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### On The Road Again...

As I write this I am sitting on a green plastic lawn chair on the deck of our hotel room, which overlooks the ocean, in Sheet Harbour, Nova Scotia. It is 07-07-07, the wedding day of my good friend, Lee. He stopped by this morning with his parents for a quick visit before running off to fetch the fixings for punch for the reception tonight and to make a call to check on his beloved bride. The wedding is in about three hours. My kids are napping “so they can party” tonight, as Ezra put it. We are on day eight of our two and a half week adventure cycling the Maritime provinces of Canada: New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. So far we’ve ridden about 160 miles and are no worse for the wear. Actually, everyone is doing great.

We drove the eleven hours to Murray Beach, New Brunswick and started the trip with a kiss under a fabulous sunset over the Atlantic. We’ve crossed Canada’s longest bridge to PEI and cycled back and forth all over the island, made famous by L. M. Montgomery in her Anne of Green Gables books. We spent an idyllic morning exploring the house and grounds after which the story is fashioned, the home of Montgomery’s spinster aunt and uncle. The kids ran through the Haunted Wood and Lover’s Lane, expecting to see Anne and Diana around every turn. We drew flowers from their gardens into our nature notebooks and read a chapter of the first Anne book aloud in the shadow of the house. One minor bike crash (Gabriel) resulting in a broken bag and a peeled knee, light rain showers and a plethora of hills aside, our time on the island was perfect.

Our introduction to Nova Scotia has been considerably less romantic. We crossed the ferry to Pictou (pronounced “pick-toe”) on a sunny afternoon and optimistically embarked on the second

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two thirds of our trip. The rainy two thirds. The next three days were spent battling hill after hill in black fly infested rain and a solid headwind which made even the down hill runs feel as if we were pedaling up hill. It rained so much that we considered turning our half circle shaped tents upside down and paddling instead of pedaling. We camped on an old logging road in the middle of a game preserve last night. In the rain. The black flies nearly carried off one of the children when we were setting up the tent. We ate dinner 100 yards from our camp to discourage visitors of the critter variety... in a downpour. Our friend Megan, who is bravely cycling with us, slept in our tent, for fear of being washed away in her one man ultra-light. The up-side? I sleep better in the rain. We woke up to, you guessed it, more rain. Packed up in the rain. Ate our oatmeal in the rain and proceeded to pedal a good twenty miles into Sheet Harbour... in the rain. Tony pointed out to the ever optimistic children, that it just goes to show what we really CAN do if we have to. The folks at the hotel saw us for what we really were: Drowned Rat Refugees, and bent over backwards to make it up to us: tea, hot showers, free use of the hotel washer and dryer, space to dry out the tents, you name it. The folks at The Fairwinds are fine folks indeed.

I'm looking forward to this wedding. The kids are looking forward to the dancing. Surely this day will signal a turn for the better in our fortunes in Nova Scotia... won't it?

Post Script from Great Village, Nova Scotia, One week and one day later:

We're getting good at pounding out twenty in rain and a good headwind. What can I say? Halifax was fabulous, thanks in large part to our good friends the Purcells. Rafting the Tidal Bore on the Bay of Fundy was a once in a lifetime experience... stir in plenty more rain and hills, one or two more crashes for Gabriel, resulting in more bloody knees, a crash for me, resulting in a perforated bag and a broken spoke (that'll teach me to wave at the kids in the day care cage!) the purchase of three knee braces, a fabulous Victorian B&B, a killer migraine and a partridge in a pear tree and you've pretty well got the gist of the past week of the trip. The good news: We're still having a great time. The bad news (which might also be construed as good news): It looks like it will take at least a day longer to get back to the car than we had originally planned.

## Considering Our Blessings

by Stephanie Payton

Our family just, quite literally, celebrated our son's 6<sup>th</sup> birthday. The anticipation has been building for the past five months, as he patiently experienced the celebrating of all of his sisters' birthdays. One by one, moving ever so slowly, the months of waiting finally came to an end.

He rose this morning, emphatically stating it wasn't his birthday yet, because his Mamaw and Papaw had not arrived for the party. He is at that funny stage (have your kids been there?), where he does not understand that the birthDAY is different from the birthday PARTY. They are still one and the same to him.

I was also amused by his eagerness to repeat the birthday greeting to those around him. My oldest daughter said to him, "Happy birthday, Lucas!" His response: "Happy birthday to you, too!" With a chuckle, I had to, at the very least, applaud his generosity and politeness. And don't worry; it did not take long for him to realize that this day was, indeed, a celebration for HIM.

What a celebration we had! For those reading this that do not know, we adopted our little guy four years ago. Loving him has been a journey for our souls. We continue to be amazed by how the Lord teaches us so much about Himself through our relationship with Lucas. We are so undeserving of this to which God has called us. Just a few weeks ago, I was listening to Lucas's prayers. These were his sweet words: "Dear God, thank you

for Mommy and Daddy. I just like them so much!" Ah, blessed child. Who could resist such adoration?

My husband and I read a book last fall titled The Blessing, written by John Trent and Gary Smalley. We were both moved by the message written throughout this book. It made us examine our own upbringings, and the blessings both bestowed and unbestowed during that time. And now that we are in the position of parenting these precious children, we are examining how we are blessing them in their young lives.

Through reading the book, we have decided to be a bit more intentional in expressing our thoughts about our children directly to them. You might think that this should be a natural part of our everyday life. Of course our kids know what we are thinking about them! We found, however, that all too often we were so caught up in instruction and discipline that we simply did not take enough time to share with them all the wonderful things about them that we were quick to share with others. Am I always aware of their need for this affirmation, and do I always take the time to express it? No. But I can say that I am more aware of it now than ever, and try each day to give them a part of the blessing.

Along with everyday blessings, we have decided to come up with a special blessing each year to be read on their birthdays. We approached this with a bit of trepidation. What would the kids think? Would they think it

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was goofy? Would they even understand what we were doing?

Well, tonight was our fourth opportunity this year to offer a blessing to one of our children. If you can, picture this. All three girls were huddled around Lucas as he opened his last gift. Audra, the oldest, with a glance at me, eagerly tapped Lucas on his arm. "Lucas," she said, "It's time for your blessing! Everyone, listen! Mama is going to read Lucas's blessing!"

Did you hear that? She really **gets** it. Amidst gifts and celebration, everyone quieted down to hear the blessing about to be bestowed on this child. The girls had joyfully heard theirs, and now recognized the importance of Lucas hearing his.

In case I have sparked some interest in your own heart about this special event, I would like to share with you the blessing we read to our sweet boy tonight. May you be inspired, yourself, to creatively bless your own children.

\*\*\*\*\*

Our Dear Son, Lucas,

Wow, how the time has flown! It is so hard to believe that you are six years old today. The first time we met you, we had just missed your second birthday. Four years have passed since then, but we can still remember our first trip to meet you. Your laughter touched our hearts from the beginning, and we continue to delight in your happy spirit.

You are a testimony to us, Lucas. You opened your heart to us, as we had already opened

our hearts to you. Your determination and strength of spirit impressed us. You have a very special place in our family. It is impossible to remember what it was like before you arrived.

You are growing each and every day, both in body and in spirit. It has been noticed, both by us and by others, how you care for those around you. You are quick to share with others, and take special pleasure in being kind to your friends. It pleases us to see you demonstrating God's love to those around you.

We love you, sweet boy. You are a reminder to us, each and every day, that God's plans are always the best. God led us to you, and we are so glad you are a part of our family. May you continue to grow in your love for Jesus, and may you trust him each and every day with both your happy moments and your troubles.

Happy 6<sup>th</sup> birthday, Lucas. We look forward to sharing many more with you.

With love,  
Daddy and Mommy

\*\*\*\*\*

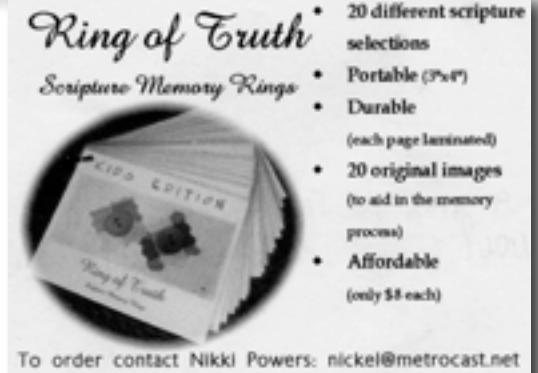
It is a simple thing, really. A spoken message, attaching high value and picturing a special future for your children. Add to these an active commitment and meaningful touch, and you will have captured the five elements of the blessing. I would encourage you to bestow the blessing on your own children today.

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## Mail Bag

*I hope you're having a wonderful time in the Maritime provinces. I grew up in Saint John, New Brunswick and spent a lot of time on PEI and in Nova Scotia. (I met you at the home school convention in Indianapolis this past year.) My family is headed up there in mid July for three weeks and I hope to take my girls to the Bay of Fundy also.*

*I'm so inspired by your newsletter each month and I'm loving your lesson plans as I prepare for next year. Thank you for using your God given gifts to help me train up my little girls!*

*Blessings,  
H.A.*

## Wilds of Creation

### Long-neck Encounter

by Judy Daley

It was early morning on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The sun had barely made it up onto the horizon. The air had been cooled by a weather front that had pushed its way through the region the night before. The sky was an awesome shade of cobalt blue. It promised to be a spectacular day!

As I sipped on my coffee,

I casually glanced out the back door window to look at my two llamas. They were standing side by side and perfectly still. Their eyes were intensely focused toward the street. Something had caught their undivided attention. I hurried to the front of the house expecting to see a herd of deer pass by, as was the case so many times before. But I saw nothing, nothing at all. I returned to the rear door. The llamas, now on the move, were walking toward the street. Unable to see what it was they were starrng at, I stepped out onto the deck for a better view.

It was a solitary deer standing at the fence!

The deer was starrng in at the llamas. The llamas slowly approached the fence, pausing several times as though waiting for a “bolting reaction” from the deer. But that did not happen.

Like small children meeting each other for the first time, the llamas and deer stood face to face starrng at each other. And then, in an attempt to smell each others scent, one llama reached forward nearly touching noses with the deer. What an awesome encounter!

For several minutes the animals appeared to regard one another before the deer dropped its long neck down to the ground to eat grass mere inches away from the llamas. The llamas dropped their heads to the ground too, using the same gesture as the deer, pulling up blades of grass and then eating them.

“What could they be communicating”, I thought.

What ever was happening, it sure was beautiful. There was an unspoken language between these two animal species that was calm, gentle, and peaceful. Llamas are curious animals by nature but I had seen them alarmed at the sight of deer many times before.

This time there was something different happening; something precious, something very mysterious and special. Perhaps it was because the deer was young or that it had come alone. Or maybe, just maybe, I was lucky enough to have witnessed something that had gone on undetected for years. I may never know. Nature has many mysteries. How wonderful to have caught a glimpse of this one.

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## A Day On The Farm... The Weasel Farm

### Ezra on Cliff Bars:

Prince Edward Island is fraught with hills... it seemed so much flatter on our motorcycle eight years ago. The ride from Cavendish across to Charlottetown was hilly at best. We stopped often to suck greedily at our camel back straws, or to snack. When we cycle, we always carry our "spare provisions"

of Cliff Bars. My favorite is Carrot Cake. Tony and the kids like Chocolate Brownie. Ezra hates them with a passion, but, they were all that we had.... I broke off the smallest reasonable piece of Chocolate Brownie (the lesser of two evils in his opinion) and handed it back. It was three bites worth, at most. He gagged and whined and choked down two bites before it "accidentally" fell in the dirt. Not long and we were



on the road again, flying down the next big hill. All of a sudden I hear coughing behind me. "Ez, are you okay?" "Yup, but I fink I'm gonna frow up!" Oh the drama... "Okay," I say, knowing that this is his own way of punishing me for forcing down two bites of the dreaded Cliff Bar. More hacking and coughing and gagging... only louder, so I'll be sure to hear it. When the drama is ignored he pipes up, "Mama, if I hafta frow up should I lean out to the side?" "Yep!" I reply, in my most cheerful voice, "Just lean out and go for it." "Okay," he says, obviously disappointed by my lack of sympathy. What do you know, the kid didn't throw up! Next time I'll give him three bites of the Carrot Cake!

## Pictures from the Bike Trip:



## Rest For the Weary

Any home schooling Mom can tell you that school doesn't really stop for the summer. It just changes forms. Most of us put up the math and science books in favor of longer days spent outside, lessons about vascular bundles in the veggies growing in the garden, or the gravitational pull of sun and moon on the water that surrounds our planet as we surf the incoming tide with our twin three year olds (Hi Amy!)

Most of us also spend the summer thinking about school the following year. What will we do? Which books will we use? We pour over catalogs, fill our lesson plan books and sift through the libraries of friends, becoming ever more anxious to get started, and becoming ever more concerned about whether or not we are doing "enough." We quit for the summer because we declare that the kids need a break... which they do... but when does Mama get the break?

Any of you who know me personally know that I'm not against preparation and planning... you've seen my school room shelves. However, the longer we school our kids, the more we learn as a family, the more I am reminded of the importance of MOM getting a break too. It is physically and mentally impossible to keep up the pace of being everything, to everybody, wife, teacher, house-keeper, cook, mother, friend, caretaker... you name it, for year after year. Now, I'm not one of these ladies in favor of "escaping" your

family to get a break. I chose this family, I love these people and escape is not what I want or need. However, we all need to rest, kids and Mom alike. How do we manage that? The kids have no problem... I'm the one who can't wind down. My mind runs a mile a minute planning the "next thing." I have to purpose to rest. Purpose to go to the beach WITHOUT my heavy tome on the condition of the Middle East peace process that I'm plowing through. I have make myself take a walk down to look at my flowers without taking baskets to pick lettuce and beans while I'm there... just enjoy the flowers... you planted them.

I don't know what "rest" looks like to you. I only know what it is for me. I'm thankful for a husband who MAKES me rest from time to time. One of my goals in life is to learn to be a better "rester." This summer, especially, I'm working on it. Would you work on it with me? This motherhood thing is a marathon. We need to line the road and hold out cups of cold water for one another, just like they do in Boston for the big marathon every spring. The reward at the end is far greater, if we don't grow weary of doing good... but growing weary is so easy, we must rest. For our husbands. For our kids. For ourselves. On the seventh day, God rested, and it was GOOD. Your home school summer assignment: REST at least one day a week. Yes, you. Let's do it together!

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