

# Checkin' In

Here it is mid-April already! It's funny that a few days ago I thought I had made the decision to not blog anymore, but here I am (part of this doing-less-for-me-more-for-others mentality I'm attempting). I have a kid who wants to train to be a babysitter by watching her siblings, and I have a baby who decided he needed a nap – so I find myself with idle time. Wait, idle time?!? What's that? I'm not used to this; I don't know what to do! Usually I try to cram in some housework or laundry or food prep in my “down” time, but right now I just want to sit... so writing I will do!

Nothing much to say, just a generic update on my family. The kids are doing great! There hasn't been any sickness in our house lately, so we are thankful to God for that. So a quick update on each of us if I can get it in before Luke's nap is over...

Taylor is 12 and a half now, and she is a great kid. She shows so much responsibility and genuinely cares for others. She is challenged at times with patience with her siblings, but she does well. I can't imagine it would be easy to be the oldest in a house where there is always so much chaos and needy little kids! Taylor leads the worship music for the kids at church, and she also enjoys using her artistic gifts to make posters for church events.

Sammie is almost 8 and is a pretty good babysitter. She LOVES her baby brother, and if it's the right day, she's great with her 5 year old sister and 3 year old brother. But Sammie has her off-days too, and if it's one of those days, WATCH OUT! ☹️ She will push buttons of all of her siblings, and she is quite good at getting them going. She is watching the littles as I write though, so it feels wrong to say bad things about her behavior. She is getting ready for her 8th bday party coming up in May!

Disney has been causing 90% of the trouble in our house lately. Our sweet little Disney is going through a phase right now that is making all of us (her included!) crazy! She had a good day today, but in the past few weeks, she's been upset about EVERYTHING and also intentionally pushing the buttons that drive siblings over the edge. She loves school, and she is excited to start Kindergarten in the fall (we do homeschool, but we don't start homeschooling our kids until 2nd grade for a number of reasons; one is because we like the social skills that kids learn at school in the early ages).

Christopher has been acting like such a big boy lately! He's been potty-trained since New Year's day, and he does well with that. He's stopped throwing so many tantrums and is really acting more like a kid these days instead of like a crabby tantrum-throwing toddler. He does get into his fair share of messes, and he gets especially upset when he goes thru candy withdrawal.

Luke is 6 mos. already, and a handful as always – it's only getting worse as he gets older. Then again, he is getting even cuter as he grows, so that's the plus side ☺ But what a strong personality and eye for mischief he has for such a young age! I try not to think about it, but I find myself tempted to worry about how I'm going to stay sane when he is actually moving! Right now he's just scooting and rolling around, but he puts EVERYTHING in his mouth and is quite demanding; wanting 100% of the available parent's attention 100% of the time! You can see why this is challenging when there are 4 other kids – it's just one reason why I gave up my social life ☹

Hubby and I are doing well also. His working 2 jobs keeps us busy, but in some ways, it's actually not as stressful as I thought it would be. It's amazing how much easier things are when you truly trust the Lord to get you through. By no means is life easy these days, but I am so much better equipped to handle the twists, turns and busyness now than I was a few

years ago thanks to Him. As I mentioned, we have given up our social lives. I miss my friends, but luckily we live in a world where I can still keep up with their lives and know how to pray for them when they need it. I've tried hanging out with adults a few times in the past few months, but unfortunately with all these kids running around and being so demanding, it seems better for everyone if I just focus on the kids and live a kid-oriented life. So, with Hubby now working on the weekends, we've been having our family Saturdays on Fridays when we can. And we've been doing less of the expensive entertainment stuff and have been trying dedicating our hearts to serving more. My husband has thought of some very creative ways to do this, and we've had many an opportunity to get out into the local communities and give and share God with others. It's been wonderful!

I was going to write more, but the baby has woken up, and he's demanding my attention, of course. I just can't think straight when he cries and he knows it! More next month... haha!

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## A Big Sarcastic THANKS

THANKS – to the one who got us the 300 piece puzzle for Christmas. Granted, 300 pieces are not too many for a puzzle. But normal puzzles usually have the person putting together a broken portrait, like a picture of a landscape or a scene. But the puzzle given to my 10-year-old back in December was a depiction of a collection of small toys clustered together on some shelves – what seemed like 300 toys broken into 300 pieces which we were supposed to piece together...

I wanted to do this puzzle together as a family days after it

was given to us, but since that was one of the worst weekends of my life, we didn't get around to it. Tonight, my 10-year-old was having trouble sleeping after her little sisters had gone to bed, so we hauled it out and went to work. Thank goodness the little ones were asleep. There was no way that they would have felt anything but frustration when trying to do this puzzle – it was too daunting for even my husband to try, but then again, he is not a puzzle person in the slightest. As a matter of fact, when he saw our completed triumph, he asked, "How do we preserve this?" I answered, "Why bother, we'd probably like to do it again; it was fun." He gave me the strangest look and said, "I guess our definitions of fun in this case are completely different."

I'm proud to say that together, my daughter and I finished the "impossible" puzzle about 15 minutes under our two-hour goal. Here are some pics:



Despite my clever blog post title and in all seriousness, I am thankful for the time that we spent together doing the puzzle, and we will look forward to doing it again. The thanks I would like to expend to the puzzle-giver is not at all sarcastic; we actually had a lot of fun. But that same puzzle-giver should keep a watchful eye... there are now two of us looking to challenge you to an equal payback ☹

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## Ready, Set, Relax!

A few years ago (3, I think?) an organization in our county enacted a yearly event called "Ready, Set, Relax!". Every year, on the first Monday of October, families in the county are encouraged to take off and set aside everything outside of family: no work, no meetings, no private lessons, no practices, rehearsals, games, homework, tv, nor internet. Every local entity takes part; ie, the teachers don't assign homework and various civic groups (the Girl Scouts, the local city councils, etc.) reschedule their meetings for this day. The idea is that for at least one day, families can enjoy each others company. I think it's a great thing, and even though I feel that our family is blessed with much more "together" time than most, we enthusiastically participate in "Ready, Set, Relax!" each year. This year, we made sure to have a sit-down family dinner together (which can be surprisingly difficult to accomplish when you have 4 kids of different ages!), then we took a long walk together. When we got home, the two eldest planned a carnival for us parents and their youngest siblings which included a puppet show, dancing, playing games, and story time. It was so much fun! Even though we are blessed enough to be able to spend a lot of time together as a family, "Ready, Set, Relax!" gives us just another excuse to enjoy each other. It's definitely something

we will do year after year, and something I hope might catch on for the rest of the country!