

Slippers In The Store

We took a family walk down to Walgreens last night, and about halfway there, I happened to look down and noticed that my husband was wearing his slippers. We proceeded to give each other a hard time, neither one understanding the other's point of view.

MINE: It's embarrassing. I don't really concern myself with what others think for the most part, but I also know that many people are judgmental and will treat you differently if you have the appearance that you either don't take care of yourself or are dirt poor. I don't want to make either statement about my family, and I don't like drawing attention to myself or my family. I definitely don't want our daughters to have any excuses to not want to go places with us as they approach their teen years, when they will fashion plenty of these excuses themselves. I will teach them not to care what other people think in that way as much as I can, but teens will be teens. Besides, the signs on public places say, "No shirt, no SHOES, no service." Technically, slippers are not shoes, and I like to follow the rules.

HIS: I'm comfortable. Who cares what people think? If they judge, that's their problem. The signs on the doors of public places are referring to no BARE feet.

I told him if I wrote to Dear Abby, she would say wearing slippers in public is not appropriate, and he challenged me. So I said I would make a poll on my blog. What do you think?

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Daily Bread

My Daily Bread spoke to me today. [Our Daily Bread](#) is a little book that contains small daily devotions. I keep mine in my bathroom; that way I can flip through it while I'm bathing a kid, or, er, whatnot. Lately I've been struggling with being overwhelmed by back-logged home repair and organizational projects that I know I really shouldn't waste time and energy worrying about. Some people would say 'just do it' – then I'd be less overwhelmed as the things start to get done, but with 4 kids, I just don't have the time (see my post about [Poison Control](#) and you'll see what happens if my kids are left unattended for mere minutes), and I'm tired all the time and also kind of lazy. So anyway, I'm trying to just let go and not think about my To Do list, and here is the Daily Bread for today; maybe it will help others in my boat too:

It's been a long, cold winter, and I am eager for warm weather. I'm tired of seeing bare trees and lifeless brown leaves covering the ground. I long to see wildflowers poke through the dead leaves and to watch the woods turn green once more.

Yet even as I anticipate my favorite season, I hear my mother's voice saying, "Don't wish your life away."

If you're like me, you sometimes hear yourself saying, "When such and such happens, then I will . . . or, If only so and so would do this, then I would do that . . . or, I would be happy if . . . or, I will be satisfied when . . ."

In longing for some future good, we forget that every day—regardless of the weather or our circumstances—is a gift from God to be used for His glory.

According to author Ron Ash, "We are where we need to be and learning what we need to learn. Stay the course because the things we experience today will lead us to where He needs us to be tomorrow."

In every season, there is a reason to rejoice and an opportunity to do good (Eccl. 3:12). The challenge for each of us every day is to find something to rejoice about and some good to do—and then to do both.

*Just as the winter turns to spring,
Our lives have changing seasons too;
So when a gloomy forecast comes,
Remember—God has plans for you. —Sper*

Every season brings a reason to rejoice.

I Don't Want To Play Inside All Day...

But some of us don't have a choice where, or even if, we get to play all day. And it's tax day, and shame on you if you haven't done yours yet! I don't know about you, but where we live, it's oh-so-nice out – I'm talking 80° weather! But you might be stuck inside doing your taxes...

So here is a song just to torture you. I've seen this on Sesame Street twice now, and I just think it's so cute; especially when Elmo sings along! It aired again the other day, so blog time! Sorry if you were stuck inside all day for work or other unpleasant tasks. Take comfort in that there will be a whole spring and summer's worth from where this came from – I ♥ Spring!

Finishing Out The Wonderful Weekend

After our fun Friday game night and awesome anniversary celebration on Saturday, Sunday after church we decided to take the kids to Chuck E. Cheese. We decided to bring along Sammie's little 5-year-old friend (the one who is moving to Mexico – the new one, or New Mexico if you don't speak 5-year-old), and that turned out to be... an *interesting* decision, for lack of a better word – more on that later...

We had a blast at Chuck E. Cheese – we don't live really close to any like many people do, so it was kind of a new experience for my kids, and they had a lot of fun. We found some great internet coupons, and we were able to escape with minimal monetary damages – plus the kids didn't blow through their tokens nearly as quickly as I had expected; thanks no doubt to my husband's brilliant token allocating. My son, who will be 2 in July, just loved Chuck E. and called him "Mouse" pronounced "Mow" like rhyming with "Ow". He kept saying, "Where Mow"; it was so cute! Here's a video; he's saying "Right there, mouse".

And luckily I didn't capture any of this on film, but I have to give a bit of a public service announcement here. Sorry if it gets graphic and disgusting, but just remember we had to witness it; you just have to read my blog about it. If you go to Chuck E. Cheese or just out in public in general, please keep your pants on. I know it sounds obvious to most of us, but you would not believe how many, er, how much we saw that we did not want to see. I guess those low-rider jeans are in style, but I don't like them. And I especially think that women who have small children should not wear those at all, especially at a place like Chuck E. Cheese where you are constantly bending down to talk to or pick up your kids or squatting to get tickets or whatnot. Use your imagination if you don't know what I'm talking about because I certainly don't feel like describing it. Thank goodness we hadn't planned to eat there or appetites would have been lost – YUCK. Enough said.

We had a great time, except that my daughter's 5-year-old friend was extremely hyper and by no means a good listener. She was the kind of kid who made me truly appreciate how well-behaved my own kids are, and I'm still working on un-doing some of the bad habits they learned on the hour-long car ride to Chuck E. Cheese – like putting Mike & Ike's in their noses and spanking butts. At Chuck E. Cheese, they have a kid-friendly check-in system, so we wanted to let the kids roam a little bit, but this was next to impossible since our little friend was the kind of kid who was constantly climbing on the outsides of rides while other kids were on them. Then, she came up with two little finger rings, and my husband asked her where she got them. She led me to someone's table, and I was horrified to realize that she had taken the rings from the table. Could have been an honest mistake, but I could tell by her face that she knew she didn't really "find" them – at least she was honest about where she "found" them. Luckily she had no trouble putting them back, and kudos to Hubby for being so head's up. Maybe it sounds mean, but we high-fived

each other all day that she is moving. Don't get me wrong, she's not a bad kid and she and my daughter get along great, but our 5-year-old is our biggest challenge behavior-wise and having a friend prone to misbehavior would not be a good thing for her. Besides, she's only 5, and she will make other friends – friends that will listen to their parents as well as to their friends' parents.

Overall, a great day to finish out a fun-filled weekend! Even though it will probably take me all week to recover sleep, it was well worth it! ☐

Our Eleventh

This past Saturday, April 10, 2010, marked 11 years of marriage for my husband and I. Since it was a weekend, and we treasure that as family time, we didn't think about calling the babysitter to get some alone time. A generous friend stepped up and offered to watch the little ones for a few hours for Hubby and I to have some alone time, and we contemplated our options that morning. I love the zoo, but it seemed like too big of an endeavor to travel all the way to Toledo after staying up until 3 the night before for game night. We had an awesome time Friday night, but note to self – no more game nights the day before our anniversary! Boy, were we tired on Saturday! So anyway, we ditched the Toledo idea, and we thought about just staying home since Zambrano was scheduled to pitch for the Cubs, and he is always entertaining. Finally, my husband came up with a great idea – we'd go to Buffalo Wild Wings, and our friend could take the kids across the street to Menards to play while we sat and watched the Cubs game at Wild Wings. Before you think I'm nuts, I should mention that Menards (at least our location,

anyway) has a hugely awesome indoor play area for the kids – they have many of their playground sets, play houses, and sandboxes on display for people to see and for kids to play in while parents shop – our kids love it and always have a blast, plus it's free!

So Hubby and I sat at Buffalo Wild Wings and watched the entire Cubs game on Saturday! And, as a special Anniversary present to us, Zambrano led them to victory! They started out playing terribly, but turned themselves around (which is rare for the Cubs!), and actually looked pretty good by the end of the game – I'm talking diving catches, great plays, homeruns, and most importantly, turning a 3-0 deficit into a 4-3 victory! YES!!

And I have to add that Buffalo Wild Wings was actually a great, albeit non-traditional place to celebrate an anniversary. Not only did they not mind us sitting there for hours watching the game, but they were happy to accommodate us in letting us choose which channel we wanted, AND they gave us a hat with 4 balloons attached to take home for our four children. AND a free anniversary dessert!

After watching the Cubs win, we got the kids and took them over for some go-carting. Always fun, and this is the first time in a long time no one had to sit out with a baby! Our son is old enough to ride this year, and although he was apprehensive at first, it only took him until the first turn when he began squealing with joy! First time he rode with Dad (because everything is less scary with Dad), and I was able to snap this pic before we took off:



Then I got to take him on the second time, and he was such a wonderful little passenger; he had so much fun! As I was riding in the beautiful weather with my little guy next to me, I had the thought, "It doesn't get much better than this!"

Happy Anniversary, Honey, it was a great one, as always! And thank you for eleven wonderful years of marriage and for four beautiful children! I love you!

Thought For The Day

I recently came across this neat story in an article about volunteerism:

There is a story about a man walking along a beach. He notices that the starfish have washed ashore and will soon die in the baking sun. Then the man sees a young child picking up the starfish, one at a time, and throwing them back into the ocean. Noticing the hundreds of starfish and the small size of the child, the man says, "Son, you will never be able to save them all. What you are doing will not make any difference." The little fella looks at the man, picks up yet another starfish, and tosses it back into its saltwater haven. "Matters to that one."



I think this is a cute story that very effectively describes the fears that many people have about volunteering – their heart may be in the right place when they want to help, but then they begin to have doubts, like “I’m just one person, what could I possibly do to help?” or “I don’t have a lot of time, so I probably just shouldn’t bother committing to anything.” The bottom line is, if you have any extra time at all, as little as one hour a week, and you’d like to help others, there is a place in your community that could use and be grateful for your volunteer work. So if it’s something you’ve been thinking about doing, let go of your insecurities, find someone to answer your questions, and find a place that suits your interests where you can pitch in and lend a helping hand at the same time. Your calling might be at a food pantry, nursing home, animal shelter, community theater, hospital, senior center, community service agency, delivering for Meals on Wheels, etc – the list goes on and on. If you really want to take the time to help others and give back to your community, don’t let excuses run your life – just do it!! If you really can’t find anywhere to volunteer in your community, try contacting your local churches to see if they have any community programs for which you could volunteer, or perhaps a family in need of some helping hands; you never know what you may find!

My Issue (IsSHOE)

I HATE shopping for shoes. For as long as I can remember, I've gotten a pair of shoes and replaced them with the same type of pair when they wore out or when I needed to change sizes – no need to see what went well with my outfits or anything like that for me. It started with some black slip-on Keds that I kept replacing for a few years, then when I played sports I moved on to black Adidas with shoe-strings; followed by some cheapie black velcro shoes from Walmart (when we first got married and were really poor), and finally my black Brahma Bravo boots – each pair of those would last me about 3 winters, and they were great for the summer too. I guess I like black shoes.

So for about a year now, I've had a bit of a shoe issue – they've stopped making the Bravo style of the Brahma boots. The soles on my current pair of Bravos have been worn down so far on one side of each shoe that water seeps in if its particularly rainy, and my feet ache if I wear my shoes all day – time for new shoes. As I said, I realized this about a year ago now, and that's when I began to search. I thought it was as easy as going to Walmart and picking up a new pair of Bravos, but alas, I can't find them. I scanned the various offerings of work boots, but I just don't want anything with a steel toe, and I certainly don't want to spend more than \$30. And of course black ones would be nice, can't find those either. I put the shoe issue on the back burner all summer last year until winter became inevitable, and I found myself near a Payless Shoe Source in October, so I wandered in and had a look. Sure enough, they had a pair of black boots that fit my fancy **and** my feet – SOLD! I was extremely pleased that my months-long search had culminated in me finding comfortable

black boots in my target price range – under \$30, and they were waterproof to *boot*, oh brother...

But not more than a month after purchase, my new boots began to crack – apparently they were SO waterproof that the waterproof shell was just that – a shell; so hard to keep out the water that it couldn't be flexible enough to handle the movement of my feet without cracking. So now winter was really starting to bear down on us, and I was stuck an hour away from any Payless. I lived with the cracking boots all winter, still loving the way they looked and the way they kept my feet warm and dry, but I was also very disappointed. When an awful set of circumstances culminated to basically grind our household to a halt in December, it looked like I was stuck with my boots – didn't have the time nor even the money to get to the faraway land of Payless to exchange the cracking boots.

But then things got better, and we were finally able to afford the time and gas to get to Payless and return the boots. Even though it had been more than 3 months since purchase and the boots were cracked (though that really wasn't my fault – they shouldn't have cracked within months, err, one month of purchase!), Payless took them back and gave a full refund, no problem. It only took me an hour and half to pick out a replacement pair (I guess I never realized that I might be picky about shoes, but my husband's huffing and puffing at me on that date night made me re-evaluate... a little), but after walking around the strip mall for 5 minutes, I knew these were not going to be my new boots. But I had forgotten to bring a spare pair of shoes with me – uh, oh. My choices were: 1) waste more of date night going shoe shopping until I found the right shoes, then return these awful new boots to Payless, or 2) wear the uncomfortable boots for the rest of the night, then beg my mom (who was coming for a visit that weekend and lived in the vicinity of like, 5 Paylesses) to return the boots for me. I chose option #2 (thanks Mom!), and that's why

I've been wearing the years-old Bravo boots with the worn down soles ever since. Every time I get a spare moment; sometimes with the kids, sometimes without, I make it a point to stop in the shoe section of Walmart, Target, Meijer, wherever – to continue the hunt of finding myself a new pair of boots. I've taken home about 3 pair now, but I've been happy with none of them. Now that winter is officially over, I've attempted forgetting about finding boots that will get me through snow and tried downgrading to a good pair of walking shoes, but I've returned at least two pair of those as well – and there is another pair still in the box in my front hall closet, ready to be returned – they just dig into my ankle bone in a way that makes me *crave* high-tops; I can't help it!

The other day, I tried searching online for the Bravo style of Brahma boots, but they only make them in an ugly Wheat color and not even in the half-size I need. I was thinking I could order something on Walmart.com and return it to the store if (when) I didn't like it, but I couldn't even find anything in my price range that would work for me.

So back to my point – I HATE shoe shopping; I loathe it. Many women love it and have a pair of shoes to match every outfit they own. I've always valued myself as different from the average (extravagant) woman in that respect – I'm pretty basic in my wardrobe needs... my husband and I share many clothes actually, and it's not because he wears trendy woman's clothing – I opt for cheap, comfortable men's wear.

But how I would like a nice, inexpensive pair of good (hopefully black) walking shoes (preferably boots, but I'm willing to drop that criteria at this point in my frustrating shoe battle).

Is this really too much to ask?

Night Of Nightmares

Last night, I had the worst dream I've ever had in my life. I didn't realize it was a dream while I was having it, but I remember waking myself up on purpose anyway – it's difficult to explain, as many aspects of vivid dreams usually are.

The gist of it was – a member of my family (who in real life has been estranged from the family for 25+ years) was buckling my kids into her car for a sleepover. She began doing so at a frantic pace, which alarmed me, so I called it off. But before I could do anything, she was pulling out of my driveway with the kids, and I was screaming at her that this amounting to kidnapping and I was calling the police. She didn't stop. My two older girls found their way home, but she still had my younger two – they're 3 years and 20 months. Meanwhile, the pre-planned game night at our house (but it didn't look like our house) was beginning to take shape as guests were arriving. A friend from college (who I haven't seen since) shows up with my cousin (the kidnapper's daughter) as his date, and she is sullen and seems really angry. We manage to get out of her that her mother hasn't been herself lately and somehow come to the conclusion that she is intending to commit a murder / suicide. Where the police were at this point, I don't know, but for some reason, I couldn't go out and look for them myself, and I was inconsolable. It was the most helpless, panicky, horrible feeling I could imagine, and I had to watch my parents watch their daughter go through this as well – the whole thing was just awful. Even though I didn't know it was a dream, I squinched my eyes shut and woke up – thank goodness. It was one of those where I woke up out of breath, my eyes darting around my bedroom. I realized it had all been a dream, and I suppressed the urge to get up and have

a reassuring look at my kids – what good would it do to interrupt their sleep? Besides they'd be getting up soon enough – I could see the light starting to come in through the window. But when I looked at the clock, it was only 1:45 am! What the heck? I had felt like I had a full night's sleep! For once (and I honestly can't remember the last time I felt like this) I felt well-rested and actually *wanted* to get out of bed – and I didn't want to put myself in the position to have another horrible nightmare. So I laid there and mentally composed my blog post depicting my terrible dream, and I was able to fall back asleep. The dream I had next was actually quite a comical episode involving a (non-threatening) alligator in a restaurant. When my alarm went off hours later, I was back to normal – tired as can be, not ready to get up...

There must have been something going on last night because my 5-year-old told me about a nightmare she had had involving a circle of chicken pox.

So was that light coming into my room at 2 in the morning the light of a full moon? Do full moons cause nightmares or vivid dreams? I know my family and friends in law enforcement tell me that they are extra busy and have some of their most interesting calls on full moon nights, but now I remember driving home last night and seeing the moon – and it wasn't full. So why was it so bright in my room last night? Most nights I can't see without my flashlight, but last night I could see easily – I had just assumed it was the sun rising until I looked at the clock... that one's a mystery that remains unsolved.

I have some guesses as to where certain parts of the dream came from – I had been reading *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* before I went to bed. Could my dream have been my own version of a boggart (a magical creature from the series which is a shape-shifter that takes the form of its intended victim's worst fear – ie, something bad happening to my

kids)? And I was listening to an old Don Williams song in the car yesterday ([If You Could Read My Mind](#)), which reminded me of a time when I was a little kid and Don Williams was playing as we were heading to my aunt's house (the kidnapper in my dream). I don't know why my college friend suddenly appeared or why he was dating my cousin, but the game night significance could come from the game night we have scheduled for tomorrow... just a few theories; I think the bottom line is obvious – dreams are WEIRD!!!

(and this is unrelated – but as I was looking for the Don Williams song, I came across this wonderful version of [In The Ghetto](#) by both Elvis and his daughter Lisa Marie Presley – a posthumous duet. I've made my youtube references as links in this post rather than videos so as not to force anyone to watch/listen to anything if they don't want to)

The Kindness Of Strangers

I came across a couple of instances of good citizenship lately, so I thought I'd share. I would write a letter to the local newspaper, but I don't think they'd print it – they didn't print the last one I wrote them about the wonderful person who found my lost wallet and turned it in to the police station – intact! I guess the newspaper is only interested in printing letters where someone has an issue or is complaining about something...

So the other day, we were stopped at a stoplight, and it turned green – but the car in front of us was not moving, and that's when I noticed that he had his hazard lights on. The guy behind me was too close for me to back up, so I was stuck. I saw the guy behind me throw his hands up in

frustration, and I'm thinking, oh great, here comes the blaring horn and obscenities (I'm from Chicago – sadly, that is what most people there would do). My husband gets out of our car to see if he can help push the stalled car, and off they go. The next thing I know, there are two other men helping push it (they had been on the corner holding signs advertising a sale at the shopping center). Then, the guy behind me – the one who I thought was p-o-ed – gets out of his car to see if *he* can help!! What an amazing example of people being thoughtful and going above and beyond! I've both lived in and visited plenty of cities where I saw (or I was) a stalled car. But in all of these instances, never have I seen **4 people** come out to help the stranded driver. I've seen cars speeding angrily around the stalled vehicle, people honking, making obscene gestures, yelling obscenities, or simply ignoring the person in need. I feel very lucky that I was able to witness such selflessness; people disregarding whatever their own plans may have been for that day – people willing to sacrifice being on time to their obligations just to help another in need. How refreshing!

And something else happened this week – I'm sure you know about the big snowstorm by now. We got about 8 inches of snow that came down in less than 12 hours. I was sitting in my living room, watching it come down, and I was trying to shovel when I could – I couldn't bear the thought of my husband having to come home from work with a walkway full of 8 inches of snow to shovel. But I have 4 little kids, and we had just gotten a new puppy, so my efforts to shovel away the snow as it fell were in vain – I just couldn't keep up. So I'm playing with my kids in the living room, watching the snow fall, when we see someone clearing our walkway for us with a snowblower! I thought that it must be a neighbor; someone who has a snowblower and was kind enough to take pity on those of us who only have shovels. I told the kids to watch the man and see which house he went into so I could later drop off a thank you note. But instead of walking into a house, he

packed up his snowblower in a red truck and drove away! I didn't recognize the man nor his truck, but I don't think he was just roaming town snowblowing everywhere he went – he purposefully cleared **our** walkway! I doubt he reads my blog, but if he does, then I'd like to tell him a big THANK YOU! And for the rest of you – never underestimate the power of a kind word or deed! I have a wall hanging with that saying on it in my bathroom, and it means even more to me now!

Uh Oh, Snow!

There is a kink I did not foresee in my housebreaking-the-new-puppy plan – snow. We are currently getting nailed by a snowstorm – about 4 inches on the ground and much more expected. The snow engulfs our poor little shivering puppy, and I've had to shovel first every time before I take him out. It's quite challenging to find the time to go out and shovel and take the dog out, all while taking care of 4 kids – changing diapers, feeding lunch, breaking up fights, helping them do homework and Valentines... But today school was canceled, and this time it's actually been more of a good thing than a bad thing. The new puppy and the Valentine's projects are helping to ward off cabin fever, plus the older girls are helping to walk the puppy. Adding some fun to the snow storm is that my husband and I started watching [Storm of the Century](#) last night; which is an excellent scary movie that we watch every year during heavy snows. I'm looking forward to watching the second part of the movie tonight, but only if I make it through the dinner rush. My husband gets home from work around 5, and the kids are always starving by then, but it's nearly impossible to start dinner before he gets home with my 18-month-old underfoot. Complicating today's dinner rush is the fact that my husband will have to finish the

shoveling when he gets home, and I also have to send him on an errand – stupid me didn't stock up on certain essentials before the storm hit. Most of the region is experiencing the same weather, so stay warm, stay dry, and most importantly – stay safe!!