

I'm Thinking You Might Like This

[Kids of 1995 Predict the Future of the Internet – correctly!!](#)

Checkin' In

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

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

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

Sammie is almost 8 and is a pretty good babysitter. She LOVES her baby brother, and if it's the right day, she's great with her 5 year old sister and 3 year old brother. But Sammie has her off-days too, and if it's one of those days, WATCH OUT!

□ She will push buttons of all of her siblings, and she is quite good at getting them going. She is watching the littles as I write though, so it feels wrong to say bad things about her behavior. She is getting ready for her 8th bday party coming up in May!

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

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

Luke is 6 mos. already, and a handful as always – it's only getting worse as he gets older. Then again, he is getting even cuter as he grows, so that's the plus side □ But what a strong personality and eye for mischief he has for such a young age! I try not to think about it, but I find myself tempted to worry about how I'm going to stay sane when he is actually moving! Right now he's just scooting and rolling around, but he puts EVERYTHING in his mouth and is quite demanding; wanting 100% of the available parent's attention

100% of the time! You can see why this is challenging when there are 4 other kids – it's just one reason why I gave up my social life ☹

Hubby and I are doing well also. His working 2 jobs keeps us busy, but in some ways, it's actually not as stressful as I thought it would be. It's amazing how much easier things are when you truly trust the Lord to get you through. By no means is life easy these days, but I am so much better equipped to handle the twists, turns and busyness now than I was a few years ago thanks to Him. As I mentioned, we have given up our social lives. I miss my friends, but luckily we live in a world where I can still keep up with their lives and know how to pray for them when they need it. I've tried hanging out with adults a few times in the past few months, but unfortunately with all these kids running around and being so demanding, it seems better for everyone if I just focus on the kids and live a kid-oriented life. So, with Hubby now working on the weekends, we've been having our family Saturdays on Fridays when we can. And we've been doing less of the expensive entertainment stuff and have been trying dedicating our hearts to serving more. My husband has thought of some very creative ways to do this, and we've had many an opportunity to get out into the local communities and give and share God with others. It's been wonderful!

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

Monday, Monday

Don't you just hate when you run out of certain household staples and a trip to the store becomes imminent whether you planned it for that day or not? Happened to me today, and wouldn't you know, it was a cold December rainy day. Complicating what should have been a simple run to the store were my 5 kids and the fact that the rain decided to change over into sleet and ice during the trip.

As always, it took us almost an hour to get ready to go. It takes forever for the kids to listen well enough and to stop playing long enough to pull on socks, shoes, and coats. Since 2 of my kids are in diapers and one is being bottle fed, my diaper bag these days is huge and takes some time to pack every time I leave the house; especially when I have to take breaks from packing it to tend to the baby and the various needs of various kids. Finally, we were ready to leave the house, but somewhere in the melee I decided to leave my 2 oldest kids home. Contributing to my decision, Sammie was having a rough and crabby day, so I decided it would be most productive for the family if she and her brother were separated since that's where today's fights were centered. Except that meant that I had to come up with a home-schooling project for the girls to do while the rest of us were out, which meant further delay.

I get most of our family's staples at Walmart because they are usually cheapest and it's the whole one-stop shopping thing. Except that their milk prices are horrible, so today I found it worth the savings to unload all 3 kids (ages 2 mos., 3 years and 5 years) to make an extra stop at Rite Aid. Besides, I've had a hankering for some Combos and Rite Aid often has them on sale. But wouldn't you know it, today was a Monday and there wasn't a sale on Combos, nor was there any milk on the shelves at all! "The truck is usually here by now," said the clerk when I asked about the absence of milk,

but his musing didn't help me any. So I re-loaded all the little kids and headed to Walmart – by now the rain was turning to sleet and the driving visibility was compromised. We made it across town safely with a quick pitstop at the gas station because it was coffee Monday, which meant all sizes of coffee are just \$.89. But they were out of 24 oz. cups. Which meant that I had to have a 20 ounce cup for the same price as a 24 ounce cup would have cost – the kind of stuff that normally gets my goat. No matter, I shouldn't have coffee greed anyway, but now I was cold, wet, and slightly irritated... and I had all these KIDS with which to deal... that extra 4 ounces of coffee could have served me well!

On to Walmart where I had to circle the lot 3 times to find a decent parking spot. Not that I'm lazy, but it makes me nervous to walk through the parking lot with so many little kids, at least one of whom doesn't listen well and tends to run off whenever he pleases. I got a break because my parking spot was next to a cart return, so I loaded all 3 kids into a cart – though it was a bit of a feat to fit them all in along with my huge diaper bag. We had plans to switch into a more kid-friendly cart once we got inside, but the kid-rider carts were all buried behind other carts, leaving me no choice but to leave my kid-filled cart in the path of every other shopper who entered the Walmart in that particular 5 minute span. The shopping itself was uneventful, unless you count the fact that my son tumbled out of the cart (did it have to be while he was explaining to me how he likes Justin Beiber's songs just not Justin Beiber himself? And one wonders what that all even means when coming from a 3-year-old...) We had to stop a few times to nurse his wounds and to feed his brother, but then we were on our way. I didn't realize until my groceries were all bagged up that I forgot my wallet, meaning that I had to drag all the kids back out to the car in the now freezing rain (it actually made noises as it bounced against our cheeks) to get my wallet and then to return to the store to buy our groceries... not to mention maneuvering BACK to the car to

load up all the kids and the groceries...

Following that, my intentions were good; I was going to bring Hubby a special half-price fountain drink from Sonic for Happy Hour, but I ran out of gas. Well, I didn't run out of gas and get stranded in the cold, so for that I'm thankful. But after all of the illustrations of Murphy's Law I witnessed on this Monday, I decided not to risk stopping at the gas station again for gas – coffee Monday or not.

In case you had the same sort of Monday and need a theme song:

Little Luke Likes Lights

Thought I would post a quick little update about our youngest child who is growing so quickly that I don't know if we can call him our "new addition" any longer! Luke James is almost 2 months old, and among his likes are being held, listening to music, and looking at lights. He's been especially impressed by the colorful lights on the Christmas tree. These things are common favorites among many almost-2-month-olds, but Luke is a very special baby – he has been able to hold his head up for a few weeks and is extremely alert for a baby his age. His VERY FAVORITE thing to do in the whole world is to be held like this while his little hands open and close and his eyes bulge as he takes in the world around him:



Luke doesn't sleep well at night, but we aren't really surprised because none of our 5 kids were very good sleepers as babies. But Luke doesn't sleep much during the day, either – he takes about one good nap per day about 3-4 days per week. And by "good nap" I mean him sleeping for over an hour without waking up. Actually, I thought of the perfect way to describe Luke the other day: he is an *intense* baby. He wants **what** he wants **when** he wants it, and he's not shy about asking. Don't get me wrong; it's not that he is a disagreeable baby, and he is very

smiley. He's just very demanding, and since he is always awake... well, you can understand why my free time is down to almost none and the blog posts from me remain infrequent. Especially because he demands to have 100% of the available attention, whether it's eye contact while playing with him or using both hands to feed him – he is not a fan of a multi-tasking parent.

He's already able to play – he loves looking into the eyes of people who play with him, and he especially likes to exchange baby talk with “goo” being his favorite word. He loves when his sisters and brother play with him, but it's hard to tell if he has a favorite yet. Christopher is 3 and Luke's only brother, but he doesn't play with him often – it seems like Christopher is afraid of hurting Luke, and he also seems shy about talking to him or playing with him. Disney likes to hold Luke (she's 5), but she loses interest in a matter of minutes. Taylor is almost 12, and she enjoys Luke's cuteness, but she is too busy with a life of her own to spend a lot of time with her baby brother. Sammie stands out as the remarkable sibling. 7-year-old Sammie just adores her baby brother; she's always asking to hold him, and she doesn't soon grow tired of it. She plays with Luke, asks how he's doing, expresses interest in his activities, misses him when she's gone, and loves seeing cute pictures of him. I'm looking forward to watching their special bond strengthen even further as they grow up together. His brother and sisters love their baby brother in their own ways, and any time Luke does something new, he is crowded by an admiring entourage that can rival that of most celebrities.



Luke also really likes baths. He smiles like crazy the whole time he's in the bath; he'll even throw out a couple of "goo"s and "gaa"s and doesn't seem to notice that he sounds different when his ears are under water.

Luke is also the tie-breaker in our family – we have 3 brown-eyed people and 3 blue-eyed people. Two months old is too early to tell what color a baby's eyes will be, so right now we don't know which "side" will win. It's interesting also that our 2 blue-eyed kids are left-handed while our 2 brown-eyed kids are right-handed. Will Luke be a tie-breaker in only the eye color category or will he break the mold and be a blue-eyed righty or a brown-eyed lefty?

Even with his intensity, Luke is a wonderful baby and it's been nothing but a pleasure so far to get to know him as his personality develops – I wouldn't change any part of him or anything about him, no matter how far behind on stay-at-home-mommy-work I am! Here he is wearing the adorable camouflage hoodie someone got him – it's so cute! And here's an interesting bit of culture clash for you – where I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, Luke would wear this and we'd be trendy. Here in the woods of rural Northwest Ohio, I put the camo hoodie on Luke, and we heard no fewer than FIVE comments about hunting and him being a little woodsman ☐



How Hubby Saved Halloween

October is normally one of the busiest months for our family, and that was true before October 2011 – the month that saw us being blessed with a new baby, starting homeschooling, and Hubby starting a new job/career all at the same time. There are so many fun fall and Halloween events and activities that we like to do this time of year; we didn't even realize exactly how many until this year when we had to scale it back a bit. We skipped the corn mazes, the pumpkin farms, and all the haunted attractions this year. We did take the kids to the mall for the trick-or-treating there, and it was lots of fun even if there were 50 times more people than last year – there was a line circling the perimeter of the entire mall! Not a problem, seeing as how we live near the smallest mall I've ever seen and the line was continuously moving – as I said, lots of fun!

I heard about a congressman on the news who wants to pass legislation to move Halloween to the 4th Saturday in October because it's safer for kids and easier to work around school if trick-or-treating is always on a Saturday and earlier in the day. Some lady they interviewed for her opinion on the

street was against it; she said that would be like moving Christmas to make it more convenient. Umm, not even close in my opinion, but I won't go there. My point is that the area in which I live always schedules the Halloween stuff on Saturdays anyway – I guess we're ahead of our time here in rural Ohio, haha. This year we had 2 Halloween parties and our trick-or-treat on Saturday October 29. Except we found out during the mall trick or treat (which was on Tuesday night) that baby Luke is a homebody – he gets really fussy when we try to take him places, especially if it's outdoor places, and yes, we do bundle him up. Saturday was a very big day for all of us because Hubby's and my lack of sleep finally caught up to us. We began the day on a very grumpy note, and everything was very hectic as we tried to get our work done at the church and ready the kids for the Halloween festivities. We made it to the first party – the community Halloween party they have at the ice rink (no ice of course). We had tons of fun as usual, and we even got on the hayride before the rain came and before the line got too long. But Luke decided he was finished with the Halloween party before we were. No sticking this baby in a stroller and feeding him on the go like we did with the other 4 kids; he just won't have it and voices his complaints loudly. Luke is our fussiest baby; the others were all very adaptable babies – in retrospect, I guess we were spoiled. We are a very busy family, so either us scaling things back for Luke or trying to get him to adapt to our busyness will be interesting. He can go from what I call 'zero to screaming' in a matter of seconds, but don't get me wrong – he's oh-so-incredibly cute and lovable. It's just that his idea of a good time is being held and cuddled – constantly. Which also explains my lack of blogging lately – while I am feeling better after being sick most of the pregnancy and am recovering well after the surgery, I am not a very successful one-handed typist. There really isn't a choice between cuddling a cute baby or blogging, now is there? So anyway, I took Luke to the car while Hubby finished up at the party with the other kids, and we decided to put off

trick-or-treating until another day and do it in a nearby community that had scheduled it on Sunday. We also decided that Hubby would stay home with Luke that evening while I took the other kids to our other planned Halloween party. We went home and tossed a couple of frozen pizzas in the oven for a quick dinner, but wouldn't you know by the way that Saturday was going – we burnt a pizza and only the kids got fed. At least our evening plan worked out – I went to the party with the 4 older kids, and we all had a blast. Luke actually let Hubby catch a nap while we were gone too!

Sunday we drove the 10 miles to the town where we were going to trick-or-treat, but we quickly became confused – no one was out; it was like a ghost town. Hubby stopped at a gas station and found out that the trick-or-treating was from 3:30-5. We had readied ourselves and arrived there ready to trick-or-treat from 5:30-7. Apparently my lack of sleep had impaired my ability to read the time correctly in the newspaper. I can't believe I did that – I had checked the paper probably about FIVE times throughout the week to make sure I had the right time, day, and place. And I had misread the information each of those FIVE times. So my genius Hubby made us a plan. He stopped at Walmart and picked up 2 huge bags of candy – at full price I might add, which was hard for him. He loves store clearances and sales, and it's a testament to how much he loves his family that he bought all that candy at full price knowing that it would be half off in just a day or two. But anyway, we got the candy and stopped at the dollar store and bought each kid a flashlight. We drove over to the park, and Hubby hid the candy all around the park and then we let the kids loose with their flashlights and trick-or-treat bags to find it. They loved it! They said they liked it even more than trick-or-treating, and we even got an unprompted handmade thank you card later that evening from 7-year-old Sammie – and I quote, "I love wat we did today". I should add how great the kids were in the car as we tried to figure out what was going on with the trick-or-treating. They were all in their

costumes and ready to go, and then mom and dad starting driving around aimlessly. When they found out they wouldn't be trick-or-treating after all, there was not a tear, not even a protest. Just a few questions and much patience as they waited to see what we would do instead – they are AMAZING!

I think I have some video of the kids at the mall, but other than that, things were way too hectic during our Halloween celebrations to take many pictures or video. We have our wonderful memories though, and those of course are priceless.

Here's a picture of my kids dressed in their Halloween costumes on the day they arrived in the mail from Grammie. 11-year-old Taylor was a pirate, 7-year-old Sammie and 5-year-old Disney were princesses, and 3-year-old Christopher was Superman:



Warning About Potty Training At Walmart

My little boy Christopher is 3 years old, and we've been working on potty training for a while now. He gets it, but he just doesn't remember to make it to the potty every time he

has to go. The other day we were in Walmart, and he wanted to use the potty. Because he was with mom, he had to go in the ladies' room, and because he is an independent little guy, he wanted to go into the stall by himself. Next thing I know, there was a huge CRASH!

It seems that Christopher had taken off his diaper and tried to throw it away in the little "garbage can" that they have in each stall of a ladies bathroom. The receptacle somehow fell off the wall, clattered to the floor, and now used tampon applicators were rolling everywhere. Beyond disgusting, right? How are those things not a bio-hazard? Being the considerate little boy that he is, Christopher tried to pick up the garbage, but thankfully I was right there and shouted NOOO just in time before he touched anything. After that happened, my sensitive little guy was trying to finish going potty with his hands on his ears. He wouldn't let go, not only because of the loud noise the "garbage can" made when it fell but also because the automatic flushing toilets really scare him too. After we got all that sorted out, he did pry his hands off his ears long enough to wash them, but then those darn automatic energy-saver hand dryers got the best of him – those things are loud! In the end, potty mission accomplished, but in the future, it might just be easier for us to stay home until we're done with this potty training business!



So How'd It Go?

Overall, so much better than my fears were telling me it would go. I had my second cesarean section on Friday, October 7. Boy was I nervous beforehand! I figured I would write out the details, just in case we decide to do this again I can look back at it and know what to expect. So I warn you, if you're squeamish about medical procedures or just plain not interested, then skip the post. But if I can make just one person feel more at ease about their impending cesarean, even if it's future me, then it's worth writing this all out and sharing the details.

The day of my scheduled cesarean, the hospital told me to arrive at 5:30 AM. Hubby and I set the alarm for 4:30 and got there a little early so we could visit the hospital chapel and pray together. Thankfully, Grandma had arrived in town the night before and had our 4 kids at her hotel. The first nurse we asked did not know where the chapel was in the hospital, which I found strange, but then again, our local hospital is undergoing major expansion and renovation, so I guess that's the excuse I'll let them have for the fact that their chapel (when we finally found someone who knew where it was) was just an empty room. No matter because God listens where ever you are, so we prayed together and went back to the maternity ward where they began to prep me for my surgery. They put an IV in, which didn't go very well. Seems I have great veins in my arms for drawing blood (the blood techs always ooh and ahh over me and my veins, which makes them weird in my book), but in my hands, not so much. Getting IVs is always very painful for me, and it bruises up my whole hand. This day was no exception. It hurt a lot, and they had to give me 2 holes before they got it right. Then the nurse comes and tells me

that because of the combination of it being my 5th baby and the fact that I had to have a blood transfusion last time that they were going to have to give me a back-up port in my other hand just in case. So they start doing that, and that one hurts even more. Next thing I know, I have a golf ball sized lump in my hand – “The vein blew” the nurse told me. I don’t ever want to hear anyone tell me that something carrying blood throughout my body “blew”, and I still haven’t googled that one to see what it is because it sounds so nasty. And at this point, I’m near tears thinking that if things are going wrong already, what will happen when they cut me open? But they finally got my second IV port in, and then after the insertion of the catheter (not a big deal and I will spare the details), I was ready to be wheeled off to the surgery room in a wheelchair.

Luckily I had taken the c-section class at the hospital, so the cold sterility of the operating room did not alarm me, and I also knew that my Hubby had to wait outside until certain preparations were made. On our way into the operating room, I saw the backup doctor, and he was talking to himself in the hallway in kind of a strange way. He is known for being a bit different, so it didn’t really worry me, especially since I knew my regular doctor would be there also. Besides, Dr. Strange delivered my 3rd child, and she was the easiest delivery I had. I will spare details for what happened next; it’s a bit personal – if you really need to know how they prep a patient for a c-section then take a class at your local hospital. Then the anesthesiologist came in, and my heart sank when I realized it was the same lady who gave me my epidural during the birth of baby #4 – the epidural that never worked. She gave me my spinal, and it pinched a little, but much less than an epidural, not really a big deal at all. My legs started to get tingly, and I was really starting to panic big time. I kept asking the anesthesiologist if everything I was feeling was normal, and she was so nice and reassuring. They had a blood pressure cuff on my arm which kept going off

every few minutes, and they also gave me oxygen in my nose – I felt very well cared for. They let Hubby in, and he and the anesthesiologist (so tired of typing that word, think I'll just call her Dr. Drug from now on) sat by my head the whole time. Dr. Drug said that they would test me to make sure that I was numb before they did anything, but guess what – they didn't. I brought this up to someone after it was over, and they had a good point – they probably tested my numbness but didn't even tell me about it. Since it was working, I didn't feel the test, so they proceeded. Duh. It's just that I was so nervous about the numbing not working after what happened with my epidural; you can't blame me for being concerned.

The next thing I remember is the tugging and pulling, which is also something for which the c-section class prepared me. But it was actually much less unpleasant than I had panicked it would be. It's just that it seemed to take forever. They said it would take about 1-2 minutes and according to Hubby, it took 4 minutes. If you ask me, I would say it took 15 minutes. The whole time I could hear the doctors talking and I kept asking Hubby what they were saying because I was panicking about the health of the baby and the fact that I was lying there sliced open on the table. He said they were just discussing their techniques. My Hubby kept looking down there, past the curtain, and I kept wondering how he could do that – if it were him lying on a table sliced open, I don't know that I could look. But then again, I don't think it was like surgery looks on tv – I was picturing a completely open body cavity, but that's a different kind of surgery. I guess that's why there was all that tugging and pulling. So anyway, finally Hubby says that the baby is out, but I don't hear crying, so I begin to panic even more (notice a trend here? I am a worrywart, in case you haven't noticed). But both people seated at my head tell me everything is fine, and then I hear the baby (Luke James) cry. I feel so relieved, and I can't believe it's over. Except it's not. They clean up the baby, and they hold him up in front of my face for about a

millisecond, and then they take him out of the room along with my husband and probably about half the staff that was on hand. At some point, I don't remember when, but I'm pretty sure it was after the baby was born, Dr. Drug held up a little vial and says, "I'm going to give you this." She puts it in my IV, and I find out later that it was Duramorph, a form of morphine. I'm wondering now if this is something they give all their c-section patients (those who are not opposed to medications), or if I got the "panicking patient" special. At any rate, after the morphine, my memory gets fuzzy, but I do remember lying there getting sewed up (still not feeling a thing below my chest). My complaint was that it seemed to take FOREVER because I had nothing to do but lie there, and all I could think about was seeing my baby. I even got envious of my poor husband, because here I had just gone through this surgery and now HE was getting to spend all this time with the baby and I hadn't even barely gotten a look at him. They should really think about putting a tv in there or something... or would that distract the doctors? Best not to think about it, I guess. I had to keep talking myself out of looking at the ceiling because it was reflective, and I could see a little of me and a lot of red there – they ought to fix that too; I would bet that no one wants to see themselves getting surgery. But finally they were finished, and a few of the staff people worked together to lift my helpless body onto the gurney for the transport back to my room.

When I got there, there was Hubby with the baby, all excited to see me, and then I finally got to hold our new son. And he was (is) so incredibly beautiful. The rest of the day was wonderful. Slowly my legs began to work again, and I could not believe it that I had absolutely no pain! It did not resonate with me that I was on drugs. I did feel kind of loopy, but I didn't really think much of it and enjoyed the euphoria of having a new healthy baby and the relief that the worst part was over. Weather-wise it ended up being a terrible weekend to be stuck in the hospital – it was 80

degrees out and sunny, and the grandmas took my kids to the zoo on Saturday, so I had to miss that, but at least they got to go. When I was released from the hospital on Monday, it was still very nice out for a few days, but I didn't feel up to going outside and by the time I did, Northern Ohio fall weather was in full swing and I've been cold ever since. Oh well, such is life, and my Hubby had perfect advice when I was bummed about missing the beautiful fall colors (it was amazing how different our neighborhood looked with all the leaves on the ground after just 3 days!). He said, "There will be plenty more color-changing seasons, but there are only so many baby seasons." What a wise, wonderful man!

Back to my recovery in the hospital, it went fairly smoothly, although I did have a lot of pain starting Saturday once the morphine wore off. The baby was up all night on Friday, but I didn't mind at all because I just wanted to be with him. I haven't watched tv in years, but over the weekend, I watched countless episodes of 3's Company, Roseanne (forgot about the one where Becky gets into the liquor cabinet, haha!), and Everybody Loves Raymond – you know, shows from when tv was actually good. I learned about the Prohibition era from PBS, and I also learned that there are conspiracy theorists who believe that there really isn't gold in Fort Knox – hmm, that's something to think about I guess. Luke slept a full 5 hours on Saturday night from 1:30-6:30, and so did I since no one came for my blood until 6:30. Last time I was in the hospital, I seem to remember them coming for blood every hour on the hour which made it really hard to sleep, but then again I had a lot of complications last time including the need for an emergency cesarean and a blood transfusion. Sunday night, little Luke decided he wasn't going to sleep again, and I woke up from my 45 minute nap that night feeling terrible – achy and lots of other pain, and chills because of a fever I was running. Not only that, but there was a mean nurse who informed me in a not-so-nice way that I was over my limit of acetaminophen, which meant I was not allowed any pain

medicine. That really ticked me off; partly because of the way she said it, and partly because no one had given me any indication that this was a problem. Had they warned me that I was getting near the limit, I would have declined some of the meds offered to me to avoid this. Actually, all of the other nurses had been telling me that I should stay ahead of the pain. They specifically said not to wait until the pain was really bad to take the meds otherwise they wouldn't work. The staff must have known I was upset because at 11pm Sunday night, my doctor called my bedside phone personally and reassured me. And my doctor is the one I credit with my smooth delivery and quick recovery – she has been 1000% better than my previous doctors in every way throughout this process, and for that, I am so thankful.

Since I've been home, I've been resting (probably not as much as I should have, but I have 5 kids now, who can rest with 5 kids in the house??). Hubby has been *amazing* at taking care of me AND things around the house, but he also started a new job 2 days after the baby was born, which leaves him with 2 jobs, taking care of the 4 kids and me AND waking with the new baby at night as he likes to do. My mother did a ton of laundry while she was here, and I'm just now starting to do laundry again a week and a half later, so that helped a lot too. People from church have been wonderful about sending meals for our family, and that has been incredible. Not only that, but we also have frozen meals that people sent and that my husband's mother made while she was visiting for when our meal delivery runs out. It's been crazy, but we are managing, and a week and half later, I've been out and about and back in the real world. I still have pain, but nothing extreme, and my 600mg ibuprofen works pretty well for that. There are 2 complications I had that I was not expecting; one is worthy of a blog post all its own and I'll get to it next time. The other is the return of my backaches. I've had a sore back since high school; I worked fast food and had to pop a Doan's before every shift to make it through. There are various

things that I think caused it, but what does that matter now. The strange thing is that during my pregnancy, my backaches disappeared. Most women find new backaches during pregnancy, and mine disappeared. I didn't think much of it until I get home from the hospital and experience my back pain again. This is discouraging because I know the incision pain will go away with time, but the backaches seem to be getting worse, and I have no guarantee that my back will ever feel better. I guess it's something to talk to my wonder doc about in my 6-week follow-up. I already had my 1 week follow-up with the doctor, and she said my incision looks really great and my body is healing well – for that I am thankful.

Baby's healthy, 4 big sisters and brother are healthy, I'm getting healthy, and Hubby is healthy (even if he needs much more sleep – praying for that to come soon) – what more can we ask for! Life is good; God is great!

And oh yeah... everywhere little Luke goes, he has a constant crowd of admirers. If it wasn't so sweet, it would be annoying because hey, when is it MY turn to hold the baby?!?

□



In General...

Here we are in the middle of August already, how did that happen? I know how July flew by for me since most of it was spent traveling, but where the heck has the beginning of August gone?

I am 30 weeks + a few days pregnant. I talked to the doctor yesterday and am most likely going to have the baby at 39 weeks (planned cesarean), so there is not too much time left of this pregnancy – for that, I am mostly glad! I cannot wait to meet little Luke! Plus I'm sick of the soreness, the nausea, the moodiness, and all that good stuff. I just hope that I turn back into a normal person again because right now it seems like an impossibility. I can't remember my life before I was pregnant – did I really have enough energy to function every day? Sure don't now, but most days, I can fake it but that is exhausting in itself.

I wrote a few posts ago about making important decisions and about doors of opportunity opening for us. For certain things, we are still praying, being patient, and waiting to see what God's plan is for us right now. In the meantime, we did reach one decision about a lifestyle change for our family, and we are very excited to get started. Close family already knows what this is about, but do I want to reveal it to others for the first time in a blog? I'm not sure... But either way, we are very excited about it, and it's been a lot of fun already to begin this journey. Just another thing to look forward to this fall!

Tonight is the last night of our Wednesday night Bible study, and it's been great to make new friends and to get to know these families. I am looking forward to having 3 (THREE!!) free Wednesday nights for our family once the class is over and before youth group starts again. And how is this for irony? I wrote the preceding paragraphs, saved it as a draft,

then did lunch with the kids before coming back to it. During lunch, I checked the mail and I found postcards notifying us of youth group leader training meetings on TWO of my THREE free Wednesdays. Sigh. I need to be happy with that one free evening, but my human nature disappoints me because I almost had 3 free Wednesdays instead of one... oh well, such is life. Wednesday nights are fun anyway; I just wish I had more energy to enjoy them.

My Monday morning Bible study is drawing to a close also – that one I will really miss. I've become close with the other ladies in my class, and it's been so great to get to know them and learn about the similarities and the differences in our lives and journeys in our relationships with Christ. I will even miss the 5 hours a week of homework – it was SO incredibly valuable and eye-opening for me to spend this time with God's word. If I weren't taking on so much this fall, I would definitely sign up for another one. Maybe in the spring or next summer...

Seen some movies lately, as usual – I think it's probably mine and Hubby's favorite thing to do together, snuggle and watch movies after long days of work and tending the kids. I had heard that the new Planet of the Apes movie was supposed to be good, so we saw that, but I was disappointed. It was okay, but I was hoping for less ape, more planet – meaning, the movie ended just as the apes were about to take over. I would have liked to see their rise to power as they actually take over the planet. Maybe that's going to be saved for the next movie? The movie was entertaining, but there was a little too much animal cruelty and not enough payoff – seeing the apes take over the planet – for having to watch all that animal cruelty. Of course the creatures were CGI so you know none of them were hurt during filming and it was just a movie, but that doesn't mean in my spare time I want to sit and watch that and think about what goes on in animal testing labs.

We haven't visited the Redbox in a while, mostly because we

had seen many of the movies they had (we watch a lot of movies!). But Hubby ventured out last night and picked out Cedar Rapids, a fun (a bit more vulgar than I usually like, but interesting just the same) movie about insurance salesmen starring Ed Helms (Andy Bernard from The Office; he's also in the Hangover movies). It was a different kind of movie, and we both enjoyed it.

That's about it for now... I just had the opportunity to sit and blog for awhile – I MADE the opportunity, actually – because I just HAD to today. I've had this awful headache that's been lodged behind my left eye for a few days now, and running around chasing kids again was just too much for today. And I do need to sit more. For someone in my condition, I really think I should be resting more, but the nature of the busyness in our household makes it an impossibility. I'm finding it quite a challenge to take good care of myself, finding time to eat right to take care of my anemia and gestational diabetes and all that stuff. It's just too hard to put myself first when I have 4 little ones to take care of and Hubby has his own full plate with work as well. I hate to complain about physical stuff, but I really need to feel better soon.

A Smurfin' Good Time

I was so pleasantly surprised by how much my family liked the new Smurf movie that I was inspired to write a short review. Going in, I thought I would hate the movie because it didn't look funny. And I was a fan of the Smurfs as a kid, so not only did the movie look stupid, but I couldn't figure out why it took place in our realm rather than the Smurf's realm – wouldn't fans of the little blue mystical creatures, kids, and

everyone else want to see Smurf village on the big screen?

Don't worry, we get to see Smurf village, and it's pretty cool. Especially the scene where Gargamel breaks in!! Ok, so I guess that's kind of a spoiler, sorry about that... but this is a kid's movie we're talking about. And kid's movie it is – my kids all really liked it (ages 11, 7, 4 and 3). The Smurfs have screen time for pretty much 100% of the movie, and there aren't any boring scenes with a lot of dialogue – these tend to lose the attention of kids. There are some Smurfy jokes – in this case I'm using "Smurfy" to describe inside jokes written for fans of the Smurfs from decades ago. Much like the Brady Bunch movies are actually enjoyable parodies of the hit tv show and poke fun at it, The Smurfs movie has gags about such shout-outs to the 80s cartoon as their names reflecting their personalities (a hilarious joke in the movie that I'm still chuckling about), cracks about how Smurfette always wears the same dress (although more than one joke about this was overdoing it and took the humor away), and multiple references to creator Peyo.



(the Smurfs as I knew and loved them)

From the previews, I thought Gargamel was going to be a bumbling bafoon, one of these over-the-top characters who might be ruined by the actor portraying him as he flailed around aimlessly in a ridiculous looking costume. But Gargamel as a live person in today's New York City was

actually quite entertaining and even hilarious at times (If you grew up watching the Smurf cartoon like I did, watch for the way Hank Azaria runs as he portrays Gargamel – he imitates the cartoon character so well that it made me laugh out loud!). I especially liked the inclusion of the little details from the cartoon – like seeing the Smurf cages that Gargamel always had lying in wait for when he finally caught the little guys. There was backstory explained; everyone knows by now that Smurfette was actually created by Gargamel as Smurf bait, right? The story line was cheesy but not unbearable even while it made several futile attempts at teaching positive life lessons to kids in the audience. I could have done without the Katy Perry song reference (is “I Kissed a Girl” really a song for kids? I’ve never heard the song and don’t want to know), and Katy Perry as Smurfette’s voice didn’t really give any personality to the character anyhow – she was just a girl Smurf and nothing like her character in the cartoon. Clumsy Smurf on the other hand, was a perfect 3d replica of his cartoon counterpart – both in voice and graphics. I did stop watching the Smurfs sometime after the Smurf cousins (Smurflings) came in, so I have no idea where Gutsy Smurf came from (seems to be a brave Scottish Smurf complete with red sideburns and a kilt?). I would have liked to see my personal favorite Smurf, Jokey, get more screen time in the movie. On that subject, I don’t understand why the group of 6 Smurfs with the most screen time (the ones who get to go to NY) did not include such series regulars as Jokey, Greedy, Handy, Vanity or Hefty. Actually, I didn’t see those Smurfs at all, but then again, we arrived late to the movie so maybe I missed their appearances. The production staff also did an excellent job of utilizing aspects of modern technology to make funny jokes involving the Smurfs. Case in point: see the wikipedia reference.



(My favorite Smurf, Jokey)

Overall, Smurfs was an entertaining film for the entire family – and there was a huge gap between my low expectations and my high level of enjoyment of this cute movie! A must-see for anyone who has kids to take to a movie – bonus if you are a Smurf fan!

One more note – here is a list of characters I would like to see in the sequel:

Hogatha, Johan and Peewit, Clockwork Smurf, and Baby Smurf. But please, NO SMURFLINGS!!

And oh yeah... I did a search on my own blog to see if I had written about the I'm a Pink Toothbrush song from the Smurf's 1979 album. Turns out, I did include it in a [blog post that I had written in March 2010](#), and my kids (and me still!) are big fans of this adorable tune. It was really fun to read about my speculations on the Smurf movie in this blog post given the limited info I had that time on this "in production" project! (if you read it, you should know that Quentin Tarentino was originally cast as Brainy Smurf, but both actor and studio are quiet on why the pairing did not work out...) So apparently I HAD heard of Gutsy Smurf – and wrote about it in my own blog a year and a half ago!



(modern Smurfs from the 2011 movie)

July 2011 (part 1)

The July 2011 page on my calendar has been filled since spring, so I knew we had a busy month ahead. Organizing everything I had jammed into those little squares on the calendar was going to be challenging enough, but then we were even able to add a few family mini-vacations to the mix! It's been a great summer so far despite the challenges of sometimes trying to be in 2 places at once, and I wanted to chronicle everything to enhance the wonderful memories we made as a family this summer – but be prepared; this will be quite the manifest when I'm finished!

June 30 and July 1 – We began the month with a last-minute trip to an indoor water park that's an hour away. After a sudden burst of cabin fever, my husband found a super internet deal that afforded us some much-loved family time. The kids loved the indoor water park, and Christopher was old enough this time to go on some water slides which he found to be a blast!

Best of all, the constant lower back pain that had been making me short of patience, irritable and tired all the time seemed to be remedied by my getting to sit in water for 2 days. I should note for future reference also how interesting it was to pack different people for 3 different trips at the same time. Simultaneously, I was packing 6 people for an overnight stay (with a separate bag for changing into street clothes from bathing suits, I might add), 1 little girl for a 4 day stay at camp, and also for a 3 day trip for 6 people. It felt hectic at the time, but not unmanageable – due to the fact that my wonderful family did much of the work for and with me. And you know what? I don't think we forgot anything!!

July 2, 3 – After the water park, we got a day of rest (and unpacking, re-packing, laundry) before we set out Sunday for the 4-hour drive to Nashville Indiana – with one small glitch: Hubby had food poisoning. He had to miss church to rejuvenate, and then we were off – well, after packing up the car and some other in-town odds n ends.

July 3-6 – We spent the 4th of July in Nashville – a yearly trip Hubby and I take with our 4 kids, my parents, my uncle, and my sister, her husband and their 2 kids – there were 13 of us staying in a large house in the middle of the Brown County woods. It was a beautiful place, and we're torn on where to choose to have next year's gathering. Last year, we had a beautiful house where each family had their own bedroom and bathroom. The few downsides to this house (called The Oaks) was the large steep hill that led down to the pond and fire pit – it proved to be dangerous last year when someone took a nasty spill (but was uninjured), so we didn't want to gamble with it this year when we have an adult who is practically incapacitated (me being 5.5 mos. pregnant). Also, the kids have to be watched constantly down by that pond, so it was a nice break for the adults this year to not have to worry about who was going to take them down there. Also, there wasn't really any yard for the kids to play in at The Oaks. There

was a swingset, but really only the two 3-year-old boys were of the age to enjoy a swing set this year, and that leaves 4 other kids with no yard to run around in. Both houses had pool tables inside and hot tubs outside (which became little swimming pools for the kids since we didn't want to turn on the heat in 90° weather), and The Oaks had tons of dvds, board games, and a foosball table, but then again, this year we brought our own dvds and games and the kids had TONS to do and were never bored. Another plus to this year's cabin vs. The Oaks: the large dining room table that fit almost everyone at the same time so we could enjoy meals together. The Oaks had only a small breakfast nook that seated 4 people or about 6 kids, so the adults had to eat elsewhere. Given these pros and cons of each cabin, it's going to be a tough decision next year on where to stay!!

The kids' favorite thing to do this year was to go down to the creek that ran around the property (this cabin was called "Ginley's Gulch" for future reference). There they would walk the creek, hunting for crawdads, geodes, and minnows, and they found quite a few of all of the above. As I said, this property had a larger yard, and also 85 acres of forest, and in the future I would like to explore the gorgeous property more since I wasn't quite feeling up to that this year. I did enjoy walking down the cleared path into the forest though – there were many beautiful butterflies, cool looking insects, and birds to see and hear. And oh yeah! I forgot to mention another huge plus of Ginley's Gulch – the screened-in porch! It had a ceiling fan, so it was a wonderful, mosquito-free place to spend our Brown County evenings together. A great trip!!

July 6 – We arose at the crack of dawn to pack up the car and get the kids roused for the 4+ hour drive to Michigan to drop daughter #2 at camp. We were all exhausted, and the kids slept much of the way. We did stop in Fort Wayne for something to eat, and we finally tried a little cafe where we had always wanted to try their eggs benedict since reading an

ad for them years ago. The eggs benedict was a bust – sauce from a packet, don't you know, but they did have one of my seasonal favorites that's very hard to find in the northern part of the country where I live: fried green tomatoes. And they were yummy! We dropped Sammie off at camp just a little late, and we were excited for her after seeing what a great place [Camp Selah](#) is (Camp Selah is a Christian camp in Reading Michigan, and both of our kids who went had a SUPER time!)

July 7-9 – These next few days were a bit quiet without the whole brood together, and we fit in another family min-vacation: since Sammie had to be picked up in the morning in Michigan, we took the other 3 kids to the drive-in in Coldwater Michigan and spent the night there – lots of fun! Saturday the 9th we picked up Sammie, and she said she had a good week during her first ever time at camp.

July 11 was the 3rd birthday of a very special little guy, and we took him out to dinner at the local Mexican restaurant where they sang to him, put a sombrero on him, and dabbed his nose with dessert. I of course forgot my camera ☹ but he liked it all the same. It reminded me of last year when the staff at Bob Evans sang to him, and he dove into my shirt to hide – the year of experience helped him to enjoy the attention more this year. And in the morning of little dude's birthday, I had to drive Taylor to camp in one of the nastiest storms of the year. We made it there without a problem, but the ride home was dicey with driving rain and wind. I was glad I didn't have any kids with me which would have made me nervous, and as you can tell I made it just fine – even if I did arrive sopping wet and very late to Bible study. In the newspaper the next day, I saw a picture of a power line that fell into the road which turned out to be the same road I had been driving down during that storm. Just goes to show you what kinds of things to look out for when driving during inclement weather in the middle of desolate farm country, and I feel blessed to have made it safely.

July 11-14 – So with our eldest away at camp, the week flew by... even though we missed her (I especially missed having someone old enough to have a normal conversation with me during the day). We had 3 days of doctor appointments (me and our youngest-for-now had his 3-year-checkup) and meetings, and then... freedom!

July 15 – Hubby and I met my mom in South Bend, and she took “the littles” (our family name for the younger kids in our family; in this case it meant our 3-year-old, 4-year-old, and 7-year-olds) to Grandma’s for a vacation – which left Hubby and I kidless for a whole day! So Hubby took me to the Potawatomi Zoo in South Bend, and the amount of walking and the weather was perfect for me even while pregnant since it was just the two of us. What a great idea as I was just starting to get zoo withdrawl! After the zoo, we decided to take the scenic route home from South Bend and fell upon a perfect date purely by accident: in Middlebury Indiana, there is an excellent Amish-style restaurant called [Das Dutchman Essenhaus](#). We were driving by on a day when they had a buffet, so we could sample many varieties of their very delicious food. Even better, there were some Amish men offering carriage rides in the parking lot, so we took one! It was so romantic, the grounds of the mini-resort were beautiful, the weather was perfect, and hearing the history of the grounds as told by our Amish guide was wonderful – best date day ever!!

(below is a picture of a horse and buggy like the one we drove in (ours was more of a carriage than a buggy). I had to take the picture on the way home since I had forgotten my camera and couldn’t take any pictures while on the buggy ride!)



July 16 – This was the day we picked up our oldest from camp, and we got to hear every detail about her awesome week while driving from Michigan to Fort Wayne to see... the new Harry Potter movie ON IMAX IN 3D!! Yes, it was as cool as it sounds, and it was fun to take Taylor out for a fun day with only parents and no younger siblings – dinner was at Golden Corral, one of her favorite places since she loves steak. I'm thankful that the awful nausea I felt earlier in the day did not persist through the movie, and the cause of it that day still perplexes me... such is a mystery of pregnancy, I guess.

July 17-18 – The 3 of us tackled the huge project of cleaning out our spare room – what a mess! I wish we had taken some "before" pictures, but the most important thing is that it got done, even if I felt like I was going to fall over in exhaustion by the end of it. I'm so proud of Hubby for all the hard work he did for this project, and especially that it was his idea to tackle it earlier than we had scheduled – we began Saturday night after Fort Wayne rather than Sunday after church as we had planned. But it looks GREAT, and as I'm writing this at the end of July, our family has gotten so much use out of it already. We made it into a craft / hobby / school room, and it has a computer, Taylor's new sewing machine (a present from Grandma), all kinds of paper, crayons, glue, etc, and all the many, many arts and crafts kits and supplies we had been saving (and losing) for the past 5 years.

(July manifest to be continued – need to give your eyes a

break! But first, here is a pic of a creative, cute fire hydrant in downtown South Bend Indiana I snapped while sitting at a stoplight – look for it near the silver van's rear bumper)

