

The Branches

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Seasons of Life

Your flags are flying today, right? They come out in flying color just prior to Memorial Day, kick off the summer season, and wave all summer long. Flags line the streets, hang from most buildings, and flutter across cemeteries. They remind us that we each have a lot to celebrate; we are blessed by God to live in a relatively peaceful country. The flags remain up through continual summer celebrations: parades, carnivals, national observances, sporting and recreational events, and right into early autumn. They remind us to honor and thank our veterans and support those currently serving. We somehow have designated summer as the season for proclaiming freedom and pride in our country.

Sadly, as soon as the weather starts to turn and school begins, the flags will disappear for many months. They will be folded up and stuck into storage until next year's patriotic festivities begin. Patriotism is put on hold for the sake of winter festivals, holidays, and even school and work.

Is your Christian "flag" flying today? Or have you joined in with the seasonal tradition of summer and packed it away until the convenient and socially-designated time to show it off: next winter's holiday season? This flag is not literally a cloth flag. I'm talking about your faith. Are you caring for it? Are you showing it off to the world with joy-filled pride? Or have you stuffed it aside to make enough room for vacations and other things that could be made higher priorities? Though the Stars and Stripes—or the Maple Leaf Flag, for our Canadian friends—are waved with pride during this time of year, it is often just the opposite for Christians boasting the message of the cross.

Don't hastily put God aside and live as though next Christmas and Easter will make up for it. Take care of it all year. Unlike a cloth flag, faith cannot keep well when stored.

—Abby Matzke, St. Peter's, Stambaugh, MI

***"Stand up!—stand up for Jesus. Ye soldiers of the Cross!
Lift high His royal banner, It must not suffer loss.
From vict'ry unto vict'ry His army shall He lead
For every foe is vanquished And Christ is Lord indeed."***

—The Lutheran Hymnal, 451, v1

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Tending the Garden

If you move to Montana, please don't try to plant a garden. Especially if you are moving from Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, or another Midwestern state with lush, black, fertile soil. The barren red rocks of the mountains are brittle and dry; weeds and cacti grow plentifully but nothing else grows at all. While the mountains may be glorious at sunrise, and the wheat fields golden at sunset, your time in between will be spent hovering over each precious plant in your little garden, watering, weeding, maybe even breathing onto the plant in the hope that something will cause it to sprout forth a vegetable.

My mother planted a garden in our backyard throughout the droughts of the 1980s. We lived just north of Helena, the state's capital, in a semi-arid space in which the wind and tumbleweeds never ceased to fly down our dry street. As a young child, I loved the garden. My brother and I ran up and down the rows of corn, picked carrots and rinsed them under the hose to eat them, carved our own pumpkins in the fall, and ate fresh strawberries all summer long. But as I grew old enough to be helpful, I began to hate the garden. My mother forced us out of bed on early summer mornings to pick weeds, crouching in the hot sun until even our 10-year-old knees hurt. We picked potato bugs endlessly, and then in the fall, picked potatoes, reaching quickly with fingers purple with cold, before my father sent the slicing shovel blade slamming downward again.

Fortunately, winter arrived and we enjoyed the fruits (or vegetables) of our labor in the wonderful meals that my mother cooked. The faithful planting, watering, weeding, and nurturing in combination with the wonderful unseen miracle of growth provided us with sustenance through the cold Montana winters.

Our Christian faith also takes special nurturing and care. The seeds of faith, once planted, are not simply left to blossom on their own, with no help from the gardener. Weeds choke faith; temptation, sin, and evil are always present and ready to drown the garden with their multiplicity.

Fortunately for us, the Holy Spirit plants the seeds of faith. Jesus, the faithful shepherd and nurturer, tends our gardens and fights the weeds. We try our best to guard against sin and temptation but can't do it without His sacrifice for us. For some, this careful nurturing of faith feels a constriction on life. Yet it is a privilege to weed our gardens, a privilege to benefit from the blossoming of well-cared-for faith, and our ultimate privilege to attain eternal life at the end of our efforts. My work in our family garden helped provide life-giving substances. With Jesus' sacrifice, my earthly life in the garden of my faith will ultimately lead me to eternal life with the best gardener of all!

—Katie Sumey, *Faith*, St. Louis, MO

“There is no royal road to anything.
One thing at a time, all things in succession.
That which grows fast withers as rapidly;
that which grows slowly endures.”

—*Josiah Gilbert Holland, 1819-1881*

The Seasons of Life—Part 1

Like all the Seasons of the year
Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter,
We go from birth to end of days
God's plan for us, the master.
His Guiding love,
Sent from above,
Will keep us from disaster.

Spring

Spring brings birth to God's creation.
Plants emerge from 'neath the ground.
Dormant leaves break forth in splendor
Baby animals clean their down.
The fields indeed
Are sown with seed
From plants the wind blows around.

We, too, start with body dying
Until washed by God's own grace.
Faithful parents ever teaching
That our hearts are God's own place.
Growing, yearning,
Scripture learning,
So that we can run our race.

Then we reach those awkward teen years
Feeling insecure at best.
Making choices for our future
Where we work, and live, and rest.
God is near us,
He will cheer us,
As we walk from test to test.

Summer

Summer time is filled with blossoms,
Radiant flowers of every kind.
All God's creatures, fully grown now,
Work – a house and mate to find.
Tunnels, thickets,
Nests in tree tops,
Shelter to protect in mind.

In our 20's and our 30's
We, too, strive to pave the way
For a life that is God-pleasing
As we build and work and play.
Asking, pleading,
What we're needing,
Seeking first His kingdom, pray.

Marriage, family, come with blessings.
Let us wait upon the Lord.
It is He who knows our weakness
As we strive to live His word.
He's providing,
While He's guiding,
And we know our prayers are heard.

—Jacquelyn Radichel, Grace, Fridley, MN

Grow Old Along With Me

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

—Robert Browning

Oh sure, Robert Browning is very eloquent about growing older, but just how old was he when he waxed poetic about those glories? Had he begun to experience any of the negatives? From the other side of sixty, those anticipated glories can take on a slightly different aspect. Did he, for instance, notice the creaking bones and aching muscles of those "best is yet to be" days? Did he experience those times when his spouse chose to travel to the other end of the house before voicing an opinion on his poetic musings, taxing his aging ears? That seems to be the norm in our house. Instead of speaking face-to-face, my better half frequently waits till he's well down the hall to utter some important news, which results in some strange misunderstandings from time to time. If both of us would bother to put on the hearing aids resting on our dressers, it wouldn't matter, but in typical denial, it's assumed that the other person has the problem.

Does the rest of the family notice our aging problems? Our children, though certainly aware of them, are usually quite diplomatic. The grandchildren tend to tell it like it is. One granddaughter loves to lift the loose skin on the back of my hands and watch it stay there in little ridges. Then, as she also studies the protruding blue veins, she observes, "Grandma, how come you got worms under your skin?" As we once sat on our dock in swimsuits, feet dangling in the water, watching the little fish come up to see if those toes were edible, she glanced at the blotchy veins on my legs and commented, "You really need to wash that dirty stuff off your legs!" If only it were that easy.

Age brings on a variety of bodily changes. I was mildly alarmed one day to discover that I had almost no eyebrows left, just a couple of hairs poking out at various angles. Where had they gone? Peering through the bottom of my bifocals, I soon discovered they had migrated down past the wrinkles to a spot between my nose and upper lip, with one beauty taking up residence on my chin. Then, as I lifted my arms to explore this new development, I noticed a change in my upper arms. Skin which had once covered tight, nicely sculpted muscles had now developed into wingspans, giving me an unsettling resemblance to a flying squirrel. What to do? Ah, I discovered the solution. Remove those bifocals. Look again. Wrinkles disappear and imperfections blur. Everything looks softly youthful.

There are other hair problems as well. When a man starts going gray it can make him look more distinguished. When a woman, who had thin wispy hair to begin with, turns gray, she often just looks older. Jokes come to mind about the little old white-haired lady driving with hands clenched on the steering wheel as she peers through it. Can I possibly be there already? What to do? Age gracefully, or fight it? Enter L'Oreal Light Brown. Hope no one comes to the house as I am in the middle of a dye job, dark spikes sticking up all over my head and streaks half-way down my forehead. Can't even answer the phone without leaving tell-tale brown smears on the earpiece. The expression "Vanity, thy name is woman" comes to mind.



Memory loss creeps up on the unsuspecting slightly-older-than-middle-ager, too. The problem is quite similar to computer memory, actually. When your computer is new and has a minimum of programs in it, whatever you click on pops right up onto the screen. The more stuff you add, the longer it takes to bring anything up. Just so with the brain. When you consider the quantity of information that has been fed into that memory over the course of so many years, is it any wonder it takes time for the “hard-drive” to process the request and come up with the desired information?

Okay, enough of the negative stuff. Fortunately, they’re nothing compared with the positives. As far as outward appearance, I’ve found it’s useful to work toward more laugh lines and less frown lines.

Believe it or not, there are many and varied advantages in “the last of life, for which the first was made.” When the full impact of retirement sets in, you begin to look around and realize you have choices again. No longer are the insistent and relentless demands, several duties pulling in opposite directions night and day. You wake up one morning and understand the glory of being able to decide what you’d like to do with your day. Granted, there are still demands on your time, but often when those demands have been dealt with there is some spare time left over. Spare time is a new concept. Yes, I can take that second cup of morning tea to the recliner and just admire that pileated woodpecker working on the suet, listen to my favorite Bach cantata without kids rolling their eyes at my antiquated tastes, maybe pull out that knitting that’s been waiting, or read that book which someone recommended several years ago. I can actually plan the week’s menu, rather than grabbing stuff on the fly, and shop when the store aisles are nearly empty.

If and when my husband decides to retire, too, our options will be even more numerous. There will be quiet times at the cabin, soaking up the calm beauty of that remote bit of heaven. There will be noisy times at the cabin, happily spent with extended family. Volunteering? Travel, perhaps? Exploring hobbies put on hold for many years?

As Browning put it, “Our times are in His hand Who saith, ‘A whole I planned, youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!’”

—Eunice Roehl, *Messiah, Eau Claire, WI*



News & Notes

West Central Women’s Seminar

Get ready! The West Central Women’s Seminar, open to all, will be held September 22, 23, and 24, 2006, at Chadron State Park, just south of Chadron, NE. The theme is Isaiah 64:8: “But now, O Lord, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You are the potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.”

There are many main sessions to hear and learn from, and a variety of mini-sessions to choose to attend also. Some of the mini-sessions include “Making a Quilt Top” (which someone will win), exercise, a book discussion on *Redeeming Love*, a “Virtual Grocery Store” tour, and “Take a Walk in the Park.”

Brochures are available from Kay Morrison at (402)376-1549, or from Laila Fleischer at lefleischer2@hotmail.com. We hope you will join us!

Canoe Ride: Perspectives

Mikel, age 11:

The gorgeous waves swished rapidly as we crawled into the already soaked boat. My jeans, which had been rolled up so as to stay dry, came unrolled time and time again as we set off into the fresh morning air that hung so thick over the deep blue lake. We soon became so caught up in paddling that we didn't notice the geese flying gracefully away. "Shush," said Mom. Then, "Look." She pointed in front of my sister and I at the geese. They were so pretty, so soft, so still. I held my breath, hoping not to scare them away. There were four of them. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, one sprang up and bit another one on the wing, and so it began. They began to fight like crazy, pecking and squawking and howling! One of the geese went and took shelter on a nearby island. My view was soon distracted, though, by a slow rocking of the boat, getting more and more pronounced as I concentrated on it. My mom seemed to notice it too, because she said, "Don't rock the canoe! It's not like a boat, it'll fall over in an instant!" The rocking stopped. I looked coolly back at my sister. She was grinning sheepishly, paddle in lap. I couldn't help it—I grinned too. We all turned back to watch the geese one more time.

Emily, age 8:

Mikel, Mom, and I went on a canoe ride on the lake. We saw geese fly around and land on the lake. It looked like a mother with two teenage geese. Then it looked like they were flying home but found a stranger there. He had wrecked their nest totally. They fought the dude out of their home by standing up out of the water and put their wings out, fluffing the feathers and fluffing their chest feathers out too. They squawked practically their whole head off. Then they chased him away and started arguing. It quieted down after a little bit, but it was cool. The End.

Laurie, age 40-something:

As we paddled peacefully along, the girls and I were startled by the sight of a pair of Canadian geese hiding in the cattail leaves. We drifted quietly, observing their search for a nesting site. In the distance we became aware of another set of geese chattering. The cry went up—it seemed to be a greeting from the two in the water. Excited honking went back and forth as the pair circled in the air, cruising over the boat to land almost on top of the floating pair. It made me think of a farmer and his wife, welcoming guests to their secluded homestead. All was not well, however. Apparently the guests honked something inappropriate, invaded the "personal wave bubble" or took too close a look at the "lady of the lake." As the honking grew louder and appeared to become angry, three of the graceful birds took turns lunging and pecking at each other. While they puffed out their chests, spanned their wings to their greatest size and flew in and out of the shoreline at each other, one lone goose waddled up the bank and calmly watched the struggle. After a long and heated exchange, the two newcomers took flight. The remaining protective goose eyed them suspiciously, still honking out his threats of superiority. "Oh no, you don't—" He suddenly raced in the direction of the departing birds. They were landing again—on his lake! He flew furiously across the water, skimming his feet, leaving a rippling wake. Out of sight of our canoe we heard the battle resume. Angry honking and splashing, insults spewed forth, arrogance revealed, insecurity, threats, resolution.

The lone goose returned, paddling majestically across the water, honking slowly as the intruders could be seen disappearing into the far sky. Gradually the nesting goose waddled to the edge of the water, slid in, and made her way toward the victorious protector. Responding to his call, they met in the center of the lake. Peace has been restored. All is calm and quiet. I am struck by the similarities between our families. The squabbles, the pointless honking—all of us left peacefully floating toward the rest of our lives.

—Laurie Marzofka, *Luther Memorial, Fond du Lac, WI*

Encouragements

**“Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; And attend to the voice of my supplications.
In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, For You will answer me.”**

—Psalm 86:6

Several years ago, something happened to me that changed my spiritual life forever. It was during the time when I was having daily pain from migraine headaches. One day while I was alone at home and cleaning the living room, I was praying silently. I prayed, “God I just wish I knew that you loved me.” I went on with my day, forgetting about my prayer. The next day a strange car drove into our yard. Ray saw it from the barn, and assumed it was Jehovah’s Witnesses, and came up to tell them that I was not up for visitors. By the time Ray got to the house, I had already answered the door and had found myself face to face with a man I had never met before. His name was Pastor Bob from a church by Meadow Corner. He said he had a message for me. He had been driving home from Bismarck the day before, and he was praying for people. My name came into his head, and during his prayer he was told to come tell me that “God *does* love me.” He said that he had to work up courage to come, because he did not know me, just my name. When I told him the story of my prayer the day before, we all just sat here in stunned silence, yet all feeling incredibly blessed.

God is listening. Awhile back, I was making a cake for someone, and discovered that I was out of powdered sugar—so was the grocery store in Lemmon. At supper that night, Kelly Jo prayed for powdered sugar so I could make the icing for the cake. Later that night, Ray was in the pantry in the basement and found 4 bags “hidden” there! I don’t remember buying them, but it does not matter. God provided something as simple as powdered sugar! There are little miracles around us each day, and I am ashamed to say that I don’t always see them. I sometimes pass them off as a “lucky break” or a “close call.” They are neither. They are God working in my life. Also, I need to be as fervent with answered prayers as I am with the requests. I’m afraid that I have the tendency to be really, really sincere when I request something, and more nonchalant when I thank Him for the gifts He has blessed me with, or the requests He granted. Not exactly the attitude that would make Him want to continue to bless me, but He does.

This is not an everyday occurrence—when God directly and so profoundly answers my prayers this way. Or is it? Perhaps I need to listen more closely, or ask to begin with. Nothing is too small to lay before Him as His child. God is also talking to us. He loves each of us deeply and wants a committed relationship with us. What a gift!

—Julie Schopp, St. Luke’s, Lemmon, SD

More Than We Ask

**I asked for just a crumb of bread,
Within His banquet-hall He spread
A bounteous feast on every side—
My hungry soul was satisfied.**

**I asked for just a ray of light
To guide me through the gloomy night,
And lo, there shone along my way
The noon-tide glory of the day.**

**I asked for just a little aid,
As I stood trembling and afraid.
With strength I had not known before
He made me more than conqueror.**

**I asked for just a bit of love,
For love is sweet. From heaven above
The words came now with meaning new,
“Upon the Cross I died for you.”**

—Written by Faith Wells

Trego Women's Retreat

Within the quiet setting of the Schwan's Retreat Center at Trego, Wisconsin, the sixth annual CLC Women's Retreat was held. This year's theme was, "By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures" (Proverbs 24:3-4, NIV). The retreat began on Friday, April 21, with opening information, "Show and Tell" with Chris Lentz, and an address from Paula Naumann entitled "A Woman's Effect on the Family."

Lynette Roehl conducted the morning devotions, "Building Godly Character" on Saturday. Carrie Reim gave a presentation entitled "Teaching Responsibility for Actions," followed by Beth Kranz and a discussion regarding "Dealing with Rebellion and Disobedience."

After a buffet lunch, attendees had the opportunity to choose from several different mini-sessions: "The Art of a Working Mom"– Jennifer Radermacher, "Skin Care and Make-up for a Busy Person"– Jackie Radichel, "Book Discussion"– Bea Gerbitz, "Painless Prose"– Abby Matzke, "Talking to Children"– Dotty Lillo, "Christian Parenting of Adult Children and Your Relationship with Your Grandchildren"– Verona Lentz, "The Importance of Good Food"– Steph Altom, "Keepers of the Home"– Laurie Marzofka, "Learning to Crochet"– Ruth Voigt. While listening to presenters, there was an opportunity to help with TVBS craft assembly.

Following the day's events, a banquet was held. Sue Eichstadt served as the banquet speaker, giving a presentation about "Finding Balance in Your Life." Tina Eichstadt and Jennifer Radermacher talked about mentoring. Diane Bode led the group in a sing-a-long. The evening concluded with entertainment organized by Marie Meyer, Danielle Tri, and Ruth Voigt, with help from several attendees.

On Sunday, Kelly Fleischer presented information about "Maintaining a Reasonable Home." The retreat concluded with a church service, "Hope for the Hurting," conducted by Pastor Paul Nolting.

The CLC Women's Retreat provided an opportunity for strengthening faith, nurturing fellowship, and renewing friendships. It gave everyone a chance to hear different Biblical perspectives on Christian parenting. Above all, we were reminded that children are a precious gift from God. It is our responsibility as parents to do everything within our power, through God's grace, to assure that they are given a strong foundation on which to build their lives in service to the Lord so they can spend eternity with Him in heaven.

**Please join us on April 20, 21, and 22, 2007 in our new location—
Days Inn Hotel and Conference Center, LaCrosse, Wisconsin.
Until then, may the Lord bless and keep all of you.**

—Jan Voit, St. John's, Okabena, MN

**God bless our native land!
Firm may she ever stand
Thro' storm and night!
When the wild tempests rave,
Ruler of wind and wave,
Do Thou our country save
By Thy great might.**

**For her our prayers shall rise
To God above the skies;
On Him we wait.
Thou who art ever nigh,
Guarding with watchful eye,
To Thee aloud we cry,
God save the State!**

—TLH 577

Hymns: Old and New

**Ye monsters of the bubbling deep,
Your Maker's praise spout out;
Up from the sands ye coddlings peep,
And wag your tails about.**

Even in a sea-faring nation, poetry like this caused young people in 1692 to speak out against "these ugly hymns." Among those young people were the two sons of Deacon Watts, Isaac and Enoch. Even though their father had served jail time for sticking to his principles and worshiping with non-conformists, he did not appreciate his sons criticizing the hymns which were staples in the English congregation's diet of that day. It is reported that he caustically replied to his sons, "If you don't like our hymns, then let me hear one you have written which is better."

Eighteen-year-old Isaac was ready and, producing a sheet of paper, said, "Father, I have one which is better. Will you listen to it?"

**The surprised father: "Well, read it!"
"Behold the glories of the Lamb,
Amidst His Father's throne;
Prepare new honors for His Name,
And songs before unknown!"**

After reading four more stanzas, Isaac was asked by his father for a copy. It was sung by the congregation the following Sunday, and was so well received that young Watts was requested to write new hymns for the following Sundays. He did this for the next two hundred, twenty-two weeks (more than four years!), and coming from his pen during the next 25 years were hymns such as:

**"When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died;
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride."**

What shall we do when we perceive the hymns and liturgy of our services failing in some way to bring the praise to God which He deserves? One answer is to follow the example of Isaac Watts and work to produce "new honors for His Name, and songs before unknown." Not only may the Lord bless such efforts with new hymns, etc., but the attempt alone may lead to a greater appreciation of the efforts of others, past and present.

Sometimes it is not bad poetry, but the difference in language which makes it hard for people to use forms which have served well for many years. Trying to "translate" or update the language so that it communicates the same thoughts as the original will often be found almost as daunting as "starting from scratch." But again, if our purpose is to glorify our Savior's name, the effort may be blessed in unexpected ways. For one thing, we will have to learn to understand the original language well in order to translate it well. In so doing we may uncover treasures of which we had not previously been aware.

Worship forms do change, and none of us today are using the exact forms that our ancestors used, even if they were conservative Lutherans. Even some congregations using liturgies from the Supplement 2000 are no longer following them as written. During times of change, however, we might find ourselves both unmoved and impatient at the same time. We might find ourselves unmoved by worship forms which some others seem to find quite meaningful and expressive (whether "old" or "new"), and impatient for those same "others" to understand and respond to our plight. It might "ease our pain" at this point to remember a couple of points about worship in general which have also helped others in such circumstances.

1 Corinthians 14:11—*If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me.* (NIV) Corporate worship does need to be intelligible to the individuals involved in it, and we do want the unchurched visitor in our services to understand the basis for our preaching, praying, and praising. When we are frustrated or left “cold” by certain worship forms, old or new, we might ask ourselves: “Is this truly a question of speaking in a ‘foreign language’ or merely a different way of speaking than I am used to using for worship, or for everyday life?” Answers may vary.

Psalm 19:14—*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.* (NIV) By the Spirit of God, David calls to us across the years to remind us again that it is finally not a question of whether we are pleased with our worship, but whether God is pleased with it. The grandest anthem sung with the greatest energy and expression is worthless before God if our heart is not in it. Only our connection with Jesus Christ, with His cleansing blood, can create in us a clean heart and make our worship pleasing to God. By the same token, when we do not even know what to pray, the Spirit intercedes for us because of Jesus, and the unspeakable groans become most eloquent worship before the throne (Romans 8).

Hebrews 10:23-25—*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* (NIV) The context of the familiar passage “Let us not give up meeting together,” suggests that it is not (in this instance) what we will get out of the worship, but to “encourage one another,” to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” It is for the benefit of the other person that we gather together. How will that other person best be built up in faith? Will it be with forms familiar? Sometimes. Will it be with “songs before unknown?” Certainly that also. Will it be in conformity with the Word of God? Always, for that is how faith, which works by love, comes and is built up. No matter what forms we use in our worship,

**“When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song
I'll sing Thy power to save.”**

—TLH 157:5

—Prof. Paul Schaller, *Messiah, Eau Claire, WI*

*“A song
will outlive
all sermons in the
memory.”*

—Henry Giles

*“To Him
I give my melody
And thanks in
all eternity.”*

—Martin Luther

Parenting & Grandparenting

Once a Parent always a Parent. This is a phrase which has been repeated by parents throughout the years. While true, we also know that as the years pass and our children grow, our role as a parent changes. We want them to leave the nest and become responsible young men and women. At the same time it is natural to resist, fearing they may not be ready to stand on their own. We can suggest and offer advice, but in the end they will make their own decisions, for better or worse. In reality, we no longer parent in the flesh, but it is now that we earnestly parent in the spirit. In other words, "Pray without ceasing." Pray that God will guide them to make good decisions in both their spiritual and temporal lives. Pray that he would provide them with a Christian spouse. When they have chosen that spouse, welcome their choice into the family and pray that their marriage and home will always be centered in the Lord and his word. Then we must, as parents, continue to be a Christian example in all things.

Should our children disappoint us, we need to show them the same unconditional love as our Heavenly Father shows us when we disappoint him. Turn the disappointment over to the Lord and trust His plan for their life. In Jeremiah 29:11 it says, "'For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (NIV).

If we are blessed with grandchildren, remember that our children are raising them, not us. Be supportive and helpful when asked, always respecting the parameters set by them. Grandchildren are one of our greatest blessings. We most likely have the time to spend with them that we did not have when our own children were growing up. Our duties concerning our grandchildren are quite simple. We need only to pray for them, love them, and always be a Christian example. When distances are great and our grandchildren are far away from us, make a point to stay in touch by telephone, and writing notes. If it is at all possible bring them to visit for some one-on-one time, where we can share our love for our Savior by reading Bible stories, teaching them favorite hymns, and showing them how precious they are to God and also to us.

—Verona Lentz, Grace, Fridley, MN

Scripture Search

Children of the Bible

These questions are excerpted from the Children and Parenting Bible Quiz used at the Trego Women's Retreat, 2006. Answers can be verified on page 23.

1. What judge had 70 sons?
2. Who is the first child mentioned in the Bible?
3. What king was the youngest of eight brothers?
4. Who were the first twins mentioned in the Bible?
5. Was the prodigal son—the older or younger son?

*"Behold, children
are a heritage from
the Lord.*

*Happy is the man
who has his quiver
full of them."*

—Psalm 127

I Beg Your Pardon?

The CLC Women's Retreat held in Trego this April was once again a very rewarding and inspiring weekend! One of the many interesting topics focused on "Teaching Responsibility for Actions," presented by Carrie Reim. A wonderful presentation, Carrie. Thank you! One week later I was asked to write an article pertaining to a certain aspect of this topic. I reluctantly agreed.

Following Carrie's presentation was much discussion, and many ladies shared various suggestions and questions pertaining to the appropriate time that "teaching responsibility for actions" could begin. The question was pondered: When should this training start? At what age can you begin to "train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6)?

It seems to me that we should be starting from day one! With God's help I believe it is possible to lead your child on a Christian path, teaching him to lead a life full of love, trust, and respect. This can start early in their lives.

Respect! How do you teach respect? Well, it's always been one of the most important lessons that my husband and I have attempted to teach our two children. We attempted to teach our children as they were growing up to respect authority by following a few simple guidelines. Believe it or not, some of these still apply despite the girls being 16 and 18 years of age. Here are a few examples—many of which may seem quite simple and obvious—of the guidelines we kept. **As much as possible our children were not allowed to:**

- say "No" to us.
- call adults by their first names.
- roll their eyes at us or stick their tongues out at us or others.
- get the last word.
- overuse the word "mine."
- have a best friend. Only Jesus is your best friend.
- say the words stupid, fat, or hate.
- say the words "that's not fair."
- slam the door. Or slam anything!
- throw food on the floor.
- throw temper tantrums and get away with it.
- sass back or use a disrespectful tone to us or any adult.
- be disruptive or noisy in church.
- feel that they "won" and defeated mom or dad.
- get away with poor manners.
- remove their seat belt.

These are just a few that come to mind. We have no rule book and our family life is far, far, far from perfect. The words "I beg your pardon?" were often spoken by one of us following an attempt by one of our children to test the boundaries. The words, "Don't you ever try that again," were soon to follow. Sound familiar to anyone?

Parenting young children is not easy, and the teenage years are no different. We, as parents, have made thousands of mistakes. We try to recognize those mistakes and we apologize to our kids and attempt to talk things out. We listen, show empathy, teach with words, attempt to train with actions and speak the words of praise whenever possible and appropriate. We also learn from our children and often find ourselves following their good ideas, examples, and actions when we are tempted to stray down the wrong paths ourselves. Talk about humbling!

With God's help, we can all work harder at raising the bar for the expectations we put on our children to show love and respect for parents. This training will then help them in years to come as they mature. With God's help and continual Bible teachings our children will strive to live as Christian examples and give respect to their peers, teachers, neighbors, employers, and law enforcement.

May God continue to bless our efforts in raising Godly children. May He continue to strengthen us as we strive to discipline our children with love, knowing that we discipline and hold them accountable for their actions because we care for them. As a friend of mine said, "We can't stop our children from sinning, but we can and should give them appropriate and just consequences for their actions." Well put. "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

God's blessings to you and your family.

—Mary Ryan, Messiah, Eau Claire, WI



*She lifts it high—the torch, the light, For all who come to see.
The symbol of our freedom stands— Our Lady Liberty.*

—Jacquelyn Radichel, Grace, Fridley, MN



A Look Ahead

Seasons of Life

There are four installments to this series of themes. It revolves around the "seasons" of our walk in this world. The remaining issues will correspond to the season it appears in your mailbox. Consider how each stage of development, both in body and spirit, may reflect the seasons of creation and events associated with those seasons. For example, this fall, consider how autumn is: a time that winter can come at any minute, the fruits of summertime are ready to harvest and preserve, people and animals prepare for colder times, the colors of nature come to their peak of beauty, children return to school...and so much more! These aspects of fall contain lessons for us that can have impact on us spiritually if we only took time to consider them. Simply reminiscing about past autumns is welcome also!

The deadline for articles meant for the October issue is August 15th.

This seems early, but it allows for compiling, editing, formatting, printing, and mailing.

Please send articles of all types via regular mail to: Abby Matzke, P.O. Box 238,

Stambaugh, MI 49964, or email to: abby_matzke@yahoo.com.

Food Section

Hi Ladies! You're in for a treat when you add this summery salad and sweet dessert to your menu. We hope you enjoy making and serving the two tasty dishes found below!

Summer is upon us but we are looking ahead to Fall for recipes. We'd like to start thinking about the upcoming holidays and are asking you to scour through your holiday favorites, grandma's tried and true winners, or perhaps something you've created yourself. Think beyond pumpkin pie and cranberries to those truly special recipes you'd like to share.

We're also looking for some of your embarrassing moments. They don't need to have occurred in the kitchen, either! Anything humorous you'd like to share we'd love to include in the next issues. Send recipes and "moments" to gsmackensen@yahoo.com.

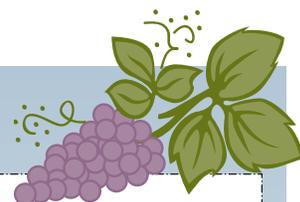
—Gail Mackensen, Peace Thru Christ, Middleton, WI

Oh the Joys of Cooking!

One of my most embarrassing cooking moments was when I made a homemade pizza for the family and went to the garden to get some green bell peppers to put on it. I thought they looked a little small, but I found several. I chopped them and put them on the pizza only to find out to my horror that they were habanero peppers that my husband had planted without my knowing. Needless to say, the pizza went in the garbage!

—Karen Schaser, Peace thru Christ, Middleton, WI

Delicious Dishes



Curried Spinach Salad

2 lbs. fresh spinach	2 fresh apples
2/3 c. dry roasted peanuts	1/2 c. raisins
1/3 c. thinly sliced onions	2/3 c. salad oil
2 Tbsp. sesame seeds	2 Tbsp. sugar
1/3 c. white wine vinegar	1 tsp. curry powder
3 drops Tabasco sauce	1 tsp. dry mustard

To prepare salad: Wash and dry the spinach; trim and chill. Core and dice the apples. Place the spinach, apples, peanuts, raisins, onions, and sesame seeds in a salad bowl.

To prepare dressing: Combine the vinegar, oil, sugar, curry powder, dry mustard, Tabasco, and a dash of salt. Whisk thoroughly and toss with salad just before serving. (This is a must or the spinach gets wilted-looking too soon.)

—Kim Bernthal, Luther Memorial, Fond du Lac, WI

Rhubarb Cake

1 1/4 c. flour	1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. sugar	1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 c. margarine or shortening	
1 egg	2 Tbsp. milk
3 c. rhubarb, cut up	1 pkg. red Jell-o
1 c. sugar	1/2 c. flour
1/4 c. melted butter or margarine	

Sift first 4 ingredients together and cut in margarine. Beat egg and milk together; add to flour mixture. Pat into 13 × 9 inch pan and bring up slightly on sides. Mix rhubarb and dry Jell-o and pour over dough.

Topping: Mix melted butter, flour and sugar and sprinkle over rhubarb. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes.

—Karen Schaser, Peace thru Christ, Middleton, WI;
This recipe is from a church cookbook dated 1972. My mom always made this. One friend of mine told me after eating it that it sure would taste good with rhubarb in it! Even the pickiest eater will be fooled.

CLC Girls

What is your opinion about the types of music, TV, and movies girls should listen to and watch?

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

— *Philippians 4:8*

As I began to think about what to write on for this topic, all I could think about was what we shouldn't listen to or watch. I realized that the Lord has certainly provided us with many means of entertainment that can actually be healthy for us spiritually. As young teenagers, we are daily faced with music that is loaded with bad language and bad situations. However, there are many Christian groups that are good to listen to. Because the actual music sounds modern, there are times that you don't even realize that it is Christian music that are you jamming to. I have personally found that Point of Grace, Newsboys, and Mark Schultz have become some of my favorite groups. As for movies and television, it can become tricky to find any that will lead us closer to Christ. However, there are TVs and software that block out bad language. You can also just monitor what it is that you are watching and turn off the TV if anything bad happens to come on. In conclusion, it is not always easy to find good music or shows to watch, however always be reminded that we are to do all to God's glory alone!

—*Jessica Ohlmann, 14, Grace, Valentine, NE*

Topic for October

Topic for October: Story Writing Challenge!

Retell a story that you heard from a grandparent, parent, aunt or uncle of something that happened to them when they were younger.

Send your stories, letters, and Pen-Pal information to either:

Jessica at jessino21@aol.com, or
Abby at abby_matzke@yahoo.com
or mail to: P.O. Box 238,
Stambaugh, MI 49964.



My Retainer

**I have this thing, it's in my mouth
It can get me at times
So I take it out, flick it around,
And start to make some noise.
But I have to be careful of my mom
It drives her up a tree.
If I don't keep it in my mouth
She'll cement it to my teeth.
So remember, if you have
one of a similar kind
Just keep it in your mouth
'cause if you don't I wouldn't doubt
You'll have one when you're 99!**

—*Submitted by Norma Rust, Grace, Fridley, MN; Written by Norma's daughter, Barbara Rust, in 1985 "To Mom on her birthday."*

Christian Allegory in Hollywood Film: The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

Certainly, anyone even remotely familiar with Jesus' life, death and resurrection can see the parallels with *Narnia*. For one thing, there is the White Witch, who undoubtedly represents sin and evil. This "dark side" is usually associated with the color black—the black arts, black magic, black market, etc. But in the movie, the White Witch appears ethereal, beautiful even. At the surface, she doesn't appear to be the stereotypical evil person. How often in our lives does sin at its surface seem inviting and beautiful? The devil knows he can attract bees (sinners) with honey, not vinegar.

But the Witch's world is not perfect. It's cold, with snow and biting winds. Residents of Narnia are afraid of her, fearful she'll become vengeful and turn them to stone. Her actions prove to be harmful as she seeks the young children from beyond the wardrobe who have been prophesized to take her throne.

But, as in the promises of the Bible, there too is hope for the fictional land of Narnia. The residents of Narnia know that Aslan, the great lion, will one day return. And when he does return, he will usher out the White Witch and her evil ways and usher in a time of peace. But this is not going to happen without a death first—Aslan's death, which bears strong similarities to the death of Jesus Christ.

In the movie, Aslan returns to Narnia and agrees to meet the White Witch. He's ushered up a hill, to a great stone table where wild animals, ugly ogres, and evil apes are gathered, taunting him. The lion is great and strong, though; one swipe of his paw could kill those who are gathered. The girls, Lucy and Susan, watch from a distance and wait for him to unleash his great power. But Aslan knows what needs to be done.

The Witch ties down Aslan and kills him with her knife. When it's clear Aslan is dead, the crowd disperses to finish off the war they think will give them rule of all Narnia. Lucy and Susan creep over to Aslan's body. They remove his muzzle, and mice come to cut his ties. A great quietness descends upon the land. After some time, the girls get up to leave. They hear a deafening cracking sound. The stone table has been broken in two, just as the great veil of the temple ripped from top to bottom after the crucifixion. Aslan is gone, but not for long. He returns in all his glory and appears to the girls. He quickly regains his strength and defeats the White Witch. Narnia is now a place where good triumphs over evil.

We cannot be reminded too many times of the great sacrifice Jesus made for us. Imagery in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* helps us to remember once again what great mercy and love is bestowed upon us. The benefit of a mainstream movie with a blatantly Christian message is that it also reaches a non-believing audience. It would be unrealistic for us to think a two-hour movie could suddenly change the mind of those who do not believe in God. However, perhaps the strong use of allegory can make people think about what they've seen and can plant the first seeds of a new trust in God. As of early May, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* had accumulated nearly \$300 million in domestic box office receipts, and \$450 million in foreign grosses. The message of the film and likewise the message of Jesus' sacrifice has reached the hearts and minds of many.

—Rachel Hanel, *Immanuel, Mankato, MN*



Book Reviews

The Surrendered Wife

Laura Doyle, a self-proclaimed feminist, has written a book called *The Surrendered Wife*. Why would participants in our own women's retreat be interested in such a book? Ms. Doyle has set forth a plan to achieve intimacy in marriage. Her suggestions are usually those that a God-fearing wife strives to accomplish based on God's plan and instruction. Strange indeed that such a book would make the *New York Times* best-seller list and would be reviewed by *Time Magazine*. Ms. Doyle never quotes Scripture. However, most of us could quote passages to validate her suggestions.

Discussion among the twenty or so women of all ages was lively. Indeed, Ms. Doyle was probably more manipulative than surrendered, but all agreed that her suggestions were practical reminders and reinforcements of how we can serve the Lord and our husbands.

God instituted marriage for the peace and stability of society. Believers will benefit from that stability even though all marriages are not founded in love for Christ.

—Bea Gerbitz, *Messiah, Hales Corners, WI*;
discussed at the *Trego Women's Retreat* in the *Book Discussion* mini-session.

Because She Didn't Have Anything Else to Do

When you read the story of Grace Snyder, as told by her daughter, Nellie Snyder Yost, you will realize this is not a true statement. It was made at a quilt show by someone viewing the work of Grace Snyder.

No Time On My Hands is the story of Grace and her family who were homesteaders in Nebraska in the late 1800's. The McCance family made the move from Missouri when Grace was 3 years old. When I read of the chores that she and her older sister were expected to do on the farm, I am amazed that she lived to be 100!

The children attended school and Sunday school, when it was available, and Grace did receive the education necessary at that time to become a teacher. Her three wishes were to marry a cowboy, make beautiful quilts, and soar above the clouds. As you read her story, you will see that all three wishes came true. The hardships of living in Nebraska at the beginning of the century can only remind us of the determination, sacrifice, and hard work that went into making a ranch successful.

Grace started making quilts when she was a child, and her quilts have won ribbons at shows across the country. Her "Flower Basket" quilt is on display in the Nebraska State Historical Society Museum in Lincoln, Nebraska. Grace celebrated her 100th birthday in April of 1982 while living in North Platte. She died in her sleep in December of that year.

Nothing to do but Stay is also an interesting and well-written story that takes place on a homestead in North Dakota. This is written by Carrie Young, author of *The Wedding Dress*. I recommend you try to find time to read all three books. You will not be disappointed!

—Edith Haertl, *Holy Cross, Phoenix, AZ*



Diakonia

Diakonia is a Greek word that means service, aid, support, or distribution. It is the title for the Ladies' group at Redemption, Lynnwood, WA. They suggested that Ladies' groups share ideas of activities, tips, insights, and ways to serve. Here are a few responses!

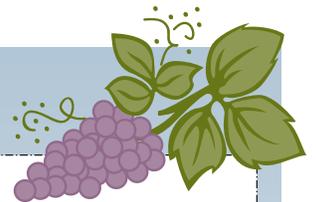
The Easter Cookie Story (April 2006 issue) was put into bulletin form by Joan Nolan; she did a great job! We used it in steps in the Sunday School. I baked the cookies Saturday and then used whipped topping for the lesson to cut down on time, substituting the real cookies in at the end. It was a great demonstration!

Do other congregations have ideas for occasions for guests? I have included a description of one we held. Presently, a few of us ladies are hoping to have a craft including "Pattern for Living." The "pattern" was already in a previous newsletter years ago! (Look for a copy in the October 2006 issue.)

The ladies of Ascension Lutheran Church had a Friendship Tea on April 29th at 2 in the afternoon. The invitations were mailed to parents of Vacation Bible School children and guests at our Dedication Day and other services. Although many guests were invited, most were members, and one former member came. Fellowship is most important, no matter what number is present.

Pastor Baker had intended to talk on our Scripture doctrine. He changed that to discussing the women at the time of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus. Scripture Cake was served with beverages. The recipe is below. The ingredients were looked up in the Bible. The recipe and a packet of spices were take-homes.

—Louise Coutre, Ascension, Batavia, IL



Delicious Dishes

Scripture Cake

1/2 c. Psalm 55:21a
1 1/2 c. 1 Kings 4:22
2 c. Jeremiah 6:20
2 c. Nahum 3:12
1/2 c. Judges 4:19b
To taste: 2 Chronicles 9:9
2 c. Numbers 17:8
2 Tbsp. 1 Samuel 14:25
2 tsp. Amos 4:5
1 Pinch Leviticus 2:13
6 of Job 39:14

Cream together Psalm 55, Jeremiah 20, and 1 Samuel 14. Add 6 beaten of Job 39 yolks. Sift together 1 Kings 4, Amos 4, 2 Chronicles, and Leviticus 2. Add alternately with Judges 4. Stir in Nahum and Numbers. Fold in 6 stiff-beaten Job 39 whites. Bake for 2 hours in a well-greased tube pan at 300°F.

Scripture Cake

1/2 c. butter
1 1/2 c. sifted flour
2 c. sugar
2 c. chopped figs
1/2 c. milk
1/2 tsp. ginger
1/2 tsp. cloves
2 c. chopped almonds
2 Tbsp. honey
2 tsp. baking powder
2 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. nutmeg
1 pinch salt
6 eggs

Cream together butter, sugar, and honey. Add 6 beaten egg yolks. Sift together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and salt. Add alternately with the milk. Stir in figs and almonds. Fold in 6 stiff-beaten egg whites. Bake for 2 hours in a well-greased tube pan at 300°F.

Cleaning for the Heart

On Saturday, April 1, 2006, fifteen ladies and a baby from Luther Memorial Church traveled from Fond du Lac to Markesan, Wisconsin, to join ladies from Faith in Markesan and Peace Thru Christ in Middleton in a day of "Spring Cleaning for the Heart." Even during our ride, enthusiasm was high and Christian fellowship evident.

The new gymnasium addition to Faith's school was the location for our session. After we found our places at the appropriate "cleaning tools" tables and experienced a warm welcome, Pastor Schierenbeck led a devotion on the topic of "Cleaning for the Heart," based on the words of Psalm 51, especially verses 2, 3, 7 and 10. He reminded us of the washing from iniquity and cleansing from our sin that we have in our Savior. Our sin is purged and we are clean and whiter than snow in God's sight, clothed in Jesus' righteousness.

A trio made up of ladies from Markesan sang "Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God," with guitar accompaniment. The ladies of Faith served a delicious lunch of soups and salads, which was followed by a presentation and discussion on heart health by Sara Schierenbeck, R.N.

While enjoying a luscious raspberry dessert, we were challenged by two spring cleaning games in which our knowledge of cleaning remedies and cleaning products was tested. The winners became "cleaning royalty" and the door prizes were distributed. In closing, the assembled ladies sang "Blest be the Tie that Binds" and the trio sang a blessing titled "May the Lord Bless You."

The blessing of Christian fellowship and learning we shared was enjoyed by all.

—Rhoda Eserhut, Luther Memorial, Fond du Lac, WI

*"Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew,
As raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass."*

—Deuteronomy 32:2

75'ers Are Back to School

On April 28, 2006, the Ladies of Luther Memorial Church, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, hosted their annual spring party for the "75'ers"—those in the congregation who have reached the age of 75. The theme for this party was "School Days," with participation from all attending. A surprise and welcome visitor was our former pastor, John Johannes, and his wife, who were anxious to attend because Pastor Johannes had recently turned 75.

A devotion by Pastor Naumann based on Isaiah 51:8 reminded us that our education would be worthless unless it is done in Christ. We were also reminded to be thankful to the Lord for our parents and our teachers, through whom the message of God's plan of salvation is passed from generation to generation. Christ's righteousness is ours by faith. Our good clothes are the white robe of righteousness with which we were clothed at our baptism, and our report card reads all A's in God's sight through the merits of His beloved Son.

Pastor Naumann led the group in the accompanied singing of "On Eagle's Wings," and the grade school children sang old favorites familiar to the seniors in attendance. This was followed by piano solos by piano students. A time of reminiscing and a sandwich lunch closed the afternoon's celebration.

We look forward to gathering again in December for a holiday party of the "75'ers" of our congregation.

—Rhoda Eserhut, Luther Memorial Church, Fond du Lac, WI

Feeding Our Faith

My aim in this section is to share with you materials and ideas that may be edifying for you and for those close to you. Obviously, nothing can take the place of Scripture—or even come close—so I am not suggesting spending your time engrossed in making the following purchases or participating in the following activities vs. spending time in the true, inspired Word! We all know that only the Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation. The following tools can be used to help keep your focus on Him—to encourage you to keep Christ at the forefront of every area of your life, and to help lead you to glorify Him through all you do!

A Gift Idea

Here is a gift idea for your child, your grandchild, a confirmand, a high school graduate in your congregation, or other young person you know: send them to CLC Youth Camp, CLC Youth Conference, 20's/30's Retreat, or CLC Women's Retreat.

Imagine this: you are a female high school graduate and you receive the gift of one-on-one encouragement from all the ladies in your congregation; they come together just for you—it's just you and the ladies. They shower you with praise and give glory to the Lord for the contribution that you had been to the church so far in your short life. Then they encourage you to let the Lord guide your ways. To top it all off, they present you with a trip to Youth Conference! Not only did they do this for you, they did it for the other three seniors that year! You wondered why they didn't do it in a group, but you figured it out pretty quickly that they wanted to thank and encourage you each individually. With or without the trip to Youth Conference thrown in, what an awesome blessing the Lord has given us within our synod...the ability to build each other up in the Lord. "As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17).

Books

For Parents...wondering how to "have the talk." My mother used an excellent source, the *Life Cycle Library*. She is now cleaning out all the "treasures" from our youth and trying to pawn it on one of us girls...no takers yet! I am going to recommend *Teaching True Love to a Sex-at-13 Generation (The Ultimate Guide for Parents)*, and for you younger mothers, this isn't a book you get when your kids turn 12. This is something you purchase now. Authored by Eric and Leslie Ludy, I read it and loved it, and think it will be a great source to help in that challenging area! It is a book that spans all parenting styles and will be helpful in some way to all parents.

For Upper Middle School and High Schoolers...*Datable - Are You? Are They?* by Justin Lookado. Straight forward. Some may even consider it blunt. I think it is a great tool to work through with your teenage daughters. It might be smart for you to get it, go through it yourself, and then decide how and if you want to use it. As I read through it, I remembered thinking all of the things Justin addressed. It made me chuckle reading it now, but I really think it would have been useful back when I struggled through my teenage dating years! If your daughters are in high school and are not dating, it doesn't mean they aren't struggling with dating. This book will help her too!

For Leaders – Male and Female...*Empowered Leaders* by Hans Finzel. This book will definitely encourage both husbands and wives, as leaders of a Christian family. On another note, it will give you additional insights as to how your Christian leaders work and what you can do to support them. It will encourage you to be a more effective Christian leader—and face it—we are all leaders at some point in time. If you aren't into leadership, don't pick this one up. But if you are, I am positive you will reap some insight from it! It is a book you can definitely pass on to your early-college-age children who show leadership talents and tendencies!

Family Traditions

Although I do not have a husband and children at this point in my life, I truly believe one of the greatest gifts the Lord showers on us is a family. One of the things that sets families apart is tradition. I am going to share a couple of traditions that I would like to implement if the Lord chooses to bless me with a family. And I would love to hear some of your family traditions that you would be willing to share with the rest of the ladies...e-mail them to me at alanaahrens@yahoo.com, and they will appear in upcoming issues. Here are a few that are close to my heart.

*Sunday...*Each Sunday, my family is going to be early for church. We are not going to be early to visit with others, or take care of all those little important tasks that must be done for the potluck that starts after church. We are going to be early and we are going to sit in the car. We are going to pray together as a family, thank the Lord for His numerous blessings, and ask Him to open our ears and our hearts to the lessons He is going to teach us! We are going to thank Him for the opportunity to gather with fellow Christians, thank Him for the support He has shown us through them, and ask Him to use us to support them in return.

*Baptism...*Each year on the anniversary of our baptisms, my family is going to shower each other with spiritual gifts—Bibles, spiritual art, CDs, prayers, etc. We are going to spend the day in the Word, singing hymns of praise, discussing the extent of the blessings He has showered upon us, rejoicing that the Lord has washed us clean and clothed us in His robe of righteousness!

*Adopting a Family for Christmas...*Last year at work I was part of the party planning committee, and every year at Christmas, we adopt a family. Everyone in the office throws in money and the company doubles it. Our committee picked a family...a grandmother and her two grandchildren. After all the shopping was done, we brought everything into the office so that the staff could see what we were able to purchase...everyone was excited. When we took all of the gifts over to the family, they filled, literally, the whole apartment. All the grandmother could say was "Praise Jesus! Praise Jesus!" What a great reminder that the Lord gives us possessions to help others and glorify Him; He humbles Himself and honors us by allowing us to help Him provide for His children! Praise Jesus!

—Alana Ahrens, Faith, St. Louis, MO

God's Alphabet

Although things are not perfect
Because of trial or pain
Continue in thanksgiving
Do not begin to blame
Even when the times are hard
Fierce winds are bound to blow
God is forever able
Hold on to what you know
Imagine life without His love
Joy would cease to be
Keep thanking Him for all the things
Love imparts to thee
Move out of "Camp Complaining"

No weapon that is known
On earth can yield the power
Praise can do alone
Quit looking at the future
Redeem the time at hand
Start every day with worship
To "thank" is a command
Until we see Him coming
Victorious in the sky
We'll run the race with gratitude
X-acting God most high
Yes, there'll be good times and yes some will be bad, but...
Zion waits in glory...where none are ever sad!

—Kathy Kauno, Redemption, Alderwood Manor, WA

Planning a Reasonable Home

It seems like people running a reasonable home are doing so by chance, with ease. But reasonableness is not found by chance; it is chosen and planned. For parents to be effective leaders, they must have a plan with a purpose. There needs to be a vision of the future. What is important must be clear. Effective parents will use reason; they will think and use sound judgment and moderation to run their homes.

A reasonable home has adults who have a plan and a purpose and are not afraid to live it. God has given parents a monumental task—to raise His little ones to come to Him. Matthew 19:14 says “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Yet many parents spend more time planning their financial future than planning their parenting. We need to make sure we are consciously thinking about and maintaining a plan, so we will be doing what God tells us to do.

No plan is a plan. If you choose to be passive and let things happen, they will happen. The media and secular society will teach your child what matters and how to get along in this world. Our culture wants to take our children to hell. Confucius said: “To know what is right and not do it is the worst cowardice.” Adults help children learn to discern God’s will.

Many people parent without a plan. They don’t realize there needs to be a plan. They haven’t thought it through far enough to see the importance of a plan. Or, they don’t know how to get a plan. There isn’t only one right way to get a plan, but we get ours through mentors, peers, books, magazines, other media, and of course...the Bible and tons of prayer. Let the Holy Spirit work in you. God wants you to bring up godly children, 1 John 5:14 -15 assures us that He will provide the info you need. Be persistent. If you can’t figure out what to do, keep praying and searching and asking until you get the answers you need.

Fear of failure is no excuse. Parenting is not easy; it is scary and hard. I have thought often that I don’t know what to do, or wondered if I am doing it all wrong, but that is a ploy of the devil. He loves to get us to give up and throw up our hands in defeat. 1 Peter 5:8-9a says, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith” (NIV). We all know about the devil being like a roaring lion, but have you noticed what we are told to do? Be controlled and alert and resist him. Do what you need to do, pay attention, and don’t give up, because the devil wants to destroy your child’s soul. Don’t let him win.

I am going to share with you some of the plan Mark and I implement. Plans can change, and we have made mistakes and had to go back and adjust, but in general I will share what the Lord has shown us to do. Keep in mind that the plan for your family will be different—you should tailor your plan for your family.

An integral part of every family plan is the God Filter. The God Filter is the filter we put all decisions through. We ask questions like: “Is this God pleasing? Is this beneficial for my family’s well being? Is this a reasonable choice? Thirty years from now how will this affect my family?” This helps us to decide what fits into God’s plan for raising His children for Him.

Psalm 127:1 says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” God is the all-important factor and without Him the family will fall no matter what other good things you do. God says to put Him first and you will lack for nothing.

Are you growing spiritually? Do your children see fruit of the Spirit in your life? Our relationship with the Lord greatly influences our children’s relationship with the Lord. Take time to be with Jesus and let Him show you His love because nothing, including a great family life, is of more significance. Our earthly existence and that of our kids, is for only one purpose—love God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

**To be continued in October 2006.
Look forward to lots of great advice from this condensed
version of Kelly’s presentation at the Women’s
Retreat in Trego, April 2006.**

—Kelly Fleischer, Immanuel, Mankato, MN

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Scripture Search Answers

To the questions found on page 11, here are the answers:

- 1. Gideon, Judges 8:30**
- 2. Cain, Genesis 4:1**
- 3. David, 1 Samuel 17:12-14**
- 4. Jacob & Esau, Genesis 25:23-26**
- 5. Younger, Luke 15:11-32**

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***I am the Vine,
you are the branches.
He who abides in Me,
and I in him,
bears much fruit;
for without Me
you can do nothing.***

—John 15:5

***“Unite us in the sacred love
Of knowledge, truth, and Thee;
And let our hills
and valleys shout
The songs of liberty.”***

—TLH 578, v3



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