

The Family Forum

Growing Together in Faith and Family Life

March 2011

From My House To Yours

I'm turning many corners these days. Seeing new sights just around the bend. Not quite there but getting closer, always closer to what's around the bend.

The [Bible Reading Plan 2011](#) is going well so far, and every time I open my Bible I learn something new about my faith, about God, about the history of His people.

Health is climbing its way to the top of my priority list. Exercise and eating right are back in the game after a time of neglect.

Extensive home renovations have come to a halt. I turned that corner with no looking back!

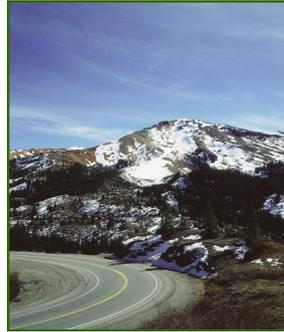
I was a full-time stay-at-home mom for about 9 years, and now both boys are in school full-time. I stand staring at the turn in that bend, not sure what to do with it just yet, doing my best to leave it all with God and follow Him

around this corner.

Opportunities to step out of my comfort zone are presenting themselves. Though it will be hard to step out, I don't want to miss the experiences anymore.

I find contentment in my grasp. It's always been there, waiting for me to recognize it for what it really is, but I missed the boat constantly. Contentment really is found everywhere, but actually seeing it and choosing to live in it are another story. I keep making a [gratitude list](#) and look forward to reading [One Thousand Gifts](#) by [Ann Voskamp](#) in the near future.

For a time it seemed I was following the same road, and the scenery never changed. Maybe I was wrong, maybe it was me that never changed, never wanted to change, afraid to turn the corners and change the scenery.



I realized there were a few corners to turn within. I saw that the scenery was always changing but I was blind to it.

It starts with one. Me. You.

Then it spreads to more. Us. We.

Turning corners means leaving the familiar, not able to look back around the bend, letting it go, seeing what is ahead. Sometimes scary, but always worth it.

Feel free to visit my blog:

annasklar.wordpress.com

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Connection Points - Ideas For Building Community

MEN - Josh Sklar

Well lads, the good weather is around the corner and that can mean only one thing - spring cleaning! Not just ordinary spring cleaning, manly spring cleaning. Get the boys together to air out the garage, and go through the tools & big boy toys. Lawnmowers need a tune up? Hit Canadian Tire and get to work! Floor mats or mini van interiors (or muscle cars should you be so lucky) need to be cleaned? Get out the Shop Vac and Armor All and have at it! BBQ needs a new burner? Bring it on! Get together and work together to get ready for spring. And when it is all said and done, you just might want to try out the new burner on the BBQ.



WOMEN - Anna Sklar

Our home renovations taught me many things, and one of them is that women are GREAT at home repair!

Ask one or a few friends to share their to-do lists and skills they have to offer, then match up the tasks with those qualified to help.

Set up dates to help each other, and have fun painting, fixing, gardening, installing, whatever needs to get done.

There are even some pink tools out there to get you motivated.

Take before and after shots. When the tasks are complete, sit back and enjoy your hard work!



FAMILIES - Anna Sklar

Host a St. Patrick's Day party and have fun decorating the house with anything green!

Have the kids make decorations of shamrocks or rainbows complete with pots of gold. Purchase chocolate gold coins to hand out for the kids to take home.

Shamrock is also known as "white clover". Check your local gardening stores or order seeds online to share with the families that attend your party. Plant the shamrock seeds as an activity at your St. Patrick's Day party.

If you have a copy of the Veggie Tales *Easter Carol*, play the St. Patrick's Day story for the kids to know more of the holiday history.



Contributions Needed!

Here's what we need for the April issue:

- Your Family Favourite Recipe
- Your ideas for Connection Points (about 100-125 words)
- Your idea for Reaching Out (about 100-125 words)

Deadline is March 15th

Email contributions or ask for more info:

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Contact Us & Subscribe

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Family Library

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

Health - Getting Enough Sleep

Babies need lots and lots of sleep.

Toddlers need 12-14 hours of sleep - usually 12 hours at night and an afternoon nap.

Preschoolers need 10-12 hours of sleep.

School-age children need about 10 hours of sleep, possibly less as they move into the pre-teen years.



Teens need lots and lots of sleep!

This is the cycle for our children as they grow from babies to adults.

As adults, we need about 7-8 hours of sleep.

How is your family doing overall?

My boys are usually good with their bedtimes and usually get enough sleep. My husband usually gets his required sleep as well. My sleeping patterns have been a little sporadic lately, and I really notice a difference when I'm lacking in sleep. I have a hard time concentrating, smiling, keeping up with my active boys and reaching for healthy foods.

Instead I reach for whatever will give me an energy boost to get through the task at hand.

What can we do to increase our chances of a good night's sleep? Here are a few ideas that have helped me: Save some time for relaxing and unwinding before bed - watch a favourite show (but too much TV interferes with sleep), read a good book, talk about the day with a loved one, sip a warm cup of tea, or eat a small, healthy snack. Adapt these ideas to help your children unwind at the end of the day as well.

Mornings look a lot better after a good night's sleep!

Family Activity



March 8th is Shrove Tuesday and the day before Lent begins. Pancakes were made on Shrove Tuesday to use up all the "rich" foods in the house (eggs, milk, sugar) before the season of fasting during the 40 days of Lent.

Mix up a batch of pancakes on March 8th and enjoy them as a family for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Use the recipe provided here. →

Learn more about the season of Lent as a family and discover more ways to celebrate!

Family Favourite Recipe - Pancakes!

1 large egg
1 cup unbleached or whole wheat flour
¾ cup milk
1 tbsp sugar
2 tbsp vegetable oil
3 tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
margarine



Beat egg until fluffy. Beat in remaining ingredients, except margarine, until smooth. Heat pan over medium heat. Grease with margarine. (To test heat of pan, sprinkle with a few drops of water. If bubbles jump around, heat is perfect!) Pour about ¼ cup batter into pan for each pancake. Cook until puffy and dry around edges. Turn and cook other side until golden brown. *-Adapted from Betty Crocker's New Cookbook.*

Options: Sprinkle a few berries or chocolate chips on top of pancake batter as you put it into the pan (make smiley faces or heart shapes, etc).

Finances - Kids and Allowance

Allowance is usually given out on Saturday mornings at our house. We take the opportunity to intentionally talk about money with our boys for a few moments each week.

Our boys know that 10% of their allowance is for giving to God - tithing. This money gets put aside and is slid into their pockets before we head out the door on Sunday morning. Then it goes into the collection bucket at church.

Another 10% of their allowance is for saving. 20% is also a good amount for saving, and we'll work up to that as they get older. The boys have special piggy-banks for their savings. When the piggy-banks are overflowing we deposit some of their savings into their bank accounts. Josh and I are joint account holders with the boys until they are old

enough to have their own account (won't be long now for Josiah who is 9).

That leaves 80% for spending. The boys have wallets for their spending money. Again, if the spending money adds up too high, we make a bank deposit.

The boys know that certain chores are their responsibility - like making the beds, cleaning up toys, putting folded laundry away, clearing the table, helping to take out the garbage, and other odds and ends if needed. They know that families need all their members to pitch in to keep things running smoothly.

Allowance isn't given based on chores completed, though I've heard this works well in some households.

We'll give our boys \$1 for every year they've

been around up to age 10. Then they can take on extra chores for extra money (to a certain limit!). Beyond that paper routes, mowing lawns, etc. are options for them.

We try to focus on teaching the boys about money management. We try to walk them through Biblical values about money. We remind our children and ourselves(!) that the money we have belongs to God and we discuss how He wants us to handle it.

This always proves for interesting conversation as we learn about money as a family!



Marriage - Dealing With Crisis



Crisis is a part of life, and a part of marriage. Sadness, strife, or stress can enter our days and leave us winded for a long time. Unexpected and unwelcome events can occur and leave us scrambling to survive minute by minute. I'm sure we can all relate somehow to crisis in our lives and in our marriages.

Josh and I experienced our fair share of crisis in our years together, but we also know others who experienced much more than we have. No one life and no one marriage will look exactly like another. We are all unique and our marriages are unique.

We lived through job loss, stillbirth, serious illness in our children, many moves, deaths in the family and much confusion. Your crisis situations may look similar to ours, but you will have your own unique experiences.

Only the two of you have your unique set of circumstances. No other marriage can have the same set. You know each other's loss, hardship, grief, sadness and stress in a special way because you share experiences, because you share a life, because you are one.

Pull together through the hard times instead of

drifting apart. Find your strength in each other instead of carrying the weight alone. Communicate with the person who may just know you better than you know yourself. Seek counselling if you need it.

During our times of crisis, Josh and I handled our situations differently. Sometimes I needed to be alone, but I made sure to reconnect after that time, even if it meant lots of tears as we got the hurt out. Josh is great at making me laugh and sometimes I needed that laughter during the hard times. Sometimes it was a hug or a prayer.

Expressing our needs to one another and accepting each other for who we are is key in dealing with crisis. Even though we don't always understand each other's emotions, we try to validate them.

Though we may never understand the reasons behind the crisis in our lives, we can trust God to be with us through the crisis. He waits for you to turn to Him, and He can handle yelling as well as praise. Lean on Him the most - as individuals and as a couple - as you deal with crisis in your life and in your marriage.



Relationship Challenge:

Take an inventory of your years together. Have you experienced crisis that you never fully dealt with? Is there any lingering sadness, strife or stress in your relationships that you haven't talked through with your spouse? Open the lines of communication and share the burden of crisis. If you need much help, counsellors are available at your church, in your community or even online to walk you through the healing and restoration needed.

Marriage Prayer:

Lord, You know our hurts. You know every second of every day of every year of our lives and our marriage. Help us to communicate openly with one another without causing more hurt, but rather to bring healing. If the hurt is too much or if we need help to deal with our crisis, please show us who You have for us to walk us through this time. May we draw always closer to You and each other in the hard times that come.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Faith At Home - Celebrating Lent

Lent is a completely new celebration for our family - one that I am hoping will grow us closer to Christ and to each other.

This year Lent begins on March 9th. Lent is a season of preparation for Easter. Easter has always been a part of my life, and I love the family activities we incorporate every year, but it always seemed there could be so much more to it. Cue Lent.

In the next couple of weeks, I hope to finish reading the gospels - I'm working my way through John right now. And stories about Jesus' life (taken from the One-Year Bible for Children) are the focus at our breakfast table. We will be reading about Jesus' death and resurrection soon. I wanted to read through the gospels just before Lent so that we can recap them during the 40 days before Easter.

The book we are using for this, our first Lenten season, is called *The Lenten Tree* by Dean Lambert Smith. The book contains two sets of devotions - one for families and one for adults - for each day of Lent. Symbols are given for each day to represent something of Christ. These symbols can be made into ornaments to make a Lenten Tree in your family, similar to a Jesse Tree that is made

during the Advent season.

We also grabbed a copy of the new book *Amon's Adventure* by Arnold Ytreeide. This book tells a story as families read it one chapter at a time during 28 of the 40 days of Lent. The boys love the Advent books written by the same author.

I'm learning much about Lent, including new recipes for the season. Tradition usually calls for sacrificing something during Lent just as Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice for us all. I'm still working out that idea for myself and my family.

Do you have any ideas to share for Lent? Email anna@thefamilyforum.ca - I'd love to hear from you and post the ideas on [my blog!](#)

Family Prayer

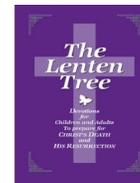
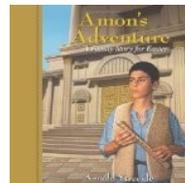
Father, thank You for all the ways we can celebrate Your Son and Your plan for us in our families. Help us to honour You as we go about our days, and may You be glorified in all the seasons. Teach us what You have for us during this season of Lent, and grow us as we draw closer to You and to each other in remembering Jesus. In His name, Amen.

Preschool Idea:

Make a cross with your young one with art foam, construction paper, etc. Tell them the cross helps us remember Jesus. Let them decorate with stickers, tissue paper or markers. Hang the cross on the wall for Lent.



Elementary-Age Idea: Check out these books!



Teen Idea:

Do some Lent research with your teen. What is the original idea of hot cross buns? Discuss this and other findings as you prepare a Lenten snack or meal.



Green Living - The Scoop on Laundry

Laundry can be one of the most expensive and eco-unfriendly chores in our homes today.

Old washing machines and dryers, shrunken clothes and huge hydro bills can leave us feeling washed out (sorry - had to say that!).

Over the years we've learned some tried and true tricks to reduce our energy bills and prolong the life of the clothes we love.

Hanging your laundry to dry leaves clothes smelling so good (especially when you hang them outside in the warm weather months). Slightly stiff clothes can be fluffed with just a few minutes in the dryer. This is much easier on the clothes and the bank account than



Pushing the limit at our house in the fall of 2009?

running the dryer for a full cycle. Drying racks are as cheap as \$10 each, and clotheslines are not much more.

Hanging clothes to dry inside in the colder months also adds much-needed humidity to a home. It only takes a few minutes to hang up a load, then leave it for a day and voilà! The clothes dry themselves! Too bad they don't fold themselves as well!

If you are able, update your appliances to more eco-friendly versions and watch your drying time drastically reduce, whether you hang your clothes or throw them in the dryer.

Front-load washers are great for spinning much of the water from your clothes.

Reaching Out

"Every year, more than 800 participating Ontario grocery stores ask you to donate a Toonie at the checkout. One hundred percent of all money raised by these campaigns goes back into your community to provide breakfasts and nutritious snacks for students at a local school. Look in stores, and on flyers, for specially marked money off coupons on everything from bread to coffee. Many of these coupons don't just save you money, on use they also donate additional cash to the Toonies for Tummies Program."

Visit tooniesfortummies.com for more info.



MARCH 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	2	3	4 World Day of Prayer	5
6	7	8 Shrove Tuesday	9 Ash Wednesday Lent Begins	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		