



MY PARENTING MEMOIRS

REARING SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN

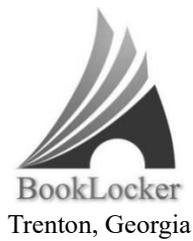


YVONNE REUSSER



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Print ISBN: 978-1-959624-03-5

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88532-078-8

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2026

First Edition

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Preface

“Your kids are great!”

“You have the most amazing kids!”

“How did you raise such wonderful kids?”

“You had a great gene pool!” This final statement came from the Obstetrician/Gynecologist who helped to deliver all four of our children: two daughters first, then two sons at Marietta Memorial Hospital. (Thank you Dr. Scilleppi!)

Then, a word of encouragement came from a close friend who stated, “Yvonne, you were anointed by God to rear children.” This came after a week of Bible School activities when our oldest child was about 5 years old. The challenge was thrown out to the large group of children at Vacation Bible School that whoever memorized the most Bible scripture verses during the week would get to throw a pie in the face of the director. Well, my daughter, having the mind of a steel trap, was the winner, but not because she wanted to smear a pie in Cathy’s face. In fact, when the final program arrived and she was announced the winner, she refused to do so. Cathy, our long-time friend and director, said to me, “That child has a loving heart, I knew she wouldn’t want to do it.” Cathy, bending down, ended up smashing the fake cream pie in her own face while Karena stood there almost in tears, watching.

The above statements are some of the remarks my husband and I hear frequently. Not to sound arrogant, but we agree with these compliments! We also know that we got a lot of help from our parents, in-laws, good mentors and God. I know everyone feels the same about their children. And they are right. Once a parent, always a parent; we can’t help but admire the wonder of giving birth and then watching the growth, changes and miraculous way they learn things.

Lynn George Reusser and I, Yvonne Delores Weber, celebrated 50 years of marriage several years ago. We can’t believe how quickly time passed and we are now what we used to think of as “old”. We

grew up in Wayne County, Ohio not very many miles apart from each other. We first knew of each other as teenagers when Lynn's sister, LaVerne, began bringing Lynn to church with her. After four years of dating, we got engaged and married in time to move off to Bowling Green, Ohio while he started a job and I finished college. After seven moves, we have settled into our permanent home near three of our children in southern Ohio.

I am not giving you a How-To manual or list of rules. This is just what I did and whether it's a formula for success for you is up to you. Here is what worked for us.

This book is for Karena Jo, Natalie Mai, George Edsel and Lynn Jordan Reusser. Each of our children bear a middle name that belonged to one of their grandparents or in Jordan's case, his first name was his dad's. George Reusser, his wife Mable Ingold Reusser, my Dad Edsel Weber, and my Mother Josephine Volpe Weber, were all influential in the upbringing of our four. Karena remembers Grandpa George, but he died the year Natalie was born. We have a Polaroid snapshot of Grandpa George carrying Karena, when she was maybe 3, down the hill of a farm we purchased. Oh, the days when we could walk *down* hills. Mable would always pack a lunch and we'd spread it on a blanket at the bottom and picnic in the wide-open spaces. George died soon after Natalie was born.

Mable lived into her 90's until she spent a few of her last years with us and died in 2006. The girls both enjoyed their Grandma Mable. My Mother, Josephine, died young of cancer at age 48, so our children knew her only through my stories and pictures. The grandparent that all four of our children knew the best was my dad, who lived until age 97½ and spent his last year living with us. I have to give credit to those four amazing grandparents! This book exists because of these God-fearing people, and you will hear anecdotes about the Greatest Generation, their methods and how they influenced me and my husband. My youngest son Jordan recommended I write this memoir. I hope this was a sign he thought we did a good job. I flip back and forth with using "my" and "our" as I explain Lynn's and my different ways we dealt with the issues

of parenting. We got good results from our combination of solutions to problems. To name all the methods would take a lifetime. And, again, don't take this as a "how-to manual;" it is only my memoirs. But if you see something that might help you, by all means give it a try.

I hope to reveal just some of the mysterious things that happened in their growing-up years of which they didn't get a full understanding. Many times, Lynn and I had to make decisions on our own; we were often inaccessible to each other for co-decision making because of working separately or not having the ease of cell phone texts like we do now. The internet didn't come into our world until the last of our children were in high school. Phone calls to their boarding school and college cost money. They will have to explain to their grandchildren what a long-distance phone call was. We alleviated problems by having them all home on weekends.

As I discuss these and similar topics with people, I hear many of you understand the word discipline to be "punishment." I believe that's a great error in what discipline encompasses. In each topic, you will see that our understanding of the word "discipline" meant daily interaction and training. We were a tightly scheduled family because of being private business owners. Our "Mom 'N Pop" store had an early opening time of 7:30 a.m. It was like running a medical clinic because we often worked a 10 hour + day or served people after hours. Mom 'N Pop is the industry term we give small town, family-run businesses as opposed to what's been termed "big box" like Lowes or Home Depot. I will not spell out the big "W" word here because we boycott that store. We shopped at and supported our small-town retailers as much as possible. Some of my details may not be of importance to you, but I hope will clarify what set us apart from your lifestyle. Most recently we are questioned daily about a building we purchased, it being a wonderful opportunity we felt was at the right price, and for whatever use The Lord God sees fit. I give Our Almighty God the credit for so much of what happened to us over 58 years.

As our children matured, they went to work with us. When eight o'clock came, they headed for school. This habit brought about true discipline teaching them how to schedule their time and activities. The question on every parent's mind remains: "What is proper punishment?" I will explain those incidents as I tell you the honest and humorous stories of what took place in the 46 years of parenting we have under our belts. I don't add the four individual collection of years we parented four children; everyone either benefitted or used our methods in some way while growing up together.

WARNING! There is an adults-only chapter, just in case some young folks pick up this volume. It's never too soon to start the topic of sex, dating and relationships, things that affect every area of our lives. But, outside of our personal experiences, many things in marital relationships can be misunderstood. One of my step-siblings told me she regretted not taking her daughters to church, and I told her it wasn't too late. We followed a time-honored tradition of only teaching sex at the age-appropriate levels and answering questions as God provided. Part of that can be explained by the fact that we were on our own and didn't have my deceased Momma to consult. I often wished Mom had explained a little more in-depth to me. But if she had, maybe I wouldn't have ever wanted the experience. I didn't know anything other than what she told me, and I wasn't a curious kid so I didn't learn things "on the street." I let my children loose a little sooner than mom did with me.

When I was confessing my faults to a daughter one time, she said, "That explains a lot!" We didn't take the time to review all the *thought-trains* running through her mind. Then again, there are only so many hours in a day. Our children all went to public schools from pre-school until eighth grade; that includes the Parochial school in town. By the time they were ready for high school, we realized we had some editing to do in their social influences and found good private schools for them, hoping their peers would be more like the children we were raising with traditional conservative family values. Prayer and Bible reading became prohibited in public schools and

that was a problem when teachers were no longer allowed to speak the name of The Lord God.

In hindsight, the two years we kept Jordan home for schooling (sixth and seventh grade, because of a bullying situation) turned out to be a valuable time in his life to explore what he was interested in, things that would have been omitted in a public school environment. Would life have turned out better for all four of them had we home educated all of them? Possibly. But all have thanked me at one time or another for how we did things. There are some things they misunderstood until they were rearing their own children. There were times when, economically, we just couldn't afford to provide what a child thought he needed. Paying their own bills was probably the best teacher of why they didn't get the newest toy or the latest fashion on the front of the Sears catalog.

Everyone went to preschool. Our oldest came home with a story of another classmate who took an opportunity to show off something that would have been best left covered up. I confronted the teacher who responded with shock and embarrassment. That should have been a clue as to what was coming in high school. This same daughter, years later, attended a seminar at the private school her own son attended. By this time, 20 years later, she said the speaker explained the extreme fearfulness in parents of the Millennial generation, a fear that prevents them from letting their children learn how to handle life's battles. Karena stayed with my parents while attending a Christian High School during the time of our local teachers strike. It brought her close to them, and I think about the sacrifice they made to do that and how it influenced her well in her appreciation of them.

All four of our children have attended and graduated from Ohio University in Athens, having lived on campus. They each drove home to Woodsfield on weekends to be able to work in our family-owned hardware store on Friday nights and returned to campus on Sunday nights.

I do admire families who educate at home, as our close nephew and niece Jeff and Shari Reusser schooled their four at home very

successfully. We lived just a bike ride or horse ride away from them, so their four children and our kids grew up together. But life is throwing us curve-balls every day and, it seems, at a more rapid pace. Maybe I'm just more aware of pitfalls and dangers. Maybe I pay way too much attention to the six o'clock news, but we see the dangers now in public school experiences, especially in the public universities, and parents need to keep their eyes open to who and what is taking place in their community. Not everyone lives in the Beaver Cleaver household. That was the norm as I grew up. My Mother wore dresses to vacuum the carpets just like June Cleaver did. My children watched Leave it to Beaver too, but "gone are those days."

What you will see in this historical memoir is what grounded us in faith in God. It is He who has helped me to accomplish my "Magnum Opus," those two women and two men who couldn't have become more successful in my eyes! Each chapter concludes with the passages of scripture that explains my life's philosophy on each topic.

I hope you will enjoy the true-life stories of how Karena, Natalie, George and Jordan became who they are.

Chapter 1: Opposite The Attraction

Here's where it all began! My BFF Vickie, at age 15, wanted a date with the cute guy in Sunday school. Cliff, my future husband Lynn's younger brother, age 15, was not driving yet, so "Vick" cooked up a plan. She asked me how I liked the idea of a double-date with Lynn and the two of them. Although Lynn seemed a bit stand-offish, I thought he was cute, - that was the standard for measuring "date-ability" in the 60s. So, I was favorable to the idea if only to get out from under my parents on a Friday night like all the other girls were. So, Vickie ran with that approval, straight to Lynn, who was 16 and had access to his family's car. He had, up to this point, been convinced a high-class girl like me (from Orrville!) would never go out with him, a simple farm boy.

With this new disinformation, we started dating once a week and were married four years later. Cliff and Vickie's relationship was not so long-lasting. They went on to date and eventually married others.

What drew me to my future husband? He seemed confident. He always had a quick answer and was always seeing the humor in a situation, which often turned the fan of disagreements and tension. He was bold but, oftentimes, not confident, which we both learned later.

He says what impressed him about me was my artistic talent and the fact that I took Latin in high school. He could envision us making lots of money as he was impressed with the realization that my father had a successful career as a salesman. He could see that I would be able to create art if we earned enough money first. I think Lynn saw some other things as well, not the least of which was my mother's fabulous banquets. (I believe she was courting him as well). Our ranch style home in the suburbs of Orrville was something he'd never experienced. Truthfully, his mother's meals impressed me also; she was a cook at Wooster College and the Wayne County Home for

hundreds of people. They may not have had a mansion on the hilltop, but I was impressed with his hard-working family and their comical back and forth banter about farm life.

The combination of our personality types - me a quiet introvert and him a talkative aggressor - blended to make our success story. Even though he grew up on a crop and dairy farm and I in the industrial town of Orrville, which was home to 47 factories at the time, we admired each other's qualities. Our common denominator was our ancestry coming from Woodsfield, Ohio in Monroe County. Both of our families spent weekends and vacation times visiting the relatives who stayed "on the home place" down in the hills. Our parents and most of our many aunts and uncles all migrated to Wayne and Medina counties where the work was. Many factories hired the servicemen and women coming home from World War II.

Over 54 years we watched the crash and burn of many friends' marriages. We figured out what worked for us that didn't for them. Our key ingredients were obedience to and love for studying God's Word. Both our parents taught us very valuable spiritual principles which show up in our life story. Both of our parents stayed married to each other, "until death did them part." Had we not sought ways to work out the day-to-day problems, we would have headed for the lawyer's office too; we faced the same problems everyone else had and found solutions. I tell young people this and my children see it played out, even today, in our lives. Thankfully, we've learned much patience which now takes precedence over selfishness.

Some folks thought we had a money tree growing in the backyard; money problems are often the source of strife. No, we never had one in the seven places we lived. Money is an idol in our culture. There's never enough of it and too many things on which to spend it. We weren't born with silver spoons in our mouths, only born to parents who managed money properly. They paid their bills, and we paid ours. Credit cards were not the mode of operating.

After living on the upstairs floor of an elderly widow lady's farm house for our first year in 1970, we moved up in the world and into a trailer. That word is now archaic in favor of "mobile home." It

served our purpose in spite of the paper-thin walls and limited space. We had to stick to a budget; at least one night we had only a can of pork and beans on which to dine. The paycheck wouldn't arrive until Friday, and \$60 had to go to rent and \$100 to a car payment. I was finishing the last two years of my degree at Akron University. Dad was still paying for that. My commute required lots of gasoline, plus I had to complete a flat tire change one morning by myself at 7 a.m. before I got on the one-hour interstate drive. We followed God's Word and tithed into God's kingdom at church off the top of every paycheck. We still follow that spiritual principle. We bring the tithe (10% off the top) into the storehouse (ministry) which results in favor and blessing over our lives. He gives to us so we can give to every good work.

When I graduated from Akron, I was hired by a furniture company so we then received two paychecks. In 1975, we moved to Monroe County, the home of our immigrant ancestors. We purchased Modern Hardware on Main Street in Woodsfield in October that year and have been there ever since.

In our many years of marriage, as everyone probably does, we encountered and endured cranky neighbors, interference from relatives and property line disputes. Nightmares of gigantic proportions occurred when we didn't foresee situations coming that ruined some of our friends' lives. With the wise and Godly advice of friends and the favor of God, we never had to pay out debts that would bankrupt us or endure lawsuits that divided us as a couple. Although of different upbringing and different educational backgrounds, we were not so opposite in working out problems anymore. Opinions seemed to come together as one. One of my life's philosophies I repeated to my children many times was: "Don't worry. Everything changes."

Lynn and I taught each other how to roll with the punches. It became a requirement when we found ourselves in the public eye daily. There you are not dealing with each other's feelings so much as other people's opinions! There are now eight billion opinions on the face of the earth vying for attention. Our children enjoy nothing

more than sitting around our kitchen table and spilling out the antics and adventures of working with the public. We threaten to write a comic book, and maybe we will! We will change names to protect the not-so innocent.

As we grew and changed over five decades, my husband's and my characteristics rubbed off on each other. My Lynn has become a wonderful art patron. His skills came in the form of designing his new barn and refinishing antiques. The latest project resulted in a unique water fountain in the middle of my garden. And I now go more boldly into conversations, start support groups and belong to community organizations needing my leadership skills. We gave our combined skills to four children. Often, we see them responding to life like we would. They have been good observers.

After leaving home at ages 19 and 20, we always attended church. In that first year, 1970, we drove the two-hour trip home from Bowling Green, Ohio to Big Prairie every weekend to be with our families. We're glad we did. It wasn't that we couldn't untie the apron strings; we felt we were honoring our parents. And, we knew at some point, they would be gone. When my mother died in 1977, I decided it was time to start a family. I wanted two daughters, then two sons. [I will explain that formula later in a chapter called, "When to Conceive."] As we saw our characteristics rub off on each other as a couple, we have also watched with wonder and admiration as our children grew up having developed beneficial parts from each of our personalities.

Our first child, a daughter, was born in 1978 with a headful of dark hair. She has her own unique combination of our personality types. We enjoy taking personality tests, and you can recognize her father's characteristics that we learned about through studying a personality assessment course we found very accurate. Karena has the characteristics of a "lioness," similar to her dad, the "lion." These people are, among other things, achievement-driven, take-charge, persistent and competitive. From me, though, she gets enthusiasm, drama and good communication skills. She is a business woman first, then achieved a law degree and pilots our own plane. She is currently

remodeling a church property we purchased with the aid of her cousin Grant. They are carrying the torch into the future for the spiritual upbuilding of this community.

Our second child, daughter Natalie, is, according to the personality assessment course we studied together, a “Golden Retriever.” Coincidentally, she has two large dogs to accompany her walks. She, being a physical fitness proponent, her personality is patient, easy-going and loved by all. On the other hand, she is emotional, inspirational and personal, like me. She and her husband are in the hospitality industry because of her strengths. They build and rent unique vacation homes and outfit hunting parties.

Our third child and first son, George, has “beaver” characteristics according to the program. His Dad taught him to be accurate, detail-oriented, industrious and thorough. In addition, he acquired orderliness, communication skills and motivation from his mother, the “otter” personality type. He is now a medical doctor who wants everything in his life to be immaculate. He is intolerant of errors (and spots on clothing), yet emotional, passionate and inspirational.

Our youngest child, Jordan, a businessman, is also an even mix of both his mom and dad. His decisive, goal-oriented, get-results personality is tempered with patience and an outgoing personality. I don't have a record of him taking the personality assessment. His life is about ministering to people. He also says I never taught him nursery rhymes. But when he got into the second grade, his teacher told me at parent conferences that he would be the valedictorian of his class. One year we asked his opinion about investing some money. Instead of asking for something for himself, like a car or new computer, as you think a teenager would, he said, “Let's get a bus and take people to Jentzen Franklin's Forward Youth Conference.” This was an annual event we had been attending with our boys for several years to hear wonderful inspirational speakers that kick-started their faith. That year, we took 22 people on an overnight 10-hour trip to Georgia. We were so blessed by Jordan's understanding

of the spiritual needs of his friends. It was a good seed sown in these people's lives. Jordan is a self-sacrificial, giving person.

I'm not fully describing my kids by these set-in-stone characteristics because there are a variety of life experiences and different educational backgrounds involved with shaping a person's character. Also to be acknowledged is birth order and relationship to extended family members. But we can understand more about what we do and why in studying various personality tests; George especially enjoys these studies. At one time in his college training he thought he would major in psychology. A clinical rotation in that field dissuaded him, as did a term in the ER at Marietta hospital - "too much stress," he told us.

By the way, as an otter, a cheerleader type who loves to talk when given the chance, I see my enthusiasm, optimism, motivation and outgoing character playing out in the children and my husband. I've had to learn some of Lynn's traits to get along in this driven life. I observed that if my husband and I walked, we didn't walk in tandem, he'd be outpacing me by six to eight strides while I ambled along photographing trees and picking up treasures for an art project, or teaching the kids what plants were edible.

Now, we see our four children compliment their "oppositely attracted" spouses. Looking for common denominators in a mate during our dating years does not secure the relationship. The commitment to work together at common goals does this. Behind all that is the more important aspect of respecting each other's God-given talents. Before getting married, George asked me what were the top five keys to a successful relationship. Here is my answer:

#1 Same religious convictions

#2 Same political beliefs

#3 Agreement on career paths

#4 Respect for the other person's God-given talents

#5 The ability to accept growth and changes in each other because nothing stays the same except commitment.

How did we get to be so blessed to be able to rear these four wonderful people? I believe it was commitment over selfishness. Fun

times broke up the daily grind. Playing games kept our kids at home in the few hours between work and school. It's a habit all families need to make. Monopoly was our first favorite, until one hotel mogul wiped out every other player and had a stack of colorful paper money all to himself. I credit Monopoly with starting our children on their interest in real estate investing, following in their father's footsteps. Pit comes in as the second most favorite. It's a fast-moving game involving commodities trading on a light hearted level. I even like it although I don't follow the stock market like my children do. It produces tons of screaming and laughter as we make instantaneous decisions on which commodities to hold and which to pass on. This game takes so much energy, and we don't play by the scoring rules. It does warm us up for Trivia, Phase 10, Crack List or Catch Phrases where we can calmly sit and have some creative thinking time, which I prefer. All these games teach valuable life skills of patience and respect for others' opinions. They also enhance each person's self-esteem and teach us to slow down from our busyness.

We were once awarded a foster daughter for 10 weeks. When she went back to her home, I asked her mother if the family played games together. She said no, so I bought her a few games, including Monopoly and told her how valuable it was to connect with her seven children in this way. Emotional needs, laughter and joking together build character in the safe space of home. My husband likes to say, "They learn a lot through osmosis." So it seems.

We don't always see the growth of the seeds planted inside, but we hear the results now when a son or daughter says, "Mom, you always said 'clean up as you go'." Or their dad would say, "You don't have to tell somebody what you are, they can see it." We see humility in all of them as a result. There were times when they had to recite or speak in front of groups of people; then I saw the humility come out as stage fright. Their abilities to smile and give confident talks came later in maturity. But none of them ever had the desire to perform in front of crowds as kids, whether playing in a piano recital or singing a solo at church. So we didn't push it.

Their Dad also said many times, even when we were all piled into the vehicle with the engine running, “Are you ready sports fans? Let’s go,” as if to say, “ Follow me.” And they did. Our sins are behind us, and guilty we were. God was faithful to get us through the early years of struggle as we repented for our wrongdoings and separation from Him. I’m glad we found our way to Jesus and salvation before these four children came into our world. This sign hangs on our kitchen wall for all to see, “***God Has been Very Good to Lynn and Yvonne***”

More Advice: go shopping at Sir Troy’s Toy Kingdom and buy some games.

Galatians 2:20: “The life I now live is by the grace of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Chapter 2: The Birds and Bees Talks

I didn't worry about those out-of-the-blue questions most parents fear. "Where do babies come from?" and "how did they get in there?" were not part of my childhood curiosity. Mother explained the changes that would happen in our child bodies, so my sisters and I had timely sex education that was age-appropriate. I probably had the same look on my face that my children did when I explained things to them. "Really?!?" they responded with wide eyes. It's hard to imagine things you haven't experienced. Where's the context? My mom's explanation of her encounters with boys in cars lacked details. Our T.V. programs were censored (by Mom). Neither Popeye nor Captain Kangaroo came close to the subject.

Maybe Mom tried to tell me what would happen in a car, on a date, around 10 p.m. My parents merely said, "Be home by 10. Nothing good happens after that." So, we complied; Lynn and I sat in the living room with its large picture window. Mom's descriptions of dangerous situations came in nebulous terms like "octopus" and "scantily clothed." I had so many "close encounters" of the "unsolicited kind." As an elementary school girl, a strange old man (in a trench-coat, no less) approached me on my walk home from school. He offered me a quarter to go get ice cream. Back then there were no constant warnings about trafficking. But I was still afraid and quickly walked away from him as he tucked the quarter into my school book I was carrying.

I told my girls, "You aren't going on dates with boys." That didn't go over well. They wanted to find out for themselves. We had some pitfalls but lived through them, and they are healthy, wealthy and wiser today and training their own children with more wisdom than I had. We found ways to interact with their friends without putting them in harm's way. We chaperoned when asked. We were assured by school officials that we didn't need to worry. [That was not the case]. We welcomed their friends into our home and had

parties there. None of us were fond of “overnighters.” Requests for sleeping outdoors in tents meant Lynn and I would get no sleep. Still there were clandestine meetings. We tried to keep them near, but we taught purity until marriage. Lynn and I waited until marriage for sex, so we knew it could be done. People can live without sex; it’s not vital, like air to breathe or water and food.

In the early days of desktop computers, we had one per household. Cyber security was in its infancy, as was individual computer and cell phone ownership. When we would open a website, immediately pornographic junk would load if you didn’t type in exactly the address you needed. Remember the line-by-line, dial-up, download format? That was in 1999, and I can still see it. The term “White House” sent a barrage of smut - who knew?

In an effort to get my boys to self-regulate even when I was not over their shoulder, I told them that what they fed their minds with would cause problems later and adversely affect their marriages. Jordan asked me once, “How do you know I’m going to get married”? And my answer was, “You will want to; you will want sex, and you will want a stable relationship.” Seeing suggestive things on the internet stays with you. Things I saw in movies have stayed with me over 60 years, and I have to resist those thoughts.

I also preached, “All vaginas are the same, some fat, some skinny but they all work the same.” “Don’t get in a big hurry to have sex; you’ll be doing it every day once you’re married,” was my main credo. In addition to receiving this education and advice, the children watched our stable marriage through thick and thin.

In recent years there has been a heightened awareness of child abuse. Everyone runs scared at the thought of their children being exploited. Parents have to make efforts to teach and train morality. There have to be standards if we want to live in a harmonious society, and God Himself set up the right ones! My kids were on the brink of this promiscuous, anything-goes, society. They see the same problems resulting from a “no rules” household as we did when we were young.

Now, rearing children of their own, my children say what we taught makes sense. They listen to their childhood playmates relate tales of woe that broke their hearts. Our lawyer daughter has clients whose children don't even speak to them. I sat next to a friend and neighbor at a funeral and congratulated her on her son's recent engagement. She tearfully confided in me that he was questioned by other friends about his choice to marry. They were advising him to just "move in together, why get married? Standards in society shift but good standards should be kept.

I believe my grown children are even more cautious than I was. Most of the people we associated with had children our age so we were all together under the same roof for Bible Study nights or just fun. Having a church family to lean on was valuable.

The "birds and the bees" is a difficult topic to write about. People don't agree on how much or how little to tell children about the sexual experience. I agree with those who say just to 'answer their questions'. Also, our family did not display nudity unnecessarily; I've heard that some families don't make a big deal out of it. As a child, I didn't seem to have curiosity about bodies; my husband tells me he did. He was a farm kid. Sex was a daily occurrence amongst animals cohabitating for anybody watching. I had no brothers, and I and my sisters had the highest respect for our boy cousins with whom we were with often. Others were not able to avoid the pitfalls. For them I give grace. I'm glad Mom tied the apron-strings tight.

My grandma Weber wouldn't allow me to go watch a calf being born; my mom disagreed with her. She said, "I think it would be a good experience!" Nope, no kids in the barn. What would it have taught me - how a cow looks when it's born? Grandma, I doubt I would have related the experience to sex, which I believe is what you tried to shield me from. Grandma suffered from the effects of the Victorian era. The underlying philosophy was virtuous, but there was damage done to society by the secretive attitudes and lack of open discussion.

I've told my family, in our town in the 1950s, everybody did the right thing, or seemed to. 99% of the students I attended school with were being reared by two parents - their own. Today, children are products of broken families and multiple family environments. Four Christmases can be overwhelming!

People have been fed the lie (by Hollywood drama and media) that children's rights override their parents' authority. It's not benefiting our society to let children rear themselves, which is essentially what is taking place. Don't you just love (sarcasm) paying tax money to fatherless families? Such a travesty.

I'm sure my children would tell you it was good to have two sides to choose from if a situation was on the fence for a decision. But with many children they knew, a single parent's opinion could often be skewed.

What's amazing is that we hear wedding officiants read the 13th Chapter of I Corinthians even at weddings of non-believers. It's a good thing! Hollywood has done us no favors, broadcasting more and more perversion which is disillusioning people more and more. Watching people do things to each other that is far from reality has made us think what we do is not normal or even close to ideal. I cite the many scenes I've seen of unmarried people ripping each other's clothes off to get the act over with quickly. I've told my children, "That's not the ideal way for a good sexual experience." What's their rush? You want it to be over with? Doubtful.

So, the night before our first child was born I sent my portable T.V. set home with my friends; I was not going to subject my family to hard, soft or any porn. I will later share many events we did that occupied our time.

Others I have encountered throughout my life have had different opinions and thoughts about this subject. I was discussing the sin of extramarital sex with a friend who said, "Men need sex!" She was having an affair with a married man for years unbeknownst to the man's wife. I responded, "Sex is not a basic human need." Food, water, air - those are things we can't live without. Sex is not on that

list. That relationship fell apart, both hers and mine and her tryst with him.

Lynn and I learned some valuable lessons from each other we've never seen in print. We've read books on the subject, and no one tells the whole truth about the physiological thrills of sex. There again, smut is not a good teacher.

Lynn was the uncle to 14 nieces and nephews. Several were his playmates and only a few years younger than he was. He was the fourth child in his family as his brothers and sisters started families long before we did. His mom and dad were grandparenting at the same time they were still parenting him, so he wasn't really excited to have his own children. I told him early on my plan was to have two daughters and two sons. He was good with that. We then experienced the most joyous times of our lives planning, conceiving and awaiting the birth of four wonderful human beings and then getting to parent them. We miss those days. We didn't get started very early, so there shoulda'-coulda'-woulda' been more. We did lose a couple pregnancies through various circumstances, but God knew best, and we count ourselves blessed. Stress was definitely a contributor to the loss of the babies.

A number of friends and relatives have told me through tear-filled eyes that intimacy has been illusive for them. Many people I've talked with have navigated multiple marriages. I think that statistics could be altered if people would learn and apply the truth found in first Corinthians 13. "Love is patient;" yet we are told the only way to live is "Look out for number one," "make yourself happy first." "You're not happy? It must be someone else's fault." "Find someone who will make you happy." And the process gets repeated, maybe more than once or twice. I am fortunate my children chose to be married rather than just live-in.

The reason for this chapter is, in our opinion, people should be reproducing more than they are today. Our country's birth rate has dropped for several reasons. Reason # 1: We have invented far more activities and pastime interests that keep us from raising families. Hobbies, Pinterest and so much more all get in the way and consume

our time and our minds. Then, there are sports of all kinds. These activities all seem more interesting than raising children. Nope. Nothing is that satisfying. Pets are now called fur babies, or people refer to their cats and dogs as “their girls” or “their boys.” I guess the only advantage of pets over kids is they don’t talk back.

For those with no family, I give grace and see that they need companionship; but, don’t call my children or grandchildren *rugrats* or *pests*. They aren’t.

Birth control is another culprit. There will be harsh judgment for the evil invention of stopping what God commanded and made us able to do. To top it off, people are changing their gender. This, to be totally honest, is just another insidious form of birth control, as is abortion. This lie is fueled by people who worry that our 126-billion-acre planet (that figure according to a Google search) is overpopulated. Anyone who believes that lie hasn’t flown over the Arctic circle and seen the vast, uninhabited area our planet contains. You say, it’s not habitable? People are staying in luxury ice hotels. Our president is talking about buying Greenland. People I know have already traveled there - not my cup of tea, I like moderate climates. But extreme environments have certainly led to new inventions. And technology has come up with more than we, who were reared in the 1950s, ever imagined.

I dedicate this chapter to couples who have stuck together for a few years, still deciding whether to have a family. My advice, keep working at it. I’m not condoning spousal abuse in any way; when a preacher speaks of wives submitting to their husbands, they have usually skipped over the previous verse, Ephesians 5:21 (using King James or Amplified) which states, “Submit to one another.”

When I had my third child, the roommate I had in the hospital was told by her Ob/Gyn that she should consider stopping with number five. She said it would be up to her husband. There are laws governing that, both spiritual and societal. Women are the ones doing the child care so she should have a say. You’ve gained so much however long you’ve been married. To trash it is a tragedy. You will both grow and change; we should accept marriage as a contract, not

condemnation! Maybe you didn't see your parents in a happy relationship; don't judge all relationships by that one. Can you learn from them? Maybe you saw arguing and thought it out of place. I stated that my husband's and my discussing things heatedly bothered our children. Be glad there was communication! Let's move on to what good parenting can produce.

Our society is at the brink of population decline. I hope my success stories as a parent of four will encourage some to reconsider and bare at least two. The earth can handle it, your careers are at stake and the supply and demand cycle will remain stable as new people with new ideas keep our world growing.

When to Conceive

In my teen years, I picked up the habit of reading our daily newspaper, *The Wooster Daily Record* (Wooster, Ohio) along with our local weekly *The Orrville (Ohio) Courier Crescent*. In the *Daily Record*, Garry Meyers, M.D. wrote a child-rearing article. His wisdom grabbed my attention. This and other similar articles seemed like valuable philosophy that would be useful in my parenting years, if I ever decided to parent. My altruism wanted to roam the world as a *National Geographic* photographer or be sent to one of my church's foreign outposts in Africa or Argentina as a missionary. It seemed so glamorous and would get me away from the small-town-prison environment. But I faithfully clipped the articles and saved them for future reference.

Anyway, the time came for me to review the clippings and I had saved an article on "How to Conceive." It worked for us four times. The method could be trusted to determine the sex of the child as well. The vagina of a woman is naturally acidic and has a tendency to kill of male producing sperm, it explained. The environment should be doused with white vinegar to make the area alkaline and improve the chances for boy babies. This needed to be done near the time of that five-day window of conception. In a 28-day normal menstrual cycle, there is a window when egg cells travel through the fallopian

tubes. At this point there are an equal number of both sexes but, as they travel, male ones diminish in number. The five days surrounding that midpoint (about day #15) are the times to have intercourse to improve the chances of boys.

After having the two daughters I planned for, we wanted two brothers for them and, voila, George and Jordan. I shared this information with several families who used the same advice with positive results. God gave us what he wanted us to have.

Ephesians 6:12 "We aren't wrestling with flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, rulers of the unseen and spiritual wickedness in high places."

Chapter 3: Potty Training

This is a short chapter for a short time of life that will save hours of laundry, and the expense of diapers you pay for and throw away. It seemed to work the best to start teaching them before they learned to say “no.”

I don't know why this is such an issue. But it seems to be. I just have a couple of things to advise on. First, to give a child a sense of acceptance for who they are and what happens with their bodies, all comments about bathroom functions need to be positive. We never made unkind comments about smells, held our nose, or called anything by a funny name. I believe training happens more quickly by actually taking the toddler, as soon as he's able to walk and even before he/she talks, into the bathroom with you to observe what happens. They see that the potty is not a bottomless pit to be feared. Some are afraid of the flushing sound, so let them push the lever - instant excitement.

My two girls and both boys got the idea that using a toilet was just a necessary part of life. My children, and I hope yours, carried that respectful behavior into the public in their adulthood. The bathroom was also a perfect place to discuss any sexual issues that came up - for instance, where babies come from and how it happens. Parents, that's your job so teach and train your children. The girls have a few more issues to deal with, such as hygiene. Personal feelings and embarrassment are of no importance here. Girls with girls, boys with boys. Of course, I as Mom was the primary coach for all four. If your bathroom sinks are too high, provide a step stool for them to reach the faucet and soap. They love this part of it. Let them know germs need to be washed away and not oiled onto doorknobs and light switches.

Some people like rewards and charts for good bathroom results; I personally didn't take time for all that. There seemed to be enough

to do to change soiled underwear and restock pull-ups (thank you to whomever invented those).

So, my main focus in potty training was teaching my four children some simple responsibilities. The hard work is all on the parents at first, coupled with patience and consistency. But I found that my children wanted to learn how to take care of themselves. When they realized stuff needed to be wiped off their little bottoms, they wanted to do it themselves. When the boys learned that they could direct their little fire nozzles into a container, they enjoyed doing it and no longer having to help clean up a puddle or walk around in a wet diaper.

And by all means, when a child has learned to tell Grandma that they are potty training, they can use a potty. Don't accept any excuses and above all, don't make a game out of it. Seriousness is the key and you can remain pleasant while doing it.

Chapter 4:

Where Did Our Children's Names Come From

Mom and Dad told me my name Yvonne meant “Little one.” I’m sure I did look little to them as an infant does. It’s not something we see every day. My middle name, Deloris, means “sorrow.” I’m sure my parents didn’t think of me as “little sorrow” - they were thrilled with my birth; they just thought the names sounded pretty. I never felt unloved, but their vision for my life turned out much bigger than they ever knew.

But my name carried into my life and I felt insignificant in a world of billions of people. I was Miss Wallflower throughout my school years. I came from humble parents; Dad and Mom were depression babies themselves (1926 and 1929 respectively). Dad was named after a car - the Edsel. People are getting all kinds of crazy names now - things that can become the label they live by. I am glad I had the opportunity to learn the truth of God’s Word about who I really am and what I can become. As I attended Full-Gospel churches. I learned to look at the world through different eyes.

I can easily see that Disney characters have names that fit their roles or at least suggest something about their personality. One example is Cinderella, the stepdaughter who cleaned the cinders out of the fireplace, or Cruella- the name just tells you exactly what she is up to.

* Little Princess *

We didn’t plan our children’s names ahead of time, we looked through books and had some preferences but we waited until we saw our newborns to see if our choices fit the person. Yes, they are little people, not blobs. We didn’t have the advantage of sonograms until 1989 when George was on the way. So we waited for the results to know who they would be.

Our first daughter, Karena, has become the key to our succession plan, the heiress apparent, one of four. Karena, according to the name books, meant “Little Princess.” She was taking charge of things at

age three by changing her baby-sister's diaper and then learning business skills by answering the phone at age five and taking messages for her dad or me. Then, when she went to kindergarten, she came home her first day and announced in her older-than-her-years voice,

"I don't think I'm going back!" Even at that age, she began analyzing other people's actions and discerning their motives. She was destined to be self-motivated, or as one babysitter titled her, 'self-possessed'.

As soon as I was up and able after giving birth at age 28, I headed back to Modern Hardware to work with Karena in a stroller. Breastfeeding took precedence over everything. My mother nursed me and my sisters, and I would do the same with my four babies for at least a year, and that's how it worked out. Karena began working in our business at the age of 12 helping with bookkeeping and running errands. She proved to be an excellent retail saleswoman with superior people skills. We called her "Radar" as God had gifted her with discernment from a young age. She now operates our hardware store and her law firm plus pilots our plane.

I learned from having too many naysayers in my life that I should let her grow up as soon as possible, making decisions at a young age and taking charge of things even if beyond her years. This was what I did not have in my childhood. My Mom prayed but was still overprotective. I never tried to stop Karena and her enthusiasm; she would get on her bike and ride the few blocks to the hardware store if her dad left without her. But she tells me I was a little too hands-off at times. At least when she left the nest, she really did learn how to fly!

Christ's Child

As I stated previously, my plan was to have a second daughter. Natalie was a different personality than her sister from the beginning. As we nursed, she'd spit-up. The solution was to start solid foods and end breastfeeding early. Grandma Mabel - my dear sweet mentor/mother-in-law, suggested mashed potatoes and scrambled eggs; these worked. But, getting through the toddler years she

displayed her strengths by doing things her way. I'm not going into details on this; the powerful woman she is now was displayed in those early years by insisting on doing things her way, even to the point of tantrums which I just stood back to watch. I let them play out. No harm was done. We hugged and made up. And, she learned to comply and follow after her sister instead of fighting. In fact, I do not remember a single fight between the five-year-old and two-year-old. The two of them make sister dates to this day, evidence that they respect each other.

Natalie has become an awesome and successful mother of three and continued the nurture of her babies with breast milk. She follows a healthy diet and forages for natural foods in the woods, namely raspberries. She seeks God's will daily, immersing herself in the Word of God before heading off to her new calling as a teacher at the local Catholic School her daughter Ella attends. What a blessing this is for the elementary students who benefit from her physical education instruction that will help them all their lives. She and her husband build and rent vacation homes and operate an outfitting service for hunters which contributes to the growing tourism industry in our barely-on-the-grid county. Her family spends as much time as possible outdoors, swimming, hiking, running and climbing through national parks.

Prosperous planter

The name we gave our first son George, is what we desired for his life. He prospers and plants good things into peoples' lives. Few know the story of God's healing of George. He experienced a ruptured appendix at age 12 and strange skin rashes we never found the source of. After he experienced so many health problems, he had a bad report about a heart condition and rather than receive a pacemaker, he said, "mom, let's just pray that God heals it." According to his doctor, the medical procedures included an MRI which could have rendered him sterile. Again, we prayed. When he and his family called me on Facetime to announce the coming of their third child, six-year-old Araya said, "Mommy. Grandma is crying!!" Her mother Vera said, "Yes, that's because she's happy!"

You see, no one knows the power of simple prayers except those of us who pray them.

George is the only baby we have pre-birth videos of. Although it is his Grandfather Reusser's name he received, George only knows the man through our stories. George worked briefly during high school and college in our business, but he chose a different path to success. God gifted him with the ability to heal people's minds, souls and bodies. He and his wife, raising a beautiful family of three, became family physicians and are gifted to heal as well as lead others in the healing arts and sciences as they are on staff at a regional hospital in Arizona. We all depend on them for medical advice before calling our local doctors. They have certainly seen a variety of personalities come through the doors, perhaps even more than other doctors being on the Mexican border and seeing folks who carry little in life.

Cross the river Jordan and take the land

After the loss of two more pregnancies, we needed one more son. Jordan, our fourth child, is beloved by all he comes in contact with. He is in the public daily in our retail business and operates the gun department within the store. He is the son of our spiritual maturity; his ability to connect with people came from his growing up with three older shot-calling, siblings;. He learned to roll with the punches, but that made him a peacemaker. People stand in line to get his advice on everything from firearms to marriage. We took our children to many spiritual conferences including Morningstar's Worship Equippers with Rick Joyner and then to Jentzen Franklin's annual Forward Youth Conference. One specific song, by Don Potter, had an eternal effect on him. "Walk right over the river Jordan and take the land," was an admonition to the Israelite nation to receive what was promised to them. "J" took it personally by exponentially increasing business, real estate holdings and sowing good seeds into people's lives.

Our four children are living up to their names. I trusted them to live up to the meanings; that's why I was so hands off. I didn't understand the depth of prophetic ability until attending Rick

Joyner's conferences. He illuminated I Corinthians 14 for me. Names are important; the kids fulfill God's call on them: encouragement, comfort and exhortation in each of their spheres of influence. People trust and look up to them. People ask for their advice.

Proverbs 22:1 - "A good name is to be chosen rather than riches, favor rather than silver and gold." KJV

Chapter 5: Responsibility and Learning Work Ethic

There's a new card game on the market called Pando. My daughter Natalie and her family always bring over the newest games for family game night after a long work week. This particular game reveals a lot of hidden qualities we prefer not to talk about on a normal day. A person reads three questions on a card and everyone, in turn, has to guess the right answers for the reader. It was Jordan's turn, and his question was: "What is my least favorite household chore?"

I was thinking in terms of him owning his own home and having been married for six years, and I did not guess his answer. He finally revealed that he hates mowing grass. He gave me the "duh" look and then I remembered; he'd always left a fringe of grass around all the landscaping and flower beds, and I'd send him back outside to finish after he thought he was done.

I believe children want to work. They want to learn how to do things. As previously mentioned, George made a list of things to do when there wasn't anything to do; he said he never wanted to be bored.

My husband and I have owned our retail business, Modern Hardware, since 1975. We added a Little Caesars Pizza franchise in 2013. As each child got old enough to take some responsibilities, they came to work in the business. They were glad to do it because, up until that point, they had chores at home. They discovered that working in the hardware store had its advantages such as getting to bring home unwanted, obsolete items, getting to eat a restaurant meal and being closer to Dairy Queen.

Growing up at home meant, when Saturday morning came, getting out the vacuum cleaner, picking up clothes from the floor and taking them to the laundry room (which was in a spooky basement), emptying trash cans, cleaning out cupboards or cleaning the garage. All the children had many friends who had no chores. One mother

we knew even did her son's laundry when he came home from college for the weekend. Many of the young employees we hired over the years who had absolutely no work ethics were the product of those who did not teach responsibilities at home.

My children learned how to take orders around age 10, follow directions and work from the years of chores at home. They learned how to repair broken items and what products were on the market for those repairs. They found out about the 100,000 items available on the hardware market, only a fraction of which we kept in inventory. Our daughters know how to change out their own kitchen faucets. The boys can troubleshoot and replace dishwashers.

People would call us even on Sunday and need a hot water heater replaced, a car battery installed or a dryer to handle a load of wet clothing. One winter night when Lynn was out of town, a customer, whom we only knew slightly, came to our house and needed a breaker or fuse or some necessary item. I left my baby home with his wife and trudged through deep snow to open the store for him. People are grateful for the small-town hardware store. Our four children learned how to help people solve problems; we were like a medical clinic. Even during the COVID pandemic of 2020 and beyond, we were mandated to be vital to the community.

After family meals (yes, we sat at a kitchen table and ate together), everyone learned to take his or her own plates and silverware to the sink and rinse. (Not hard). The girls learned to load and unload the dishwasher at a young age. The boys learned at some point because they do it in their own homes now. Their kitchens are well-maintained. I keep a dishcloth draped over my sink; my daughter-in-law doesn't let me do that at her house. (One of George's rules?)

Everyone was doing their own laundry by the age of 10, and they were dressing themselves when they started to school. They knew they had to take care of their own belongings, i.e. toys, books, games, shoes, anything they wanted to use again. They tease me now with the saying I used on them. When they couldn't find something, I would tell them, "It probably got thrown away." I threatened this

many times if I crippled myself on a Lego, pegs up, or a pink Barbie doll spike heel. (Those things hurt!) Beds had to be made. That's not hard either. I didn't expect perfection, but I wanted them to learn that our home needed to look like we cared.

My children may remember this a little differently, each having their own version of how we got things done. Regardless, their homes, I'm telling you, are immaculate. I don't remember getting violent if something wasn't done right or not at all. I felt that an incomplete task or imperfectly done task meant they needed help in the way of either further explanation or even doing part of it for them or alongside them. I remember my own impatient mother grabbing a mixing spoon out of my hand and hurriedly stirring the cake batter in an annoyed fashion; I felt belittled.

Once in a while a child would ask, "Mom, is there anything else that I can do for you?" Now, the grandchildren ask that same question often when at my house. Alex, Karena's son, is willing to help with chores. Felicity, Natalie's oldest daughter, loves decorating, and Ella, Natalie's youngest, is always up for baking cookies. Oh, what sweeties! Somebody did something right.

I realize families with other occupations may not have had the same advantages we had of being able to work the kids into responsible positions in a family business. But they have to come up with their own busyness. There are always chores at home. I see yards that need trash and debris picked up and think, "Where are the kids?" Actually, I know where they are; they are well versed in Minecraft or Harry Potter. We talked to all the children about investing in worthwhile activities and avoiding time-fillers like those I mentioned. We bought estates from time to time, which included attractive things to all of us. Karena recognized the possibility and set up a yard sale and got rid of a PlayStation before she found herself wanting to waste too much time on it.

And when there aren't chores or they are done with them, there is plenty of learning to do. That's a job in and of itself. No one will ever read all the books that they should; there are so many classics from which they could learn.

We lived for a number of years without TV programming. People argued with me that they were missing out. But I heard at a homeschoolers convention that we are not actually using our brains when we watch television; only hearing. Half of the time, I know I don't even listen. Even educational programs, or what we would consider informational, are subject to our interest level. We can tune in or tune out at will and be unaccountable for what it's trying to teach us.

When the kids reached school age, about 1985, Willie George Ministries from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, sent out a teaching VCR tape monthly called the Gospel Bill Show. We subscribed. Each episode taught two great life lessons portrayed in the backdrop of an Old West community. Once a month, for five years, we received what shaped our lives in the form of a now defunct format, two stories in the mail. We all watched them a hundred times. We have far more options on satellite TV now; at least a dozen channels are Christian programming. You can't avoid being exposed to the Word of God unless you try.

When we lived in town, we also had the advantage of the public library down the street within walking distance. Lynn and I made reading books a priority, both to ourselves and to the children. We visited bookstores too. The children were always encouraged to pick out reading material of interest. I read the Little House on the Prairie series to the girls. Karena and Natalie went on to The Babysitters Club series. They had opportunities to babysit others' children while we parents dined or visited. Later, they got into Sophie Kinsell's Shopaholic books.

For several years during the 80s, we operated a Sears Catalogue Store right beside the hardware store. The daughters learned to sort out and put away customer orders and phone people for their incoming orders. Once, a local customer asked 10-year-old Karena her age. She seemed incensed that a child was calling her about her order. Our community had to get used to the idea that we were teaching and training the next generation to take over.

Communication is key to the whole process of rearing cooperative children. We started talking “to” the kids from day one. I started a practice of teaching the children how to talk. We talked to them and not at or about them. I put my index finger on their soft baby chin and moved it up and down as I spoke to them. Starting with simple words, I would try to get them to speak back, “Mommy,” then, “Da--ddy!” Then, learning gestures, babies pick up the simple words of “hi,” and “bye.” I feel this got them out of the crying and whining stage of life and started on the conversational ability they all gained early. They can learn simple gestures at a young age too, like waving to people. My favorite child-rearing book, more valuable than any other I read, was *How to Talk So Your Kids Will Listen and Listen So Your Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish. Their suggestions work. I highly recommend it, and it’s now back in print and available through Scribners.

As soon as they were really understanding our words, we began reading to them. We had their attention at the age of 18 months with picture story books. Then, I read aloud to them some of the books I enjoyed as a kid. Actually, we kept reading with them even into the high school years when there was a tough assignment. When George had to complete “A Once and Future King”, we alternated reading chapters with each other. As it turned out, we both got lots of laughs with a classic, and he learned that dry material gives valuable lessons when read properly. George says reading should be emphasized in childhood. I think they would agree I was an animated reader and could emphasize the right words with proper inflection so as to hold their attention. Using sound effects with words is a good idea too. I did the same with the Bible; it’s how I learned it myself.

I’m so sad to hear people say they don’t read. They are missing half of life, but they are also only half right; they read things online every day. So, their excuse isn’t true, and a lot of today’s issues stem from lack of people focusing. It’s easy not to focus when you can scroll through page after page of hundreds of topics and scenes and automatically delete by not focusing. Focused attention is required to understand the full message of a book. I am sad when I see our

local library discarding hundreds of books by asking for a donation at the annual book sale. To me, handheld, hardcover books are superior over YouTube. It's too easy to dismiss a talking head or try to find one that is more interesting. And, the jury is still out on what staring at a small screen is doing to our eyesight.

Recently I returned from the hair salon and my hairdresser related the tale of almost being late to work because of the poor service getting coffee at a drive-thru. I hope this generation has the patience to read this book because I have outlined what explains a lack of good service in so many businesses - people don't see the importance of focusing on the task at hand. Reading books, periodicals, newspapers and manuals on paper, require and teach concentration. It may become a lost art but not during my life.

One of our first employees stated an old adage, still true, "There is no time lost in whetting." Of course, that refers to taking the time to sharpen your knife so when you need it, it is ready. My shortened version is, "Everything you do counts." George remembers me telling him this. (I love it when the kids tell me they learned something from me.) They also tell me things they felt I messed up; it hurts, but if it helped them learn to do it right, it was worth it. I was still the teacher.

One of the best teachers of responsibility and work turned out to be other children! My children got to see it played out many times in a grocery store where a parent and child were melting down together over whether to buy some Ho-Ho cakes or just a pack of candy. Many is the time I stepped in and told a little Hell-raiser, "You sure do have a nice mommy, don't you? You should do what she says." I got a deer-in-the-headlights look as the situation diffused and the parents finished shopping in peace.

I'm not sure we ever had an incident in which I had to pull out my wooden spoon. I carried a lightweight mixing spoon in my purse during the toddler years; it's what my niece called the attitude changer. An opportunity to use this handy device meant we'd be leaving the store with no treats and no groceries. The chances of being taken along on a future shopping trip were slim also. My kids

just didn't like the embarrassment it produced. (Said spoon retired early).

My husband talks often of walking through open doors. We experienced God's grace by His keeping us out of the open ones that did not profit. Growing up in prosperous families gave us the pattern for our lives. When we were about to make the big move to another part of the state, my mother was horrified. She asked, "Why are you moving to such a place; that area is at least 10 years behind the times." Here again, she didn't see the vision of where God was leading us. Yes, we experienced the "poverty mentality" in this new community. We were told right from the start that people moved here because the welfare agency was very operative and proactive. A government funded lifestyle was prevalent in many families. What is ironic? There are more millionaires in our county per capita now than any other county in Ohio. Don't let the rolling mountainside and back woods fool you. The people living on the farms tucked in the trees have experienced great wealth since the geological surveys revealed Marcellus and Utica Shale oil and gas reserves. Over 30 prosperous wells dot the landscape.

People encourage one another to do their absolute best and we are seeing the results. My Mama would be blessed.

This is a good time to share my favorite inspirational Bible verse from the first Psalm verses one & two: *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the council of the ungodly, stands not in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law he meditates day and night."*

Chapter 6: Knowing God

“GEORGE. STOP IT!” I could hear my younger son yelling in the living room. Walking in, I saw Jordan’s little four-year-old biceps pounding his older brother’s back and George, with his head bowed, giggling through the beating, as he wasn’t really being hurt. Something frustrated Jordy - his laboriously built Lego castle lay in rubble. I stopped the altercation and knew it wouldn’t be the last. Usually, I let them work out their own differences and tried not to take sides unless it appeared someone’s life might be in danger. Letting kids work out their own differences teaches compromise, respect for others’ opinions as well as camaraderie. In keeping with my goals to rear a God-honoring, Bible believing family, I attempted to teach them how to maintain peace within our relationships.

Ah, the struggle of knowing when to intervene and when to urge the little birdies to leave the nest. Most things turned out well for our four amazing adults we had the privilege of growing up with! Following the instructions laid down in Deuteronomy chapter six, we had many opportunities to teach and train their friends as well. It really does take a “village to raise a child.” That quote is attributed to several sages. The summer I was expecting our first baby, someone called to ask me to teach in the Ecumenical vacation Bible school program. That was the last time I turned down this opportunity. Karena was due that very week. My parents both taught Bible classes and led home study groups, so I had plenty of examples to go by. As my children grew out of infancy, we attended churches which preached the whole gospel.

When our girls were pre-school age, we started attending a non-denominational church in town, and I soon became involved with teaching children. In the 1980s, Children’s Church became a common thing in churches. Sometimes it was called Junior Church. It benefitted the adults by having uninterrupted worship time, and the kids benefitted by having age-appropriate and physically active

learning classes. Over a three-year period, a couple of us ladies were inspired to write a series based on a circus theme. Our leader was dressed as a ringmaster/lion tamer in a red coat with tails and black top hat. The cane she carried let the kids know she meant business, i.e. sit still and listen! I came up with the idea of dressing as a clown with the name *Rebel-ation* and had an ‘attitude’. With curly rainbow wig and all, I bantered back and forth the Bible verse of the day with the ringmaster. Dressed in colorful polka-dots and ruffled collar, I was a fun child-like character kids could relate to as we all learned the verse. Learning the verse of the day was always the goal; for everyone to go home with it on the tip of their tongues and remember it throughout the following week. We had a hand-crafted lion outfit which a teenager wore. I alternated my character with being a popcorn vendor. My costume consisted of a paper hat and stripy red vest, and I strolled through the room as a song leader. Quirky items popped out of my vending box with song suggestions. A cheese grater prompted the song, “Greater is he that is in me, than he that is in the world.” Punny and funny.

After we ran the gamut of ideas, we had three years-worth of hand drawn Bible verse take-home pages, and I published them into a coloring book entitled, *Children’s Church Circus*. We sold almost 1,000 copies. I still have a limited number available.

Chapter 7: Living the Creative Life

When my children, one by one, aged out of the circus concept, they pitched in to help with new lessons. We had moved on to a new church environment. Each one helped me and learned the ropes of sharing their faith with their friends as well as learning how to drop a hand -puppet's mouth to make the talking look more realistic. (Thank you Willie George Ministries). By the time the girls were grown and starting their families, the boys were in high school. The children's church team was asked to do a Summer Children's Church program one year; God gave us a theme: "Vacation in the Son." We wrote out a 12-week program I subtitled "Most important things I want my children to know." On May 30, we asked the kids (a group of about 12-30) to wear shorts, tees and flip-flops, and we did the same. I had a good group of volunteer help; a close friend and her husband with pirate gear, and my Natalie and her family helped with coordinated song leading and puppetry. Some of the church's pastoral staff alternated with me to teach lessons and act out skits. Often, my two boys helped with skit characters or an extra hand in a puppet play. A lovely pink Flamingo puppet we named Word Bird appeared to teach the Bible verse of the day. We decorated the room with plastic, blown up palm trees, sea shells and other tropical items.

On our first morning, two helpers did a puppet skit with their puppet heads made of green felt. The life-like Oogene lost his ticket to leave for the trip to the island vacation he planned. That went over well; we got it. But when Word Bird came out to teach the verse of the day to our eager group of kids, one of the fathers who helped out was challenged to fit the role of "Sinbad, the Pirate" snarling, with an eye patch, bandana and sword. This seemed like a perfectly good way for the kids to see the contrast in good and bad behavior. The pirate, however, went off-script, and his entry lines "Arrgh!" and "shiver me timbers" fell flat. He was supposed to come "steal the word" but instead joined right in learning the verse of the day.

Romans 8: 38 - 39 teaches, “Nothing shall ever separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus”. My idea of having *Sinbad steal the loot (AKA Bible Verse)* didn’t happen; so much for having midweek practices and getting a point across. We needed to be more forthright and less subtle in our teaching methods. Drama and suspense capture and hold kids' attention in children's church, especially when there are surprise elements like these. My children looked forward to each new challenge to help.

God kept inspiring us on how to teach about “Vacation in the Son” for 11 more weeks. The story of Joshua leading the Israelite nation through the wilderness and the trials they faced seemed easily adaptable to present-day pitfalls. The main lesson was to learn the importance of listening to and obeying a leader, in other words, to *Know Jesus as Lord*. Sinbad reappeared many times as the good pirate who got converted. Maybe the Spirit of God was teaching us that when He changes a person, it is a real transformation; maybe God was teaching me to see something different about His abilities in changing peoples’ hearts.

Other lessons we taught with a *summer vacation* theme were as follows:

Don’t Give the Devil A Foothold in Your Life. This theme focused on the story of what the Bible called a wicked king named Ahab. The scripture says he was the wickedest of all the many kings, continually seeking the advice of his own wicked advisors and wizards. He was married to an idol worshiper as well. This gave us plenty of material to work with so we had a puppet skit with the characters fishing in a bad location. They pulled trash and odd items from the back of the puppet stage instead of fish. This time, Sin-Bad, the non-compliant pirate from last week, had it figured out and we scripted him to argue with me about listening to bad advice and thinking he could figure life out on his own. Ahab’s sins were similar to people's attitudes the kids could relate to:

“I’m my own boss”

“I can figure it out myself”

“I have rights”

“I’ll do it my way”

“Nobody’s going to tell me what to do, it’s a free country” etc, etc.

In week four, we taught, “How to Hear from God” The scripture reference was, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,” found in Romans 10:17. All the kids would repeat this until memorized. This week we gave each child the opportunity to write the verse on a dry-erase board and the class would read the verse. The selected child would erase a word. The next child would come up to the board and repeat the verse and erase another word. We would have each child get to repeat and erase until all the words were gone and we all knew the verse like clockwork. Things never got boring with Word Bird flying out from where she was that morning and squawking, “I hear the Word!”

We also reinforced the lesson and scripture by sending home a hand-drawn (by me) verse/picture they could color. Another lesson covered the topic of fear; we asked if anyone had a fear of something and we encouraged them to share with us. I started by telling about an irrational fear I had of kids older than I was when I was a kid. I realized it was an unnecessary fear because those high school-age kids probably were afraid of something too. None of them ever did anything to me and one time one older boy looked me straight in the eye and said, “You are not afraid of me!” He was actually embarrassed when my cousin revealed my fear to him.

We stressed what to do when something frightened you. I shared a photo of some strange looking creatures I saw in a parade once. It showed these 20-foot-tall clowns called *Moko-Jumbies*. I asked the kids if they looked scary, and they agreed that they did. Then I explained that they were just dressed up people standing on stilts, walking in a parade. Once you find out more information about something, you realize how silly it is to be afraid. Actually, it becomes entertaining. I found that if my children saw something frightening in a movie, we’d make fun of it, using a disclaimer of sorts, such as, “That’s not real blood, it’s ketchup!” or “That scar on his face is drawn on with a marker!” or “You can tell that’s a fake

window-it's painted onto the wall!" Maybe that's why my children never got into horror or fantasy movies, which we never permitted when they were young. We also requested more suitable reading books for a class assignment and asked permission to pick our own. Most times they concurred with us about unsuitable content. I could see no reason for my children to be exposed to alternate lifestyles and overt sexual expression. We nixed sci-fi and fantasy also.

My kids grew up not liking Halloween anyway. Churches we attended usually just held a "Hallelujah Night" or Harvest dinner when October 31st rolled around. The Jack-o-lanterns I carved were always smiling; and we didn't allow horror movies nor did we drape Cheesecloth cobwebs on our trees. And forget spiders, it was bad enough when we saw real ones. If they were ever involved in a TP (toilet papering) party, I never heard about it. They avoided anything that could cause undue punishment. During their school years, it was common for an entire class to get punished for vandalism caused by maybe one or two culprits. And you know there was never a confession so everyone in the class suffered.

Teaching on "The Whole Armor of God", we shared a message found in several Bible passages. I purchased a child-sized set of plastic armor from the Christian book store and let everyone try it on. It contained a shield, breastplate, belt, footwear and helmet. The shield was for fending off fiery darts of the enemy such as lies or bullying. The belt, I explained, was how we held in our guts to be courageous and not chicken out. The Bible footwear was nothing like today's but did protect the feet while going into the battle. We kept that plastic armor set around for years because my boys were especially good at play acting, turning their now-defunct baby crib into a pirate ship and building teepees with mop handles and blankets all tied together at the top.

The whole armor of God is not to be taken off; we face daily battles so we need to keep it on. George tells me resilience is one thing he wants to instill in his children. Growing up with lots of fears, he sees the importance of this lesson. Often, he coerced his little brother to run into the grocery store if I had asked him to go in and

buy a newspaper or a needed ingredient. He never enjoyed having to deal with strangers. He wants to see his kids bounce back and not downtrodden. One Sunday, with God's word being our focus, we reinforced getting past fears by having each child speak the verse into a microphone. Hopefully that skill stuck with them as I see so many adults today who still have a fear of even expressing themselves in public.

I want to share how I feel about teasing. This became a no-no in my house. I didn't allow the practice of teasing other children either. Teasing gives kids the idea that adults can't be trusted. I don't blame people for not liking others! It became a byword I've heard the hippie generation of the 60s spout,

"Don't trust anyone over 40."

Thanks a lot! Now who are they going to learn from? It probably started by someone making unfair, unnecessary comments to them as children. Seriously! I've heard things like, "You goof ball!" What is a goof ball? Or, "You're gonna get fat eating all that ice cream!" I think a lot of intimidation comes from teasing. Like I have mentioned earlier, we have all probably had unintentional remarks that were insulting. Children's church was a good place to undo scornful remarks and let children know they could have a friend. One family quit attending church when she brought in her family of five and an old geezer sitting on the sidelines jested, "I see you brought your problems to church with you." She was not amused. This family needed us, and I later kept one of the daughters in my home for a few weeks. The judge at our local juvenile court awarded her to me.

I love running into people who remind me that they remember me teaching junior church. I remember when one guy, now a grown man I see and talk with weekly, told me as a 2nd grade student that he had got a 100% on his spelling test. That was a Sunday I was probably emphasizing how God helps us or provides for us. Whatever the Bible lesson, he applied it to his own experience.

That same summer on the 4th of July, we went outdoors into the church's big parking lot. We set off sparklers and some larger fireworks to demonstrate the idea of The Awesome Power of God.

The original Greek word the Bible used for power of the Holy Spirit is *Dunamis* which is where we get the word Dynamite. This got the kids excited. We learned the verse from II Corinthians 16:9 that states, “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him!” I have to believe that scripture also was good seeds sown in fertile ground. Everyone had fun and knowing how kids are neglected and often shuttled off to baby-sitters and sit in front of a screen, I know the time was well invested. This is how my children grew up, knowing their mother and often Dad, were going to be teaching a Bible lesson somewhere to someone every week. Since then, we’ve all had hundreds, maybe thousands of opportunities to plant good seeds in people's lives. He is the Lord of the Harvest.

It may be old fashioned, written about 2000 years ago, but the Bible is not untimely. However old-fashioned, the Bible, no matter what version you read, is relevant and history is repeating itself. People who read history see this. Ideologies that make the rounds appear new to each generation, and they aren’t new. There have to be standards for people to survive. Coming up with a great reset is not the answer if we want to save humanity. Restarting our world system is a fantasy that will never survive reality; people who depend on someone else giving them wealth to start with do not have the work ethic to continue. That’s the premise behind the Bible; it is true and forever settled in heaven. God is the highest authority and has set the standards. I know they work because they worked for my family and I don’t think we are that unusual.

We pulled my husband in to help with object lessons. I named him Mr. Hardware Man and had him wear one of his work shirts and a Modern Hardware ball cap. We found ways to use household items to teach scriptural principles. He brought a transformer one morning and talked about how it converted 110 volt to 240. In simpler terms he explained that this little box is what enabled all the switches in a furnace to do what they are supposed to do. We tried to relate that to the importance of God transforming our lives to enable us to live a

good life. We have to be connected to God, and He causes all things to work together for our good.

One morning, years later, I was teaching a creative lesson. I felt the children needed to know about the Holy Spirit. After the service we were to have a children's workers meeting, and several young couples, parents of young children, gathered to plan our next season's lessons. The Pastor's wife, whom I thought was on board with us, blew a head gasket and said we were absolutely not going to teach on the Holy Spirit as we were still a denominational church. Up to that point, this couple had been one of the most encouraging couples with whom I'd ever worked. They resigned and left town. I'm glad my children were grown at that time. My daughter and her husband had been assisting me. We continued on after the blow-up. There is still so much controversy surrounding the movement of God's Spirit; I'm glad my family does not limit Him and what He can do in their lives. I still trust what God did in dozens of kids' lives over the course of two to three decades of my willingness to teach and train children.

I can't finish this chapter without naming one example of ridiculous new-age philosophy being forced on the unsuspecting, which my family is wise to. We believe it's just another way the adversary, Satan, is distracting people. We used to be able to trust our educators. Our Walter Cronkites and James Dobsons are gone, but their truthful teaching lives in the hearts of righteous society. Look out Ms. Greta Thunberg, eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you will die just like the rest of us. This simple-minded teenager was, I'm convinced, paid and televised to spout her fear of global warming and the danger of carbon emissions. She's going to be rudely awakened to find out warming and cooling cycles have been happening for hundreds of years of recorded history. Her lack of understanding gets broadcast through technology provided by the advancement of science that she had nothing to do with. "How dare we use up our resources and how dare we keep releasing ozone into the atmosphere?" she blathers, all the while promoting her misinformed agenda. She wouldn't have a platform to stand on if it

weren't for the technology created by the systems she condemns. Maybe this is one area where Lynn's philosophy of osmosis learning took place; our kids do not subscribe to new-age philosophy any more than we do. God put us in families to instruct one another.

Proverbs 29:18 is an oft misquoted verse. People do not like to speak the entire passage. "Where there is no vision, people perish AND, the rest says, he that keeps the law, happy is he". Laws, rules - that's what rebellious people fear; having to submit to standards. And yet they do so every day. They think their happiness is being restricted. My children found that out when they mis-stepped and called home to say, "Dad, I'll never do that again!" The mental wards, prisons and psychiatrists' offices are full to capacity with those who "Go their own way". Go ahead and break the traffic laws and let us know how it worked for you. Go ahead, argue with your boss about how the company should be run and let us know if they closed down when you stormed out. We'd also like a report of how it went when you started your own business without any standards or guidelines. My husband explained it this way, "Put your hand in a bucket of water. Now take it out. Did the water stay apart?"

I always encouraged my children to think something through, both sides of it. Natalie asked for help with her fifth-grade science project, "Which Brand of Popcorn Pops Best." Any parent who has ever helped with a science project is glad they only have to do it once. It's hard to let that tri-fold poster-board go out the door without having done some alterations on it, but I did. I was just the consultant, much to my dismay. And when Jordan was homeschooling fifth to sixth grades, he learned to dislike doing art. His walls are graced with paintings now, but not his. He did create a replica of the tunnel scene from "The Great Escape," a movie we watched more than a few times. I did a little more than my share of a foam board basketball court model, with his help. But he watched intently. He grew up learning that between the two of us, we can handle most any creative project thrown at us.

As I taught and trained mine and my friend's children, I reminded them they could insert their own name into Bible verses to

replace the pronouns. That makes it real. Example: “For God so loved Karena, that He gave His only Son that if she believed in Him she would not perish but have eternal life.” Wherever there are pronouns or generic references to people in the Bible, substitute your name in there. Putting your name in makes it personal and doable. The ancient text of the Holy Bible is as relevant today as it was when written. All 66 books agree with each other even though they were written over centuries and from different cultures. It’s never going to be outdated. As I continue in my seventh decade of life to quote and memorize the Word it’s deeply ingrained in my life. The Lord has an answer for every issue of life. It’s how I answered the children’s questions.

Eating away at parts of the Christian world is Communist ideology which has failed people on all levels. I had to explain to my family what Communism is. Who pays attention to, much less understands, four syllable words in elementary school? This ideology is the embodiment of Satan. I remember hearing about the McCarthy trials in the 1950’s. Senator Joseph McCarthy brought up the very real threat of Communism; the subversive side made a mockery of his idea but the threat never went away, just into hiding for a while.

A book I recommend often is the updated version of *The Naked Communist* by W. Clean Skousen. For up-to-the-minute info on its influence on Western society, American families should subscribe online or buy a hard copy of *The Epoch Times*. Its editor, John Tang, is a dissident from China and the author has written his experiences in his book *How the Spector of Communism is Ruling our World*. I questioned my daughters and sons if they were taught what Communism is. Some do not know. It was taught as a viable socioeconomic option from the time of the 1970s when, all of a sudden, people were finding out they had the constitutional right to protest. It wasn’t peaceful protesting that took place, though, and resulted in death for some.

I remember the summer of 1970. I had finished my first year of college at Kent State’s branch in my high school. Four students were

killed and nine wounded while protesting our country's involvement in Southeast Asia. Out of the blue, children began insisting that they "had rights." Their demands included detrimental actions to society. I don't need to preach to anybody who wakes up in America every day that drug use, abortion, a reduced military, unpunished crime and a general lack of Christian character are rampant in society. What Baby Boomers didn't realize was they were tools in the hands of evil men promoting a Godless society. I am thankful that my four children and their families are sticking to what we taught them. They benefit society by their careers and moral character. The Word is hidden in their hearts. Thank you Karena and Ken, Natalie and Casey, George and Vera, and Jordan and Brianna.

From the time of putting the children to bed in their own rooms, I would go in and sit and read from many different devotional materials, and we'd sing a worship song or two, pray and get them to sleep in a peaceful fashion. George had me read the story of David fighting Goliath a hundred times. The girls enjoyed the Bread for Children publication, a periodical with modern day stories of inspiration on elementary level. Natalie especially liked the stories of virtue in a series Grandma Mable got us started on called Children's Bedtime Stories.

We sang a lot from Salty's singing songbook and Integrity music. Even though we provided each of them with music lessons, none of them play or sing in front of people, outside of a congregation. (some of them sing in the shower).

Since those years, I've given away most of my resources to other families. We had a baby sitter who shared with me that she wanted her boys to grow up to be just like mine.

Matthew 5: 6: "Blessed are you who hunger and thirst after righteousness, you will be filled!"

Chapter 8: Controlling Tongues and Tempers

Andy Rooney, a 1960s TV personality said, “Let your words be sweet, you might have to eat them”. My husband saw a similar message on a billboard, “Humility is a lifelong lesson.” As we reared four children, we wanted them to learn to give grace to people; we learned right along with them. Words we speak enter the atmosphere and can’t be taken back. Speech is powerful. We realized how often we wished we hadn’t responded so quickly, raising our voices and causing emotional damage. Selfishness causes us to demand our way rather than listening to others.

I get angry. My husband gets angry. We all were frustrated and annoyed at times, but we learned to control what we express; sometimes we stop a sentence dead in its tracks. Often, my husband utters a few words and silence follows leaving me wondering but glad I didn’t hear it. I’m sorry my kids had to watch me grow up. Karena used to be bothered by our heated discussions. It’s how we used to do things, and I believe this worried the children about the future of our happy home. I try to remember what my parents, grandparents and 11 uncles and 11 aunts experienced in life and realized that I couldn’t learn patience soon enough.

Swearing was never going to be part of my vocabulary. If anyone ever had reason to come unglued and let out a stream of perverse language it would have been my Italian Grandma, Jenny (Vincenzina Palumbo Volpe). She was the daughter of Sicilian immigrants arriving here sometime in the early part of the 20th century. They settled in Chicago; I have no idea how she made her way into Ohio. There were no interstate highways, and air travel for the common citizen was non-existent in 1900. Family legend has it that she was a bartered bride. She served her family of six children and husband until Grandpa Pasquale Volpe, immigrant from Bari, Italy as a teenager, died around age 50 of a heart attack. Life was hard. Nothing was automated. Horses plowed the fields of their dairy farm. My

Uncle Frank risked his life to run in and free the animals when Grandpa's still caught fire. The barn burned to the ground, but he saved the horses. There was no internet or TV. A hand-cranked telephone hung on the wall, and they shared a party line with neighbors who knew everybody's business. They didn't call an Emergency Squad; they ran to the neighbors for a bottle of Mercurochrome for injuries in emergencies.

Mother told us that at any given time, everyone had two outfits of clothing, one to wash, one to wear. One pair of shoes served school, barn chores and church. Meat was only eaten on Sundays, and eggs were for selling to make money. Grandma didn't have the convenience of disposable sanitary products or diapers. Those garments had to be laundered and reused. That was more work for Grandma. Wouldn't she be amazed at the convenient items I have that I think are absolute necessity? After Grandpa died and the three sons moved the family off the farm, they discovered Grandpa had made tons of money bootlegging whiskey for the Italian cousins who "visited" on weekends. The money was hoarded and never spent on things the family really needed. Yet, despite lack of conveniences, rearing six children on a shoestring and miscarrying several babies, Grandma Jenny was the most soft-spoken, easy-going person I ever knew. Always wearing a tender smile, she never let a situation ruffle her feathers.

When my three uncles began a construction business, the family of seven moved off the farm and to Orrville, Ohio. They built new homes for most of the seven families. People were always moving in and out of Grandma's house. A troubled teenage grandson and his buddies hung out, eating what little our grandmother could afford. One son moved his girlfriend and baby into one of the only two bedrooms. Grandma was always hostess to someone. She continued her gift of gardening and preserving her own foods, and everyone took advantage. But Grandma Jenni Volpe never expressed a word of resentment about her lot in life. What a saint! She showed us what contentment looked like. My Mother learned her ways; my mother and dad never uttered perverse language or swore that I knew of. I

wanted the same for my children. Life can be lived without profanity. Peace reigned because the Prince of Peace ruled our home. If the Prince of Peace rules your home, there will be peace.

I endeavored to teach my four children to speak kindly and answer thoughtfully. It was not a matter of being “religious.” I cared how we treated each other and those in the outside world. I hear people who speak without thinking, and it proves intolerance and the inability to allow others to make mistakes. A foundation of trust begins with us forgiving very quickly and keeping our critical and judgmental opinions to ourselves. God’s not done with us.

Dorothy Law Nolte penned a list in 1972. I am paraphrasing her for your bulletin board:

“Children Learn What They Live”

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn. If they live with hostility they learn to fight. If they live with fear they learn apprehension. With pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves. If they live with ridicule, they become shy. If they live with jealousy they learn envy. If they are shamed, they will feel guilty.

But if they live with encouragement, they will learn confidence. With tolerance they will learn patience. If they live with praise they will learn to appreciate. If they live with acceptance they will learn to love. If they live with approval, they learn to like themselves. If they live with recognition they will set goals. If they live with sharing, they will learn generosity. If they live with honesty they will live with truthfulness. If they live with fairness they learn justice. If they live with kindness and consideration they learn respect. If they live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those around them. If they live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.

My children bless me to this day. Once my older son, George, now a father of three, expressed how tired he is some nights while trying to be a good parent, so I reminded him that being a parent is the most important job you do. Rest when you can.

One evening when he was three, George encountered a serious problem: he tangled his little army vehicles and helicopters in a doily

sitting under my lamp. He quietly looked over at me while I was reading, and he said, “Sumpin’ happened, Mommy!” His inventive little mind was using the bedside stand as an army base and was secure enough to ask me what to do. I was glad he assessed the problem as being something he needed help with. I didn’t preach to him or get upset and cuss nor did I tell him to take his toys elsewhere. There was no damage done. I was pleased he asked for my help to untangle the wreckage.

We had many “*sumpin’ happened*” over the years. These were opportunities to teach, not berate. I often admonished, though, that things don’t “just happen”. Own up to responsibility. I learned to tell when my child was remorseful. I believe no one wants to do wrong, at least not in the beginning. It’s only after a child is made to feel rejected and stupid that they turn to misbehavior and later, crime. Some have said children doing dastardly deeds are vying for our attention, pushing the envelope. I think they are just being kids and would rather not make stupid mistakes.

We were having a fellowship time with another family one night. Their two boys were playing with ours, and they were playing basketball in the house which led to a serious incident. Our ceilings were tall in that old Victorian home, nearly the height of a basketball court. We still had antiques in our Victorian home in town. The basketball got away and collided with a valuable blue glass hurricane lamp. Did we scream, holler and threaten? No. That would not have repaired the lamp but might have caused permanent guilt-ridden damage to them and the two friends who contributed to the accident. Everyone felt terrible, but no one was really hurt. Material possessions should not be more valuable to us than our children. The NBA wannabes never repeated the incident. I can’t say the same for the next generation but we allowed for extra rough-housing room when we built our new house in 2001. I had to let go of my disappointment again when Natalie traded away my expensive doll clothes I had collected since I was 12, and in return she received back scrappy, hand-made raggedy things that weren’t anything to keep. We had a barstool mysteriously come up broken and an antique

etched window pane cracked by another wayward basketball. Hopefully my calm treatment and explanation of the value of things reminds them how to respond when their children destroy valuables in their homes. No one ever confessed about the splintered bar stool; it wasn't purposefully broken but probably just served as a rampart in one of the frequent Nerf wars that take place in our basement. 20 people would join in the fray and have a "high old time." (That was Grandma Mable's saying when I saw the gleam in her smiling eyes watching her family enjoy life). Memorable moments are more important than stuff. We should have realized that hanging a rare neon light near the basketball hoop in that same basement was in the danger zone. It still hangs there as a reminder to protect things we don't want broken.

A very important point which our children saw us play out was in communicating with their teachers at school. We entrusted them with their decisions over our children's education. Times have changed; those with evil intentions have taken over the moral values of our society. If I were rearing children today, we would be educating from home unless I knew the teachers personally and could verify that they were teaching Christian values and not undermining the authority of the Bible.

We believe in teachable moments according to Proverbs 22:6 in the KJV:

"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he's old he won't depart from it".

Chapter 9: A Legacy of Frugality

If we want to let people know how hard life was for us as kids than they do now we say, “When I was a kid _____”. Fill in the blank. I know I’ve said that to people and listened to their stories too. I really did trudge a mile to school in six feet of snow. That was my experience from second grade through high school. And it was for at least a mile! Now, my children are saying it. Changes go unseen.

A lot of our attitudes and habits learned, from parents, shape how we parent. So, here’s an explanation of why Lynn and I did it “that way.” I learned how to avoid buying new things by watching our folks repair stuff. You won’t ever see duct tape holding a shower curtain to the wall in my bathroom, however, that was one of my Mother-in-laws favorite repair techniques - the rampant use of gray duct tape. She was inventive! Rather than buy a larger shower curtain to fit around the tub, she duct-taped it to the wall to keep the floor tile dry. It worked for years. I did learn so much from her. Lynn and I have a challenge throwing away things that have served our families purposes for so long. We did recognize in 1999 that the time had come to let go of antique furniture buying. I mentioned my children's homes being immaculate? They are also tiled and use only neutral color schemes. There’s no fluff, no carved mouldings and crystal chandeliers, only what’s essential for a very busy and focused lifestyle for these four and their families. I will start to eliminate the extra things I have saved that they will have no use for. My granddaughters are asking about things they would like as mementos and I attach their names to them.

Since I bear a French name chosen by my German father and Italian mother, I learned to love a variety of ethnic foods and cultures. We didn’t come that long after the immigrants who came here. A five-hour plane ride to Europe is pleasant compared to riding on a boat, bobbing up and down, up and down on a week’s journey

from London to New York harbor. I'm told Grandma Jenny arrived here from Sicily at age two. The Weber ancestors came from Shoenau, Germany on a boat named Fredonia in 1944. Once a year we traveled to the DeVito's Italian Grocery market in Akron to get specialties for Christmas. Baklava was offered along with biscotti, Pizzelles, anisette cookies and thick loaves of soft Italian bread. Things my children can now purchase anywhere or drive an interstate highway two hours to shop for, were infrequent treats for us in 1956. We encouraged our four to experience life outside the neighborhood. When interstate highways were built, trips to Whole Foods Markets in Columbus, Ohio were just a short afternoon road trip.

When I was a kid, Mother would purchase a five-pound box of squid for calamari soup, a healthy way to eat what people deep-fry today and call calamari! My friends at school would wrinkle their noses if I'd tell them what we had for dinner. It was squid to me, and I loved helping squeeze the eye balls and pull the cartilage out of the slimy things. Skinning them was a chore I didn't mind. I long for a bowl of Mom's calamari soup! I believe the recipe is lost to the ages. Now, people just pull a cardboard box out of the freezer for a meal.

The marinara-soaked aroma of Italy drew the largely Italian population of North Hill in Akron into the shop under the *viaduct* and into the *gorge* to DeVito's. They relocated on Tallmadge Avenue. I'm not related to these people; but all Italian people feel connected. Italy is a melting pot just like the United States. I felt a connection through my ancestry. Pairs of waxy Provolone balls hanging by two ropes from atop the deli case fascinated me, as did the colorful salami sticks and garlic bundles. Briny olives and specialty salads, giant grapes and unusual candies all tempted us; it taught this girl to enjoy all foods! Mother also knew how to prepare Baccala - a salty fish she purchased out of barrels on the floor; she had to soak them in water until edible. Yum! I love the memory of my Italian grandma, sitting in our cozy golden yellow kitchen while Mother made piles and piles of homemade cavatelli pasta or 'cucidati' fig cookies. Cucidati are now my children's favorite

Christmas cookies. (Recipe forthcoming.) Our family learned to love nutritious and healthy foods. We shun McDonald's drive through. Homemade meals are the favorite. Our grown children raise their own chicken and beef and have their own eggs as well as vegetables from the garden. Living so close to restaurants and having access to prepared foods, we don't depend on our own produce but realize we could if we ever have to.

My father's German heritage influenced our diets as well. Hearty meats like lamb, goat, home pasture raised beef and wild caught fish are on our menu. We are all scornful of processed, preservative-soaked, store-bought products. We like our desserts, but we look closely at ingredients on labels. Before I would buy a cereal, I made the children read the labels; Trix, Kix and any other colorful, charmed cereals were banned in our home because of dyed and chemically processed ingredients. Fiber grams had to be counted too. Under two grams, it didn't go home with us. The children told me years later that they sometimes craved the forbidden foods. When Natalie was still young enough to sit strapped in the shopping cart, about three years old, I parked the cart a little too close to the shelf which held cake mixes. She reached up and grabbed a box of chocolate cake mix that had a luscious looking frosted cake on the label, and, pretending to be able to read the back, she proclaimed, "It says 'for babies'!" We have laughed about that for years. I bought the mix.

In 2023, my Father Edsel Weber turned 97 years old. He boasted of having lived longer than any other Weber we knew. In the 73 years I knew him I never witnessed him overdoing anything, including food. I believe my four children have his genes. All are quite slender and fit as fiddles! They also loved their only Grandpa. Their Reusser Grandpa was gone too early, and only Karena has a memory of him. If my dad wanted another guitar he sold one, so his collection never totaled more than a dozen. If he wanted a treat, he would descend into the basement and we'd hear the sound of black walnuts cracking open, which he had picked up at his dad's farm, his home place. His Mom, my wonderful Grandma, always had a granite roaster full of

homemade cookies, and we made our way stealthily to the kitchen to snatch one as often as possible. These were not your Oreo or Nutter-Butter Nabisco types; these were *real* cookies about six or seven inches in diameter and very satisfying. And listen to this - all of uniform size, shape and consistency, perfect as if out of a package. Mother gave Grandma a run for her money. She was the premier cookie-baker of the next generation. From my Sicilian Grandma, I present, ‘Cucidati’ or, in English, ‘little cushions’;

Mix: 1 cup of softened butter

2 cups of sugar

4 large eggs

Then, add in 4 Tablespoons cream (half & half works)

And 2 teaspoons vanilla

Sift together and mix in 5 cups of AP King Arthurs or any other organic flour

½ Teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon baking soda

This makes a large amount of dough; chill in the fridge for a few hours or until needed.

Divide the dough into 3 sections and prep 1 section at a time. Roll out onto a heavily floured surface 1/8th inch if possible. Cut into 3 or 4 “circles and lay on a parchment covered cookie sheet.

Filling: 2 cups of your choice of diced figs, prunes, date, raisins or a mixture of these and chopped almonds or hazelnuts, ¾ cup water and ½ cup honey. Cook until slightly thick. Cool before using. This mixture can be refrigerated for a few weeks and used throughout the season when needed.

Spoon onto ½ of the circles, wet edges with milk, fold over and seal with tines of a fork. You can get fancy and cut a shape or slit the top layer if desired.

Bake at 350 for 12 minutes.

For a sweeter and decorative cookie, frost with stripes of red, white and green to resemble the flag of Italy. Natalie now holds the title of Cookie Queen and holds an annual baking day near Christmas. Cousins and Aunts spend a whole Saturday before Christmas baking at least 20 different treats, enough to share with

many families. Our list of must-haves are Natalie's chocolate covered peanuts, chocolate mint sandwiches, and six or eight others. I usually do Russian tea cakes, fold-overs with jam filling, frosted cut-outs, seven-layer bars and cherry coconut bars. Natalie's cousins do their favorites and my sister does biscotti. The kids help, but I now have the same feeling Mom probably had, and I have to hide my impatience with the mess that's made all over Natalie's kitchen. Red and green sprinkles stick to socks and we share bowl-washing duties.

Dad was three when this country endured the Great Depression of 1929. It was only called "great" because it was wide-spread and affected everybody. I was going to say it didn't serve a blessed purpose but from my 73-year-old perspective, I believe it taught frugality and appreciation of the value of our possessions. Dad often said, "when I was a kid, we didn't know we were poor." This came from a guy who slept in an unheated attic, on a straw tick (whatever that is). He had to shake the snow off the quilt in the morning that fell from between the roof tins. As shown in the accompanying photo, my Dad was compulsive about neatness. He was one of those OCD guys that outlined each tool on his tool bench pegboard in black marker. He also carried a cloth handkerchief and never used Kleenex; Mother washed those hankies like we used to wash cloth diapers.

That generation is long gone. Everything now is disposable. My first baby wore cloth diapers until my husband decided it was worth buying disposable Pampers rather than mess with the germ, smelly pail of soaking diapers in the laundry room. But, my older son, George, can't stand stains or dirt in any form. He performed an hour's worth of scrubbing on a spot on his white sweatshirt. Jordan wore the same shorts and matching shirt from the time he was four until I hid them away a few years later. This is frugality! Don't throw something away if it's fixable and can still be used. Don't throw anything away that can be repaired. Some of Mom and Dad's frugal tendencies came from his 18-month service in the U.S. Navy. Dad shared about the compliment he received from his superior. When they were having their bunks inspected, Dad got the dubious award

of “neatest bed” when he announced, “Now here’s a guy who half-assed tried.”

Mother told me of a disappointing shopping trip where they returned home having bought a “less expensive” bedroom suit than the one she admired. Danish Modern was the rule of decor in the early ’50s. Today, we use the term Ikea, which means use as little and thin material as possible.

My parents took great care of everything they owned, and the things they didn’t own they treated like it was theirs. We were even taught not to walk across each other's yards because it was a lot of work to take care of the grass. Every other year, the company Dad worked for selling cleaning chemicals for the food industry sent him a new vehicle. After supper in the winter time, Dad would religiously retreat to the garage to hose the cinders and slush off the car tires and chains, so that when it was traded in two years later, it looked like it had never been driven. And, we never dreamed of eating in the car; we didn’t encounter drive-thrus as commonly as we do today.

In the photo accompanying this story, you can see more of my parents' thrifty lifestyle. The doll bed was handcrafted by Dad and the doll blanket by Grandma Weber. Grandma even made my first doll. Dad also built from scraps of our new home my first doll house using a piece of roof shingle and plywood. I think this might have ignited the spark of my interest in interior design. Dad and my Mother-in-Law Mable, of whom I spoke earlier, invented reduce, reuse and recycle. It's not a new concept, just a new term. We didn’t throw away an entire bagful of garbage a day like we do these days. We hauled refuse to the city dump which today would be called a landfill. We had that adventure on Saturday mornings only. (Daddy/daughter time). Frugality carried through in my parenting habits as I crafted toy guns from cardboard so the boys and their cousins could play cops and robbers as they flushed “bad guys” out of the barn. Over the years, the kids enjoyed making their own play houses out of large appliance boxes from the store.

When we operated a Sears Catalogue Store in Woodsfield, items that were returned for credit became dumpster fodder, as Sears did

not require us to return broken or damaged merchandise. Rather, if a toy was missing some pieces, we took it home for the kids to play with. One toy they got lots of use out of was a Fort Apache set. There might still be a few soldiers and Indians in our toy box. Our family got hours of use by recycling what others couldn't abide by. Often, items of clothing missing buttons or needing a zipper repair, a household tool with paint scratched or bent parts, still quite usable, saved us lots of money. I don't remember any of the children ever saying they felt deprived though. They learned the value of a dollar. This thriftiness reaches into the third generation. One day my granddaughter secretly confided in me, "Grandma, I wish I could return all this stuff and get the money back for it." She knows.

Our small town now has two dollar stores making it too easy to keep buying "stuff". I think Philip Vischer's Veggie Tales' "Stuff Mart" theme song helped us not over consume also. Who can forget Solar turkey-chopper and padded Gopher-Bopper song?

These are just a few of the healthy habits we taught the children. We developed some go-to home remedies we use to this day. When someone gets an earache, we'd cut an onion in half, wrap in a wash cloth and microwave it for a minute. The vitamin C fumes from the onion always felt great and the earache subsided. I didn't let my daughters buy tampons; I taught them what my mother said, "The vagina isn't supposed to be opened until marriage". When someone had a tummy ache or flu we knew what we needed the most was rest and the right food. Soft drinks and Capri-Sun drinks were not kept in our fridge except on holidays. Along with the home remedies, we listened to healing scriptures and Don Francisco music. We learned the truth of the Holy Bible: God wants us well! In the KJV James chapter 1 says, "He wants us to be well and to prosper like our soul does". We made the scriptures part of our daily vocabulary. We walked in divine health. We sought the reasons we were under attack by the Devil (God of this world) and wore the whole armor of God. A friend whose daughter listened to many of my sermons in Children's church, years later told me, "Jessie said, 'Yvonne told us to pray before we go to the medicine cabinet.'" That was a common

theme we taught, and I designed a take-home paper shaped like a medicine bottle with the “Gospills” verses inside for the kids to repeat and remember. Here is the prescription:

Exodus 15:26 ...hearken to the voice of the Lord and you'll have no diseases!

Psalm 103:3 ...He heals all my diseases!

Proverbs 4:20-22 ...my Words...are life to all who find them and healing and health.....

Isaiah 53:4-5 “He bore our griefs, by His stripes we are healed!”

Matthew 8:17 Jesus quotes the above verses.

Luke 13:10-17 People rejoiced because Jesus did the right thing by healing a woman.

1st Peter 2:24 Jesus again quotes Isaiah.

Hebrews 4:16 Let's come boldly to the throne of grace to find help in time of need.

I am not paraphrasing the abovenamed passages, just shortening them so you will read them for yourself.

My father often quoted his mother by saying “Moderation in all things”. And my dad always said, “We didn't know we were poor”. I quote my dad and Mom more than I realize. I like to say, “*We are rich*”, or “*Blessed, happy, fortunate and to be envied,*” as the Amplified version states it in Psalm 33:12

Chapter 10: This is Not a Restaurant!

My Mother-in-Law, at the age of 90, came to live with us for nearly a year. She was the best Mother-in-Law a person could ask for! We all loved her; she had been such a blessing to her whole family and we wanted to return the blessing. This was during the years my sons were still in high school. We built our new home close to town to accommodate handicapped or any person needing assistance. Mable was with us as per a doctor's instructions. She and I were good friends; she made the best of the situation but I could see that moving into someone else's home wasn't what she would have chosen for herself. Families used to care for their aging relatives at home before the invention of nursing homes. My Dad came to live with us for the year before he died. I hoped that he never had the feeling that he was intruding on our lives, I didn't feel that way. The three or four generations living together taught everyone to be less selfish. My Mother-in-Law and Dad both expressed remorse at having to be cared for; I hoped we could all see ourselves in the future.

The big challenges came with mealtime. Mable was known for years by many for her delicious meals. Fried chicken, corn, 'taties and noodles was the name my little girls gave their favorite Grandma meal. But by the time she moved in with our family, she refused to eat anything green, in other words, vegetables and salads. The same with my father, basically, nutrition was out the window. Starch is all they wanted - and candy.

My widowed brother-in-law dined with us frequently during the time Mable was here also. As a cancer patient, he had to forgo red meats and sugar. His diligence in this area kept him alive 10 years longer than most cancer victims. When my younger daughter married, we gained a total junk-foodaholic. He'd eat the meals I fixed, but was happy with a hot dog and tomato soup- lunch or a cupboard laden with Little Debbie Cakes and Doritos. During these

years, our two sons, living at boarding school through the week with students from India, Bahamas and other foreign countries, developed a widened taste for all ethnic foods. I wasn't a heavy seasoner; I had to get used to people asking for the salt and pepper shakers, sauces and dips. My husband developed this habit, too, and now retrieves the 'Cha-hula' sauce from the fridge to douse anything from scrambled eggs to roast beef. Our daughters had gone strictly to a no high fructose or hydrogenated oils diet. This wasn't a problem since I still cook fresh from scratch. There are few processed things that occupy space in my pantry, and I could be sure the kids read the labels. Cooking things are challenging when you have a diabetic family member to consider, who eats the filling out of a pie crust, the toppings and cheese off a pizza slice and leaves the noodles in the bottom of the lasagna pan.

For the grandchildren, I keep bananas and graham crackers and milk handy. Ella's Daddy said once, she only eats those things at my house. (It's a grandma thing). Then to top off the assortment of diners, I have to keep in mind my sister and brother-in-law who have gone vegetarian but recently added fish to their fare. Does that mean I'm always obligated to serve seafood for them so they get their protein? My youngest son is not a big seafood/fish fan. I developed a plan. I would put a glass in front of everyone and serve up the biggest pitcher of water with lemon and orange slices, and say "Bon Appetit!"

I'm not sure what the point of this story is but to say, we mostly ate at home. Seldom were we invited to other's homes. We hosted others a lot, but the invitation wasn't returned much. The children mostly packed lunches for school; other's quickie pizzas and undercooked chicken legs didn't appeal to them.

The water pitcher and glasses idea never materialized. Woodsfield has grown; we now have 14 eateries which enable us to have large family dinners and everyone orders what they want. Mexican or Chinese are the usual. One granddaughter has a very restricted diet so brings her own food. Two other hometown Mom'n Pop places serve up home cooking that is pretty satisfying;

Subway, one of the first restaurants to set up shop in Woodsfield, is a favorite. We also have several ice cream venues and we bought a Little Caesar pizza franchise in 2014. I can add a tossed mixed salad and homemade dessert to this and everyone's happy. Thanksgiving meals remain pretty traditional because it's just once a year, except for Karena's trial run Thanksgiving. Her husband now raises organically grown turkeys and they are delicious for several meals. Christmas gives us the opportunity to try new recipes that are constantly being promoted through the media. . Those are three meals no one complains about.

All 18 of us try to stay on track with healthy eating and when an illness does attack, we keep as holistic as possible. Our old family doctors used to tell us, "Instead of calling in for a script so you can stay on the treadmill, you folks need to stop and rest"! We were never of the mindset, often preached in some mainstream churches, that God sends trials of sickness on a person to punish or teach a lesson. To believe such is a complete misunderstanding of God and His Word. We don't want our children sick. We also relied heavily on my now worn-out Jethro Klauss Back to Eden manual.

3rd John 1:2 "Belove, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers".

Chapter 11: Alcohol, the Great Divider

Lynn and I moved to Woodsfield, Ohio in 1975 to take over the Modern Hardware Store; the owners were retiring and their three children did not want the business. We had some aunts and Uncles still living in Monroe County at the time and we visited them frequently. The four employees of Modern stayed on with us, and I worked there six days a week. On Saturday, when Lynn wasn't selling hardware as a traveling salesman for our supplier, Belknap, Inc., he worked in the store so I could get some household chores done. We stayed busy; there wasn't time for partying. When I heard the word "party" I learned that it meant *drink fest*.

We were treated cordially by the town's people, but I heard about parties and events to which we were not invited. The word got around that we were not alcohol users. Alcohol consumption is what I call *The Great Divide*. We'd be invited to a couple's home and when we didn't accept a beer or glass of wine, we never got invited back. In our home we served lemonade and iced tea although we were always very generous with snacks.

Our business grew and has supported our family since 1975. We've remodeled and expanded several times, and a number of relatives came and helped out. We had lots of company; people wanted to see what drew us to Southern Ohio. My Aunt Bea, who was also a neighbor, invited us to her church, which took up our Sundays. It was a conservative group of young families; they were our first friends. We spent any free time we had with relatives on weekends, especially Great Uncle Walter, who lived to 93 years old, on our family farm. We didn't waste money on anything because there was only enough to keep paying down our debt to both of our dads, who had loaned us our down payment on the business and our house. We started our family in 1978 and spent only what was needed for clothing and food, gasoline and two-hour trips home to visit relatives in Wayne County.

I saw how people functioned who regularly used alcohol. Our store was next to a bar and people who spent money there would come to our store and spend what was left before they went home, especially on Christmas Eve. We weren't even pushy, or overbearing sales people, but we could talk them into buying anything. There were many times we didn't even have to talk they would choose whatever we had on-hand and we'd wrap it up. They may have been compensating for coming home in a not-so-pleasant condition. Over the last 50+ friends have told me they had to quit using alcohol because it affected their health, their ability to think, as well as their memory, etc. Their doctors gave them an ultimatum: quit or die young. I didn't preach to anybody about it; I just noticed my friends who continued to drink "just a little wine with dinner" had a difficult time remembering details of our conversations the next time we met. That got really annoying when we were on committees together and I was the only one who remembered our plans for the bazaar or even the next meeting.

I have become even more adamant about this issue as time goes on as I see how it affects families in the financial as well as social experiences of the family. Not being a drinker means there is no beer in the fridge. In addition to that, I had extended family members whose children and wives did without necessities because of their consumption of alcohol. My husband has some funny stories of people who would drop in to "visit" his father and need a little something to warm up. It is sad when your friends have to make excuses for jobs not done or responsibilities not fulfilled and you know why. It's not easily hidden.

I don't say these things to condemn, but to warn parents. I merely repeated to my children and those entrusted to my Sunday school lessons what I observed. In discussions, people recoil; I don't have the authority to condemn it but, seeing relatives' lives ruined with that habit convinced me it would not be a part of mine, nor my children's lives. We have enough battles to fight.

I quote Isaiah 5:11 & 12 and Proverbs 23, in the Amplified Translation: "Woe to them who rise early in the morning to pursue

strong drink, who tarry late into the night until wine inflames them. They have musical instruments and wine at their feasts but don't regard the deeds of the Lord or consider the operation of his hands in mercy and judgment'.

There are a number of passages which come from our God who loves, cares and desires the best for His people! To read a thorough study on this and other topics, refer to my devotional book, "Word Studies" which I shall be completing soon. There has been so much heartache in both mine and Lynn's family with people who were steady alcohol users and friends who lost young people through related alcohol car accidents. Oh, all the uncles held jobs and brought home the paychecks but, there were family needs that went unmet. A cousin went to work at age 12 to be able to buy her basic needs since her Daddy drank most of the paycheck. My Mother tells of the heartache the night their barn burned down, the result of Grandpa's still catching the hay on fire. Grandpa died at age 50 of heart failure, most likely due to his stress-filled bootlegging life. All of us know of families who have lost young children when a drunk driver collided with their car. A prominent family, their teenage daughter riding with boys who had been drinking, lost their only daughter. That memory from my impressionable pre-teen years never left me.

These Bible passages and stories far outnumber the argument, "*doesn't the Bible say take a little wine for your stomach*"? Who takes a "little" wine for their stomach? They take a little wine and then a little more wine, but not for their stomach.

Joshua 24:15 states in the KJV, "*Choose you this day whom you will serve....as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*"

Chapter 12: Who Wins? The Answer is ...Both!

Lynn and I were hosting Natalie's family of three at PF Chang's for dinner. It was already crowded and noisy. The tables in that place are too close together so you get the full effect of everyone's conversations plus background music which only adds to the chaos and drowns out nothing. Me, AKA Grandma, always sat with two-year old Nicholas because I always carried provisions like crayons and Matchbox cars for entertainment. We ordered, waiting for appetizers to arrive. I moved Nick's milk cup away from the edge of the table. Those flimsy plastic cups with the hole in the top for a straw, were never meant to hold liquid in, even with a cover. I could see the possibility of an elbow coming in contact with the milk. He moved it back to the edge, without taking a sip, within a millimeter of the edge of the table. I grabbed it again and moved it further away from the line of fire. He became agitated and reached for the cup. Grandma was a step ahead. With my superior sense, I managed to put the still-full cup out of his reach. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed his father watching the altercation.

He said, "I'm anxious to see who wins this battle!"

I answered, "Guess who!" and not using a megaphone voice to yell "NICK!"

There were no harsh words or anger exchanged, just calm intervention to avoid a mess.

I learned from previous battles with our own 4 children, if we handle disagreements with tact and respect, everybody wins. My Mother often quoted a Proverb 15:1, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger". A sample of what I might have said during our dinner discourse was, which I have heard others say is, "STOP IT!" or "Do you want me to take you outside?" I never understood the purpose of asking kids what kind of punishment they preferred. True punishment is going to hurt no matter what kind. And corner sitting, telling the child to think about it doesn't make sense to

me either, because if the child knew how to think through something in a mature manner, he/she would not have done the deed the way he/she did.

My explanation was, “Nick, Gramma doesn’t want you to bump your milk on the floor.” He complied. I got out some more crayons and asked him if he knew how to draw a star. That’s the first thing I ask kids who seem reluctant to take up a drawing pencil. Art gets kids attention. They are proud to make more stars when they find out there is an easy method! Then, I move on to houses, hearts and other simple items. When adults say they can’t draw a straight line, I say “I use a ruler!” I have given many art classes to people over the past 25 years; art is a skill to be learned and used life-long. Art is everywhere in life; never discourage the interest. Artists are the teachers in life, seeing beyond the observable. When Nick was in first grade, he won the all-school coloring contest. I’m proud to have been able to spend many hours doing creative projects with Nick. Winning children over with respectful and non-retaliating communication is key to having a good relationship into adulthood.

Done! No need for anger or harshness. We never used a public scene to belittle our beloved by calling the child *silly*, *spoiled* or *brat*. Worrying about how you look to others never masks the reality of the child’s behavior. If you have to go outside to diffuse a situation, GO! By the way, I hear that often: speak to a child what you want them to be; *silly* isn’t a label I wanted my children to wear or spoiled a quality I want them to live.

One way to teach cooperation is to let them help make good purchase decisions. It starts young, and I touched on it before. When Natalie picked the cake mix off the display, my heart was touched so I bought it. I probably let her hold it and instructed her to lay it on the conveyor belt at the check-out so we could pay for it. Have you ever seen an odd item laying at the checkout counter at a grocery store? There are impulse items to select from there, but I’ve seen a package of plastic army men sitting on the Hershey bars, a pack of miniature Hostess donuts among the eyeglass repair kits. Huh? I know what that means; there’s been a battle over whether a candy or

toy is going to be purchased. My husband and I never wanted to be embarrassed by screaming toddlers in the check-out line. We had an agreement before we went into any store: there would be no arguments. Thus, no need for punishment inside or outside the store.

I watched a child strapped into a shopping cart seat, throw one item to the floor after another. A jar of strawberry jelly was thrown, and all its goo and glass crashed onto the tile. Mama shopped on with no reaction. Next came a loaf of bread and another item. I was so appalled I didn't want to watch! Was she oblivious to all this? No, she thought she appeared wise by not making a scene. She didn't. She didn't alert the staff about the mess they were responsible for either. How wise is that?

Healthy parent/child relationships for our family started at home. Respect for each other was the key. It wasn't a one-sided project. If our children were listened to and respected, we found they complied with our wishes, even commands. They want to be thought of as right! Have I mentioned our niece's favorite line, "Everyone thinks they're right." So do kids.

Chapter 13: Attitude Changers

The “attitude changer” was the term my niece, Shari Reusser, gave her paddle of choice. I also carried a small wooden spoon in my purse in case a child’s attitude needed to be adjusted while we were away from home. This dates back to the 1980s and 1990s when a parent’s responsibilities took precedence over a child’s rights. I don’t remember having to use “the dreaded spoon” more than once per child, for each child knew its whereabouts and avoided behavior that would call for its use. One time I took care of it and oh so easily! That’s why butts were made so well-padded! There was no physical abuse, only capturing attention. There was no damage done, no beating; it hurt far less than hurt feelings resulting from total embarrassment when a child realized he made a fool of himself. Correction is vital to growth. Face slapping is a no-no, unnecessary and humiliating. That is not the purpose of punishment. One person shared her belief that spanking was to warn of danger; I personally feel words can do the same thing. Spanking is for capturing wrong behavior and stopping it in its tracks. Spanking isn’t for humiliating or belittling, it’s a responsible action by loving parents who don’t want their adult children breaking laws and landing in prison. In 2024, I read somewhere that the age of adulthood is now considered to be 24; I knew when they lowered the legal drinking age and voting age we’d be seeing disastrous results. Fortunately, there are the children whose parents care enough to correct them.

A friend, Monica Wohnhaus, left this earth on June 7th, 2021. It was a tragic result of the Covid-19 disease that killed many. “Monie” had been a friend, then not a friend, then a friend again when we became part of a creative community. We had exchanged some words that had flung us apart for several years, a misunderstanding on both our parts caused a wound that time eventually healed. I’m glad it ended that way. I’ll always remember praying with her on our last morning together when a mutual friend had died. Crying, then

conversing, she took me to her new home, showed me her decorations and attitudes had changed. We decided that.

Attitudes need tempering. I will mention again our niece saying, *“Everyone thinks they’re right!”* Her first marriage ended in divorce, and I don’t want to know any more details than I do. They started off their marriage, I’m sure, thinking their life would be a bed of roses without thorns or weeds. Instead, it was more like a freshly-tilled garden of loamy soil that eventually produces unwanted and often unplanted annoyances. The earlier that weeds are pulled out by the roots, the better.

This makes me wonder how many times I didn’t teach my children how to forgive and let an offense go. I have learned too late to apologize quickly because apologies diffuse things quickly. As today’s English vocabulary changes, people reply to an apology with, “Oh, it’s okay.” But I know it isn’t. Love wants us to get past the offense and move on. I now try to train myself to look for things in which I’ve offended and get the relationship back on the track it should be on.

I have developed a habit of giving young folks my time-tested advice. At our 50th wedding anniversary party, a young man said to me, “Seeing you guys, (meaning me and Lynn), have this long relationship gives me hope.” I answered, “Yes, it can be done! We’ve faced the same issues and problems as everyone else but we found ways to work them out.” I just talked to a young man yesterday who spoke of his future marriage, and I repeated, “So you plan to get married?”

He said, “Yes, what’s the point of dating if you aren’t?”

What a champion of young people! There is hope for the world! Well, since writing that little snippet, that couple has separated. The reason? The girl told me “He was getting too controlling.” Well, I’m glad they figured that out. Maybe saying they were committed made them look at the bigger picture.

I wanted to title this chapter, “Self-Control,” but it wasn’t as catchy as what I chose and you just might have skipped it. I know this is stepping on toes. I’ve had to re-grow a toenail myself, and it

took a year! (True story, check with Dr. Cooper, my podiatrist son-in-law).

Nothing has given us more opportunity to forgive, let go of grudges and change our attitudes more than operating our hardware business for 49 years. (In 2025, it will be 50 years!) A few years back, I checked out a customer's purchases and heard her say something under her breath to her companion. I felt it was aimed at me so I asked if there was something wrong.

"See what I mean?" she spouted to her companion in an angry tone.

They grabbed their purchases and stomped out without giving me an answer. When I meet this person in the grocery store I say "hello" with a smile, hoping someday she will pause and clear the air. I may have to make the first move. What did I do? Did I grab her money too hastily? Did I not greet her properly? Or, had she just heard gossip and assumed it was true? Who knows. I could be anxious about it forever. I learned to never assume that I always do everything right. Changed attitudes save relationships. All our children have their own stories of lessons learned in dealing with the public in the store.

I learned through our four children's lives that they want to do the right thing, and they want to know the right way to live. I never saw them wanting to make mistakes. There is mischief, even sin, but those are parenting opportunities to teach and train. James 3:2 states, "If a person keeps from offending with their words, that person is perfect!"

Various Bible versions use words to help us understand the directive. The Amplified says "Discipline is teaching and having a plan for life." To punish rebellion doesn't mean abuse, it's a form of correcting undesirable behavior. Discipline and punishment should never be from anger but love and a desire to see children succeed. The Modern English Version states we are to discipline diligently. What picture does that etch in your mind? It should include good habit forming, scheduling, giving children certain obligations and responsibilities, as well as follow-up. Again, never abuse your

power. Sparing your disciplinary rod of nurturing, teaching and training and a child will be spoiled.

That is Proverb 13:24 in the Easy Version stating, *“If you don’t punish your child, you show that you hate him. If you really love your child, you will punish him when he does something wrong.”*

Chapter 14: Reigning Cats and Dogs

When Jordan was quite young, he and I were visiting a home where animals roamed freely. So, “J” took a sitting position on the floor and was teasing the cats with some toys the owner had and entertained himself and the cat while I chatted with my relatives. He became more and more creative with his different uses of the twisty rope and the jingle ball. The true nature of the toys, I really don’t remember. But the cat seemed to be enjoying himself as much as Jordan was. My family had a cat in the house as we were growing up and even a cat and a beagle puppy at the same time.

Well, in a home where animals are allowed to rule and reign, peoples’ feelings take a back seat. Suddenly, the cat’s person, yelled at Jordan,

“DON’T hurt her!”

Out of the corner of my eyesight, I saw the cat leap into the air and land on all fours, sturdy and unshaken, as only cats can do; they were designed that way. They are created to climb and navigate tall structures like trees. The paws of a cat are even made to withstand what would traumatize a human and send us to the podiatrist.

Jordan was embarrassingly taken aback and went back to just dragging the rope on the ground. Boring. The *royal feline* did not seem to be hurt or disgusted. Jordan now has no sympathy for cats.

Our family loves animals. We have “owned,” at various times, many different animals. Or, should I correctly say, been the parents of baby box turtles, iguanas, dogs, farm cats, and a ferret who lived about ½ hour in our untamed jungle of a wilderness (story follows). Later we acquired a riding horse, Prince, who acted more like a racehorse and would take off at a whim with children hanging on for dear life. During the 4-H years, our boys raised rabbits, the offspring of which didn’t survive. Selling rabbits at the county fair proved to

be too emotionally challenging. Then we had goats who had voracious appetites for expensive leather shoes. The last straw for Oreo and Moose Tracks was the possibility of a broken kitchen window. The two goats would look at themselves in a window as if it was a mirror, not at the people eating breakfast inside. Hooves on kitchen windows sound like sledge hammers, take it from one who knows.

The poor ferret Lynn brought home to control the rodent population in the barn encountered the wrath of our beloved farm dog, Trudy. How was she to know we'd added the ferret to the family? She thought it was a predator to be reckoned with. A funeral followed.

We had draft horses, Bob, Belle and Victor. We used them to pull vehicles for riding through the woods. They were bred for the work. Our church friends even borrowed them for hauling loads of firewood out of the woods. When Victor died, he got more sympathy on Facebook than I did well-wishes for my birthday that year.

I think animal love has taken over common sense. Although I've shared all these pet experiences which our family enjoyed, we never ever allowed pets in the house outside of those who could be kept in cages. Sneaky, the Ball Python, keeps to herself in a glass house in my son's home. We don't hear anything from her. She gives no indication she's there. I even invited her to stay warm in our house when the power went out in theirs. Any animal lover will agree there is animal instinct. I agree that some animals are smarter than others. Granddaughter Ella's rabbit just gave birth to four adorable babies. Her Mother, Natalie, is a very busy person and most days only has enough time to call us and report the days' happenings. There is no extra time to clean-up after animals who are not potty trained. So, you will never see animals running at large through any of our homes.

With all that being said, we are often uncomfortable when we enter a home with animals who are allowed to shed on our black pants or invite themselves to sit on our lap. When a friend of ours was dying and we visited, the animal fur could be seen thick in the

air as it was revealed in sunbeams through the windows. Thick, floating fur in the air which people breathe through. My step-sister relates the time her husband showed her no sympathy when she tripped over their dog and really hurt herself as she fell in the kitchen. Her then spouse came running to the rescue of the whimpering animal.

“Did that clumsy *oaf* hurt you?” he said as he took the dog's head in his hands and comforted the wrong victim. What happened to common sense? Many are the stories of mass destruction caused by animals. Aged friends explain to us how they “fell.” The answer usually is, “I tripped over the cat.”

No, as my husband often says, if an animal terrorizes a home, there will be one dead animal.

With that, I leave Proverbs 12:10 “*A righteous man regards the life of his beast.*”

Chapter 15: Attacking Anxiety

When I asked my children and grandchildren what should be included in this book, George said, “I want my children to be resilient, to bounce back from adversity.” When he was growing up, he experienced a lot of challenges in public school from other kids who were raised differently from what he was, and then there was conflict. George faced the bullying with much trepidation and vowed to body-build for future encounters. One child especially annoyed him. But when he was invited to the boy’s birthday party and he accepted the invitation, he said,

“I’m going to give him a Gideon Bible. He needs it.”

I’m happy to report the child grew up to be an amazing husband and father. That boy had lost his Daddy when he was quite young, and his family took years to recover. But the tension between George and this kid never subsided. I guess our children saw us working through every issue through the eyes of God’s Word and joined in the effort. We were members of Gideons International for about 43 years; they are the world’s largest missionary organization, going into 200 different countries. We keep Bibles on hand to give away.

I have passed my attitudes on to my children, and did I cause them to be anxious about the same things I am? Jordan and Natalie check me on unnecessary worries. Karena says I passed on my moodiness to them. I see that I taught them to stay busy to keep their minds occupied so busyness was misinterpreted as moodiness or worry. My cousin Sharon said one time that my husband and I appeared to be workaholics. Well, at least we never lacked for money to take care of our household. Time = money, and money requires work! This was an investment in our family’s well-being; we used it wisely.

Busyness. This showed up in George as a fear of being bored. We both think it is interesting how the human brain works. He studied the differences between men’s and women’s thinking in med

school and how no one really understands the brain yet. I reminded him there are lots of emotional and unobservable things that science will never understand.

Another time we experienced anxiety was in sickness. We dug out the music of Don Francisco and Morning Star's music which gives us the strength to heal mentally and physically as we listen to God's promises. This is so second-nature to us. I pray as I write this that you seek the truth in the passages I leave at the end of each chapter. They are a different way of looking at life than what the American Medical Association prescribes. And it works. We believe there are many God-fearing doctors and nurses, people who are called to heal, but the health sector is now largely controlled by our government and often ignores God in the equation. The pharmaceutical companies who benefit from our purchase of their medications do as well.

Anxiety attacked again in the area of boredom. Millennial and Gen-Z kids have a multitude of video and audio entertainment to appease them. My children grew up in a healthier time. I see the difference between kids raised in the 21st century and mine from the 20th. Being outdoors, riding bikes, fishing, raising rabbits and goats, and being involved in church youth activities helped our kids participate in things that kept them healthy and taught resilience. The girls were told to scare a groundhog out of a culvert with a stick once. It didn't bother the ground hog, but it did send a hive full of bees swarming. Natalie and George have the experience of hanging on for dear life as the horse they were riding spooked and headed the wrong direction. The boys swung from a Tarzan rope into the pond, and the girls went door-to-door selling eggs and greeting cards. George made a list I found many years later entitled, *What to Do When There's Nothing to Do*. I don't know how much he consulted his list, but he was always busy.

Maybe we taught him from our example of constantly being busy. This brought on a mind-set of continual anxiousness. He told me he never wanted to be bored, so he filled a college-ruled notebook sheet with: Read a book, design something, play with little brother,

clean out a closet (he got good at this), walk in the woods or build something. My cousin, God rest her soul, said to me once, “You folks are workaholics, aren’t you?” Well, we went to work every day, including during the pandemic years, and always had good meals on the table. My children work and pay their own bills. I can think of no greater blessing for a mother to have.

George and his wife are hard-working as well and 100% committed to being great parents. My other three children do the same, influencing many in their daily lives and staying focused on productive projects.

One of the other issues we had to work through, although minor in comparison, was the wild, rural environment of farm life. Until they got used to it, the boys couldn’t get to sleep at night. It was summer and without AC. We’d leave the windows open at night for fresh air. Lynn and I slept on the first floor, the boys were upstairs in a room, and each girl had her own room. There were no street lights shining in nor coal truck traffic noise providing a steady hum. It was pitch black and, I thought, quite peaceful after living in town for 20 years. I was getting to sleep, after I thought I had them all tucked in with prayers and Bible stories. I heard a call from upstairs, “MOM, MOM!”

It sounded urgent so I headed up the steps,

“What’s the matter?” I called, when I was only ½ way up.

“There’s too much noise!” the boys said.

“Noise? What noise?”

I listened. I did hear crickets, frogs, water in the creek bubbling, an occasional dog bark and, once in a while, a coyote scream. The spookiest sounds were the hoot owl and whip-poor-will call. Those are things I used to enjoy when visiting my grandma’s home, which was down the road. To them, they were not the noises they were used to.

“Well, guys, that’s farm life. You’ll get used to it and there’s nothing to be afraid of,” I said.

As the children grew up, none of them ever fought us about going to bed on time. As I stated before, we started reading, praying and

singing worship songs at bedtime with the girls. I believe it gave them the comfort for a peaceful night of sleep. When we had the boys, we did the same thing. They loved a good Bible story and prayers. This was the nighttime routine during the farm years. Karena was away at Ohio University. Natalie became a good nanny for the boys during those years. The noises continued at night, but I closed the window, hoping the silence would get them through the night. I think they insisted on sleeping downstairs nearer to us for a while until the sounds of the country put them to sleep. We took many nature walks during those years, down the county road and up the hill into the pastures or across the creek and along a trail Lynn made for our horse drawn carriage. Familiarizing ourselves with nature helped all of us.

These are the passages our family tries to remind each other to quell the unfounded fears.

2nd Corinthians 10:5 says *“cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bring into captivity every thought...”* Companion to that verse is Philippians 4:8 *“Be careful for nothing”*. I think the correct interpretation here is to quit being so care-filled or anxiety-filled. And finally, Philippians 4:8.... *“Think on these things...things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous and of good report and praiseworthy.”*

Chapter 16: Patience: The Unsung Hero

Our lawyer daughter added another shingle to her growing list of life skills. She has had to deal with divorced couples, which are not her favorite clients. There are too many emotions to deal with, and the truth takes a while to come out. When she initially sits down with them to find out why they want to separate, the answer is often, “No good reason.” They have complaints but no good excuse for destroying their foundation. People present themselves as “without faults.”

I see the real issue; a lack of patience. Self-centeredness doesn't allow for growth. I saw this in myself and my husband. We both had a desire to think ourselves virtuous and always be right. Thank the Lord we were born-again, regenerated in our hearts and minds before we were beyond repair. Divorce is a weapon of mass destruction. I know there are certain circumstances that require a separation if there is no desire to save the relationship. No one else can help so I don't condemn you.

I wish my school teachers would have had some patience too. In my sophomore year at Orrville High School, there was a concept in Chemistry I never did get. A tutor would have been helpful, but I didn't know how to ask for one. As I think about it, the professor was at fault. “Pro-” means someone who knows his subject well and “-fess” means someone who can teach it, right? “Pro-fess:” teach it to me. Instead, as we reviewed the test questions, he smugly said, “I don't think anyone missed question two this time, but if you did, I don't want to hear about it.” Well, that's not helpful! How much responsibility lies with the student? How do we make it through life without help? Marriages and child-rearing depend on being open to assistance.

As we reared the children, my heart told me to learn patience. Many times, that meant I went off to myself and cried it out when I didn't understand something. That didn't accomplish much but I

think God met me in the solitude of self-reflection. My children never questioned me. All four seemed to learn to be patient with whatever situation we were facing. I didn't always have a ready or proper answer. Science isn't God. It only follows after at a distance and at a very slow pace. The scriptures tell us to "get understanding" over 132 times. When the children needed help, we tried to find the right counselor or tutor or simply changed schools.

Proverbs 4:7 sums it up: "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore, get wisdom. And with all your getting, get understanding". This does not happen overnight.

"Think twice, speak once." It's an old proverb similar to "measure twice, cut once." These two concepts carry the same weight. My sister-in-law and her husband noticed early on that I did not enter into every conversation at my husband's family gatherings. I mentioned in the "Names" chapter that I was a wall-flower. I didn't want to drop my two cents worth into every conversation. Who's going to remember it anyway?

The best marriage sermon I remember, given by Pastor Steven Furtick, was on this issue of offenses. A man and his wife were on-stage to help demonstrate what happens when insults, disagreements, harsh words, and opinions cause offense. As the Pastor slammed fence boards into the mock dirt, with each argument, or thoughtless comment, standing side by side, soon there was a fence separating the couple. What does it take to get back together? The fence needs to be torn down somehow. But how much better to not take offense in the first place but to try and understand, with patience?

In this age of distractions, listening is becoming a fine art. Listening to the first words someone says is a challenge these days. "Wait, what?" Is a common question I get. Then we make the person repeat what the rest of the crowd already heard, the effect of the news is lost. I have decided to wait until I have a person's full attention before launching into something important. And I try to notice if people are gazing in another direction which tells me they are completely bored. I learned this quickly when our three-year-old

George would ask us to repeat everything. Even a simple answer to his question would make him ask, “Did you say yes?”

We don’t think we are going to hear anything new, or life changing, so we go on with our video game, or our text. The worst culprit is YouTube, that never-ending, continuous flow of movie clips that get a person addicted to whatever the next episode might reveal. I know talent abounds in people, but it’s up to us to encourage the people around us to develop theirs. Frustration abounds without patience!

Romans 12:18. “As much as possible, live peaceably with all men.”

Chapter 17: Sibling Rivalry and Jealousy

In our Christian home, there was no room for jealousy. I remember telling my children, “There is plenty of love to go around.” We believe in a gracious God whose storehouse is full of blessings, and He is not limited in any way. I intentionally did a lot of things differently for each child and their unique personalities, likes and desires. I don’t think I ever purchased the same gift for all four of them. The ability to provide for each was also based on what we had economically at each time in their four lives. The age difference was pretty wide also. Karena was driving by the time baby Jordan came along. As each one had the need for a vehicle, we provided what we could. The four children didn’t all drive a 1990 model (the year Karena started driving). Nobody had a right to complain when we purchased Jordan a truck as a Christmas present. He had agreed to work the store and was traversing gravel roads daily.

For that, no one can blame us. Each lived their own life. Natalie was the first to start a family so her children naturally got a lot of our time and attention. Her son is the only one we purchased a baby bed and toy chest for. Jordan was the last to leave home, so he had a bedroom all to himself. He decided to make his career in the business with us and would be doing a lot of things the others didn’t. We provided transportation by way of cars complete with tires, gas, and insurance for all of them to drive back and forth to school. No, those four cars were not all the same make, model, color and year. We didn’t require anybody to pay rent, and they never had to turn over their paychecks like some families do. In college, they made their career choices and we paid the tuition. We helped move all of them into and out of housing at Ohio University. We helped Natalie move to and back from a Caribbean island, Karena to Pentagon City, Washington, D.C. George to Norfolk and Chicago and Jordan got a remodeled, burned-out house. He oversaw the total renovation of this project, and it is beautiful. His other option was to remodel one of

our barns with the vision of a great room as an indoor basketball court. Jordan ended up driving George to Phoenix. George is the only one I put a car on a cross-country transport when he and Vera settled in Yuma.

No one else ever journalized all this but me. We believed in helping our children at every stage along the way. Everyone has different perspectives of how life happened. During some family discussions, we listen to two, three or four different versions of the same incident.

I have to credit Willie George of Church on the Move Ministries in Tulsa, Oklahoma for his teachings on the provisions of The Lord God. Our kids grew up on Gospel Bill and Fire by Night video tape series, watching them numerous times. The eternal truths their cast of characters acted out in Western gear were invaluable! Month after month Nicodemus, played by Ken Blount, and Gospel Bill, portrayed by Willie George, held our kids spellbound with their everyday Old West scenes and catchy new worship songs. (Lynn & I watched them too, over and over). We quote their trite but timeless truths such as, “Who calls you ‘Romeo of the range’, Nicodemus?”

And Nicodemus answered, “Well, I call myself that at least once a day!” So, when one of us makes a statement a little too prideful about ourselves we ask,

“Who calls you that?” and the answer is, “I call myself that at least once a day.”

For five years, the truth of God’s grace permeated our home as we looked forward to the mail holding a VCR cassette tape containing two lessons. A lot of them can be viewed on YouTube still today; they are timeless.

In the olden days, the 1950s, we just had “flannel graphs.” You are considered of the Greatest Generation or Boomers if you remember those. It worked for us. Mom & Dad were Sunday School teachers. They lived their faith at home, too. I watched them spend many hours prepping for teaching a Bible lesson.

My Uncle Jake lived in Grandma’s house most of his adult life after he was discharged from the U.S. army. He owned nothing and

had little, materially speaking. But he and his mother, my Grandmother Jenny, never went hungry as they raised a garden and had a huge cherry tree in the back yard. They didn't receive monthly welfare checks either. My parents and the other four Charles and Jenny Volpe offspring fared better, in varying degrees. Yet, I saw not one shred of jealousy or envy between Mother and her five siblings. In the 1950s & 1960s, middle America was satisfied with the prosperity that the post WW2 economy offered. People worked, saved, invested; everyone had a chance at something. We weren't a cookie-cutter world. We tried to help each other and love each other and let bygones be bygones. I feel like I have to explain my idioms, though, to Gen-X, Gen-Y and Gen-Z. You would know what bygones are by the song John Lennon made famous, "Let it be" or the tune from the movie, "Frozen"- "Let it go". These examples all point to an eternal truth, "Forgive and you will be forgiven".

George Orwell wrote about Utopia, in his book *Brave New World*, was it prophetic or did people just believe him and live accordingly? Is everyone supposed to own the same amount of stuff, look the same, and have the same positions in life?

I brought home a hand-crafted wall piece from our local florist and showed it to my children. It was mostly wooden and had a metal screen door, and a ceramic pot with tiny apples in it. that depicted a country, back-porch scene. The purpose was to draw their attention to a "teachable moment." I said, "Always remember you can do anything with what you have to work with." I hung it on the wall of our farm-house. They may have thought I was nuts buying such an obscure, useless item, but it taught a lesson and daily reminder. I think they got the point, that being there is never a reason to feel you lack what you need. Their Dad and I did everything we could to help each of them reach their goals. Most people will never know the whole Lynn and Yvonne life story. There isn't time enough to recall every moment of every one of the 19,710 days of our 54+ year journey.

In 1975, Lynn and I pooled everything we had and, with the help of our parents, purchased our first home. \$25,000 was a lot of

money then, and it would take years to pay it back. But we worked at it until it was. Some children in our families weren't able to do the same and they live with their choices. Dad and Mom never held grudges however. Neither did dad and his second wife, although they could have. They continued to love and support through every crisis that came along.

I remember that my mom told me how her parents believed the weaker ones deserve more help. I can't say I'm that virtuous. Some things seem unfair, worthy of retaliation, but we can't go there! Our oldest child put up with, but seemed to have fun with, homemade doll clothes and the simplest of things I could afford. As each new sibling was added, we could spend more because we made more money. The same goes for technology. The first two kids went to school without the advantage of cell phones and computers, which meant we paid for every phone call we made to them when they were away from home. Were they disadvantaged? Do they deserve reparations? They never mentioned it. Maybe I should check with them. My kids love each other. Jeff and Shari Reusser taught their four children the same Godly principles. I see none of their kids having jealousy issues. We live by God supplying all our needs according to His riches.

There is no lack in God's kingdom; there shouldn't be in our mind-set. He, the one true God, is our provider! There is so much in the scripture that reaffirms this. My four children speak to each other and communicate in person, by texts and by phone calls. They work together, encourage and listen to one another. They invest together. In conversations with others, I learn that families don't all get along. It all stems from a rivalry-feelings of unfairness and that one person got the breaks and the others didn't. My Aunt Bea used to quote an old proverb, "Rags to riches and back again in three generations." If everyone starts out with the same amount, those who are industrious will rise to the top and those who waste money will be penniless.

Another way I tried to foster individuality was never to buy the same thing for each person. Everyone has their unique areas of interest and deserve things according to those interests. As we

prospered, we gave. Birthdays were another opportunity for me to make each one's choice of cake. Jordan takes the prize for most unique gift request. When his doctor asked him what he wanted for his upcoming third birthday, he responded, "A cake and a hay rake."

Luke 11:11 "What father, if his child asks for a piece of bread, will he give him a stone?"

Psalms 84:11 "No good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly".

3rd John 1:2 "I wish above all things that you may prosper..."

These are the words of a servant's heart, to bless and not curse. There is no room for jealousy, envy or selfishness. Those evil habits will bring about curses of failure and defeat.

For those of you reading this who did not experience the truths I'm discussing and failure and poverty seemed to be attached to your family, I'm sorry, even heart-broken to hear that. But, if you are alive and reading this, your story isn't over. God's presence is world-wide and never ending. You see success around you. Instead of that being a source of annoyance, learn and run with the possibilities of growth and change. You know it's possible. I'm hoping with my words of encouragement today you seek the inheritance of success and happiness you were born to have. I can't tell you how to get it. It's your choice. I guarantee someone nearby can point you in a good direction. There is no lack of encouragement out there. Your problems don't stem from someone getting better breaks. Abused people - ask for help! Abusers - you need it too.

3rd John 1:2 "Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers": "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers." KJV

Chapter 18: Becoming Citizens of the World!

I flew to NYC in 1971. It wasn't for a vacation, but I began to see the world from a different perspective. There was life outside of my hometown. The places I'd read about in geography books became reality. Geography was my favorite subject in sixth grade, and I loved my teacher, Mrs. W, for giving me many opportunities to draw maps. I determined I would see the world and the man I married would have to tag along. Our first opportunity to travel came when Lynn won a cruise to the Bahamas. The girls, then two and five, stayed home with relatives. I never wanted to leave them home ever again. Natalie took a while to get reacquainted when we returned a week later. Next, we joined the Gideons International, and we went along to NYC to distribute Bibles to doctor's offices, nursing facilities and prisons. In between distributions, we walked the blocks of the ethnic neighborhoods. On another trip we took our oldest daughter along, and she jumped right in handing out the pocket-sized periwinkle blue testaments to random people on the street. From there, we took any opportunity to take the children on far-away excursions. In 1983, we loaded up the girls, aged three and five, along with Grandma Mabel, and flew to Los Angeles for a week at the Gideon International convention. There we met Dr. Andy Lim nee: Boon Keng who represented Malaysia. He eventually traveled back to visit us in Ohio with his wife. Our children learned the universality of mankind and never held racist views toward anyone. And they got to taste Bird nest sou - supposedly an Asian delicacy, which Doctor Lim made for us from a saliva bird nest he brought from Southeast Asia.

One of our first overseas excursions was with my parents to an international food show. We were gone a week and left our friend Janet to take care of Natalie and George, who was only six months old.

While Natalie was in High School, Lynn traveled with the Christian Chiropractors to Ukraine. He took Natalie along. They saw a new side of the world in many Christian homes and churches where they helped with projects. Natalie helped in a Christian Children's Orphanage. Lynn helped put in plumbing at a church. They brought back fabulous photos of the beauty of Ukraine, the baptismal service and sweet people in and around Cherkasy and Kiev.

Lynn also joined the Christian Chiropractors when they went to Jamaica, and we followed up with a family trip there where we stayed in a private villa and had a chauffeur. After these experiences, the Caribbean Islands were open doors for simply vacationing. We ended up going to 14 different islands over the years. Natalie and her husband at the time spent 14 months in St. Thomas Island with baby Nicholas. George accompanied us to St. Martin and Sint Maartin islands; we had such a memorable time. I think that's why George attended one of St. James medical school campuses in Anguilla. Anguilla island is only accessible by boat from St. Martin. On any trip, after that experience of Natalie not recognizing me, I always wanted at least one of the children with us. Expense -wise, we couldn't afford to take all four at once.

In addition, we have traveled with various combinations of them back to the Bahamas, then Cayman Islands, Puerto Rico, St Thomas, St John Island, Saint Martin and Saint Martin — two separate countries sharing the same island but vastly different in culture. We drove or flew into Florida at least 100 times, Belize, where I first Zip-lined with Natalie, Cancun, Hilton Head, Ocean City and Washington D. C.

New York became a favorite destination to vacation, shop and see Broadway plays. We shouldn't be surprised that all four of our kids enjoy world travel. While still in high school, Karena went with a mission group to Lima, Peru where she participated in street drama telling the gospel. She then became an independent traveler, while studying for her Master's Degree at George Washington University in Crystal City near Washington D.C. From there, she and her family have taken advantage of trips to many spots around the country and

overseas. She and husband became pilots, and together with them, we purchased a plane to eliminate time spent in airport lines. While in law school, she participated in overseas programs that accelerated her schooling by taking us to Wales, Ireland and Italy with her. These were dream vacations. It's become easy to fly anywhere.

When Natalie got married, she and her family of three moved to St. Thomas Island for a year. Both she and her husband quickly found jobs and said anyone needing to earn money fast should move there. The job opportunities were many. Her family continues to travel the United States, preferring hiking in the national parks or very hot, tropical rainforests.

In his senior year of high school, George applied for a scholarship to go to Switzerland and was able to live with a nice family while doing more schooling. After getting his Bachelor's Degree in German and living in Austria for a few months his Senior year in Ohio University, George applied to an accelerated medical program and lived in Anguilla for 18 months. He earned his medical degree and met the woman whom he eventually married. This came after they lived in Chicago, Phoenix and Norfolk doing their clinical rotations.

Karena and George took a jaunt to Spain, and Lynn took them to the south of France. I traveled with both George and Natalie to California on separate occasions.

Of all the places we've visited, we most liked Italy, having ancestry from this beautiful place. We wish my grandparents had stayed there, but of course that means we may never have gone.

Jordan, although adventurous, is content to stay near his home and wife. His first adventure alone was an internship in downtown Chicago. At the end of that term and before his next year at Ohio University, the company offered him a lucrative position, which he turned down, so he could remain in his hometown. After establishing his goals in the firearms business, he traveled to Newfoundland and harvested a black bear and a moose. That was good meat! We did not eat the bear meat as per warnings about the diet of bears.

Over 33 years we traveled to Florida primarily to visit my parents where they homesteaded and eventually lived permanently. As the years went by, the trips became two to three times a year and eventually my father moved back to Ohio to stay his final year with us. Florida was not a favorite, although visited the most.

Grandson Alex is the next generation of travelers. He's been to more places than I can count. We stormed the castle walls in Wales, found Boba teas in Bologna Italy, and biked the trails of Jackson Hole Wyoming. Our favorite place overall is Orlando, Florida where we ride the rafts of the lazy river at the JW Marriott Hotel. We looked for water parks and found one in Marion, Indiana and our closest, Great Wolf Lodge in Cincinnati.

Our next world traveler will be Granddaughter Felicity who will graduate high school and accompany her dad on a European vacation.

Chapter 19: Accepting Change

When I heard a friend say, “You didn’t prepare me for losing you,” after her mother died, it made me reflect on whether I prepared my children for my home-going. I believe that’s what teaching and training is about: preparing a succession plan for the next generation to take over and improve on the past procedures.

My daughter is now teaching at the elementary school she and her siblings attended, St. Sylvester’s Catholic. While they were students there, I assisted the other parents with fundraisers. That was a requirement to keep our tuition lower. A couple dozen of us would take home a turkey and a bag, with instructions on how to roast it one day before the annual holiday bazaar. We served up enough turkey dinners the next day, complete with all the sides and desserts, to make over \$20,000. Raffles and country stores and vendors made up the rest. Now, Natalie reports that they couldn’t “get” people to roast turkeys. It wasn’t an option at one time. Today it is. People have choices as to whether they are going to cooperate. It’s a trickle-down philosophy. If we cared enough about something, we got involved. Leaving this earth for the next life is inevitable. My own Mother’s very premature death from cancer at age 48 taught me this. I had to finish growing up myself at age 27. How did I pay my own expenses, run a household and raise my family? Some things I picked up stuck with me, others I had to learn from other mentors.

I relied on Mother many years after she was gone. And we only spoke by land-line once a week while she was here. Change happened. Me, thinking I was all grown up, got married at age 19. *I knew it all!* We moved about 100 miles away. It took three hours to get home. Before the days of interstate highway travel and cell-phone Face-Time capabilities, one didn’t know if their loved ones arrived safely to their destination or not until they received a call from the house phone.

Even so, I didn't appreciate Mom's questions nor answers until I sat in my office, 45 years later, and thought about what Mom might have said in a particularly difficult situation. I was not paying full attention in person at age five, nor over the wires at age 27.

My children, did you hear me when I preached to you? You most likely did, but understood from only your perspective. Do you hear me now when you are at a crossroads looking for directions? I believe you do. I see you all navigating so well. My opinion is from my perspective. Your understanding is from yours. Did you really hear me when I said "change is inevitable?"

As a child, I didn't believe it. I thought I'd always be living in our salt-box house at 117 Smucker Street in Orrville. It seemed like my forever home, and I didn't see myself growing or changing. I see this is a concept that parents need to teach. So many people with debilitating emotional issues don't accept the changes that took place in their families, and then they blame the wrong thing. Many don't recover from circumstances that were not explained to them. While I was still writing and editing this book, my lawyer daughter told me she knew of many people who won't even speak to their parents, so it is an honor to me to give you this memoir.

I've moved 13 times in my life. I've read that most people move at least eight. Jobs, schools, neighbors, churches, and names all change. When Karena was 17 and heading to Ohio University, we chose to sell our old Victorian home where our four children had been born and reared. Karena questioned our judgment by saying, "We're not supposed to be downgrading, we should be upgrading!" I didn't fathom her heart-break. We would be leaving good memories behind. All Lynn and I saw was more and more maintenance on a century old home. The farm house was even in worse in its condition having been built in the early 19th century. But we planned to build a new home.

A friend warned us, "You will never come closer to a divorce than when you build a new house." I am happy to report we didn't come close. After having lived in older homes several times, we were excited to get something brand-new and waited until we could afford

to pay for it. We chose to agree and compromise at times. Our biggest disagreement came with the decision to have a painted kitchen as opposed to wood. I personally think wooden cupboards hide too much dirt. With bright country yellow, I could see keeping things much cleaner. I had compromised on so many other points, I stood firm on a photo of a painted kitchen I clipped from a Smallbone ad. I saw the company who made these when we were in England, my kitchen exactly! I believe we have all been happy with it. Lynn on the other hand, switched out the ceramic floor tiles from what I had chosen. We had everything decided for the 1,400 square feet of ceramic tile. I was walking to the car with the children and, voila, behind my back he picked out something beautiful but easy to live and the tiles were larger so would be more coordinated with our rooms. I think our tastes blended together over the years. We even agreed when we moved from the Victorian house that our antique collecting was coming to a close. We sold almost all of our antique furniture and went with a little more traditional/ contemporary/ Italian/ palazzo style.

Karena questioned my sanity when we announced to our kids that we sold the house she was born and raised in and were moving to what was my Great-Grandparent's farm. The old farm house we were moving to was even more ancient than the stately Victorian, and we had done a lot to upgrade. She hadn't been born when Lynn and I purchased the \$25,000 property in 1975. We decorated, remodeled and transformed 224 Eastern Avenue into the comfortable home she grew up in. Our home was chosen for the football mothers' Fall Tour of Homes and again at Christmas for their school's Christmas fundraiser. Our Progress chandeliers were so lovely, I wanted to move them with me. But we were offered a fair price for this home which would go a long way towards building a new home. We had some social issues which made our decision two-fold. We wanted the children in a more private location for the time being. We lived on the farm for seven years and did a lot to upgrade there as well.

Karena pitched in and helped me wallpaper the kitchen/dining area in what was once the home of her Great-Great-Grandpa George and Grandma Rosann Christman Weber. The wallpaper we hung remains to this day, 30 years later.

After Karena finished her education, she chose to work in the family business and never did move back home with us. We had built our new home closer to town and she moved into my Great Grandparents homeplace where we had all lived for 7 years. She and her husband moved onto the farm and Alex was born during that time. They have, however, added their own decorating flair, which changed the looks of the entire farm. including a two-story, two-bedroom addition. The new Great Room now houses a grand piano she plays as well as a fireplace. It would have never fit through the doors of our old house in town. She and Ken have expanded the farm to include barns, animals, equipment, fruit trees and fish in the pond. The ancestors would be honored and proud! Great-Grandpa George Weber, you would be glad to see your farm is still considered progressive.

I remember friends from the 14 locations I lived in and, from time to time, Lynn and I ask each other, “Wonder whatever happened to so-and-so?” Often, I recall a married name. In this millennium we frequently search social media for somebody. Friends: I lost count of how many came and went. They probably number in the thousands. We’ve employed hundreds and got to know their families and neighbors whom we moved away from or they forgot about us. In 2019, Lynn accompanied me to my 50th Orrville High School class reunion. It was well-attended, as we were a close-knit bunch, 129 of us. We also attended his class reunion and still call these folks friends. Things changed with those relationships too. We wear name tags and complement each other on our gray hair or fitness level. Appropriately, Lynn and I each won a door prize - a cane hand-carved by a classmate. I hope not to use it for a while.

Back to my class - only a few, can I say, are still close friends. One had the nerve to insult my political views. She had been one of my closest comrades in junior high school. That changed. When our

country's political arena got intense, several refused to talk to me and one even came up to my ear and in hushed tones whispered, "I'm not really sure who to talk to and who not to."

So, I tell my children, "You are fortunate to have a few friends, and you actually have more than most people." My middle grandson says he doesn't have any. My answer to that is, "You have more than most people do! They may not be your age, but as you grow, the same-age friends you thought were so important won't be there for you." It's good if your friendship lines cross the borders of age and interests.

The hardest changes to accept were having my father remarry and move to Florida, a thousand miles away. I had grown up with my grandparents close, so close we saw Grandma Jenny every week and the Weber grandparents at least monthly with our trips to the hills of Monroe County. Days in the sunshine, playing in the creek bed, leaving a glass bottle with a note in it for the next wader, made for fond memories that my mother kept a thorough photo journal of. I will always remember picking Queen Anne's Lace and trekking to the chicken coop for eggs with Grandma. But my children didn't have those experiences. Their memories of grandparents are Grandma Mabel who spent time with the girls and some infrequent trips to Florida to be with the Weber grandparents. Their grandparents said good-bye to them too early. My kids respected them but had very little opportunity to glean their wisdom. Karena had Grandma Mable Reusser the longest, and Jordan was in high school when she died. Grandpa George died when Natalie was only six-months-old. Driving to Florida was the most economical way to visit the Weber grandparents: the trip took 16 hours back in the day. As highway systems improved, we cut it down to 14 but, by then, most of the children were in college, and Lynn and I had to leave them behind. They knew my Step-Mom Shirley as their grandmother. From 1977 until 1989, we drove to see them in Orrville, two hours away but only drove or flew to Florida once or twice a year. We had to relish every minute of the infrequent visits.

Change is daily, and we don't see it if we are living for the moment. Memories are precious, and they are grounding. When my three littlest grands were here for a week, the six-year-old and three-year-old and their cousin Ella, who lives a short drive from me, studied the picture board in my art studio. Ava, age three, recognized herself in the baby pictures we took the night they moved to Arizona. She was only four-months-old then! How is that for a memory! Araya asked me the night they were about to relocate if I could move with them. My heart sank and I merely responded, "I wish I could honey."

I'm a picture taker and proud of it. It's not that I live in those old moments; my mother and Father and my Step Mom all kept exhaustive photo albums for which I am grateful. I am doing it for a generation I hope will be thankful. My iPhone is loaded with over 4,000 pictures. But I think a photo in-hand or framed is worth more than that. Scrolling through 4,000 photos may be too great a task, and they won't have my hand-written captions. I love looking at my mother's beautiful cursive handwritten script under each black and white photo. The pictures are attached to black construction-type paper, and the holes through which the rope ties them are wearing and loosening. I learn a lot through my parents' memorabilia, and they help me understand what came before me. There are stories behind every snapshot. Dad saved the receipt from the hotel he and my mother stayed in on their honeymoon in 1949. Seven dollars a night was the charge. Some hotels cost \$300 per night and more these days. We found out he won a scholarship from the Kroger company in a writing contest and sent a letter to Washington DC with his design for a better airplane. He saved the letter he got back from them as well.

Since the Eastern Avenue house, I've always kept a corner for my artistic efforts. I offered opportunities for my children to get involved, but George was the only one to actually do art. He drew out his medical school charts as a better way to study and remember necessary anatomy lessons or formulas. Years went by, and Natalie brought her girls over to do some new painting projects. They

seemed to like art when they were young but let the ball drop as they found other activities more in line with their talents.

With my mountain of photograph albums, there will be questions. Who will remember why George has a ski mask on in that one photo? What is that tall tower behind Alex and Karena? Who is the baby that the little girl is holding in front of the Christmas tree? As people answer those questions, they will remember who and what came before them. I pray they will be thankful and grateful for the abundance of things they've been blessed to experience in this life.

Lynn and I promote what we believe is the most important of Bible passages, Deuteronomy chapter 28, with its eternal promises. Remember God's promise to Abraham: your descendants will be more numerous than the stars. That was one of the first songs we taught our children:

“Father Abraham had many sons
And many sons had Father Abraham.
I am one of them
And so are you
So let's just praise the Lord”

We sang round after round of this with motions to reinforce the cycle; marching, hand waving, etc.

Chapter 20: Godly Mentors

What book on parenting would be complete without a chapter on “How I screwed up?” I have to admit that I have only read a few of the books that are out there on parenting. It’s a topic of prime importance, yet the shelf at BAM, Books-A-Million, holds far fewer books on this subject than any other category shelves in the store. I’m a firm believer that we learn from our mistakes. I also love learning from other’s mistakes. In the Christian world we call those mistakes “testimonies!” Thank you to those who exhibited good parenting examples to me and Lynn. Our Moms and Dads were first, the best!

I mentioned this in the chapter on “Knowing God.” Having been into parenting for about 20 years, I was asked to teach a children’s program at a church. The Pastoral staff gave me free reign to teach what and as I saw fit. I had some of the best spiritual mentors I could have asked for. Pastors Wayne and Myrna Teafatiller came to our town in the early 1970s bringing a strong message of faith in God, of Holy Spirit-led life, and intentional Bible-based living. Cathy Neff-Bippus, a longtime mentor, and I designed and produced a three-year children’s program for ours and the church’s children for Sunday mornings. We held about 30 boys and girls captivated for an hour every Sunday morning. We pumped the Word of God into them via a circus theme. Years after that successful season, Cathy spoke a prophetic word over me to the effect that I had an “anointing” to parent children. I didn’t recognize it as I did it, I just wanted to do it. I guess my husband recognized it before I did since he trusted me when I decided we needed to start rearing a family when we did.

Lynn and I were reared in God-fearing, God-obeying homes. We were “church kids” and are very thankful we were. Our youth Pastors Don and Doris Dravenstott did more than they take credit for, to display what God-honoring looked like. Pastor Greg Fish was the first to be on the same page with me using truly artsy, creative

methods that spoke to the youth of the day to teach Bible concepts the kids needed. I'd use the adverb "desperately" here, but it was discernment from the Holy Spirit that showed me what individual children needed. Some things that worked in the 1900s for Cathy's children and mine were no longer relevant. One morning, as I was teaching at a different church, the concept of "He who does not work should not eat," taken from Apostle Paul's letter to Thessalonians book 1, chapter 3 verse 10.

We moved beyond Y2K - that scatterbrained group-think 1999 year that sent people to the grocery stores to over-purchase 50-pound bags of whole wheat flour and 30-year roast-beef pouches. I saw a shift in our community's standards. As people took on fearfulness as a lifestyle they didn't realize they were teaching their children dependence on external sources (i.e. the government) to take care of them. Doubt and unbelief in Biblical standards became common.

There were more and more mothers rearing their children alone without a dad near or maybe not ever in the picture. Teaching the Bible standards required tenacity. We heard that schools were teaching Evolution right beside creation. My school teacher friends were fighting back with their faith. Some were careful not to offend the government standards they were contracted to follow. Others supported the mass-exodus to home schooling. We did that ourselves for various reasons. When my children went to high school, we relied on our Dake's Annotated reference Bible notes with its extensive pages of information refuting evolution. Every home needs a Dake's Annotated Reference Bible before our powers-that-be ban them.

After completing a list of "life lessons," I wanted my children to know I realized these things were merely in my mind, my world of "hope-so." Whether those concepts came across to my two-year-olds, my five-year-old kindergarteners, my independent pre-teens, 18-year-old high school grads or the now 21-year-old college grads the way I wanted them to was a chance I took.

Finally, one son, displaying respect and gratitude, said to me, "Mom, you need to write a parenting book!" What better compliment could I have? That statement, I'm sure, included tragedies that turned

into triumphs for us. Our testimonies of trial went along with our medals of mercy from God.

My book contains 28 years of learning experiences that turned out well - very well for me and Lynn. Three of our children are now rearing their own children. Will they do as they were told? Will they do the opposite? No Mom is born with a manual. They surveyed me often. When one of them asked me why I had children, I answered, as I did as an anxious Mother, "So I could show people how children should be raised!" Everybody at our kitchen table laughed. Later, I realized what a blessing it was that they asked me that!

Our oak kitchen table, seating six with two more chairs pulled in, served as the Board Room for our family meetings and does to this day. Often, we try to share a meal. Sometimes I cook, but it gets harder to make a meal for 15 of us when it's just the two of us day in and out. My blessed Mother-in-law, Mabel often said, "Where else can they all come home?" I could see that is what she lived for, to be able to connect with her five children on a regular basis, and we spent as much time with her as possible.

Mabel doesn't get to read this tribute but I was honored and privileged to care for her in our home until I couldn't and she went to be with Jesus at age 93. The boys were still here when Mabel came to live with us. It may have been a challenge for them to share our time, but they could see the temporary nature of life and what it looks like when the end comes. After Mabel had a slight stroke and called me, we notified her nearby neighbor, and Mabel spent a short time in the hospital. The doctor told her five children she shouldn't live alone anymore. I did not hesitate when her five children couldn't decide what to do. My home was open to her, and I loved having her here. We connected on so many levels. We always were friends. That's how I wanted it with my in-law children, Ken, Casey, Vera and Brianna. I count it a blessing to have had my Mother-in-Law live with us. She was one of the great parents! As with my own father upon his death in 2024, I was privileged to submit the obituaries of these two near-perfect people to the newspapers. Previously I sat back and did not participate in Mabel's funeral service. But when I

had spent the last 13 months of Dad's life so closely involved, I conducted his service. My children can choose what to do about my send-off. My home-going should be a celebration that they arrange as they wish.

Let this statement be a tribute to the wonderful woman who coached me through the entire writing of this memoir, Mrs. (Dennis) Kay Flowers. A published author of both fiction and non-fiction, she encouraged and spurred me on to complete this first of several what I intend to be a helpful handbooks for other women, both young and old. Goodbye for now, my friend, we will meet again one day.

Chapter 21: Choosing Educational and Career Paths

The final decisions of colleges and careers are the children's. Finances changed over the years, so the availability of money did have something to do with where and when and what the children chose. But we never relied on student loans that taxpayers are now funding for other people. We paid our own bills.

Karena enjoyed helping in our business from the start. We did a very few college visits, but Ohio University on the main Athens campus made the most sense. She was accepted into the College of Business at Ohio University, and while there, attended a church where she was baptized into the Christian faith one Sunday morning. She got a Master's Degree in Coaching from George Washington University in Washington D.C. and stepped into her role at our store. We remodeled a dedicated space for her and, with her experiences, the business has expanded many times over the last 30 years. She continued her personal growth with a law degree and keeps a full schedule of clients with only word-of-mouth advertising.

Natalie had a dream of becoming a chef. While a student at a private high school, various colleges sent recruiters to woo us. We visited Johnson and Wales College in Hyde Park, New York. Sending her so far away just did not feel right to us, plus it required high out-of-state tuition fees. She too decided on taking business classes and was accepted into the business college at OU. An acceptance there required a higher grade-point average than other colleges. Her experiences paid off in her current business that I have mentioned previously.

George experienced a different situation. In high school, and I don't know exactly where the issue started, he had to do extra reading to understand concepts. He would study and reread until he got it and graduated from the same private high school as Natalie did. After that last year, he was distressed about his future. He took some remedial sessions at the Learning RX in Akron, which we highly

recommend. They work with anyone needing to gain comprehension skills. He received two scholarships from high school, one which partially paid for a year in Switzerland. While there, he attended school again. It was stressful for him to be away from home, so he returned early to the U.S and enrolled at OU with a focus on German language. His German degree earned him further education at St. James Medical School in Anguilla. I guess he got used to being away from home by that time and took medical rotations in Chicago, Scottsdale, AZ and then Norfolk, VA where he and his doctor wife got married.

Jordan attended the private high school and was very involved in extracurriculars. At Athens he did the same but still came home on weekends like his siblings had done. He spent the summer as an intern at an investment firm in Chicago between his junior and senior years. They offered him a very lucrative position to stay, but he felt that Dad and Mom had invested so much in our business back home he could do just as well there. So, he returned to Athens to finish out the degree in the business college and stepped right into Modern Hardware. He also found his wife right here in his hometown.

Chapter 22: Sorry, Not Sorry

My Children have flattered me; George said, “Mom, I think artists are the most intelligent people in the world. They have to know a lot about a lot of things, understand how to put things together to look good, gather the right materials, then do the work.” I think we artists never quit thinking. It's hard to stop the creative juice and go to sleep at night. The ideas come as long as we let them. I think all my children are the most intelligent people I've ever known.

Karena said, “Mom, you're a saint. How did you do it?” I tell her, I had a lot of grace from God. Since my babies didn't come with manuals, I just raised my kids like I saw demonstrated. My Mother was the saint. She told me she often wondered, “How have I failed my child?” I didn't know why she felt the way she did. I can't find fault with her.

Natalie admires her -ad and me for all our accomplishments. She writes very eloquent greeting cards to us on many occasions of how we have blessed her life.

Jordan is the one who encouraged me to write this book. Maybe it's because he wants to understand why I did what I did so he doesn't make the same mistakes!

I have made many mistakes, erred, sinned, and probably embarrassed them each at times. I'd like to go back and do some things over, and I apologize for not being able to. One comfort I have is all of them still speak to us! I have had friends who say their children do not. I don't ask why. There are many reasons that could cause this problem. Often, family strife results from a second marriage taking place. I was asked to pray for a friend recently who had family tension because of this. After experiencing the same problems as Mom and Dad, they will mature in their thinking and empathize. I have heard of families not speaking because of political

or religious differences. Couldn't we help each other better maintaining a relationship than looking in from outside?

I read an interesting book called *The Sociopath Next Door* by Dr. Martha Stout. She describes what the characteristics of a sociopathic person are which made it less scary for me. She says that one in four can be considered sociopathic. I break it down to mean there are people who struggle to relate to and connect with others on a cooperative and peaceful level. I take this into account when I expect more out of a person than what I see. Karena says I told her, "The hardest thing we do is to get people to think like we do." That breeds another problem - accepting the fact that we can't change people and we have to love them anyway. But, as I look at my children, they are doing exactly as we taught them. Watching them interact with life is like looking into a mirror.

I'm sorry I made mistakes but not sorry for the decisions I made.

I'm sorry I was not mature enough to teach you more than I knew at the time but not sorry for how gracious you are and forgave me.

I'm sorry we didn't have more control over you and your decisions but not sorry you learned how to recover from your own errors in judgment.

I'm sorry for my selfish attitude that caused my errors in judgment but not sorry you could see through it and make better decisions.

I'm sorry you didn't stay sweet little infants that I took thousands of pictures of but not sorry to get to watch you become so successful in your lives.

I'm sorry you were born into a world of turmoil but not sorry that I taught you about God's love for you and the hope you have all found through Jesus.

I'm sorry I didn't always have the answers you needed, but I'm not sorry that you had the fortitude and independence to seek for yourself.

I'm sorry we were inconsistent in your educational process but not sorry about the amazing and beneficial learning experiences that have made you who you are.

I'm glad we allowed Karena to go to Peru on a mission trip, but I'm sorry we learned never to trust an old suitcase. I'm sorry I trusted public school educators but not sorry she learned how to help others navigate pitfalls in life.

I'm glad Natalie got to experience the beauty of the people of Ukraine. Sorry, I don't plan to ever go there. I'm sorry for the change in career paths but not sorry she is a blessing to so many people right here in her home state.

I'm glad George got to live on an island, but sorry he had to learn that you can't neglect changing the oil in your vehicle.

I'm glad Jordan got to live and work in Chicago but sorry he nearly got mugged and almost had his pizza stolen.

I'm sorry I didn't learn to pray more effectively until after you left home but not sorry I taught you to pray and seek God yourselves.

I'm sorry I wasn't more strict with TV watching. That grocery sack full of *shoot-em-up*-

Cut 'em up, black and white westerns a friend dropped off at our house was not on my parenting to-do list.

I'm not sorry you all have such busily productive lives that you don't have time to watch that garbage anymore!

Isaiah 26:3 & 4, "Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusts in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever for in the Lord Jehovah (Lord) is everlasting strength."

Chapter 23:

Wait ‘til the Last One Leaves Home

In the summer of 1970, my mother and Mother-in-Law were discussing my upcoming wedding. Lynn and I would be moving 110 miles away, and Mother was having separation anxiety. Her apron strings around me were about to be cut. Mabel had sent off three to be married already so she tried to console my mother, “Wait ‘til the LAST one leaves home.” I’m not sure this came off as comfort, but rather a foreboding. I think she was saying it got harder to let go and she didn’t get used to it. I experience this now, six years after my youngest left home. It was hard for both of us.

When Jordan announced that they were getting married in our kitchen, I questioned the work that would go into moving the furniture, decorating, etc. As he and his sweet wonderful wife planned the wedding, they said, “Don’t worry, we’ll take care of everything.” And they did. I was greatly satisfied when they made the decision to remodel an abandoned home “just over the river and through the woods” from us. Jordan explained, “That was the plan!”

We would be seeing them daily since they now work in our business. The harder choice to accept was the transfer of George to Arizona when his wife accepted her appointment to the residency program in Yuma. With a household of three children, two doctors and Vera’s parents to care for, they only have enough time to entertain us a few times a year. I’m thankful for video face time. It’s almost like being in the same room. A grandchild’s smile and “hi grandma” are priceless. Jesus said, “Greater works will you do,” and I count facetime calls as one of those greater works! We are blessed and relieved that three of our children live within a short drive from our house. Just knowing they are close is a comfort, and the three of them seem to be content with the relationship also. Their spouses are accommodating when we need attention.

I share these feelings because I hear of so many dysfunctional in-law relationships. I abhor cartoons and comics that express

disdain and disrespect for the proverbial “Mother-in-Law.” My children saw how well I got along with my in-laws and my husband with mine. We held the highest respect for them without arguments always. I have made an effort not to try to interfere with their marital decision making. Even if asked for advice, I tread very lightly. If anyone thought I was getting too bossy, they told me. Count that number on one hand. I have even refused to offer my opinion and deferred to the spouse’s opinion when in a tense situation. One spouse told me we would always have trouble, and I answered that it wouldn’t be because I wanted it and I never experienced it with my in-laws! We were friends. Why shouldn’t we uphold and support each other?

Our family never gets done quoting the old proverb, something everyone should take to heart, “time flies.” We quote it because, when Jordy was young, he probably didn’t know the meaning of this saying so he would rearrange it into, “Time flies when you have fleas” or “You can flee if you know how to fly.” Neither proverbs nor idioms are the best way to teach a principle. We try to describe what it’s like seeing change over 70 years. One daughter told me, “It’s hard watching you guys get old.” I say, “It’s not easy watching your babies grow old, either.”

During my father’s confinement in a nursing home in 2020, facetime saved his life. He stared, wide-eyed and happy, in disbelief as his three daughters stared back on the computer screen. He never was a techie, even refusing to ever own a cell phone, but I know he appreciated that everyone else was proficient with computer technology. An accommodating nurse at the care center, 1,000 miles away from us, set up her laptop and, every couple of days, we’d talk to Dad all the way from Ohio and Texas.

“Oh my three beautiful daughters!” he exclaimed.

I don’t know that he would have survived there without that interaction. I know I place a lot of importance on interaction with my four children, even though they are on their own and taking good care of themselves. I believe I’m quoting Ken Copeland when I say, “Once a parent, always a parent, the responsibilities just change.”

Yvonne Reusser

Thank you to the four in-law children who give me the grace to keep being a parent. You'll see what it feels like one day.

Chapter 24:

Truth is Funnier than Comedy Central: Real Life Tales of Our Family

“The Attack of the Toxic Carrots”

George used to call home while away at boarding school to tell us about strange coincidences. He experienced a short period of time in his junior high years where he got allergic skin reactions to everything. We tried to change all the usually suggested culprits: soaps, laundry detergents, junk foods and fried foods. Nothing helped. We bought new shoes and hypoallergenic socks. We couldn't figure out what to blame for all these hives or skin rashes. After graduating high school, he took a nine-month exchange student program in Switzerland.

While he was gone, a friend was having a meal with us when he told the strange story of how they discovered that his son broke out in hives every time he ate carrots. I got on the phone that day and called overseas to George, who had been away for several months by that time. I told him Dave's story, of his son's allergy and immediately George related that he had not eaten any carrots nor had he had a rash since he arrived in Switzerland. Problem solved. He also told me he never did like carrots, and I realized, because they were a favorite of mine, I pushed them on my family too much.

“Spiders Beware!”

We have owned a rustic cabin my Uncle Frank built many years ago. One weekend, Lynn's brother's family of seven came for the weekend and wanted to rough it in the cabin overnight. The first morning they came knocking at our door at an unusually earlier hour than we expected them. Rudely awakened on our Saturday morning, we all gathered in the kitchen to find out how they liked their accommodations. They're what you would call “city folk” and not

used to the country's wildlife. Well, they admitted, they just had enough and had planned to stay longer. But, they saw a spider.

“Oh,” I inquired, “What did you do about it?” It didn’t seem like a huge issue to us. We’re always stomping on spiders.

“We killed it!” they said. I could detect shivers running up their backbones.

“Oh dear, what am I going to tell Rent-A-Spider?” I teased them.

I think that’s the biggest laugh I ever got out of my family, I’m not usually the jokester.

“Left on the Island”

I once rode in a get-away car. My daughter was driving along with her husband and two-year-old son. When Natalie and her family decided to move back home from St. Thomas Island, I graciously offered to help. They had shipped all they could ahead of time, and we packed a couple suitcases each, along with carry-ons for the four of us. There seemed to have been an issue with cutting final ties with the landlord which was never totally explained to me, but that’s okay. We had packed all we could and planned to discard unnecessary items in a dumpster half way down the mountain they lived on. We grabbed a few final snacks from what food was left, since it was past breakfast hour. Who knew when we would eat, so I had a bowl of oatmeal, and as we rounded the last bend off of the mountain, I asked what I should do with my empty bowl and spoon. As Natalie drove near the dumpster, going about 80 miles an hour down the steep mountain they lived on, as if eluding someone, she yelled, “Throw it in!” She had no intention of stopping. Her husband and I both opened the windows and he heaved some trash, and I lobbed my spoon and bowl toward the trash bins. It was the quickest dumpster visit on record, as if we were afraid we were being followed. I can see this scene appearing on the St Thomas evening news as we sped down the mountain and Natalie kept checking her rear view.

“Attack of the Killer Bees”

When our girls were young, their father often gave them some exciting adventures. As a family, Lynn took us on truck rides. While driving out to the farm, Lynn noticed a ground hog run into a culvert. He stopped the truck and ordered Karena, about age seven, and Nataliem about five, to take a stick and beat on the culvert on one end, and Lynn planned to club the pesky animal as he ran out the other end. Ground hogs are a menace to farm folk. They create holes where holes aren't wanted, not to mention dangerous. The plan ran afoul when a hive of bees erupted and swarmed out of the culvert and toward the girls. As I saw what was taking place, I opened the truck doors so they could escape. Not everyone thought this was funny, but we have surely spent a lot of time laughing at the scene playing out in our minds ever since.

“Fresh Country Air”

A farm in Holmes County, Ohio developed a wonderful Christmas experience when they arranged all their farm animals in areas to tell the story of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem and culminating with the nativity in a huge barn. Thousands of people arrived and climbed aboard horse drawn wagon-loads of straw. Our families (eight of us and a friend) sat on bales of cold straw, huddled together to stay warm on a freezing December night, arriving at each station of the story. During the 1+ hour evening tour as we each exhaled frozen breath, little Alex, about three-years-old, exclaimed, “What’s that smell?” Uncle Casey responded that it was just natural, country air. Alex, in his wisdom, said, “Smells like poop to me!”

“Pink Lights and Hot Dates”

Teenage boys are always looking for ways to attract girls for Friday nights, right? While in high school, one well-meaning classmate told Lynn if he would put pink lights under the dash-board it would drive the girls wild. Lynn set to work locating the right bulb and switching out the one in his gold 1970s model Buick Wildcat, which was a classy car for its time. I'd like to say it impressed me, but to be perfectly honest, it didn't. I thought the hazy glow was

standard equipment on all cars. I don't think Lynn tried this technique on any other girls since it fell flat on me.

“Mis-pronunciations”

In the early days of running a hardware business, I was excited to help people when they shopped our small business. There were hundreds of products for me to learn and many times, customers weren't even sure what to ask for. One day a woman called to ask if we had plenty of that butter that was advertised in our sale flyer. I politely answered her that we didn't sell butter. She argued with me for a few minutes insisting she saw it advertised. I explained to her that we at Modern Hardware, did not sell butter. She then realized she had tried to call the local food market. On another occasion, the customer was right; a woman with a strong lisp came in and asked me for “flyscripps”.

Me, being so proud that I had learned the names of tools I never used, escorted her to the tool isle and handed her a pair of vise-grips. She looked at me and repeated her request in a different manner. “No! Those sticky strips you hang to trap flies!”, she exclaimed. Red-faced, I handed her a package of those-I had never used them before either.

“Deep Thinkers”

Our 3 years-old granddaughter, trying to figure out the family dynamics, asked me, Grandma, is my Dad your kid?”

I answered, “Yes, he is”.

Then, she surprised me with, “Is my Mom your kid too?”

Her older sister listening in asked, “Grandma, do you ever get mad?” And I knew I had to be transparent here, “Yes, I do, but I find kind and gentle ways to treat people”, I said.

She, in her 7 year old wisdom said, “That's why my Dad is your kid”, with her all-knowing smile.

If you have enjoyed reading about my adventures rearing my children, and growing up with them, I plan to write another volume. This one will focus on how I got through life's tragic events. My children observed but probably never really know how we did it watching from their perspective.

In the meanwhile, there are a few copies left of my first publication, a coloring book I mentioned earlier. Let me know if you'd like one, they are \$5 each and \$4 shipping.

Thank you for reading and may your parenting skills be blessed of the Lord from here on out. Write to me:

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September 2025