

Back To Blogging

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

To Hellinois...

I'm not a big fan of the place and try to avoid it like the plague for the most part, but there are about two times a year I am willing to travel to the place of my birth which I lovingly refer to as "Hellinois", a nickname for Chicagoland, with its insane traffic patterns and millions of unfriendly citizens: around April for my nephews' birthdays and also around Christmastime. Making the 4-hour trek across two states twice a year is doable and definitely worth it so that my kids can have fun and get to know their relatives. So Friday afternoon, we took off and headed over to the Land of Lincoln. I don't understand why it took me two hours to pack our family of 6 for a one day trip, especially because there were plenty of things that were forgotten, but more on that later. We arrived outside the Loop right about 6:30 on a Friday evening local time, but much to our surprise, we barely hit any backup. What the? Unheard of for a Friday night!

But on our way past the Chicago skyline, we did have fun trying to find the new Trump Tower and comparing it to the John Hancock and also to the other new skyscrapers that have sprung up, seemingly over night. I have to admit that Chicago's skyline is more impressive than that of New York, at least in my opinion – just for the heck of it, I played tourist and actually took a picture of the Sears Tower. While I was there, I heard that they're going to build balconies on the observation deck of the Sears Tower with glass floors. They got the idea after watching all the tourists bump their foreheads on the windows while trying to look straight down. I have to admit, I've done that myself a few times. Wonder if I could keep my new-found vertigo in check enough to give the new balconies a try when they're complete?

We arrived at our hotel and got the kids ready to go down to the pool, and that's when we realized that we forgot my son's bathing suit, as well as ALL of my husband's clothes that had been put in the dryer before we left and forgotten. So we all had to sacrifice – I had to sleep in my clothes and give my pajamas (sweat pants and a t-shirt) to my husband to wear to the birthday party the following day. He had to wear pajamas to the party and also roast inside a sweatshirt all day since the t-shirt was ripped. My son went swimming in his pants – luckily I had learned a little something from the New York trip and brought plenty of extra baby clothes with me.

We were only down at the pool for about 30 minutes, but the kids had fun – my son kept clapping. We had called fellow blogger Derek to join us, but we kicked him out soon after we got back from the pool since the room was very crowded and the kids needed to settle down for their big day ahead. We ordered pizza (MMMmmm, Chicago-style pizza!) and tried to get the kids to settle down, but it took a long time. We got so tired that we forgot to close the drapes, which led to everyone rising bright and early in the morning – big oops. Our almost 5-year-old Sammie, the handful (putting it mildly)

of the bunch, decided to draw a bunch of block letter T's all over her cousins' birthday cards. No problem, until she ran out of room for any more T's and threw a 2-hour tantrum about it – I am not even exaggerating. By the time we checked out of the hotel, so many people had walked by glaring at our family; it was not a good way to start the day. We were so not in Kansas (err, Ohio) anymore. I have trouble getting used to that every time I visit other places. It feels weird to not say hi to everyone I pass, or worse yet, to say hi and get a weird stare in return.

We had decided that my husband was going to take Sammie somewhere else rather than for us to subject my elderly grandparents to her screaming, but luckily she calmed down on the way over to their house. We had a nice visit, and as usual, my grandma made too much food. What was supposed to be a light lunch (so we could fit in as many other samples of fine Chicago dining as possible during our short stay) turned out to be a buffet spread of strawberries, black raspberries, cheese, smokies in biscuits, deviled eggs, pickles, cheese spread and crackers, not to mention 3 kinds of dessert! So anyway, we had a really nice visit with my grandparents, although we were walking on eggshells with Sammie, who got an early birthday present from them, which was nice. But then fights broke out over the birthday present, and rather than stress my grandparents, we beat a hasty retreat. My grandpa did manage to make a joke, despite all of his discomfort from the Parkinson's and who knows what else. He asked how our 10th Anniversary vow renewal ceremony went, and we said great! So then he said, "You made the same mistake twice, huh?" Obviously, I don't feel I made a mistake once (or twice) marrying my husband, but it was funny anyway and so great to see the old tease that is my grandpa back in action. So we left their house in Schaumburg and headed to Aurora to see the rest of the fam. After little sleep the night before and the 2 hour tantrum in the morning, I offered to drive so my husband could take some much needed rest. Wanting to think

as little as possible, I turned on Jill the GPS and sat back and let her lead me through the tangle of expressways that is Chicagoland. Except that Jill had apparently had one too many morning cocktails. She directed me to stay on I-290 rather than to merge onto I-355. I knew better than that – I had made that trek many a time when my husband and I were dating. But my brain was fried, so I lemmingly went along with Jill's directions, and next thing I know, we're traveling east TOWARD the city, instead of west toward Aurora! Finally I saw the toll road we needed – I-88, and now we were finally headed in the right direction, after going 10 miles out of the way! Oh, well, at least we were running early since my kids had decided to get up at the crack of dawn!

Just writing about this makes me tired. I think I'll take a break here, unpack a little and save the rest of this huge weekend for another post!