

# S.I.L.L.Y. (Sisters In the Lord with Lots of Young'uns)

December 2008

"Her children arise up and call her blessed...." Proverbs 31:28

"Children are spring-loaded for worship. One of the most important callings God has given parents is to display the greatness, goodness, and glory of the God for whom they are made. Parents have the opportunity, through word and deed, to show children the one true object of worship—the God of the Bible.  
—from Sheparding a Child's Heart  
by Tedd Tripp

## Next Month:

With a new Year right around the corner, many of us are thinking of resolutions. Please send in your suggestions for making a new habit or routine "stick", ways to kick a bad habit, tips for making exercise fun or weight loss doable, healthy recipes, home organization, etc. I'll print as many as we can!

## "Blue" at Christmas?

I looked up from our Thanksgiving craft, (pinecone turkeys), with hot glue and feathers stuck to all my fingers, and asked my mom, "Why is it so much work to have fun?" My children lost interest in the turkeys and ran off wearing their felt Indian head-dresses, and emitting realistic-sounding war whoops. I collapsed into the chair, my question unanswered.

I was feeling the same way two days later as my mom and I were driving the kids home from the Christmas parade in Archbold, OH. My husband was gone on a trip, so I had rushed to get the evening chores done, and then the kids ready and packed into the van. When we got to the parade, the baby wailed because a steam engine whistled right in front of us, Bella, (almost 4 yrs. old), complained the whole time about being cold, and Bodey, (6 yrs. old), ate way too much candy. Now, on the way home, Bella was crying because her shoe fell off, and Bronte, (2 yrs. old) was begging for her "Bankie" which had been left at home. Brielle, (8 mos.) was crying because she wanted to go to sleep and it was too noisy! At least Bodey was quiet, but probably only because his mouth was full of candy. I turned to my mom, (poor woman, she bears the brunt of my maternal anxiety), and asked the burning question that is always in my mind. "Is it like this for everyone who has lots of little kids, or am I doing something terribly wrong?"

For me, the holidays seem to make finding the answer to these questions more urgent. I have a strong desire for us all to look like a picture from Currier and Ives. I want the house decorated beautifully, the kids dressed in matching outfits, the oven full of cookies, carols playing, lights twinkling, and love and harmony in the air.....then I wake up from this little fantasy to smell burning cookies, children who are fighting, (so loud I can't hear the Christmas carols), and a house that I have to work on for an

hour just to make room for the tree!

Lord, where is my joy? Help me to remember why we're celebrating. Fill my heart with wonder and thankfulness for what You did on the first Christmas day ....for taking on that most dependant, helpless and lowly of roles, clothing yourself in the flesh of a tiny baby...for me. Help me to give up those unrealistic expectations that I have, to love and enjoy my children for who they are and where they are right now. Thank you, Lord.

After I prayed this prayer, an idea came to my mind of a pine tree. It's a scrubby, pokey, Charlie Brown kind of tree. It isn't lovely to look at. Its needles are sharp. The pine tree is like my everyday battle of raising children. The messy house, the endless diaper changes, the bickering, the whining, the crying, the thankless jobs that have to be done over and over again....

Oh, but then there are the ornaments...the brief, beautiful, sparkling moments when my children are so sweet. The tight bear hugs, and slobbery baby kisses, the story times with everyone piled in the chair at once, the delight they feel when it snows, their little prayers, the laughter and their funny games of make-believe....the lessons God gives me the opportunity to teach them along the way.

Right now, I am in the middle of the tree. It's scratchy and uncomfortable, and it's difficult to see where I'm going. I hope and pray that when my children are grown, we can look back and the picture will finally be complete. The shining ornaments will make the whole tree beautiful.

My prayer for you this Christmas is that you will not let unrealistic expectations cloud the bright, joyful moments you can share with your children. Take some time to savor memories and create some new ones. Your children will not remember most of their gifts, or if the house was decorated perfectly, or even if it was clean! They *will* remember the day Mom built a snowman with them. Just think of it as creating another ornament for their tree!

## Prayer Requests:

We'll post these new every month. If you would like one to stay on the list, please re-submit it each month, with updated information if possible.

\* Karen Blocher and family—for continued healing from burns. Karen is now home, Praise the Lord!

\* For our missionary families, away from their families at this time of year, serving the Lord.

\* For the leadership in our country, let's remember, all authority comes from God.

\* For Timothy, newborn son of Kevin and Kara Lorenz, who has had surgery to attach his small and large intestines, and for the family as they face these challenges.

\* For the many among us who are battling life-threatening illnesses, or mourning loss of loved ones during the holidays.

\* For this newsletter, that it would be used of God to help sisters who are raising young children

\* I'm sure there are many others, send them in!

## Holiday Hospitality

Those of you ladies who were at Women's Retreat will remember Bernice Wagner with great fondness. I asked her to write an article on Holiday Hospitality, and here it is! (She writes just like she talks, so you know there's a lot of information packed in here!)

Thanksgiving, a time of gratefulness... Christmas, celebrating Jesus's birth. Special times of wonderful food and fellowship with family and friends. A beautiful time of celebrating our love for Jesus and His love for us...we should just radiate peace and joy!

Does the world see us relaxed and joyful as we make preparations for this time of Jesus birth? Or do they see us frazzled and frustrated as we scurry about buying presents they don't need, for people we hardly know, with money we don't have?

Our holidays can be wonderful without maxing out the credit card. If you want to decorate, find someone that's trimming and pruning their pine trees and ask for the trimmings. Put the greens in boxes, crates, baskets, crocks and your child's express wagon. Fill the sprinkling can with greens, then hang it on the shepherd's hook in your flower bed and tie a big red bow on the handle. Stuff greens and holly in your window box with a red bow and a little string of lights.

Fill an old goblet with candy canes (lollipops the rest of the year). String cranberries and popcorn on dental floss so it won't break, then hang it on trees or bushes after Christmas for the birds. Use pine cones the children gather for your baskets and greens. These are ways to decorate that cost very little and shows others it can be done if you're on a budget.

Get creative, make gifts. Bake cookies or breads, wrap in Saran Wrap and tie with ribbon or rick rack from your sewing basket. Trace your child's hand print, then frame it, or use muslin, quilt and frame it or make a pillow for grandma. Read to shut in's, take your children to retirement homes and let elderly folks chat with them...best vitamin those people will have for that day! For your parents who seem to have everything...make a schedule for the year and have them for 'a meal a month' present. You and your children, send thank you notes...it teaches gratefulness and appreciation. Read to your children...a gift of time spent with them.

May Jesus be first in all your plans for this special time of the year. Seek His advice before you spend money, ask who He wants you to invite for a time of food and fellowship, and who does He want you to share the story of His birth with...Jesus, the real reason for the season.

Blessings to all, Bernice Wagner

## A Thousand Thanks

Continuing on our holiday theme, here's an article from Sister Tena Priest that expresses the idea of thankfulness in the throes of life very well.

Growing up I never had huge aspirations. I never dreamed of carrying a brief case under my arm and being a prosecuting attorney or hauling handcuffs and being a policewoman or even of seeing shiny apples on my desk as a teacher. I guess you can say I dreamt small. All I wanted in life was to be a wife and mother.

I would dream away my days just knowing that I would be such a good mother that as soon as my children could walk they would rise up and call me "Blessed".

I would also be such a good wife that my husband would "Praise me in the streets"! No macaroni and cheese dinners on my table, no siree, just healthy gourmet dinners, thank you! My house would also look like Martha Stewarts 24-7!

Then reality hit.....I would have days that I pictured myself walking out the door with a brief case under MY arm after I kissed my husband good-bye while HE stood there with extra appendages clinging to HIS legs. Or I would picture myself in slow motion chasing down the school bus passing by our house and begging the driver, "Please, just for today??!!"

After one particularly hairy day I found myself sitting on the floor of our closet, tears flowing down my cheeks, begging God for grace to get through the day. My one son and I had spent most of the day working on spelling words that were so simple yet so hard and I was convinced he would NEVER get it. I had to go hide lest he start to think he had something wrong with him. It was not long before I heard echoing through the house, "Mom, where are you?" Soon he found me and just sat on my lap. He did not have to ask me what was wrong, he knew. As I sat there with him gently patting my back and as our tears mingled a thousand thanks raced through my mind.

Lord, thank you that no matter how many times I fail, my children still love me and forgive me.

Lord, thank you that no matter how many times my husband comes home and has to trip over legos just to get to me, he still takes me in his arms and loves me. Lord, thank you for giving me second chances and for filling in the gaps when I fail miserably and Lord, thank you, thank you for, ahhhhhh.....

This is the Life!!

## Poetry in Motion

~~~~~  
Here's something new for us! I received some poems from Maddy Brock, a thirteen-year-old sister from the Pleasant Ridge congregation. One in particular stood out to me for the December issue. In all of our busyness this holiday season, let's not forget those who are hurting, who don't have the family or resources that we do. There are so many needs to be met, sometimes it is overwhelming. Ask God to bring a specific need to your attention, so that you can bless someone else.

### The Child With the Pleading Eyes

by Maddy Brock

Far away in a dirty street,  
Sat a child with cold, bare feet.  
The orphan sat out in the rain,  
Her hungry stomach full of pain,  
And no one seemed to hear the cries  
Of the child with pleading eyes.

As on the ground she sat right there,  
She wished and longed for someone to care.  
Well, God was looking from above.  
He saw the girl and was filled with love.  
All the girl could see was clouded skies,  
The child with the pleading eyes.

God looked upon this tiny girl,  
And saw a precious, shining pearl.  
The little girl, so hungry and poor,  
Would not sorrow anymore.  
And up to Heaven her soul did rise,  
The child who once had pleading eyes.

### **Grandmas Fill Gaps**

I didn't hear from any Grandmas this month, but I know something I would appreciate as a busy Mom! Take your grandchildren into your home for an afternoon of baking Christmas cookies, or making decorations while their parents go shopping, or wrap gifts. The grandkids will love it, and so will your big kids!

## From the Mouths of Babes

I thought this would be the most popular category, but I haven't heard from anyone! You're all going to get tired of hearing what my kids say!

I overheard Bodey asking Bella yesterday, "Do you want to grow up to be an evolutionist?!?" I called them into the living room where I was folding clothes and asked what was going on. "She's pretending evolution!" he claimed. "Bodey, I don't think she even understands what that is yet." I said. "Yes, she does!" he insisted. "I told her to pretend to be a tiger and she keeps turning into something else!"

## Tips Appreciated

.....  
Sent in by Sister Janell Trujillo

Picking up toys and messes at our house seems to be dreaded like the plague. There is always a great round of groans and moans and excuses. I find that my frustration level rises right along with theirs when I come back later only to find the mess still there or very poorly done. Somewhere along the line I heard this idea of the "pick-up game" and it works quite well. Instead of saying, "Pick up all the toys in the living room, *now!*" you can say, "Pick up all the green toys." When that's done maybe anything that is round etc. It's gone from needing to stand over them with a stick (practically!) to them dashing here and there putting things away to see what I will say next. Now I won't even claim to not have troubles with messes any more, but when I take the time to do it a "fun" way, we all feel much better!

### Make your own dishwasher soap

Submitted by Sister Kara Lorenz

In a large container, simply combine equal parts:

- \*powder dishwasher soap (I use the cheapest store brand)
- \*baking soda
- \*Borax

Stir up and use approximately 1/4 c. per load. I store this in an old ice cream bucket and it lasts a long time. It cleans the dishes quite well and helps to save money in this area.

## Kids Korner:

There are so many fun things for kids to do this time of year, it's hard to choose!

One thing we are trying to stress with our children this Christmas is that it's not all about "getting". We are following some of Bernice's suggestions for giving the gift of time, and also doing some service and mission type projects with the kids. Instructing our children in a society that is increasingly materialistic and Santa-oriented can be difficult, but it can be done. Just getting them in contact with people who don't have a home or enough food to eat can produce a more thankful attitude. Doing something to help those people puts Christ's compassion into action for our children.

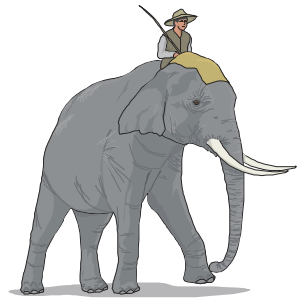
Churches in many areas put on "living nativities" that can make the story of Jesus come alive for children. There is also a "Little People" toys set that depicts the manger scene. My children received a set a few years ago as a gift, and we get it out around the first of December and read the Christmas story. They play with the little plastic characters and act out the Christmas story many times throughout the month. I have also seen wooden versions of this for children.



## KIDDIE KLASSICS:

.....  
All is Well by Frank Peretti is not the "typical" Christmas story ( it takes place in the middle of July), but it is one that will touch your heart and the hearts of your children with the real meaning of Christmas.

Be prepared, I can't read it without tears! It is beautifully illustrated, and sparks discussions about those who are in need and what we can do to help them, as well as how God takes care of us, no matter what our needs or circumstances.



.....  
**'And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the lowly estate of His handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.'** Luke 2:46-48



