

# 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

## There's a Method to My Madness

“What we learn in childhood is carved in stone. What we learn as adults is carved in ice.”

--David Kherdian, poet

My locker clean-outs in junior high and high school were legendary. The teachers used to send us out in the hall at the end of the year with instructions to empty everything out. They gave me my own 55-gallon trash can. One year I found three Health textbooks in there. I'm not sure how I convinced the teacher to let me have a second, and then a *third* one! Another year, I actually abandoned one locker as hopeless at mid-term and took over another empty one. I'm not bragging. It embarrasses me to admit this. In fact, I never told my husband this shameful story until I started writing this article. If ever a disorganized, procrastinating pack-rat were born, it was I.

My motive for telling you this is to drive home the point that organizational skills do not need to be inborn. They can be learned. While my home is certainly not the pinnacle of orderliness, neither is it what you'd expect based on my high school habits. By nature I am still “too optimistic about time, money, and fix-it-uppers,” (as my husband always says), but out of necessity I have learned to be more organized.

Over the years, I have tried many different “systems”, some were not practical and got left behind, but I'd like to share a few that have proven useful to me.

**Marker Boards:** I have several small dry-erase boards magnetically stuck on my fridge. One carries a running “to-do” list.

Items stay on it until they get crossed off. It may take me a week or a month to get through all the things on there, but keeping them in front of me usually means they get done sooner, rather than later or never. Another board says “Today's Menu”. I can look around first thing in the morning and decide what to fix, instead of at noon, with two little ones hanging from my skirt. I can never think of anything when the pressure's on! Yet another board holds a grocery list. Whenever I notice we are out of something, I jot it down right away. I used to write it on paper, but somehow those little slips always got lost. Now, I just copy the list from my marker board right before leaving for the grocery store. One last board has a generic month calendar on it, and I re-do it each month, writing in appointments, birthdays, potlucks, etc. If someone is having surgery and we need to remember to pray, it goes on the calendar; if I need to bake 6 dozen cookies by Thursday, it goes on the calendar. I see it many times a day, so it works better for me than a planner I might forget to open for several days.

**Containers:** Divide and conquer. All four of my older children and their clothes reside in one bedroom with no closet. This situation requires some creativity. Large plastic tubs in the attic contain outgrown children's clothing, or clothes they are waiting to grow into. I go through all their clothes Spring and Fall, so only warm weather clothes or cold weather

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## There's a Method (Continued)

clothes are actually in the drawers. At those times I take out what has become too ratty to hand down, and put away the things that we're keeping in the appropriate size/gender labeled tub. I try to find things a season ahead at garage sales or thrift stores. I put them away in the correct tub as soon as possible. I also have tubs for winter coats, hats, boots, and mittens and one for swimming things, so only what we need at the time is taking up space in our downstairs closet. I have a large tub for shoes, so when a child needs a pair, we look there first, to see if a pair of outgrown ones or ones I've picked up at a garage sale will work. We rotate toys using this system, also. About every six months we bring down the toys that were in the attic, let the kids pick out what they want, then re-fill the tubs with what isn't getting played with, (or donate it to Goodwill). This saves space and mess in the playroom. Speaking of the playroom, that's another place where containers are essential! Plastic boxes on bookshelves help the kids and I put toys away neatly, and group objects such as blocks, games, puzzles, and matchbox cars. I use containers for kitchen supplies, craft supplies, hair ribbons and barrettes, and much, much more.



This is how we fit them all in one room. (Just Kidding!)

**Maintenance:** This is perhaps the key to the whole thing. No matter how brilliant your system, it will eventually start to get messy and fall apart. All organization requires regular maintenance. When you notice that your neat and tidy linen closet is starting to look like a rat's nest, don't throw up your hands and give up, put it on your to-do list! Next time you have a few minutes, go back and start over. Everyone has places where clutter accumulates. The counter in the laundry room, the dining room table, on the vanity in the bathroom. When you are cleaning that room, take a few minutes to de-clutter. If left to themselves, those areas seem to take on a life of their own. It can get ugly. Sometimes when you are raising children, it feels you just don't have time to do those "extra" things. You're so busy just keeping everyone fed and dressed and bathed, organizing the coat closet doesn't seem like a priority. Sometimes it isn't. But I generally find that the time I spend organizing is more than made up for, by the time we save not having to search for lost objects. Children and husbands can help pick things up much better if everything has a set place to go.

**If All Else Fails, Get a "Sarah":** Sarah Johnson comes to our house one or two mornings a week, and helps out. Often she watches my littlest ones so I can do school with the older ones, but occasionally she has time to do other things. It just so happens that organizing is her strong point. She actually enjoys it! She has been able to help me go through many of my "problem areas", and keep our basic systems in much better repair. Perhaps you know someone who is good at that sort of thing, and could hire them for a few hours. It does require swallowing your pride a bit, to let anyone else see inside those closets and cupboards. If you can't get a "Sarah", trade baby-sitting with a friend so you have a little time to work on it yourself.

There are more articles and tips in this month's edition to help you get organized. Not all ideas work for everyone, but perhaps something you read here will get you started. Just remember, if I can grow into a semi-organized person, there's hope for *anyone!* (Just ask my tenth-grade Health teacher!)

## K i d d i e   K l a s s i c s

We aren't real big on Santa Claus around here, but [A Pirate's Night Before Christmas](#) by Philip Yates is a delightfully rollicking re-telling of the original poem. It contains such gems as: "The pirates were snorin' like pigs in thar beds, while visions of treasure chests danced in thar heads," and "Away to the poop deck I ran very fast, I threw off the anchor and shouted, 'Avast!'. It's such fun to read aloud, and the pictures are great, too. Bodey received it as Christmas gift....one to keep in mind for next year!

"The most interesting information comes from children, for they tell all they know and then stop."  
 —Mark Twain



Bodey, Bella and Bronte love acting out stories with costumes or puppets.

Few children learn to love books by themselves. Someone has to lure them into the wonderful world of the written word; someone has to show them the way.  
 —Orville Prescott from [A Father Reads to His Children](#)

Mt 18:3 "And [Jesus] said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

[A Question For Next Month](#): I frequently have trouble getting my children to be quiet and hold still during church, especially on the Sundays their dad is preaching, (and I'm often trying to nurse Breck). Some of this I'm sure is a training issue, and we've recently started having practice sessions of "sitting still and being quiet" times, at home, where it's easier to dole out consequences to the unruly. Any advice or suggestions?

[Containers need not be expensive](#). Here are a few you may not have thought of: Pink plastic wash basins from hospital stays. Know a nurse? Ask him or her to save them. They can be sterilized in the dishwasher, and would otherwise be thrown away! Know a farmer? Many medications used for pigs, chickens and cattle come in great plastic buckets with lids. Often, the medication doesn't even contact the bucket. It's usually in a plastic bag or packets. Happy recycling!

~Always out of room to hang skirts? Hang six skirts in the space of one hanger with a "Folding Skirt Hanger", \$6 from the [containerstore.com](http://containerstore.com).

# HELP!

By Sister Kirsten Wertz

HELP!!!!

This is the plea I heard coming from my sons' bedroom as I was folding laundry the other day. As it was a fairly urgent sounding call, I moved quickly down the hall and into the bedroom to find my eight year old somehow suspended from the bottom side of the top bunk! On seeing my face, he

When you fear  
God, you fear  
nothing else,  
whereas if you do  
not fear God, you  
fear *everything*  
else.  
~Oswald  
Chambers

broke into a big, goofy grin and said, "I need help getting down from here!" He was between the slats



and the mattress and was stuck. Why? Who knows why eight year old boys do things like this. He is my fourth boy, but I still don't have 'em figured out! After some tugging and pulling and readjusting, he was able to squirm free. He gave me a big hug and dashed off to find something else to do. I was left standing there, shaking my head and smiling. Later it hit me that I do the same thing to my heavenly Father sometimes. I get myself into an impossible situation, where I have no option left but to cry "Help!" and He always shows up. Why do I do these things? I've been a believer for over twenty years, but I still don't have that one figured out, either. However, how sad would it be if I had no one to call? We've been learning more about the foster system and are saddened by the many children who have no one to call to come help them. At times I act like I have no-one to call. Sometimes, I just refuse to call until I am so entangled by sin that I begin to become fear-

ful. The Word tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Maybe if I'd had a bit more of that godly fear, I'd not have gotten myself in the situation in the first place. This year, I think I need to focus on more time in the Word, developing the kind of reverential fear of the Lord that will keep me from getting all tied up in sin. "Therefore, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Heb. 12:1 Wow, maybe I'll even lay aside some other extra weight too!

## From the Mouths of Babes

Our daughter Erin is quite a 4 year old. Sometimes I don't know whether to laugh or spank. Erin is full of get up and go, except at meal times. Then there is daydreaming to do, things to talk about, or "exciting" things to see. For example - One Sunday morning she was eating breakfast ; the rest of us were done and getting ready for church. Chad went out to encourage her along. When he asked her why it was taking so long she very seriously said, "Daddy, I am watching that tree grow!"

## Worth Reading

Recommended by Sister Kirsten Wertz

The title of this book caught my eye as I was standing in line at the local pharmacy last January. The House that Cleans Itself by Mindy Starns Clark sounded like a dream come true. I wondered if it came with maid service! After getting it home and browsing through it, I came to the conclusion that there was no maid hiding inside it, but that the one holding the book needed to get up and get busy using some of the tips in the book. As with most book of this type, some of the ideas were very helpful to me and others not so much, but it did help me think differently about my housework and how to make it work for me rather than against me.



Does the book say what to do about small people setting up housekeeping in the bathroom?

## Another Worth Reading

Recommended by Sister Rita Noecker



Have you heard about the book Good and Evil by Michael Pearl? It is a Bible story comic book. The Scriptures are accurately interpreted through the pictures and writing, and it has references at the bottom of the pages so you can find the story in the Bible. Oh yes, I mentioned pictures! The art is fantastic! The quality of the illustrations is what most impressed my family about this book. Blane (just turned 4) has a lot of questions about some of the “scary” pictures – like a baby being thrown into the river (Moses) and Christians being martyred. In fact, I thought some of the pictures might be too graphic for our young children, but is it not okay to have a fear of evil? Blane is seeing through this book that the Almighty God is bigger than all the evil; that He has defeated Satan and his helpers and will conquer them in the end. You can read about this book and see what it looks like before ordering at: [nogreaterjoy.org](http://nogreaterjoy.org).

**“And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”**

**John 21:25**



**“Learning to write well at age thirty-five is a lot like learning to rollerblade or speak a foreign language at age thirty-five; it’s not as easy as it would be at age seven. Vocabulary and coherent sentences can’t be downloaded onto paper unless they’ve first been uploaded to the head—by reading.”**

**—Jim Trelease, The Read-Aloud Handbook**

## Michelle and Her Man

By Sister Laura Hawbaker

A few weeks before Christmas, our church held a Wednesday night service at a local care facility. The facility, originally called the Dallas County Poor Farm, later updated to the Dallas County Farm was now called the politically correct name of Dallas County Care Facility. In reality, it is still home to the poor, the physically and mentally handicapped, outcasts and those without family to care for them. We sang carols and read scripture with the intention of bringing cheer and encouragement to the folks residing there, but one resident encouraged and inspired me.

She had sparkly eyes; she waved at us and clapped enthusiastically after each carol. Sometimes she would say, "I like that song!" She was sitting by a man who seemed calmly stoic compared to her bubbly enthusiasm, yet they looked uncannily similar to each other. They both had Down syndrome.

After the service I shook hands with her and she introduced herself, "Hi, I'm Michele." Then she turned toward the man beside her, punched him affectionately on the shoulder and proudly announced, "That's my man!" Michele's man shyly mumbled something and politely shook my hand.

I evaluated Michele's specimen of a man: he was barely five foot tall, his soft, flabby waist encircled by a size 42 inch belt, white socks showed beneath his too-short jeans. Not exactly a prize winner, but Michele was proud of him. Michele and her man were not officially married, but they were a couple, and apparently a happy one. I was reminded of another couple I had heard about in the news recently. Handsome, slim, athletic, wealthy, famous, fashionably dressed, Tiger Woods and his wife were technically married, but obviously unhappy.

A few minutes later, mingling with the crowd, I ran across Michele again. Her friend was near by. She shook my hand again, and again announced, "That's my man!"

I couldn't resist. It was my turn to brag. Looking around the crowd, I saw my husband a few feet away, back toward us, talking to a group of men. I pointed him out to Michele, "That's my man!" I said.

"What's his name?" Michele asked eagerly. When I told her, she delightedly called out, "NELSON!!!" causing him to jump and see who was shouting for him!

When it was time for us to go, Michele and her man walked down the hall way with us. He was slightly ahead and looked back every now and then to see if Michele was coming along. I thought they were just heading to their rooms, but Michele proudly told us, "He will open the door for you." Michele's man did just that and politely and quietly told us good night.

I was challenged by the delight Michele had in her man. How easy it is, in the daily-ness of life to forget the wonder of the marriage relationship. Instead of celebrating our husband's good points, we tend to get hung up on the annoying habits; the things we wish were different. Little seeds of discontentment soon grow into ugly weeds when we dwell on the "if onlys" of marriage. Michele accepted her man just as he was, (flabby waste and all) and was not out to "improve" him. Of course, ignoring problems in our marriage is not healthy, but handling our differences with love, respect and honor is so much more effective than nagging or sulking.

In the weeks since meeting Michele I like to punch my husband on the shoulder and say proudly, "That's my man!" Try it. Your man will love it!

**"That's my man!"**

## She Bringeth Her Food From Afar



Bella works on her gingerbread house.

### Blueberry Cream Muffins

- 4 eggs
- 2 c. sugar
- 1 c. vegetable oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 c. (16 oz.) sour cream
- 4 c. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. Baking powder
- 2 c. fresh or frozen blueberries, (if frozen, don't thaw)

In a mixing bowl, beat eggs. Gradually add sugar. While beating, slowly pour in oil; add vanilla. Combine dry ingredients; add alternately with the sour cream to the egg mixture. Gently fold in blueberries. Spoon into greased muffin tins. If you use paper liners, spray them first with cooking spray. Bake at 400\* for 20 minutes. Beaty says this yields 24 muffins, but my muffin pans must be smaller, I usually get 36.

To help keep kitchen cabinets organized, buy only Glad or Ziplock left-over containers. Stack lids in one large plastic basket and containers in another. No more searching for the right Tupperware lid, that matches just one certain container.

A great recipe to use up those bananas that no one wants to eat...My family loves these for breakfast, snack or with a meal, pretty much anytime!

### Banana Wheat Muffins

- 1 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 2/3 cup all purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 cup mayonnaise (no low fat substitutes)
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 cup mashed bananas (3 medium)



Beat together mayo, sugar and bananas. Add flour, soda and salt and stir just until moistened. Fill muffin cups 2/3 full. Bake 20-25 minutes at 350. Makes 1 dozen muffins.

### Things To Do With Frozen Blueberries

- Put your cranky, teething 14 month-old in her high chair, put frozen blueberries on the tray, and both of you will be happier. The frozen berries soothe inflamed gums wonderfully!
- Use as little mini-ice cubes for cooling hot oatmeal for children.
- Pour pancake batter on the skillet, then let the children make smiley faces on their pancakes with the blueberries as they cook.
- Make yogurt smoothies.
- Make the great recipe from Beaty Switzer, on the left. It's one of my children's favorites. It makes a big batch and the muffins freeze well, too.

## Tips From the "Organized One"

By Sister Sherry Zook

There are three of us sisters in our family.... we're best friends and God has made us so uniquely different! Awhile ago, one of my sisters and I were talking about what makes each of us tick, something that we thrive on. This is what we came up with for each other....one sister enjoys getting a lot accomplished, she's a real worker! Another sister feels that all is well when she had time to do something thoughtful for someone. I was told that I thrive on being organized. I thought about my "diagnosis" for a little bit and had to agree, there was some truth there, however boring it sounds!

I don't have any complicated, expensive way of being organized. My cupboards and closets aren't full of labeled bins and containers (I have to admit that would be fun, if I wanted to spend the money!) Several years ago I came up with an idea that works real well in helping me stay organized. I designated a small area in my attic for putting extras. As I go throughout my day and see an item we don't use or that doesn't fit us anymore, it goes on the pile. As you put laundry away and see a shirt in your son's closet that is too small and you don't want to keep it for a hand-me-down, throw it on the pile. There is really no reason that a child needs

5 pairs of pajamas! Keep a few and put the rest on the pile (it helps if you do this when they are occupied elsewhere :-)) As you're cooking in your kitchen and rummaging through your drawers and see a gadget you rarely use, add it to the pile. Last evening I bought a 12 pack of assorted comb sizes because that's how they come at Walmart. I only needed 1. I'll keep the 2 that are the size I need and put the rest on the pile.

"To sum it up, I feel that the less "stuff" I have, the less cluttered and hectic life seems."

When I get a sizable pile accumulated, I load it up in my car trunk and drive to our local re-use-it shop. There are friendly workers at the drop off dock that see me every few months and I'm sure they recognize my car by now. Someone else will find a use for our stuff and the proceeds go to third-world countries. Some of you may wish to save your stuff for a yard sale in the spring. In that case, you'll need a larger area to save it all and you could make some spending money also!

Another area that is essential to keep cleared out is your desk. To me, this is the center of being organized. In the evening, take a glance at your calendar and write yourself notes...."give Grandma a call to wish her a Happy Birthday"... "write a note to teacher about up-coming school absence".... "run an errand first thing in morning", etc.

Then go to bed and sleep well!

I'm certainly not an expert on organizing. I only shared some ways that make our home semi-organized! To sum it up, I feel that the less "stuff" I have, the less cluttered and hectic life seems. I wish all you sisters a wonderful year of discovering the best that God has for you!

—Keep a donation hamper in your closet. Every two weeks, select an item of clothing you haven't worn in the past six months and throw it in. When the hamper is full, take it to Goodwill.

—Keep a small notebook with you at all times and use it as a constant brain dump. Go through your scribbling each evening and put thoughts in their appropriate places, such as your calendar or to-do list.

—Shop dollar stores for storage bins and baskets.

## " I Need Grandma! "

### By Sister Becky \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

As a mother with children fast approaching their twenties and with no prospects in their horizons, I really was losing faith in ever becoming a grandmother. I was anxious to be a grandmother, I really thought I would make a good one!

Then one morning quite a few years later, I woke up and I was a grandmother... to seven. I began to wonder.. What is my responsibility to them? Have I taught them anything? (Besides the fact that there is always gum in my pocketbook!)

One Sunday morning as we were sitting in church, I was oblivious to the noise coming from the back. My husband leaned over and whispered, "Your grandchildren are really cutting capers this morning." I started listening and, yes, it was MY grandchildren! After a little while, our son made his way to the back of the church carrying our two year old granddaughter. As he went out through the double doors, she wailed, "I NEED GRANDMA!" It was my moment of fame!... but it only lasted a moment. It started me thinking, Did she really think I would come to her rescue? And if she did, what did I do to make her think that?

My experience with grandmothers is pretty limited. My paternal grandparents were separated, so Grandma worked night and day to keep her family together and support herself. After my uncle took over the family farm, Grandma lived wherever she worked, in nursing homes, and later, as a housekeeper. Once when she came to visit us, one of my sisters asked Mom who that lady was. I was afraid of her when I was little. After I was married she came to live with my parents. It was then that I really learned to know and appreciate her. When she told me the stories of her life, the tragedies and disappointments she had faced, and how her faith kept her going, I was proud to call her "Grandma"!

My maternal grandmother died when I was six. In those six years she showed me what a grandmother could be. I can still remember the way she smelled, like lavender and candy all wrapped up in one. I remember her sitting on the "davenport", ( I never heard anybody else call our sofa a davenport) cuddling with me until I fell asleep. She was my ally against my older siblings. When she died I knew I had lost something valuable.

I realize how blessed I was to have two exceptional grandmothers. One taught me to treasure every moment you can with your grandchildren, and the other one taught me that even though life is hard, God will give us strength to face our struggles. I remember a reunion we had several years before she died, she looked around at all her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren and she said in a voice filled with awe, "I am responsible for all these people!" I thought to myself, with God at her side, she was able to live to see her family grow together, even though there were times she couldn't be there for them. And now, as I grow older there are still times that I NEED GRANDMA!

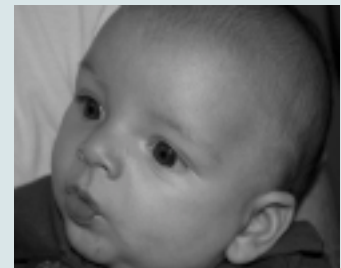
My Mom, Dyann, with Brecken



**P.S. Sister Becky-Thanks for the great article, but I have three "Beckys" on my mailing list. You didn't include your last name, and I can't find the original email, so I'm not sure which one you are! Please write and let me know!**

## Dear New Mom . . . .

As I have watched a number of friends go through the adjustments of bringing a new baby into the world, it has taken me back to about 7 years ago when we first had that experience. So, I share a few of those memories, both painful and pleasant with you to encourage those of you who do not have hind sight yet.



Brecken, 2 months old

Many times after Erica was several months old, I said how the first 6 weeks were not much fun at all.....you just try to survive. Do not set your goals too high, and don't let those expectations and ideals from all those books get you discouraged. You will hurt in places you have never hurt before. You will wonder if you will ever have time for yourself again. "Will I spend the rest of my life sitting on this couch, nursing this baby?!" You will wonder if you will ever go to the bathroom again without being afraid you will tear stitches. Sleep will become something you long for but never seem to have enough of. You will remember special times with your husband, and think they are all in the past. You will feel like a failure because your baby won't nurse right and certainly isn't on the schedule you had hoped for. Your milk will come in, and if you are like me, there will be so much of it and you will be so sore that you will long for the days of being a 'nearly A'. You might even hold your baby sometimes and not feel very much love at all. Instead you might think things like, "YOU are the one that caused me all this pain. Just NURSE! Go to SLEEP!" Then you will feel guilty and think you must be losing your mind or maybe going through the dreaded "postpartum depression."

"Will I spend the rest of my life sitting on this couch, nursing this baby?!"

The wonderful news is that you are totally NORMAL!! No, you are not a horrible Mother. No, you are not losing your mind! You WILL survive those first several weeks. In fact, in a little while, it will all become a fuzzy memory that you will once in while recall so you can encourage someone else. You will heal. Your body will be healthy and strong again and you will work just as hard and be just as efficient as before. Your milk will regulate and your baby will get on a schedule that works for you. Nursing will get to be a breeze, lasting 15 minutes TOTAL! Eventually, you will feel rested again. Times with your husband will be just as special as before. Then one day, you will look into your baby's face, and she will smile and coo and you will be rewarded for all your hard work.

But for now, give yourself a break. Let your husband or your mom take care of you. Accept that your house will not be perfectly clean. All you need to do right now is heal and feed that baby. Soak in the tub any chance you get....nothing feels better to those sore stitches. Enjoy each day as much as you can, but accept that it's normal at first "just to survive." The thrill and joy of life WILL return....just give yourself some time.

With Love to All You New Moms,  
Sister Janelle Trujillo

## Speaking of Babies...

**\*\*Announcing the birth of Jessica Marie Skiles born November 30, 2009 to Jonathan & Jill Skiles**

**Grandparents: Dale and Janie Meyers and Paul and Sarah Skiles**

**\*\*Announcing the birth of Lexi Jo Hufford on October 31, 2009 to Mark and Monica Hufford.**

**\*\*Announcing the birth of Sophia Noel Gish was born November 5, 2009 to Cody and Rebecca Gish**

**Grandparents: Phil and Mary Ellen Gish**

**\*\*A Praise!! Our Savannah is officially Savannah Joy Martin! We got a phone call on Dec. 3rd that the adoption is finished. We have started the passport and ask for prayers that the process would go smooth and speedy. We praise God for His greatness and answered prayers!! ~Sister Missy Martin (We have since heard that the Martins are safely back in the U.S.)**

## Prayer requests

**\*\*From Sister Missy Martin—** A Praise and a prayer request at the same time. Praise that us missionaries in Haiti were kept safe in the earthquake and a prayer for all the people who were hurt and family members killed. May peace and revival fill each heart!

**\*\*Please pray for others serving the Lord in Haiti, the Stauffers and others from the Cornerstone congregation, (I'm sorry I don't know all the names) for Jean-Claude and Monica Compere, and others you may know of.**

**\*\*Pray for the people of Haiti, the injured, those who have lost loved ones, and that the Lord would be glorified and made known to many more of the lost in that country.**

**\*\*Praise God that Sylvia Noecker and Lee and Danae Swihart are safe, and able to come back to the States for the birth of their baby.**

## Tips Appreciated

- If you have lots of small children to dress for church, keep all their "Sunday shoes" in a plastic box or basket in the closet, it's quick to grab on a hurried morning.
- Get a label maker. They are great for files, shelves, boxes, and containers of all kinds. Picture labels on boxes help non-readers sort toys.
- Book shelves—they can work for so much more than books! Often inexpensive, they can form an extra wall in a room to divide it into two areas, fill with baskets or boxes to store and organize toys, craft supplies, or even children's clothes.



"Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in."  
—C.S. Lewis from *Mere Christianity*

## Teenage Sons: A Response From Sister Sally Meyers

*A Question for those  
further down the path  
than I am....*

*Can you give those of us  
mothers with teenage  
sons ideas for ways to  
connect with our boys, to  
have fun with them, to  
get them to talk to us, to  
obey and respect us, etc?*

*Any advice for moms of  
teenage sons would be  
greatly appreciated!*

*~Sister Kirsten Wertz*

I read Sister Kirsten Wertz's plea for advice with teenage sons in the last issue, and I thought, "I hope someone answers her." I know the feeling of desperately wanting to have answers and to learn all I can. We only pass this way once and we don't get a chance to go back and do it all over. Realizing the seriousness, the absolute necessity of seizing the moments we have with our teenagers, I understand her longing to "do this right".

I hesitate to give advice at the risk of sounding like I have it all together and know the answers to all life's questions. God only knows how often I've asked for His help and the divine intervention He's granted. But in the stillness of my sleepless early mornings, I have decided that I should stop waiting for someone else to answer. With eight children at or through the teen years (and four of them sons), I should have learned *something*. In my pursuit of knowledge I have gleaned much from those who trod the path before me and graciously shared their wisdom. Should I not be willing to leave a few morsels for those behind me to learn from as well?

Let me preface my comments with the fact that Jim and I have very much *enjoyed* our teenagers. You will be able to enjoy yours as well, if you lay the foundation in the pre-teen years. They need to know you love and care for them; you must get a hold on their hearts, not just control their behavior. Oh yes, the challenges are there, and you will always be aware of the weight and repercussions of the choices you make, but you are now dealing with near-adults. You can reason with them, and discuss issues, helping your teens to make the right decisions.

You will see areas of their lives that need to be addressed from time to time, but keep in mind, no one wants to live with constant criticism. Never fail to point out their good points and mention things you appreciate about your teenager. Remember, too, "The person who praises a child is the one who controls the child." If teens don't feel acceptance and love from their parents, they will turn to someone else and do whatever it takes to get it. Take care that your relationship with your child is not characterized by negativity. Rather than trying to "catch them doing wrong" seek to "catch them doing right."

There will be times when you need to confront your teenager about an issue. Always keep your voice soft and loaded with tenderness. Your child should be able to sense your genuine interest in him, not just condemnation or criticism. Teens need to know that they are loved and accepted for who they are. They will not be exactly like an older sibling, and they shouldn't be made to feel like they have to be. Each child is unique and needs to be loved and shaped from their own mold.

Be humble enough to say, "I was wrong, I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" We all jump to wrong conclusions, demonstrate wrong attitudes, or display wrong temperaments at times. A heartfelt apology can go a long way toward restoring and maintaining a relationship with your teenager.

## Teenage Sons (continued)

Try to find time here and there to talk one on one with your teen. In a busy household with lots of children, this can be difficult. For me, it was often early in the morning. I would be fixing breakfast or packing lunches, and one of my older sons would be up getting ready for work. We'd have a few minutes in the kitchen when I could ask how things were going in his life and discuss some recent event or relevant issue. Other times I would catch a few minutes with them in their bedroom as I was putting away laundry. Often Jim would get called into the conversation, or I would assure my sons that I would talk to their dad about their questions.

Love their dad. A mother who honors, respects and looks to her husband as the leader of the family is an invaluable asset to her teenagers. When it comes to respect, far more is "caught" than "taught". Teens need to see their parents displaying a good and godly example of how this is done, first toward each other, and secondly, towards outside authority. If they see you displaying an attitude of disdain or lack of respect for authority figures in your life, don't be surprised if your children behave the same way towards you. If, instead, you teach your children from little on up that those in authority are there to protect us and God expects us to obey them, it will have an impact throughout their lives, and make the teen years much easier.

In our home, Jim took each child out for the evening and for supper when they turned thirteen. It was a special effort he made to connect with that child, to give opportunity for discussion, and also for him to give some encouragement and instruction for challenges ahead. I think all our children eagerly anticipated their "night out with Dad".

It is good for fathers to have accountability checks with their sons. Dads should ask their boys how their thought life is going, if they are guarding their purity, if they are winning the battles. Boys need to hear that their struggles are normal for young men, that Dad has been down the same road, and that with Christ, they can be victorious. Practical strategies for how to avert their eyes, walk away from a compromising situation, and avoid the pitfalls of pornography are a few of the keys to victory that boys can be blessed with, when fathers care enough to instruct and keep their sons accountable.

Jim and I often think back to the advice we were given years ago, to "pick our battles". Some hills are not worth dying on. If it's a strong Biblical principle that's at stake, then draw the line in the sand and don't move! If it's a personal preference or your own opinion, then cut your teens some slack and listen with an understanding heart. Your child might not be *wrong*, just *different* from where you are.

Play games with your teenagers, laugh with them, pray with them during challenging times and after difficult discussions, and always, always, always let them know you love them. You are no longer dealing with little children, but soon-to-be-adults. You have to work at cutting the apron strings and letting them make more of their own decisions. You may even need to let them make some mistakes. Your teens are forming their own opinions and convictions. They are moving from doing what we, as their parents, believe to what they, *themselves* believe. Hopefully, those beliefs will not be miles apart, but there will always be some differences, because God has created your children with their own unique personalities.

Go forth with joy. These are wonderful years and meant to be enjoyed. Bathe your teenagers in prayer—every day. God bless you as you parent your teens, and cherish the moments, they are fleeting!

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

Dear Sisters,

As I have worked at the newsletter this time, I have wondered, as I often do, why on earth is it **me**? Why am **I** the one writing this? How could I possibly have anything to say that would benefit other young moms, when I so obviously do **not** have it all together? My house is often messy, my homeschooling erratic, my children fight and are noisy in church, etc, etc. I don't know the answer to my own questions, except this: I felt God calling me to start this newsletter a little over a year ago, and I felt Him calling me to be honest. It is my prayer that none of you will ever be discouraged by the things you read in it, feeling that you somehow "don't measure up". The greatest desire I have in writing and editing this paper is that you will be encouraged. I hope that we all are edified and instructed by the things our sisters write, but mostly I just want to help put the courage to keep fighting into each of you. I have been thinking lately that there are two kinds of refining that the Lord sends our way. There are the huge, earth-shattering tests, like the loss of a child or cancer or a house fire, and then there is the kind of testing that most of us experience on a daily basis. The every day trials that just act like sandpaper, wearing us down, little by little. It's a grand thing to die bravely, but might it not be just as grand to **live** bravely? To be victorious and Christ-like in the midst of dirty diapers and piles of laundry and runny noses and noodle casseroles? Lord help me to keep that vision before my eyes....an eternal perspective that empties my daily annoyances of their sting and helps me remember that all I do is for You.

Love in Christ to each of you, my Sisters,

Sister Bonny Jamison

## Back Talk

I think we'll try an idea for a new column. If an article, idea or recipe you've seen in S.I.L.L.Y. has influenced or inspired you, let us know how it has touched your life. Even if it's just a recipe you tried, or a book you read, write in and tell us about it. I'll try to include one of these "letters to the editor" in each issue. To get you started, I'll give you some quick examples:

\*I'd like to thank Laura Hawbaker for her article on cleaning house last January. It included the idea of just having each child pick up ten items. I have used that so many times since I read it. Telling small children to pick up the whole playroom is overwhelming. But picking up just ten items is do-able. Plus, they have fun counting to ten! To re-read this great article, check the new S.I.L.L.Y. website. I'll post it there.

\*This afternoon, I took my own advice from last issue, and was "present in the moment" with my children. They went out to the pond with their father, and instead of taking advantage of a few minutes to myself, I donned my old ski pants, made some hot cocoa, and took them a little ice picnic. I was well rewarded for my efforts by the delighted surprise of my children. I got to soak up some winter sunshine and watch their first clumsy, comical attempts at skating.



Bodey and Bella show off their "new" skates. Brant's mom found them at a second-hand children's store. Another economical place to look for skates is at a shop that sells used sporting goods.