



# The Branches

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## Childhood

In watching children—and if you’ve had your own, then you’ve realized the ramifications of this—we find that they naturally imitate what they see. They pick up on the good that those around them do, and they pick up on the not-so-good too! They also do and say what they see others doing and saying, whether that is on TV, in school, in books, on the radio...you name it.

Adults are capable of being imitators also, though sometimes we get too set in our ways and opinions to really assess our habits—the good ones or the bad ones. Unsurprisingly, we are instructed by Scripture to do the more thought-required of the two: we should “become as little children,” and “be imitators of God” (Matthew 18:3; Ephesians 5:1).

Children trust their parents. They don’t question a parents’ ability to provide. They look to their parents for approval—and disapproval! They figure everything a parent says must be true.

Even the negative tendencies we see in children may have application here. The tantrums should end quickly if they happen; the whining and complaining can be circumvented with the distraction of another blessing; the testing of boundaries proves to children they are loved enough to be rebuked for their own good. And children are acknowledging the authority of the parents when they do these things. The type of persistence children exhibit is something God seems to encourage. Matthew 7:7 tells us to “ask, and it will be given to you.” Then Matthew 15:21–28 describes a woman of Canaan calling repeatedly after Jesus for help, and then receiving it for her show of faith.

If we surround children with a bombardment of secular and poorly-wrought religious ideas, thought and action, those things will be ingrained in them and will be their tendency. If we surround children with good, positive, Christian lifestyle, worldview, and education, then that will be their foundation and inclination. In the same way, as adults and imitators ourselves, we can surround ourselves with the proper study, thought, people, and environment, or we can settle for garbage. An old saying goes, “If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas.” Though not Scripture, it makes sense that if you have undesirable things around, you will get them on you eventually.

And through all of the “hardships” of childhood—learning to grow and take on more responsibility and becoming educated (whether we like it or not) and having higher expectations put upon us—children are generally happy, content, and joyful. They find excitement in each day, something to laugh and dance about, some little bug or stick to wonder at, and worry little to none for what they are generously given. We could all use practice imitating as children.

—Abby Matzke, Immanuel, Mankato, MN

***“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children.”***

—Ephesians 5:1

## Inside

- 2 **Training in the Word**
- 3 **Mother’s Apron**
- 4 **Childhood Days**
- 5 **Christmas Memories**
- 6 **Earliest Memories**
- 7 **Look Ahead**
- 8 **Grandpas Don’t Get Old**
- 9 **Children are a Heritage**
- 9 **Book Review**
- 10 **It Takes Cow Chips**
- 11 **Encouragements**
- 12 **Delicious Dishes**
- 15 **Entertaining Kids Creatively**

## Training Up a Child in God's Word

The Lord equips each member of His church with different talents that are used in His service. He shows us this in 1 Peter 4:10, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." One way to use those gifts is in service to the Lord by teaching His lambs. For many years, I've had the privilege of being a Sunday School teacher at St. John's in Okabena. Those years have provided many opportunities for both students and teacher to "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Without a doubt, teaching Sunday School is an awesome responsibility. It gives support to the work that parents have already started at home. It also focuses the child on the Lord's path for their lives as He tells us in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it."

As a parent, there are no greater gifts that you can give your children than home devotions, Sunday School, and an education focused on God's Word. My students often hear me say that it is so important for them to read Bible stories and memorize passages. Once those words are written in the heart, no one can take them away.

God uses His Word each day to guide our steps. Instilling God's Word in the hearts of young children is an important task that should not be taken for granted. He tells in Luke 18:16, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."

Each of you has a favorite passage that helps you through your day, comes to mind when you are facing a difficult situation, or gives glory to God for one of His numerous blessings in your life. What a wonderful gift that is, knowing that the Lord Himself has written those words in your heart so that you may always turn to Him in faith, knowing that He will help you, no matter what the situation.

As important as that is in your life, it is also important in the lives of your children. So, teach them:

- that they are sinful, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells..." (Romans 7:18).
- to repent of their sins, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).
- that the Lord forgives their sins, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).
- that they are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of children. Please guide, protect, and comfort them as they learn the direction You have for them in their lives. Please give parents and teachers the tools and patience necessary to teach them Your Word. Help them to keep the faith and spend eternity with you in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

—Jan Voit, St. John's, Okabena, MN

## October: Pastor Appreciation Month

**This month, make a point of expressing to your pastor and his family your gratitude for his dedication and hard work. Don't forget to thank your Sunday school and day-school teachers, deacons, elders, voters, organists, cleaners, and various other volunteers at your congregation. The encouragement goes a long way!**

**Need an easy and affordable yet effective way to show appreciation to Pastor? Go to Bible Study! How overwhelmed would Pastor be if a crowd showed up? And for those who already attend regularly, try to come up with questions or comments to liven things up some more and give his education a workout.**

## My Mother's Apron

It was the end of April and our Christian Day School's end-of-the-year program was set to begin at 7:00pm. Cookies were needed for the after program treats and I (along with others) had volunteered to bring some over. I wanted my chocolate-peanut butter cookies to be as fresh as possible, so I delayed making them until after work the same night as the program. (Did I really need them this fresh? Or maybe I just have become a procrastinator in my later life and am not willing to admit to it!)

Anyway, I arrived home from work and set to the task still wearing my office attire. Butter, sugar, flour, eggs, chocolate, peanut butter, mixing bowl, and beaters were all set out. That is when a picture of my mother flashed into my head. Why? Because there was no apron around me to protect my white blouse. I told myself I would be careful. Was I flirting with disaster? I could hear my mother's "tsk, tsk."

Mom did a lot of baking in her years as mother of nine and grandmother of many more, and I don't think I ever saw her in the kitchen working without her apron tied around her waist. She didn't take the chance of soiling her dress or blouse—no, out came the apron! It was her kitchen uniform, religiously donned.

Those aprons were many and varied. Some were the simple half apron, others were bibbed, some were fancy, others quite plain. I am sure she made quite a few from scraps of material left over from her other sewing projects—so the material they were made from was always interesting. But as varied as they were, one thing was common to them all—they each contained a pocket. Usually that pocket stored a hanky (in later years, a tissue). If one of us came in crying, out came the hanky to dry the tears; if we sniffled from a cold, out came the hanky; if the knee or elbow was bloody, out came the hanky. Or her pocket might contain other items: a bobby pin to keep back a few stray locks of hair, a coin or small stone she found in the pocket of an article of clothing while sorting laundry, a scrap of paper on which to write an item needed for her next shopping trip. Useful thing, that pocket.

An apron served as protection for her clothing, but also it was very useful as a moving towel! Often her hands wiped the front of her apron to get rid of a bit of flour or sugar that escaped the mixing bowl. Or it was used to wipe her sweaty brow—those boiling kettles of beans or tomatoes or corn on the cob during canning season produced a terrific amount of heat. On those days I can still see her picking up the edges of the skirt and fanning herself for a minute to try to cool down before the next batch of vegetable was ready to be plopped into the kettle. Some of those aprons got a good workout before the day ended. But each day saw a fresh apron. If company stopped by, a second one came out of the drawer crisp and clean.

My mother's aprons were useful for something else, too. It was one of the items we girls first learned to iron (along with our father's many handkerchiefs). The long apron strings would be stretched out along the board and pressed carefully flat on both sides. Next came the waistband on the front, and finally the skirt itself. "Keep the pocket from gaping and watch out for your fingers" would be the instruction given. What article of clothing do young girls learn to iron first in this day and age? Has the iron been totally replaced? And speaking of firsts, I believe aprons were one of the first items of clothing we learned to sew. Long straight seams, squared off pocket corners, and neat and tidy hems were the rules to produce a good working apron.

Oh yes, my mother's aprons. They bring back good memories. Dad says one of her aprons still hangs by the side of a cupboard in his apartment and he has used it occasionally to protect his shirt and trousers while mixing up a batch of cookies for the children, grandchildren, or great grandchildren to enjoy. How comforting to know that one of her aprons still survives and is being worn!

I did not make a mess on my blouse the evening of the children's program in mixing up my cookies, but it would have served me right. I will have to dig out my stash of aprons and make them handy in my kitchen again in loving memory of my mother, Lois Gurgel.

—Ruth Bernthal, *Peace Thru Christ*, Middleton, WI

# Childhood Days

**Childhood Days  
Still amaze  
All the ways  
Each child plays**

**First smile stages  
Baby Book pages  
Grandma's praises  
Growth Chart phases**

**Daddy's joys  
Little Boys  
Trains for toys  
Baseball noise**

**Mommy's pearls  
On little girls  
With bouncy curls  
And pink dress swirls**

**Baby's one  
Lots of fun  
Learns to run  
Loves the sun**

**Two's are great  
Eats off plate  
Helps create  
Investigate**

**3's and 4's  
Plays outdoors  
Loves seashores  
Bugs, lots more**

**First day school  
Bus is cool  
Teachers rule  
Books—a tool**

**Recess take  
Friends to make  
Hearts may break  
Hurts to shake**

**School's out  
Most kids won't pout  
Without a doubt  
They'll all shout**

**Each child grows  
And it shows  
How much he knows  
By what he chose**

**Too soon it's done  
The Childhood fun  
That race is won  
Life has begun**

*—Jacquelyn Radichel, Grace, Fridley, MN*





# Mother's Christmas Memories

—Katie Sumey, St. Paul, Lakewood, CO

Dear Elijah, my son,

This year we will celebrate your first Christmas! I can hardly express my excitement. We'll even be in my hometown of Helena, Montana to celebrate. Thinking ahead to your first Christmas makes me think back to those of my childhood.

In our family, the Christmas season began the day after Thanksgiving, when we would drive into the mountains and hike until we found the perfect tree, which your Grandpa would chop down. Grandpa always picked the tree, and your Uncle Paul and I always thought it was too short until we'd get it home and Grandpa would cut several feet off to make it twelve feet, the height of our ceiling. Grandma unpacked the decorations, and after Grandpa hung the lights (and he was never a big fan of this job), we trimmed the tree with ornaments.

Over the next month, your Grandpa played Christmas music regularly (and we'd try to remember to water the tree regularly, too). I remember best the Manheim Steamroller album. Uncle Paul and I would share the chocolate-behind-each-door Advent calendar—I got the even days and he got the odd days, though we often shared the big chocolate on December 25. Your Grandma made many Christmas cookies—pebernødder, brunkager, krumkake, spritz, snickerdoodles, fudge, coconut macaroons, and—of course—the dreaded frosted roll-outs that were so wonderful to eat but, as a child, seemed to take forever to frost. Uncle Paul and I loved to arrange and rearrange the presents that gathered under the tree.

On Christmas Eve, Grandma would make our traditional dinner of medisterpølse (Danish sausage), mashed potatoes, and lefse. We ate early, and then went to the 6pm church service. The service was full of the Christmas hymns that we waited all year to sing, and the reading of Christ's birth. Upon returning home, dishes were done, a plate of Christmas cookies was set up, and a pot of hot tea was made. Then we all sat down to open presents. Your Grandpa "played Santa Claus," we would say, and passed out the presents strategically so that it looked like everyone got the same number of presents, though Grandma usually had the most! We ate cookies, drank tea, listened to Manheim Steamroller, and watched each person open their presents. When your Uncle Paul and I had opened the last two presents, which we always tried to do at the exact same moment, it was time for bed. Some years, though, Grandpa was an usher at church for the midnight service, and I got to go with him. I loved this service because it was the beautiful candlelight service!

On Christmas morning, Uncle Paul and I would wake each other up and unload our stockings together on the couch. There was always an orange at the bottom, which we knew had come out of the fruit basket and would go directly back into the fruit basket. Then we ate Christmas dinner, and some years there was church on Christmas day as well.

And then Christmas was over. We took down the tree a few days later, all the ornaments were put away and the lights carefully packed back into their little boxes, and Grandma vacuumed up the millions of pine needles now covering the carpet. In later years, things changed a little. Some years we would go to Minnesota for Christmas, or our grandparents would visit us, especially your Great Grandma Polly. Now, Uncle Paul sometimes chops down the tree. And, sometimes, we aren't all together on Christmas anymore. But the Christmases I have described here are the ones that I remember best. I know that Uncle Paul and I are eager to recreate for your first Christmas those that we remember so well from growing up. Over time, your Christmas memories will become your very own. I can hardly wait!

Love, Mommy

## Earliest Memories

Raising a family—what an awesome task! It's a good thing we're not aware of the enormity of the job before we start. It's so easy to be expert at it with someone else's children. Before we had our own family, I had definite ideas on the subject of correct child rearing. Having numerous nieces and nephews on whom to practice gave me a distinct advantage. There were many things of which I approved, but also those I was sure would never happen with my own children, such as, "I'll never snap at my child like that! I'll take the time to listen to his side of the problem," and "I'll use a sense of humor in this type of situation and avoid a confrontation," and "I'll never say I'm too busy. I'll take the time to answer my child's question regardless of what I'm doing." Obviously, I had a thing or two to learn.

Our ideas of child raising are certainly influenced by our own homes and how we were raised, and that would have a bearing on the values and expectations we bring to the job. But how could I evaluate what I can't remember? For the most part, my first seven or eight years are blank. All that is really sharp and clear are four distinct memories of my father. The first must have taken place when I was around 3 years old. As I remember, it must have been night time and I'm in a tub, crying. Mom wraps me in a towel and carries me to another room. Dad is behind a desk in a big leather chair and I'm in his lap as he sings, "Schlaf, kindchen, schlaf . . ." Mom is on the other side of the desk and off to the right, smiling. I remember feeling warm and secure.

The second memory involves "Janny," our church janitor, a great friend to Ben, Lois, Bert and me. It's a summer day, I'm sure, because I have on a dress but no jacket. I'm standing at the foot of the long outside stairway of the grade school, next to the parsonage, and Janny is teaching me to sing, "You are My Sunshine." Next I'm standing on the front seat of a car, pre-seatbelt days. Dad is driving and he and I are alone in the car. I'm singing my new song and Dad is laughing and asking where in the world I learned that. I remember feeling happily smug.

The third memory takes place on a late December afternoon. Pre Christmas tension is no doubt building in our Milwaukee parsonage. Dad is home on this particular afternoon. With a congregation of over 1000 souls in his care, he is probably between calls. I remember asking him for a piece of gum and hearing him say that he has some, but it's in his coat in the front room closet, and he'll get it for me. What he has forgotten is that the closet is in the Forbidden Room. Like many other families in those days, our parents decorated the Christmas tree and then locked the doors to that room, denying access to the children until Christmas Eve. The anticipation was painfully intense. My sister and brothers would sneak around outside and try to peek in the windows, but of course the shades were drawn. There wasn't even a decent peeking angle through the keyhole.

Whether my request was premeditated or not I have conveniently forgotten. What I never will forget is the delicious surprise when I discover that he has left the doors open, and there before me in all its shimmering glory is The Tree! I still can see it today as it appeared then, although it probably was not as huge as it remains in memory, since I was somewhat closer to the floor at that time. The details are all intact—paneled wood sliding doors, tall windows, shades drawn, and the tree covered with hundreds of strands of tinsel, each hanging perfectly straight, wondrous ornaments of all sizes, and train tracks circling the floor beneath.

After the Children's Christmas Eve Service, my parents would tend to linger interminably, talking about totally inconsequential things as we tugged at their coats. Of

course, they wouldn't leave 'till each and every member did. They finally would give in and walk the short distance to the parsonage, but our wait still was not over. Dad would ceremoniously enter the front room alone, closing the doors carefully behind him, to "get things ready." He'd get the train started and see to it everything was in its place, and purposely take his time. Pure agony, but worth every minute when we were finally ushered in.

Only here I am, seeing it all ahead of time! My scrutiny ends abruptly as Dad comes around the corner of the closet door, startled to see me there. Now I'm in for it. But wonder of wonders, he just shakes his head and smiles! That smile still evokes a warm all over feeling each time I see it in memory.

That, unfortunately, is also my last memory of Dad while he was alive, since he died suddenly of a heart attack the following spring at the age of 44. I also remember that day—Memorial Day, 1941. I can hear Mom asking Ben to see what's taking Dad so long in the basement.

Ben calls from the basement, and there are sirens and men are carrying Dad out. Ben tries to get Bert and Lois to stop crying, saying, "Look at Eunice, she's not crying." They answer, "That's because she doesn't know what's going on." I ask Ben if the men will bring Dad back, and he assures me they will. That this sad loss would be permanent was beyond my four year old comprehension.

Many times over the years I've felt that loss, wondering what Dad would think or advise on this or that occasion, wishing his grandchildren could have known that smile and felt his warmth. I look forward to the day when there will be no more need for Christmas anticipation, when Christ will come again, but instead of joining us in our world, will take us home to His, for the long awaited reunion with my father and my Father.

Why have these memories stayed etched so sharply in my mind? Could a child's subconscious somehow realize that this was all she would have? When I tried to explain it to my brother, he suggested that I was only remembering what people had described in later years. I know that's not true, since I still see the rooms and the people, and feel the same feelings. It's been a special joy to have these few brief memories to take out and savor from time to time, and I would hope that when I'm no longer able to remember recent happenings and my brain has "fuzzed up" a bit, these memories will remain as clear and precious as they are today.

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



## A Look Ahead

### **January's Theme is "Encouraging and Supporting One Another as Christian Women"**

The theme for our upcoming January issue will be "Encouraging and Supporting One Another as Christian Women."

We'd like to hear about ways this has been done, could be done, verses that come in handy especially for this purpose, things that are around us and in God's Word that we can draw encouragement from, and whatever else this topic inspires you to write about.

**Deadline for the January issue will be November 10**

slightly earlier than usual to accommodate the busy season.

Send all submissions to Abby Matzke via the information provided on the back page.

## Grandpas Don't Get Old

There's something about Grandpas that automatically makes you think "childhood." Maybe it's that mischievous smile he gets when he comes in from the garage with your little brother. Maybe it's that tinkering project that's been around forever that seems to always need something else. Maybe it's the fact that legos, board games, ket cars, and sandboxes are never in short supply.

If we would've gotten caught with anyone other than Grandpa we would've been in big trouble. They could get us laughing the hardest. They always did the most teasing, but never made us cry. In fact, as soon as we got too old to be teased about still using training wheels or having dolls at the table we found that they're really just boys with gray hair. He never really seemed like the serious type unless Gramma had a "job for the two of you." But even at his most serious moment, he found a way to make the job fun and take less time.

Some of the biggest things I've learned in life I've learned from one of my Grandpas: there's always room for dessert; it's okay to get dirty; walking slow is a good thing; if Grandpa steps on your feet when you're dancing don't say anything because he didn't notice; if Grandma or Mom gives you a job, get it done, but find a fun way to do it; if the tractor doesn't go exactly straight it's not a big deal, we were just picking rocks anyway; monkeys apparently have tails and apes don't; why girls can't be pastors...in a way that a six year old can understand.

However, maybe the biggest lesson I've learned from them is that it is okay to get excited. You wouldn't expect an "old" man to jump up and down. But when you see his face light up in excitement about Jesus, heaven, and sins forgiven you can't help but be excited too. There's something about the joy a grandparent gets on their face when a grandchild says, "Jesus loves you," that is absolutely irreplaceable.

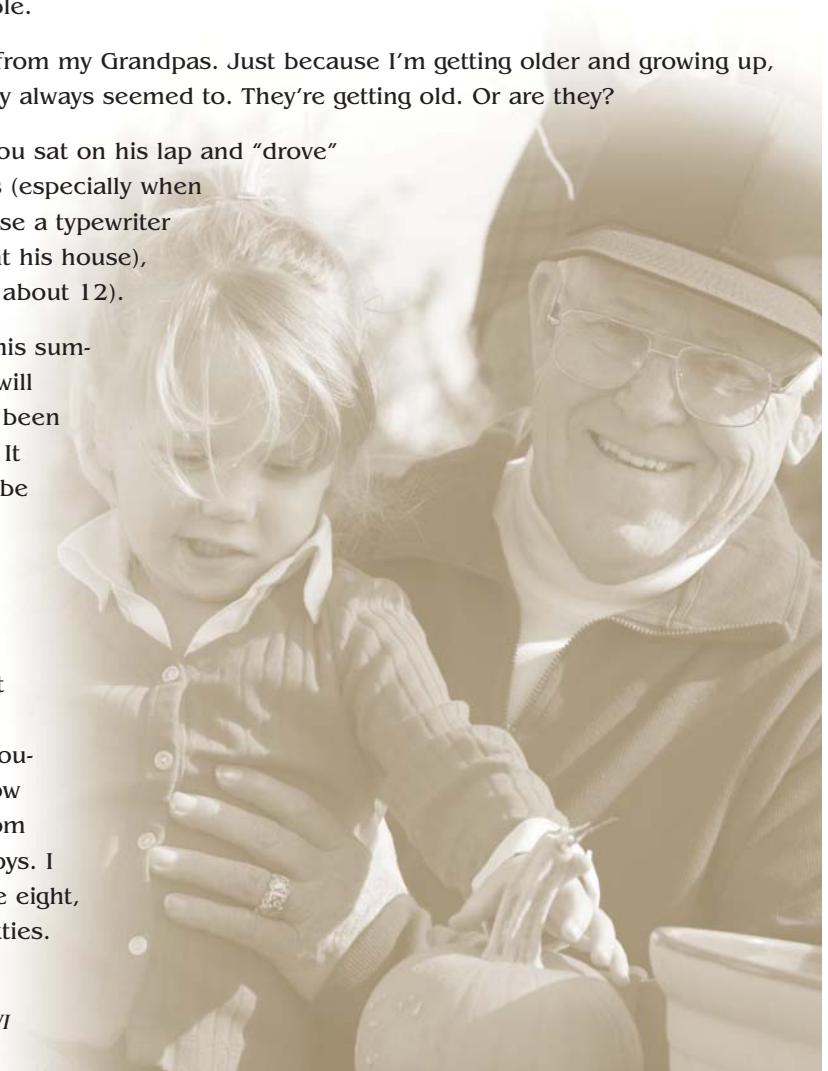
This summer, however, I got another lesson from my Grandpas. Just because I'm getting older and growing up, doesn't mean that they stayed frozen in time like they always seemed to. They're getting old. Or are they?

He's the guy you went rock picking with as you sat on his lap and "drove" the tractor. He'd laugh at you when you'd climb trees (especially when you'd say, "Grampa, climb too!"), teach you how to use a typewriter (knowing full well that you'd never use one besides at his house), and let you win every race or game (until you turned about 12).

I still don't think my Grandpas are old. But this summer I was hit with the hard reality that one day they will be...or at least their bodies will be. The man's never been too old to get kisses and flowers from a six year old. It seems like there will never be a time when he won't be the biggest man in the world. I mean, he raised the next biggest people in the world: my parents.

For everyone it's something different, but there's something about a Grandpa that screams the very epitome of childhood. As I look back, I find that in many circumstances, it was because they encouraged it the most. If there were laughs to be had or trouble to be gotten into, Grandpa always seemed to know where to find it. He had the best stories, snatched from the table before the meal, played outside, and had toys. I guess you could say that he was just like us. We were eight, seven, and six. He was in his upper fifties, maybe sixties. Peas in a pod. The epitome of childhood.

—Becky J. Gerbitz, Peace Thru Christ, Middleton, WI





# Children are a Heritage

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

—Psalm 127:3

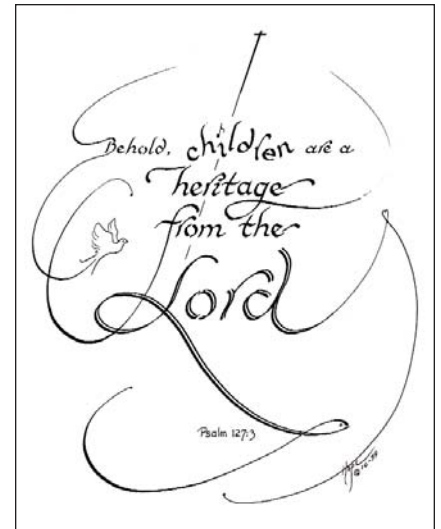
**F**ind the symbolism in the Psalm 127:3 calligraphy: Begin with the (red) heart which reminds us that while we were conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5b), God the Father loved us so much He sent His only Son to save us (Col. 2:13). Look up to see the empty cross. After Jesus died, rose, and ascended into Heaven, He did not leave us comfortless but sent the Holy Spirit to keep us in the true faith. He is represented by the dove. If you follow these three symbols around, you will see they form a triangle to remind us our God is Triune.

Notice how the word "children" dances about as children do with so much music in their little souls. May this exuberance for life continue as you open the Holy Scriptures to your little one through Bible stories, and songs. Daily teach him (her) God's ways so nothing will come between him (her) and Jesus as he (she) grows. Note the "g" in "heritage" is broken—at times children stray—but then continues again to point to the cross (Prov. 22:6).

As the fish cascades down from the "L" in "Lord," may we tell others (especially our loved ones), of Christ's love also for them so they, too, may have joy on earth and the security of Heaven in their eternity.

May the Holy Spirit, through baptism, work faith and forgiveness (Titus 3:5–7) in your precious child's heart so he (she) will be an heir of God's Kingdom knowing Jesus loves him (her) forever.

—Hope Luurtsema, *Rock of Ages, Grand Rapids, MI*; editor's note: the calligraphy pictured here does not include the watercolor background on the actual piece. In the original, there is a sailboat on the line extending off the fish, and there is a balloon on the right side of the verse—they are both silhouetted in white against the darker watercolors. For inquiries on where to obtain works of art such as this from Hope, contact Abby Matzke using the information on the back page.



## Book and Video Reviews

### The Tender Years by Janette Oke

**I** highly recommend the book, "The Tender Years" by Janette Oke. It's about a 13-year-old girl and her struggles with growing up, doing what the peer group does, or following what she's been taught at home and knows is right. I thoroughly enjoyed it (and I'm not normally a reader of fiction)—couldn't put it down! I think a 12-year-old to whatever age would also like it. It had a lot of good life lessons from a Christian viewpoint.

Before reading this book, I also recommend reading the books prior to this, or better yet, as I did on my daughter's recommendation, rent the videos from the library. They are, "Love Comes Softly," "Love's Enduring Promise," "Love's long Journey," and "Love's Abiding Joy," all by Janette Oke. She has another one out which I haven't seen yet. These would give a nice background for the first chapter or two where the author sets the stage with the relatives before getting into the story, as she is the granddaughter of the woman in "Love Comes Softly."

Hope you enjoy these as much as I did.

—Hope Luurtsema, *Rock of Ages, Grand Rapids, MI*

## *It Takes Cow Chips to Make Dinner*

**Growing up in Rural South Dakota in the 30's and 40's**

*Below is an excerpt from the book of this same title, recently written and published by a retired pastor of the CLC, one many of you know: Rev. L. Dale Redlin.*

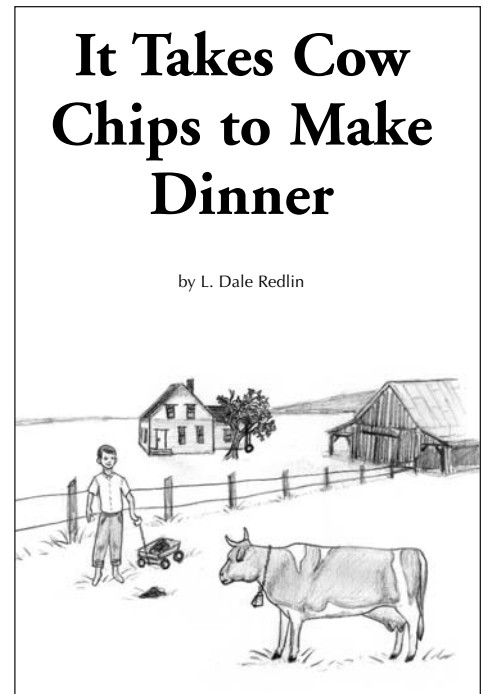
**T**he title of this little book comes from one of my regular chores. I was the official cow chip gatherer. Ma was talking to me when she called out with that never-to-be-forgotten announcement, "I need cow chips to make dinner!" This, in itself, serves as a glance into life in those years, especially in rural South Dakota.

Ma had a cow chip box on the porch. As a five-year-old, it was my job to keep it full. Ma always wore gloves when she carried the box of cow chips into the kitchen. She opened the lids on the big four-lidded cook stove and put some crumpled up paper in first. Then she carefully broke some chips and placed them over the paper and lit it. Ma quickly closed the lid and soon the fire was roaring. More chips were added and soon the stove was hot. The water in the reservoir began to bubble and steam. The potatoes began to cook in the cooker and meat began to crackle and sizzle in the hot grease in the frying pan. Soon dinner was ready!

I felt some satisfaction that I could contribute to making dinner. I didn't know anything about cooking, but I did know how to gather cow chips! They needed to be seasoned, sun-dried, mature chips, at least a month old. Those were the best: easy to handle, odorless, and loaded with energy. So when the chip box was nearly empty, Ma called out with words that are indelibly fixed in my memory to this day, "I need cow chips to make dinner!"

Those were much simpler times. The episodes, as I recall them, are a humble attempt to picture briefly for my grandchildren and eventually, perhaps, my great-grandchildren (and any one else who might find them worth reading), the life and times of another generation. Perhaps—just perhaps—this small volume may play some small role in helping future generations appreciate a bit more the many blessings that we enjoy today but so easily take for granted. And, by the way, we did walk more than a mile to school—up hill both ways!

*—L. D. Redlin, Immanuel, Mankato, MN; editor's note: Dale Redlin is a retired pastor residing in Mankato and has recently accomplished writing and publishing "It Takes Cow Chips to Make Dinner," illustrated by Abby Matzke. This is a wonderful family read, something along the lines of the "Little House" books and "Grandma's Attic" series. To purchase at \$10 per copy (shipping included) contact the author at: [hope-dale@juno.com](mailto:hope-dale@juno.com) or at 225 Crystal Circle, Mankato, MN 56001. Shipping for bulk orders will be established upon inquiry.*



## *Christmas Gift Subscription Offer!*

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## Encouragements

***“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time.”***

—1 Peter 5:5-6 (NIV)

In the process of raising five children, I’ve come to believe the old saying that children keep you humble. They seem to have a knack of saying or doing things in an innocent way that make their parents cringe. About the time you really feel they are just wonderful, they come up with a new way to humble you. Several years ago, one of our older children was working with Ray outside, and a repairman was there working on a tractor. The child, who will remain nameless, (Andrew), was about 4 years old at the time. After watching the repairman, who had a full head of graying hair, our curious one asked him politely, “Are you like a hundred?” The remark was followed with near silence—I say near, because I’m sure Ray made some noise as he was trying to hide. Okay...maybe that’s not so much about humility as it is about being humiliated!

The thing about humility is that it’s so...well...humbling. Being humble is not something that is looked upon as a desirable trait in today’s world, but it is a wonderful trait where it counts: with God. When I am full of my prideful self, it can hamper His working through me, or my receiving His blessings. I think humility is about putting myself in a position where I am serving others with love, and seeing myself as I truly am, which is helpless without God’s grace. Jesus, through His entire life on earth, was truly humble: being born in a stable, working as a carpenter, and the death of a horrible criminal on a humble cross. Yet, though humble, how powerful was that cross!

“Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another”—put the garment of humility on my person, covering my normally proud and sinful self in my relationships with other people. This reminds me of the way Christ’s blood covered my sins as He died on that humble cross. I love a saying of one of my dear friends. We were talking about being humble, and she said that one way to truly humble ourselves is to stop comparing ourselves to each other, and instead compare ourselves to Christ. Wow!

God be with each of you in your humble walks with Him!

—Julie Schopp, St. Luke’s, Lemmon, SD; Visit the Encouragements website at:  
[www.encouragementsbyjulie.com](http://www.encouragementsbyjulie.com). Or email Julie at: [encouragements@sdplainswb.com](mailto:encouragements@sdplainswb.com).



***Let me sit with my baby and play for awhile  
And forget all my unfinished work with a smile.  
For every tomorrow holds work to be done,  
But lullabye moments and peek-a-boo fun  
Are life’s special treasures meant just for today—  
For babies grow up, and the years slip away.***

—Author unknown; submitted by Jennifer Schaller, Redemption, Lynnwood, WA

When trying new recipes and new techniques in the kitchen, it's always good to remember those we learned from our mothers and grandmothers (and fathers and grandfathers). It's often easiest to remember meals from childhoods that were associated with big events, like Christmas. That's why this month's section focuses on Foods from your Heritage. We'll take a look at those special recipes that helped make us the cooks we are today!

## Kransekage

This recipe comes straight from my Danish heritage. Kransekage is a Danish celebration cake. My Grandma Polly, who lives in Mankato, Minnesota, still makes these cakes for her grandchildren at our confirmations and weddings. It does call for special pans in the shape of rings, and is usually pressed through a special pastry shaper. But either of those could be modified and you'd still have tasty results!

1 1/2 lb. almond paste  
1 1/2 cups granulated white sugar  
3 eggs, beaten by hand until foamy

Grease and flour the rings. Mix ingredients using an electric mixer. Work with 1/3 of the dough at a time. Press dough through pastry shaper or just roll the dough into ropes on a board sprinkled with powdered sugar. Bake at 325 degrees for about 20 minutes. Cool a little, and then remove from rings.

—Katie Sumey, St. Paul, Lakewood, CO



## Pebernødder

For this recipe, it helps to have several strong arms available. Make it on a below-zero winter night. This is a Christmas cookie from my Danish heritage.

1 1/2 c. butter, softened  
2 c. sugar  
1 c. milk  
2 tsp. baking powder  
6–7 c. flour (spoon lightened, then measured)

Cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add baking powder to flour, then add flour alternating with milk, until the mixture can be handled by hand. Roll into ropes of 3/4 inch diameter. Freeze. Preheat oven. Slice ropes into pieces that are about the size of nickels. Lay the cookies out individually on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 to 375 degrees for about 8–10 minutes. Watch carefully so they don't burn. Scrape off with spatula to cool.

—Katie Sumey, St. Paul, Lakewood, CO

## Christmas Divinity

3 c. granulated sugar    3/4 c. light Karo syrup    3/4 c. hot water    1/4 tsp. salt    2 egg whites  
3 Tbsp. dry cherry gelatin mix (half a package)    1 tsp. vanilla    Nuts, if desired

Butter sides of a heavy 2 qt. pan. Combine sugar, water, syrup and salt. Cook and stir mixture on stovetop dissolved and it reaches boiling point. Without stirring, cook to hard ball stage (250 degrees). Remove from heat. Beat egg whites (using a large bowl) to soft peaks, gradually adding gelatin. Beat until you have stiff peaks. Pour hot syrup slowly over egg whites, beating constantly with mixer at high speed until soft peaks form. Add vanilla. Beat until mixture loses gloss. Stir in nuts, and drop candy by teaspoonful on to wax paper. (You will get equally good results using lime gelatin instead of cherry for pale green candy).

—Betty Notling, Messiah, Eau Claire, WI



## Springerle: German Christmas Cookies

1 pound powdered sugar (~3-3/4 c.)  
4 Tbsp. oil (olive oil)  
or 4 Tbsp. melted butter  
1 pound flour (about 4 c.)  
1 to 1-1/2 tsp. anise flavoring  
(5 drops anise oil)  
5 medium eggs  
2 tsp. baking powder

Beat eggs well. Beat sugar into eggs gradually, beating about 1/2 an hour until smooth. Add oil. Add flour and baking powder and knead in by hand (don't use mixer anymore, it gets tough). Roll out dough to 1/2 an inch thickness. Cut into 2-1/2 to 3" squares and press in designs with a well-floured springerle board (or use a juice glass that has a cut out design on its bottom if you don't have carved springerle boards). If pressing the pattern onto the cookies flattens it, simply push on the sides to bring it back up to about 7/8" thickness. Place on floured cloth. Cover with cloth to allow dough to dry out about 3 hours or overnight in a cool place. Place on greased cookie sheet (can sprinkle cookie sheet with anise seeds if desired). Bake at 325 degrees about 10 minutes (or 300 degrees about 20 minutes) until the bottoms are just lightly browned.

Do not over bake. Done when no imprint if pressed. They get high and puffy; sometimes the tops are hollow underneath. Sort of cake-like. A very mild, soft cookie.

—Hope Luurtsema, *Rock of Ages*,  
Grand Rapids, MI; This is my favorite  
Christmas cookie. Mom and Dad  
always made these, as did Dad's par-  
ents when he was little. Enjoy!

## Next Issue...

We would like to dedicate the next food and recipes section to the topic, "Cooking from Scratch." Please send us your recipes of anything you make from scratch (ie: breads, soups, cheese, noodles, etc.).

All recipes/comments can be submitted to Erin Radichel at [emradic@hotmail.com](mailto:emradic@hotmail.com) by **November 1, 2008**.

If you would like to send a recipe via U.S. mail, please mail to Abby Matzke at the address on the back page.

Also, we would like to introduce our new mini-section that will appear in each issue: "Food for Thought." This small section will include any tips, questions, or information on cooking that you may have to share. We will research any cooking questions that are submitted and do our best to supply an answer in our next issue. See if you can stump us!

## Food for Thought

### "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire"

**W**e've all heard the song, but who has ever done it? Chestnuts traditionally have been roasted in fireplaces. They are scored with an X first and nestled in the hot ashes of a dying fire. After 10 to 15 minutes, they will be fragrant and easy to shell.

And for those of us who don't have easy access to an open flame, instructions for roasting in the oven are as follows: Cut an X on the flat side of the nut and lay in a single layer on an ungreased baking sheet. Roast in 350 degree oven until nuts are fragrant and the scored portions begin to separate from the shells, 15 to 20 minutes. Using a kitchen towel or pot holder, pick up each nut. Using your fingers or a knife, peel back the scored X. Discard both outer shell and inner skin. Eat the chestnuts immediately or use as directed in a recipe.

*Enjoy!*

# The New Cooks in the Kitchen...

## Meet Erin Radichel...



My name is Erin Radichel, and I am very excited to be the new co-editor of the food section of The Branches. For those of you who don't know who I am, here is a little bit about me. I am currently living in Mountain View, CA with my husband, Neal Radichel, and my two children, Titus (2 years old) and Gabi (8 months old). We moved from Eau Claire, WI just over a year ago after my husband received the call to serve as pastor of St. Stephen Lutheran Church. So it's been a roller coaster of a year to say the least, but the Lord truly has blessed us so much through our new friends and family.

So living out on the west coast has opened my mouth to a lot of new tastes and flavors. Growing up in the Midwest, I am probably what you would call a "meat and potatoes" kind of girl. If you would have asked me a year ago what an artichoke was, I probably would have answered with the question, "Is that the one that looks like a pinecone?" Let's just say that I'm a work in progress.

I am very much looking forward to sharing my cooking "adventures" with you as well as share recipes from women across the CLC. Thank you for letting me come aboard!

## Meet Katie Sumey...

Somewhere between the garden in our backyard and my mom's cooking, I developed a deep interest in wonderful foods. I grew up pulling carrots out of the ground and rinsing them with the hose for an afternoon snack, but eating Lilly's Beef Stir-fry for dinner. As a teenager, I couldn't understand how my mom could spend so much time reading cookbooks and cooking magazines, but I loved to eat the food. In fact, I even cancelled a date once when I heard that we were having au gratin potatoes for dinner that night!

Now, as something of an adult myself, I gravitate right to the cookbooks in Barnes and Noble, and I scour the internet looking for recipes of dishes I've eaten in restaurants so I can cook them for my family.

My husband, Chris Sumey, and my son, Elijah (8 months old), and I recently moved from St. Louis, Missouri, to Denver, Colorado, for Chris to start his medical residency in Internal Medicine. I'm just starting out as a stay-at-home mom, and I'm loving it so far! I am so excited to be co-editor of the foods and recipes section of The Branches. I can't wait to see others' recipes and try them out, and to share my recipes (mostly my mother's and grandmothers' recipes) with all of you!



## Creative Entertainment for Children

As a mother I've read many articles which speak disdainfully of childhood in America today. When describing the troubles of our young ones the authors use words like "entitlement," "sedentary," and "unimaginative." They describe families who either spend every waking hour preparing for and returning from one event or appointment after another, or children who sit and watch TV and play video games all day long. These articles give the impression that our children are doomed to lives of monotonous electronic entertainment or rigorously scheduled activity! However, all I have to do is look up from my magazine and glance out the window at the cardboard box which has become a tree house for Dolly and the alder leaves which have become perfect skirts and dresses for Barbie to see that bright imagination is still alive and well in the world.

As the Lord's creation, we have been given a marvelous capacity for imagination and ideas. He has designed our children's minds to be curious about everything in their world. He has blessed us with both the ability to find twenty uses for a few sticks and some twine as well as being able to invent digital entertainment. And He wants us to have fun together and to grow each day as a family, enjoying the blessings He's given us. We can find many ways to embrace this and to raise happy and well-rounded children.

Childhood has changed over the generations. I'm sure many *I Branches* readers could tell me how passing time brings about new childhood activities. I've been thinking lately about the way my girls spend their time. The Lord has blessed me with daughters who like playing make-believe games together, and we have a large yard for them to explore and enjoy. But the inevitable, "I'm bored. Can I play computer or watch something?" is always asked at some point in the day. What do you say? Kids are imaginative, but they also need some good direction at times when they are sure that plopping down in front of a screen is the only thing that could possibly fill their need for entertainment. With family budgets stretched to their limits and more inclement weather on its way, I thought I'd share a list of entertainment possibilities for the younger children in your life. When the answer is "no," for TV or computer, you can try one of the following activities instead. With the holidays approaching, many of these ideas also double as gifts for your children to give their loved ones.

- Paint suncatchers
- Make homemade play dough (see recipe below)
- Use recycle-bin papers to cut out snowflakes
- Buy glass ball ornaments and paint/decorate them yourself
- Use scrap wood from dad/grandpa's workshop to make a "treasure box." Paint it however you like!
- Learn to braid by making friendship bracelets with yarn or cross stitching floss
- Wash some rocks. Put on old clothes (or just take clothes off!) and paint the rocks. Great outdoor decorations!
- Use scraps of cloth to learn how to hand-sew a seam. The result is a skirt for Barbie or a quilt for Dolly!
- Mix 1 part white vinegar with 2 parts water in a spray bottle and let Mommy's Helper safely clean counters or wash windows.

As children get older they can tackle more intricate and messy tasks, but no matter what age, encourage the children in your life to explore what they're good at and what they enjoy doing with their time. Remind them of how their Creator has given them the potential to use any skill to His glory!

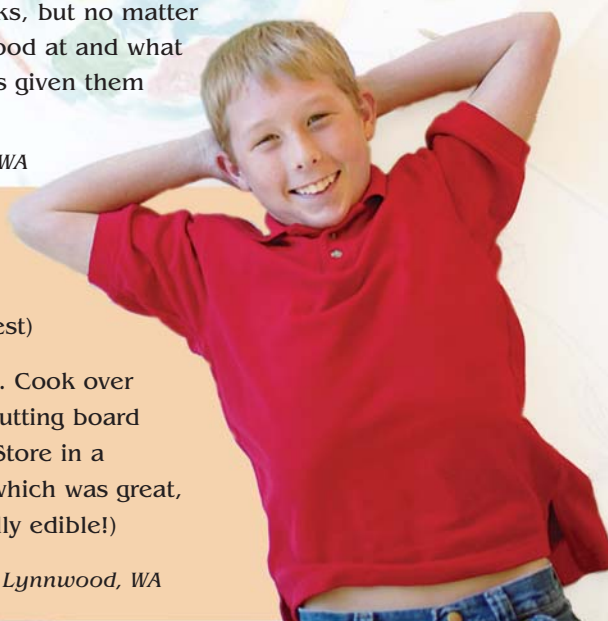
—Jennifer Schaller, *Redemption, Lynnwood, WA*

### Best Homemade Play Dough

1 c. flour	1 Tbsp. oil	2 tsp. Cream of Tartar
1 c. water	1/2 c. salt	Food coloring (gel works best)

Sift flour and cream of tartar. Combine all ingredients in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat stirring constantly until a ball forms. Turn out onto a cutting board and allow to cool slightly. Using rubber gloves, knead until smooth. Store in a plastic bag, do not refrigerate. (I've added strawberry scent before, which was great, but encouraged the little ones to eat it. Thankfully this recipe is totally edible!)

—Jennifer Schaller, *Redemption, Lynnwood, WA*





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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

***But Jesus called  
them to Him and said,  
“Let the little children come  
to Me, and do not forbid them;  
for of such is the  
kingdom of God.”***

—Luke 18:16



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