

Team Time

The team of people I'm now working with for Women in the Academy & Professions is flung far and wide across the country. So, it was wonderful to have a team retreat last month for a few days. I finally got to meet some of my colleagues face-to-face! We spent a very productive 48 hours engaging in team-building discussions, making plans for our part in the Following Christ 2008 conference next December, and working out our publishing agenda for The Well (<http://tothewell.org/>). We were sad to miss one of our team members at the retreat, whose husband died a few days later from cancer. Join me in praying for Marcia Bosscher and her family in their grief.

Grown-Ups Love It

I had a special opportunity last month to take some of my InterVarsity training and share it in adult Sunday school for our local congregation, Grace Evangelical Covenant Church. I was invited to teach a short segment on inductive Bible study (one of my favorite teaching topics), including an overview of the method and some hands-on practice time.

It was loads of fun to dive into a short text (we used Luke 10:38-42) with these fellow worshipers and see adults get as excited about manuscript Bible study as undergraduates do! Digging into a biblical text to observe carefully, interpret meaning, and apply it to our lives always bears good fruit, no matter how familiar the story is. What a treat it was to have the chance to share some of the professional skills I use in InterVarsity with our local church!

Shelf Life

Book Notes from Ann

Little One, We Knew You'd Come, by Sally Lloyd-Jones

It feels like an extra-special blessing to be pregnant during Advent and Christmas season (again!). All of the waiting and the sense of anticipation takes on a double-meaning as we wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus, and then a few months later the birth of our second daughter.

After Lucy was born, we discovered a wonderful children's book that reflects the double-sided nature of natal joy. A mother begins, "Little one, we knew you'd come./ We hoped. We dreamed. We watched for you./ We counted the days till you were due./ We waited. How we longed for you./ And the day that you were born." Throughout the whole book, it's delightfully ambiguous whether the subject is Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, or any other baby and its parents.

Jackie Morris's illustrations complement the text beautifully. These days, Lucy loves pointing out all the stars pictured in the book. We also recently discovered a children's Bible written by Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. We look forward to reading this one with our girls when they are a bit older!

Prayer Requests

Please pray:

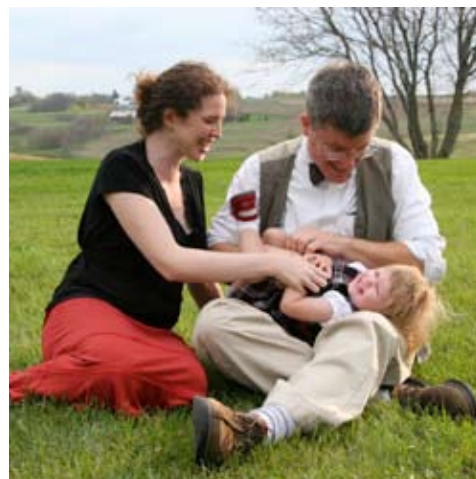
- ☛ for my colleague Marcia and her family as they grieve the loss of her husband
- ☛ for the health of our Baby Girl #2 and a safe, full-term delivery (due date: March 27)
- ☛ for students and faculty to receive spiritual nourishment and replenishment over the Christmas break

Boyd's Eye View

We were very excited to learn at our mid-pregnancy ultrasound that we'll be welcoming another girl into our family! Baby Boyd is growing steadily and kicking away, just as active in utero as her big sister was. (You can see cool 3-D ultrasound photos online at <http://boydsnest.org/news/>.)

Lucy is just a bundle of fun these days, talking up a storm and running around the house squealing. She has been especially intrigued with all of the lights that adorn houses this time of year (including ours!), which we all enjoy on family walks. We have been having a blast creating Advent traditions that Lucy can participate in and enjoy even more now that she is a big toddler. Who knew that parenting gets more and more fun every day?

Lucy gets some serious tickling from Mama & Papa.



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Extra! Extra!

Preparing for Jesus

I love preparing for things. Putting a little bit of time into stocking a diaper bag or chopping ingredients for a recipe can make all the difference in my enjoyment of an activity.

Around the Boyd house these days, we've been having a lot of fun preparing for Advent — a time of preparation in itself! We've decorated the house, stuffed our Advent calendar with fun family activities, and picked out some new cookie recipes. We've been also thinking about ways we are preparing for the birth of our new daughter in a few months — finishing up some household organizing projects, upgrading our ancient Honda, knitting a new baby blanket, re-reading some parenting books. We are busy, busy, busy with anticipation!

While vacuuming the other day, I had a new thought: Mary didn't really have the option of preparing a place for Jesus to be born. They weren't even able to get a room indoors. Later, I went to Luke 2 to read more about what this time was like for them. Did she anticipate giving birth while they were traveling in Bethlehem? Did Joseph grumble as Mary insisted on bringing along blankets and a baby sling? My hunch is that they just had to improvise by making a crib out of a feeding trough and wrapping Jesus up in bands of cloth. As uncomfortable as that may have been for Mary and Joseph, it is encouraging to me that Jesus decided to arrive anyway. He wasn't waiting for everything to be flawless before he made his entrance into the world. In the same way, Jesus is happy to show up and be with us even when our lives aren't perfectly

arranged to have a long time of quiet Bible reading or prayer to wait for him.

I find this truth encouraging, especially at this time in my own life and spiritual journey. The meat of my life these days is made up much more of tidying up after my rambunctious toddler than enjoying delicate moments of quiet. There are some things we can do to make room for Jesus, to prepare for him to come into our lives more deeply. Sometimes that includes making space and time for quiet reflection and spiritual reading. But, if we can learn more from Mary in this text, the most important thing is being open to God at all times. Jesus is gracious to come into our lives even at the most unexpected times. (For goodness' sake, most of these thoughts came to me while I was vacuuming!) I look forward to meeting God this season during some of the times we've especially prepared for him — singing Christmas carols, lighting Advent candles, spending time reading devotionally. But I'm glad that Jesus didn't mind spending his first night in a barn, and that he's also willing to be with me while I'm vacuuming up graham-cracker crumbs from our floors. What a gracious God we serve!

For Christ & the University —

Ann