



Just Czeching In.....	1	Thinking About Thought.....	5
Homemade Stickers.....	3	Temptation~a Woman’s Choice.....	8
Poppy Seed Salad.....	3		

Just Czeching In

The sun is up but, like me, she hasn't opened her eyes all the way. The sky over Cerna Hora, CZ is the steel grey of early spring, promising more of those showers that bring at least as many muddy shoes as they do flowers. The house is quiet, a rare oasis of quiet: just me and my lemon tea (I'm fighting off a nasty cold) and the two grey doves watching me from their perch on the telephone wire above the street. Our trip back to the Czech Republic is due, in large part, to the prayers of a four year old little boy named Jackson. He's number five in a line of six Adams children; all of whom have been praying for us every time they've seen a cyclist and at meal time since we met them nearly eight months ago.

We've spent this whole last month of our trip visiting the friends who've become the highlight of our year. It all started on Valentine's Day, when Tony took each of the kids out, one by one, for pastries and coffee and asked them a series of questions, one of which was "If you had a one way ticket back to anywhere we've been this year, where would you go?" The answers were unanimous: to see our friends the Schmidt, Barker and Adams families. So, here we are.

The children didn't know until we boarded the first train in Paris that we were headed for Germany and a long weekend with the Schimidts (name changed to protect the family.) These are the folks who scooped us, complete strangers, off of a train ten months ago and introduced us to the families secretly home schooling in Germany and working to change the laws. We packed our four days full of sledding the still snowy mountain sides, long vineyard walks on the sunny side of a castle topped hill, another visit to the biggest "free church" in Germany and a fabulous afternoon at the Wilhelma, Stuttgart's beautiful zoo. There was crying as the doors of the train slid closed and we were whisked away... and the children learned of our next destination: Ansbach, Germany home of the Barker family.

Carla and I "clicked" the moment she rounded the bend to the train station last summer with three little kids on bikes (one wearing an ankle cast but pedaling gamely, nonetheless.) Our hair is the same color, we have the same books on our shelves, our two oldest daughters are peas from the same pod (just five years apart!) we like the same food, we have the same verbal quirks ("This looks like the wreck of the Hesperus!") and we wear the same size and style of clothes, right down to our shoes. What made this trip even better was that her husband was home. Last summer he was right at the end of a 15 mo. tour in Iraq

REFORM IN EDUCATION AND LIVING INSTRUCTION FOR THE YOUNG

and, we all know, home is just not quite the same without Daddy. They've moved since we spent fourth of July with them last year. Now they're living in a house that looks like something out of a travel magazine, within walking distance of fields and forests and ponds where Carla and I shivered under hats and mittens for hours while the kids whooped and hollered and explored the "islands" and the "whispering woods" until someone fell in and got his feet so irreparably wet that the kids would reluctantly agree to trudge home before toes turned black and fell off.

If I've ever known people with the gift of hospitality, it is Brad and Carla. Not one day passed in the week we were there without coffee for the local ladies, chats with the Russian grandma across the street or impromptu dinner parties with friends. I think she was actually as excited as we were when we discovered that our old friend, Sean, could take the train over for a weekend visit... even though it meant shuffling kids' sleeping arrangements and one more mouth to feed. Being so much alike, the Barker house reminded me of our home and all of the things I most miss about having roots in a community, namely, the steady stream of friends and strangers that seem to find us daily and enrich life in so many ways. Extending hospitality comes easily to me (my Mom was a great teacher) this year has been an exercise in the blessing of receiving it and Carla is my hero.

Finding Sean Staley standing at the bus station in Ansbach, wearing his Dad's backpack from the 1970s, scanning the crowd for someone he could almost remember was the icing on this year's cake, one more time. He was Hannah's first babysitter. She doesn't remember him. His parents were the folks we had over just weeks before Hannah was born to ask "How did you do it? How do we have kids as "perfect" as yours?" His mother, graciously, did not laugh me out my own front door, but treated my sincere, if naive, new Mommy questions with grace and dignity and continued to as we carefully watched their family grow. Sean, the eldest, is now a graduate of Moody, and is pursuing a post graduate degree at Bonn University. For the moment, he's staying in a monastery, pondering the great thoughts of all time. He traded three days (which turned into four) of his quiet, studious, bachelor life for a house full of seven kids who thought he walked on water and stood ready and waiting to sword fight, wrestle, show off their pull ups, or beg free music lessons if he showed the least sign of potential weakening on any front. I think he had fun. I know the kids did. We enjoyed sitting up late and talking, getting to know the man who's grown out of the boy we once knew. I only called him by his Dad's name, accidentally, once!

The train trip to the CZ was a long one: ten hours. It was not without adventure, but if you're following our travelogue on the Edventure Project website, you already know that. There was much screaming and hopping up and down and general pandemonium when the four Miller kids met the six Adams kids, none of whom knew about the surprise until the night before. We've been here a week, half of the time we've got with them. Like few places on the planet, their house feels like home. Once again, we were total strangers when we rolled into their yard last August and were life long friends within twenty four hours. The "best thing" about the Adams, is that they will be home on furlough this fall and the children are already making plans for seeing them stateside then. It's been kind of a rough week, honestly. There have been kids up all night with ear pain, skinned knees for boys, a close call for stitches for Morgan who cut her nose on the radiator and Hannah who cut her foot on a toy by the bed, there are sore necks and backs all around and everyone is fighting a cold bug. This hasn't diminished the joy found in a big box of goodies from our faithful friends, the Campbells, in NH. It came loaded with homemade dried apples, candies of every sort, coffee and tea for the Daddies and Mommies and a brand new movie, complete with popcorn: "They sent a movie night!!!" You've never seen ten happier children. While the smaller box, with immunity boosting tablets and a single bag of chocolate chips, from Lois, might have appeared less

glamorous to the kids, to me it spelled a healthy trip home and we immediately started taking our “dirt pills” (they taste like dirt!)

Two weeks from today we’ll be completing the final pack of our bikes and gears and be savoring our last French pastries in the City of Lights before winging our way toward our home continent. There is much we are looking forward to at “home:” Family, friends, new babies, comfort food and many, many cups of tea as we crisscross two countries retying heartstrings after a year away. Next Tuesday marks exactly one year since we drove out of the lane on Fern Hill and hit the road. Where has this year gone? What will the next year hold? I’m happy not to know because we’re learning to enjoy each day as it’s own adventure. Inshallah, we’ll see you soon.

Homemade Stickers

Carla and I were talking about this just last week when the girls were crafting away in her cheerful school loft. I thought I’d lost the recipe, but it turns out I haven’t! This is a great activity for one of those many “rainy days” of spring! Enjoy!

j

Materials:

1 packet of unflavored gelatin-1/4 oz

1 T. cold water

3 T. boiling water

1/2 t. sugar

1/2 t. flavored extract

Paint brush

Divide a sheet of plain white drawing paper into squares or the shapes desired for your stickers. Have the children color the stickers using markers, crayons or pencil crayons as they wish. When all of the coloring is finished paint the uncolored side with the adhesive (following) and let dry.

After making the stickers Mom could use the sewing machine, without thread in it, to perforate between the stickers so that they may be easily torn off, licked and “sticked” by the children.

Poppy Seed Salad

To Make Adhesive:

Soften gelatin for 5 or 6 minutes in a bowl with the cold water.

Carefully add the boiling water and stir until dissolved

Add the sugar and lemon extract and mix well.

Brush the adhesive onto the back side of the sticker page. The page will curl up as the adhesive dries but may be flattened again with an iron when completely dry. (be sure to iron between newsprint if the kids have used crayons to decorate their stickers!)

Left over adhesive can be stored in a baby food jar in the fridge for months. To re-use simply soften the adhesive by soaking the jar in hot water.

Happy Licking and Sticking!

REFORM IN EDUCATION AND LIVING INSTRUCTION FOR THE YOUNG

by Melissa Adams

Ingredients:

2 or 3 heads of different kinds of lettuce
1 red onion thinly sliced in rounds
2-3 11 oz. cans of mandarin oranges
1 package of bean sprouts
1 c. sliced almonds
3 Tbsp. sugar

Cut up lettuce and mix in a large bowl.

Remove half of the lettuce

spread half of the onion on top of the first layer of lettuce

arrange half of the oranges on top of the lettuce and onion

blanch the bean sprouts and rinse in cold water, arrange half on top of the salad

repeat with a second layer of lettuce, onion, oranges and sprouts

Dressing:

2/3 c. red wine vinegar

2 tsp. salt

2 tsp. dry mustard

1.5 c. sugar

1 c. oil

Blend ingredients in a blender until well mixed. Slowly add 1 c. oil (NOT olive oil) blend until smooth. Pour into jar. Add 3 Tbsp. poppy seeds... shake well.

Almonds:

In a fry pan, cook 1 c. sliced almonds and 3 Tbsp. sugar on low heat until the sugar starts to coat them. Spread out to cool.

To serve, drizzle dressing over the salad and sprinkle with the sugared almonds.

Melissa says to tell you to make twice as many sugared almonds... the kids will eat them up!

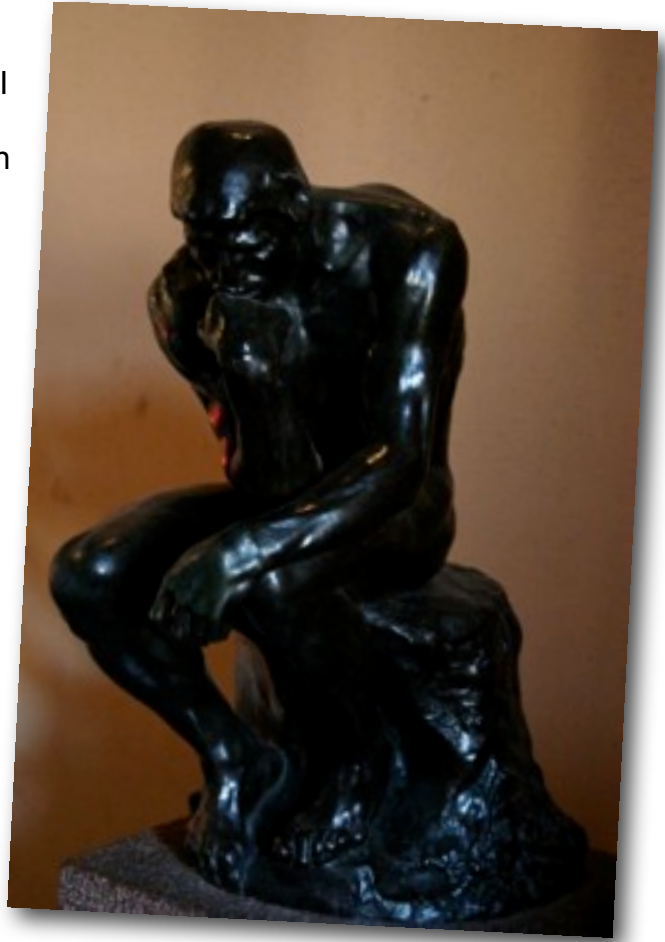
Thinking About Thought

I found this article in a file recently, I wrote in almost nine years ago. There have been lots of discussions recently with friends about thinking, reasoning and the different kinds of reasoning. It caused me to dig this out and consider again the importance of, not only my own thought life, but cultivating careful thought in the minds of my children.

“The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” Proverbs 1:7a In teaching thought, we must first be grounded in truth. Without an absolute truth, a bottom line on which to base all arguments and assumptions, any thought or debate of thoughts becomes subjective rhetoric. We must begin by teaching truth.

In our Western culture, there is much talk of amusing children. The root of the word amuse means “to cause not to think, or to stare stupidly” . Is this what we want for our children? I am not saying that children ought not have time of amusement, just that there is room for an education in intelligent thought.

It is all well and good to discuss teaching a little child to think, but how is it practically done? No textbook, or doctorate degree is necessary, only a thinking parent with a desire to teach and diligence in the journey. There is no twelve step program for learning to think, or a series of lesson plans, that, if faithfully applied, yield the greatest thinkers of all time. Rather, learning to think is accomplished little by little, step by step, moment by moment. It is as much caught as taught. Thought can be taught in at least three separate categories: Critical Thought, Moral Thought and Creative Thought, a good place to start, even though there are many more. There is so much more to be said than can even be begun here. My hope is that this will provide a spring board for your own pondering.



Critical Thought

Teaching a child to think critically begins as simply as wondering aloud together, “Why do you suppose that grasshopper is green?” “Why is that rainbow in the sky?” “Why do you think God made families?” “Where do you suppose the red color in that maple leaf came from all of a sudden?” Wondering together allows a child’s natural curiosity to be satisfied and at the same time gives opportunity for the parent to begin to introduce logic and introduce simple reason. Another easy way to begin to teach a small child to think is to ask questions like: “If everyone picked a flower from this neighbor’s garden, what would happen to it?” To begin to build upon the simple if / then reasoning that is developing within the child is a wonderful way to encourage independent thought. Critical thinking will develop on many levels, if fostered. Discuss the news with an older child, or play “name that world view” (a favorite in our family) with passing bill boards. Talk about the messages that the culture bombards us with and measure them next to God’s word. To think critically is to observe an idea, and to accept or reject that idea based on its logic, reasoning and truth. This is the basis of education, the acceptance or rejection of an idea, based on its merit in these areas. To think critically is to self educate.

Moral Thought

Human beings are moral creatures. Either by intentional moral training, or by default, we all glean ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, from our families and societies. To neglect the intentional moral education of a child is to allow his morality to be formed by the surrounding culture. Often what society teaches is incongruous with our personal values and God’s word. We must teach children to think morally, as well as critically. This moral thought gives the child a reason to act morally as well. In the long run, “Because I said so!” is not an adequate reason for right action. The child must learn to consider the needs of others and of society and to desire in his heart to behave morally. The only way that this will ever happen is through instruction in moral thought.

One simple way to begin this task is to give the child the reasoning behind instructions or family behaviors. For example, “We always wipe our table at McDonalds when we are done because we want to leave the table clean for the next family; they are precious to God and we can show them love in this way.” or “We do not pitch fits because it is not a blessing to others and it does not show contentment in our hearts.” or “We love Jesus and since he lives in our hearts, we need to wrk on looking like him. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control!” (Gal. 5:22) These kinds of explanations to a child will serve to give him in-

trinsic motivation for doing right, rather than remaining dependent on external consequences to mold his behavior. In short, it teaches him to think about his actions from a moral standpoint.

Creative Thought

The careful cultivation of creative thought, is perhaps, one of the greatest gifts a parent may give a child. The ability to go beyond the obvious and blaze new trails of thought, to forge new solutions to old problems can be observed throughout history as one of the recurring characteristics of the truly great men. A significant example of this can be found in James Watt who, through sheer perseverance of will, in the face of many obstacles, succeeded in building the first working steam engine. It took years of study and thought, trial and error, and much creativity to accomplish what many believed could not be done. His accomplishment helped to usher in the Industrial Revolution. His invention changed the face of our planet and the quality of our lives immeasurable. James Watt began his education at home. He learned to read, write and draw at his mother's knee. His father began his instruction in arithmetic and trained him in the use of the tools of his trade (ship supply and repairs) Throughout his formal education Watt applied himself diligently. He worked with what he had and applied his knowledge in new and different ways. Creative thought is bread of boundaries. If there is unlimited resources and infinite possibility, what need is there to be creative? By giving children boundaries we encourage them to think creatively. "What can you make of these pipe cleaners and beads and nothing else?" "We have only these five ingredients left in the fridge, what interesting meal can we make of them?" "You have five minutes and this Renoir painting, think of a story about what you see." These sorts of challenges encourage creative thought and add excitement to a child's day. There is great pride in accomplishment in the midst of adversity....even if that adversity is contrived for the child by his parent with a purpose in mind!

Finally, the most important aspect of teaching a child to think is demonstration of the valued characteristic. The child must see his parents thinking (sometimes out loud) about all areas of life. If this is faithfully demonstrated to the child, he will begin to "catch" the desire to think, and be like this parents. Make careful thought a part of daily life and look for moments to demonstrate and practice thought with the child and he will soon begin to think, critically, morally and creatively, all on his own!

Temptation~a Woman's Choice

by Stephanie Payton

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

I Corinthians 10:13



I recently returned from our church's yearly women's retreat. I'll be honest--I rarely look forward to this event with anything but mild trepidation. It seems, in all the years past, that I end up more tired at the end of it than when I arrived--wondering if the effort expended in attending was worth it. I always, however, find a measure of spiritual encouragement and renewal, along with fellowship of close friends--and I suppose that is what, ultimately, draws me back each year.

This year's topic dealt with "The Heart of Temptation." While my curiosity was piqued, I was prepared to kind of glide through the weekend with little spiritual conviction. After all, the "biggies", as I see them, have become dust under these traveling feet. Thoughts of murder have easily been satisfied this year with the setting of mouse traps throughout our garage. Coveting our neighbors' possessions hasn't been much of an issue either, as one of mine has frequent visits from the septic-pumping truck, and the other has the frequent misfortune of trees falling down whenever a storm hits. No graven images decorate my shelves, and I turned my back on stealing after a spiritual encounter during a junior high church camp I attended when I was twelve. All kidding aside, I wasn't quite sure what the topic would encompass, but was mostly just looking forward to spending time with good friends, and potentially getting some rest.

So imagine my surprise when Lori, our speaker, and a few others from my church started sharing from a LONG list of various other temptations. Subtle temptations. Temptations that I had not even recognized as temptations! Was I really, truly, utterly surprised? I suppose not. Was I surprised by how often--and how recently--I have faced so many of these and allowed them to defeat me? Absolutely. That was really the heart of the weekend--the "heart" of temptation.

Would I stand against these temptations with the power of God and His Word, or would I give in to them, allowing myself to be defeated by the god of this world?

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.” 1 Peter 5:6-9

These were a few of the temptations mentioned that we are vulnerable to, and likely to give in to, if we are not prepared to stand against them: anger, self-condemnation, envy, gossip, greed, hatred, laziness, lying, pride, revenge, rude jokes, unforgiveness, worry, poor self-image, comparing oneself to others, self-loathing, comparing one's **children** to others, being critical of others, being critical of our husbands. If you haven't found yourself in any of these yet, don't worry. There are many more to be found throughout the Scriptures! Or you could simply ask your family and friends. They have a way of seeing clearly what we are often blind to.

As I mentioned last month, God has been impressing on my heart the need to KNOW Him, and know him **well**--to hone up on my theology. So yet again, over these past couple of weeks since returning home, I have been contemplating my own theology, and how important it is that I am demonstrating an **accurate** theology within my home. My children are picking up on it, whether I blatantly teach it or not. What temptations am I giving in to? How am I allowing myself to be defeated? What are they learning about God as they watch me walk--either with Him or away from Him each and every day?

I am ashamed to say that there are too many temptations from that list that I am allowing to be a source of defeat, rather than victory, in my life. And when it comes right down to the “heart” of each one of them, my defeat is due to my unbelief. When I do not stand against temptation, I am demonstrating my unbelief in the God of the universe. I am saying that HE is unable to accomplish the victory in that area of my life. In those times, I am trying to run the race by my own power, rather than His.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and per-

fector of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2

Again this month, I want to reference the book When Life and Beliefs Collide by Carolyn Custis James. I will conclude with this thought of hers: “The writer to the Hebrews knew, no doubt from personal experience, that we would be hampered if we tried to carry heavy burdens and run at the same time. Ancient Greek Olympians understood this and were radical about unburdening themselves. They stripped to the skin and ran naked. The exhortation to ‘throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles’ calls us to adopt the same ruthless mentality. By speaking so broadly of what hinders, the writer leaves room for us to fill in the blank with anything--sinful or otherwise--that interferes with our running. Ultimately, the race isn’t a test of our stamina. None of us has what it takes to make it. The race is a test of our great God. We run well, not because of our own skill and determination but because we have a great God who is always at work for our good. It is only because He is on his throne that we can run with endurance.

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