

From My House To Yours



2011... Hmm... I wonder what this year will mean to me. To my family. To my church. To my community. To my city.

When I think back over the year of 2010 I can't believe all that happened in those 12 short months. It's amazing how life can seem such a blur sometimes. Yet I can grab snapshots in my mind as I play back the year, snapshots that hold such precious memories. Some of them sad and stretching, some of them unexpected and fun.

As I enter into this new year I am excited for what is coming - for the things I can see at least. I'm sure there will be much to experience that will throw me for a loop and I hope to react well to

what I cannot see.

I have many ideas floating around in my head and in my heart. I've been able to put some to paper and map out a plan on how to live them out in our home.

One of the ideas I'm excited about most is [reading through the Bible in a year](#) - I developed a Bible reading plan that allows me to read a passage in the morning, tell a Bible story to the boys at breakfast from the passage that I just read, and that follows our calendar year as well. So when it's time for Lent we're reading about Jesus' life and when it's time for Advent we're recapping the Old Testament with Jesse tree devotions. I'll post the reading plan on my

blog if you'd like to join in!

I'm excited about **getting our house organized** after the extensive renovations the past three years. I just started reading *Smart Organizing* by Sandra Felton - it's a good one so far!

Another exciting prospect for me is **writing, writing, writing** and seeing how God leads in 2011.

Other ideas that top my list are **quality time with Josh and the boys, bulk cooking**, and fitting **exercise** into my schedule.

Do you have a plan for 2011? What's at the top of your list of ideas for the new year?

I'd love to track with you more in 2011. Feel free to visit my blog:

annasklar.wordpress.com

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Connection Points - Ideas For Building Community

MEN - Josh Sklar

The winter is in full force in Northern Ontario and unless you bundle up quite well, it is a short time out of doors. That is why this month's idea for getting together is an indoor idea. Last year a group of us got together for a "symposium on maturity," or in layman's terms, a Wii party. We grabbed a projection unit and speakers, stole our kid's Wiis and remotes, bought enough food to feed a small Honduran village, and played for 3 or 4 hours. We played hockey, boxed, launched grenades at each other, and the only thing that was hurt was our waist lines from the food. We are already planning the second annual symposium.

Let the games begin!



WOMEN - Amy Phillips

There is something about winter that is so magical. One of my favourite things to do during the winter months is to take walks after dark. The cool crisp air, the quietness of the night and the sound of the snow crunching under my feet while the stars shine bright overhead brings an overwhelming sense of peace to my soul. It is particularly nice when there is a full moon shining bright to light the way. What a great adventure for a group of women to share! Invite a group of adventure seeking women out for a winter moonlight hike (or snowshoe). Don't forget to bring a thermos with your favourite hot drink. You could end the evening with a treat inside by the fire or build a campfire outside and roast some marshmallows!



FAMILIES - Anna Sklar

Dashing through the snow... What fun it is to laugh and sing a sleighing song tonight!

Pick a day this month to invite a few friends and their children over for some sleighing fun.

Whether it's a hill down the street, a hill you made in your yard, or a hill in your community where you can meet with the friends - enjoy the ride! Make sure YOU get on the toboggan with the children for some sleighing fun!

Afterwards, invite the friends over for a serving of Crockpot Chilli and some hot chocolate.

(See chilli recipe on page 2!)



Contributions Needed!

Here's what we need for the February issue:

- Your Family Favourite Recipe
- Your ideas for Connection Points (about 100-125 words)
- Your idea for Reaching Out (about 100-125 words)
- Couples for Marriage on pg 2 (about 200 words each)

Deadline is January 15th

Email contributions or ask for more info:

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Family Library

Build your library at home with some of the books highlighted in our [Store](#) on our [site](#)!

Health - Exercise

What's one of the very best ways to gain more natural energy, achieve greater self confidence, look better, and be healthier? You got it - **exercise!**

What better time to continue or start the exercise program than now? The new year brings "resolutions" to do things differently and better. But instead of making a resolution that will likely fizzle out, why not commit yourself to forming a habit of regular exercise into your life?

It's not always easy to make exercise a regular part of my daily life, but when I get in the habit of it and simply DO IT without think-

ing myself out of it, I feel better and good about my body and health. I also have more energy and strength to take on the demands of the day.

Decide what you enjoy doing: walking, aerobics, swimming, going to the gym, etc. Then schedule the days you'll do that activity - aim for at least three days a week. Write it on your calendar as a firm commitment.

The key then is to just do it! With small children, you'll need to be creative finding the time, but do this for you. Put on your shoes and appropriate clothes, and get movin'!

Have fun with it and allow the stress of the day to be worked out in your work out. Enjoy how great it feels to lower your risk for deadly diseases and increase the quality of your life. Step up! - **Wendy Lempner, R.D.**



Family Activity



You've heard of scrapbooking, but what about **faithbooking**? This activity is about recording your personal journey of faith in much the same manner as scrapbooking.

What a great way to pass along your faith journey to your family! Faithbook as a family & have different books or different pages for each family member.

Google search for much more info on this new trend - I'd love to try this!

Family Favourite Recipe - Crockpot Chilli

1 lb ground beef
1 onion, chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
1 large tomato, diced
½ cup frozen corn
1 can kidney beans
1 can tomato soup
¼ cup ketchup
1 lime



Brown beef on medium heat. Add beef and rest of ingredients (except the lime) into the Crockpot. Cut the lime in half and squeeze the juice into the chilli. Cook until warmed through. Serve with rice or whole grain buns, and add a salad. Makes 6-8 servings. Double or triple the recipe as needed. Freezes well!

Hint: mash the kidney beans in food processor to avoid detection from picky eaters!

Finances - Creating A Budget Part 4 - % Allocations

It's a new year, and what better time than to wrap up our Creating A Budget series and move on to living out the budget?

We've mapped out our variable and fixed expenses and the dates they are deducted from our accounts. We've calculated our income and when we are paid each month.

The budget worksheet is filling up and we are ready to finish the task of creating a budget!

Now we need to figure out what percentage of our income should be allocated towards what expenses. You will find that some of your expenses are definitely out of whack in terms of what percentages are recommended. You can bring your budget in line over time, or choose what you will sacrifice from one category so that you can have more room in another category.

Here's the breakdown for a \$45,000 income household according to Crown Financial - this is a GREAT resource!

Tithe	10%
Housing	32%
Food	13%
Auto	13%
Insurance	5%
Debts	5%
Entertainment/Recreation	6%
Clothing	5%
Savings	5%
Medical/Dental	4%
Miscellaneous	7%
Investments	5%

[Click here to see % for other income levels.](#)

Your task is to calculate how the current amounts in your budget categories line up with the recommended amounts.

Click on the image below for the updated Budget Worksheet - I hope this document makes it easier for you to record your budget.

Next month we'll take a peek at what should be included in the Savings category so you can have a better idea of where your money will go when it's needed. - **Anna Sklar**



Marriage: What Is Your Vision?

Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.
- Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)



When Josh and I hit the ten-year mark last year I was feeling a little lost. I knew I was happy to be married to Josh, that we were doing our best to raise our two sons according to God's will, and we were in church ministry.

These are all great things to be doing right?

Yes, but I had no idea **why** we were doing these things. I felt like I was withering away, running around aimlessly, scrambling to keep my head above water, exhausted.

In short - I was perishing.

I remembered Proverbs 29:18 and came to realize why I was perishing.

I was totally lacking in vision.

That realization set me on a course to map out vision in all areas of my life, so that I had a sense of purpose. I was able to set goals for fulfilling the vision(s) and begin to watch them unfold as the days, months, years passed.

It had to start with our marriage. I knew we were married because we love each other,

because we have fun together and we go really good together. I believe God brought us together to serve Him, to honour Him, and to bring Him praise. But how was all this working itself out in our marriage? Was it working itself out?

Josh patiently mapped out the vision with me that I desperately needed for our marriage and for raising our boys. As we talked about vision for our marriage, I was encouraged that we were already on the same page in many areas, and the rest just needed a little talking out to come together in my head and my heart.

Vision is a new thing for me. I thought it might be limiting to different areas of my life, but it is actually extremely freeing. I am so free to live out the life I want, the life I'm called to as a wife and mother, and to be the person God made me to be.

I am still working on visions for the other areas of my life like writing, running the household and self-care.

Most days now I feel confident instead of withered. I look to our future with hope and excitement for all that is coming. I am so grateful for the vision that Josh and I share.

- Anna Sklar

Relationship Challenge:

2011 is a great year to set a marriage vision! Here are a couple of tips to get you started:

- Brainstorm a vision individually then bring the ideas together. Talk or write them out.
- Ask yourself some of these questions: Who do you want to be as a couple? What do you want to do together? Is there anything you want to accomplish? What does God call you to in your marriage?

Marriage Prayer:

Father, thank you for the gift of marriage and the togetherness it brings to our lives. This year help us to become more and more confident of who we are as a couple and the purposes You want to fulfill in our marriage. May we see each other and our bond through Your eyes and discover the possibilities and dreams that tie us together in Your will.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Faith At Home - Memorizing Scripture

I never really made scripture memorization a part of my life. People would tell me about its importance and give me examples of verses to memorize, but my eyes would always gloss over and my mind would always wander.

As I write this, I'm starting to get it. I'm not very good at following through with things just because someone tells me to do them. Usually there has to be a reason for me, I have to understand why and make it real.

I already know of a couple of good reasons to memorize scripture. I know it is "a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105) and that it helps "that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11).

I also realize I inadvertently have many verses tucked away in my head just from years of church attendance, personal devotions, small groups, Bible studies, and growing up in Sunday school.

As I researched more Bible verses with "word" in them I came across SO MANY reasons to memorize scripture and hide it in my heart and the young hearts of my boys. There is one major reason that sums it all up in such a simple and fascinating way, and it is revealed

in the scripture I hope to start memorizing.

John 1:1 says "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

And then Revelation 19:13 says "And He [was] clothed in a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called the Word of God."

Jesus is the living and active (Hebrews 4:12) Word of God. He is the Bible made into human form. It's pure magic.

The more we know scripture, the more we know Jesus. Memorizing it and hiding it in our hearts means having more of Jesus in our lives. And THAT gives me more than enough reason to memorize God's words to grow in my own faith, and help my sons to grow in theirs.

- Anna Sklar

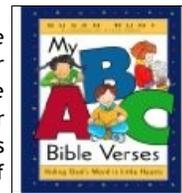
Family Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your Word. Help us to hide it in our hearts so that we may know You more. May we constantly find ways to memorize the words in Your book, have fun with the memorizing, and discover the power that Your Word can have in our lives.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Preschool Idea:

There are some really cute resources out there for little ones to learn the Bible. Your preschooler can memorize Bible verses even at such a young age if you work at it with them.



Elementary-Age Idea:

Pick out your verses and write them on your bathroom mirror with erasable marker. Recite them together and quiz each other before or after your daily hygiene routine!



Teen Idea:

Ask your teen to be your accountability partner in this endeavour - I bet they'd LOVE that! And how about a celebration of memorization milestones for sticking with it for a week, a month or a year?



Green Living - Natural Cleaners

A few years ago I made the switch to natural cleaners. I did this for a few reasons:

- My men all have allergies and the scents seem to really bother them. I even switched to scent-free laundry detergent and replaced my fabric softener with dryer balls.
- The chemicals in regular cleaners are carcinogenic and I wanted to get them out of the house.
- I took Environmental Studies in college and have a real soft spot for caring for our world.

There was not much in the way of "green" cleaners when I started on my quest. I did



the research and discovered the natural cleaning power of baking soda, vinegar, lemon, hydrogen peroxide and Borax. I mixed my own concoctions and off I went.

Recently I had some heavy-duty cleaning to do after the home renovations and I felt the need to purchase cleaners from the store to really get the job done right. I thought I'd have to settle for the toxic cleaners this time around, but I found there are such a wealth of green cleaners available to us now.

Whether you like to create your own, or store-buy, making the switch to natural cleaners is simple and beneficial to you, your family and your world.

- Anna Sklar

Reaching Out

Do you live far away from your loved ones?

This year let's do our best to stay in touch with friends and family who would LOVE to hear from us. Especially those who live in retirement homes or nursing homes.

We email out a family newsletter every few months. I print out a copy for those who have no computer.

A letter can go a long way towards making others feel involved in our lives. And children's drawings, photos or hand-written notes are always a hit!



JANUARY 2011

Feel free to use this calendar for your family - hang it up to keep track of schedules, appointments, anything!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 New Year's Day
2	3	4	5	6 Epiphany	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					