

The New One

Last week, my daughters were playing outside when I heard a bunch of shouting. Since I was heading out anyway – just had to put on the little guy’s shoes – I brought him out barefoot and began to work on the shoes outside. That’s when I realized that all of the shouting was because my daughter had found her friend from Kindergarten, but since neither of them were allowed to cross the street, they had been shouting across the street to each other. Now that mom was outside, I took my daughter across the street to play with her friend, and her mom came out – which is when we realized a church friend is also our neighbor! So I took the kids for a walk, and we set up a play date for later in the week. After the play date, my daughter was telling us about her friend and what she said was so cute – “My friend Chloe is moving to Mexico – the new one.” Chloe did indeed say that she is moving to New Mexico, but it’s not really wise to believe rumors started by 6-year-olds. Until her mom says something to us, we will continue to enjoy Sammie having a friend just a block away, even if eventually she has to move to “Mexico – the new one”. □

Tending To Our Flowers

As I’ve mentioned before, I belong to a Christian moms’ group called MOPs (Mothers Of Preschoolers), and I enjoy our monthly meetings immensely. Every month, we receive a handout with a little essay that contains advice or words of wisdom from one mom to the rest of us. I found this month’s article beautiful and thought-provoking, and things like this help motivate me and give me strength to get through some of those really tough

days of being a mom. Hope you like it!

Tending to Our Flowers

by Katherine Craddock

So it is with all of our children – their glory is like the flowers of the field. For each generation, God has prepared an entire garden of flowers. Some, like tiny crocuses, tulips, and hyacinths, bloom early in their lives. Their soft beauty, strong resilience, and beautiful fragrance give us a reminder of hope and resurrection – then sweetly melt away.



Other children burst forth with wild, exuberant colors in their elementary and teen years. Some will blossom and bear fruit later, in the middle of their lives. Other cut flowers will fill our homes with color and fragrance and life until they are suddenly gone.

There are loud, attractive summer sun flowers like echinacea, Russian sage, daisies, and black-eyed Susans. There are thorny briars that burst into rose blooms, and quieter shade plants like hosta and hydrangea who bring beauty and peace to the darkness.



And last of all, there are the plants that have been patiently and steadily growing all along, looking like nothing much. Entire seasons of life can pass before these flowers find their voice. But when they do, the asters and sedums,

chrysanthemums and lilies remind us of the beauty that was and is to come.



Who can say which has more beauty or value, the crocus or the rose? Each, when lovingly tended, is unique in its own strength and has no need to be compared.

So whether your daughter walks at 9 months or 19 months; whether your wild son behaves as early as Preschool or not until after college, be encouraged that every child – “gifted”, “disabled”, or “normal”, will bloom with great beauty in the Gardeners’ time.

“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.” – Isaiah 40:6

Brown Hogs

Everybody knows that kids say the darndest things – there was even a tv show or two about the subject. If you go back and watch the Art Linkletter version, you can see him coaching the kids and moving his lips for the kids to see what they were supposed to say. I don’t know why they had to do that; kids come up with enough cute stuff on their own. The reason I decided to write this post is because it came to my attention that my 3-year-old daughter Disney calls groundhogs “brown hogs”. Just a cute little tidbit I wanted to share, and hey, she’s got a point – the critters **are** brown! Makes sense to me! ☐

Potty Training Celebration!

Ok, I know it might seem weird, especially to those of you who aren't parents. But in my family, we are celebrating a major milestone – 3-year-old Disney is officially potty-trained!!! In lieu of this triumphant moment (congrats to Disney but let's face it, one of the best parts about this is that we only have to buy and change diapers now for ONE instead of TWO!), I thought I'd share a cute potty-training-themed email forward, here goes, and again, forgive me if you are not on the same page with me – potty-training kids is a big deal, and this is our THIRD success story!



THE POTTY

A LITTLE THREE YEAR OLD BOY IS SITTING ON THE TOILET. HIS MOTHER THINKS HE HAS BEEN IN THERE TOO LONG, SO SHE GOES IN TO SEE WHAT'S UP.

THE LITTLE BOY IS SITTING ON THE TOILET READING A BOOK. BUT ABOUT EVERY 10 SECONDS OR SO HE PUTS THE BOOK DOWN, GRIPS ONTO TO THE TOILET SEAT WITH HIS LEFT HAND AND HITS HIMSELF ON TOP OF THE HEAD WITH HIS RIGHT HAND.

HIS MOTHER SAYS: "BILLY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU'VE BEEN IN
HERE FOR A WHILE..

BILLY SAYS: "I'M FINE, MOMMY.. I JUST HAVEN'T GONE 'DOODY'
YET."

MOTHER SAYS: "OK, YOU CAN STAY HERE A FEW MORE MINUTES. BUT
BILLY, WHY ARE YOU HITTING YOURSELF ON THE HEAD?"

BILLY SAYS: "WORKS FOR KETCHUP."



My Job Is To Make People Miserable

My husband works from 9:30 to 5 on weekdays, which leaves me the job of holding down the fort. My kids are generally good kids, and they are adorable, so it should be a fun job. But I'm not having fun today. I've had 3 kids crying literally constantly today from 9-12:30. Taylor is 10, and she's home sick from school. She's the only one being good, but I can't give the poor kid a break because her sisters and brother are acting so crazy!! This is the 2nd Wednesday in a row that the kids have acted up – what is up with that?!? I have 5 minutes

of peace right now because we got Sammie to Kindergarten and the baby is napping. I just need to blog about it because I feel like I'm going to explode!! The baby is getting over being sick, so if he's not being held, he's crying. I don't know what the deal is with 3-year-old Disney, she's usually pretty good, but today she is screaming about *everything*. And she has this loud, shrill, ear-splitting scream like you wouldn't believe. In the meantime, Sammie was provoking everyone and starting fights with all 3 of her siblings; I was trying to referee, hold the baby, clean up his messes, change dirty diapers, and make lunch all at the same time. Now that I have some "peace", I feel worse – Disney has asked me 6 questions just in the short time it's taken me to write this. I'm trying not to snap at her, but I'm in a really bad mood. It would really help if I had my dog to snuggle, but she died in December and my other dog is too smelly to snuggle. I feel like I work really hard all day, and all I do is make people miserable. How can my husband get any work done with all the screaming in the house? It adds pressure to me to try to keep a suitable work environment for him. I am looking forward to a relaxing evening. No, wait. It's youth group night, which I normally enjoy, but to go try to teach a bunch of preteens after a day like today seems daunting. Not to mention that I have an extra group tonight since a fellow teacher had back surgery yesterday. I hope it went well for her...

I would cry but then I'll get another nosebleed – my nose has been bleeding a lot lately, stress maybe? I sure wish I could figure out a fun way to wind down to give me something to look forward to tonight, but my kids have been refusing to go to bed lately, and the little guy has been waking up all night with his illness.

Ok, that's my vent, sorry to be such a downer, but I thought writing about it would help. Dunno yet if I was right... Time to make the most of the baby's nap and get the garbage out and lunch cleaned up. If I'm lucky and he sleeps long enough, I

just might get a nice long hot shower – but that’s probably too much to ask.

Those Crazy Kids

Well, it’s not a full moon tonight, but you could have fooled me. My kids are acting completely nuts today; I just had to get away from them for a few minutes for some “me” time to vent and blog this out. Ok, it’s not really “me” time; the kids are right here, they just happen to not be needy at this moment – first time all morning. I actually just checked the moon’s forecast, and we are only 2 days away from a full moon. Oh, my – does that mean I have 2 more days of this? My [blogging teacher friend](#) wrote about how she used to be able to predict her students’ daily behavior by the way a herd of Clydesdales were acting when she passed their farm on the way to school each morning. If the horses were running around, there was a good chance the kids were going to be crazy. I’m betting that if I had a herd of Clydesdales in my backyard, they would be running around. And that would be cool – I’ve always wanted a bunch of animals. But hopefully I’m wrong about something crazy being in the air and the chaos is just localized to only our house because I have to teach youth group tonight, and I don’t know what I’ll do with crazy teenage girls if I have to deal with crazy little kids all day!

Sammie, my Kindergartner is still sleeping, and it’s almost lunch time. I can’t complain about her behavior because for the past 3 days now (knocking on the wood floor), she’s been good as gold. Yes, I am counting the days of her goodness because we just endured an incredibly bad phase of hers that lasted a few months – it was really bad. Why dwell on the

negative, though? Today she was playing with her little brother without even being asked, and they were so cute together! They played tag, and she read books to him – I would have taken a picture, but I was busy meeting the demands of my 3-year-old, Disney. She was always the one I could count on to be good; she's always been a sweetheart. But lately, she's been in a really intense phase, and it's hard to handle. She has a very loud, shrill little voice, and she's always using it to yell "MOM", and you wouldn't believe how often she needs something – hungry, thirsty, help with something... we starting heavily potty training; I'm talking no more diapers during the day, so of course that makes her even more needy. By the way, the potty training is not going very well.

Well, I'd better wrap up; I'm sick of all the interruptions – I've found it's better when I don't really try to blog or work while the kids are around because it causes more frustration than productivity. But it's amazing how positive things look when our Kindergartner is in a "good" phase! And her older sister has been completely awesome lately too, so that makes 3 of my 4 kids in good phases. And Disney's bad phase can't even be called "bad" when you compare it to one of Sammie's bad phases. It's funny how our family dynamics are constantly changing as the kids go in and out of phases – kind of like the moon!

He Ate The Cheesy Fiesta Potatoes, And Then He Wore

Them

I have an 18-month-old little boy, and the other day, he tried cheesy fiesta potatoes from Taco Bell. I think the title of this blog post pretty much says it all.



The Fun Kind Of Chaos

Last night's youth group was... interesting, to say the least. It was the last session before a 2-week holiday break, and the kids were as hyper as they could be! We had decided to throw the kids in my husband's group and my group a pizza party, but last week, my husband had another teacher's group as well, so two 6th grade boys groups and one 7th grade girls group were invited. The kids ran in, ate pizza and drank pop (got all sugared up), and kept running around the room. Finally, we got them to sit down for a kid-friendly version of the party game Mafia (I've linked to it enough, if you want more info, you'll have to do some searching thru my blogs or just google it). Well, that presented a problem we hadn't foreseen: once the players were eliminated from the game, what were they supposed to do with themselves? When adults play the game, players get "killed" in the game and then are trusted to sit

there quietly, observe and gather strategy for future games. Not the case with a bunch of preteens. The boys were trying extra hard to impress the girls, and they were falling all over each other like a bunch of buffoons. One kid even decided to record the Mafia action with his cell phone while he was closing his eyes – cheating, but you’ve got to recognize his resourcefulness. The girls weren’t running around, but they were busy texting with their cell phones and shooting the immature boys dirty looks. It wasn’t quite what we had in mind, but it was fun nonetheless and a great way to end our first session as youth group leaders!

It’s STILL Scary!

When I was growing up, my parents pretty much operated as a pair, and my dad worked outside the home. Therefore, I only remember two times when he was left in charge – the time I went missing and the time I watched the movie *Poltergeist*.

Both incidents occurred when I was 4 or 5. My dad was having a meeting with someone I didn’t know (think it was an insurance guy), so I didn’t want to come in the house from playing and walk past the scary insurance guy because I was a really shy kid. So I waited for him to leave, and I waited, and I got sleepy, and next thing I know I’m waking up in our little red wagon in the dark garage and my sister is there saying, “I found her!” My parents had the neighbors all out canvassing the neighborhood calling my name, and so my babysitter came over afterward and I remember showing her how I had just learned to tie my shoes. My parents probably don’t remember the incident in quite the same light...

As for the other time, somehow my sister and I were allowed to

watch the classic 80's horror movie [Poltergeist](#) even though we were both under the age of 10. If you haven't seen the movie, then you wouldn't know about the terrifying clown scene that takes place in a kid's bedroom. My favorite stuffed toy at that time just happened to be a Ronald McDonald doll, which was no longer the case after I saw that movie. The Ronald McDonald doll went into the basement, and a few years later, I decided I was over it and went to look for my old friend. But he was gone, and when I asked my mom about it, she said that she had put him out for [Amvets](#) since I had decided I was done with him. But I had trouble explaining that I wasn't done with him; he was just on probation! So I felt badly, but it was probably nothing compared to how my dad felt when mom found out we watched Poltergeist...

So anyway, I was thinking about my Ronald McDonald doll after seeing Mr. McDonald in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, so I decided to look it up on the internet. If you ask me, you can't really blame a kid for being scared and banishing this thing to the basement:



Budgeted Birthday Blast

I think I blogged about my daughter's upcoming 10th birthday party a few weeks ago, looking for activity ideas. There was no need to worry, because we had the party last weekend, and everyone had a blast!

We ended up extending the party to make it last 3 hours instead of 2, and two of the girls were even able to spend the night. It was actually really easy to entertain 8 nine and ten-year-old girls, as well as the birthday girl's two little sisters, ages 3 and 5. Seventeen-month-old little brother was a nuisance, but the poor little guy was really very outnumbered by all those girls!

As we waited for the girls to arrive, they played a video game on the tv where there are floating balloons they get to break using their bodies instead of controllers. Next, Dad led the girls in about 5 rounds of the [party game Mafia](#) – they loved it! Then, we made English muffin pizzas – I set out the English muffins, pizza sauce, cheese, pepperoni, and mushrooms, and the girls made their own pizzas and then I put them in the oven for 5 or 10 minutes. The entire activity cost about \$6, and the kids loved it! Then we had cake, but I had realized ahead of time that with 4 kids, we spend about \$80 on birthday cake per year! Wow, does that add up! So I had a talk with my oldest, and she really had no problem with me getting mini cupcakes instead of a personalized birthday cake and numbered candles. This decision saved us about \$15! I got two 2 liters of pop, and a few cheap bags of snacks for the sleepover, and the entire party cost us under \$20! Most importantly, my daughter and her friends had an awesome time and made some great memories! Happy birthday Taylor!!



(No, the party wasn't so boring everyone fell asleep! This what a group of kids playing the party card game Mafia look like!)