a hint!

I could struggle with it, demand calm sleep of them—though that wouldn’t work, and we’d only all be crying tears of frustration. Or I could gather the courage to surrender and accept a change of plans. I got alone for a moment of quiet prayer and had the most out-of-the-box idea. Arrrgh! I really didn’t like it.

I was tired, and I feared them getting a fever if they didn’t get enough rest. But with the other option worse—a very grumpy and unhappy time of trying to force what I thought to be best on them—I opted for the new solution.

**[Jesus takes care
of us more than
flowers.]**

-3 YRS

**[Could you give
me a hug? I feel
sad.]**

-3 YRS

“Okay, you can get out of bed and put on your pants and jackets. Let’s get our ‘jiggles’ out, outside!” So we did.

The calmness, the beauty of playing in the setting sun, while I finally got a chance to clean up the yard, made a nice way to end the day. More fresh air was what they needed, I supposed.

A solid 10 hour sleep without waking was enjoyed by them that night.

“It takes so long to grow up!”

My three-year-old often says, “It takes soooo long to grow up!” Today I asked him “Why do you want to be older?”

“Because I don’t want to be called [only his name] anymore, ... But “astronaut” or “workman”... In other words a title of a profession, accomplished, respected, capable.



When asked the same question, my five-year-old said: “Because I want to know more how to do things.” And “I want to work with daddy.”

We talked about how it would be if children could do the things adults could do within a year or two of being born, without learning patience, and wisdom, and all the other traits that come over the years that enable them to do the job better when they are finally old enough.

Without the quality of patience, that can only come with time and experience, they aren’t as equipped to capably handle things. (We talked about driving, as an example—and how patience helps to aid in the safety aspect of being a good driver, etc.)

Later on in the day I was doing one of those “juggle acts” holding the baby with one hand, so he didn’t plunge to the floor while suddenly deciding to fall headlong off the bed, and finishing sending an email with the other hand. Do you get those thoughts too at times?

“Ah the bliss it would be to actually be able to use both hands, and peacefully, serenely, do some simple task...” without all the juggling and struggling.



Just then I heard my own question to the children earlier echo back to me. It was as if Jesus was asking me, “So, why do you want them to grow up fast... If they did, *you* wouldn’t learn patience, wisdom...” Point taken. So true.

I’ve got my lessons to cover too. Just because I’m an adult, I’m not at the end of my “growing-up”. Whatever it is that’s in store for me in the coming years, or decades, these patience-learning experiences I have now, while my children are also growing up, will be essential in preparing me for it.

Each day is a building block for the future. What I learn or experience today, as patience-trying as it seems, may be an invaluable resource in the future that I’ll be so grateful to possess.

Mother's List of Opposites

*The fruit of
the Spirit is
love, joy, peace,
longsuffering,
gentleness,
goodness, faith,
meekness,
temperance:
against such
there is no law.*

*Galatians
5:22-23)*

You may find these words are seldom used in the same sentence in a mother's life. Some are wonderful, appreciated gifts, others are gifts in disguise that help to hone in us the gifts and fruits of the spirit and good character.

Good/ Sleep
Sit/ Eat
Boring/ Day
Always/ Organized
Free/ Time
Endless/ Energy
Laundry/ Done
Enough/ Time

Regular/ Day off
Quiet/ Children
Nothing/ To do
No/ Love
Not/ Needed
Hugs/ Rare
Laughter 'n' Smiles/ Gone

Enjoying the works

I fought off the feelings of guilt. But was I right? I was just sitting, watching the cute children play, seeing what they came up with while playing with their building toys. I was too tired to clean or to do anything.

“But you are supposed to give the children your best. Surely the best involves making sure the laundry is done, the dishes, the ..whatever. Do anything! Don’t just sit!” But being too spent to hop to the rhythm of those “do better, do more” thoughts, I sat long enough to hear something else.

The thought came to me that I work so hard to mould, instruct, teach, wash, clothe, instruct, enrich, nurture, these little children, but then I never step back to enjoy what they are becoming, and the “fruits of my labours”.

I just keep trying to accomplish more, do more for them, clean up, make things for them, teach them new things, and so forth. So I



[I'm glad I'm sick. Then I can have more time with Jesus. When you were gone out of the room, I prayed for my food!]

-5 YRS

didn't need to feel guilty that I wasn't up serving my family every second. I just watched them play, enjoying seeing what they'd come up with when creating new duplo inventions.

The thought was on my mind that I need to do that more often: Enjoy what I've put so much time into. Then a day or so later I watched something that brought out just that point. It was woven into a talk by Rob Bell. I'll type up here a transcription of the parts that touch on this concept: Stopping to enjoy what you've laboured on. Not just unceasingly trying to make fast progress and accomplish more and do better.

"...The Hebrews who had been slaves in Egypt... What was life like in Egypt? In Egypt they worked 7 days a week, making bricks. They had quotas in bricks. It was bricks, bricks, bricks, all day, every day, bricks! In Egypt your worth and your value came from meeting your quota of bricks. You were worth as much as you produced.

"God rescues these people from life in Egypt and now He's trying to teach these people what it's like to be a human being—not a human doing! God is trying to teach these people what it's like to be human.



“You’re not a machine. And in Egypt their worth came from what they produced and God is trying to teach these people, your worth does not come from what you produce. Your value does not come from bricks. Your value comes because you are rescued and redeemed children of the one true God.

“So what does God say? Work six days, but then take a day and do no work and rest, reflect, play, whatever feeds your soul. Take one day a week to remind yourself that you are not a machine. ...

“Create, but take time to enjoy. A couple years ago I noticed this disturbing habit in my children. They’d say, ‘Dad, dad, dad’. Was this a stutter, what was the problem?

“It began to bother me. One day we were playing Lego on the floor and I heard the, ‘Dad, Dad, Dad.’ I noticed it about the second ‘Dad’ and was fully there by the third, “Dad”. And I notice that I was there playing with them, but I was somewhere else. Thinking about a meeting, thinking about something I needed to do, thinking about emails, thinking about phone calls I needed to make when I was done with them.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

“I realised that I was there with them, but I was actually somewhere else. I realised that my boys had gotten used to their dad being here, but actually being somewhere else, so over time they realised that it takes about three tries to get Dad ‘here’.

“Exodus 24 God says to Moses, ‘Come on top of the mountain, and stay here.’ And the Rabbis point out that the literal translation of the word ‘stay’ is the word ‘to be’. So the command literally reads, ‘Moses, come up on top of the mountain, and when you get on top of the mountain, be on top of the mountain.’

“It sounds like something from the redundancy school. ‘I get it. If I’m on top of the mountain, I’m on top of the mountain!’ Oh, no, no, on. The Rabbis say, this command is brilliant. See God understand human nature.

“God understands that Moses will spend all sorts of energy getting up to the top of the mountain, and then he’ll immediately begin thinking and planning how he’s going to get down and in the process he won’t ever be fully present on top of the mountain, and he’ll miss it.



“...Is the writer saying, ‘In the midst of creation, there is so much to do, there is so much to accomplish, there is so much to build, there is so much to administrate, there are so many emails to respond to, there are so many phone calls to return, so much to create, so much to manage, so much to order.”

“Be careful that in your managing, creating, ordering, be careful that in the midst of creation you don’t become so consumed in your work that you don’t spend all your time creating that you don’t spend any time resting, and in the process you lose something, and you find yourself back in another sort of Egypt.’”

“The writer is saying, ‘Don’t become a machine who is so caught up in everything you are doing that you miss the joy, the wonder, the awe of being a human in the midst of this whole world God has made.’”

What Makes the Difference?

What makes the difference between...



A breeze or a draft

A 'b' or a 'd' or a 'p'

Relaxed or lazy

Careful or overprotective

Rowdy or lively

Cool or chilly

Problem or opportunity

Foolish or undaunted

Weak or recovering

Apathetic or easy-going

Indulgent or generous

It's really a matter of perspective, perception, and personal experience.

It helps to remember this when we're in a bad mood, things aren't going well, and the way we see the situation is bringing us

**[This forest is
swarming with
trees!]**

-4 YRS

**[Us is better
than the
computer!]**

-3 YRS

down. Try to get a different perspective. Look at it from a new angle. Stand on your head. Use a periscope or binoculars. Get a new feel for what’s going on. Our take on the matter may not be the only way to view it, nor even the right or best one.

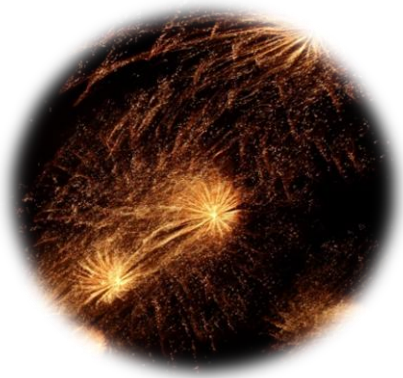
“Mummy, an ‘f’ is an upside down ‘J’ with the line going across it” , as my son noted one day.

The words of this song have helped me through many of the hard-to understand-why events of life.

If We Could See Beyond Today

n

If we could see beyond today as God does see,
If all the clouds should roll away, the shadows flee,
For present griefs we would not fret,
Each sorrow we would soon forget,
For many joys are waiting yet for you and me.



If we could know beyond today as God doth know,
Why dearest treasures pass away and tears must flow,
And why some darkness leads to light,
Why dreary days will soon grow bright.
Some day life's wrongs will be made right,
Faith tells us so.

"If we could see, if we could know," we often say,
But God, in love, a veil doth throw across our way.
We cannot see what lies before,
And so we cling to Him the more.
He leads us 'til this life is o'er,
Trust and obey.

Author Unknown

Disappointment = Opportunity

Disappointment = Opportunity

Whoso shall
receive one such
little child in
my name
receiveth me.

Matthew 18:5

It was the day the children and I planned to visit the nearby church again for story time with other children their age. We walked the 20 minutes there, looking forward to it, only to find that it's the one time a year when it's closed. It's the "Church Camp" weekend.

Must have moved to this weekend due to the rainy weather when it was schedule before. The kids were disappointed. So on the walk back home we talked about how when things don't work out like we planned or hoped for, it gives an opportunity for something different, possibly better, to happen.

As it turned out due to the change, the timing was right for them to video chat, for the first time in way-too long, with their friends whom they missed, that are now living at the other side of the globe. It's not something that easily works out. It was a joy for them all.

Difficulty = Advantage

A year ago I didn't know what to do about the children's dietary needs. I knew they had major issues with certain foods, the trouble was, trying to pin point it was a long and painful road of discovery and guess work. Even blood tests revealed nothing.

After a Christmas of chocolates and whatnot, desperate to find the keys to their tummy and health issues, I prayed for their bodies to be cleansed of anything that shouldn't be there. The next day, and the days that followed, they had the runs, vomiting, and couldn't hold anything down. It then reached the point that the doctor said they may need to go to hospital because of dehydration if things didn't change soon.

On my face again in prayer, not wanting my little guys to go through the trauma and having all sorts of things injected, I pled for healing. Then I remembered my prayer for cleansing. It had happened, obviously.

The next day, answer to prayer, they could keep things down, and I slowly introduced foods and liquids. It was like a clean sheet of paper—every little thing I gave them to eat or drink now could show clearly what had a good or negative effect.

Dairy showed clearly being a problem causer! And several other foods. The joy that we had enjoying good, painless sleep at night, through eating the on-target-for-their-bodies foods made it all worth it. I know prayers affect things. And if it weren't for that cleansing sickness, the insight wouldn't have been so clearly seen, making things easier in the long-run.



From Peril to Danger

Gravity defying, mountain scaling, adventurer! From peril to danger! That describes the agenda of my one-year-old right now. There are days were I can seldom blink before he's in another perilous strait. His guardian angels, powered by God's love, mercy and protection, are working double duty these days.

[Children are like Jesus' money. That's how special they are to Him.]


-4 YRS

Yesterday he was sitting in the empty bathtub playing. I wasn't staring at him each moment—he's fine for a second, right? Just sitting peacefully with toys in a walled in area—the empty bathtub.

In the minute it took me to take three steps to the bedroom and back, he had climbed up out of the bath, onto its edge, and from there up to the nearby sink, stood on the precarious edge of the sink and was leaning over grabbing the little glass bottle of eucalyptus oil that was “put up out of reach”! A bar of soap was in there amid the toys, I noticed, so I imagine his foot was a bit slimy when he started his ascent. Miracles happen.

Each night as I hold him, putting him to sleep, I thank the Lord that he's made it through another day of toddler adventures and real-life learning experiences.

Then there are the red-backs to guard him and us all from. A common spider, yet fatal if a young child is bitten by them!



The stress of this alone was getting to me. It was time for a talk. As I walked one day I talked with the Lord.

“Isn’t it kind of morbid, that the way things are in this world is causing to have to zig-zag our way through the varied ways of dying that there are?” I asked, half-joking, but my point dead -serious, pardon the pun.

“Through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage” came the verse to my mind. (Hebrew 2:15.)

I looked up the rest of the passage and it is shockingly appropriate:

I will put my trust in him. ... Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:13-15)

I was surprised. “I’m not afraid of death! When it comes there’s a wonderful Heaven to look forward to.”

But it was true, and it was a matter for stress in raising children. It had become my new fulltime occupation—keeping them alive! I had come to realize that I was gripped with a fear of death.



“I am come that they might have life,” He added to my thoughts. (John 10:10)

Again I looked up the full passage. It’s beautiful. He says:

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.(John 10:10,11)

Jesus is not the one scheming new dangers. He’s the protector and caretaker. He’s the one that answers my earnest prayers for protection. He’s the one that has the times of their lives in His hands.

Thy wife shall
be as a fruitful
vine by the
sides of thine
house: thy
children like
olive plants
round about thy
table.

Psalms 128:3

"It is appointed unto men once to die." (Hebrews 9:27)

"A time to be born, and a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3:2)

It's a timing thing. When the time is up, then it's up. It's not me who's keeping the children entirely. I do my part: Watch and pray. I can't get lethargic and passive in those duties. But somehow the fear that gripped me, that affected my communications with the children, the panic when they were going into a "danger zone" was gone.

I am at peace in that area of daily life, for the first time in a long while. I guess I gave Him more trust to take care of what I can't. I pray, I watch, I do what I can and should. But He's not going to let "a hair of [their] head perish", as His Word says, in Luke 21:18, without His foresight and oversight, and having His hand in the matter. Their life-times are in His hands. I have:

"Committed the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator." (1 Peter.4:19)

[It makes me feel left out when I try to tell something to visitors and then they and daddy laugh or chuckle about it, rather than taking me seriously and answering or talking to me about it, like normally to their family.]

-5 YRS

Take Time with the Shepherd

“Learn of Me” Jesus says in the Bible. It’s in learning from Jesus that we find the “how to’s” and the solutions to rearing the children. All the books in the world that tell of the “best ways to raise children” won’t be as on target as God’s tailor-made plan and counsel for raising my little “lambs”.

As a mother, working together with the Creator of the children, I am like an assistant shepherdess. Jesus is the shepherd who knows His sheep like none other can. I need to take time with Him. –Time to listen, to be still, to get His insight.

What stops us from doing things in God’s loving and on-target way—what He knows is best for each individual child? So many things.

--We are busy, surrounded, and weighed down with so many things to do.

--We are concerned with what we feel is the “expected way of doing things” but so often isn’t God’s way, for our children, right now,



today—because they are mindsets from those dealing with situations and people that aren't our children. We have to find out from Him what is best in each of our individual situations—for right now.

--We let our pride and circumstances get in the way of downloading from Above the best methods of operation while on the go.

--We use less-than-ideal tools of motivation, out of habit, or because it seems easiest. To do things in a heavenly way goes against the grain of mankind, generally. We have to stretch in new ways, get out of our “comfort zone.” Be free.

We can read the books written by other parent “experts”, and learn what we can from them. But most of all let's learn from Jesus, first hand, just like they did, when they wrote about it. We aren't to just parrot in our life what God showed others to do with their children.

The point is to break out and try something new, what works with our special little ones. Jesus will lead and guide and He'll answer according to our desperation to know His thoughts and ways.

Children, obey
your parents in
all things: for
this is well
pleasing unto
the Lord.

Colossians 3:20

If we first have a willingness to change and to become anew, then He can work with that and make us more into what we need to be. I say “more”, because we’re going to fail in some ways, no matter how hard we try, and we’ll never be all that is needed in each situation for each of our children. God doesn’t expect that.

But in working with Him, and being open to His individual “tips and tricks” for each child’s care and nurturing we’ll be hitting closer to the target more frequently. Having that desire to change our former ways of thinking, and follow God’s new ways of doing things with the children He’s given us, will bring more joy into our lives.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. (John 10:14)

Party on, Anyway!

Maybe there is something you can do! Instead of letting the months or years go by, wondering when you'll ever get a chance to have "fun" while you are swallowed up in the daily duties and often moment by moment emergencies.



It was starting to get to me, every time I opened my closet. My "pretty dresses" were not just "seldom used", I couldn't remember the last time I got to put one on. There wasn't a chance, or opportunity. Christmas dinner? Are you kidding? Try getting all the dinner done, caring for the children and the baby, preparing for relatives and such. Gotta wear work clothes, tough stuff—that can be tugged, pulled, spilled on, easily give a nurse to the baby in, and so forth.

However, my little boys like to have a princess for their mother too. Whenever they see those dresses—one real shiny one in particular—they wish I would wear it. It's just never been appropriate thus far. Last night we changed that.

My husband had to be gone again, working for the evening. It's been an especially busy few weeks for him. The children miss him, and I knew this time would test their graces. They'd had wishes of Lego time with daddy and all. I needed something fun for us all. Then the thought—a new thought—struck.

“Why do we have to wait for a perfect time, with friends, and everything all set, to have a party?”

So what if there weren't other friends of either our ages—old or young. We had each other! A mother with a one-year-old, a three-year-old, and a five-year-old. We had time. We had the need for fun. We had music. We had a lot of dress-up clothes. We had food to make party nibbles with. It really did help smooth things over that evening. Announcing that it was party night, and that I was finally going to wear that special shiny dress was a welcome idea for them, and their daddy was able to leave without a fuss heard.

As they tried on outfit after outfit from our growing dress-up collection, I prepared party snacks—no “normal routine, sit at the table and eat” dinner. Though it was basically the same menu, it was



**[I need cuddles
all throughout
the day.]**

-6 YRS

**[I wish I was that
kitten!]**

(A picture of a
kitten asleep
under its
mother's arm.)

-6 YRS

cut up, with dips, and so forth, arranged on a tray and placed in the “party room”, and a fun blended fruit drink.

The dress was donned. The music went on. The lighting was special—with their favourite tall lamps. We jumped, danced, clowned around, nibbled, played some games, and had fun. Mummy was in “all smiles and just let them have fun” mode. Then: “To end our special party, we’ll have a new story!” Heh—off to the bedroom for bed time story, and to sleep.

Next time I come across one of my “laments” and “since being a mother I never get to...” well, maybe instead of whining there’s something I can just do—maybe not the way I was used to when carefree and single—but perhaps better.

I have life-long friends I’m building bonds with, who I get the privilege to love, nurture and raise. And one day when they are grown and off having parties of their own, and I have my dresses all to myself, I’ll probably pine for these days. Let’s party now, enjoying the once-in-a-lifetime chance with our darling little ones!

Embrace a Real Life

Laundry's stacked up, my hair's a mess
Dishes still awaiting
Toddler's found a pen I see
His art on walls creating



Noises of all types ring out
Any time of day
Kids have yet to learn "quiet"
So much to do and say

Longing for orderliness
I tuck the kids in bed
Soon I join in dreamland too
And I rest my weary head...and dream...

*Alone and quiet, the evening's drear
Not a thing is out of place*

Fathers,
provoke not
your children to
anger, lest they
be discouraged.


Colossians 3:21

*But lonely now I feel a tear
Run down my saddened face
Though my house is clean and shiny
No marks upon its walls
How I yearn for gladsome voices
To echo down its halls*

A young voice wakes me with a start
From this sour dream
The children have embraced the day
How heavenly it seems

I couldn't live in a place pristine
Without a blemish seen
Without handwriting on the wall
And laughter echoing down the hall.

A perfect house, no disarray
Can wait until "someday"



I lay aside this illusive ideal
With joy embrace a life that's real

I'd rather not a palace
That of joy is gaunt and bare
I'll take a shack for a farthing
If the wealth of life's held there

The Helicopter

I had a sweet moment with my 1 ½ year old today. He's at that age when he's trying to communicate his joys more. He was in the back yard and started to smile and say his version of the word "helicopter".

Happily he was pointing and telling me about a helicopter that he said was flying. I didn't see one or hear one. He wanted us to both sit on the step to watch this "helicopter".

Perhaps I'd misunderstood what he was saying? Anyway, it was a balmy afternoon, a clear blue sky, and a special moment together staring up into the sky. He had settled on the step in the way he does when anticipating something he really enjoys.

Then after what seemed like a while to me of continuing to see or hear nothing, finally a flying vehicle appeared. Well, it was a yellow propeller plane. Fun and rare enough. I was surprised how keen his ears were. It took nearly seeing it until I could hear it. But he knew it was coming a minute or two earlier.

This is just one little example of children's keen perception and senses. It pays to listen to them. We could learn so much. Sometimes we think we are the "all wise" and "all knowing" ones when compared to those who have lived so many less years than us.

But with all that "experience" padding our senses, sometimes the business and hard work and difficulties of life have just dulled us to many things we could be enjoying—if we'd notice them.



[You call out to your Jesus, and Jesus come and help you with all your things that you might want to think of.]

-2 YRS

It's refreshing learning, listening to, and living alongside those to whom life is a wonder-world of new and exciting things yet to be discovered.

Silent test

It was raining only a slight drizzle, and my boys just had to have their out time. With baby in the covered stroller, and the two young boys warmly dressed, we started on our walk to the park. I tried to do something different. Try this test. It can be nearly impossible to pass. But it could be a great stress reliever—for your children.

See if you can walk to the park without telling them “come along” or “catch up” or “let’s keep going” and so on and so forth. But just let them chill, walk at their pace, pick daisy (or make mud pies, as mine were doing that day, in the puddles).

I tried so hard to bite my tongue to not prod them along. We were out, moving (most of the time), getting fresh air, they were enjoying themselves. There really wasn't any reason to get to the destination as fast as I wanted to—or even at all really, in all honesty. I tried to convince myself of this, but it was pretty tough.



Sometimes I can be so addicted to the feeling of “accomplishment” that the joy of just living and “doing” is lost. Perhaps we have become so accustomed to stress and pressure being a daily part of life that we assume it’s “normal” and the way to be with others. We then pass it on to our children, pushing them, pulling them, making their lives filled with as many “good things” as we can, telling them to do this, or that, and questioning why action hasn’t been taken immediately.

Sometimes poor planning or just the surprise happenings of life can squeeze time out and we are left trying to do more than we’d like to have to do in a short amount of time.

Thou shalt keep
therefore his
statutes, and his
commandments.
.. that it may go
well with thee,
and with thy
children after
thee.

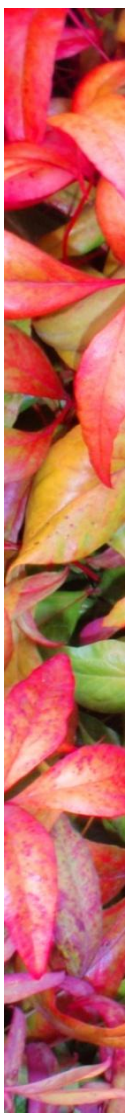
Deuteronomy
4:40a

It's good to stop and think before pushing the kiddies along, "Is this really good for them, necessary, or is it just me trying to 'check something off the list' I have determined should happen?"

Maybe subconsciously we think that they are going to have to deal with stress all their grown life, so we are helping them to get used to it. But perhaps it's teaching them the opposite. As grownups we are supposed to relieve our lives of health-ruining stressful reactions. Why not let them learn the beauty of peace, faith, taking life one wonderful moment at a time?

The Miraculous Within the Mysterious

There is a lot that happens in the care of our children that is difficult and just plain puzzles us. Why this or that happens, and on goes the mystery at times. Such as it was with my night last night.



But there is another side to things that I think is sadly seldom brought to light. And that's that in all the difficult times, the Lord always sends something to make it bearable, or easier, or some little miracle that happens. Often we only say the rough-road things to others, but leave out the coolest parts of the story.

Here's an example from my night:

Last night was a beautiful night. My baby-toddler slept calmly, without his usual discomfort with gas and such. For only the first time in his life he didn't even nurse in the night. And it was a gift. As the "fuel tank" was getting cracked and sore from the extra use lately with his discomfort and teething. I was cringing thinking about the night and the pain I'd have. But he just didn't need or want it. He didn't cry or fuss.

Or I could say: *"He vomited all over me, and repeatedly throughout the night. I could hardly sleep. I had to keep the bowl and cloths handy at all times, holding him most of the night."*

The truth? --All of the above. A blend of them both.

Though he had such an odd never-before-happening, that took into the next day to clean up, he was so very patient, calm, quiet, and strangely comfortable and just kept happily drifting off to sleep, after each “deed” would wake him suddenly. It was a miracle night.



Like that verse, "...grace does much more abound". And the hymn, "He giveth more grace when the burdens are greater."

Let's help encourage each other when sharing the lows and bumps on the road of parenthood, to include the neat things that God does also, at the same time, to make things not more than we can bear.

He always keeps things balanced in some way. And if we look for them, think of them, expect them, we may be surprised at how many little miracles, just out of love, that He sprinkles on our way.

**[I just turned
into a big guy
because I don't
turn into a little
guy.]**

-2 YRS

**[I'm so happy,
I'm impressed!]**

-3 YRS

Lord, Teach Me to Play

As I sat there looking at the Lego, my mind drew a blank. I really didn't know what or how to make things. If it were dollies I could come up with plenty. But since I have boys, their interests are more creative and inventive. I could say that I never had much Lego experience growing up, so I don't know how. But with all the opportunities over the past year and a half, I could have learned something.

Give me some books and tools to teach with, and I can educate children and have fun learning together. Give me a guitar and a Bible, I can teach them to sing and learn about God's Word. Give me a messy room, and I can tidy it. Give me some water and towels, and I can make dirty boys clean ones. Give me a pot and food and I can make a meal.

Give me enough time on a computer and I'll write books. Give me the messiest pants to change, and I can fix things up to a shine. But toys... I had forgotten how to play! Somehow I've just been too busy to sit and play with the children.



“Can you please play with me?” The request comes from my dear little ones. I try, and do a token. But then I’m up and active with things that seem more time efficient.

Toys are great for kids, teaching them coordination, creativity, imagination, team-working, cooperation, diligence, patience, thinking skills and on goes the list. But for me to spend my time on it, I really didn’t have the focus for it.

It is a way of showing love, acceptance, and to show I enjoy their company, as well as providing an opportunity to get to know each other, and so forth. I realise I need to change. I need remedial therapy.

So from now on I’ve put it on my list of “to do’s” that during one of their play slots in our day, instead of doing dishes, cooking, and cleaning (great things for when the kids take their play breaks and are happy and self-entertained), I’ll put it all aside and sit with them, and play together... while I still can. One day they’ll move on from toys, and I’ll have missed those fun special times together.

My son, keep
my words, and
lay up my
commandments
with thee.

Hearken unto
me now
therefore, O ye
children, and
attend to the
words of my
mouth.

Proverbs 7:1,24

Thank God for Daddies! As the kids say, “Daddy’s talent is knowing how to play” ... as opposed to mom lacking it! Ha! Maybe I can change that, if I put my mind and heart to it.

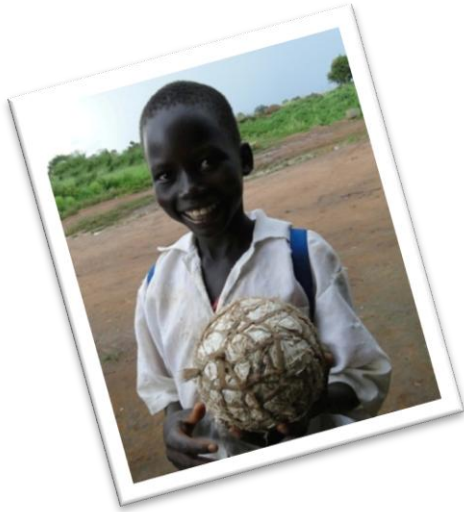
Slogging Through a Bog?

A poem I dedicate to anyone going through a “bog” in anyway—sickness, moving, work, difficulties, challenges, low finances, trying times, and second and third rounds of all of the above!

Old Chinese proverb (I just made up now) says:

Thick mud makes strong legs.

Slog, slog
Through the bog
Looks like fog
Wanna jog



Grope, grope
Tryin' a cope
Need some rope
Give me hope

Can't see the end of this endless treadmill
Things stacking up like a giant landfill
Seems all I do is the same things once more
Starting to seem like just chore after chore

Prayer, prayer
Give Him my care
Feel a new flare
Answers are there

Light, light
Feeling alright,
Wings give me flight
To gain new insight

Training my mind to look past this war zone
New skills of faith God's helping me hone
There's more to this life, than just what we can see
The prizes we'll get as we serve faithfully



Behind the Scenes

My husband teaches piano to our children. They enjoy their special times with their daddy. He told me about the father of Mozart, who some criticize now. They say perhaps he was too hard of a teacher to his children, and taught them with but lucrative motives. It's odd how history warps in hindsight.

Well, since none of us were in on the childhood piano lessons of Mozart with his dad, we can't really say much. But one thing we do know, that he grew up to be an amazing musician. And the fact is plain, that he wouldn't have been, had someone not taken the time

I wanted my brother to have enough watermelon. He had too much watermelon so I wanted him to have enough. I took a bite of his watermelon and then he had enough and not too much.]

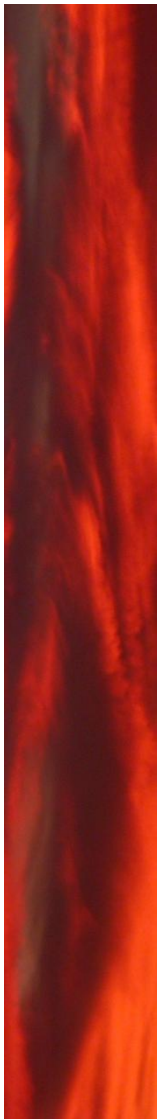
-3 YRS

to teach him! We only hear the famous names, but forget that there are vital people behind the scenes that made it possible.

It reminded me of the story I heard about the rescuing of John Wesley, the famous preacher, when he was young boy. He was in burning building and some caring man noticed him still up there, climbed up and got him out. We don't know that man's name or anything else about him. But many have heard of John Wesley.

If someone hadn't been there at the right time and making the right decisions, his name wouldn't only be forgotten, it probably wouldn't ever have been heard of. And worse, the countless people that John Wesley helped to bring to the Lord wouldn't have heard from him either.

Even if we are never heard of, and become as invisible stage hands in a great play, making the stars look wonderful and making many happy, let's do our part well, and give those in our care our best.



We'll get our name lit up one day, if not now. But mostly, we'll feel such satisfaction at seeing the ripple effect in many other's lives because of our efforts to teach, to save, to care for those ones who seem but children now.

Who knows what the future holds—for them, or us?

“Us is better than the computer!”

The day was woven with some beautiful first-ever moments. Ah, the joy of seeing the oldest helping the young ones. One of those “it comes back to you” nice feelings. My nearly 6-year-old got the toddler dressed, just to kindly help him out.

Later on, I see him reading a book to my 4-year-old, wisely making sure to skip any words or parts that he knew his brother didn't like hearing. So caring.

Let the word of
Christ dwell in
you richly in all
wisdom; teaching
and
admonishing one
another in psalms
and hymns and
spiritual songs,
singing with
grace in your
hearts to the Lord.

Colossians 3:16

Then I noticed for the first time, that rather than pulling the whole stack of books off the shelf to get the one he wants, my toddler learned how to push against the pile, and pull out the one on the bottom. Victory! He loves books and I have spent so much time picking them up for the baby, and now little tot.

We had our rough moments too: Frustrated and unkind words when the toddler was getting into what the older ones were doing; or the younger brother had accidentally broken the older brother's block design.

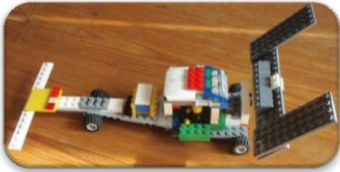
“People are more important than things,” I would say.

“Imagine that instead of having your brother to play games with, or jump on the trampoline with you, if every time you only had a bucket of blocks and toys to keep you company?”

(“I'd like to have my brother AND the blocks...” the boy interjected.)

Oh, well, they got the point anyway—which I thought was a good mini sermon—and they had a bit more patience with each other.

Then there was the wildness, running, boisterousness, and the loud yelling outside where all the neighbours were sure to hear of their made-up toilet-level songs and phrases. Oh, dear! That was curbed, with “perhaps you’d like to run laps instead of jumping on the trampoline?”



These rough sounding, way-too loud, wild ‘n’ crazy times happen when they’ve had too much chemical-filled air—in public buildings, where lots of people are, or lots of fumes from cars, etc. (Being rather sensitive in this way).

We couldn’t avoid it this time—or thought it best not to in this case. There was a fun Lego exhibition in the city that day! A room filled with great Lego designs and creations displayed in a fancy community centre building—plus sardine-can style crowds packed with people filing through, and zero fresh oxygen.

Now we were paying the cost. I tried to endure it, while helping them learn to “control themselves somewhat —no matter how they feel.” The fun they had, and the experience, I kept telling myself, was worth it.

(I was just glad that I didn't go—the chemical mixture would have made me far less than patient and understanding, while helping them through it. I could think rationally and stay relatively calm.)

When bedtime came, the well-enjoyed time of curling up under the covers and listening to me reading stories off the laptop was replaced with “jiggles.”

As the jumping was starting on the beds, I tried to just sit there and guard the computer, watch for their safety, and patiently wait till the bout passed. The pillows were flying, lots of laughing, tumbling, as well as a dress-up show using toilet paper. Wow. Then I decided for safety to put the laptop out of harm's way, giving even more room for the “fun”.



**[Jesus is so
Godly and so
powerful and
so good!]**

-3 YRS

**[I wish Jesus
could come out
of that picture
and be here.]**

-3 YRS

Then the “instructive” and wise sounding tone of voice, and deep quote from my 4 year old, worth remembering for a long time, said: “ Mummy! **Us** is better than the computer!”

In other words, “Wouldn’t you rather have us, as lively as we are, as boisterous, as bedtime-disrupting as it is, as plan-changing as the moment is, as noisy as we are, more than your computer and the cozy time you were hoping to have? No matter how wild the moment, just seeing our happy, lively, laughing, fun-loving, selves— just the wonder of us, your children—is better than your “toy”, the computer, no matter how unperfect we are being. Isn’t this a blast? Aren’t we better?”

My speech was being preached back to me.

“Yes, you are better than the computer!”

So I sat back and relaxed and watched the show with amusement rather than endurance.

Whosoever
therefore shall
humble himself
as this little
child, the same
is greatest in the
kingdom of
heaven.

Matthew 18:4

And when the moment passed, at last we did settle down for that cosy story time that they (and I) so enjoy. It was a good day, with a balance of the pluses and minuses. And I learned I'm to keep perspective and enjoy even what I consider to be "minuses", when they come.

Nature—And the Good Side of Things

"What?! Is that my towel...?" My creative, innovative son had been playing he was a workman of sorts. A bucket of beach mud we brought home a few days ago was the cement he was laying atop the (real) cement path way.

I remembered then that he had said: "The workman just needs something from the bathroom" as he came in from the backyard for a minute.

"Okay" I'd said, happy that he and his brothers were playing fun games together, while I got the dishes done, watching most of what was going on through the kitchen window. I saw now what he'd



gotten: towels and a bathmat. They were placed carefully and straight, well thought-out, right over the wet “cement”.

When he heard my surprised question, he quickly added, “Let me show you the good thing about it. It looks like nature! See, here this brown is the dirt (the dark brown bath mat). The green towel (mine) is the grass, and here are the flowers! (a floral patterned towel—the hand towel from the sink).”

I had to agree with him that it did resemble nature. And ordering the towels off the ground wasn’t going to make them any cleaner. I do support a love and appreciation of nature. It was so cute, and such pure motives, I had to let it pass, adding “just this time...”

It wasn’t the first time he’d helped point out the “good side” thinking about nature.

We’d gone out as a family to take the children biking along a woody pathway. But before getting there a very difficult-to-breathe



smell filled the car as we and the others on the road were stuck in the traffic with fumes of some road construction. We had to cover our noses and mouths with jackets and whatever we could grab to breathe through.

In the midst of that, our dear positive son, said, “I’m just thinking about the nature we are going to go to. I’m not thinking about all this stinky city.”

So we joined him in focusing on the good what was to come. Although we found out that the path we’d planned to go on was closed due to more construction, (sigh), there was another spot we could go to. So nature was enjoyed nonetheless.

I guess it was on this day that I too, got my “think on the good side” nature thoughts. Starting on my birthday, and the days that followed, my family had made a change. A great new commitment: We’d head off to nature early in the day, and have good vigorous exercise there.—As many days a week as we possibly could.



It was marvellous. During this week we'd biked in a pine forest. We played soccer in the sand near a lake and climbed on the rocks, we'd hiked up a hill and seen the breathtaking view of nothing but pasture, mountains & sky. We'd taken a walk through the botanical gardens. *Nature, fresh air, exercise.*

It was our commitment to health. But if we hadn't been pushed to it due to new and unique health issues in our family, we might have kept it only as a "sometimes, if it works out" dream. However, now as a result we would all be thriving more wonderfully than ever.

So for the first time I was able to say I was glad for the challenge of the seeming difficulty. We were all going to be better for it. It's nice when we finally pass on through problems to the point of gratitude, seeing the good that results from something less-than-ideal that comes our way. Ah, it's a beautiful moment.

**[I love you sooo
much! Even
when I don't like
you, still I like
you. Even if you
are sad I love
you. I love you
anytime.]**

-2 YRS

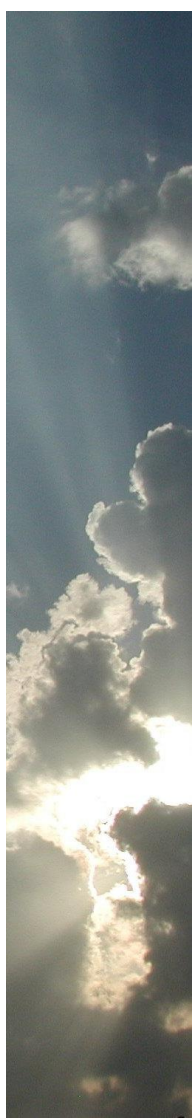
Heart-stirring. Mind-awakening.

A proverb to ponder:

“Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.” (Ecclesiastes 4:13)

I'm sure I've read this before, but when I came across it the other day, it seemed brand new to me, and was a good and weighty thought to ponder. It stuck out to me, and fixed itself in my mind and heart.

Imagine a beggarly child, dirty with little or no education; getting coins from those he can move to have a moment of generosity; living in a shack, with nothing much—if anything—to call his own. He holds more worth as a person on earth, than a rich king, with a whole nation to call his own; having power and fame, gaining anything he wants.



Why? Because if the child is wise, and ready to learn, listening to others, mouldable, not thinking he's complete and good enough as is, wanting to change when there is a better way—he can benefit society far more, than someone who thinks they have it made and act as they will, regarding no one else's thoughts and suggestions.

It wasn't just saying children that are smart, clever, beautiful, well-dressed, shiny and polished are great—but that even the children of paupers, those looked down on by higher levels, are to be cherished more greatly and held in higher esteem than those who have it all, can control masses, look well-accomplished, yet think they are too good, too proud, and are too set in their ways to learn anything new.

Those qualities that children have of being ready to learn, being unset in their ways, being humble, are to be valued and cherished.

That child there, the one that you get the honour of being in the presence of, and the sobering responsibility of being the one to

Children, obey
your parents in
the Lord: for this
is right.

Ephesians 6:1

instruct, admonish, teach and train, can hold more value than a king—so the Bible says. It's a deep and awesome thought.

And it wasn't the only time this concept was mentioned. Take what Jesus said, for another example. (See Matthew 18: 1-7)

It's very heart-stirring:

Jesus' disciples asked, *"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"*

Who is the most respected, honoured, and of greatest worth? Who, in the realm of God, with His way of thinking, is considered the best? There have been great men of old; there are been kings and rulers; there are powerful angels; those who have given their lives as martyrs; those who have built cities; those who were very rich on Earth. But in God's politics, in His list of "most important persons", what people, or type of people, or those with what qualities does God consider the most noble?

Jesus' answer is simply astounding, surprising, and deeply moving.

–A little child!

“And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them...”

And those mirroring the example of humble, believing children are also highly regarded:

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Can we allow our minds and hearts to truly accept and believe it, and act like we do? Think of the massive change it would be the world over, if very man and woman adjusted their mindsets, motives, priorities, actions and deeds according to what Jesus said!

May God help us view, as He does, these precious ones we are granted the privilege to raise.



Rules of a Domestic Affairs Overseer

Rule #1: Always hang out the laundry

If it is a sunny day, and you have not used every drop of the sun and air to process the piles of soiled clothes and bedding, you have missed probably the most important thing of the day.

Furthermore, if you have allowed yourself to indulge in the luxury of taking a 10 minute break to sit and smile and watch the children playing outside, and have neglected your duties to their clothing, when you very well could have during those moments, all the more shame to you!

(Ah, the rules unsolicited seem to scream at times... “Mummy, aren’t you glad we’re having fun?” my son says, while I’m out just taking a fun-time breather with them... “Yes, I’m very glad!” And I tell myself, “Laundry we’ll always have with us.”)



**[Mummy, if you
were a puppy,
I'd feed you
grass. I'd take
care of you!]**

-3 YRS

**[Your lap is my
best!]**

-3 YRS

Rule #2: A tap must never leak, under any circumstances.

Dripping taps unattended to promptly, within the first 2 drips out of step for a proper tap, show extreme incompetence of the householder. Nothing should be out of order in any of the mechanical workings of the house.

(Sometimes, you just really, really, can't do something about it—you and your husband are just pressed with more important things... Waiting a week or two until work deadlines are met, won't bring a flood, or break the bank in a water bill—as much as the eager-for-pay repair men waiting to help warn you. And it can be tended to when there is a recess of the moment-by-moment essentials, that have kept you hopping like bare feet on hot pavement on a summer's day. Keep smiling, keep hugging, and keep your eyes on the true priorities.)



Rule #3: A house should be spotless on birthdays or when guests come

To make a pleasant birthday atmosphere, and the best quality, nurturing, environment for your children, the full day before any birthday, where guests are expected, must be spent cleaning until it all shines.

All must go on hold, until it has been completed, and you feel “ready” for the next day’s festivities. There is much at stake—image, sanity, and the opinions of others. The children’s care and happiness shouldn’t usurp this priority.

(Well, I rebutted this one with, “If all my son remembers about his birthday is a stressed out mum, uptight, who cares more about things, and others’ thoughts, than him, his feelings and needs... then it will be anything but ‘happy’ birthday to him.”

And, ye fathers,
provoke not your
children to
wrath: but bring
them up in the
nurture and
admonition of
the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4

(What makes children truly happy should be considered above the “perfect” setting, party plans, decorations, opinions of relatives and visitors. Years from now—or even next week—visitors will forget. Your child won’t.)

(Feeling loved sticks for years to come. And sadly, so does the opposite. And what might appear as “love” being show to them by us working hard to make it be “nice” might feel quite disappointingly different to him—if it’s really our own feeling of satisfaction were after, of having completed the perfect plans we set out to do.)

(For me it was trying to push hard to get things looking as great as I wanted them to look that eventually brought us to the point of frustrated and sad tears. I was doing it out of a good heart, to have things nice for my son’s birthday... but when I looked deeper in my heart, wasn’t it just because it would make me feel better? ... He probably couldn’t care less! He wanted me—the happy, loving version of me, most of all. So I relaxed. Things would work themselves out. They always do... They either do, or they don’t seem to matter in the long run anyway.)

Just laugh



I was exhausted, and had used up my last ounce of umph, and was giving myself timeout, to sit, put up my feet, and hope to deal with things nicely, when I'd recharged a few droplets of strength to do so.

Today was the day of the week we take all bedding and air it in the sun. Great fun for the kids, as they play on the bouncy mattresses, and make wombat homes in the pile of blankets and pillow play on the sunny trampoline.

However, getting it back on takes a long time—and the kids delay it as long as possible. The clock was ticking; soon the youngest would need to be put to bed. If I didn't get this done before night fell, and sleep time began, none of us would have proper beds to sleep on, or so I told them.

Funny how it is, the thing that has been untouched and forgotten about for hours, the second you as a parent begin to clean it up or work on it, it is all of a sudden the desired item.

Like bees to honey, I had just reached for the bedding, when the boys from all ends of the house descend on me, instinctively knowing it was about to be “back to normal” again. I tried to push onward, tolerating the crawling, bouncing, and such. But it really wasn’t doable.

Finally, after trying my hardest, I just couldn’t manage it. I had no strength or patience left. I went to sit down, leaving a sad boy. He felt my frustration, wondering why I wasn’t having just as much fun as they were, romping around on mattresses and blankets.

Perhaps I could indulge in a few tears, relieve the pressure, and then get up and on with things... Nope. My toddler has this instinct telling him when I’m going to cry. He gets up from his play on the floor, climbs into my lap, looking closely at my face, “mama, mama.. ha..ha..mama!” trying to get me to laugh instead. He’s gotta be a cherub in person. He’s totally cute.



[Daddy doesn't need his glasses at night to see his dreams.]

-5 YRS

[God is like the sticky stuff (glue/tape) and our problems is like the ripped paper that the glue fixes.]

-5 YRS

Ah, okay, fine, I'll hold it together, smile and muster up a laugh.

The sad son comes in. I tell him to enjoy the bedding now, because as soon as I find the strength to try again, well, that will be my last attempt. If they hinder me again, I won't have strength left, and it might be wombat beds for night time, in a rubble of blankets—or they'd have to make them.

“Mummy, I lost the joy of playing there...Remember what I was telling you earlier about how I feel sometimes...I'm getting that feeling now.” *(He'd said that sometimes when he does bad things, and he's afraid I'll find out, he gets this bad feeling, wondering if I'll stop loving him.)* Oh, dear. My attempted self-indulgent moment just ended, I needed to get on the offensive to get the smiles going again, in hearts and on faces.

“Okay, count to 20, and I'm going to be hiding in the bedding... come and find me!” I say.



The laughter and surprise when I popped out from under a blanket, making silly sounds and all—repeatedly—was worth it. It changed everyone. And after that they willingly let me fix it all up “properly” again. Really, they just want things to be fun, that’s all.

It was perfect—For them

Every time the drawer is opened—which seems often this week—I cringe. “I’ve gotta find the time to organize it.” It’s the “drop box” drawer, filled with a zillion details. When I find something that looks like an important part of a piece of something, I put it there. Pens, rubber bands, marbles and things too small to have around for the little one, knickknacks, do-dads, and so forth are some of what this top drawer holds.

But it grates on me that there is a place that is a jumbled, disorderly mix. I want it to be all tidy, sorted and an easy-to-find-things draw. It used to be, but given the nature and function of this spot, it just gets into a mess as time passes.

Remember
now thy
Creator in the
days of thy
youth.
Ecclesiastes
12:1a

You know those things, that if compared to important, “big picture” things of life, are really very inconsequential, but still they bother you? This one nags at me: *You can't keep up! You're a mess like that drawer!*

Then a new thought came and it changed everything to a positive thought—at least until I can “make things right”... one day. *“It's the funnest thing for the kids... it's perfect for them.”* When the boys need something interesting to do, they look in that drawer, and always emerge with some long-lost or forgotten item or trinket to make something with.

“Mummy, look! It's the wheel cover to the little toy wagon that has been gone for so long!” I must have found it one day on the floor and figured it went to some little toy, so placed it safely in there. Finally, the wagon was complete again. They love that drawer!

We were having our “Celebration of Colours” day. My toddler grabbed something for me to put on him. It was just what made him

feel a part of the activity. His oldest brother's new yellow sweater a friend had just given us was his choice.

On little man, it went down past his knees. I rolled up the sleeves plenty. Then he found some bright green swimming shorts that were given to us also. We've never used them, as the elastic waistband is shot, so they won't stay up. "One day" I'll fix them. But to complete his costume he wanted to wear them.

Well, the sweater was bulky enough to tuck into those shorts and keep them up. He smiled. It was just perfect for him. Toddler loved what he was wearing. Imperfect in every way... but totally great—to him! His pleased expression showed.

When we were still all dressed in our colourful clothing, we went on our hike in the woods.—They wanted to stay dressed up. The older boys went further with their daddy up the path, but little man was having his issues, so I sat with him on the ridged side of the pathway leading to the top of the hill.



I held him, and he went to sleep in my arms. The gentle warm breeze out in this natural-air spot was ideal. But nothing else felt such to me at first:

No bed to have him take his earlier-than-expected nap in. My rear end was numbing from the rough rocky seating. I was keeping guard against the eager mosquitoes trying to land. I didn't get to make it to the top...again. But then the "thought of the week" came yet again: "Look at him... it's perfect for him."



He was as snug as a happy bug, in my arms. The temperature was perfect. He was getting the fresh air in nature that he so needs. As I shifted to get a bit more comfortable, I realized that for him and his needs at that moment, it was just great.

Often what I feel isn't "just right" might in actuality be just perfect for someone else. Next time an unsatisfying situation of imperfection tries to get me down, I'll try looking at it from another's point of view. Maybe things are more "fine" than I thought.

**[Our problems
are like an old
house, and Jesus
is like a new
house.]**

-6 YRS

Maybe having it all suited to my tastes and wishes, or what I perceive to be “right”, wouldn’t actually be as great, for others—the young ones I’m trying to make it all “great” for anyway.

Starting to look for the “why-it-might-be-good-actually’s” helped yesterday too, when for my toddler’s birthday we took a family outing—which we haven’t been afforded the time for much lately.

We were cherishing this time to go to a pretty park that has a little train ride—the reason for choosing that spot in particular. He so loves trains.

Thankfully the rain was held back, but to our surprise, of all days, the train was under maintenance. So instead, we enjoyed the large and beautiful park area, walking, biking, snacks, rock climbing, exploring.

I realized that had the train been operational it could have ruined our time. Little man wouldn’t have settled for one ride, and



could have fussed, whined, and been unhappy the whole time, wishing for more rides. But since it really wasn't an option, instead we had a fun, refreshing and relaxing time. We'll catch up on the ride another day.

And I'll keep playing the "spot the good in the less-than-ideal situations" game.

$$E= mc^2$$

(By my husband:)

Theory of relativity applied to parents with small children.

$$E= mc^2$$

$$\text{Everywhere}=(\text{mess})\times(\text{children})^2$$

Theorem:

Hear, O my
son, and
receive my
sayings; and
the years of
thy life shall
be many.

Proverbs 4:10

There is a constant amount of mess in the universe. Thus if tidying energy (clean-up) is applied to mess in one room of the house...a simultaneous application of an equal amount of untidying energy (playtime) occurs in another room.

Thus while mess (m) may under some circumstances temporarily decrease...the constant value of m does not decrease. The rate at which mess accumulates increases exponentially according to the number of children(c) applying untidying energy to the matter.

Thus tidiness can be seen not as a natural state, but as a briefly occurring local anomaly. A vast amount of tidying energy must be applied to create even a small temporal and spatial appearance of cleanness.

Conversely, empirical evidence abounds that a minimal amount of untidying energy can produce a vast quantity of mess within a very small time period.

A Chance at a Second Childhood?

I'm finding such joy to in some ways be a child again, alongside my own young ones. To be as a child who finds joy in learning new things, who can dream up plans and try in some fumbling way to make them a reality.



I guess that's the point where it's good I'm also an adult: I do have the ability to make things happen, more so than a child. If I didn't get to do all I wanted to, when younger, now's my chance, as I see those interests immerge in my own little ones.

I don't have to know everything, and try and pretend I do with my young ones. I'm often heard to say, "There's lots I'm still learning—and still want to..." and we each list our "want to learn how's". Theirs' might include parachuting and electronics, and mine sign language and making clothing. But we all share the joy of the endless thrilling store of things yet to be learned.

Here are a few ways I'm choosing to enjoy and embrace a second childhood:



--Dreaming up alongside my sons—who wanted to build a doll house for their friends, for Christmas, from scratch. We think up just how to make it, furnish it and all. I have never built something like this out of wood before. But putting that all to the wind, believing we can, we are doing it, and are having a great time.

We talk about it, imagine it, draw our plans, and just do it. Not perfectly. We learn things like: the thickness of the wood matters and things won't fit if you forget that, and so forth. But happily we have nailed it all together, and are nearly done painting it, and the fun will go on as we add the hinges, and finally furnish it. I think we'll get it done in time, after all!

--It's a thrill to read books from the library that are of great interest to all of us—them at 4-6 years old, and me in late 30's. It's pretty cool. They aren't children that go for the goofy, odd, strange

**[I ate some of
the bites of
pear, because it
seemed like
there were too
many to fit in
the bowl. I did
the math in my
mind and
figured it out.]**

-5 YRS

and completely untrue fairy-tale-land type of stuff often typically in the “children’s books” section of the library. I never go there.

One of the books I borrowed was titled “buildings that changed the world” and had great photos of all the most famous and outstanding places from the leaning tower of Pisa, to castles, to a building that is made out of balls and sticks, to resemble a very, very large atom!

These little boys are such builders, and enjoy anything to do with it. So do I. Each book I read to them has new things for me too. We learn together. And I choose books of genuine, learn-worthy quality.

--We put on clown shows every now and then for friends. And it’s not just them practicing performing skills and having fun sharing their tricks and jokes, while I watch and cue them, nodding approvingly from the sidelines. It’s important to them I am one of the clowns too. And I have to dress up, of course!

They'd never let me get by not joining in. So on went the butterfly wings, tiara and big puffy princess dress. I always wanted to wear one of those, anyway.



Now, I don't have a real dress, and I let myself dream of one day wearing a proper one, like those in the ladybird books I used to read. I don't chide myself for still wishing to look like a princess sometimes—though it seems light-years away—because it gave me the freedom, the childishness to still make one as best as I could, just the way my little boys wanted me to be dressed for our performances.

It wasn't perfect, and our sewing machine had stopped working for a while, so the fast hand stitching looked just like that. But they didn't care, it looked great enough for them, and so I didn't care either.

--When I walked home one day I saw something discarded that I knew the children would just love. But to get it to them took

three things: a bit of strength, willpower, and totally not caring what people who saw me all the way home would think. I chose to do it.

I imagined what the boys would feel and want. And I was right: they had a great time. It was some very large pieces of cardboard that had been discarded. Each about four feet square. Thick and heavy, and four of them, they would fit together well to make a fast indoor play house.



I carried them this way and that way, struggling, and stopping every minute or two to rest my strained hands. Finally, on to the head they went. Sweet relief. That was the easiest way. I avoided all eye contact! And focused on the reaction of the children when I would arrive with it.

Looking outside the window with their dad, they were most amused to see me as I approached, carrying such an odd load in such an odd way. Immediately work was begun and the play house was built and played in for a long while.

I have taught
thee in the
way of
wisdom; I have
led thee in
right paths.

Proverbs 4:11

--When they start to dream up their wild and fun-sounding can't-happen-in-real-life thoughts like "I'd like to explore inside the sun..." or "Maybe we can make a flying fox or cable car from our house roof to the tree over at the other side of our yard..." or "I'd like to live in a house on stilts, with water all around, then I could be a diver and explore the water every time I wanted to get out..." I don't rush to bring a reality check, but explore it with them.

"Oh, yea, it would be great to know what's inside the sun. I'd like to see that too! ... It'd be too hot now... but maybe one day we'll know..."

"Wouldn't that be fun? And then on our way, zooming on the flying fox, we could jump down on to the trampoline, wheee!... well, the tree isn't tall enough, nor do we actually have rope that long, but it's fun thinking about it... maybe one day we can make one in our yard..."

“Oh, yes, you’d have fun doing that! Diving and exploring the water! You’d have to invent a way to keep things dry that you were trying to carry, but maybe you’d think of something.”

I wonder what today will hold? I hope I choose to once again get on their level, to enjoy what they are smiling about—if it’s good, and to play together, to learn together, and to not be too practical or “realistic” to stop “dreaming the impossible dream” they may come up with. Maybe it can happen... in some childish version. And that’s probably good enough for now anyway.



At Least the Platypus Got Taken Care Of...

It startled me a bit, and caught my eye. It was strangely unexpected. A reflection of me was clearly staring back. I relaxed as I realised it was just that the mirror was now clear in the bathroom. I had gotten temporarily accustomed to the completely white/cloudy look it had taken on for a while.

**[BROTHER TO
BROTHER: You
are my best
friend. I like you
so much,
sometimes you
feel like you are
a bit like Jesus to
me.]**

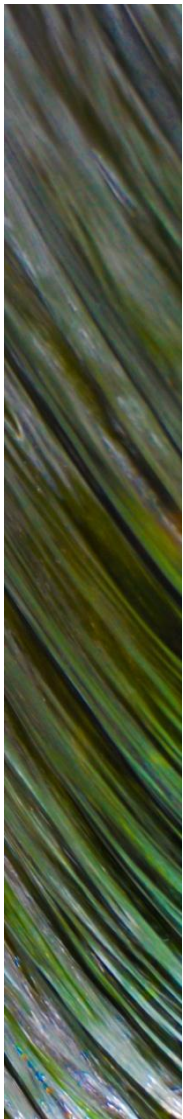
-6 YRS

In a moment of feeling a “cleaning spree” mixed with a bit of silliness and fully enjoying it, the boys had discovered for themselves that combining bar soap and toothpaste to clean a mirror “really well” didn’t actually improve its visibility.

I wouldn’t exactly be able to send a photo to a cosmetic magazine of my make up ‘n’ hair jobs of late with the mirror in the state it remained, “until we got a chance” to clean it up. Yesterday was finally that time.

Some days just seem to hold the magic—things go well, new ideas are tried, I have something to show for the hours put into the day.

Then there are the other kind of days—that have seemed to be more common lately, I’m tempted to lament—where I get to the end of the day, searching my brain for anything noteworthy I can give myself a good pat on the back for, that I accomplished that day, but I can’t seem to think of anything.



Sure the kids were cared for, fed, dressed (repeatedly—due to their new favourite past time: mud and sand play), they had a safe day, we had some time reading and learning things together, they taught themselves new songs on the piano, committed to memory a Bible scripture or two, had fun at the playground, maintained good health and living habits, and so forth... but still I feel I want more.

I want to be able to take out my pen and check off several things from my long list of “to do’s”. I want to be able to say I had wonderfully fulfilling times with the children, and they were enthralled at all we did together, and made giant leaps of progress. I want to sink into my bed at night knowing every corner of the house, shelf and drawer is in order and will greet me cheerily the next morning.

But rather than that, I feel further behind in so many areas of life, new challenges springing up in the children’s care and behaviour, new things to fix, and just tons to do. But then I look at the children, happy, cosy in bed, waiting for their bedtime story, and I decide to change my criteria of “accomplishment” and a “good day”.

We will not
hide them from
their children,
showing to the
generation to
come the praises
of the Lord, and
his strength,
and his
wonderful
works that he
has done.

Psalm 78:4

I mentally go down a new list, and see how many “checks” I could put.

--Did I help the children smile today?

--Was I patient when things weren't the easiest?

--Did I give hugs and show that I loved each one in my family?

--Was I there to help, listen, talk, and encourage whoever needed me then, even at the cost of not “getting something done”?

--Did I send a prayer for someone today, easing their load in some way?

--Did I laugh and choose to take things in stride when I felt like it was pushing me over the edge?

A couple of days ago, as I was trying to stay afloat and pushing off the weight of despair and despondency. Things had continued to be in disarray, the children weren't being the perfect image of care-bears, and there's always tons to do that seems to only stay on a "wish list".



I walked into the bathroom, to find a novel sight. My toddler, in an impulse of fun, had taken the soft, fuzzy, stuffed-animal platypus, put in the sink plug, given it a good wash, and now had poured baking soda all over it (what I use for cleaning the bathroom). It looked like snow had covered the little creature. My boy was well meaning, and wanted to make it as clean as could be, taking very good care of it in his tender way.

I didn't need more things to clean up. I didn't need half the box of baking soda poured out and wasted. But it did look cute in its own way.

I decided to see the funny side, and think: "Well, even though I can't seem to get around to any of my other goals, at least the platypus got taken care of. At least that's clean!"

So, did you help someone have something to smile about today? If so, mark yourself up a big check mark on your one-of-the-most-important-things-to-do-in-a-day list.

Tomorrow's another day. Eventually the rest will all work out. Plod. Breathe. Smile. Plod. Breathe. Smile. We'll get there, eventually, wherever "there" is actually meant to be.



New Year Savings! –Up to 90%!

Save 50 % of your energy trying to ask the children to do things, by prefacing your requests with a few words of appreciation, thanks, and gratitude.

Save 40 % on tears and drama by thinking ahead, and praying for solutions to possible pitfalls or common daily troubles. Don't wait till you are swimming in a current of kids' emotions to think of solutions. Pray down a plan at the start of the day.

**[I make mistakes
sooo good.]**

-3 YRS

**[Don't be angry.
Just be so loving
to everyone that
want to come to
Jesus and God.]**

-3 YRS

Save 80 % of your time spent repeating and re-explaining things by slowing down, looking at your child, ensuring their attention and talking to them in an “I-care-about-you-and-love-you-no-matter-what” kind of way.

Save 70 % on inspiration-draining thoughts by saying (and thinking about) something you're truly glad you have (or glad you don't have), rather than concentrating on only the mess, the tiredness, the behaviour, the financial needs, the headache, the unkind words said, the lacks, and the problems.

Save 30 % of your mind-strain, trying to think of cool fun idea on the spot, while the lively children's varied and individual needs pull you every-which way, (and the “blank time” in itself creates new needs), by making a few lists and “packs” and “what to do when” ideas, to draw on over the next while.

Save 50% on irritability and conflicts by insuring sufficient amount of active exercise, preferably outdoors —letting no more than 1-2



hours of sedentary activity pass (unless sleeping) before resuming the movement their bodies were made for.

Save 40 % on illness and headaches, by letting no longer than 1 hour pass before “tanking up” again with a good drink of pure water—and letting the children do so as well. For basic functioning and maintenance your body will happily utilize 10 glasses a day, easily. Less than sufficient will insure the body-machine will wear, tear and break down. (Tip: skipping drinking health-robbing beverages.)

Save 10 % of your funds to give away to others in need, and towards spreading the awareness of God’s love and Word to those desperate for hope and the knowledge that Someone somewhere cares—and see that 10 % magically multiply as it’s being rewarded back to you in surprising ways. If you give to God, it’s an investment with great dividends—both here and now, and in the wonderful life to come.

Save 70% on depression, immobilizing-disappointment, mind-warping bitterness, joy-siphoning thoughts, long-term negative effects of possibly life-shattering blows, through realizing how short

Lo, children are
an heritage of
the Lord: and
the fruit of the
womb is his
reward.

Psalm 127:3

this life will seem, as you rest in God's loving arms one day, when it's all over. All tears not only wiped away, but all things finally making sense. Like that song says, "It'll all be right at last. Pray on, oh weary not. It'll all be right at last."

Save 90 % of your time and energy laboriously working and problem solving, through investing adequately in the most time- and strength-saving resource yet discovered: Prayer. Let God do the "lion's share" of the work, and do things thought impossible for you.

"Can it be my birthday tomorrow?"

I told my young son that the new shoes we happened to find on sale for a low price would probably fit him by his next birthday. They looked so shiny and new, and he was distraught that they didn't fit him yet. It was such a big deal to him. Like seeing an advertisement for something you really want, and then you find out the shop is out of stock and it will take months until new supplies are shipped.

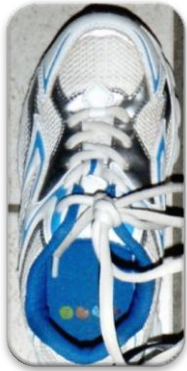
I tried to cheer him, giving the idea of how fun it would be to save the shoes and have them right on his birthday.

His solution? “Can it be my birthday tomorrow?”

I explained that if all of a sudden he was big enough in one day, that though the shoes might fit, he’d also outgrow some of his clothes—like his favourite set he was wearing then, too small nearly already.

Some things we just can’t speed up, or slow down, or make happen at exactly the time we wish we could have them. And if we do get what we want, when we want it, sometimes we realize, to our disappointment, that it’s cost us something else.

Waiting, and being content, noticing the good we have right now (some things that may not always be a part of our life), is hard to do—especially when our eyes and heart are set on only that one thing we want. Whether it is a circumstances, or feelings, or relationships, or more time, or different schedules, or better health,



or more finances, living conditions, fun events, more friends, or whatever.

The things that can and should change, go for it! Those things that have to wait, that are totally beyond ours and others control, may take some looking-for-what's-good-anyway, to give us steady patience.

Seeing past it all to what we are glad for right now, in spite of it all, helps us not to miss the great things we do have—things that may change eventually, and that we'll wish we'd savoured more.

For me, I think what strains my patience muscle is the fact that the kids DO grow—and grow so fast! Maybe not fast enough according to their likings. But certainly faster than I can keep up with. And there is so much I want to enjoy with them, and let them experience during their childhood. All the varied ingredients I'd love to have as part of their life. But so much seems to slip by, as the clock and calendar move swiftly on.



**If you need a
cuddly (stuffed
animal) and
don't have one, I
can be it for you.
I am a cuddly
that grows, and
never tears or
gets old and
worn!]**

-4 YRS

I want the best for my children, but it can seem as if there are many things making it difficult or impossible to have every area of their life as euphoric as I dream of it being.

And then sometimes when I finally do get something just the way I'd like it to be, I find that the passage of time has made it almost non-relevant. Ah, such is life.

But then when I put on the right glasses and look back over that time when I just couldn't make it all happen as I wished, that there were so many other things the children's lives were enriched by. -- Things that would have been missed if I only got everything the way that I, to my limited vision, thought was best.

Let's give our best, and pray & trust for the rest.



Jack-in-the-Box

Ever seen one of those “pop-up surprises”, where a clown puppet pops up as a box opens, after cranking it with a handle for awhile? It was a good mental example to me.

There are those times when it can seem that all I’ve taught, instructed, given, and poured into my children has had about as much of an effect as water on a duck’s back.

Their choices that day, the words spoken, thoughts, ideas and reactions they’ve had haven’t shown that much of a “dent” was made, that all I’ve given and done perhaps isn’t helping to shape them into glowing characters. What kind of person will they become?

Then, out of the blue, when I least expect it, they do or say something that exposes the reality—showing that not even the

I have no
greater joy than
to hear that my
children walk
in truth.

3 John 1:4

slightest thing had gone unnoticed by them. It had all gone in. Perhaps unheeded or lived at times, but not unlearned.

For that wonderful moment they radiate with what I've laboured long and hard to enrich their lives with.

I'm so glad then for those resources I've given them—day by day, like the turning of the crank—things that seem deeply buried at times, like the hidden clown. But the welcome “pop-up surprise” gives me a glimpse of true reality, giving my heart a smile.

It's all gone in, and is ready for them to use—when they choose to. At least it's in there. That's our job. What our children do with it is ultimately up to them.

It's wonderful however, to get those “beautiful moments” reminding us to keep it up, and keep storing their inner library and shop with all the things that will help to enhance their life in the best ways possible—the information on hand (and heart) to draw from through their many life's choices and experiences.

Wise Words from Wee Ones—Just for Fun



Some thought provoking questions and facts from my 4 year old—allow yourself a moment to smile and thank God for amazing children. So buoyant, constantly learning, bravely attempting new things, and loving us day in and day out. They are worth giving our all to!

“Are mosquitoes nocturnal?”

“Are fireworks disposable?”

“Smiling helps bring the love back to me. Did you know that smiling is fun for me? I try to make the best smile!”

“I’m feeling house sick!” (as opposed to car sick) “I feel jiggly!”
(Needing to get outside and wiggle!)



“I want to visit Toyota. There is a nice sandy beach in Toyota. There are no earthquakes in Toyota. The cars that say ‘Toyota’ are from Toyota.” (Whenever there is an advertisement for “Toyota” cars, they often are set in a nice outdoor setting. He began to think it was a real place, a paradise, and wanted to visit it.)

“Lego is kind of a school thing. Because it helps you learn how to make tricky things.” (I agree!)

“Atoms are very useful! Because plastic & cloth & water are made of atoms.”

“If you need a cuddly (stuffed animal) and don’t have one, I can be it for you. I am a cuddly that grows, and never tears or gets old and worn!”

“Gravity is un-helium.” (as in opposites)

**[I like the quiet
and freshness of
believing.]**

-4 YRS

**[I go near to
Jesus quickly
before I get any
bonks.]**

-3 YRS

“Daddy doesn’t need his glasses at night to see his dreams.”

“We discovered that the lipstick in your bag is tasteless!”

“The whole point of money is just to make money!” (A kid trying to find sense of the capitalistic, materialistic modern world.)

“There is one thing that we don’t have to learn, mummy! –We don’t have to learn how to be a child! We already know that!”

Genuine Blue

Some things aren’t totally black and white right—but right on when checked with the colour wheel of love. They are to be commended as such. It’s the heart that matters, after all.

I was amused by a clever act of kindness the other day. My toddler has this fondness to “blue”. I would say “the colour blue” but that’s



not completely accurate. It's more of an expression meaning "that certain one I'm talking about" or "that nice thing" or "it's special to me". A blue fire truck might be just the one that he has in mind to play with and wants.

Okay, so the anecdote goes:

His four year old brother was enjoying holding and walking around with these two matching, small, green books. Of course if it's good enough for his older brother to have an interest in it, it is the new "must have". What to do?

I could have encouraged the older brother to give one to his younger sibling, since he had two—but that wouldn't have worked anyway. The little guy would need to have them both, since the obvious attraction was the fact there were two matching ones.

Big brother tried to offer a nearly identical one to the toddler—same size and type, but it was red. "Here you can have this red one." But no, that wouldn't do. He kept pointing to the green pair of books,



held preciously in his big brothers hands, and saying he wanted the two “blue” books, meaning “nice looking” to him at that moment. They had to be “blue”.

The kind and clever older boy thought of a happy plan for all: He searched and found another identical red book—now there was two of them. Handing the two red books to his young brother he said enthusiastically:

“Here are two blue books for you! –They are blue!”

It worked! The grateful little guy took them—since they were considered blue by his brother, they’d be good enough for him. He was content.

Here’s another cute example. I said I needed to get a tissue for my nose. My kind-hearted littlest guy ran off to be a help and came quickly to offer me the tissue he’d gotten. It could fit on my fingernail it was so small—or get lost in my nose if I tried to use it!

*A wise son
maketh a glad
father.*

Proverbs 10:1

I thanked him with enthusiasm—mentioning nothing of the imperfection. I was touched and smiled. He was so caring, and so quick to respond. He'll remember my gratitude and be happy to help in the future.

Love seems to be real important to him. I've told my husband that he has a "love-ometer" inside of him. Whenever he detects that something is a loving deed (such a hug) or will be a kind act (such as his brother releasing the toy into his hands that he's gently trying to take or ask for) he'll make an "ahn" sound—a takeoff of the "aww, so sweet" that we've said at times.

So "ahn" means love to him, and he's always mentioning when he sees it in action, or gives it in the form of hugs or deeds. He's focused on noticing and giving love. May we all be.

A Casual Diary of Sorts

Here are some notes from my last week...if you want a moment away from thinking, to relax and laugh along with me.

Some things that made me laugh:

*My toddler, after seeing a mouse scurrying in our kitchen, (and the reaction of us adults!) got a toy kaleidoscope, and used it like a “telescope” resting on his nose, and went looking all over the house and in the cupboards looking for the “bee gong” (bug animal is the literal translation—mouse). Since we said we needed to find it, he took on the task.

*My young son, wanted to run his fastest, so was dressed in as little as possible, freeing his legs and arms, racing in our back yard with his likewise-dressed brothers. Seeing them dash so happily and carefree—and him dressed in nothing but his inside out briefs, was a humorous sight!



**[You can't get
lifted up in an
earthquake.]**

-4 YRS

**[Rich or poor,
clean or messy,
you can always
have Jesus in
your heart!]**

-5 YRS

*Our oldest has a real ear for music, and knows the name of several classical pieces by hearing a portion of them. “That’s ‘Morning’” he’ll say when watching something that has put part of that classical piece in the sound track. When we went hiking last Sunday, we found some hug rocks to climb on and discover the giant lizards sunning themselves on. Then he found this hole and crack in a large rock, so big the three of them could walk inside of it, like a hallway.

“We found the “Hole of the Mountain King!” he called it. (As in “Hall of the Mountain King”.) Great to find out what they really think we have been saying!

Some things that made me cry:

*My middle son really has to work on his vocalised anger. They are all usually great buddies together, but when something gets to him, he can say such shouldn't-be-said words. It just brings me to tears at times. I told him so, as I was drying my tears, that every time he speaks nicely to those in his home, it's like a workman building a



strong house. Speaking roughly and terribly does the opposite, and makes the house of our family weak and breaky.

I helped him try to look forward into the future, “What kind of a home do you want to have? Do you really want everyone in this house speaking like that, when you are older? Or do you want to have a place that is friendly to come home to at night?” This gave him good food for thought. We memorized a Bible verse, and it’s helping to keep things in check now.

*Toddler is teething his molars and has his other issues too. The days that the fussing and discomfort are a main part of the day are tough. I go to the nth degree to make the situation as good as I can, and if the world revolved around us, things just might be perfect. But I haven’t gotten it to do that yet! So we brave on doing the best we all can. And really, it’s totally nothing compared to the bigger things others face. He’s healthy, he’s mobile, he’s a joy. I love him so much!

I guess that’s why it’s hard to handle when things can’t be totally great for him, and he can’t just play happily, giving me room to tend

Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

Proverbs 20:11

to all the other things I need to—for them. One time when his pains were causing trouble through the night and on in to the morning, I could take it no longer, “Just make it stop!” I at last demanded God in tearful prayer. It finally did.

Peace was found, and things haven’t been like that again for a while, thank God! And really, compared to the joyful times he has, the tough times are minimal, compared to where we were at a year ago.

Some things that amused me:

*When we were first moving in to this house, with a fussy baby, a two and a four year old, winter nearing and boxes everywhere... you get the picture... the priority wasn’t to see that socks were matching! After some time had gone by, my two year old was seen staring at his feet, looking from one to the next. “Mummy”, he said puzzled. “They are both the same...” !

Fast forward a couple years, after doing better on that score for a while, I eventually stopped trying to fight that battle. We’ve had a



“sock drawer”. That was it. If they looked in and searched on their own and happen to find ones that matched, great. But it wasn’t a daily luxury! They didn’t mind, and I gave myself the reality check—there are more important things in life. “I just can’t make everything be perfect...” I told my husband.

On our last outing our boys took their shoes off to slide down a long slide extra fast. When I saw what they’d put on, it made me laugh! Unmatching socks, with toes sticking out! It was time to get a handle on things. We sorted and tossed out all holey ones, and even found several matches. A shocking dozen or more sets were there now! Cool! That should keep us going for a while now, all looking great! ... Not so fast now...!

The boys were so happy to have an endless supply of matching socks, what else was there to do but to celebrate by using them all—nearly—on the first day! While I was out doing yard work, raking, and watering our veggie garden, and they were collecting and playing with the mown grass, they slipped in to the house.

After a while with big smiles they came out again to play in the dirt in stocking feet only. “Mummy! I have on 7 pairs of socks! And my brother has on 5!”

Some things that pleasantly surprised me:

*We’d waited until the last moment to do the food shopping. The weather had been perfect, so we’d opted to go out on a family outing that day instead, and hoped the food would last until a day or two more.

It was a good choice that we don’t regret, but the next morning’s breakfast called for creativity. I literally used every last leaf and bit that was there in the fridge and freezer. Noticing that the cut bottom of a celery stock looked like a rose, I decorated it further with the celery leaves. The rose was a nice looking display on our breakfast table.

Looking over the spread I had prepared for them—consisting mostly of greens and rice—I called our fancy restaurant, “The Rose Garden”!



**[I like Jesus so
much!]**

-2 YRS

**[Jesus isn't just
the bread of
life—He's the
fresh bread of
life!]**

-5 YRS

I made each thing be as tasty as possible and nicely displayed. They came to eat at this special exclusive place, “that just serves things that look like a garden—leaves, etc!”

The boys ate everything--cheerfully! My middle boy, who rarely lets such a thing as lettuce—unless home grown—enter his mouth, was joyfully eating it, “This is so yummy!” The oldest who doesn’t always like avocado, depending on its preparation and disguise, was saying enthusiastically, “This avocado tastes great!” And it was genuine. Children’s gratitude, especially when things aren’t “just their way” is a real upper!

*My son hadn’t been acting so great, so I assigned him a job. “Please clean off the kitchen table” was the only instruction I gave him. I left him to it while working out his mood. It’s not something he’s done well before, or at least has grumbled hugely over doing before, saying he doesn’t know how.

He bounded off, and within minutes the table was spotless. –
Cleared of clutter, nice & tidy, wiped thoroughly, including under



each place mat, and dried. Wow. I was shocked. I didn't even know he had it in him. "At first I was doing it grumbling, but then I did it cheerfully" he told me. He's growing up.

Autumn Leaves

It was a beautiful moment, looking at the colourful changing leaves at the park one autumn afternoon—and the boys playing merrily in them. Piles were made, leaves were flying, and daddy was getting covered with them.

Such joy and entertainment in something so simple. I went to join in the fun, when my newly-talking-toddler was trying to express something.

"Yu' yeeves. Wha' do 'bou ih' ? ... Noh kee yup..." (The old brown leaves. What are we going to do about it? We can't clean them all up!)



He'd been blissful enjoying it, till something made him ponder: *It's a huge mess. We can't possible clean them all up. It'd be such a big job!* I supposed it was the first autumn he remembered. He's never seen the grassy area all "messed up" and covered like it was now. It seemed like a huge task, too big to do!

I then explained that he didn't need to clean them up. Jesus would do it for us. The leaves would turn back into dirt again, and the new leaves would be on the tree. We could just play and enjoy it, and let God take care of it. He seemed to understand, and stopped worrying that it was a job to do, and was again happily just enjoying them.

I thought about it, how sometimes things that we have to face in life can look like an impossible task, monumental, and we assume it's a job that we are meant to do, since we are in the middle of whatever it is, face to face with the issue.

But maybe it's like the leaves. We can just have joy, and enjoy the moments, and trust that God will clear away the troubles, sort things out, and take care of it, in time.

Children's
children are the
crown of old
men; and the
glory of
children are
their fathers.
Proverbs 17:6

It never was on our “to do list” anyway. We just assumed it was. But God had it covered, it was on His to do list, and we could just lie back and relax—like the children did, while pretending the leafy pile was their bed!

Thoughts from My Sister: (a mother of 8)

I think if someone would ask me the two most important things I've learned about kids (of all ages) I'd have to say:

One: *Laugh it off!* At each age of a child's life they go through stages. Whatever the kids are doing or not doing, it's not usually as important or intense as we think it is. Remember not to take it personally.

Two: *Keep one step ahead of your kids, or more like, anticipate their needs.* Most “misbehaviour” is a result of boredom. Just think, how many misbehaving kids have you encountered when they are truly absorbed and interested in something.

Mess Grows Like Weeds

I clean and tidy and it may have taken hours collectively. But when it's done I smile. The end result always does give me a sense of peace and enjoyment.



A tidy house at last! A long, struggled-for victory. I can't see any reason for it getting to that despised point again.

We'll just keep it tidy and pick things up and I won't have to spend (waste) all that time again, that I'm sure could have been well-used on something far better than merely stuff-shifting.

But a day or so later, to my shock and dismay I look at the floor and corner of the room and stuff has started to cover it again!

Where does all this come from? It's just like the weeds in the garden that seem to flourish well, with no coaxing what so ever!

**[I just need to
cuddle you. I like
to cuddle you so
much.]**

-2 YRS

Why doesn't food grow that easily? The seeds have to be pampered it seems, but weeds? They just spring up wherever there happens to be soil—like my house floor seems to grow clothes and toys without me lifting a finger!

I have plenty of work to do and three lively young and very creative, innovative and initiative-filled boys that I'd like to be playing and reading with and doing fun thing out in the sunshine together, but the longer I leave the "weeds" the bigger the mess seems to grow, until it's out of hand.

If I sit to work, then I feel the satisfaction of a job that gets done, and I can move on to the next project. But clean up? I do it, and then I'm not only behind in work and life for the time lost doing house work, but at a rate of about an hour per day it's a mess again.

One day of clean up is lost in one hour of fun 'n' living it seems! Back to square one again.



A new thought then came to my mind: *“Clean up is like exercise—it’s just something you do every day for the benefits, not something that gets ‘done’ once and for all.”*

What muscles does it strengthen? Patience for sure, humility, diligence, faithfulness, and gratitude are some of the muscles. Happy exercise time!

Have A Good Laugh!

Several years ago while the new baby had his nightly fussy-and-crying time after dinner, and all I could do was hold and care for him, my toddler, nearly two years old, was creative at finding things to do. Thus the following true and funny tales—as if written by my toddler.

Better is a poor
and a wise
child than an
old and foolish
king, who will
no more be
admonished.

Ecclesiastes

4:13

Toddler's Activities:

Tried-and-proven ideas of how to keep busy while Mum rocks or nurses your baby sibling.

- Take a clean roll of toilet paper (I've learned it's better to use clean, rather than used paper, plus a new roll has more on it to play with.) Unroll slowly and spit on each square, and throw that piece away.
- Another fun thing to do with toilet paper is unravel it and spin in circles. See how many times it can wrap around you. Or make a neck scarf out of it. I'm sure you'll find just as many creative ideas as I would have come up with, were my mum to have let me continue.



- For those times when you still have energy at bedtime, look around the room and see anything that could possibly be climbed up on, even things that you've never tried before. An upside-down baby bathtub works good as a stool, for trying to reach the cleaning fluid that's normally out of your reach, when you are in a cleaning mood.
- Grab the nearest stool around and finally get to reach all those "put on a high shelf so the toddler doesn't get them" things. One sure way to combat boredom.
- Make your mom's day by cleaning the bathroom for her. Get any sponge you can find—the only one I had was the one for washing the toys—and get scrubbing. I used the nearest bar of soap and lots of elbow grease and started vigorously on the toilet seat. And then I discovered the neatest thing. I didn't have to keep getting water on my sponge from the tap, there

was water right there in the bowl of the toilet! Handy for getting the job done quickly.

- Do some practical math with a large bottle of water. Hold the tiny cap in one hand and pour the bottle into it. See how many caps it can fill. I found it usually fills about two caps and then the bottle is empty. Well, a little bit spills on the carpet, but then even that can provide some more fun cleaning it up! I cleaned the spill with a water spray bottle and broom!



More Ways Children Said: "I love you"

*My son said, "Wow! That's the nicest cow you've drawn." "Oh," I said, "Thanks..." (It was supposed to be a horse.)

*I needed my hands washed so my young toddler jumps up to get me a bowl to fill with water to wash my hands in, without me asking. He got up and brought me a bowl of water to wash my hands with. I

[Sometimes you help me get warm, because daddy and you is the helpers.]


-3 YRS

thanked him and smiled. It was the bowl I'd just used to scrub the bathroom floor. His heart was right.

*I picked up my little guy to walk down the pathway and he says, "I can go up and down." I said, "Am I like an elevator or a forklift?" He said, "Yes. You like a digger and crane and elevator and forklift. You so many things!"

*I don't often wear earrings because often they are not very comfortable, but I put some on one day, and my wide-eyed son that loves to see Mummy all fancy looks up and says, "Are you wearing earrings, Mummy? Are you so fancy? You are a chandelier."

That was one of the highest compliments because he knows that I really like chandeliers, dangling glass-jewel lights, and he's looked at pictures of them before and we all agreed that they are one of the fanciest things. So when he looked at me with the earrings and he called me a chandelier that was a high compliment.



I was hugging him one day and he said, "Mummy, you're the mummy rooster and I'm the baby rooster."

"Can we swap, just for a day, please?"

If just for a day, magically, I was the child, and my toddler the parent, what a beautiful day it would be...

I would receive such warmth and love.

There would be hugs abundant.

I'd be given gifts and special things throughout the day.

I would be talked to with gentleness.

Smiles would be showered on me, cheering and brightening my day.

Fun would be the rule, and there would be such adventures the day would be remembered for a long while.

*A little child
shall lead them.*

Isaiah 11:6

The smallest things would be noticed.

Time would be taken to stop and explore things of interest, rather than ignored as common place.

Laughter would be the chorus of the day's song.

We'd sit cosy and read lots of books.

We'd run, and climb, and play ball often.

Things might not be tidy or always put away, but we'd forget to be bothered, as we'd be having so much fun. When at last, tired and happy, we'd fall asleep remembering the joys the day gave us.

Oh, just for a day, can we swap places please? My little one is so full of love, joy, and life, I know it would be a wonderful day, if they were given the chance to be the parent.

Alas that can never happen—time keeps us in our places. But how blessed I am to have him as my child, and I pray he'll feel blessed to have me as his mother. It's an honour I treasure being able to have.



Dear Lord, I pray that I can take on the qualities that this dear child holds. Let me radiate with smiles as I look at him today. Fill my mind with fresh ideas of fun.

Give me the resilience to rise beyond petty troubles. Let my very being be filled to the full with Your love. Though the toils of life wear on me at times, please help me to sprinkle each day with as much love and joy as I'd wish to have if I were the little one.

Maybe that's one thing You meant, Jesus, when You said to become as a child. If I were to do that, I might bring a bit more of Heaven around us each day—just as this one does.

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