



Heart to Heart Newsletter

The Heart to Heart Newsletter, created in 1999 by Lois Breneman, was sent around the world for almost 16 years. The current editor of the Heart to Heart Newsletter is Michelle Gill. The purpose of Heart to Heart's origin was to encourage women and create biblical values in their day to day living and so that intention remains.

the Heart to Heart Newsletter

December 2014 Christmas Edition

VISIT our [new website](#) for additional articles and how-to videos that will compliment each newsletter. If you would like to unsubscribe, please email Michelle at standandsee@outlook.com. Lois still adds to her blog regularly and can be viewed at www.heartfilledhome.blogspot.com.

Homemaking & Family - Building family, purpose, and community

Teaching Your Children the True Meaning of Christmas

Used with Permission by Blair Massey

The stores have put up their holiday decorations. Yuletide carols are being piped into shopping malls across the country. Ah, yes, the holiday rush is on.

It's the time of year when the lines are long and shoppers are irritable. There are parties to go to, cards to write, baking to be done, a tree to get, lights to be hung and presents to wrap. Then there is the deluge of television advertisements that tell us what we must buy in order to make our loved ones happy.

The world has taken Christmas and turned it into a celebration of consumerism. For many children, Christmas is about what presents they are going to get. They have no idea what it is really about. What can we do as Christian parents to make sure our children know the true meaning of Christmas?

The answer lies in what we do as parents to put Christ at the center of our Christmas. If we're too busy with holiday preparations to spend time teaching our children what Christmas is really about, then we can't expect them to know the truth. The world will teach them its rendition and it won't be about Jesus. But if we take the time to put Christ at the center of our Christmas, we will be giving our children the greatest Christmas gift of all: connecting with Jesus at a heart level.

Here are some ways you can teach your children the true meaning of Christmas. Begin by reading to your children the account of Jesus' birth in the Bible. Next, discuss Jesus' life. Read scriptures that show examples of how He loved and served others.

To make Christmas come alive for your children, teach them to imitate Jesus by following His example of serving others. I have listed some examples below for inspiration.

Before you make your plans please consider the following. Make sure that you choose an activity that will have a meaningful impact. The activity should also require your children to give of themselves in an up close and personal way. And last but not least, be sure to participate in the activity with your children. You'll be teaching them a valuable lesson in serving, one that they will remember as they get older.

1. Teach them to give

“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Acts 20:35.

- Have them choose one of their own toys (in good condition) or purchase a new toy out of their own money to give to a child who otherwise would not receive a toy this Christmas.
- Give a coat or shoes to a homeless person.
- Bring toys and clothes to an orphanage.
- Help a less fortunate family for Christmas by providing all the fixings for a Christmas meal, presents for the children and clothes if needed.
- Pack bag lunches to give out to the homeless. Include a sandwich, juice box, cheese and crackers, Wet Ones, bus pass, a list of addresses where they can get a hot meal and shower, change for a phone call, and invitation to church.

2. Teach them to share

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.” 1 Timothy 6:18.

- Take a basket of homemade cookies to a neighbor you don't know well and invite them to church.
- Have a friend over for dinner who doesn't know about Jesus and share the Good News with them.
- Have your child invite a school friend to Christmas service at your church.

3. Teach them to care

“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.” Psalms 68:5-6.

- Visit a convalescent hospital and sing Christmas carols.
- Visit a children's hospital. Bring cookies and games to play.
- Bring a meal to someone who has a chronic illness.
- Invite a military person who is away from home to spend Christmas dinner at your house.

3. Teach them to serve

“Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:26-28.

- Volunteer to make and serve a meal at a homeless shelter.
- Spend an afternoon at a senior citizens' home. Bring cookies and reading material, sing Christmas songs and serve in any way that may be needed.

- Take an elderly person shopping or do errands for them.
- Do yard work, pet care or housework for someone who is not physically able to do those things for themselves.

By teaching our children to imitate Jesus this Christmas season, we will keep the true meaning of Christmas alive for this generation and for the next. Jesus is the real reason for the season.

Christian Lifestyle expert Blair Massey is devoted to helping Christian women around the world get their home, family and life organized. To get organized and start living the amazing life you were created by God to enjoy, sign up for her FREE newsletter now at www.christian-homemaking.com

Encouragement - Testimonies to bring joy, inspiration, and courage

Taking a Full Stride into Your Callings

by Michelle Gill, www.rebornjoy.com

Luke 1:38,39 "And Mary said, 'Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her. Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharius and greeted Elizabeth."

While I have had some trouble with my Achilles tendon, I was now having issues with my back muscles. I went to an experienced massage therapist who told me that to avoid pain in my Achilles tendon, I had stopped taking full strides. This practice had affected my entire muscular structure including my back. He told me to start fully committing to my steps and following each stride all the way through.

Immediately, I thought how my life is reflected in my physical body. When I thought of all the things I was certain God had called me to do, I realized I stepped into them without fully committing. For example, when He told me to run, I jogged for a while. When He told me to write, I took another class. When He told me to give, I did only to the extent it was comfortable for me. When He told me to go to a certain church, I quickly left after the last "Amen." When He told me to pray for someone, I did until the passion waned.

I have been thinking about the power of belief. Luke 1 presents the difference between Zacharius choosing not to believe Gabriel right away and Mary fully committing the moment he spoke to her. Zacharius lost his physical ability to speak due to his lack of belief. In contrast, Mary was called "blessed" by Elizabeth because of her belief.

God is speaking all the time, but do I believe what He is saying? And if I did, what difference would that make? So as I practice stepping fully through my stride, I also practice believing Him and giving more focus and intention to his guidance. For example, do I need to help my daughter read an extra ten minutes instead of letting her read to me as I do the dishes? Do I need to make an appointment to write each week instead of waiting for the urge to strike?

What are some of the simple and not so simple things that He is speaking to you about that you could give more intention to, and fully believe Him in? What difference would it make if you did so? Whose life would it change? How much more of His power would we see, if we just believed Him?

God not only honors our belief, He delights in it. I had no idea how stopping short in my stride affected my entire body, not just the tendon I was trying to protect. I daresay that taking a full stride versus stopping short will make more difference than we could possibly imagine. But we won't find out until we actually follow through.

CHRISTMAS A Most Special Gift

Used with permission by Susan Belisle – Speaker, Writer & Pastor's Wife
www.susanbelisle.com (January 2015)

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

We have entered the most wonderful time of the year. The Christmas season offers hope for today and positive expectations for tomorrow. Everything we will ever need in life we find in Jesus. He is truly the hope for all the world. As Christian believers, we should pause amidst the hustle and bustle of life and reflect upon Jesus, God's indescribable gift to us.

Hanging above my fireplace are four stockings. They are nothing more than decorations that may occasionally hold a gift card or concert tickets. For me and most other people, the gifts of greatest value lie beneath the tree. They are beautifully wrapped and grouped together for each of my family members. Several months of thought, planning, and shopping have gone into the gifts beneath my tree, and I hope they will bring much joy to my family as they open each one.

What gifts are beneath your tree? Who are those special people that will be the recipients of your gifts? Have you put as much time and planning into the selection and wrapping of your Christmas gifts as I have? Can I suggest that you include one more gift under your tree? It will not cost you a specific dollar amount because it is priceless. You will not have to shop near and far to find it. It's always the right color and always the right size, and it never goes out of style.

Jesus, God's greatest gift to us, has transformed our lives through the forgiveness of our sins. Without Jesus, we would not experience the gift of eternal life that comes through God's forgiveness. Forgiveness is a concept that seems to be gaining popularity in recent years. It is a continual theme that permeates Hallmark movies and is spoken of on talk shows and in Sunday morning sermons. Perhaps our world is beginning to see the powerful impact forgiveness has in our lives and in the lives of others. Perhaps people are gaining a better understanding of the value of extending forgiveness. Perhaps we are all learning that the lessons Jesus taught about forgiveness are as needed today as they were in biblical times.

As you think back upon the past year, have there been situations or circumstances that have left you broken or bitter? Are there people who have hurt or offended you? Are there people who need your forgiveness? God has freely forgiven us, and we too must freely forgive others. Although forgiveness is a gift we give to others, it is also a gift we give to ourselves. We erect our own prison walls when we choose not to forgive. We are set free to soar when we extend forgiveness to others.

During this wonderful Christmas season, let us give the gift of forgiveness. As you carefully place gifts under your Christmas tree, be sure to place the gift of forgiveness under there too. Whose name will be on the label? Will she be surprised by your gift? Maybe it will make her cry. I can assure you that your gift won't be returned or exchanged. It will also be the most priceless gift under your tree. It will be the most beautifully wrapped gift as it is clothed in the precious blood of Jesus.

Tis the season to give so let's give forgiveness to all those in need. Truly, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Healthy Living – Information, Recipes, and Oils

Have a Healthy Holiday!

Used with Permission by Leigh Carter
www.TeamConquerIt.weebly.com

Don't you just love this time of year? The chill in the air, parties and get-togethers, celebrating what God has done, giving Him thanks, and eating amazing food – for two straight months. Ha. If you're like most people around the holidays, you find it difficult to say no to all the delicious, homemade goodies and say yes to working out. I know it's not easy to add in a workout during such a busy season, but if you do make time – even just 20 minutes 4 days/week, I bet you'll find that you have more energy, stay healthy, and that you won't gain the typical holiday weight.

Here are some tips for how to enjoy the season and stay fit and healthy:

- Eat smaller portions more frequently: Instead of 1-2 large meals, eat 4-5 small snacks. On Thanksgiving, serve yourself 1-2 small spoonfuls (measure with a tablespoon) of what you want to try, instead of large serving spoons of each dish.
- Drink plenty of water: Always have water nearby to sip on throughout the day and drink with meals to help process food and keep your system healthy.
- Enjoy people rather than food: Instead of thinking about the season in terms of the great food you'll eat, think more about the amazing people you'll encounter. If your family is like mine, there are lots of cousins I only see 1-2 times/year – so, Thanksgiving and Christmas are great days to get to catch up on kids, family, hobbies, school, kids, and life! Plus, when I'm talking, I tend to eat less!
- Work out for 10-20 minutes – that's all! Sometimes we think that if we can't work out for an hour, it's not worth getting out there to do it. That's wrong! If you don't have much time, just increase the intensity and workout for a shorter amount of time.

Try this at home:

- 2-3 min warm up: walk around your house, up/down stairs, or jog, then begin circuit.
- Circuit: Do 1 minute of each of the following:
 - jumping jacks
 - push ups
 - squats
 - jump rope (w/ invisible rope if you don't have one)
 - chair dips
- Rest for 1 minute, then repeat the circuit 2-3 times

Sewing & Craft Ideas - Photos and links can be found on website

How To Make A Coffee Filter Wreath {with burlap roses}

Used with Permission by Shannon of Fox Hollow Cottage

<http://foxhollowcottage.com/2012/10/how-to-make-coffee-filter-wreath-with.html> (visit Shannon's website for a picture tutorial)

You Will Need:

1. A wreath form. (Mine is a Dollar Tree cheapy.)
2. Fabric to cover the form. (white is recommended!)
I used some white scrap fabric I had hanging around.
3. Glue and Glue Gun.
*Low temp is fine and what I used.
4. Coffee Filters! I used about 75 for my fat little wreath.
You can get these at the Dollar Tree.
5. Burlap. (optional for flowers)
You can use any fabric you like to match your decor!

Directions:

Step One-

Cut your fabric into a long strip (or 2) and wrap it around your wreath, then secure with glue. This will camouflage your wreath form and give your filters a little something more to stick to.

Step Two-

Get your filters and get comfy!
You'll start be scrunching them up (so technical)
and getting the bottom into a point.
Then fluff out the ends and straighten up.
Finally, twist & pinch the end.

Step Three-

Start gluing. It'll feel like a slow start to get the wreath looking full, but keep going and fill them in. I glued about a thumbs length of the twisted end section onto the wreath form.
See, it's getting fluffier!!
I add a few to fan out on the sides and get a fuller, more uniform look.
I figure.. as long as it looks good from the front, right?
The wall won't know ;)

I added some burlap roses to mine.
I thought it needed a little more texture and interest, which worked out great, because it's even more versatile with that pinch of burlap.

After all that fluffing, gluing and flower making.. you should have yourself a wreath.
I think the coffee filter wreaths are sort of like fingerprints... so it won't be exact!
Just love the wreath YOU made.
Mine is a little wonky, but it grew on me.

[Lots of Christmas Ideas from Previous Newsletters!](http://heartfilledhome.blogspot.com/p/christmas.html)

<http://heartfilledhome.blogspot.com/p/christmas.html>

[Lots of Recipes for Christmas!](http://heartfilledhomerecipes.blogspot.com/p/dessertsholidays.html)

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Precious Gems - Precious quotes from children compiled by Lois Breneman

A young child in our church asked once while we were learning the books of the Bible and came to Hebrews and James..... "Just who was it that bruised James??" Can't you almost see the Father smiling at these precious things children wonder and say!! ~ Cyndi in Ohio

Eva (8) is learning the Old Testament books of the Bible. We were working on Joshua, Judges, Ruth. "Mommy?" Mia (5) asked, "Does Joshua judge us too, or just Ruth?" Bahahaha ~ Elizabeth in Virginia

In Kroger today...a very nice older lady to Brooklyn (4): "Those are some cute boots there, young lady!"

Brooklyn, while curtsying without hesitation, "Well thank you, old lady!"

Yep. ~ Lauren in Virginia

This afternoon in the car Josh (14) and Gracie (12) had a disagreement about what to listen to on the radio, so I said we should turn it off. Joshua said, "Look at Mom going all Solomon on us. Bring out the baby!" Gracie and I laughed hysterically over that! That boy is funny! ~ Penny in Virginia

You know you're in trouble when...You're at the dinner table, enjoying your family's company, talking about the day. You just finish telling a story and the almost 2-year-old chimes in and says..."Emily. Eat." Yep. Big trouble. ~ Emily in Virginia

"I miss Trigger, Shadow, Abbie, our Chickens, Florida (our fish), and our dead crab," said my girls (5 and 8) today. ~ Elizabeth in Virginia

Famous last words of a 7 year old.... "Umm, mom...why are you taking the trashcan to my room? ~ Jennifer in Virginia

Lois continues to post on <http://heartfilledhome.blogspot.com> and <http://heartfilledhomerecipes.blogspot.com> and to contribute to our newsletter.

Have a very merry Christmas from all of us at Heart to Heart!