

# Blessings

We always knew that we were blessed with our 5 healthy babies, but the reality of how blessed we really were is beginning to sink in. Our first 4 children were very easy, content, healthy babies, so our 5th child, Luke, has rocked our world a little bit. He has always been an intense baby; very energetic, playful, sleepless, alert and specific about his wants and needs. But during the past few months, he's been sick as well, so the poor little guy is having trouble being comforted. We've taken him to the doctor a few times, and he's been diagnosed with bronchitis and an ear infection. As if these illnesses were not enough, his chest x-rays show he has an enlarged heart. We are currently praying that this is not a symptom of something seriously wrong with little Luke's health. My husband made me promise not to google it since we've made a few medical scares in our family worse by scaring ourselves with random internet information. We are currently waiting for our appointment with the pediatric cardiologist. Scary stuff.

I will continue to update when I can. In the meantime, prayers for Luke would be wonderful ☐

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## JJ

My little parakeet JJ passed away some time during the night last night. Not much of a surprise there; he has been sick for a while, and even though he began looking well again a few weeks ago, he took a turn for the worse in the last few days. He looked so awful yesterday that I knew he wouldn't make it through the night. But there was always hope that I was

wrong. He had been on what I called "death watch" before and made it through the night, so the hope was there.

I don't really know what happened – he was only about a year old, and I had had him since January, not even a year. He started showing signs of illness about 2 months ago. I gave him medicine and TLC, and he began to do better, but like I said, I guess it just wasn't enough.

He was "just a parakeet", but I loved his company. I was so excited to see what kind of bird he would become; how he would look and act as an adult and who he would be when he felt healthy, but now I won't know. Honestly, taking care of animals is one of my favorite things in the whole world, so why do I have to be so bad at it? A few months ago, JJ was so happy when we moved his cage into the living room so he had company all day rather than living in the solitude (or was it protection?) of our bedroom upstairs. We kept him right near the Halogen lamp, could there have been a smell or the heat or something that made him sick? On the rare occasion that a bug would fly into the Halogen, yuck, what a smell that made. We tried to get rid of Teflon pans and things like that, but JJ's new home in the living room wasn't too far from the kitchen – maybe cooking smells did him in? He was a fraidy-bird, so I couldn't really take apart his cage to clean it out; maybe it got too dirty? A dozen why's and what-if's, but no more parakeet. At least he is not suffering anymore – it was getting really difficult to see him in his cage looking so miserable and worse for the wear. Poor JJ. Even if he was just a caged bird, I miss him already. Ugh, and the cold weather is back today... fitting somehow, just feels like a miserable day all around – time to make the best of it.

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# Back To Blogging

It seems like I haven't had the time to blog as much as I'd like to lately. Put it this way – Halloween ended over a week ago now, and I still have a draft sitting here detailing how my family spent what's probably our 2nd favorite holiday. I think I will quickly summarize and get it churned out next, hopefully.

One thing that's been taking up my blogging time is laundry. When the seasons change, my laundry responsibilities increase from about 3 loads per week to 6 or 7. That's because my family of 6 is now wearing pants instead of shorts or sundresses, many of us dress in layers in the fall which adds sweatshirts to the mix, and then there are the added number of blankies that the kids use when it turns cold outside. The good news of all this is that when spring turns to summer, I find myself with about half the laundry I've gotten used to doing in the winter – kind of a fall back, spring ahead-type thing for laundry, I guess. But more laundry folding and less blogging for me in the mean time.

And that reminds me, a funny thing happened at church yesterday. When my class got back to our classroom after large group, there were 2 new kids sitting there. I introduced myself, and we were just getting started when their dad came to the door, seemingly embarrassed and very apologetic as he asked for his kids back – turns out their family had forgotten to set their clocks back an hour, so they were actually there for the next service ☐

Our family remembered to change our clocks, but we didn't get to appreciate the extra hour of sleep it was supposed to bring – kids have biological clocks, they wake up at the same time every day regardless of what the clock says or what time zone they are in. This is especially good advice if you're going to travel with kids across time zones – don't fool yourself

into thinking that your kids will adjust to the local time when you travel, or you could be in for a not-so-pleasant surprise. My wonderful, thoughtful husband is always the one who gets up early with the kids, but I had to be at church at 8:30 yesterday. Also, I was up all night with a killer headache – now that was strange.



I am very lucky to be able to say that I very rarely get headaches. If I don't get enough sleep, I will have a dull ringing in my head, but nothing like Saturday night's doozy that was actually waking me up throughout the night. Luckily it went away (with help) before I arrived in my classroom full of 1st graders. But I have to wonder about the cause of this colossal headache – could it perhaps be some kind of weird virus that had me laid up all weekend? Saturday I was knocked flat on my back by a sudden and severe mysterious back pain. It began on Friday, when I decided to take my kids to the zoo since they had a day off school. By the time we were ready to leave, I couldn't bend over and had to ask for help to tie my shoes. I thought maybe it was a pulled muscle or something, maybe a cramp that would work itself out – I couldn't remember injuring it. But I did not enjoy myself nearly as much as I usually do at the zoo ☐ And thank goodness Hubby decided to come with or I don't know how I would have been able to handle 5 kids (my daughter's friend came along) by myself without hardly being able to bend or move right. When we got home, Hubby had some work to catch up on, and I fell asleep on the couch while waiting for him –

something I haven't done for ages which makes me realize that I didn't feel too well on Friday. Then Saturday dawns, and I can't get out of bed because of the extreme pain every time I tried to bend. So I stayed in bed until 1:30 – played my cards right and got lunch in bed too ☐ – when we absolutely had to leave to meet our youth group kids for a service project. I got the easy job – waiting for the kids who were late – while the others raked leaves and picked up litter, and while I took it easy, my back started to feel better. But then came the headache which was to plague me all night. What makes me think this is a virus is because of all the stuff going around lately, plus the fact that my sister had this same exact sudden backache a few weeks ago – could it be a contagious 'backache virus'? I owed my parents an email, but I couldn't get in front of the computer with my sore back, so I called them from bed Saturday morning, and that's how I found out about my sister. Anyway, my point is, it was a busy weekend, but also one where I couldn't get to my computer even if I had had the time, hence the slow pace of the blogging.



And speaking of things going around... my parakeet JJ is feeling much better. He's even chirping again!! He hasn't lost his balance while sitting on his perch in days, and his physical appearance is starting to look healthier. The lady at the pet store said that if a little bird is fluffed up and at the bottom of his cage like JJ was that it's almost always too late to save them, so I feel really great that my little guy seems to have another chance. I guess I should have bought this really cool looking

toy I saw the other day, but my husband and I have a policy that we try not to buy anything unless we have an immediate use for it. This thing was a \$10 cabinet – you install it in your living room or somewhere; it's a nice looking wood cabinet, and it opens into a little play yard for small birds. Ugh, just writing about it makes me want it, but the store was an hour away, and JJ is a cage bird – I don't know that he would come out to play in a play yard. I think of him as so fragile, so it would be difficult for me to make him come out; I sure wouldn't want him to get sick again.

Well, anyway, I've rambled enough – guess I just wanted to share my relief at getting well and of being able to blog again. Until that overdue Halloween post...

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## **My Poor Little Bird**

JJ, my parakeet, is very sick. I had parakeets when I was younger, and I know enough about them to know that we are lucky that he's still alive. His chirping and squawking gradually decreased until I realized the other day that he doesn't vocalize at all anymore. He is very lathargic, and sits puffed up on his perch where he loses his balance every few minutes. His tail is bobbing when he breathes, which is a sign of respiratory distress, and he has some discoloring around his cere (nose), which indicates discharge. The other day, I noticed that he was sitting on the bottom of his cage, which is a sign of imminent death in parakeets. Based upon my research (past experience, the internet, and bothering the heck out of the local pet store), JJ seems to have a respiratory infection – something that is often fatal for small birds.

But he's hung on a few days now from when I first believed his death was imminent when he was at the bottom of his cage. After all, parakeets' instincts are to hide their illnesses. If they show any sign of being sick, wild birds will be cast out by their flock, so if captive birds allow signs of illness to show, it's often too late to save them. I got some birdie antibiotics, and I'm hoping that he is drinking his water where the meds are. He is still eating, and that's a great sign. We put a blanket over the cage, and are trying to keep him warm and calm so he can rest and get well. It's just touch and go at this point, so I'm praying for my little bird. I got so attached to the little guy! I got him right after my beloved dog passed away, and seeing my happy little bird helped me feel at least a tiny bit better. And now I'm watching him suffer; it's hard. I want to move him back upstairs where it's a little warmer and quieter, but I'm afraid of stressing him out too much, which is basically the same reason I don't want to take him to the vet. I guess I'll wait for him to improve a little more before moving him upstairs; that's the only plan I have right now.

Like I said, he does seem to be improving – the loss of balance on his perch seems to have subsided anyway. But he still does not look well, and he is not vocalizing. He is less than a year old, so maybe his youth is keeping him strong and resilient. Poor JJ! He is just a little parakeet, but he means a lot to me. If you could send out a little prayer for JJ, we'd appreciate it. And pray for my husband while you're at it; he's fighting a nasty cold. Obviously, Hubby's health is a billion times more important than JJ's, but if I wrote a blog post every time Hubby got sick... well, I wouldn't have time for that! Besides, Hubby's illness is not life-threatening. I wonder if Hubby and JJ have the same thing? That's one thing that stinks about this time of year – all the illness! Wish I could transfer some of my super-immune system over to Hubby, who seems to get EVERY single thing that comes our way...

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## 4 Down...

My husband fell ill over the weekend, and he had to leave a show early that we went to see together on Sunday. By Monday night, my two littlest kids were throwing up, and Hubby and I stayed up late cleaning them up and comforting them. Monday night, I had a dream that we were on a trip, and we were scheduled to leave our vacation, but I was sick and worried about the 3-4 hour car ride. When I awoke, I was really sick – so this thing has struck down 4 of us, and my 2 oldest daughters remain unaffected as of yet.

We are busy people! I already rescheduled the dentist appointment we won't make, but I don't know what to do about our church's Kidstuf play Hubby and I are directing – rehearsal is tonight. I don't see how I'll be able to make it, but I also don't understand how to summon the energy to stay home with sick little ones when I'm feeling so incredibly lousy. Complicating things is the fact that my two oldest girls are also in Kidstuf, and they had to miss the first rehearsal because they were at their Grandma's. There is a waiting list for kids who want to be in Kidstuf, and so the kids who are chosen to be in it are not supposed to miss even one rehearsal. If my kids get sick, they will have to miss another rehearsal, and I'm so worried for them that they won't get to do the show!

So today, I have to find a way to navigate around the thumping in my head and the visits to the bathroom (sorry, but here we are) to care for my 4 kids so Hubby can work. And I have to do things in a way that won't spread this super-contagious illness (it says something when I get an illness – I don't usually get sick ever!) to the remaining healthy ones in my family.



Anyone want to babysit? ☐

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## Sick

It seems like I have been getting sick a lot lately. Last Friday, I felt terrible after working all day. I had to call and let my leaders know that I wasn't going to be at my first Bible study lesson! I didn't feel any better by Saturday, but I was not going to miss a seven hour work day either, not when we need that money. I didn't stay the entire time. I left two hours early, after I got sick from my lunch. Sunday, I stayed home and did nothing, just so I could be well enough to go to work on Monday. By Monday, I was fine. I was up and about, nothing wrong at all. HA! Now I have no voice and a cough that keeps my voice from coming back. Well, that and having to try and talk at work. That's always fun to do. I have had no voice since Tuesday night and it's now Saturday. Thankfully, that is the only thing wrong and isn't keeping me from work.

Tony is also sick, though he doesn't want to admit it. He insisted on going to work yesterday after waking up with a fever. I am pretty sure he will go to work tonight also. True, his fever had gone down by the time he had to go to work, but it came back. I could feel it. I guess he's just stubborn, not that I'm not. ☐ We are very stubborn people. One of the many reasons I love him.

Hopefully, Amie doesn't get sick from us. She can't get miss any work any any more than Tony and I can. We have a house full of poor people who need to work and need insurance. Though Amie will be able to get that soon enough from her work. If I'm lucky, I'll be able to get it from Goodwill when I am working more with my head cashier position, which I start

training for today! Pray that everything goes well.

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## Wonder Woman

Probably a year ago now, I received one of those email forwards about getting to know your friends. You know the type – you read your friends' answers to some strange and random questions and then you answer them, getting to know more about your friends and yourself. One of the questions was something about choosing a fictional character that best describes your friend, and my friend wrote "Wonder Woman" about me. I thought that was awesome because I don't feel like a wonder woman, but it's fun that someone else thinks that about me, so it's kind of stuck with me... Especially in these recent days where I am one of the last ones in our family standing as the others are flu-stricken. It's been kind of a mantra I say to myself as I walk around our barren wastelands of a living room, tending the ailing... *"I am a wonder woman, I will not get the flu."*

If I were a sort of flu wonder woman, I would carry holsters for my tools of trade: bottle of disinfectant, antibacterial soap, hand sanitizer, Hall's Defense lozenges, antibacterial wipes, tissues... I've washed my hands raw in the past week.

This is all very strange, maybe the flu has infected my brain. I've also taken on what seem like really weird habits lately, like swallowing garlic cloves and onion petals like pills with my dinner. I'm not going to say anything about how I smell lately, but hey, I'm one of the last ones around here who hasn't gotten sick. So far, our two youngest kids and myself remain healthy. I can't believe we haven't gotten it, and it feels strange to live life feeling like a sitting

duck. This thing is so nasty and contagious, it's really only a matter of time...

Our oldest daughter came home last Friday night and stayed in bed until Tuesday when she also finally starting talking and eating again. Our second oldest daughter had a bad fever Tuesday and slept for awhile and then she was fine. My husband has felt terrible for 3 days now. It's affecting everyone differently, and it's completely unpredictable. I had to go into the middle school to get my daughter's homework, and that's where I found out that half the 4th grade came down with it Friday night. I also learned of the "8 day" theory – some people have thought that their families were sick and over it, only to have other members of the household come down with it 8 days later. Sounds like a horror movie, feels like a sci-fi movie. Pretty much everyone I know who has kids has H1N1 in their families. I'm especially worried about our friends whose diabetic daughter was sent home from school with a blood sugar reading of over 300. Her mother also has a chronic illness and her medication includes steroids, so both of them are high risk for H1N1 complications.

We had a busy week planned this week and had to cancel most obligations. It's really difficult to live our busy lives without being able to commit to anything, not knowing whether we'll be sick or healthy. I hope everyone else is doing ok... is the outbreak especially bad in our small community, or is this just the reality of the 2009 flu outbreak? *I am a wonder woman, I will not get the flu...*

So what's that tickle in my throat?

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# Quack Doctors – Take Two

Just a little update to let you know my mouth is finally feeling better and yesterday I was able to indulge in food and got to actually enjoy the feeling of being full for the first time in an entire week. No thanks to our local doctors, though, my husband made me some sort of concoction from stuff we had around the house that I swished around in my mouth. I don't know if it was coincidence or if that's what finally did the trick, but all I have to say to the doctor's \$300 mouthwash is **HMPF!** And it should be noted that we went to the doctor's office again yesterday and sat there for an hour and half waiting for the doctor whom they said was out to lunch. I didn't want to pay to be seen again, but I wanted him to change my prescription to something that would help me and that I could afford. Finally tired of waiting, we left with the nurse's promise that she would call me as soon as he got back from lunch, but they never even bothered to call until this morning when I was finally feeling better. Rude isn't even the word for this, I was in agony! And all that after 3 different nurses and Walmart told us like 5 different ways they could help me, none of which turned out to be true. As my husband put it, it seems like at this medical center, the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing! Kind of sounds like another local organization we've worked with, but that's another blog...

I'm a bit concerned that this canker sore problem is something that I might have to deal with from now on in my old age. Even though we think this latest canker sore outbreak was caused by hand, foot, and mouth disease, the doctor shrugged off our internet diagnosis since it's so rare in adults. So if he's right and it was just canker sores, it might be something that I'll have to deal with every once in a while, especially since it seems to be a hereditary problem! Let's hope not – my family can't handle the stress of anyone else

being sick!

On a side note, please pray for my little nephew who was admitted last night into the hospital with croup. I'm praying that he gets well and that it's not H1N1 and that none of the other kids he was playing with (his brother and my kids!) last weekend get it. I'm really really hoping we can dodge some bullets this flu season since there are six of us, thus six open doors for viruses to come into our household. But for now, we're hanging tough (groan!) and ready to party this Halloween weekend. Don't worry – I plan on getting the house scrubbed down for all of you coming to the Halloween party! Can't wait!

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## **I'm Grounded**

I will spare you the details, but apparently I've caught some sort of stomach virus (and it causes stomach pain – OUCH!). Of course, I can't call in sick to my job as a SAHM (stay at home mom), and just my luck that my husband has work today, so I'm stuck with the two little ones. Actually, they're stuck with me – I don't feel well enough to go to Walmart or to take them anywhere else, so I can't even kill time that way – I'm grounded. And I do need to go to Walmart – I've already endured one tantrum about our lack of fruit loops. I don't think I could handle another one. Is there fruit loops delivery? I actually *want* to go to Walmart – like I said, it would kill the time anyway. At least I can blog like a maniac right now while the baby is napping. When he wakes up, I will be at his mercy. He gets really bored around the house and wants to be held all the time. But when I hold him, he just wants to grab things he shouldn't and bang on my computer keyboard. I guess I might say I'm bored. It's not that I

have nothing to do; there are always blog posts to write (I'm sitting on 14 drafts right now!), newspapers from weeks ago to read, thank you notes and birthday party invitations to write, a messy house to clean, laundry to do, an anniversary photo album to put together... it's just that I don't feel like doing any of that. Or feel like doing much of anything, for that matter. I guess I'll sit here and watch Dora the Explorer all day. I'm getting hungry, but I'm scared to eat anything because of my stomach. I have a meeting I'd really like to get to later... sigh. Being sick sucks. I hope I feel better for date day tomorrow!!!

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## **Sick Of Being Sick**

The past week and a half in our house has been awful. It all came to a head last Friday when our two-year-old got sick in the car. Last weekend, when she wasn't sleeping, she was throwing up or in the words of Chandler, played by Matthew Perry on the tv show Friends, "visiting a town a little south of throwing up...". Later in the weekend, her baby brother was afflicted with the same illness, and now we had huge messes x2. Big sister Sammie got it later in the week, but luckily, the little ones started feeling better. Add in a snow day and a couple of weather delays, and our house was chaos for what seemed like forever. On top of everything, I had some sort of extreme fatigue. I was so worried about it that I even made a doctor's appointment and went in, where the doctor ran some blood tests and even gave me a neck xray since I had a strange achiness accompanying the fatigue. I guess it didn't occur to me that I could have the same virus that struck down the kids, mainly because I didn't have the same (disgusting) symptoms they had, but I did look up some stuff on the internet in an attempt to scare diagnose myself. The good news is, my xrays

and blood tests came back normal (well, I'm actually still waiting on one of the tests, but it's Friday and the nurses are out to lunch and won't be back until Monday afternoon – what is that? Can I have a job like that?), but the tests that did come back show that there is nothing wrong with my thyroid or my iron levels, both of which I thought were possibilities. So that's good... I guess. If there was something wrong with my body chemically, we'd be able to fix it, and then I'd have the energy I need to keep up with my 4 little kids. Now that most things came back normal, I don't know where to start to feel better... Although I do feel much better today, but still no where near normal, and that makes me think it might be the illness my kids had after all. But it was a bizarrely lengthy version of the stomach flu, and it will take us weeks (at least!) to catch up on all the work that didn't get done in the week and a half of illness, sigh.

My husband had to take off from some of his work so he could watch the kids while I rested, and especially with all the laundry we've had to do around here, Mt. Washmore is once again threatening to take over the second floor of our house. All this catching up, and I'm still exhausted... My husband seems to think I have sleep apnea, mostly because I snore often and loudly and I'm always needing more sleep. I forgot to bring this up to the doctor, but if I ever get ahold of her and that last test comes back normal, maybe we can go from there... I do seem to need an awful lot of sleep to function. Well, anyway, that's my story – sorry if I grossed anyone out (especially body-function-joke-hater Derek), but I thought people should know where I've been for the last two weeks. At least the kids are feeling better – it was beyond sad to see them crabby, lethargic and not able to keep anything down... Is it time for summer yet?!?