



# ADVENTURES IN MOTHERING

"... how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ..." EPH 3:18

November 2008

By: Karin Coutsouridis

I was reading in the book of Luke the other day and came across one of my favorite stories. In it Jesus had sent out 72 of his followers, two by two, telling them to preach that the kingdom of God was near. The 72 then come back and they are full of joy. They tell Jesus this is because even the demons have listened to them and been under their authority.

Could you imagine? They had authority over everything as they traveled in Jesus' Name! Those are the kind of days I like to have! The kind of days where everything just seems to fall into place...the kind of day where I'm hanging out with good company and making a difference too. On that kind of day, the kids are enjoyable, I get to spend time with my husband (and we're both awake for it!), and maybe the household chores are all done...On that kind of a day, I'm living like I know God is a God of mercy, love, and power. Those are the kind of days where I'm kicking some demons' butts by Jesus' power and rejoicing!

Unfortunately, I seem to have so many of the other kind of days. The kind of days where nobody is listening to me, little less any demons. The kind of day where I feel like I'm the bad company and not making a difference in anyone's world. Or just the kind of day where nothing turns out very well.

Recently I had a day like this. I had decided to take all the kids out to Denny's for a pancake lunch. This is huge in our household, a major treat. Denny's was, of course, crowded and the kids were antsy but no one was climbing on top of the table (under, yes, but not on top of) so I figured we were holding our own. Finally, the food arrived and I was trying to pour syrup, cut pancakes, and remove any lethal cutlery when my 2 year-old Elisabeth turned to me and promptly threw up - all over both of us. which caused a reaction. My 5 year-old Nick ran away from the table screaming (really). Stephanie, who's 7 and a little bit more together ran for the

waitress and returned with a fistful of napkins from that waitress, who apparently didn't quite grasp the enormity of the situation. My 3 year-old Paul was totally unaffected by the throw up but very displeased that I could not and would not cut his pancakes in half immediately. By the time the waitress had arrived, Elisabeth was stripped bear, I was trying to clean myself with a napkin, Steph and Paul were calmly eating and Nick was under the table (really). Much to the relief of all the other customers, I'm sure, I asked for everything to go and we made our way out, all four crying for a variety of reasons like just having thrown up, having witnessed the throw up, and being unable to continue eating as planned.

That story is actually kind of funny in the aftermath but there are so many other stories which would not be as funny. Times where I have yelled and upset my children through word or deed. Times where I look out and feel surrounded by despair. Times of chaos or pain. Those are the days where I wonder where the joy is, where the victory is.

And Jesus tells me, tells all of us. we most certainly can rejoice on those phenomenal days where everything is working out as it rightly should. But we can also rejoice in those days that are not. Why? Because our names are in the Book of Life. We know how things will end. The road may be rocky but in the end God wins. He holds the trump card. No one can defeat Him. And that means we win too.

We cannot do that on our own. We cannot add our own names into that book and get ourselves into heaven with the things we do right or the things we do not do wrong. But we can recognize that we can't and ask Jesus to forgive us and change us and be the One who runs things in our lives. And when we do, we can rejoice, no matter what kind of day we're having, because someday we will spend forever together with Him in heaven. And all our days will be sweet. May you all know the true joy at this time of Thanksgiving!



"...how long, how wide,  
how high and how  
deep is the love  
of Christ"  
Ephesians 3:18



## MARRIAGE SEMINAR

Focus on the Family presents

"Focus on Marriage" - Seeing your marriage through the eyes of God.

A Simulcast Conference featuring Beth Moore, Dr. Gary Smalley, Dr. John Trent, Dr. Del Tackett, Gary Thomas and special music guest Jeremy Camp.

**Live Via Satellite: February 28, 2009 at  
Westfield Evangelical Free Church, 9 am - 4:30 pm**

Register by sending check with contact information to:  
WEFC, 568 Southwick Road, Westfield, MA 01085  
Cost: Now through Nov. 30 = \$30/individual, \$49/couple  
Dec. 1 - Jan. 31 = \$35/individual, \$59/couple



MOPS is a ministry of Westfield Evangelical Free Church  
568 Southwick Road, Westfield, MA 01085  
(413) 562-1504

[www.westfieldefc.com](http://www.westfieldefc.com)

Service time is Sundays 10AM  
(Childcare/Sunday School is provided)



Exposed...the real ME

By: MOPS President Naomi Cramer Overton  
August 2008

Early in my mothering adventure, a combination of three incidents led to a moment where I no longer felt like me. Each happenstance, by itself, might have been small, but combined, they threw me for a major "Who am I NOW?" loop.

Incident #1: Feet in stirrups, I sprawled exhausted in the wee hours of a Wednesday morning after having been in labor since Monday night. My soon-to-be-born baby's heart rate started plummeting. Preparing for a possible emergency C-section, the anesthesiologist prodded, "How much do you weigh?" Amazed I would have to answer such a question at this time, I replied, "210 pounds." But even that wasn't enough. Oh no! The doctor didn't hear me the first time. And there—flayed for all to see—I made my public confession again, louder and through gritted teeth, "Two-Hundred-and-TEN-POUNDS."

Incident #2 happened eight days later, after my hubby and I had flown to take part in his brother's wedding. There in the airport restroom, during my first go-round with a fold-down changing table, I had removed Tyler's teensy diaper and was ready to put on the new one. Ka—SPLURT! A seedy mustard-yellow liquid streamed out and hit the tiled wall of the restroom. Oh well, I thought, I'll just change it again. And then another explosion and another diaper. Forty-five minutes later, I emerged from the airport bathroom to find my husband trying to be patient at the baggage claim, asking, "What took you so long?"

But the final incident that pushed me past all self-recognition happened the next day at the wedding. I was sitting in the bride's dressing area trying to unzip my zip-in-back dress so I could nurse my little bleating baby, who needed to eat—NOW. Just then the groom walked in on me—the bare-

chested, DDD bra size version of me. As I was leaking milk, I felt the fullness not only of my chest, but of my new identity: "cow."

As soon as the wedding ended, we went to a friend's home to recover. My slim friend Susie asked with a bouncy smile, "So, how was the wedding?" I choked back the tears. Susie had a 1-year-old and looked totally together. I most definitely was not. There, in the safety of her living room, I told her about my moments of "identity crisis"—how I didn't want to be a 210-pound, diaper-changing milk provider. She laughed with me and told me it was going to be OK. It would be hard, but the year ahead would show me things about myself I never dreamed possible.

There, in relationship with another new mom, I found what I didn't know I needed—someone who'd been there and understood how I'd lost "me." As I watched Susie capably feed her toddler, I noticed how her character had deepened as a mom. And I gained hope! With a picture of my possible future before me, I determined to accept and even cheer for the new me along the terrain ahead—and I relaxed, knowing God would be doing the same.

Though other experiences have, of course, challenged this outlook, I know I am loved as the "new me"—the Naomi-mom-me—no matter what weight, repetitive tasks or bra size lie ahead.

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (Psalm 139:14)

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What is MOPS?

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) is a non-denominational Christian ministry program designed to nurture mothers with children from infancy through kindergarten. MOPS helps moms...and MOPS makes a difference in the lives of families. Visit [MOPS.org](http://MOPS.org) for more information and resources on mothering preschoolers.

The MOPS International theme for 2008-2009 is **Adventures in Mothering**. The content for our year is focused on learning more about ourselves as we go through this crazy adventure called motherhood.

[www.orgsites.com/malmopsofwestfield](http://www.orgsites.com/malmopsofwestfield)



SCRIPTURE OF THE MONTH

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Philippians 1: 3 - 6



## **Grumbling to Gratitude**

*From dirty diapers to frantic schedules: Can we really be thankful for everything?*

By: Lisa Johnson and Elisa Morgan

I had just merged onto the busy freeway, my new baby girl in tow, when a pungent odor began circulating throughout my van. As a mother of four, my finely tuned sense of smell told me this was the real deal. There was no time to pull off the freeway for a diaper change; I was already running late for a Christian educators' convention where it was my turn to work an exhibitors' booth I shared with a couple of friends. *Just my luck*, I muttered to myself.

Once we arrived at the convention center, out came the car seat, the stroller, the diaper bag, the baby, and a partridge in a pear tree. I plopped Charli in her stroller and we raced through the entryway just as 9,000 people flooded the exhibit hall, forcing me to undertake some pretty daring stroller maneuvers against the flow of traffic. Fortunately, the crowds parted like the Red Sea to escape the fumes that announced our presence, and soon we pulled into our assigned spot.

I sat down and commenced decontamination procedures on my daughter's hind side, frantically searching for wet wipes with one hand and holding Charli on the makeshift folding chair/changing table with the other. By this time droves of people were passing the booth, and I was flashing my best I've-got-everything-under-control smile.

I stuffed all my baby paraphernalia back into the diaper bag and tried to get organized in the booth. But a tiny cry reminded me that it was time for brunch, and I was about to become known as the nursing mom exhibit. "What possessed me to think I could do this alone? Could this day get any more complicated?" I grumbled.

But as the day passed, something unexpected happened. A steady stream of moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas strolled by the booth, stopping one by one to stare at the little angel in my arms. Clad in a pink dress, her big brown eyes peeking out from beneath a crocheted bonnet, Charli commanded the attention of all who passed.

The knowing gleam in their eyes seemed to say, "It just doesn't get any better than that."

With each comment of, "Enjoy this time, honey. It goes so fast," I held Charli a little closer, examined each little dimple of her tiny fingers more carefully.

I became so enchanted by this cooing miracle sitting on my lap that I forgot I was there for any other purpose than to be filled with the joy of her presence. I felt God's soothing touch calm the edginess that had crept into my soul. "Isn't she amazing?" he seemed to whisper. A thousand prayers of thanksgiving welled up in my heart, and I forgot all about my frazzled nerves.

It takes no effort to find things to gripe about. In fact, some of us seem to have a knack for it! It's not quite as easy to live a life that reflects the exhortation of Ephesians 5:20: "Always [give] thanks to God the Father for everything."

To cultivate a heart of thankfulness requires intentional effort and new eyes to see all that God has done for us. Yes, we have piles of laundry, but thank God we have clothes to keep us warm. Yes, we spend our days shuttling kids from soccer to swimming lessons, but thank God they are able to run and play.

The reward for this effort is a life in which small pleasures are savored, people we love are treasured, and nothing is taken for granted. When we choose to see the blessings in our lives each day, our grumbling is transformed into gratitude.

**A note from Elisa Morgan:** Dear Mom, are you stuck in a place of seeming impossibilities? Even in such stuckness, God waits to hear our gratitude. Paul says, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). It seems God knows that when we find ways to be thankful, even in the darkest times, our hearts are lifted, our hopes are increased, and for a few seconds, we can pick up one foot and take another baby step through the day.

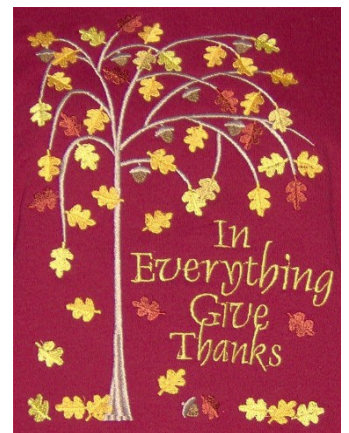
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## **THANKSGIVING WORSHIP SERVICE AT WEFC**

Join us on Tuesday, November, 25<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM to give thanks.

We will have a special service of worship, sharing and praise for God's goodness to us. Childcare is provided.





## Fireproof Your Marriage: Never Leave Your Partner Behind

Today marriages are burning up at an alarming rate. Money problems, children, poor communication, changing emotions, and sexual temptation can all cause a good relationship to burn up. When the fire comes to your home, will your marriage survive?

As a follow-up to the movie "Fireproof", Westfield Evangelical Free Church will hold a special marriage Emphasis in January and February. You are invited to join us as we explore God's plan for building a loving marriage that withstands the fire!

**Join us Sundays at 10 am.**

January 11 - Worth Fighting For

January 18 - He Said/She Said

January 25 - He First Loved Us

February 1 - Love for a Lifetime

February 8 - Breaking Free From Temptation

February 15 - Forgiveness

February 22 - A Better Way of Loving



### TOP TEN TURKEY TIPS

Guidelines for tackling the big bird!

[www.foodnetwork.com](http://www.foodnetwork.com)

Whether you're tackling a Thanksgiving turkey for the first or hundredth time, our top 10 tips will ensure your big bird is the best it can be.

1. Thawing a frozen turkey requires patience. The safest method is to thaw turkey in the refrigerator. Be sure to plan ahead — it takes approximately 3 days for a 20 pound turkey to fully defrost.

2. For crisper skin, unwrap the turkey the day before roasting and leave it uncovered in the refrigerator overnight.

3. Cooking times will differ depending on whether your bird was purchased fresh or frozen. Plan on 20 minutes per pound in a 350 degree F oven for a defrosted turkey and 10 to 15 minutes per pound for fresh.

4. A turkey will cook more evenly if it is not densely stuffed. Consider adding flavor by loosely filling the cavity with aromatic vegetables — carrots, celery, onion or garlic work nicely — or by carefully tucking fresh herbs underneath the breast skin. For the stuffing lovers, cook the dressing in a casserole dish on the side.

5. For even roasting, truss (secure tightly) your turkey.

6. Before roasting, coat the outside of the turkey with vegetable or olive oil, season with salt and pepper and tightly cover the breast with aluminum foil to prevent over-browning (it will be removed in step 7).

7. Don't be a peeping tom (no pun intended)! Once you get the turkey in the oven, resist the temptation to open the oven door and admire your handiwork. When the oven temperature fluctuates, you're only increasing the likelihood of a dry bird. About 45 minutes before you think the turkey is done, remove the foil from the breast to allow it to brown.

8. Remove the turkey from the oven when the deepest spot between the leg and the breast reads 180 degrees F on an instant-read thermometer. Check the internal temperature of the stuffing as well; it should be at least 165 degrees.

9. Tent the bird with foil and let rest for about 15 minutes before carving. If you need more time to make gravy, heat up side dishes, etc., you can let the turkey set for up to an hour without losing too much heat.

10. Remember to carve your turkey with a very sharp or electric knife.

### STEERING COMMITTEE

Mentor: Diane Hodges, 357-8726

Coordinator: Michelle Longey, 737-3377

Asst. Coordinator & Discussion Groups: Karin Coutsouridis, 568-6080

Creative Activities: Mary Beth Reed, 789-4216

Publicity: Jenna Banaitis, 785-1832

Hospitality: Maria Seddon, 569-5416 & Sarah Lakota, 351-5936

### MOPPETS:

Tina Desroches, 357-8592

Megan Patterson, 568-0233



**REMINDER:** Don't forget to bring your gas or grocery gift cards for the Lion's Den next month! Greg Dyson is back by popular demand as our speaker and he will be bring the cards back to this amazing, local, ministry. Even small amounts are greatly appreciated! For more information about the Lions Den, check out [www.lionsdenoutreach.org](http://www.lionsdenoutreach.org)