

From the Pastor's Wife
"Nevertheless"

One morning in our Christian academy, our daily Bible reading lead us to Luke chapter five, and the particular account which caught our attention had to do with the Lord instructing Peter to let down his net for a draught. Peter explained that he and his fellow fishermen had, indeed, toiled all night without anything to show for their labor. But then, as if to correct his own negative thoughts, Peter interjects quite a powerful word and continues—"nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." And what a marvel followed. Matthew Henry says that the amount of fish was so beyond any catch ever seen before that it truly amounted to a miracle. A load which would have certainly sunk both ships to the bottom of the lake had not those muscular men rowed like they had never rowed before to get themselves and that catch to shore. What Peter did next was, in my opinion, the only obvious thing to do; he fell down at Jesus' knees and worshipped Him. The Bible indicates that Peter and the others were absolutely astonished. Jesus proved that He had dominion over the creatures in the seas—He was able to do anything.

Nevertheless. One interpretation of the word is, be that as it may. Nonetheless. Even so. We had a lively dialogue that chilly January morning in school about all of the "nevertheless" cases in the Bible. One young man began by citing the story of Naaman, the Syrian general afflicted with leprosy. The man of God told him to go dip in the muddy Jordan River seven times to be cured. At first, Naaman was outraged, turned his back on the prophet, and stormed away. Good thing for him his servants began to reason with him, and nevertheless, in spite of the wrestling within his own heart and perhaps even the embarrassment he felt, he finds himself dipping in that cold river. Once,

twice, seven times he obeys and is miraculously cured.

A little girl brought up the name of Moses. "Which time?" I queried knowing there are plenty of stories about him and wondering if she really understood the concept of "nevertheless." "When the bushes caught on fire?" her sweet little voice rendered. Of course! When Moses turned aside to see the burning bush, never did he expect that God would call him and choose him to confront Pharaoh. "They will not believe me... I am not eloquent." (Not to mention he had killed an Egyptian a while back and more than a few people knew about it.) Despite all the uncertainty and fearful pleadings, the next thing we read is, "And Moses went..." Nevertheless. Be that as it may.

In the small coastal town of Zarephath a woman was gathering a few dried sticks. She intended to build a small fire and gather her only son near to it. She was preparing to scrape together the last few crumbs in her pantry, stir them into a few drops of oil, and make what would amount to a small, thin pancake—a final meal for herself and her boy. How close they were to dying we will never know because she resolved to say, "nevertheless." Her decision to trust the Word of God and prepare Elijah a meal with every morsel she had left was the most important decision of her life.

All of these people and thousands like them down through the ages of time—up against impossible odds—chose to obey and look to God for the expected end. When I am able, by faith, to trust God's leadership—even when my faith is so weak—then no matter what the condition or the seemingly insurmountable odds—nevertheless all things will work together for my good. Even when the most knowledgeable people have spoken and concluded

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that the circumstances are hopeless, then I can say, "nevertheless."

It will take great courage to face the cynics and the skeptics. And greater courage still to stand against the doubt and dread in my own heart. But when I choose to say, nevertheless, in essence, I am saying, "But God..." It is looking at all situations that come my way as being allowed by God for His magnificent purposes. And in doing so, show to others all around me that I am trusting God to lead me to a safe place. "When my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Psalm 61:2

Encouragingly yours,

Liz



"My Favorite Things"

As a decorator, I find that I have some favorite standards that I often use, tweaking them as I go, to suit whatever design I'm working on. Here are 10 of my favorites. I hope that you will find them as inspirational as I do!

1. Candles - I sometimes find myself romanticizing about simpler times when candlelight was the only light in the house. Even the most humble cottage had to have taken on a special glow in the evening with all the candles lit, signaling that it was time to slow down at the end of a long day. Candlelight is also very flattering, hiding imperfections in its warm and flickering glow. Today, candles come in a variety of wonderful scents and colors to suit any

decor.

2. Dimmer switches - Speaking of mood lighting, these little wonders should be installed in almost every room of your house! Going from full task lighting to a soft glow at the touch of a button, is one of the best and low cost decorating tips I know of!

3. Live or silk floral arrangements - I have written many articles on this indispensable decorating tool. Flowers will bring life to any room they are placed in. If they could speak, they would certainly be saying, "Welcome" to all who pass by. I would recommend picking up a book on basic flower arranging. A well arranged bouquet will make all the difference when decorating with flowers.

4. Oil paintings need not be great masterpieces and while prints are nice, there is just nothing like an original oil on canvas. It may or may not be framed, depending on the formality of your home. My preference is for pre-1900 works and folk art. Look for oil paintings at yard sales, thrift shops, and on e-bay for best buys. Who knows? You may find a treasure in the second hand store! Make sure your painting has good overhead lighting to highlight its rich color and texture.

5. Vintage linens - Usually hand made or embellished, vintage linens have a great look and feel. There is a kind of sturdiness to them along with a great sense of history. Many items from the 40s, 50s and 60s are still surprisingly serviceable. Anything before that time, even if in good condition, should only be used for show. Mount in frames (which helps to preserve them) and use as wall art.

6. Dark paint colors bring a room to life by richly contrasting furniture and accessories. My favorite color selections are from the Benjamin Moore Historical and American Colors collections. Note: Highly pigmented paint usually requires a tinted base coat for more even coverage.

7. Crown and base molding - Nothing finishes the look of a room better than this "must have" decorator's touch. A beautiful crown molding details and defines a space like nothing else can. Be sure not to overlook the baseboard and doorframes. I like to use at least a 4" wide on base molding and 2-3" width to frame doors and windows. These can be painted white for a more dramatic effect, or off white to cream for a bit less contrast. I usually use a semi gloss finish for a smooth and washable trim.

8. Mirrors - Whether large and oversized or as small wall groupings, beautifully framed mirrors bring in reflective light and open up small spaces. A mirror is another "must have" in any entryway and always looks wonderful over a fireplace mantle and smallish hallways will open up visually with mirrors.

9. Area rugs - Another favorite standby, works every time to pull together all the elements of a room's color and decor. Whether patterned or solid, wool or nylon, choose one to perfectly bring your room together.

10. Chalk boards - Yes, chalkboards. They're great for writing notes, quotes and scriptures for the whole family. Use them as the message center of your home. Chalkboard paint is also available in black or green to cover an entire wall, if you like. I saw it used on a kitchen wall with recipes, notes and important dates and phone numbers written on it! So cute!



What do you do if you feel certain kids at your church or school are mistreating your child? Let's suppose your daughter feels a few of the girls don't like her and that even their mothers are mistreating her. How do you respond to this? First and foremost, you need to have a good heart-to-heart talk with your daughter and be as objective as possible. Are these things true or is your daughter the type that comes home with story after story about how all the girls mistreat her. Be careful and be wise. I've seen more than a few of these types and their mothers swallow every word of their daughters' stories—as fabricated and one sided as they may be. Some girls are so insecure and hungry for attention they spin many a tale about other girls and their mothers. Once these stories are investigated, they very often turn out to be false. So be a wise mother. Don't panic and run to your child's defense without investigating first. The biblical precept is not to be hasty or rash.

But what if you do investigate and there truly seems to be a problem? You've watched the way another girl (or

girls) treats your daughter and you have seen the girl's mother snub or mistreat your daughter. Now what? Okay. Be brave, you have got to confront the problem in the spirit of Christlikeness. You can't just sweep problems like this under the rug. First of all, if this happens in a church setting, there will be disunity and that is not profitable for anyone. Secondly, problems don't go away—they follow or become worse. Maybe you'd want to approach the other girl's mother and decide that all the girls and their moms should sit down together. It's very helpful to have a disinterested party here as well, maybe a pastor, pastor's wife, or someone who will behave in an impartial way, and be very spiritual minded in controlling the "pow-wow."

Whatever you do, if you have investigated and there really is a problem, don't make your child a sacrificial lamb by saying, "Oh well, just deal with it—life goes on." No. Certain situations call for confrontation. And in the end, if apologies have been made and accepted, then life goes on. And if your child feels she is still being mistreated, she may be feeling overly sensitive—or it may be true. But that's the time to move on. Teach your child that there will be some people in life that they may not hit it off with, or in the form of a reality check, let her know that not everyone is going to really, really like her. That's okay. Teach her to be herself, to be sweet, to be kind to all, and to make as many friends as possible. She is not to spend the rest of her life trying to please people, but rather trying her best to please the Lord.

Just some things to talk about over a cup of hot chocolate one of these fabulous February days.



"All the Saints Adore Thee"

I don't know of one true convert of Christ who doesn't adore the Lord. We may fail Him too many times; often our love for Him is not what it should be and our obedience far from the picture of submission. But in our hearts, we adore the Lord for all He is and all He has done for us. For

saving us, calling us, and drawing us with cords of matchless love. And for all the times He has forgiven us, picked us up again, and set us on our way, as blessed as before. When we meditate upon His supreme goodness, it breaks the heart of every good Christian because we know full well what we deserve.

Yes, all the saints adore the Lord; but it's the saints with whom we take issue. I'm not necessarily speaking of our own respective church families, but the brethren. May I speak plainly to all of you wonderful pastors' wives who faithfully labor beside your good husbands? How much angst has your husband lived through at the hands and tongues of, "the brethren"? It is not my intention to be un-Christ-like about this, but when it comes to many of the brethren, "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." Maybe this will help some of you to think clearly when your husband is being falsely accused, written about, or gossiped about, and all of the other attention and labels the brethren will bestow on a man they disagree with doctrinally, personally, or spiritually. You can be sure, my dears, there is every bit as much of character assassination, backroom bossism, mud-slinging, and smear campaigning that goes on inside Independent Baptist circles as there is in some smoke-filled back room down in Washington D.C. Is it any wonder the world mocks Christianity?

Now, I know when these sorts of things happen they rip your heart out because you know what a truly good man your husband is. So how should you handle these situations? Well now, I've known pastor's wives who have literally addressed the issue themselves and actually (hold on to your hats!) faced off with the preachers who were maligning their husbands or mistreating them! May I tell you, this is absolutely not the way you are to handle this. Stay in your place as a God-fearing woman and let the Lord and you husband handle things. The last thing your good husband needs is for you to run off defending him. How mortifying! Be still. The Lord can help you to see some things as clear as the noonday sun if you will allow Him to work in your life. I know there are times when although you are trying your very best to cast your every care upon the Lord, you still need to talk yourself through the details. So ask yourself a few questions:

Does the pastor who is gossiping or maligning my husband seem to have a close relationship with his wife? I present this question first because, I've seen more than a few preachers who are quite "esteemed" by the brethren, and yet their own homes are not in order. The husband/wife relationship is supposed to picture Christ and His church,

yet they barely grunt in their wife's direction, are not Christ-like or considerate towards them, and, basically, treat them like pack mules. So here's a pastor whose wife is miserable. She tries her best to hold her head up whenever he mistreats her in public, and wonders if this is the way life is supposed to be. And this man is going to tell all the brethren what's wrong with YOUR husband? It doesn't take too much discernment to realize you should not lose sleep over a man like this or the things he is saying—save to pray for his poor wife.

Are his children godly and well-behaved or, at the very least, obviously on their way to becoming so? Is the man in control of his family or is he obtuse and undiscerning? You can tell a lot by observing a pastor's family. Some children can be very silent and yet they are screaming out that they are troubled and unhappy. Many times, in fact, I will be so bold as to say most times, the average pastor is not in tune with his kids and they are out of control, worldly, or not at all the picture of what the Bible tells us the preacher's children should be. Again, be still. Take a look at your own family. Are things well under control? Is there much love and unity? Is Christ the center of your lives? Do your children have solid, biblically sound professions of salvation and do their lives back up their profession? I'm not talking about everything they're doing, the mission fields they've visited, the bus routes they've run—I'm talking about who they are. Are they true converts of Christ? If your home is a haven, if you and your husband love each other so much and prove it by your words and actions—so much so that it overflows onto your children—take heart. The average preacher's home knows nothing of these things. You are obeying the Scriptures and will be blessed beyond any heartache you have felt at the barbs of the brethren.

Last of all, consider the church the man pastors. Ever walk into a church and expect a great sense of unity and the spirit of the Lord only to sense this fragmented, cool, "what are we all here for again?" Ever been literally shocked at the worldliness of the young people, or the lack of separation altogether? You may think me critical, but I beg to differ. I'm not asking for perfection. I'm looking for Christianity 101 when I go to another Bible-believing Baptist church. Is that excessive? Are my expectations too high? But, I digress. Mark it down—the church (more times than not) takes on the characteristics of the pastor's family. Think that sounds highfalutin'? I've been to so many meetings and so many churches and it never fails: dysfunctional pastor and family—dysfunctional church. Preacher's wife

out of place at home—women running the Lord's house. A pastor who cannot discern the needs of his own family cannot discern the needs of the church—to paraphrase what the apostle Paul wrote under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. So consider these things with me. Is your church a haven? Are the good brothers and sisters of your church growing spiritually? Are their children growing up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Is there harmony, unity, and a great spiritual cohesiveness? Then dearest, why would you give these "paper bullets of the brain" another thought?

Life will go on—all of these trying times do always pass. And though the love of many shall wax cold, there is One true Love Who never changes, alters, or betrays. What a wonder that He would choose us to represent Him. Our faith, as Charles Spurgeon has said, "Rests not upon what I am or shall be, or feel or know, but in everything Christ is, in what He has done, and in what He is now doing for me. On the lion of justice the fair maid of hope rides like a queen."

1 Cor. 15:58



by Jennifer Fryman

Dear Girls,

I think it's time I told you a little about myself. Because I was raised in a good, strong Christian home, I could write you letter after letter to tell you what a wonderful life I've had. I want to share a whole bunch of adventures and life lessons, but most of all, I want you to know how wonderfully blessed your life can be when it is lived in obedience to our great Saviour.

So let's begin. Valentine's Day makes me think of friendship. I've had a lot of wonderful friends in my life, but true friendship really begins at home.

When I was seven-years-old, my family moved way across country, from the only home I ever knew, to Long

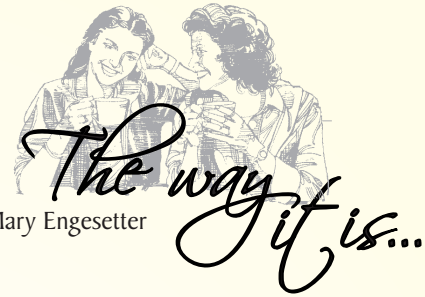
Island, New York. I left all my little friends far behind me and thought I'd never get over missing them. But a wonderful thing happened. My brothers and sister and I became the best of friends. We spent our summer days playing "Little House on the Prairie" (I was always "Ma") and building forts. When my dad would get home just before suppertime, we'd play a big game of kickball. Many of our evenings were spent all cuddled together in our living room, or stretched across our parents' bed, talking about everything and anything. We had serious talks, heart talks, talks which taught us so many things—all aimed at helping us to become better children, and one day, better adults. And along with these wonderful talks came "Pow-wows." Pow-wows were times when our parents taught us how to be obedient to our parents and kind to each other. Often as brothers and sisters, we had to work out our problems. You know, your family knows you better than anyone and so it's important to listen and take to heart the things they say about you. Sometimes, older sisters can be bossy—my parents didn't want me to be that way, especially because I had two little brothers right under me. So they worked hard with me and all my siblings and taught us to love and appreciate each other. We're all grown up now and we are all great friends.

Here are a few ways you can be a better sister to your siblings:

1. **Don't be bossy.** Your brothers and sisters have one set of parents. Let your parents do the parenting and you be a good girl!
2. **Don't be a tattler.** You don't have to tell on every single thing you see. Some girls are "informers." This really wears on your parents and annoys your siblings. It's okay to let your parents know when something is wrong, but don't make it your life's work to tell tales.
3. **Learn to enjoy** your family, especially your siblings. Sit down with them, talk things out. Have heart-to-heart talks and get it all settled.
5. **Learn to love and appreciate** your siblings. Do things for them. Learn to overlook their faults. Be kind and make these days at home some of the most memorable moments of your life.

Until next month, remember:

"...the king's daughter is all glorious within..."



I was born in 1962 (I know what my readers are doing right now—save your energy. I'll be forty-five in April.) And somehow, it never really bothers me that time is marching on and I am getting older. Try as they may, some of my very best friends have tried to "get my goat" by reminding me of my upcoming birthday and by "accidentally" mistaking me for a grandmother. I've even been informed that soon I'll be half-way to ninety. Somehow, I take it all in stride. I guess it's because there's comfort in knowing that we're all in this thing together, and if I'm getting older, why then so is everyone else! (I guess that's not very comforting, is it?) Either way, getting older is not something with which I concern myself on a regular basis, but I will admit there have been times when... yes, it bothered me. Yes. Yes, indeed—it bothered me. It bothered me a lot.

It happened on a Thursday. I did what I always do and went the drive-through way to make a bank deposit for our church. The only open lane was the one furthest from the tellers. I drove right up, put my car in the park position, and pulled the deposit out from its blue zippered bag. Carefully I placed it into the clear bank tube and, with the press of a button, launched it into the hands of the bespectacled woman behind the window. Looking quite efficient, she glanced my way, smiled a brief smile of recognition (I thought so, anyway), and went about her business putting the money into our account. I waited patiently for her, but for too long. In fact, I waited patiently for so long that I was soon out of patience. I rolled down my window to buzz the buzzer when her voice came crisp and clear over the tiny speaker located on the deposit launcher. (That's what it's called, right?)

"Is John Graf a signer on this account?"

"Yes, yes he is," I told her, bugged that she should ask such a question. I mean, after all, John Graf is our pastor! He's been a signer on the account for nearly twenty years. He makes the deposit every Monday and every

Thursday. What did she mean, "Is John Graf a signer on the account?" What could possibly be the problem?

Then came the question: "Are you his mother?"

I froze. I was suspended in time, unable to think, my mind unable to register the full meaning of her words. My thoughts tumbled through a vortex of reasons why I could possibly be mistaken for Pastor Graf's mother! "I'm still forty-four, not yet half-way to ninety. My birthday's weeks and weeks away—why, I'm not even a grandmother yet! Pastor Graf's mother?? How could she possibly imagine such a thing??" Provoked, my mind snapped to attention and I responded like a true-blue New Yorker (whether or not I should be proud of the fact remains unknown to me): "His mother?? Tell me you're kidding me. You are kidding me, right???"

"Oh, I'm sorry," she said, "This is Pastor Graf's signature, not John Graf, Jr.'s. I'm sorry. Pastor Graf is a signer. I thought this was his son's signature; his son is not a signer. I'm sorry."

"That's okay," I mumbled. I didn't mind being mistaken for John Graf Jr.'s mother. After all, I really am just about old enough to be so. And time marches on, and I am getting older. But it doesn't really bother me, because there comfort in knowing that if I'm getting older, why then so is everyone else. That just the way it is.



This Valentine's Day, win the hearts of everyone with this lovely chicken/pasta dinner. Then, treat your valentine to special cherry dessert or a slice of chocolate cake roll—all fresh from your kitchen!

Creamy Lemon Chicken and Broccoli Fettuccine

- 1 pkg. (16oz.) fettuccine, uncooked
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into ½ inch pieces, seasoned with salt and ground black pepper
- 4 cups fresh or frozen tiny broccoli florets
- 1¼ cups milk or chicken broth
- ½ teaspoon dried basil leaves
- ½ teaspoon salt

- 1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, cubed and softened
- 1½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided

Cook pasta according to package directions; drain. Meanwhile, in large skillet over medium heat, melt butter; add chicken. Cook 3 minutes or until no longer pink, stirring occasionally. Add broccoli, milk, basil, and salt; heat to boiling. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 3 minutes or until broccoli is tender and chicken is thoroughly cooked. Stir cream cheese into broccoli mixture until completely melted and smooth. Remove from heat; stir in lemon and ½ cup Parmesan cheese. Toss hot pasta and sauce; sprinkle with remaining Parmesan cheese. Serve immediately with fresh baked Italian bread or garlic bread. Note: Recipe can be halved.

Chocolate Cake Roll

Cake:

- ♦ 1/3 cup cake flour
- ♦ 1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ♦ 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ♦ ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ♦ ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ♦ 1/3 teaspoon salt
- ♦ 4 large eggs, separated
- ♦ 1 cup granulated sugar, divided
- ♦ Confectioners' sugar

Filling:

- ♦ 1 container (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed

To make the cake:

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Line a 15x10-inch jelly roll pan with waxed paper. Grease and flour lined pan; tap out excess.
2. In a medium bowl, combine flour, cocoa powder, cornstarch, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Mix well. In a separate bowl, using an electric mixer set on medium speed, beat egg yolks and ¼ cup sugar until fluffy.
3. In a small bowl and using clean beater, beat egg whites on high until foamy. Gradually add ½ cup sugar, beating until stiff (but not dry) peaks form.
4. Fold 1/3 beaten egg white into egg yolk mixture. Alternately fold in remaining whites and flour mixture. Pour batter in pan; smooth top. Bake until a

toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, about 15 minutes.

Rolling and filling the cake:

1. Dust a clean cloth with remaining sugar. Turn cake out onto prepared cloth; remove waxed paper. Trim the cake's edges.
2. Starting with a long side, tightly roll up cake with cloth. Transfer cake, seam-side down, to a wire rack to cool.
3. Unroll cake; remove cloth. Spread whipped topping over cake to within ½ inch of edges. Re-roll cake; place seam-side down on a plate. Dust with confectioners' sugar before serving.

Kitchen tips:

For easier slicing, place cake in freezer 20 minutes before you're ready to serve. Use a large serrated knife and a gentle sawing motion to slice the cake cleanly.



Have fun putting together homemade Valentine cards for your family and friends.

Valentine's Day Greeting Cards "Be Mine Butterfly"

Use shades of red and pink for the card and butterfly or softer tones of lavender, yellow, green, and cream.

- ♥ Pencil
- ♥ Colorful scrap paper (wrapping paper, wallpaper, scrapbook paper)
- ♥ Scissors
- ♥ Heavy card stock
- ♥ Envelope
- ♥ Glue stick
- ♥ Craft Glue
- ♥ 3 half-inch pom-poms
- ♥ Ruler
- ♥ 1 pipe cleaner
- ♥ Marker or crayon

1. Draw and cut two hearts in your desired size out of the scrap paper. (You may want to trace around a small heart-shaped cookie cutter.)
2. Cut down the card stock so it will fit inside the envelopes.
3. Arrange the hearts on the card to form butterfly wings and affix with the glue stick.
4. Using the craft glue, help your child attach the pom-poms. Cut the pipe cleaner into two 1-inch pieces, and glue them to form antennae. Write a Valentine's Day message.

"Thumbs Up"

- ♥ Materials
- ♥ Scissors
- ♥ Card stock or postcard
- ♥ Envelope
- ♥ Washable inepad
- ♥ Marker or crayon

1. If using card stock, cut to fit inside an envelope. Lay on a flat surface.
2. Gently press your child's thumb onto the inepad and then onto the card twice in a "V" to form a heart shape. You should be able to make two thumbprints per inking.
3. Write a Valentine's Day message, add child's name under the thumbprint heart.

Frame it:

Slip the Valentine card into a photo frame as a gift for someone special. A double frame works nicely. Place your child's photo on one side, the card on the other.

"S'More Pie"

- ♥ 1 Ready Crust® 2 extra servings graham cracker pie crust (9 oz.)
- ♥ 1 (12 oz.) chocolate candy bar, broken into pieces
- ♥ 30 regular marshmallows
- ♥ ¾ cup milk
- ♥ 1 tub (8 oz.) frozen non-dairy whipped topping, thawed
- ♥ 6 oz. hot fudge, warmed
- ♥ Chocolate syrup

1. Place chocolate bar, marshmallows, and milk in medium saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until marshmallows and chocolate are melted. Cool.
2. Fold 1½ cups whipped topping into chocolate mixture. Spread thin layer of warm hot fudge over bottom of piecrust. Gently spoon marshmallow mixture into crust.
3. Top with remaining whipped topping and garnish with chocolate syrup. Refrigerate 3 hours or until set. Refrigerate leftovers.

Variation:

Use a chocolate almond or chocolate peanut candy bar in place of plain chocolate.



On your plate: If you use a 12-inch plate, you'll serve yourself more food (and eat more) than you would if you used a 9-inch plate. Think small when choosing plates, bowls, cups, and glasses. Besides, small dishes take up less room in your dishwasher!

Bottom line: A plate, table, or kitchen with too much food is like Mount Everest to an explorer: You'll eat it "because it's there."



Have you ever looked back on a day or situation and said, "I've been deceived," and not only by others, but by your own heart? As we strive to walk the narrow road a character trait much needed discernment. We need to be able to distinguish with understanding and judgment what should be done in any situation. We need to have discernment in practical affairs and to have perception of the inner nature of things. But how do we get discernment? As a child of God, we must go to the One Who is all wise. The Lord speaks to us through his Word giving us wisdom, warning, and direction. He directs us to whom we need to listen, obey, and from whom to learn. The more we follow Him, the more we can have judgment and by reason of use have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Jesus Christ, as our Example, had discernment. During His temptation, He used discernment and followed God's written Word. In so doing, "the devil leaveth him." Jesus Christ also judged the questioning of the Pharisees and Sadducees, answered them wisely, and put them to silence. He also encouraged discernment in others. He warned the apostles to beware (to have discernment) of the leaven of the Pharisees. Others, using discernment, made right choices. The Shunammite woman in the Old Testament realized that Elisha was a man of God and prepared for him a room to meet his needs. James, Cephas, and John discerned the grace that was in Paul and gave him the "right hand of fellowship." Solomon pleased God when he prayed for discernment.

Here are some suggestions about how to make your kitchen, table, and plates trigger healthy eating choices:

In the kitchen: The foods on the counter, ready to grab, are going to make it into your mouth most often. So hide the candy in the cupboard (even better—don't buy it!) and set out a bowl of fresh fruit. In your fridge, bring the produce out of hiding! Keep fresh-cut celery and carrots sticks in the front on the top shelf of your 'fridge. In the pantry, keep only one kind of treat on hand and limit yourself to a small supply—not the super family-size packs from Costco or Sam's.

At the table: Although seven-course meals are a mark of fine dining, it doesn't pay to offer lots of variety on your table. Present just a few options at dinnertime—a main course and one or two vegetable side dishes. And nix large serving bowls—serve only enough to provide each person with a reasonable helping.

If we don't discern what needs to be done when living our lives for the Lord, we will not only hinder ourselves, but also hinder others. For example, King Darius signed a decree not discerning that it was written for a wicked purpose. In so doing, he allowed his friend, Daniel, to face the hungry lions. Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, did not discern the angel of God and lost his voice. And Joshua, who neglected to ask counsel of the Lord made peace with the Gibeonites.

Let us strive to follow the steps of Jesus and have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Let's have the mind of Christ knowing that the true source of our strength, success, and discernment comes from the Lord.



F February, the month of love. Hearts are on display everywhere. As I was observing this, my thoughts turned to what do we as mothers want to instill in the hearts of our children? God's Word tells us our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked. So how do we keep our children tenderhearted so the Lord can speak to them concerning salvation?

First of all, we must determine what we desire our children to become. We want them to be kind and considerate of others. We want them to be generous with their possessions, time, and talents that the Lord has given them. We want them to be thankful for everything and to be honest and trustworthy. As I was pondering these words, I saw two children in the toy aisle of the store I was in. I would like to share the scenes with you.

The first little one was causing such a commotion. She was screaming, "I want this, I have to have it!" The mother was explaining to her that she had one almost like this doll at home, but it was to no avail. The little girl's cries grew louder, "I know, but it's old and I want a new one with a this outfit on!" I could hear the mother saying, "No" on several occasions, but this little girl was persistent and

kept whining, "I want it, I want it!" She was determined to get her own way and guess what? It worked! After about five minutes of listening to this, I saw the mother placing the item in her cart and down the aisle they went, heading for the nearest check-out counter. Did this child know this would happen? Of course she did; that's why this scene took place. She knew she could manipulate her mother into buying whatever she desired. I'm sure this was a very familiar episode in her life. What a tragedy.

How different was my second little girl. As I proceeded down the aisle, I came upon this little one engaged in a wonderful conversation with her mother. She was saying how beautiful the doll was. She talked about the dress and how it looked like someone they knew. She hadn't picked it up nor did she ever ask for it. The words "I want it" were never verbally spoken. As the two of them proceeded down the aisle, I could see how content she was to just admire things. It was a blessing to see such a lovely young child. She wasn't pleading for it, and by her words and actions, I knew she would have treasured it.

Which mother had worked on teaching her daughter to be selfless and thankful? I'm sure we would all agree that it would be the second mother. This mother had taught her daughter to be content with what she had and to admire things without desiring everything she saw. The first little girl vocalized her desires very disrespectfully by being loud and whining. She held the doll without permission and when she finally got her own way, she never even responded with a thank you or even a hug for her mom. What a sad sight.

May we seek the Lord's help in order to properly discern the needs of our children so we can keep them tenderhearted. Our jobs are definitely full time, but the rewards are great. Never give up, even when it seems your child repeats certain actions over and over again. The Lord knows your trials and He never leaves us. Victory is ours.

Have a wonderful Valentine's Day with your husbands and your family. Remember to tell them that you love them and how much they mean to you.

