

Bingeing Bieber?

Those who know my family are aware that we have a son named Beeber, pronounced the same as the last name of that popular young male singer, Justin Bieber. But my son got his cute little nickname from his big sister, who was not even 2 years old when he was born – she could not say his real name, Christopher, and so “Beeber” stuck. That was way before Justin Bieber became so popular, I might add..

So now that my disclaimer is out of the way, I can share the following story, which has nothing to do with my son Beeber and everything to do with Justin Bieber. A few weeks ago, someone spotted Justin Bieber drinking beer at a bar, so they called the cops to report underage drinking because apparently Mr. Bieber is just a teenager. But when the cops showed up and ID'd Mr. Bieber, they found that the “underage drinker” was a 27-year-old **woman** named Katie. Given the pic below, honest mistake, don't you think? That would be Katie on the left and Justin on the right.



(Thanks to tmz.com for the story and picture)

Look At This Idiot

He is our puppy and he's cute. But still, you've got to appreciate the idiocy of this puppy predicament – a delicious scent awaits in the baby's playpen. What is one to do? Why, get stuck in a moron's photo opp, of course...



That Candle Smells Like WHAT?!?

Something to put on my birthday list?



The White Castle slider-scented candle. That's right... if you are familiar with [White Castle restaurants](#) and their famous products, be warned – they have made a White Castle-scented candle. Yes, the steamed onion scent of the famous little burgers can now be brought into your home!

According to an article that ran on nydailynews.com:

“The candle has a top note of diced sweet onions and crisp pickle, the middle notes are beef patty, cheese and ketchup, and bottom note is a warm burger bun. It all comes together to create this amazing aroma of a White Castle Slider.”

Ok, so I don't really want the White Castle scented candle for anything other than a conversation piece. I am curious about how it smells, but for my birthday I would much rather have a terrifically fun weekend, which is always probable thanks to my wonderful family and the awesome local 4th of July events that are usually planned. On my birthday, the 3rd of July (please don't remind me that I share my birthday with one of my least favorite actors), we will probably catch some fireworks somewhere, as that is one of my favorite thing to do every year. Since the 4th of July is on a Sunday this year, we will be going to church, so we have to find a way to get out to the airport as well for the annual fly-in breakfast which is always a lot of fun. After church, probably during the little dude's nap, we have a lot of packing to do for a super-fun week in the woods of southern Indiana with the extended family – more about that when we return in a week or more.

HAVE A VERY HAPPY AND SAFE 4TH OF JULY WEEKEND!!!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA!!!



Runaway Parrot

As you might have read in my blog previously, we have a pet Scarlet Macaw parrot. His name is Squawky, although he is more 'screamy' than he is 'squawky'. Occasionally when the weather is warm enough, we take Squawky outside – he either goes for walks with our family or he gets tied to a tree (so he doesn't fly away) to enjoy nature. A few weeks ago, we were sitting in our dining room having lunch when we saw the man from our local pet store approaching Squawky in the tree out front with a towel on his hand. "He's going to take your bird!" I said to my husband, "You have to go outside!" I guess this is where I should get it in that I didn't think it was a good idea for Squawky to be outside alone in the first place, but we had to give the kids lunch and Squawky was enjoying himself so we didn't make him come in with us. So anyway, we ran outside, and told the pet store guy that he was our bird – apparently our neighbors were unaware that we had a parrot (guess they hadn't seen him outside before; sometimes we put him in the backyard). So the neighbors called the police, who called the pet store, who sent the bird-catcher. He thought it was someone's lost bird, and he was going to "rescue" Squawky – and lose some fingers in the process. It's not an exaggeration when they say that adult Macaw parrots can snap a broomstick handle with their super-strong beaks. Check out a few of my husband's parrot battle scars or use your imagination to see what one of those beaks can do to a fleshy finger. Luckily we got out there just in time to save the pet store guy's fingers, and he apologized profusely, as did our neighbors who had called the police. The pet store guy found it unbelievable that we could have a macaw parrot (a notoriously loud bird) and not have the whole neighborhood know about it. I told him that the neighbors on the side of the house where Squawky's room is probably know about him, but the neighbors who called the police live across the street – plus Squawky doesn't scream when he's outside.

But all's well that ends well – as much as that bird irritates me sometimes, he has been a part of our family for 8 years now, and I don't want to lose him. Well, not to have him stolen or lost anyway – getting paid the going price of an obnoxious Scarlet Macaw might be kind of nice... A joke, sort of. ☐

I looked around for a picture of Squawky in the tree, but I guess I don't have one. So here he is having a tremendous amount of fun taking a bath. He is a bit larger now because this was taken 7 years ago.



****UPDATE**** – Squawky was back in the tree tonight, so this time I made sure to get a picture of him enjoying his tree:



If only his personality was as beautiful as his plumage

Tornado – Err, Weather Siren

If you've read my previous blog post, then you know that I wrote a letter of complaint to my local newspaper about our town's policy change regarding the ~~tornado~~ weather siren. Our siren is now activated for any severe thunderstorm warning, a policy which I consider hazardous since we seem to now be left without any warning of actual tornadic activity. Ironically (or not, since the sirens have gone off no fewer than *eight* times this June 2010), today we got another dose of the siren. As has been usual lately, we got an average thunderstorm, nothing more than some lightning, thunder, and rain. I decided to videotape my street as the sirens were going off, with the intention of adding it to my blog to illustrate my point about writing a letter to the newspaper. At the very least, the following video will help my daughter and I – we are getting really good at doing impressions of the ~~tornado~~ weather siren – enough to drive our puppy crazy anyway. ☐

I'm Published – Again!

The title of this blog post is kind of a joke, just as it was the first time our local newspaper printed something from me. A few months ago, they printed a picture I took of some baby doves in our tree in the front of the house, and today I am happy to see they printed my letter in the public forum! Here is a copy:

Siren Rules Need Clarification

I appreciated your article about the weather sirens called "Siren Rules Given" that was printed on Tuesday June 22, but it seems that further clarification is necessary to ensure the safety of the community. Because the rules were changed regarding when to activate the sirens – they are now being activated for severe storms, not just tornado warnings – what type of warning system does our town have in the event of an actual tornado? When did the guidelines change and why were they changed?

The seemingly constant activation of the sirens lately (at least 6 times in the past month; with 3 sirens in ONE day on June 23!) is very scary for my 4 children. Other local parents are having the same concerns. Today there was a mild rumble of thunder at my daughter's T-Ball game, and at least one little boy began to cry. We can reassure our children, but it's concerning that in an actual tornado emergency that many people might not take it seriously since the now so-called 'weather sirens' are being activated weekly if not more often – it's a 'boy who cried wolf' scenario that could lead to a tragic disaster. I would like to see our city go back to the old guidelines

on the weather sirens – call them tornado sirens once again and only use them when the threat of tornadic activity is severe enough that us citizens should be taking shelter in our basements.

I wrote this letter the other night and sent it in before I learned of [what happened to a town in our county](#). Edgerton was hit by a microburst and sustained devastating damage to many trees and a few buildings. Thankfully, there is only one report of an injury that was not life-threatening. I hope that people aren't confused by my letter; clearly the people in Edgerton should have been in their basements on Wednesday night. Their tornado sirens were warranted (as were ours probably since Edgerton is only about 10 miles away) on Wednesday night, and thankfully the injuries were kept to a minimum thanks to the smart people who took cover. But we did not go into the basement on Wednesday night. As I said in the letter, the sirens had gone off 3 times on Wednesday, and the kids panicked each time. And since the sirens had been going off all month and it had been published in the newspaper that the siren was now for severe thunderstorm warnings, we decided that going down to the basement added to the drama and aided in keeping the kids alarmed and up late. After Wednesday's storm moved through, our town was spared any major damage, but this storm did cause tornadoes to the east in Indiana as well as that dangerous microburst in Edgerton. Looking back, we probably should have gone to the basement, but we have been desensitized to the seriousness of the siren, and it didn't seem like a big deal. Part of the purpose of writing this letter was to vent my frustrations, and I also wrote it partly because I want some answers to the questions I raised. I was hoping that maybe someone from our local branch of the National Weather Service will reply or perhaps we'll hear from the fire chief, who was quoted giving the new siren rules in the original newspaper article to which I referred. If there is any follow-up, I will keep you posted, and in the meantime, we will have to continue to calm the kids any time that now

weekly 'severe weather siren' gets activated.

My Psychic Moment

This is a strange thing that happened to me; just thought I'd write a little note about it.

I was in my laundry room, folding laundry and humming the song "You Light Up My Life", which is not a usual song on my playlist – I probably haven't heard it in a few years. So I'm folding laundry, and the final Jeopardy question comes on the tv:

CATEGORY: Billboard Hot 100

CLUE: Besides Frank and Nancy Sinatra, they're the only other father and daughter who each had #1 solo hits.

Got your answer? Mine was Nat King Cole and his daughter Natalie. Although wrong, my guess must have been a reasonable one as two of the contestants also incorrectly guessed the Cole's as their response. The correct answer, however, was Pat Boone and his daughter Debby – whose only #1 hit was ironically enough, "You Light Up My Life" – the same song I had inexplicably had in my head just minutes earlier!!

PS – I've never really heard of Debby Boone, and I certainly didn't know who sang "You Light Up My Life". For all I knew, it was Lee Ann Rimes, whose version of the song is quite enjoyable.

Fun At The Jubilee

For the life of me, I could not think of a creative title for this blog post, so I just went with a logical one. Our town has an annual Jubilee – a little carnival on the town square that comes once a year. For all but 1 of the 7 years that we've lived here (we were out of town during that missed year), we've enjoyed the Jubilee, especially now that we live within walking distance and don't have to worry about parking – we can come and go as we please, and it's especially nice to spend a night at the Jubilee and run home for potty breaks rather than using the disgusting Port-O-Potties. It's fun to walk around the square and soak up the bustling atmosphere while chatting with familiar faces among the crowd. Although carnival rides are quite costly these days, we are lucky that my husband's birthday always falls during the week of the Jubilee and that we have some generous relatives who send him much-appreciated birthday money (which my husband is always more than happy to spend on the kids at the Jubilee). The kids had a night of fun on the carnival rides, and there was an extra treat at the Jubilee this year – an animal show!!!

I, like many of my friends it turns out, was thinking that the animal show would not be anything spectacular – a few snakes, a parrot, and maybe a jumping dog or two. But this was more like a traveling zoo – *in my backyard!!!* First, a disclaimer – I love animals. But I'm not one of those PETA activists – I find most people like that over-the-top; you know, those people who spend their time protesting the “horrible” conditions of zoos, blah, blah... that's not me. I won't go into too much detail, but basically I believe in taking good care of animals. I believe that most zoos accomplish that, and overall, I believe that zoos are a great way to educate the public about animals and get people to care enough to want to take actions that will stop the destruction of wild animal habitats and the killing of species throughout the world.

That's it in a nutshell, and I'll stop there since that isn't really what this post is about. My point in bringing this up is to say that when I first heard there was going to be an animal show at the Jubilee, I wasn't going to go, much like when I refuse to attend circuses (I'm not an extremist, but circuses ARE bad for animals!! But that's a whole 'nother post...). So we were at the Jubilee, and there was a huge crowd over by the animal stage, and my curiosity got the better of me – so we checked it out.

Like I kept saying all weekend, it was like a zoo in my backyard! They had a tortoise, a turtle, a huge python, an albino cobra, a monitor lizard (komodo dragon's cousin), an eagle owl (largest species of owl in the world with striking orange eyes), a blue and gold macaw parrot, a binturong (rare mammal who is always sleeping every time I see it at the zoo – this is the first time I've actually seen one awake and in action. They have an odd buttery popcorn smell. I put a picture of one below if you're curious.), a kangaroo, a monkey, a full-sized leopard, AND... a 4-week-old white tiger! The animals seemed well-cared for and their keepers were caring and knowledgeable, so I was quick to become a big fan – in fact, I attended 3 of the 8 shows they put on while they were in town! I would have gone to more, but it was tough enough to get my little guy to sit through the two we brought him to (especially when there were very rude kids standing in front of him – I was so mad!).



Saturday was one of my favorite days ever with me getting to take my kids to TWO animal shows and another one of my favorite things – a PARADE!! I just love small town parades, and this one was especially great – the weather was perfect (in the 80's, but with big puffy clouds and a nice breeze, humidity not too high for once), and two of my kids were marching in it! PLUS, there was a vehicle handing out free stuffed dogs at the end, so we got one for each kid! Best. Jubilee. Ever. ☐ Even if I didn't make my annual trek to the Dippin' Dots stand this year – that should tell you how much I enjoyed the animal show!



It's Gone...

If you've traveled down I-75 in Southern Ohio since 2004, you've no doubt seen this; it was hard to miss:



The King of Kings statue

no longer
graces I-75

We've passed by this King of Kings statue outside Solid Rock Church on our way to Florida many times, and it was always awe-inspiring. Quite unfortunately (and ironically), an act of God destroyed the infamous 62-foot statue – it was struck by lightning and subsequently burned to the ground. No word yet if the church plans to rebuild the huge sculpture, and until they do, if they do, I-75 won't be the same.



Teacher, Teacher

Well, I survived. Today was my try at teaching my 3-year-old daughter's Sunday school class. Every summer, church members have the opportunity to serve in our church's Kids' Kingdom in order to give the regular teachers a much deserved summer break. Instead of requesting a specific age group where I might have been comfortable (last summer my husband and I taught 4th grade boys, and I'm used to teaching 5th and 7th grade girls from my youth group teaching experience), I decided to let the Kids' Kingdom coordinator put me where I would be needed the most – so the 3-year-old room it was. And lucky for me (cough cough), there aren't very many 2-year-olds at our church at this time, so they were just combined with the 3-year-olds, putting me in charge of fourteen 2 and 3-year-olds for over an hour. But it was SO much fun!!!

Not something I'd like to do every week (just because of my responsibilities at home with 4 of my own kids 24/7), but definitely worth a shot, especially since I was helping out. I might even sign up for another Sunday with the 2/3-year-olds; they were so cute!! In anticipating my teaching experience today, one challenge I did not foresee were the kids who cried when their parents left. We had about 4 of those – their world was blown apart when this strange lady (me) was in their classroom in place of their regular teacher. 3 of them got over the shock right away; one little girl did an actual 180° turn in personality. She began the class by crying and clinging to the wall, only to come out of her shell later and insisting she sit by me at story time as well as wanting my constant attention. The 4th little boy held out a little longer; he was a cute little guy who clung to the wall for most of the class. He stopped crying for his parents within the first few minutes, but I couldn't get him to participate in any of the activities. I kept asking though, I didn't let him fade into the background, and I think

that helped. Also helping was my teenage helper, without whom I surely would have lost track of all those kids.

Upon arriving, I was given a packet of papers detailing my lesson plan and ideas for activities related to the lesson which I will share:

Basic Truth: God Made Me

Key Question: Who can help you?

Bottom Line: God made people who help me.

Memory Verse: "Be kind and loving to each other." Ephesians 4:32, NCV

Bible Story Focus: God wants families to help each other.

Boaz cares for Ruth and Naomi • Ruth 2:1-23

As kids were arriving (and some were bawling into the doorframe), I had them sit at the table and draw their favorite foods in the pre-printed basket they were given on cardstock. I got a big kick out of one little girl who drew chocolate fudgicles, chocolate soy milk (?), and chocolate pancakes. I attempted to draw my own basket (filled with spaghetti; I didn't think I could draw Greek food nor did I feel like explaining saganaki or kafta to 2 and 3-year-olds), but there was too much to do for me to finish my artwork. Soon, we ran out of table space to color, so I moved on to this activity:

Get Up and Go

What You Need: Blue painters' tape, masking tape and different forms of transportation toys such as cars, horses, trucks, trains, buses, boats and airplanes.

What You Do: Make "roads" on the floor with the masking tape. Make "waterways" on the floor with the blue tape. Pretend you are traveling on the roads with the trucks, horses and cars and in the water with the boats. Fly the airplanes around the room. Make up places to go and let your imagination take you on a fun trip.

What You Say:

During the activity: "Who wants to go on a trip with me? These cars and trucks can take us places. These boats can take us places. Oh! And look! We have horses and an airplane too! We can use these to go all kinds of places. This white tape can be our road and this blue tape can be water. Come on! Let's get up and go!"

At the end of the activity: "Cars and trucks and boats can take us to all kinds of places. There's one more way to get somewhere that we haven't talked about...our feet! We can WALK to places too! In our Bible story today, two ladies named Ruth and Naomi have to use their feet to get to a new place."

So as you can see, the instructions were laid out pretty well for me. After the kids laid out their "roads" (and had a BLAST doing so, I must say! Gives me a great idea for an inexpensive, non-messy fun activity to do at home this summer with my own kids!), it was time to go down the hall for story time. Here we met up with the 4-year-old group and the 5-year-old group (of which my other daughter belongs; she was happy to see me!), and the kids listened to a Bible story. During the story, my teenage helper stayed behind to set out the snack, so it was solely up to me to keep our group of 14 quiet and listening to the story – yeah right. I did the best I could, and I even got to dance with the kids.

We returned to our classroom, had snack, and then we tried the Foil Food activity:

Foil Food

What You Need: Aluminum foil.

What You Do: Give each child a piece of aluminum foil. Show them how to shape the foil into different food shapes like a hot dog, banana, apple, small grapes, chicken fingers, French fries and carrot sticks or anything a child could easily shape with foil.

What You Say: "Watch what I can do with this foil. (Shape the foil into a food item.) Look! It's a (name of food). I have some foil for you too. You can shape it into all kinds of

foods like a banana or several small grapes or even an apple. Ruth and Naomi were very happy to find food to eat when they got back to Bethlehem. God gave them Boaz to help take care of them. God gives you people to help take care of you too. Who can help you? [Bottom Line] God made people who help me."

The kids had a ball with the foil activity too, even though some of them misunderstood – my little friend the chocolate lover, requested that I make her a butterfly out of the foil... oh, and there was one little guy who completely misunderstood and began to EAT the foil ☐

When the kids grew tired of that activity, there was still about 15 minutes left, so we did some free play with the toys and puzzles in the room as I did not feel prepared for the other activities on the list. One little girl kept putting a cow toy on my shoe, and she and about 5 others were loving it when I would react every time – OH, there's a COW on my shoe! Am I going to have to take this cow home with me?!? That lasted about 10 minutes; imagine if I had tried that one with my 7th graders – they'd be gossiping about me being bi-polar as they do about one of their teachers, gossip which I try to stop, of course.

My teen helper had to take about half the kids to the bathroom at some point, so I decided it was a good time to try this activity – I didn't want to try it with all the kids there since we were only given about 6 pieces of fake food. Having 4 kids of my own, I'm well-versed in kid-fight-prevention, so I knew doing the following activity with only 6 pieces of food and 14 kids was a recipe for disaster. But with about 8 in the room, I thought it was worth a try... until the bathroom group came back in the middle of the activity...

Fast Food

What You Need: Toy food items, a large basket like a laundry basket and a stopwatch.

What You Do: Spread the toy food items all over the room.

Place the laundry basket in the middle of the room. Challenge the children to see how fast they can get all of the food into the basket. Time them and be ready to tell them how fast they do it each time. Continue doing the activity as long as the children are interested.

What You Say:

At the start of the activity: "A girl named Ruth has to look for food to go in her basket in our Bible story today. Our basket needs some food in it too. Do you see some food that we can put in it? (Pause for response.) OK. When I say "go," I want you to put the food in our basket as fast as you can. On your mark...get set...go!"

At the end of the activity: "You got faster and faster each time you put the food in the basket. I wonder how long it took Ruth to put food in her basket? I can't wait to hear her story."

Ok, I wasn't given a stopwatch, so I just had half the kids hide food items and the other half find them... but then the bathroom group came back and we had too many kids and too little room and too few food items to hide. My little friend threw a not-so-little tantrum because she wanted to be the one to hold the basket – and she was going to have her turn as I said, but first she had to wait, which wasn't cool with her (ADHD diagnosis, anyone? It's sad, but they seem to be slapping that one on kids left and right these days). But oh, great, now I had a kid screaming just as parents are starting to arrive. Luckily she got over it quickly, and the parents came a few minutes earlier than I had expected – good thing too, since I was out of activities for which I had supplies.

Overall, a GREAT experience – I'm so proud of my own little 3-year-old who was not only one of the best behaved in the group (of course), but who was surprisingly not very clingy to mom and let me be a teacher to her peers. I think the kids had trouble remembering my name, so by the end of the hour, I was known as 'Teacher, Teacher' complete with pant-leg-tugging –

hence the name of this blog post.

Next up – in August I'm scheduled to help with my 5-year-old's class, and I'm excited to see the differences in behavior between the two groups. But after today, I'm quite tempted to volunteer for another Sunday in the 3-year-old room... they are fun kids who are quite sweet. My only regret is that there were so many of them, which impeded my ability to get to have more fun with them on a one-on-one basis. Plus there were a few that were handfuls (well, just my little friend and then another little boy who started all kinds of trouble all morning!), but it was still hard to give attention to the kids who were being good, and that should never be the case. Too bad I know in my heart that I'd be spreading myself way too thin if I volunteered to be a Sunday school teacher. I need to stick with the youth group kids I committed to, and both groups plus my own kids at home would be way too much... something to think about when my kids get older and my youth group kids graduate though!!

For those of you looking for ideas for Christian fun at home, for your small Bible study groups, or a Christian daycare, here are the rest of the activities I was given and didn't have the time / materials to do:

Looking for Food

What You Need: A clear plastic soda bottle or a large clean peanut butter jar, uncooked white rice, several pieces of Runts® candy and a hot glue gun.

Tip: Runts® candy comes in a mix of green, red, yellow, purple and orange. You can pretend these are little green apples, red cherries or red apples, yellow bananas, purple grapes and orange oranges

What You Do:

At the start of the activity: Fill the plastic container no more than 2/3 full with the rice. Put in several pieces of the Runts® candy pieces. Put the lid on tight and hot glue it.

Tip: Make one bottle for every three children to share.

During the activity: Show the bottle to the children. Point out that there are different kinds of "food" inside the bottle. Their job is to roll the bottle around in their hands until they see a piece of "food."

What You Say: "Come and sit with me. I have something to show you. Watch the white rice while I turn this bottle. Tell me if you see anything. (Wait for a child to respond.) Yes! There are little pieces of food hiding in the white rice. There are little green apples, red apples or red cherries, yellow bananas, orange oranges and purple grapes. Here. You can hold the bottle. Keep turning it and see what you can find. Two women named Ruth and Naomi have to go and look for food in today's Bible story."

Make a Match

What You Need: "Food Items" (from the Activity Pages on the Web site), scissors and white cardstock.

What You Do:

At the start of the activity: Make two copies of "Food Items" on white cardstock and cut the cards apart along the perforated lines. This will give you one set of cards to play a game of memory match. To play the memory game, place all of the cards facedown. A child will turn over two cards at a time and try to make a match. If a match is not made the next person has a turn. If a match is made the player can go again.

Tip: Make more than one set of cards so more than one group of children can play at a time. You can pair children up or put as many as four children with each set of cards.

During the activity: Show the picture cards to the children. Ask them to help you identify each food picture. Next, place all of the cards face down and play a game of memory match.

What You Say: "Boaz helped Ruth and Naomi in our Bible story because they were in his family. God wants families to help each other. God gave you a family to help you too. Who can help you? [Bottom Line] God made people to help me. That's right! In our story Ruth and Naomi had to look for food, right? Well, I have a game for us to play and we're going to

have to look for food too!"

My Favorite Food

What You Need: No supplies needed.

What You Do: Sit in a circle with the children and play a food memory game. Begin the game by saying, "My favorite food is an apple." The child next to you will say, "My favorite food is an apple and (their food choice)." The next child will repeat, "My favorite food is an apple, (name of food) and (their food choice)." Assist the children in remembering when the list gets long.

What You Say:

At the end of the activity: "Raise your hand if you like food. (Raise your hand really high.) Me too! We all like food and we all NEED food. Ruth and Naomi needed food in our Bible story today. They also needed help to find food. God gave them Boaz to help them find food. God gives you people to help you too. Who can help you? [Bottom Line] God made people to help me."

(Ok, so this activity didn't require any materials, but I found it way too daunting to attempt for a group of 14 2-3-year-olds...)