

# the garden

-a monthly newsletter for moms who desire to blossom in their roles of being a mom, wife, and woman-

“For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.” Isaiah 61:11



## Sowing the ‘Seed of the Word’ in our Daily Lives...

Practical, Biblical Encouragement for Moms

I love sitting on the cusp of a new year with all the possibilities, goals, and hopes. The idea of a fresh start is exciting! To begin the new year, I always love to get organized and “clean house”. I clean out files with the previous year’s bills and statements, I break in my new calendar with important dates, I clean up clutter, and incorporate gifts into the household. It’s a great time to “re-group” and start with a fresh clean slate. The “deep” cleaning I do reminds me of the last time I did some in my bathroom... my least favorite place to clean! I was vacuuming the rugs when the corner pulled up. What it revealed was shocking! I discovered that the vinyl under the rug was much whiter than the vinyl exposed to daily wear. It was striking. Ok, it was embarrassing! As I got out the cleaner to scrub

the floor, I knew there was something deeper to this than just a menial chore. As I scrubbed to reveal the white flooring beneath the dingy brown, God showed me how this can relate to our life. We can become stained with sin

*“I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow.”*

Isaiah 1:18

or the bad choices we make, and become desensitized; unaware of it’s presence... right before us. We can become so comfortable in doing something that is wrong, that we easily overlook it. It made me examine myself and ask God to bring to light anything in my life that does not please Him. It’s important to routinely peel back the “rug” of our conscious, step back and ask Him to show us areas we need to work on. He’ll

help us take the blinders off and see clearly, AND He’ll help us do the “house cleaning”. Our bleach can’t begin to do what God’s forgiveness and mercy can. I love what Isaiah 1:18 says (see left). He wipes away those sins in us that are like scarlet and leaves us white as snow. This time of year, we know how it looks as the “flaws” outside are “cleansed” by the newly fallen snow. How the snow clings to every branch, rooftop, and edge. Everything –big and small, leaving a breathtakingly clean and almost magical world that we savor before it’s touched by mankind and “flawed” again.

Fortunately God is always there to clean up our messes and make us clean again. He’s the God of second chances, and His mercies are new *each* morning!

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e-newsletter of:



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Moms in Bloom strives to help equip moms to grow in the Lord & blossom where we’re planted. We believe that mothering is one of the most important jobs there is, and through support of each other, God’s Word, and a relationship with Him, we can better fulfill that role... and enjoy the journey together!

We hope this e-newsletter is a blessing to you, & we desire to reach more moms with encouragement & hope. Please forward these on to moms you know, & they can receive them directly each month by emailing Wendy (above). Pass it on!



## This Month’s “Pick” ...Health Tip of the Month

To be all we need to be as moms, we need to take time for us/our bodies

What’s one of the very best ways to gain more natural energy, achieve greater self confidence, look better, and be healthier? Ok, the graphic probably gave it away -**exercise!** And what better time to continue or start the exercise program than now? The new year brings “resolutions” to do things differently and better. But instead of making a resolution that will likely fizzle out, why not commit yourself to forming a habit of regular exercise into your life. It’s not always easy to make exercise a regular part of my daily life, but when I get in the habit of it and simply DO IT without thinking myself out of it, I feel better and good about my body and health. I also have more energy and strength to take on the demands of the day. Decide what you enjoy doing: walking, aerobics, swimming, going to the gym; whatever. Then schedule the days you’ll do that activity –aim for at least three days a week. Write it on your calendar as a firm commitment. The key then is to just do it! With small children, you’ll need to be creative finding the time, but do this for you. Put on your shoes and appropriate clothes, and get movin’! Have fun with it and allow the stress of the day to be worked out in your work out. Enjoy how great it feels to lower your risk for deadly diseases and increase the quality of your life. Step up! -WL, R.D.

As a mom, I bet there are things you are very aware of that you'd like to do better. Being a mom is so challenging, I know! We often feel guilty for our actions... things we do and things we don't. With so many expectations (many unrealistic!) placed upon us by others and ourselves, we're practically set up to feel like a failure. Fortunately that's *not* how God sees us. He's so much more merciful on us than we are! When we mess up (it's inevitable!), He just wants us to humbly seek forgiveness, which He freely gives to believers who are truly sorry. He even tells us that He then **forgets** our sins -I wish we could! So stop beating yourself up! I know many moms who do. Please know that God doesn't condemn you, He convicts you. There's a big difference. Condemning and trying to deceive you that you're a failure is Satan's job. He wants to destroy you and your family. It's harsh but true. God, on

the other hand is our friend and our soft place to fall when we mess up. He'll convict us to work on areas of our life and us do it. It's always in our best interest. flowers. They brightened those dreary and gray winter days. Being white as snow, they remind me of the gift of forgiveness and fresh starts that I am so grateful to have. We all need that. God knows we're not perfect. Why just need to over time. desire to He'll prove you! If you truly trust Him, Himself to God is so good to show us hope and new life in each season. There's a winter flower called "Paperwhites", and my sister blessed me with a container with three bulbs in it, surprisingly only in small rocks, no soil. They quickly grew and shot up their green leaves. It was a daily adventure to check on their growth. Before long, we were excited

to see buds appear. Quickly, a bud opened to give way to the most delicate and pure cluster of white little flowers! How exciting to see new growth inside our home as death has taken our outside flowers. They brightened those dreary and gray winter days.

Being white as snow, they remind me of the gift of forgiveness and fresh starts that I am so grateful to have. We all need that. God knows we're not perfect. Why try to hide it? He just wants us to climb up into His loving arms to find rest from condemnation and guilt -to find real forgiveness and the best new start we could ask for. A start that can be ours each and every day of the year. So start your new year out right... "clean house" in more ways than one, and be grateful for the forgiveness and hope we have in Jesus!

[Have a blessed 2008!](#) -WL



## "Bonus" Health Section:

A New You for 2008: "Bone Health"

December brought with it a full month of miserable illness for me. I was so sick! The flu began on the 1st and then bronchitis and a terrible cough that cracked my rib. Ouch! I wondered if anything good could come from this. Now I believe it was a firm "wake up call" from God. You see, I'd been blatantly disregarding my bone health/calcium intake, despite knowing how important it is. Maybe you are too. Since my rib cracked, I'm now taking it seriously. I want to try to spare you the pain, suffering, long recovery time, and future consequences of a broken bone. Let's do this together! Women age 19-50 need 1000 mg/day (3 servings); over age 51: 1200 mg/d (4 servings). 1 serving = 8 oz. milk or yogurt (300 mg cal.), 1-1.5 oz. cheese (300 mg), 1/2 c. tofu (250 mg). Other sources: broccoli, almonds, kale, calcium fortified foods, etc. We need to consciously work on this daily to get enough. Exercise also strengthens bones.

For years, I drank a big mug of coffee (half decaf) in the morning and afternoon, replacing calcium fortified OJ or soy milk since I knew that the caffeine from the coffee would decrease my absorption of calcium if consumed together. End result: insufficient calcium and compromised bones. Now I'm drinking those calcium rich beverages as we should. I'll add yogurt too when I'm over my cough/congestion. (Dairy products may increase mucus production; I avoid them when sick.) I'm also now on a calcium supplement. Dr. Andrew Weil, M.D. of Tucson, AZ recommends taking 500-700 mg of calcium citrate/day, and at least 1,000 I.U. of vitamin D3 with a fat-containing meal for best absorption. For more information, go to: [www.drweil.com](http://www.drweil.com), a WONDERFUL free online resource for healthy living based on an integrative medicine philosophy.



## Kitchen Connection:

Sharing recipes we're glad to have!

**Fruit Smoothies** -from the "blender" of Wendy Lempner  
A delicious energy boost for workouts or anytime; great for body & bones  
8 oz. skim or soy milk                      1/2 banana (soft)                      frozen fruit  
100% apple juice, orange (calcium fort.), or your favorite 100% juice.

Simply add your favorite frozen fruits to the other 3 ingredients and blend to desired consistency. I like mine thick like a shake. It's so good, it's like a dessert!! For an antioxidant boost, add berries: frozen blueberries, strawberries, or raspberries. For a refreshing tropical smoothie, use OJ and add frozen pineapple, mango, papaya. Look in the freezer section for bags of chopped frozen fruit. There are many choices. ENJOY!!

While sick, I lost my taste for coffee and didn't drink ANY. After a week, I noticed something significant for me -clear skin. I always have at least a few break outs. I've tried numerous remedies since my teens, with disappointing results. As a coffee lover, I had read but overlooked that caffeine can trigger breakouts. When I "Googled" the topic, I found that caffeine can aggravate acne and rosacea by upsetting hormones. Bingo! (It can also exacerbate stress/anxiety and depression.) I NEVER thought I could live without coffee; I thought I NEEDED it to start and keep going each day. I can hardly believe my steady energy now *without it!* Even decaf usually has considerable caffeine so I've rediscovered decaffeinated herbal teas. They are warm on cold days and taste great; with so many wonderful flavors. I just look at the beautiful tea pot basket I received for Christmas and smile at God's timing! To me, this experience shows how God always has our best interest in mind. I was so miserable, but He knew He had to get my attention in order to make me change to a healthier path. If you feel convicted, seek God's help to get you on a healthier path for 2008. If I can, you can! Believe in miracles! -WL, R.D.



## Nourishment for the 'Soil' ...Sharing the Fruit of God's Work in our Lives

*"the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." Luke 8:15*

For three years now one of my neighbors has chosen to stop speaking to me. Her reason does not make sense to me or anyone else that she explains it to. My attempts at reconciliation have been rejected. She has done many things to try to hurt me over these three years - even yelling at my 80-year old grandmother and two of my children. I never realized how bitter I became about what she was doing. Bitterness is subtle because it is often not dealt with. We perceive the problem as someone else's sin. You see I only focused on my neighbor's sin. I thought that I had forgiven her each time she hurt me but I know that when I can still remember all her transgressions against me and all of the details of our conflicts, that I have not truly forgiven her. My head told me that I had forgiven her but my heart held onto the pain. Pain held dear turns into bitterness. So now I went from someone who had been wronged to sinning myself. The Bible tells me to, ***"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one***

***"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13***

***another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.***" Ephesians 4:31-32. So although I had been praying for my neighbor, I stepped up my prayers. Every time I saw her house or had a thought about her, I prayed blessings on her and her family. I continually prayed that she would come to know God. Then one day the Holy Spirit gave me a vision of hugging her tightly and telling her that all she does is not hurting me but only hurting her. He reminded me that my life is perfect because of Christ Jesus no matter what anyone does to me. That despite what my neighbor does to me I will still love her, pray for her and hope that she will seek Jesus for her salvation. I pray that I will have the opportunity to share this with her. In the meantime, what I can do is pray and make sure that bitterness has no room in my heart.

One book that helped me greatly is *How To Be Free From Bitterness*, by Jim Wilson. I encourage you to read it. God bless you!

-Kim Green (an "Arizona" Bible study friend of Wendy's)

## Babes in Bloom ...Moms Aren't the Only Ones Blooming!

Moms share fun things to do, parenting tips, funny things they said, teachable moments, etc.



Do you ever wish you prayed more for your child/children? You're not alone. There truly is power in prayer, and who doesn't want God's awesome power released in their lives? God loves it when we talk to Him, just as we love when our children come to us to share what's on their heart, whether it be triumphs or sorrows. In our family, we daily pray together. -For us and others. Then we thank God for answered prayers by putting a pebble in a glass jar. This tangibly shows God's work in our lives. In the first section of this issue, I wrote on sin in our life. Did you know that sin ties into our

prayer life? God tells us to: ***"...confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous [person] is powerful and effective."*** James 5:16 And ***"The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and His ears are open to their prayers."*** 1 Peter 3:12 Before you ask God for His help, first humbly seek forgiveness for your sins. This opens the communication pathway. Want ideas of important things to pray daily for your kids? You can download a wonderful free calendar, "Praying Daily For Your Children", by 2MOMS ministry at: [www.2moms.org/other/prayercalendar.asp](http://www.2moms.org/other/prayercalendar.asp) . -WL



## Calling on God ...the Powerful Prayer of a Woman, Wife, Mother

Don't miss the opportunity to connect with God daily. Tap into His power in your lives!

### For yourself:

Lord, It's a brand new year, and I look forward to our adventure together. I'm excited about the plans You have for these 365 days. Help me look to You for what You would have me focus on this year. Help me make You, my family, and people You've placed in my life my top priorities, and please direct me to examine myself & areas in my life I need to work on. I want to serve You! Amen.

### For your husband (if applicable):

Lord, I also want to pray for Your direction in my husband's life for 2008. Help him understand what it means to have a fresh start because of You. -Not only at the beginning of the year, but daily because of Your amazing gift of forgiveness that You extend to believers. Please lead him into a closer relationship with You and to truly desire to live for You in all areas of his life. Show him how he can serve you even at his workplace; through integrity and sharing you with others. Amen.

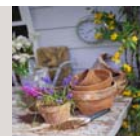
### For your child/children:

Lord, I pray Your blessings over my child/children throughout this upcoming year and always. Please watch over them as You promise to, and guide them in Your ways. Help them grow to love You and know You in a real and tangible way. Help me make praying for them a daily part of my life, as I believe in the amazing power of prayer/talking with You. Lord, I desire Your best for their lives. I desire Your Will to be done in and through them. Amen.



## How Does Your Garden Grow?... Have a Garden? Share it & Your Story Here!

What does your garden or flowers mean to you and your family?



Happy New Year! It's January -the perfect time to plan your garden! Looking at the hard, barren ground and gray skies, you'll probably think I'm a few seeds short of a packet. While that may be true, the start of a new year and the hope and potential lying dormant in the frozen ground really do make it a wonderful time for reflecting on both your garden and life. Many of us make resolutions, seeking to change habits or attitudes, often in light of last year's disappointments. For the same reasons, January is a wonderful time to think about last year's garden with an eye toward this spring's. It's a good time to ask questions. What did bless? Did you invest your time and energy well? Will you plant? What thrived? What failed? Whom did you try something new?

January also brings much anticipated seed catalogues. less potential! In their pages I can dream about the hollyhocks, and juicy strawberries. They also bring this year? The ability to dream, hope, and see potential. They are aspects of His character that He gave us by

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11*

often difficult to remember, especially when life is hard. Think about the disciples. After Jesus was crucified, they believed all was lost. Jesus was dead. His words about a new kingdom were misunderstood or forgotten amidst their grief. They were hunted by the government and ridiculed among the people for what appeared to be a lie. When things seemed to be hopeless, Jesus returned. If they had had eyes to see, the disciples would have seen those days between Jesus' death and resurrection as brimming with hope and potential. In that January of the soul they could have recognized the dormant seeds that Jesus had planted inside of them, and allowed those seeds to sprout. But instead, the gray skies of grief had enveloped them and their hope seemed as barren as our gardens do now. Yet hope was restored with the rolled-away stone! So like the bulbs or perennials lying dormant in your flower beds, what is lying unseen below *your* surface? Do the things that have taken root in your heart need fertilizer or pruning? What seeds has God planted in you that are waiting to burst forth this year? Have you placed your hope in the One from whom all things come? What about your potential? Do you trust in God's promised plan for you? The hope and potential assured by God is bliant in the joy of the empty tomb. It is not absent in the desolation of January, however, if you just ask for eyes to see. -Sue Fisher, Cincinnati, OH



## Family Traditions... Fun, Seasonal Ways to Teach our Children about God

Share your family's traditions that create memories and pass down important values here.

The new year brings with it a new round of birthday celebrations. It's a wonderful opportunity to celebrate how blessed we are to have each other and what makes us each unique and special. Each birthday is a milestone with potential for creating childhood memories. One thing I remember fondly are the fun home parties with games, balloons, and especially the homemade themed cakes that my mom made for me. As a new mom, the thought of making a beautiful and memorable cake was overwhelming, yet something I really wanted to do for them. Maybe you can relate. I stressed that the bakery ones were perfectly decorated, and I was no pro. It took me much agony and a few years to get over this and discover cover a better way. Here's what I learned: 1. It doesn't have to be perfect to make them smile from ear to ear. 2. Use small toys of theirs on the cake for a "perfect" character. (Just put a small piece of plastic wrap under it.) Then simply write "Happy \_\_th Birthday, (name)" on it with a tube/decorating tip from the grocery. This can make a really beautiful cake -stress free. For

more creativity, add things like brown sugar, for sand and shells like I did for my daughter's "Little Mermaid" cake last year. With these, I now enjoy making cakes that warm their hearts and make them smile!



Also, you don't have to spend a lot to create a fun party. I never have, and the kids have always had a great time. For one, they just love being all together with their closest friends! I always decorate with streamers, balloons, and their toys that fit the theme of the party. As the kids arrive, there are balloons all over the floor to play with. The fun begins even before I can give them my full attention! Plan a few age-appropriate games, maybe a simple craft and music, serve cake and ice cream (pizza from the freezer is an option), open gifts, and then send them happily on their way home with a little "thank you" gift. As they get older, consider one "nicer" gift (a \$1-2 book?) instead of a favor bag with trinkets and candy. It will last longer and be of more value to them. I hope these bits of "wisdom" will bless you and your child/children throughout the upcoming year. Celebrate! -WL

## The Harvest... Share the Fruit of What You've Sown : "Joy from Self Sacrifice"

What "praises" do you have? What fruit do you see in the lives of your children? Encourage others!



My ten year old daughter is an only child, not by choice. We are blessed to have our miracle child. She has always wanted to have brothers, sisters, or dogs. The dogs were easy -my husband brought home two! My husband and I also have a heart for children. So as a family, we prayerfully decided to become a foster family. Gavino, 7, and Pablino, 3 came to live with us for a year, which was such a blessing *and* a growing experience for all of us. My daughter

went from being an only child to being the oldest of three. She had to adjust her life, her home and even her social schedule". Both boys had special needs, so it seemed that we were constantly going to appointments for them that left very little time for many things Carissa was used to doing. She learned that life does not revolve around her and she had a "hands-on" experience in helping others and putting their needs before her own. Was it always easy? Definitely not! Some days

were absolutely painful for all of us! But the funny thing is: in the end, she realized that every sacrifice she made was so worth it. In fact, she told me that she deeply regretted every time that she had been jealous or selfish. Because "I am so blessed and so many others out there don't have a family like mine", she said. And now every night she still prays for the boys and now she prays for more kids to come live with us again. -Michelle Diaz