

# S.I.L.L.Y.

S I S T E R S I N T H E L O R D W I T H L O T S O F Y O U N G ' U N S

## READ THIS FIRST

I have struggled with this issue of S.I.L.L.Y. for literally, months.

My prayer is that we can read what each contributor has written with the knowledge that, although the Holy Spirit is working in the hearts of all Christians, He does not lead all of us down exactly the same path to exactly the same answer.

In these pages, there is much food for thought, much wisdom, and much insight into how God is working in the lives of the ladies who have been brave enough to write for this issue.

I am so thankful for each of you.

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Many of you will remember a personal testimony I shared a few years ago, about the loss of our first baby to a miscarriage. No one can know all the reasons why God allows certain circumstances in our lives, but I do believe that part of the reason He allowed this one in my life was to change my attitude toward children. (I won't reprint the whole story, but if anyone is interested in reading it, please email me, and I will send it out to you). My husband and I were very career focused, materialistic, and not much deeper than surface Christians. We weren't sure we wanted any children, at most one or two. We didn't want to be inconvenienced. As we are now expecting our sixth, it is evident that something changed....

I certainly don't mean to imply that overnight I became an advocate for large families....I would not say that about myself now, even. There are some women, some couples, who seem naturally suited to caring for large families. Others may be called to grow (painfully) into this role. (I definitely fall into the second category). Still others may be called to smaller families, adoption, or mentoring "spiritual children" rather than biological.

I also don't mean to imply that since I decided to have children, it's been nothing but joy ever since... During my pregnancy with this child, I have found my attitude needing almost as much adjustment as it did before my first was born! Early on in the pregnancy I wrote out a whole list entitled "What I DON'T Love About Having Six Children." I shared it with my husband, and I shared it with God. I fully expected that all the issues on it would be resolved by the time I had this baby, and I would be ready to move cheerfully on to child number seven. It hasn't happened. I had started making another list, on the back of the paper, of positive steps I'd taken towards resolving the problems on the front side. As I look over my "steps in the right direction," I have to say that every one of them has fallen through since I wrote it.

What does this mean for me? Does God say, at some point, "This is enough for you"? And if I feel Him saying that to my

spirit, what is my responsibility at that point? To wait and do nothing? To take steps to prevent or delay another pregnancy? And if so, how? I know there is a wrong way to go about that, (see Sister Diane's article on page 5), but is there a right way?

These are the issues I've grappled with as I've read what each of you wrote, poured over the Scriptures pertaining to this, and prayed for direction. It became so intensely personal, that I did not want to send out the newsletter anymore, because I didn't want to open up to all of you what I was going through. I didn't want to expose myself to the possibility that some of you might condemn my choices. However, I feel God calling me (as He always does) to be honest. One of the things that I've read during this time of searching is an article by a woman named Alyssa Welch. I wanted to share it with you, and she gave me permission to reprint part of it.

**“The fruit of the ground is a reward and a blessing.**

**The fruit of the womb is a reward and a blessing.**

If a farmer plants as many seeds as he can without consideration for the ground, the health of the plants, etc. and thinks the fruit of the ground should be God's area and we should not get involved in the number of seeds planted, or the spacing of the seeds, or the size of the garden which I can reasonably care for, the seeds will produce fruit (it is the nature of the creation) he will have more plants. However, the ground will suffer, the plants will not be healthy (because there are not enough nutrients in the soil to supply that many plants), and the plants will ultimately be neglected since there are more plants than the farmer has time to weed, prune, fertilize, and care for.

If a man plants as many seeds in the womb as he can, without consideration for his wife's body (the ground), the health, training, discipling, educating, providing, and loving of the children, etc. and thinks the womb should be God's area and he and his wife (the farmers) should not get involved in the consideration of the number of seeds planted, or the spacing of the plants (children), or the size of the garden (family) which they can reasonably care for, the seeds will produce fruit (children--it is the nature of the creation) they will have more plants (children). However, the wife's body will suffer as well as her emotional state, the children will not be healthy (because there is not enough emotional, spiritual, and physical nutrients in the parents to supply that many plants/children), and the children will ultimately be neglected since there are more children than the couple have time, energy, and resources to weed (rebuke), prune (discipline), fertilize (teach, train, disciple), and care for (love and meet their emotional needs).

The farmer is responsible before God to be a good steward of his land and the fruit of the land.

The husband and wife are responsible before God to be good stewards of the womb and the fruit of the womb. They are responsible in God's Word to provide for them, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, keep their hearts turned to each of them, and provide a rich example of the love of Christ for the church as the children observe their love for each other and how they relate to each other.

Therefore, since we want to walk in a manner worthy of Christ and the gospel, we must have the same attitude as He had (emptying ourselves, humbly serving, and willing to lay down our lives for others) and to think about the interests of others (our wives, husbands, and children) more than our own interests (reputation or self-esteem). Parents should remember, having children is not about them, it's about Christ. And if all of life is about Christ, then it is about others. So the question about how many children should a couple have can only be answered by that couple, accurately understanding their abilities, gifting, health, and God's provision with an attitude of stewardship before God for His glory.”

This spoke to my heart when I read it. So many of the things on my “Don't Love” list were fears about not having enough time to train the children we already have. Over the past few weeks, God has given us many small assurances, that for now, six is enough. But more importantly, I feel Him saying, “I AM ENOUGH.” He is enough. I don't need to be all things to my children. If my heart's desire is to raise my children for His glory, He will fill in the gaps when I am not enough, when I don't love having six children, when not everyone approves of the choices I make....He...is....enough. ~Sister Bonny Jamison

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Planning our family has been something very dear to my heart. I love my children. I love babies. And I love seeing two pink lines! But I also love training my children to grow into adults who love the Lord.

I have heard quite a few arguments for and against family planning. Should we space our children or simply let it happen? I'm not going to say which way is right or wrong because I believe each family needs to decide which is right for them.

Whenever I hear a woman saying what she believes about family planning, my first thought is "what does her husband think?" I believe this is the first thing we must ask ourselves in all honesty. Does my husband feel the same way I do? If he does not, then we need to seek God's grace in helping us submit to our husband. I know personally that this is very, very hard. But I have also found that if I go against what my husband believes is right, then I will not be blessed. I am stepping out of the headship order.

It also seems as though some people have completely missed the picture. Are we having children to raise them for eternity in heaven or simply as a number we can spout off? I really think we need to take to heart the fact that these children are precious souls God has placed in our care and the training of them is more important than the number of them. I know from personal experience that I can be so tired and drained from having 5 babies in 8 years that sometimes I let things slide that I shouldn't in their training.

I also like to remember how God made Eve. He made her a wife first, and mother second. Our first priority should be to our husbands, and then to our children. Most times it's the other way around. Our children get our undivided attention and our husband gets the leftovers, including in the intimate part of marriage. I know that's very candid, but it's something that can destroy a marriage.

After reading this, it probably sounds as though I am anti-large-family. Which I'm not! I've got five and I'd love a few more, with my husband's blessing. I guess I just wanted to share how I've had to learn a few lessons regarding laying aside my own dreams and desires for what the Lord truly wants for our family.

~Sister Kendra Graber



BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE:

In regard to family size: I believe that it is each family's choice. However, my husband and I chose to only have three. We feel our family is complete with three, and it is a big responsibility to teach children about the Lord. I am sad to see many large Christian families have a large number of children, that they can't provide for and in the end, you see them on WIC assistance, Medicaid, or gov-

ernment help with bills, etc. What they do not realize, is that other people (my husband) has to work harder and get taxed more to pay for their choice in having more children that they can't afford. I feel that if you decide to have a large number of children, then you should take the responsibility to care for them yourselves. You should be able to afford for all the medical, dental,

school, clothing and food needs, without taking it from others in the form of government assistance. Plain people do not want the government to be in charge of their church, yet they think it is fine to take help from the government for medical or food or school assistance. That my friends is WRONG! -Please withhold my name.

*"I also like to remember how God made Eve. He made her a wife first, and mother second."*

*—Sister Kendra Graber*

# One Incredible Journey.....

Life is one incredible journey as we walk with the Lord. By His grace we learn much as we walk with Him. Looking back on my personal journey concerning bearing children, perhaps some how it can be an encouragement to one of you sisters.

When Bob and I got married we lightly joked about our dozen children. It really was not a conviction at that point to have a quiver full, just an open desire to have a family. We started our marriage using a birth control that was encouraged for couples dealing with an HIV positive husband. After 9 months of using birth control we wanted to begin our family, so stopped using birth control during the times of the month that conception could occur. Each month that we did not conceive grieved our hearts more and more. This forced us to do a lot of soul searching - and the study of the word of God. I never knew up to that point how much the Lord loves children, and considers them a blessing from Him. Then we grieved over the child/children lost by our choice, and how we had grieved the heart of God. In seeking counsel, a man asked us why we could not trust God for His protection from HIV the whole month instead of just during the time of conception. Again we realized we were doing things our way instead of the way of the Lord. Genesis 38:8-10 was one scripture the Lord used to convict us that birth control was something the Lord did not want in our lives. When we chose to stop using birth control we were both amazed at the release of bondage we felt. As Hannah (Sam. chapter 1) was blessed by the priest and conceived, I chose to be anointed by our elders to give it all to the Lord, and to ask for His blessing in conception. About 2 months later we were blessed with expecting our first born. Our second born soon followed.

Bob died when my children were 2 years old and 10 months old. Not only grieving for Bob, I grieved for the children that would not fill my arms. Though desiring marriage and more family again, I was a widow for 17 years. It took a long time, but by the Lords grace I came to accept that I probably would never have the blessing of more children.

Now the Lord has brought Al into my life. We were married in Aug. 2010 - and are now expecting our first baby. We entered marriage with an open desire to have the family the Lord gives us . . . and how blessed we are!! I am now 40 years young and as I type, the babe in my womb is moving and making it's presence known. As I write, I have to cry with the overwhelming blessing I have been given. God has been so very good to us.

From a purely medical stand point each of my pregnancy's have been 'high risk' the first two could have contacted AIDS - now with any children the Lord gives Al and I, I am considered high risk because of my age. But God is bigger than all of this. I don't believe God sees 'risk' - when things look impossible for man, He is free to show Himself strong in our lives. Miracles still happen.

May the Lord bless each one of you sisters as you raise your children for the glory of God.

~Sister Sheila Stauffer - Bontrager

# Family Planning

This topic was of great interest to me as we studied birth control methods in the OB/GYN rotation in nurses training in 1971. I was engaged to be married and it was very pertinent to our lives. As we studied the methods, I concluded that as a Christian, some methods were not an option--those that cause abortion by preventing the implantation of the embryo (such as the IUD).

There have been some subtle changes in terminology that have deceived many people concerning birth control methods. Prior to 1976, a "contraceptive" was understood to be an agent that prevented the union of sperm and ovum (egg). In 1976, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology changed the definition. A contraceptive now meant anything that prevented the implantation of the embryo (which occurs 6-7 days after fertilization). The hidden agenda in ACOG's redefinition of the "contraceptive" was to blur the distinction between agents preventing fertilization and those preventing implantation of the week old embryo. Abortifacients (devices that cause abortions) such as IUD's, the Pill, injectibles as Provera and implantables such as Norplant are now called contraceptives by this new definition, when in reality, they are abortifacients. This blurring has been very successful and has been very deceptive to many Christians.

Since 1988, only low dose birth control pills have been available due to the side effects of the higher estrogen levels of the earlier Pills. According to multiple references throughout the Physician's Desk Reference (PDR) which contains research findings of all the birth control manufacturers there are, not one, but three mechanisms of birth control pills: 1) Inhibiting ovulation, 2) thickening the cervical mucus, thereby making it more difficult for sperm to travel to the egg and 3) thinning and shriveling the lining of the uterus to the point that it is unable or less able to implant the newly fertilized egg. The first two mechanisms are contraceptive and the third is abortive.

What does God say about this subject? "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." (Read Psalm 127 and 128) God views children as a blessing, a reward, a gift. Today's worldview is just the opposite and we have to be careful we do not become entangled in Satan's web and prefer vacations, independence or a high standard of living to God's blessing of children. God has never rescinded his command to "Be fruitful and multiply".

To continue briefly with our story... I graduated, we married and were blessed with our first child 18 months later. Then came a long seven year wait for our next child. It was an emotional roller coaster each month; hoping then disappointment. It was a time of learning that God opens and closes the womb. God again blessed and after our fourth child and a difficult birth, we searched out an acceptable birth control method to use for a time. We found natural family planning to meet that need. I am very grateful for the seven "arrows" with which God has blessed us and encourage each of you to seek God in this very important decision and to view children as God views children.

There are some of you with few children, who desire more and there are some who feel overwhelmed at times with many. I have visited with women in both situations and I would like to share some pointers to prevent hurting those that are already hurting in this area. If there are women present struggling with infertility, please don't complain about your children. (They would love to be up at night with a baby, etc.) If there are women present that are overwhelmed with many, close in age children, be compassionate, remembering that you aren't as thankful for rain that comes everyday for two weeks as you are for rain after a three or four week drought. They love their children, but are struggling. Let us empathize, encourage, and pray for each other in this HUGE, but WONDERFUL calling of Motherhood.

For further information on the birth control pill, read [Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?](#) by Randy Alcorn or visit [www.epm.org](http://www.epm.org).

—Sister Diane Pifer

**PEACE WILL ONLY COME FROM GOD**

Every situation is uniquely designed by God! Family Planning has been something that my husband and I have spent many hours in prayer about, and have sought advice on, yet we know that there are no two families alike. This is something that has to be well thought out and a prayerful decision led by God! God will give each couple an answer and God's Will, will be different for each couple.

Children are like arrows and happy is the man who hath his quiver full of them. Understandably everybody's quiver is a different size. Have you stopped to think about that? The size of a family, I believe, has to be a decision between you, your spouse, and God. You and your husband both have to feel peace and that peace will only come from God!

We are commanded by God to take care of our bodies. If physically you cannot handle another child or it could cause health issues to your body if you got pregnant again...Is it taking care of your body to have another child?

We had a choice to make...What should we do? I had my 3rd child and my iron level got quite low. When I became pregnant with the 4th child, my doctor was even more concerned that I wouldn't have my iron level high enough, when it came time to deliver. We tried so many different things. Nothing seemed to help, only to cause more problems. My delivery day arrived and my level dropped so low that they were considering giving me blood. Our doctor told us that I needed to wait 2 years before I even *thought* of having another child, that otherwise they could lose me. My husband said, "Why would we risk having our four beautiful children live life without their mother, to have another child? Is it really worth it? If we feel called to have more children, we can always adopt or do foster care." I know this isn't for everyone, but this is how we felt led.

At the same time as we were trying to make a decision about what we should do, my youngest sister-in-law found out she had cancer for the second time and had to have a complete hysterectomy. We struggled so much. After we had spent a lot of time praying about it, my sister-in-law happened to come for a weekend visit. I just asked her how she felt about the whole thing. How would it make her feel, knowing that we could have a lot of children easily (minus my iron issues) while she was not able to have children at all, but yet we might decide to do a vasectomy? I can still hear her reply, "Don't have more children because I can't, that will not fix your problem! Take care of yourself!"

Are you physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially stable to have another child? If we're scratching to be able to make ends meet with the children (responsibilities) we do have, then why would God want us to be more stressed out and not able to provide for our families? Sometimes I feel like God allowed our situation to teach me that I needed to be more careful of how judgmental I am, and to realize that God leads us all differently. God has a plan and a purpose for everything, in what He allows you to experience in your child bearing years. We need to surrender our lives to God in these circumstances. Through these times in our lives, are we going to allow these circumstances to make us Bitter or Better?

As for attitudes towards our children, I think we have to be very careful. A child can sense our attitude before they are even born. In disciplining, we have to make sure we always do it out of love. If not, we need to make sure we apologize for acting out of anger or frustration. They're normally very quick to forgive!

I trust each of you will seek the Lord and find His peace in each of your situations. May God Bless!

~Sister Rhoda Martin

## His Control....Not Mine

Family planning and family size is a subject that I tend to avoid in groups. If the subject comes up I either listen silently, or slip away because my story is so incredibly untypical. One of the things about both subjects is that they imply a certain measure of control, and my story is one of total lack of control on my part.

My husband and I were married a little over 13 years ago, and we assumed that we would have a smallish sized family. I think the numbers that we threw around were 4-6 children. Several months after we were married we began to realize that I was experiencing some irregular cycles and other health issues and also I hadn't gotten pregnant. I doctored a little bit, but mostly the doctors said I needed to "try" for a full year to conceive before they would consider that there was a problem. Prior to this my life had presented very few problems that I could not overcome if I just worked hard enough at them. Infertility doesn't work that way. My frustration with my own body and its imperfections was huge. I was angry, discouraged, and bitter all at once.

After a little over a year of waiting we began what seemed like an endless quest of doctoring and asking questions that I never dreamed I would voice to a doctor. We were blessed to work with several doctors that were willing to pursue things with some herbal treatments, and we also did some hormone therapy. There were many frustrating moments when we would decide to take a break from doctoring, and then after several months we would try something new.

One thing that became very clear to me during this time was that God is the one who opens and closes the womb. His ways are so much greater than our ways, and our infertility didn't take Him by surprise.

I must admit that I have struggled with resentment toward families with lots of children. It looks so easy, and simple from my perspective. You just have one gorgeous little one after another, and there are no trials or struggles right? I know that isn't the case but I can become caught up in mind games that make me feel helpless.

About five years into our marriage we pursued adoption. After several matches with birthmothers that fell through, we were blessed with a nine month old baby boy in September 2003. A little over a year later we adopted an eight day old baby boy. Six years later I still sometimes feel a measure of surprise and unworthiness that God would choose to bless us this way.

One of the questions I get a lot is "Are you done, or are you going to adopt more?" I tell people I'm not sure--I guess only God knows the rest of our story. I guess that pretty much expresses how I feel about family planning. God is the author of our stories, and each couple has a different story with a different ending. For some it may include many children, for others just a few, and for yet others it may not include children. Being sensitive to the fact that other peoples stories are written different than ours will ultimately avoid the hurtful attitudes that drive us as believers apart rather than closer together.

~Sister Rebecca Miller

### BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY—A Book Recommendation...

This manual goes into the Word of God to see what God says about having children. How many should we have? Does the Bible have anything to say on this subject? Order the manual to check out. You'll get lots of surprises. Every married couple needs to study this manual together.

It also has questions for personal meditation or discussion at the end of each chapter.

Recommended by: Sister Cara Lorenz

## LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME

I would've loved to see Jesus' interaction with children. I can imagine Him squatting down to get to their level. I can see Him placing His hand on their shoulder. I can see Him reaching out to pick up a little child. Most of all, I can envision a tender love in His eyes as He looks at them and smiles.

I'd like to be more like Jesus.

I cringe as I look at the world and the attitude it has towards children. They are belittled, unwanted, avoided, aborted, unloved and people are discouraged from even having them. They see them as interferences to their plans, expenses in their budgets, and a bother to put up with. People are choosing more and more to not even have children or at least enjoy lots of "free time" in their marriage before having children. Some people are waiting too long to have children and then when they finally get around to fitting them into their schedule, they find they can't have them.



Madison Heisey enjoys the beauty of Fall in the Rockies

**A large family that has not been taught Godly character brings no glory to Him.**

The world offers many ways to prevent children. Some doctors are trained to treat pregnancy more like a disease than a desirable condition. Some methods of pregnancy prevention are a subtle way of possibly causing abortion, while others do indeed prevent conception from occurring. However, this article is not meant to focus on birth control, but rather our attitude towards children.

I'd like to be more like Jesus.

Christians over the centuries have been pro-family and have had a desire to have children, to experience this wonderful blessing from the Lord, and to pour their energies into "raising up Godly seed." This "seed" would be as arrows going out and reaching a time and people they could not reach as parents. This "seed" would share the Light and Hope that Jesus brings to a dark and troubled world. Christians WANTED children.

But the world has had its influence. The world has been teaching our doctors and many of them have caught the idea that four is a tribe and five is just too many. I remember when I was recovering from having our fifth child and was talking of the possibility of a sixth, my doctor highly discouraged me and said I had physical reasons to not have any more. Besides, he said, "I have three and that's plenty! I can't imagine having five and wanting more!" (Just for the record, God blessed us with a total of eight and the last three births were even smoother than the first five. To God be the glory!) Never for a moment do I want anyone to misunderstand that I think large families are holy and small families are out of God's will. God **chooses** to give some families only a few children, and some He withholds children from entirely. Also, a large family that has not been taught Godly character brings no glory to Him. My point is that we consider God's view of children as we form our own attitude towards them.

## LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME

What the world does, the Church usually follows just a few years behind. It is getting more and more common for people to not want many children. The cost of just the birth is getting ridiculous, not even mentioning the cost of raising them. Somehow it doesn't seem like it could be God's will for a perfectly normal, natural event like a birth to cost tens of thousands of dollars. It's no wonder our young couples are feeling some financial pressures. Is it time we as conservative Christians consider alternatives, like midwives and home births to be more financially feasible? I know there are lots of conditions to consider, like previous C sections and other health problems, and those all need to be taken into consideration but the fact remains that thousands of babies are successfully delivered at home with very competent midwives. I have had the blessed experience myself and feel privileged that I got to do that. (I've also had good hospital births and not-so-good hospital births. I am NOT against hospitals or doctors. I am very thankful they are there for when we need them!)

The world is only getting darker and darker and the conditions that oppress us may be a deterrent to having a family, but if ever there was a time that the world needed light, it is now. Who is going to shine that light other than the Christians? And who will shine that light after the present generation has passed on? It is going to have to be our children and those who have embraced the faith.

I know it is a huge responsibility to have a family, and never for a moment do I want to come across as someone that thinks we should just "shell out the babies" and then not properly train them. They call for unwavering commitment, work, and energy. They call for falling on our faces before the Lord and crying out for His help. They remind us of our own limitations and short-comings and our desperate need of the Lord's help.

But I want to be like Jesus.

I want the world to see that I don't embrace their philosophy- I believe the Bible. I don't want to do something just because it's the norm and that's what everyone else is doing - I want to line it up against the Bible and see if it's in tune with what God says. God says over and over in His Word how children are a blessing, happy is the man that has his quiver full of them, and they are to be wanted, loved, and guided. That is God's way.

Lord, give us hearts that love children...  
as Jesus does!

-Sister Sally Meyers

What the world does, the Church usually follows just a few years behind.



# Desert Wandering

by Sister Jenny Wray

## Not to Condemn

From Oct. 29, 1996 to Dec. 19, 2006, a little more than ten years, we wandered in the desert of life, the part of life involving the decision of child bearing. Little did we know how one small, seemingly, insignificant decision would impact our lives in such a huge, significant way. We had wandered aimlessly into a lifestyle of self gratification and one that pursued pleasures for self.

Our story is a little like the children of Israel: a story of wandering in the desert and reaping consequences for actions of disobedience. However, by the grace of God, this time the wandering only lasted 10 years!

In Deuteronomy 28 the Lord clearly shows the wandering children of Israel that with obedience comes blessing and with disobedience comes cursing. One consequence of disobedience is found in verse 38, "Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locusts shall consume it." This could be referring to barrenness. Marc and I had come to realize, the locusts had crept in and had stolen the seed from our field, yielding undesirable consequences for a choice we had made.

Oh, but our God is a God of Grace! In Joel 2:25 He says, "...I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten..." Restoration has been promised! We do realize the extent of that restoration will be different in every situation.

We share our story and convictions with you, not to condemn any decision you have made in regards to child bearing or family size. We want to share with you to encourage you! *We share our testimony because we are called to*, just as Malachi 3:16 states "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another..."

## Our Story

On October the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1988, I married my best friend, Marc. A couple of years went by and we started our family. Within 6 ½ years God had blessed us with four wonderful daughters, Kayla (Beachy), Jessica (Meyers), Theresa, and Darla. Darla, our fourth daughter, was born on October 29, 1996. We felt blessed and satisfied with the size of our family and decided a vasectomy was for us, after all, we were 26 years old with four children, we were buying a house, my husband was going to college and we didn't see that adding any more children to the nest would make things easier. Frankly, we felt fully blessed already! However, as we would eventually learn, *the logical part of our decision was not God's perfect will*. So, in November of 1996, Marc had a vasectomy performed.

It did not take but a few months for me to regret our decision. I began to pray that God would give me peace about the decision we had made, but peace would not come. About this time, I was hearing of doctors that actually did vasectomy reversals. I decided to write and get information on the procedure. A few weeks later I received in the mail information that confirmed what I had feared. It was extremely expensive and insurance companies do not cover these procedures. The cost of the surgery was estimated to be between eleven and twenty thousand dollars! I knew this would be a huge hurdle for my husband to jump. There wasn't extra money lying around! After all, he was working hard to establish a business, struggling to pay off debt we had incurred due to some poor choices, and with a mortgage that seemed the size of a dinosaur, there was no way he would see things my way!

## Desert Wandering



The Wray Girls

By now, several years had gone by and the Holy Spirit continued to prompt me to pray and occasionally mention the subject to my husband. Mostly I prayed. When I would mention it to Marc, he would respond with things like, “remember, we made this decision together” and “just where do you think the money will come from?” Marc didn’t see things my way for a really long time. This seemed an eternity to me, but I knew it was not my place to “nag” but rather give way to God. Marc will tell you, in looking back, that *my silence on the subject allowed him to hear the Holy Spirit speaking.*

A couple more years passed and we continued to pray and search our hearts. At this point, I was sure God was telling me we would again have more children. But in my mind, HOW?? This was a very exciting, faith building point in my Christian walk as God continued to give me hope through verses like Ps. 30:5 “weeping endureth for a night but joy cometh in the morning”, and many others.

In the fall of 2005, my husband began to “warm up” to the idea of possibly going through with the procedure of reversing the vasectomy. Marc and I decided to pray together, confessing our wrong in limiting God, and asking Him to forgive us. We felt we had limited God by telling Him how many children we should have, that was, by the worlds standards. *When we ask for forgiveness we then have to take action to make right our wrongs!* So, again I requested more information from different doctors in the community knowing the cost was a huge detail God would have to help us through. Do you know what we found out? If we do the possible, God will do the impossible! Through many small confirmations God was prompting us to move forward in having a reversal. We learned that faith is not faith until it is tested, as in Hebrews 11. And so, in January of 2006, out of obedience to the Holy Spirit’s prompting, a vasectomy reversal was performed.

The doctor who performed the procedure was in our home town and was very accommodating, another miracle we witnessed to confirm our decision in this faith building journey. The surgery lasted five hours and was a seemingly intense time for me. Our decision to go ahead with the surgery was not for the sole purpose of having a larger family but was an act of obedience which had been carried out because of our convictions. Our prayer was, that God would give us peace and that He would receive all the glory! The doctor did not give us a huge amount of hope that we would conceive again. After all, ten years had passed by since the vasectomy had been performed. Yet, we would go through this just for the satisfaction of knowing we were in God’s will. We did not tell anyone of our decision, except our doctors. *What fun it was having a secret with our Heavenly Father!* After the surgery, I had so much peace. It was worth it all!!

Within two months we found out, that at the age of thirty-six, we were expecting our son, Andrew! Our story doesn’t end there. God has also graciously placed in our care two more daughters, Amanda and Annika! *God has blessed us beyond our wildest dreams.*

When we found out we were expecting Annika, we also found out we were expecting our first grandchild! *Christmas of 2009 will long be remembered as the Christmas of surprises!* Marc and I had decided we would tell the children the news of the expectation of another child, not knowing we would be surprised that very same Christmas with the news that we were to be grandparents! Kayla (our oldest daughter who lives in Thailand) and I were pregnant at the same time, with due dates only two weeks apart!

# Desert Wandering

## Going against the flow

This journey has taught us a lot about God. One of the truths we know, is families are dear to the very heart of the Creator. I would encourage young families to give God your plan book when it comes to planning your family size and let him have a chance to prove to you His sovereign will. *We live in such an anti-family culture today.* I believe very strongly that our participation in the pro life movement must begin in our Christian homes. This is the front line of the battle and we must stand up for life! God's people have a real testimony when they go against the flow of what's considered normal in our society and let their light shine among men. I encourage you to use whatever size family God blesses you with to stand up for life!

I pray you will see these worlds' goods as the rubble it is, and preserve God's message through your families. May we continue to teach our children of God's love and His higher ways!

May the Lord Bless your families,

Sister Jenny Wray



Andrew Wray

## 101 REASONS FOR HAVING CHILDREN

This was originally printed in the "Above Rubies" Newsletter, by Nancy Campbell. Submitted to SILLY by Sister Cara Lorenz.

I receive constant complaints from mothers telling me how hurt they are from the negative comments which they receive from family and friends when they share the news that they are going to have another baby. "God gave you a brain, didn't He?" or "Oh No, not another one!" and so on. One Above Rubies reader wrote to me, "...I can't understand why people think children are such burdens that they'd only want one or two, and then suggest to me that I stop at that number also....I've sometimes joked with my husband that I could write a book of all the one liners people say and title it, "101 Reasons Why Not to Have Any More Children."

This gave me a wonderful idea. But I decided to dwell on the positive rather than the negative. I asked our readers of Above Rubies to share why they love having children. I received so many answers and so here are "101 Reasons Why Mothers Love Having Children." Many of these reasons were reiterated over and over again by different mothers.

1. We love receiving gifts and blessings from God.
2. Why would I ever want to turn down one of God's blessings?
3. We not only want to receive gifts from God for ourselves, but we want to give more gifts to the world. Every child God gives us is a gift to the world.
4. It's so exciting to see who God will send to bless us each time.

**1 0 1 R E A S O N S F O R H A V I N G C H I L D R E N**

5.It's an honor for the Lord to use my womb again.

6.I love being "with child."

7.I love to see what God thinks of next. I believe each child is a precious and unique thought, with vast possibilities, straight from our Heavenly Father. It's the most exciting thing in my entire life to give birth and see the new little person. There is nothing that moves me as much as seeing the birth of a baby.

8.I love to behold the handiwork of the Lord as a new little miracle comes forth.

9.The birth of a baby is the ultimate fulfillment of love between a husband and wife. Each child is an unbreakable bond between a father and mother.

10.It is amazing to think that each child is a part of me and my beloved husband. God said to Jeremiah, "BEFORE I formed you in the womb I knew you..." God is the One who will form my future children. If He knew Jeremiah before conception, then He knows all my children before conception, yes, even the children who haven't yet been formed. I don't want to refuse children God has chosen.

11.I'd love another baby because to choose not to is like saying NO to God. I want to say YES to God and His will for my life.

12.I'll have more people to love.

13.I'll have more hands to help.

14.I'll have more babies to nurse and therefore less risk of breast cancer.

15.I feel so blessed that God wants to reward us again.

16.I look upon each child as an incredibly beautiful jewel. Each one takes on a different loveliness and I can't wait to see the next jewel arrive.

17.Another baby in the family makes my other children so happy.

18.I love to see the faces of my children as they see a new brother or sister for the first time.

19.Babies teach the older children so much about caring for little ones, being kind, protective, and unselfish.

20.Children brighten up the home. They make life interesting.

21.I become a better mother with each child I have.

22.Children teach me patience.

23.My children think I'm beautiful no matter how I look.

24.The more children we have, the more they entertain one another.

25.There's always someone around to visit with, play with, pray with, or read to.

26.It's just as easy to cook for ten as it is for one!

27.More children give us the opportunity to have our faith increased as we see God meet our daily needs.

28.You have your own cheering squad in whatever you do.

29.The more children we have, the more impact we have upon the world.

30.We want to establish a godly dynasty that will continue down the generations to come.

31.We want to raise another soul for Jesus.

32.We desire to raise up a standard for God in this evil day.

33.More children releases more of Christ in our home.

34.Because babies are the most irresistible things on earth.

35.There is nothing like a new baby in the house.

36.There is no occupation more rewarding than motherhood.

37.Because I am fulfilling the only career that is eternal! Every other career will be left behind when we leave this earth, but I can take my children with me into glory. My children are eternal souls who will live for ever.

38.Parenthood is investing in eternity.

39.Children are like arrows which we send to places where we will

## 101 REASONS FOR HAVING CHILDREN

never be able to go.

40. We want to fill our quiver.

41. Because of the people who might be reached for Christ through this child.

42. I want to increase the 'salt' and 'light' proportion in the world!

43. We're forming our own orchestra to make music to the Lord.

44. Having and raising children aids in sanctification of us parents.

45. Having children helps to develop in us the godly character of servant-hood.

46. My children help me surrender the selfish desires of my flesh.

47. Parenthood allows us to experience the kind of love our Heavenly Father has for us.

48. In an era when so many individuals condone the denial, or taking of life - we want to give life - for life is sacred.

49. We don't want to deprive our parents of their "crowning glory" (Proverbs 17:6). We want to bless them with grandchildren.

50. Our children are my teachers. I learn sweet things from them every day.

51. I'm replenishing the earth with godly seed.

52. I want to be obedient to God's Word to "Be fruitful and multiply."

53. My children are my friends and my brothers and sisters in the Lord. Now who can have too many of these?

54. I have a passionate love for babies.

55. I just love being a mother. I love being pregnant. I love giving birth and I love breastfeeding.

56. I love the sweet smiles, the delightful giggle, the soft baby to cuddle.

57. Jesus said that when we welcome a little child into our home and family we are actually welcoming Him. I don't want to spurn Jesus.

58. We want our children to have the riches of many relationships with brothers and sisters. When we are no longer living, our children will have each other for encouragement, fellowship and a sense of family

59. The more children we have, the more our love is multiplied.

60. We still have an empty seat in our van, and we'd like to fill it!

61. Our children are all so wonderful, who could resist another one? 62. God says that children are a reward and we believe Him!

63. Children are the most precious gift of marriage.

64. We get lots of experience in sharing and communicating.

65. Children help me see my daily dependence on God for His wisdom and strength.

66. I love to feel a precious life within my womb.

67. Large families are FUN! And we love having fun.

68. In a large family, the children and teenagers don't want to go out to find entertainment because they are lonely and bored - there is already fun and entertainment at home A new baby reminds me of how Jesus came into the world.

69. To be open to more children shows our present children that we love them. How can our children understand the love of God if we have the attitude that a certain number of children is too many?

70. More children help to grow the church.

71. I want to rear strong soldiers for

101 REASONS FOR HAVING CHILDREN

the Lord.

72. I'll be able to spend eternity with my children.

73. My body was created for this purpose.

74. Family celebrations - birthdays, holidays and Christmas are even more wonderful with a new baby in the house.

75. Hope for mankind is expressed in the miracle of a baby's birth. Wherever there is life, there is Hope.

76. Babies are sweet, cuddly, adorable and have so much potential. It's like planting seeds in a flower garden - a beautiful bouquet for the future.

77. There will be more people to pay for the aged's social security benefits.

78. I want to yield my womb as a living sacrifice to God.

79. To prevent menses and enjoy the nursing hormones of prolactin and oxytocin. My most enjoyable and peaceful times are during the absence of menses during pregnancy

80. To give a sweet testimony to a lost world.

81. Babies remind us of how wonderful and how creative our God is.

82. We are training a godly generation that will cover the earth with the Gospel and prepare the way for

Jesus' return.

83. Younger children teach the older children how to be helpers. By the time they are old enough to be married and have children of their own, they'll be prepared for raising them.

84. I want another arrow for God's army.

85. I love to feel a precious new life moving within me.

86. I would hate to stand before God on Judgment Day and have to answer why I rejected the children He had ordained for our family.

87. Our children have taught me the value of relationships and the shallowness of the world's value system.

88. I trust God in all other areas of my life and I want to trust Him in the area of having children too.

89. It sure is nice to kiss and smell a little one again. Their scent is so sweet.

90. Babies are also a blessing to other people. They sure love to hold and cuddle mine. Since my siblings have stopped at two children per family, I want to supply them for my parents and everyone else's pleasure.

91. Our horizon and interests are constantly widened. Each child is born with a different destiny upon his/her life. Each child has different gifts. As we encourage our children in their varied gifts we constantly learn new things ourselves. Our

children will often take on ventures and interests that we would never have dreamed of. Parenthood is not confining, but enlarging.

92. Babies are future dish washers!

93. Babies are a lot more entertaining than TV.

94. We're helping to build the kingdom of God.

95. So I can buy cute baby and children's clothes, even if it's at a yard sale.

96. I'll be able to spend eternity with my children.

97. Children teach me to become a servant, and that's what Jesus wants us to be. Jesus Himself said He came to serve rather than to be served.

98. To be convicted of sin and the need for repentance as I observe my sinful nature in my children's sinful natures.

99. The more children we have, the more we will be blessed when we are older. Instead of being lonely, we will have many children and grandchildren around to entertain us, bless us and care for us.

100. Raising up a godly seed is laying up treasure in heaven.

101. Having children causes us to depend upon God moment by moment!

## NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

After my husband and I became Christians, we decided we wanted more children. Nothing seemed to be happening, but we did not want to use fertility drugs to conceive. Somehow I learned about a group called Couple to Couple League (ccli.org). They are a Catholic non-profit organization, so while we did not agree with all of their material, much of it was very useful. They teach a method of Natural Family Planning (NFP) that uses temperature charting and observing fertility signs to determine the best time to conceive or to avoid conception. Their primary instruction manual is called The Art of Natural Family Planning.

When I first began to chart my cycles, I found out that I was not even ovulating. No wonder we were having trouble having a baby! I ordered a book they carry called Fertility, Cycles & Nutrition by Marilyn M. Shannon. It was an excellent book which discussed how changing your diet can improve your fertility. It was amazing to see the improvement by looking at my charts over the course of several months. The Art of Natural Family Planning also included many low-tech suggestions for increasing your chance of conceiving. I am happy to say that the methods they taught us resulted in the addition of a healthy boy to our home. We are so grateful.

Years have passed since we have learned about NFP. I no longer chart my temperature and fertility symptoms, but use a similar, more casual method. Although it is probably not as effective, we are satisfied with it and have planned our family of five children using this approach. If you follow the NFP instructions carefully, the chance for becoming pregnant is very low. We are happy that we have avoided using birth control methods that could cause harm.

The Couple to Couple League also prints materials on various birth control methods. Much of the information you will not receive from your obstetrician or gynecologist. Before you consider vasectomy, you may want to read their brochure, "Vasectomy: Some Q&A". It was eye-opening to us. ~Name Withheld



Just for fun—Some of my furry babies...

## S.I.L.L.Y.

Dear Sisters,

I apologize for the extremely delayed publication of this newsletter. I appreciate so much your willingness to bare your hearts, writing about things it would be “safer” to keep to yourselves. Many of you have emailed, or called, and gently encouraged me to get this issue of S.I.L.L.Y. out. My spirit has been resistant. I have sometimes not even answered your notes of concern. Forgive me, and thank you for caring. Discouragement has knocked at my door on a daily basis, and all too often, I have let it in.

I have gone through some personal struggles with busyness, school, having many small children, a husband who is wonderful, but often absent, and a pregnancy that has had it's share of health issues. The feeling that I have “nothing to say” to anyone else about child-rearing or child-bearing, ( considering my own inadequacies) has been overwhelming at times. As I sit here, “great with child”.....in my 39th week of pregnancy and confined to “semi-bed rest”, I do not take the opinions expressed about family planning in this newsletter lightly. I am in the middle of some very gritty life issues, right here, right now, as I know that many of you are. When I think of what my sometimes judgmental attitude has been toward others as I've watched *them* make these decisions, I cringe. It's somehow so different when the decision concerns our *own* health, our *own* body, our *own* family...

Please pray for me and my family as we get through what time is left until our baby is born, as we prayerfully make some decisions about family planning ourselves, as we strive to do what the Lord has called us to do with the children that He has given us, as we surrender to the circumstances He has placed us in, and as we strain to hear the whisper of His will...

I love you all.

In His Grip,

Sister Bonny Jamison