

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

Well, the hustle & bustle of this joyous Christmas season is well underway, and most likely we're all preparing to give gifts to the loved ones in our lives. I know I've been busy with my list! We try to find just the right gifts to bless those we care about. It can be fun... and challenging for some of those people on our list! But I know I desire to keep the greatest gift ever given at the center of Christmas... Jesus' birth! As Christians, we have a great responsibility to "carry and pass the torch" of the real reason we do all we do at Christmas. Sadly, our society continues to pull away from the foundation of what we are celebrating... you see more and more "Happy Holidays", and schools call it "winter break", and we now sometimes stop and think before we wish a stranger "Merry Christmas" anymore, for fear of offending someone who isn't a Christian. Sometimes it all makes me feel like a foreigner in a foreign country! Can you relate? But fortunately, as moms, we can pass on that

torch of the real meaning of Christmas to our children. We can help insure that we leave a legacy of faith in their lives.

As you search for those "perfect" gifts, let's take time to ponder the greatest gift ever given... He arrived to us in humble surroundings and was wrapped in

"This is how God showed His love...He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. ...He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." 1 John 4:9-10

swaddling cloth... baby Jesus, God's own Son; the Savior of the world! Let's not miss this opportunity to teach our children how God came down to earth in the form of a man to save us from our sins through forgiveness, and made a way for us to be re-deemed in His sight, and therefore worthy, by grace, to enjoy eternal life in the presence of our perfect, holy, & truly awesome God! Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves,

and something we can never ever "earn". We simply aren't perfect, which is what our sinless and holy God requires. Only a perfect sacrifice could pay the price of our sins... past, present, and future... COMPLETELY! Done. Because of His totally selfless act, we can live free of the eternal punishment our sins deserve. Jesus took *our* place on that cross. All who believe this are saved and live in the freedom of this truth! God's grace is amazing, and we must always humble ourselves and remember this. Sure Santa is fun and we all have childhood memories of him, but if that's all Christmas is about to us/our families, we've left the best gift unwrapped and under the tree! Be sure to give that gift to all you love... keep Jesus in your heart and at the center of your Christmas.

But the gift-giving doesn't have to stop with this gift. Our gift-giving can continue throughout the year. When we receive the Lord as our Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to live in us... *God lives in us!* When

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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 and 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

The holiday season has begun! This time of year is so joyous and festive, and full of so many memories and celebrations that center around delicious, seasonal food. At this time, there is so much extra food around... so many extra calories that can be actually *seen* after the holidays... on us! Fortunately, we don't need to deny ourselves of those special foods... that can actually lead to splurging/overeating! Here are a few ideas to help you enjoy without guilt! 1. **Don't go to parties on an empty stomach!** Fill up a bit on fruits, veggies, & a low fat protein with water before so you won't be ravenously hungry and overeat a lot of high calorie foods. 2. **Get the "lay of the buffet":** before diving into the food, check out all your choices and prioritize what you'll really enjoy the most. 3. **Portion control:** Thoroughly savor smaller amounts of food; you don't have to eat a lot of something to enjoy it. 4. **Remember, we *drink* calories too:** punches and alcoholic beverages contain lots of calories that can go down & add up quickly. 5. **Limit the heavy/creamy foods, but don't deprive yourself:** the key to a lifestyle of healthy eating is to find a way to enjoy it! 6. **Keep movin'!** it can be challenging to find time to exercise, but *making* time for it will only help you enjoy foods while keeping caloric intake/output balanced. -WL, R.D.

Sowing the 'Seed of the Word' in our Daily Lives ... cont'd from page 1

He does, He brings more than just forgiveness & salvation... as if that weren't enough! He brings with Him a sort of fruit basket. Yes, they are popular at Christmas, but this one is one we can "eat" from all year long. It's very special fruit called "the fruit of the Spirit." I love the sweetness of fruit, and as a dietitian, I know it's not only pleasant, but good for us. The fruit of the Spirit is both of these, but it's only attainable with God living *through* us and producing them in our lives. When we trust God and completely surrender our will to His, we see these qualities of Jesus Himself come pouring out through us. Our sinful "flesh" can never produce these on it's own, but as long as a Christian abides in Christ, just as a branch is connected to the vine, we will produce fruit because we are simply the channel through which the vine produces fruit (John 15:4-5). The Bible lists the fruits of the Spirit (see verse in red). Love is first because all that follow depend on us abiding in, dwelling in, & responding in God's love. Let's briefly look at each of these Christ-like characteristics...

Love: "agape" love; love of self-sacrifice that seeks only the highest good of others; reconciliation that brings fellowship as one. **Joy:** gladness & rejoicing. **Peace:** the cessation of



"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23

hostilities; seeking resolution to conflict. **Patience:** an even temper; long-suffering; bearing the burden of time when dealing with offenders. **Kindness:** mellowing over time; losing harshness. **Goodness:** benevolence; looking out for the good of others; standing up for good. **Faithfulness:** being one who is trustworthy. **Gentleness:** meekness; humility. **Self-Control:** self-restraint; in power over one's actions/words.

I found a wonderful explanation about this group of characteristics : "The first trio pertains primarily to self, the second to others and the

third to God. The first trio of love, joy and peace describes the feelings in a Christian's heart. Love always produces joy and peace. Joy is the feeling of excitement, and peace is the feeling of calm satisfaction. The second trio of long-suffering (patience), gentleness and goodness describes a Christian's relationship with others. Longsuffering always produces gentleness and goodness to others. Gentleness is the attitude that is opposite of irritability and sharpness. Goodness is the attitude of actively seeking to help others. The third trio of faith, meekness (gentleness) and temperance (self-control) describes his relationship with God. Faith in God produces meekness to submit to God's will and temperance (i.e. self-control) as we go through life's trials." When we keep in step with His Word, and turn from wrong-doing, God creates beautiful fruit in our lives. And I'm so glad that because of Jesus I/we don't have to carry the weight of the law & punishment on our shoulders. That burden rests on the shoulders of Someone more than capable to handle it! Let's ponder that gift this Christmas, and give the gift that keeps on giving! [Merry Christmas to you & yours!](#) -WL (above quote by Pastor Dr. Paul Choo of Singapore)



Kitchen Connection ...Sharing Recipes Our Families Love

Got a recipe you're glad to have?? Don't keep it a secret... email it to Wendy at wendy@momsinbloom.com !

Hot Chicken Salad -from Jillian Reeve's kitchen (Milford,OH)

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 whole chicken/4 whole breasts | 1/2 c. slivered almonds |
| 3 hard boiled eggs, sliced | 2 T. minced onion |
| 1/2 can condensed cream of chicken soup | 2 T. lemon juice |
| 1 c. sour cream | 1 tsp. salt |
| 1 can (8 oz) sliced/drained water chestnuts | 1/4 tsp. pepper |
| 1 can (3 1/2 oz) French fried onions | 1 c. grated cheese (mild cheddar) |
| | 1 c. mayo |

Cook chicken, dice. Mix with remaining ingredients except cheese and French fried onions. Place in 9 X 13 pan/casserole dish. Top with cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Slightly crush French fried onions & sprinkle over all and bake for 15 minutes longer. Serves 10-12. ENJOY!!!

Brushetta (EASY!)- from Wendy Lempner's kitchen (Morrow, OH)

This is a wonderful Christmas appetizer... green & red with "snow" on top! Yum!!

1 loaf French bread- long, but thin
1 jar pesto with garlic (like Classico Creations)
2-3 small tomatoes- seeded and chopped
1 c. mozzarella cheese, shredded

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Slice bread and arrange on baking sheet. Spread each piece with pesto. Sprinkle each with tomatoes, then top with cheese. Bake until cheese is melted and golden brown... about 8 minutes.

Craft Corner ...Seasonal Craft Idea: "Cinnamon Applesauce Dough Ornaments"

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups ground cinnamon
- 1 cup applesauce (store bought works best)
- 1/3 cup white school glue (Elmer's or other brand)

-Mix the ingredients together until a dough forms.

-Knead for a few minutes.

-Roll out to 1/8 or 1/4 inch thick. (If sticky, dust your hands and rolling pin with cinnamon, work on waxed paper.)



Looking for a fun craft/gift for the kids to make and give this Christmas? Here it is! They are beautiful, easy, & smell great when warmed by the Christmas lights!

-Use cookie cutters or other implements to cut out the shapes you desire.

-Cut out a hole at the top of each with a drinking straw so you'll be able to thread a ribbon or string (for hanging) when dry. It takes 4 or 5 days for the ornaments to air dry. You should turn them over frequently so they will dry evenly and won't curl. You can outline each shape with puffy paint to make them more special.

-Recipe from www.teachers.net/gazette submitted by Kathleen Carpenter.



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

"Where is baby Jesus?" my four-year old asked as he gazed upon the heaping pile of Christmas presents that had engulfed the Christmas tree and were snaking their way across the living room floor. This Christmas Season, he had become so interested in nativity scenes that he had started to collect them; a tradition he still adheres to. He had even taken to carrying around a small wooden stable complete with clanking porcelain figurines wrapped in an empty tissue box. To stores, church, and Grandma's house he toted his personal manger scene—a vivid reminder to all what Christmas was truly about. So here, on Christmas Eve, amidst the energy and excitement of his cousins who were eager to tear into another year's treasure trove of stuff, Sean anxiously looked around and tugged on my sleeve. "Mommy, where is baby Jesus?" I knew traditionally the nativity scene was kept under the tree so I pointed to the mound of boxes and bags and said, "He's behind

there." By the time we pulled the gifts away and were able to see the manger scene, we saw that it had been pushed up against the back wall behind the tree and had quietly succumbed to the great wall of gifts. It was a gentle reminder that all too often Jesus is pushed aside to make room for the dazzling lights that catch our eyes and shiny wrapped gifts that offer us temporary satisfaction. Indeed the first Christmas gift and the greatest gift of all can easily be forgotten and not given the place of honor and position in our holiday endeavors and traditions. This Christmas season don't forget that were it not for the gift of God's only son born to us as a baby in a stable, we would have nothing to celebrate. Don't let Jesus get shoved behind the tree and under a mound of presents. Give Him the place of honor He deserves in your homes as well as in your hearts. -Mary Gallagher (Mary is a local, published author. This piece is from "A Cup of Comfort Devotional for Mothers", which is a wonderful book for moms. Check it out!)

...all too often Jesus is pushed aside to make room for the dazzling lights that catch our eyes and shiny wrapped gifts that offer us temporary satisfaction.

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.



A Family Favorite: Live Nativity Scenes...

This time of year there are so many wonderful things to do with our families. Children always love seeing the animals and baby Jesus at live nativities. It's a perfect way to "tangibly" teach our kids about Jesus' birth... something that they'll remember throughout their lives. To find a local live nativity, you can "Google" it on the web. Here are a few that have one in N.W. Cincinnati...



"Christmas in Loveland", Sat. Dec. 15, 4-9 p.m.

Enjoy festive downtown Loveland: horse-drawn carriage rides, music, etc. Details at: www.lovelandchamber.org

"Holiday Fest", the Beach Water

Park— also enjoy ice skating on a 5,000 square foot ice rink, a miniature train display, carriage rides and craft and food booths. 6-9 p.m. Thursday-Sunday through Dec. 31. Closed Christmas Eve and Christmas day. Located at 2590 Waterpark Drive, Mason, 513-398-4356; www.thebeachwaterpark.com

"Waynesville's Christmas in the Village", The

Dickens Village comes to life- more than 70 antique shops, specialty shops, galleries, restaurants, & 1,300 luminaries. Nov. 30-Dec.-2; 12 -9 p.m. Fri. & Sat., 12-6 p.m. Sun. More info: 513-897-8855; www.waynesvilleohio.com



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, this is such a joyous time of year. Help me understand Your precious gift more deeply this year, and help me share that joy with my family. Help us to keep You at the center of our celebrations and not allow ourselves to get too wrapped up in all the other things that can be fun, but distract us from the greatest gift of all... the Son You sent to save us... Jesus! I pray more people will open that gift this year and receive You! Amen.

For your husband (if applicable):

Lord, I lift up my husband to you at this busy time of year. I pray You would help him to cherish the real reason for Christmas. Help him lead our household in our relationship with You. Help Him know You better and take time for You despite his very busy schedule with work and other commitments. If he's been turned off by past experiences in church, Lord I pray that You'd help him heal from that and realize that there are churches where he can enjoy it, grow, and truly learn about You and all You have for him. Help him find You in a very real way. Thank You.

For your child/children:

Lord, this time of year is a very special time that we are given with our family and children. The "magic" of Christmas fills our hearts and it's such a memorable time for our kids. I pray that this year will be yet another wonderful opportunity to instill within them Your amazing love for them/us. What better way to explain it than to share the Christmas story with them? Please open their hearts to cherish this true story and may it serve to create a solid foundation of faith in their life. Help them to always know that they are special and loved. 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?

I recently bought a house with a sunroom and inherited a room full of plants as well. The previous owner was moving out of state and could not take them with her. "They'll grow fine for you if you put them outside for the summer," were her firm instructions. It was a three-person job to carry out the world's largest fern, huge peace lilies, and 12 feet tall ficus trees. They spent the warm summer months on the deck where they grew without restraint. As the nights grew cold and frost threatened, we went through the circus act of bringing our plants inside to settle into their winter home. Only when we got them inside did we see how much they had prospered. The abundant sunshine and balmy nights allowed the plants to thrive. Inside for the winter they will grow slowly and even lose a few leaves as they adjust to their less than ideal environment. We all enjoy the places in our lives that suit us well, when we grow and thrive. But, like the ficus and fern, we may have to come in for a season and reside temporarily in a less than ideal situation. What does God expect from us in these circumstances? The same thing he expected from the Israelites in their time of captivity. Read Jeremiah chapter 29 to see God's instructions to His people when they found themselves in a strange environment: "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jeremiah 29: 4-7). God wants us to continue to grow, honor Him, and do what we are created to do no matter where we are. Even in less than favorable circumstances or an environment that is foreign and uncomfortable for you, do your best to grow and maintain your productivity. God is still looking for followers who will grow where they are planted and are strong and healthy when it is time to step out into the sunshine again.



December's Featured "Garden":

Mary Gallagher's

(Milford, 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.

"Christ & the Christmas Cake" -Ann Pullem

Why not celebrate Jesus' birthday with a cake?! Here's a fun and meaningful activity... and you'll end up with a yummy birthday cake! Just add the following elements & discuss the meaning & verses.

1. Chocolate cake: Represents being black with sin.

-Romans 3:23 "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
-John 3:19 "...men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."

2. White Icing: Being cleansed of our sins by Jesus' sacrifice.

-Isaiah 1:18 "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow..."
-Psalm 51:7 "cleanse me... I will be clean; wash me, & I will be whiter than snow."
-Psalm 103:12 "as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

3. Angel: The bearer of good tidings.

-Luke 2:10-11 "The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'"

4. Red Candle: Jesus shed His blood for us... He was born to die for us.
-Hebrews 9:22 "...without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness."
-Hebrews 9:26-28 Christ was sacrificed once and for all!

5. Yellow Star: The first sign of glad tidings.

-Matthew 2:2 "Where is He that has been born King of the Jews for we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

6. Light the Candle: Jesus is the light of the world. Believing in Jesus illuminates your life with HOPE!

-John 8:12 "I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
-John 12:46 "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."

7. Encircle the Cake with Evergreens: Everlasting life & God's love.

-John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

This is reason to celebrate... Happy Birthday, Jesus!

The Harvest... Share the Fruit of What You've Sown

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



For as long as I can remember, my oldest daughter, Hailey, has struggled with a spirit of fear that has robbed her of her joy on numerous occasions. My husband and I have tried to help her deal with the fear. We've talked about the fear not coming from God, we've prayed with her and prayed over her, and even bought a book to read with her, but nothing seemed to get to the root of the problem. Just recently, we decided to start Hailey out with a little trial babysitting. It was only for about an hour one morning, and I vowed to have my cell phone with me the entire time. This still didn't settle well with her, but then a thought, inspired from the Holy Spirit, came to me! Actually I'd just learned, from a Bible study, about something to do with areas in our lives we have no victory in. So before I left, I looked up

"For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you." Isaiah 41:13

every verse I could find relating to fear not coming from the Lord, then asked her to look them all up and write them down. Next, I had her read each verse out loud and meditate on it. As I left, I prayed over her believing in faith that she would finally see victory! About an hour later, my phone rang. To her surprise I was just outside the house. I wasn't sure what to expect, but was thrilled to see her running out of door with her hands waving above her head grinning from ear to ear saying "It's gone! It's gone! The fear is gone!". It was a wonderful moment! The fear was gone and her

faith was strengthened! What a victory! Praise the Lord!! As my relationship with my heavenly Father grows, I'm blessed to pass on what He shows me to my children. Here, He showed me that I can pass on the legacy of faith, His Word and prayer! Ephesians 6:16 says, "...take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." ...like those thoughts of fear thrown at Hailey. Ephesians 6:17 says this about God's Word: "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." About prayer Ephesians 6:18 says, "And pray in the Spirit, on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. ... always keep on praying for all saints." What great joy to reap what we sow into our children for God's Glory! -Tabitha Warnica, a dear friend of Wendy's in AZ.