

A Note To Add To That Last Post...

I will be one of those frantic parents in the Walmart checkout line on the first day of school. I've never been there to witness them myself, but I know they exist; I'll find out for sure tomorrow when I join them. Yes, I planned ahead well enough to buy the necessary school supplies, but what I failed to do was to supervise the middle-schooler who was excitedly stuffing her new backpack, apparently ignoring the direction to "pack what's on your list". Not really her fault – like I said, I should have been supervising her more carefully. But as a result, our 4th grader now has a locker full of 4th grade school supplies AND Kindergarten school supplies (she brought them to school last Friday during orientation), while our Kindergartner has an empty backpack.

We could follow our oldest daughter into her new middle school tomorrow to repo her sister's school supplies, but I'm pretty sure being the only student whose parents follow her into school (especially with little brother and sisters in tow) could cause her emotional damage beyond repair. I'll take my chances at Walmart.

Back To School!

Well, summer is officially over – school starts **tomorrow!** I could be like everyone else and say "where did the summer go?", but for me, it actually didn't go as fast as I would have thought. We were so busy; though it was good-busy; not like so-much-work-to-do-busy. But much fun was had and I

enjoyed every minute! Last week was spent at school open houses and orientations, as well as a training event at our church to allow us to volunteer with our church's student ministries. That was an interesting evening – it began with us volunteers breaking off into groups of about 15 and making lines. We were given a spoon tied to a string which was wound around a “spool” ie, an empty tube of toilet paper. The first person in the line (me) was to put the spoon down their shirt and pants and give it to the next person who was supposed to put it *up* their pants and shirt, then to the next person who was supposed to put it down the shirt and pants, effectively “threading” the line of people together. Kind of strange, I thought, but what's going to happen once we're all “wearing” the string??? It was a little scary, but luckily, the threading was the entire ice-breaking activity, and the rest of the evening was pleasantly spent listening to a guest speaker while munching on all kinds of orange snacks (orange was the theme for the evening – I never really thought about how many party snacks are orange before!).

Today we had so many activities and volunteering planned for church that we were on the go from 8:30 in the morning until about 3:30 in the afternoon. Busy, but it was time well-spent, especially since we finished up the day with Kidstuff (a cute show with a wonderful message for the kids) and then a carnival with LOTS of treats and fun for the kids; they had a blast. Good thing too – we need to get settled down early tonight in order to get our oldest to school by **7:30 in the morning!!!** She is starting middle school, and yes, to those of you who have asked – she will be switching classes, kind of like the “block” style they had when I was in middle school. My daughter has a homeroom, but then she switches for language arts and math and perhaps other subjects as well. And they do gym class strangely – there are 4 classes: gym, music, technology (typing, etc.), and art, and they take one of these 4 classes every day for 9 weeks and then switch to another. That sounds pretty cool to me! I would have LOVED it if I

only had to worry about gym for 9 weeks of the year! But, being in middle school also means that she has to change for gym class, poor thing – I remember that aspect of middle school making a lot of kids really nervous. And at orientation last week, the principal gave us parents a talk about making sure we wash the gym clothes – the kids are getting to “that age”, she said, which prompted me to whisper to my friend nearby, “I’m not ready!” But my daughter IS ready for middle school, and she seems to be making her way from tween to teen in no time – UGH! Poor thing got her first pimple just in time for the first day of middle school, but she doesn’t seem to mind too much, so we’re not making it a big deal. It’s not like we’re publishing it on the internet for the entire world to read or anything... But what are moms for? She can thank me when she’s older and finds this through some sort of google search or something.

Our second oldest is starting Kindergarten. This is our “difficult” child; our strong-willed one. Samantha has a mind of her own, and some of the things she says leave us in stitches – others leave us shaking our heads, but we’ll stick to the positives here. It seems that Samantha has the same Kindergarten teacher that her sister had a few years ago, and my husband and I are chuckling to ourselves about the unintentional “joke” we’re about to play on our local school system. We are wondering how many years it will take for word to spread amongst the teachers in town about how much of a... well, *difference* there is between Samantha and her big sister... No need to go off about it here, like I said, we need to call it an early night, but it will suffice to say that any teacher of Taylor’s who gets Samantha 4 years later will probably be surprised ☐

I was going to write about the younger two as well, but it’s bedtime already and this post is long enough – that’s what I get for not blogging regularly, I guess, an über-post!

Things change

Well moving days are coming up. Yes, I did say moving days. There will be at least two of them.

The first will be next week at work. We are moving to a new building, and we are scheduled to move as soon as it passes inspection. That should occur this week. A little farther to drive, but it should be a nicer work environment. We will see how that goes. Good news, no students in the halls. Bad news, the way the cubicles are set up, my back will face the entrance. I never did like having my back to the door.

Then at the end of the month, my youngest heads off to college. That may take a trip or two depending on how much she needs to move into her college room. When I went to school, I was able to fit everything I needed into the back of a Chevy Chevette, I have a truck now, and I still wonder how many trips I will need to take.

At this point in time, I guess I should be feeling a bit of the 'empty nest' syndrome. I'm not sure I will in the same way other parents do. The whole point in my parenting was to get my children ready for the world. It is time for this one to spread her wings and see how she flies. A bit of anxiety, sure, but I'm ready to let her try more on her own.

There is another part of the empty nest that I really never expected when I first thought of this some 10 years ago when the first daughter spread her wings. I have the nest to myself. The question I really need to ask is "How will I spread my wings?" For more than a quarter of a century (over 1/2 my life) I've been a parent. For most of that time I've been a husband and then a widower. Before that I was in my

childhood. What am I going to do with the time I will have for myself? What will I be when I grow up? ☐

Life is all about the change...

A bit of humor

Either my last post was uninteresting, or I hit another busy spot in all of your lives. Most likely the second, but just in case of the first, here's a little break from camp for a little humor involving kids. Note: none of it was written by me, it was all shamelessly copied from [Worthy Christian Forums](#), though the ones who posted these are probably not the authors either. ☐

Murphy's Law of Children (there is no actual law it's a joke)

1. The later you stay up, the earlier your child will wake up the next morning.
2. For a child to become clean, something else must become dirty.
3. Toys multiply to fill any space available.
4. The longer it takes you to make a meal, the less your child will like it.
5. Yours is always the only child who doesn't behave.
6. If the shoe fits..it's expensive.
7. The surest way to get something done is to tell a child not to do it.
8. The gooier the food, the more likely it is to end up on the carpet.
9. Backing the car out of the driveway causes your child to have to go to the bathroom.
10. The more challenging the child, the more rewarding it is to be a parent..sometimes.

I was sitting in the waiting room of the hospital after my wife had gone into labor and the nurse walked out and said to the man sitting next to me, "Congratulations sir, you're the new father of twins!"

The man replied, "How about that, I work for the Doublemint Chewing Gum Company." The man then followed the woman to his wife's room.

About an hour later, the same nurse entered the waiting room and announced that Mr. Smith's wife has just had triplets. Mr. Smith stood up and said, "Well, how do ya like that, I work for the 3M Company."

The gentleman that was sitting next to me then got up and started to leave. When I asked him why he was leaving, he remarked, "I think I need a breath of fresh air." The man continued, "I work for 7-UP."

Great Truths That Little Children Have Learned:

1. No matter how hard you try, you can't baptize cats.
2. When your Mom is mad at your Dad, don't let her brush your hair.
3. If your sister hits you, don't hit her back. They always catch the second person.
4. Never ask your 3-year old brother to hold a tomato.
5. You can't trust dogs to watch your food.
6. Don't sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.
7. Never hold a Dust-Buster and a cat at the same time.
8. You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.
9. Don't wear polka-dot underwear under white shorts.
10. The best place to be when you're sad is Grandpa's lap.

Teaching Is Probably Not My Forte

Another tangents.org blogger, who is also a very good friend of mine, blogs about his (mis)adventures concerning substitute teaching. He has posted a poll or two about what subjects and ages his readers would like to teach if they could choose. I never really took the questions seriously since I could never picture myself in the situation to teach. After all, you need a degree to teach most anything these days, and I stopped college short of a degree to get married, which is one of the best decisions I ever made, no regrets. So I would answer those polls, and I would say I'd like to teach zoology or animal behavior or something like that because I love animals. And I guessed that I would like to teach kids younger than high school, because I was a kid once, and I remember how older kids treat their substitute teachers... But again, until a few weeks ago, I never thought I'd find myself in a position to actually teach a class...

At our family's church, childcare is provided. Over the summer, understandably there are many childcare volunteers who need a break, so they ask parents to volunteer. My husband and I quickly signed up – after all, we have 4 kids in childcare there every week, so it was time to give back. We didn't state an age nor gender preference of our students; we just noted that we didn't want to be in the 4-year-old nor 2-year-old classes since that's where our two daughters are who would have a chance of being clingy with Mom and Dad volunteering in their class. Basically, it was the luck of the draw – and our “luck” dictated that we were to be in the 3rd-5th grade boys class. Ok, no problem. I've seen the tail-end of those Brownies meetings while waiting to pick up

my daughter – 9 or 10 tween girls running around; screaming, giggling, gossiping, sometimes somehow doing all 3 of those things at once... So um, no thanks, boys will be just fine for Sunday school. So I thought...

We got our “lesson plans”, and there were not fewer than 10 pages of instructions to follow for our 1 hour and 5 minute class. Well, add-in the arrival games and we were in charge for about an hour and 15 minutes. But I haven’t seen time crawl by that slowly since before I had kids; it was the longest hour I’ve had in a long time! Not that I wasn’t having fun, because I was – A LOT of fun, actually. So anyway, all week, my husband and I have been poring over these lesson plans; I was committed to go in there today knowing exactly what I was doing and determined to keep control over those boys.

So we arrive, and the helpful leader tells us to grab snacks for the kids ahead of their arrival, but we don’t know how many we’ll be expecting, so in her words, “10 should be plenty”. We get to the classroom, she explains a few things, and kids begin to arrive. From the beginning, it was clear we were going to have to keep one eye on a rambunctious and mischievous (though intelligent) little boy named Avery. In fact, the very minute after I made a mental note to watch Avery very closely, I looked up and he was *gone*. I had no choice but to leave my poor defenseless husband in the clutches of the growing number of 8-10 year-old-boys while I literally **ran** after the wayward Avery. The Kid’s Kingdom building of our church is still somewhat of a maze to me, so it was pure luck that I got out into the hallway just in time to see the back of Avery disappearing through a set of double doors. “I’ve got you now, sucker” I thought as I ran through the gym after him. I chased him right up to the kids’ check-in desk, where I, the newbie, had to explain to the staff person why I was chasing a kid who had escaped from my classroom. Luckily for me, she seemed to know Avery and to be

familiar with his escapades, and she was grateful that I had chased him down. Turns out, he had decided to get himself a name tag (which he is supposed to do *before* class but evidently did not), so he decided to leave the classroom to do so without telling anyone, which of course is a big no-no.

So I collar Avery, and we return to the classroom, and there are now kids everywhere who all had apparently arrived during the chase scene! There was one teeny-tiny little girl who stuck out like a sore thumb in a room full of all boys years older than her, so I went over to her and offered to walk her to the girls' class – and that's how I found out that she was a guest of one of the kids in the class, who turned out to be one of the pastor's sons. Actually, he was the son of the pastor who was our friend before we chose this church, so seeing him was a bit of a relief – for that moment anyway. I thought for sure he would be a nice, helpful boy... but more on that later. We did a head count, and we discovered in our classroom, we had 14 boys + 1 little girl + 2 freshman teachers with 0 experience = fun times ahead!

We played the activity that was slated for play while the kids were arriving, and it was a worksheet where the kids matched words with the fears they represent, like arachnophobia=the fear of spiders, felinaphobia=the fear of cats, etc. It went pretty well, despite disappearing pens (one guess – yes, Avery. Though I countered his pen trick well. When he said that he **ate** the pens, I said, well, you won't be needing snack then, and the pens were automatically recovered). Finally it was time to line up to go to large group.

Once in the large group room, also known as The Warehouse, our responsibilities diminished as the leader took over and we relished a break of sorts. We got to see a few of the kids act things out, which was neat, and we also got to see our oldest daughter who had come over from her class. Let me tell you, she was a pro at their songs and dances! She just performed them without even giving a glance over to Mom and

Dad, which is so the way we wanted it and exactly what we were afraid of when declining to volunteer in any of our kids' classrooms. But her section of the room was also eerily quiet, and I kind of regretted the decision to stay away from teaching our kids' classrooms as I envied their parent volunteer with her *four* quiet girls versus our *fourteen* borderline obnoxious boys (and one little girl). Large group was uneventful, crisis-wise anyway. I tried some of the dances and my husband made fun of me... but the kids don't want to see some grumpy-looking adult standing there, not having fun, right? My job was to encourage them to participate, and I figured step one would be to participate myself!

So at 11:30, after Large Group, it was time to go back to the classrooms until 12:05. And that's when time began to creep in a way it hasn't for us since our engagement. We began class with one of the suggested games; a relay race involving cups of water. The instructions said it was "great for boys", so without really giving it thought, we learned the rules of that game and one other. The relay involved carrying a cup of water on the back of one's hand down a "balance beam" (tape line on the floor) and back again. This was fun, but as you can imagine, there were more than a few spills. And a note: Avery chose to get himself kicked out of this one – kudos to my husband for putting his foot down! Of course, by then all the boys were getting really rowdy (the pastor's son was one of the tricksters; here I thought he'd be a big help), so we shut the door and passed out the snack. But if you remember, earlier I said that we had only brought 10 snacks to the classroom, which "should be plenty" but alas, were not nearly enough for 15 hungry kids. Luckily, there were other snacks leftover from the previous session, and we didn't bother letting them choose which of the two snacks they would get, so snack time was very peaceful thanks to my husband's brilliant "you-get-what-you-get" snack tactic. I maintain from my many observations of kids that the #1 cause of **all** kid meltdowns is lack of food. That is free advice ☐

So then we sat at the table in the classroom, and it was time for a coin tossing game. Everyone got a partner (including me – a well-behaved boy named Brandon, thank goodness), chose a side and each team flipped the coin – the person whose side was flipped answered the first question (something relating to the verse lesson and what was shown in the play during large group). The game continued with asking questions of each partner, and the kids began to have some fun with it and come up with silly answers. It was a fun game, but we finished and there were still at least 10 minutes until dismissal! Again, my husband saved the day, and rather than trying to look over the instructions for another game and potentially losing control of the classroom while we did that, he made up an activity, so we went around the table discussing our fears. And I've complimented him enough so far because he did an awesome job with the kids, but here's where it gets ugly – my husband chose this moment to share my fear of frogs with 14 little boys. If I were a regular teacher, I would be terrified and would probably move from my house and my hometown. But as a one-time substitute Sunday school teacher, I think I'm safe from any horrid pranks involving amphibians. So back to the game, according to their creativity, one boy's fear was of "cinderblocks", while a few of the students answered honestly that they were afraid of the dark. Quickly looking for our lesson plans to determine the next activity, we found them to be missing... "Avery" we said simultaneously, and like magic, there were the lesson plans, right in front of Avery's chair. But it was finally almost time to line up at the door for dismissal, and again, Hubby saved the day with another game – this one killed two birds with one stone by producing quiet AND spending time. The boys had to be quiet while my husband counted to 20 or else he would start over. We only had to reset twice, believe it or not! Once for (who else) Avery, and once for two other boys wrestling each other to the floor. And then it was over.

And then we got our beautiful oldest daughter back, and she is

so good and obedient. And our other three, they were happy to see us as well, and us them, and things were going great until we pulled out of the parking lot and our 5-year-old noticed her older sister's new ring she had earned at church... and so began the fighting. And the making up. And the familial bonding which involves a beautiful process that also makes me want to tear my hair out at times.

I am looking forward to volunteering in Kid's Kingdom again. But maybe next time, changing diapers for an hour would be easier!

Thrice Upon A Potty

Yesterday saw the official beginning of potty-training for our 2-year-old. She has used the potty a few times before, but now it's official – we went out and bought the toddler sized potty. She was excited about using it and has done so twice yesterday and once today! I just worry about the time it takes to stay consistent. She still needs reminding and accompaniment, and those things might become impossible to do at times depending on what her baby brother is doing at the moment. But for now, we're really excited about her progress, and maybe we can build up some consistency so that she can tend to her own needs in case baby brother is running me too ragged to help.

There are MANY methods of potty-training. There's the famous video/book set, Once Upon a Potty, but that is a bit graphic (I don't think it's important at this age to learn WHERE the poo-poo comes from), and I don't know about your kids, but mine find it difficult to relate to a little girl named Prudence. The "diaper free infant" method of potty-training

is becoming increasingly popular. This entails holding the newborn baby over the toilet and not letting him wear diapers. I'm not one to complain about other people's parenting methods, but 'diaper free infant' parents seem like lunatics. The average newborn baby needs his diapers changed 8-10 times per day, and I don't even know how they determine what a 'day' is when referring to newborns since they are often up all night, needing their diapers changed in the middle of the night as well. Who is going to hold a newborn baby over a toilet 8-10 times a day and all throughout the night? A lunatic. But seriously, as I said, the popularity of this method is increasing, so I guess some people are having success with it. Personally, I wait until the kid is old enough to understand. She understands that older people and especially older kids use the potty and don't wear diapers. She's old enough to not like getting messy anymore, and she's old enough to understand rewards. We had a very hard time potty-training our oldest daughter. The daycare she went to at the time gave us a suggestion that finally worked – sprinkles. When a kid successfully uses the potty, give them sprinkles (the kind you put on cookies, not the kind they're putting into the toilet). Once the sprinkles came into the picture, our oldest was potty-trained almost immediately after months of trying everything else. Our second daughter was a snap to potty-train, well, ok, first we had to wait for her to get out of her "painting with poop" phase, but again, I wait until they're old enough to understand things. During the "painting with poop" phase, she wasn't even 2 years old yet, and so it was really difficult to explain to her why the poop should go in the potty rather than being artistically displayed upon the walls, her crib, her toys, and even her face... YUCK!

Ok, this post has taken a turn for the worst, so I will take that as my cue to sign off. The point is, CONGRATS to Disney for doing such a good job on the potty!

Sammie Hasn't Done This... Yet

Our almost 5-year-old Sammie is the firecracker of the group. She likes to be the one to stir things up, and she sometimes has some crazy ideas. My mom sent me an email with the following video and a message: "I'm surprised Sammie hasn't tried this."

I can't imagine what those poor parents were going through. First I'm sure horror and panic set in as they worried their little one would get injured or stuck in there – notice they wisely killed the power to the crane game. Then, once she got out, they were probably extremely embarrassed! I half expected to see them spank her little butt when it was the only part of her sticking out! Not that I condone spanking really, but you know how extreme relief often gives way to anger, especially when kids are involved... I'm certainly glad it was their problem and not mine. I know I will **not** be showing this video to Sammie nor any of my kids for that matter – they don't need any more “good” ideas!

Time Flies When You're Having Fun

I was musing today about something...

Sometimes my son gets this look on his face where he looks more like a kid than a baby. He's 9 months old, so he's still very much a baby, but more frequently I can see on his face how he might look as a toddler. It's hard to explain, but my husband feels the same way. The bottom line is, time flies when you're having fun, and I'm having the time of my life watching my kids grow up!

I got a little overtired and frustrated with them once during our last road trip, and I was thinking to myself, ok, no more doing **this** for at least five years. Then it hit me – in five years, my kids will be 14, 10, 7, and 5! No more little little ones, in just a short half of a decade!

So I asked my husband the question – why is time flying so

fast? Does it fly faster as I get older? More quickly when I have more kids? Is it just because our youngest is a boy and we're used to how girls grow up after having 3 of those? I just don't know, but as hard as the work is with 4 little ones, 2 still in diapers, I still wish they'd stay little longer – I really do.

Sunrise, sunset, quickly flow the years...

Wagon 0' Cuties

With the return of warmer weather comes the return of our locally famous wagon o' cuties:



Except what's that in the wagon, a little red elf? Now I might be biased here, but that is the cutest elf I've ever seen! This is the first time I put that little sweatshirt on my son. I wish I had found it in time for Christmas last year – I don't think it'll still fit him by December for next Christmas. And it seems the kids are starting to overflow the wagon... Might be time to make our oldest walk or ride her bike...

Busy family

Can this family have much more excitement?

The current list (as it stands now ☐)

- 1) 4th Daughter heads out for Show Choir Competition in April.
- 2) 4th Daughter's High School graduation in May.
- 3) 3rd Daughter's Wedding in June – Play I was in is going to regional competition ☐ I can't make it.
- 4) Family Vacation???
- 5) 4th Daughter Starts College in August
- 7) 1st Daughter's first child due in September

OK what else is can happen? I'm not sure. With the way this year is going, I'm sure there will be something. My life tends to get more complicated, not less.

Could 'The Lion in Winter' Go to State competition? I would love that. It was a good part and I would like to play it again...

Weddings, Graduations, College, Birth. I can remember when that was me. It wasn't that long ago was it.

Of course, I'm sure there will be more medical testing now that I'm 50. That will take some time won't it. And the fun part is, I don't know when or what those will be right now. Depends on how the tests go doesn't it?

What is life without adventure, it looks like I have my days filled with it.