

# 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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## Easter 2011

Easter is definitely a favorite holiday of mine. Can't be THE favorite because nothing beats Christmas, but it's proven to be even better than Halloween these days. No matter how you celebrate Easter, there is always lots to do this time of year, and I think our family found the perfect balance between celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the

traditional kids' stuff like Easter eggs and bunnies.

Every year, our community has an Easter egg hunt, and my kids always love it. My oldest is now too old to participate, but I was proud that she chose to come along with us and that she was a HUGE help with the little ones. Our community's Easter egg hunt is more of a candy scramble now. They used to have it in the park, and the volunteer teens from the high school would hide the candy all around the park, but they got tired of having to move the event indoors at the last minute because of inclement weather. With Easter being in April, you just can't guarantee a sunny, dry, Saturday morning without muddy ground in which to hide the Easter surprises. So now they have it in the middle school gym, and while they can't exactly hide the candy, the kids seem to love it all the same. If the kids find a piece of candy with a colored dot on it, then they win an extra prize, and 2 of my 3 kids did just that – those of you who know our family can guess who was the one with the (as always) bad luck – poor kid.

At church the following day, we had two special guests join us – one friend who doesn't go to church but began to come after falling on hard times in his life, and a new friend who is also going through tough times and looking to switch churches. I'm so happy to report that New Friend now calls our church her church home – she and her kids really like it! Also, Friend #1 has been coming to church every week since! God is amazing!

Monday, we were invited by some friends to attend "The Living Last Supper", a show near Fort Wayne Indiana staged solely for God's glory – to depict the last days and the death and Resurrection of Jesus. It was an **awesome, powerful** show; one I **strongly recommend**. This will be an annual tradition for our family for sure! Especially since all 4 of our children were moved by the performance, and we didn't even need to use the child care!

Friday saw the annual kid-friendly tradition of egg coloring, and I think this was really the first year we've done egg coloring with a little BOY in the house. Our son is 2, and what a difference there was between his rowdy excited way of dropping the eggs into the colors versus his sisters' delicate quest for prettiness in their egg designs. Our son barreled through his allotment of eggs so quickly that his sisters were still working on theirs when he was done, and this is what happened:



After dinner, our family sat down in a circle to do another one of our favorite Easter traditions: [Resurrection Eggs](#). It's a set that was given to us by my sister last year, and I have to remember to tell her how much we enjoy doing this every year. We even lent our set to some friends this year for them to enjoy! It comes with a booklet, and we take turns reading the little paragraphs that tell the story of Jesus' death. The booklet asks questions and gives you places to pause, and you open each of the 12 eggs when prompted. Each of the different colored eggs contains a little something that represents the part of the story that was just read, and we have kids take turns opening eggs. It's a wonderful way to combine the eggs aspect and the spiritual meaning of Easter into a fun-filled educational family activity, and we love it!

Saturday morning the kids got a nice surprise – the Easter Bunny had visited early and hidden their gorgeous eggs! I think the Easter Bunny thought it would be too much for us to

search for eggs while trying to get to church on time Sunday morning, and he was right ☐ Oh, here's a pic of the kids with their eggs; Dude is still recovering from his egg coloring tantrum:



After the egg hunting , we attended a fun Easter event at the community theater up the street, and the weather actually cooperated. There were Easter egg hunts, games, lunch, and plenty of prizes for everyone, and the kids had a blast. We returned home and made a last minute decision to check out another Easter drama at a friends' church.

It seems that the Easter Bunny made another visit to our house on Saturday night since Sunday morning the kids woke up to a laundry basket for each of them full of surprises. We went to church, and I enjoyed a whopping class size of 13 first-graders to teach! Problem was, all of their jacked-up-on-candy brains could only think about the other aspects of Easter, and we had difficulty doing some of our planned activities. It's often difficult to accomplish much when I have a class of that size anyhow, so I took it in stride and we went to the gym early to run around and burn off some of that sugar! At adult worship, we were blessed to see enough friends join us so that our group filled up an entire row! It's not about quantity, but it was amazing to see some friends there who don't regularly go to church and some whom we've been inviting for years and haven't come until now. I am so excited to see what God is doing in the lives of those I care about!!!

We went out to brunch, took a family nap, and then we took the kids to the movies. No, we didn't see Hop, which might have made sense for Easter, but our older kids have already seen it. So we took in Rio, which is a cute family movie about a couple of rare parrots – fitting for our family since we reside with a jerky parrot of our own, and we had fun.

Overall, one of the best Easter seasons ever; actually, this season just keeps getting better and better every year, especially as I become aware of what the season is all about and how to really celebrate it. I am truly blessed!

So a belated happy Easter to everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful Easter and have many more to come! Celebrate Easter, celebrate Jesus, celebrate love, celebrate family – Easter is great & we have God to thank!

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## love stories

It was the spring of 1983 when I first met my future wife. At this time, we were not aware that we would be together in a few short months. What I did realize was easier to identify. I found her to be very attractive, with a strong personality, an infectious smile and a bit reserved in the setting. Most people would have said she was shy, but I noticed something else was holding her back, shyness had nothing to do with this. At that time, I wasn't sure what it was. I observed, that she was watching the group intently. I was intrigued and captivated, too bad she came with her boyfriend. ☐

About a week later, I met her for the second time. I realized at that point why she was reserved and observant. She had a hearing loss, and this helped her compensate for that loss. The second time we met, we both knew we would be good friends.

Two weeks and two meetings and we felt some connection. Nothing yet to indicate that a different relationship was in our future.

A couple of weeks later, this wonderful lady brought another charming lady with her at the weekly gathering of our little group. She was not quite two years old. I'm not sure what this little girl was told before she got to my apartment, but I got the biggest leg hug ever. She sat with me most of the night, and I was smitten. (So yes, little draclet, I loved you before I fell in love with your mother.) She became a common addition to our weekly game night group. I knew at that point I would do almost anything for that little bundle of energy and spunk.

Weeks went by, and as my love for the daughter grew, the relationship with the mother grew too. I was there when a tearful lady needed someone to talk to after a break up. I was there when her first trial at seeing others went askew. At the end of May, I finally asked my future wife out. Somewhere in the many walks and long talks after that date, I fell in love a second time. Whirlwind romance occurred and marriage followed the following January. In less than 1 year's time, I went from a single man, to a husband and father. The father part came first. My love of the daughter won me the heart of the mother. Without that initial caring, the second relationship may not have happened as quickly.

My lovely wife always told me I had 3 strong characteristics that pushed her toward me. I was dependable, stable and loving. For many years I thought it was how I treated my wife, but later I found out it was how I treated the daughter. Yes, my unconditional love of another woman gave me almost 20 years of love from a wonderful wife. Through the years, she loved her daughters more than she loved me. I can't say the same thing, but I loved them almost as much. And one of them I loved longer...

She taught me what love was, after I showed the ability to

love.

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# Nothing Wrong With These Kids Today

I may not have kids of “my own” but I have about a dozen or so that I claim. Nieces, nephews, and children of special friends. I feel a great sense of joy whenever I am around them and I do not hesitate to know why: I am one of the biggest kids, myself. Spirited kids to the anti-social teenager I know all kinds and find something remarkable in them all: particularly, the anti-social teenager. Just last night, we shared an email conversation and I marveled at his wisdom (?) **NO WAY! WISDOM?!** This is one post that I hope he does not read. Or maybe I do in order to draw out another possible lurker. I keep telling him that he should really join us on tangents and share some of the wit and wisdom that a 14 year old young man has but... “Not yet.” I know another teenage junior high girl who seems to have security issues. I can certainly relate... 6th-8th grade was NOT the best of times.

There are also the “tween”agers. WOW... so wise and mature. I was never like that!

Younger children just may have an even bigger influence on me... especially some of those more energetic, high-spirited ones. They really take you back. Playful, always the center of attention, carefree. Sounds like some bigger kids to me ☐ At times, you have to be on guard and know when to say when. Sometimes difficult to say and to put into motion but creativity has its place. Remembering what it was like to be a kid may make me appear to be a push over, but, eh.

Finally, the BIG GUY who will have a HUGE place in my heart quite possibly indefinitely. Born the day after my birthday nearly 2 years ago and I got to visit at the hospital and help prepare for his homecoming. I am his biggest fan!

I am so blessed to know so many kids in all phases of development. And the best thing, at this point? You can take them home (not your own) when you are done with them!

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## Part II

Okay, long commercial break over. We are on Saturday now I believe:

7AM: Lights turned on outside in the hallway, I wake up for the last time with a little headache but much less exhausted since going to bed. I was exhausted because for three out of the four days prior I was up before 6AM looking for subbing jobs. I found them, but the toll it took was severe. So another sub-8 hour night, but I figured I would survive. So everyone got up and I let some kids head to the bathroom to change out of their night clothes (they were too modest to change in front of others even if we were all guys- just wait until middle school boys, when you'll be changing in the locker room in front of even more people). Myself, I just wore my day clothes to bed- I had showered and put on some fresh clothes just before coming to the retreat so I would be able to do this. 20 minutes later, we were in line for breakfast. The end of the line. Oh, well. Eggs, sausage, french toast sticks, fruit, and OJ. Well, I *think* they were sausages- didn't taste much like breakfast sausage.



8AM: Eyes are really bugging me. The clothes weren't the only things I left on overnight. The contacts I have are extended wear, so I figured at least once I could wear them overnight. I had successfully worn them during naps before so I figured I could get away with overnight just once. My eyes disagreed. I put drops in when I woke up and several times since, but no go. Eventually I just gave up and went back to my room to take them out and put on my glasses. Unfortunately the damage had been done and my eyes would be bugging me for most of the day. So, time for session 2 now. Each session started with a video that was just pure entertainment. I came back at the end of this video to sit with my guys (the high school leader in my room was keeping watch while I changed into my glasses). Up front game again- this time it involved two from each team, a boy and a girl, one from my own cabin (you can figure out which one...). The boys had to wear shaving cream on their faces and the girls threw cheese puffs on them. Hilarious. At the end of the time the one with the most cheese puffs stuck to them would win. In the end I think one other team had more than us, but their boy made the mistake of moving before they could be counted, losing half a dozen puffs. We won. Come to think about it, I think we won Friday night too. Worship followed with another four songs like last night.

9AM: Worship continued, and then Dr. Brian came on the scene and taught from Jonah 3, when the story started over with a better response from Jonah and this time and the Ninevites took the warning God gave them through Jonah seriously. According to the Bible, they all repented of their wicked ways and came to God, and He spared them. This has a fairly obvious (I hope) correlation to coming to Christ. We even ended the time with a prayer giving the kids an opportunity to repent themselves and accept Jesus. One of my guys raised his

hand. Unfortunately for me I had to let my high school leader- did I mention he was my high school leader at camp just two summers ago?- take the pleasure in talking to him about it during small group time since we decided to split the group for today's small group times so we would each take five, and the boy who just accepted Christ was one of his five. Since my cabin was being used for piano lessons, we had to use the room across from us. We could have had both groups in there, but Eric decided to take his group elsewhere. We talked about listening to God and accepting Christ for the next half hour. My church being what it is, by fourth grade it seems that 90% say they have already accepted Jesus at some point, so I decided to lead the discussion in who Jesus is to them to let them see if they truly understand what it means to accept Him.

10AM: At this time we were supposed to start cleaning up the cabin. Of course with piano lessons we had to wait so I let them exchange phone numbers with each other instead before we finally had to sneak in and grab our coats for game time downstairs. The game time was split in two this time with two teams playing each other in a game outside and in the gym. We were outside first. Has anyone ever played a game where a balloon is tied to your ankle and you have to try to pop everyone else's balloon before someone pops yours? This game was similar. A popsicle (still in its plastic!) was taped to the kids' arms and they had to try to rip them off of the other team. Once a child's popsicle was lost, he or she was out. Last one standing won. Well, at the end of the time the team with the most standing won, which was the other team. Oh well, can't win 'em all. No, the kids couldn't eat the popsicles during the game but they could at the end.

11AM: The teams switched. The second game was ice block

relay. Only, one of the ice blocks broke so it became scooter relay instead, at least for the boys. I think next year they need to create extra blocks, several extras. Yes, this was the indoor game. One camper sitting on the block of ice, another camper had to push the other to the other end of the gym where they would switch places and come back. With one block broken, the boys were on scooters (the square variety that you sit on, not the sort that is long with a handlebar) the entire time while the girls got to play the game with the ice blocks. At this time I felt like I was coming down with something. I sat down most of the time against the gym wall. At the end of this time we had won three games out of four, but since they had won the popsicle game it looked like they won overall. We went back to our cabins to take off our coats and head down for lunch. We weren't last this time. □

12 noon: I have to say I was very disappointed in this lunch. It was chicken nuggets and mac & cheese. Only, there was nothing to dip the nuggets in and the other dish was more macaroni than cheese. In fact, I couldn't taste any cheese at all. The economy is affecting everyone, and it certainly took a toll on the food here. One leader commented that he had eaten more junk over the last three meals than he had over the last six months. Hmm. Dessert was- not for me. I am one who doesn't like yogurt unless it's the frozen variety and this is what they served. Well, the lemonade was good. At the end of this meal I finally had to pull the pastor aside and inform him that I was running a fever and my eyes were **still** bugging me. Since I wasn't feeling nauseous he suggested I just stay and rest during the next session which followed lunch and see if I improved. After a short lunch, session 3 began. The game this time had something to do with singing familiar tunes, but I don't know exactly, nor who won. I was in the back of the room with my eyes shut trying to rest. The game leader I mentioned from Friday who stayed in our room because

it was the one his boy was in kind of took over for me.

1PM: Session 3 continued. Worship, then the message by Dr. Steve on Jonah chapter 4 which I didn't hear, and then small groups. We had our small group time in our cabin (piano lessons were over) while Eric took his group back where they were earlier. Again, I didn't lead but sat while my stand-in took over. In the end he had everyone take turns praying, which I was willing to do at least, but he chimed in immediately after the last boy. No big deal. We got ready for the final game.

2PM: Outside first again, the game this time was shooting popsicle sticks onto the church roof with really big slingshots. You read that right. They would have to pass a popsicle stick from camper to camper with their arms only and then the last one would run with the popsicle to the slingshot, set it in place, pull it back, and hope the popsicle made it to the upper roof for the greater point bonus. Then (s)he would run to the end of the line and start passing a popsicle all over again. Once all had the opportunity to shoot the popsicles, the game was over. Our team finished first if I recall correctly for both the boys and the girls (who were in separate lines), but I don't know who won for sure, only suspect from what place we finally came in for the entire day. The second game was inside the gym again, where we played human foosball. If you don't remember this game from the other times I've written about it, it's a game where the students are in four lines, hands held together, trying to kick really big balls into the other team's goal. The number of balls, and even the goals, changed over the course of the game. The other team toasted us, but that was only because of one leader they had at the end of the offensive line who kicked in a good 60+% of their goals. We

had a leader at the end of our offensive line too, but he was smaller (a high-school freshman vs a leader in his 20s) and didn't score nearly as much. About this time I was on the upswing, feeling better overall.

3PM: Time for the group picture. Donning our coats once again, we headed back outside for the final time. The children's pastor, Steve, stood on the roof with someone else whose name escapes me and took a few pictures with his, I believe, video camera. Meaning in the retreat video there may be more than just a couple of still pictures of this event. Afterward, they both grabbed all the popsicles from the slingshot game and tossed them onto the ground. A few of the more competitive kids grabbed the and... threw them back up! It was wild out there for a bit. After the popsicles were gone from the roof, they started throwing snowballs down at us. This was more acceptable to be thrown back as snow doesn't make as good a tasty treat as popsicles, so more joined in returning fire. Eventually this all ended and we headed back in to clean our cabin and bring everything down to the gym. After all, they would need the classrooms for church at 5:00. I made sure everything was picked up, and even had to look for the owner of a pair of socks. I found out when I got home that of course I left my own pair of socks from the night before (one article of clothing I *did* change). Hopefully whoever found them wasn't too disgusted as I had worn them for only a few hours.

4PM: All packs brought down and the room cleaned up, we started free time. This time wasn't really very free, but the kids were free to be in one of four places for the next hour and a half. In the gym they could play nuke 'em, another game returning from summer camp played on a volleyball court. They could watch a movie in another room- they showed Up!, a movie

I recently watched in Blu-ray. In a third room they could play board games or, eventually, watch some of Wall-E. In the last room they could do crafts or play other games. I floated around this entire time, keeping track as best I could of my cabin. Most of my kids spent their time in the gym, so I did as well.

5PM: Free time continued until 5:30, afterwhich we had dinner. Dinner was better than lunch and consisted primarily of spaghetti. Not much to say here really.

6PM: Dinner wrapped up and we moved into the worship/lesson area and watched videos until church ended and the parents started coming in. Once everyone was there, the final up front game commenced. A father-son team was called up from the leaders who were there the entire time with their sons and they played the frozen t-shirt game, where wet t-shirts were folded up and frozen. The dads had to try to get them apart and on their sons. Our team won again, giving us at least three of the four up front games. After this, we sang one worship song, Steve talked about the retreat to the parents, and jokingly as an afterthought the winner was announced. Since we came in third place, I suspect we won none of the big games. Remember, while I was able to see who won some of the games, I did not know who won Friday night nor who won the popsicle slingshot game.

7PM: Parents were permitted to take their kids home and the gym rapidly emptied of parents, kids and their packs. I got to go home and enjoy my fever which, while I was feeling better Saturday afternoon, still persisted through the weekend and made a return Tuesday, keeping me home from work.

Well, that's it. I hope you enjoyed the read. I just spent the last hour and a half writing this second part, so please excuse me for not going back and proofreading it. ☐

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## 24

Best winter retreat ever! I had so much fun that nothing could possibly compare. I wish I could say that was this weekend but that wouldn't be honest of me. For sure, many can say that and completely mean it as it really was a good retreat. The reason will become clear, and you may even find it foreshadowed before I come out with it. From the beginning:

### Friday

6PM: Arrived shortly before this time, late for the 5:45 call time. I thought I was ready, but of course remembered a few more things before I left. At least I did remember everything. In the past I have been left with no pillow, no deodorant, or similar mishaps. Was given a gift bag at the meeting containing essentials- sugar, water, t-shirt, hand-warmers... The latter was most likely due to last year's bitter cold retreat- something that was blessedly not repeated this year, at least for this group (high school suffered just a couple of weekends ago). Oh, anyone for some gum? I got a box, but I don't chew it. Just send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope and I will ship it off. ☐ Meeting ended, we

took our posts for check-in which began at 6:15. I was a greeter by the boy's area. For awhile I was a little nervous as I only had two arrivals for my "cabin" (room) while others had four or five, but I needn't have worried- in the end every camper (retreater?) of mine showed up- others weren't so lucky. I think about ten boys failed to show up- the fairer section fared about the same.

7PM: Check-in starts to die down. Did I mention all of my campers showed up? Actually, I did lose one. There are two mentally disabled 4th-graders at my church and their dads (who stayed with them) wanted to be in the same cabin. While changing cabin assignments was generally not allowed, we made an exception for them. In fact, neither of them wound up in their original cabin as ours were pretty full, but in one that had lost two boys who didn't make it. Anyway, throughout this time, after letting them drop off their things, we sent them down to watch [Jonah](#) until the arrivals trickled down. Jonah would be the theme of the retreat. At about 7:25, the last of us headed to the movie area where the intro was made and we were sent off to start the first big game of the weekend.

8PM: My assignment- auditor. I stood by an opposing team's drop-off bin, where the kids would drop off all their treasures. Oh? I never mentioned the teams? Well, there are four teams, following the theme from summer camp which was a medical theme this year. I was a Mr. Yuk over the summer but this time was a Red Cross. The cabins were actually given names. Do you remember when [Sly](#) mouthed "You're the disease- I'm the cure" (paraphrased) in a movie 20ish years ago? Well, the boys were the diseases with cabin names like H1N1, TB, and Mad Cow Disease and the girls were the cures (Neosporin, Aspirin, etc.). My cabin was SARS. So back to the game, auditors made sure the kids were following the rules. This



may be church, but you know some kids- suddenly forgetful of the rules when it could gain an advantage if you know what I mean. Here's what the game was- in pairs, the kids would link up (hold hands or arms) and search for little plastic ducks and reflectors strewn all over the church. When they found one, they had to get to their team bin. Throughout this, there were over a dozen leaders going after the kids with dodge-balls in hand trying to "infect" them. That may sound like a lot of leaders, but we're talking about 150 kids! If infected, they had to drop whatever they might have been holding and hightail it to the medic to be "cured." There were a few hundred of these things strewn about so the game lasted for awhile.

9PM: Pizza! Well, maybe I should have left that exclamation point off- we're talking Papa John's here. If you're not familiar with them, think mass pizza chains in the style of Pizza Hut or Domino's and you will know what I'm talking about. We chugged down pizza and pop and got ready for the first session, which started shortly after 9:45 with an upfront game followed by worship. What is an upfront game? Well, one camper (sometimes two) from each team was called up to play a silly or disgusting game- pure fun, though not always for the contestants... Tonight was licking names off of a tray. The catch? Part of what was used in the writing was sardines- eww. That's apparently what the contestants thought too as none of them accomplished much in the allotted time. Then worship began with singing.

10PM: The session continued. Four worship songs later, Dr. John came out to teach (medical theme remember). You know how busy doctors get, so Drs. Brian and Steve would round out the retreat the next day. Starting in Jonah, we traversed chapters one and two alongside Jonah, teaching the kids about

consequences of trying to ignore God and how God always pursues His children. After the lesson we broke off into our cabins. We were running late, so we kept the large group of ten kids and two leaders together and discussed the lesson, including a reading from Psalm 139:

*7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?  
Or where shall I flee from your presence?  
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!  
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!  
9 If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
10 even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me.  
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light about me be night,"  
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light with you.*

11PM: Set up beds, get ready, and lights out. Another leader, the game leader of the week joined us- his son was in our cabin. He and I, the "old guys," naturally brought air mattresses to go with our sleeping bags... A little chaotic as expected, but by 20 minutes after lights-out time we finally got the boys laying in bed if not asleep yet. Someone came in with a ladder to unscrew the emergency light bulbs- you know, one of those lights that stays on 24/7 even if the room switches are turned off. This still left a flashing blue light from the router mounted in the ceiling unfortunately. I hope it didn't keep anyone awake. I got this bright idea that I would just leave my contacts in all night since they are extended wear after all. Up to this point I had done naps safely, so I figured why not? I had drops to put in my eyes in the morning.

Midnight: Finally asleep, or at least sometime before the next hour.

Saturday

Midnight-7AM: Z-z-z-z-wake up-z-z-z-z-wake up-z-z-z-z-you get the picture-z-z-z-z

*(to be continued)*

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## Let It Snow... Well, Just For Tonight

I am glad to be home. I've got a nice warm cup of coffee next to me as I sit at my computer... but don't let my facade of relaxation fool you. I've already changed 3 dirty diapers and broken up 4 squabbles in the past hour since I've been home, with more of both sure to come. But my errands today went even worse – one of those days where most things, even the littlest things, are going wrong – too many things to list, and I'm exhausted.

And it's snowing, which made everything I did today more difficult. It depends upon the news outlet of choice; the radio says we are to get 2-4" of snow today with another possible inch tomorrow. I am also a fan of weather.com, who

says my area is due for a possible 3-5" today, and another 1-3" at night. Basically the same forecast, but I know they weren't exaggerating this time – there are already at least 3" of snow on the ground. I know because I had to trudge through it, both on foot and in the car. The roads are terrible, but walking is a breeze thanks to the boots I got a few months ago. Well, it would be a breeze if it weren't for all the little ones I have to bundle and re-bundle and lift out of the car at every stop. I had so many stops to make and was so sick of the snow today that I decided to not go to the library and pick up the second Harry Potter book. I know, it sounds great to be snowed in with a good book, especially because hubby is working all night, but it's difficult to imagine that I will achieve any kid-less time. I just couldn't bring myself to make that extra stop, especially when the day's other errands had already gone so awry. Some of it was just plain bad luck and some had to do with the fact that all 4 kids – well, ok, 3 of them, but I'm not mentioning any names – have been terribly behaved lately.

In what has turned into a ranting blog post of complaints, where was I?

My husband had a major issue with his work in December, so he needs to work basically whenever he's awake to get our family back on track. I lost my other best friend in this house in December, and it feels kind of lonely when the people you hang out with all day do nothing but poop, cry, or argue, sometimes all doing all 3 things at once. And I started today on such a good note; where on earth would I be right now if I hadn't? I stayed positive this morning while I cleaned the poop out of the bathtub, and I even smiled when my son pooped again on the floor and slid on it like it was a banana peel – disgusting, that's obvious, but you have to admit that it makes for a humorous mental picture (no one was hurt, unless you count my bathroom floor).

The trip to Walmart today went surprisingly well, even though

I didn't leave myself enough time for lunch. But then the kids lost it as I was loading the groceries into the car, and between the yelling and the snow, I realized I was not really IN the drive-thru at McDonald's – I was kind of taking up the drive-thru lane AND the drive-past lane simultaneously. It was too late for me to move over, at least not until the car in front of me moved, and sure enough, there came someone *squeezing* past me... I turned my head, ready for the dirty look I knew I was about to receive, and the driver did not disappoint. He glared at me, and that's when I saw it was a county sheriff, and I sank low in my seat – how embarrassing. And great – I feel sorry for the other red vans that get pulled over if this guy is looking to get revenge on me; he looked awfully perturbed at my ignorance.

So then I get home, and my little boy has fallen asleep (only took 15 minutes of crying in the car), so I put him in his crib and venture back out into the snowstorm because I forgot milk – a morning requirement in this house o' kids. But because it was today, and because anything that could go wrong **was** going wrong (remember that I've left out still most of the gory details), the first store I check is completely *out of milk*. So I go to another place, and they do have milk, but there I run into an acquaintance with whom I am forced to make chit-chat. Normally, I'd be ok because I like most people I meet, but there are a select few (usually those afflicted with [P.A.S.](#)) who really get on my nerves. Enter this guy, today, one of "those days". But I'm nice, I'm still in a positive mood, I've got my milk, and I'm on my way home. When I slide into my driveway (reminding me it has to be shoveled later), I want to sit at my computer with my cup of coffee and relax, but I decide instead to play a game of Dora Candyland with my 3-year-old because it's something we can't do when her brother is around and wreaking havoc. No sooner do we get out the Candyland than her brother wakes up – great, so all I accomplished during his nap today was getting milk! No "me" time and worse yet, no quality one-on-one time with my

daughter – just errands, UGH!

Well enough ranting for now, let's just say that I did end up with my cup of coffee and my quiet time. But if you think the kids relented and gave me this on their own, you should read more of my blog posts because that is SO not the case. My husband had to take a break from work and spend it with the kids. So now it's my turn, and my quiet time is over. But let it snow – we don't have anywhere to be because Girl Scouts was canceled this evening due to snow. Maybe we can counteract some of today's unpleasantness by spending some quality family time together tonight while we're snowed in... but please, not another day off school for the kids – after today, I don't think I could handle a snow day!

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## IT IS HERE

It's official – there is a flu wreaking havoc in our house. I don't know if it's H1N1, but all the signs are there. Our middle-schooler came down with it Friday night, and she's been in bed ever since. She had to miss a birthday party and church this weekend, and she won't be going to school tomorrow. Today our 5-year-old and 1-year-old starting showing symptoms, and tonight our 3-year-old looks like she might be starting to get it. And oh yeah – why would you think this one skipped Hubby, who gets EVERYTHING that comes around? Looks like it's making an appearance in him tonight. As usual, (except for the flu season when I was pregnant and was sick from Thanksgiving until Christmas – one bug after another) I remain the last one standing, as yet untouched by the virus (crossing fingers, knocking wood...)

So up goes this post, and down goes our family – I think a flu

outbreak is a good reason to go to bed at 10, don't you? Here's hoping and praying that it doesn't hit us too hard and also that I may stay well enough to care for my family. We are going to have to quarantine ourselves this week, which is a shame since we had plans for every single night. Tomorrow will see a slew of phone calls made and emails sent to cancel everything. Health comes first, of course. Best wishes to readers for staying healthy!!!

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## Puzzling The Night Away

Our 3-year-old Disney is really good at puzzles. Last night, she tried her first 63-piece puzzle, but she didn't quite finish it:



She got a pretty good start – that puzzle is particularly difficult. We were all enjoying a wonderfully peaceful evening since our little 5-year-old instigator had her first sleepover at a friend's house. She had a great time, and when she returned home today, the conflicts between siblings resumed immediately. There's always one in every bunch, I guess ☹

And today's lesson in everyday life: Coffee can dye a black

dog brown. Don't ask me how I know that, but it was quite a mess.

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## That's my job

As I've said in previous posts, my youngest is now off at college. Earlier this year she also turned 18. By the laws of this land, that does make her a legal adult. For the past 25+ years I've been doing my best to raise my daughters. I not only wanted to get them to legal adulthood, I've been trying to get them to mature adulthood. It was, of course, my job.

I've often said that I've had little to do with how my daughters turned out. Their mother was the primary reason they turned out the way they did. My job was to follow her lead. I thought I did that very well. Even after she died, I tried to follow her lead. She had a way with her daughters, I could never hope to do as well.

Anyway my youngest is now a young adult. In my eyes, she has grown in to a very mature young lady. Now I can say all four daughters survived into adulthood. Me, I'm just the guy who listened to their mother. Hey, it's my job.