



# CLEARLY CARING

Formerly *Beginnings*

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**Publisher:** Christian Life Resources, Inc.  
 2949 N. Mayfair Road, Suite 309  
 Milwaukee, WI 53222-4304  
 (1-800-729-9535)

**Editor:** Sharon Bauer  
**e-mail:** clr@ChristianLifeResources.com  
**website:** www.ChristianLifeResources.com

Using God's Word as the guide, Christian Life Resources, Inc. (CLR) proclaims the sanctity of human life through Christ. CLR oversees the work of three distinct divisions: *WELS Lutherans for Life* develops educational materials and resources supporting our pro-life ministry, and assists 80 affiliates in conducting their regional ministries and operation of 26 counseling and resource centers; *COMPASS Productions* produces media projects both within and outside the realm of life issues; and *Life Resources International* provides pro-life counseling, resources and humanitarian aid to people in other countries.

*New Beginnings - A Home for Mothers*, a separate legal entity affiliated with CLR, supports pregnant women who have decided to carry their babies to term while teaching them how to include Jesus in their lives.

*The Christians Concerned for Life Foundation* is a separate legal entity affiliated with CLR, established to sponsor special pro-life projects not covered by regular operating budgets. Gifts to the foundation and subsequent earnings are granted to special projects which reflect Biblical principles in protecting human life and ministering to souls.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

Artwork on the cover is by artist, Doug Knutson. Other Knutson artwork can be purchased around the country and through the CLR store (www.CLRstore.com).

## Baby Bottles Bring a "Change for Life"

by Diane Fleischmann  
 Branch Coordinator

Picture an adorable baby bottle. It conjures up images of baby feedings, doesn't it? For Christian Life Resources, baby bottles are also a source of financial "sustenance" for our ongoing life-issues programs.

This past year CLR embarked on and is now sponsoring the "Change for Life" baby bottle project. This project involves the distribution of plastic baby bottles to members of congregations who want to participate. The program is easy! Each person is encouraged to use a baby bottle, fill it with coins, cash, or a check, and return it within a set time limit. That's it!

The newly-formed St. Paul's Lutheran Branch in Slinger, Wisconsin, took the initial "baby steps" by sponsoring CLR's first "Change for Life" project this past September 2003. It was decided that the monies raised would benefit the work of the St. Paul's Branch as well as New Beginnings - A Home for Mothers, the affiliated ministry of Christian Life Resources.

Although the branch didn't know what to expect, they felt the hearts of the St. Paul's members would open up to this opportunity.

The branch representatives coordinated efforts to borrow bottles from CLR and made some bulletin and newsletter announcements before the event. A baby bassinet for distribution of the bottles was used on the weekend of the project. It was a joy to see so many people interested in the CLR ministry and willing to participate! Then we waited for the results.

What an outpouring of gifts we received three weeks later! From the nickels, dimes, quarters, and other gifts, the branch collected over \$2,400. In addition, a contribution from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans increased the total to over \$3,200!

We were delighted to know that the St. Paul's family found the ministry of its branch and the work of New Beginnings to be worthy of their gifts of love. It proved to be an investment into the future of many lives – both young and old alike.

Want to try to this easy and effective project? CLR encourages any congregation, church-related organization, or WELS Lutherans for Life branch/chapter to take on this "Change for Life" campaign. Information is available just for the asking! Contact the national office at [info@christianliferesources.com](mailto:info@christianliferesources.com).



## Looking for a special Easter gift?

Something that is a perfect reminder of Christ's sacrifice for ALL souls, born and unborn?

Consider giving the gift of the Crown of Thorns Precious Feet necklace. Wearing this necklace is a wonderful way to witness of Christ's sacrifice without having to say a word. Available in gold, 18" chain.

You can purchase your Crown of Thorns Precious Feet Necklace (product code 2CC04-4209) for just \$5.50.

Please call (800) 729-9535 to place your order or visit our on-line store at [www.CLRstore.com](http://www.CLRstore.com)



## A Special Gift

Looking for a perfect way to tell your mother how enduring her love has been? Or how about showing the mother of your children what an amazing woman she is? Consider the soft pencil artwork of Ohio artist Dave McCamon as a special gift.



You can purchase Dave McCamon's "Mommy's Love" print (product code 2CC04-7033) for just \$34. Print measures 12" x 12". Comes with oak or mahogany frame. (Please call with your frame and matting preference.)

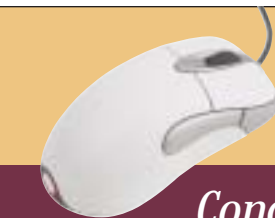
Please call (800) 729-9535 to place your order or visit our on-line store at [www.CLRstore.com](http://www.CLRstore.com)

## PLAN AHEAD!

### Christian Life Resources MINISTRY RETREAT

Saturday, November 6, 2004  
 9:30 AM until 8:30 PM  
 at  
 Star of Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
 in New Berlin, Wisconsin

Look for more information  
 on this special conference in  
 the next issue of *Clearly Caring!*



## Conduct a LIFE OBSERVANCE SUNDAY in your Church!

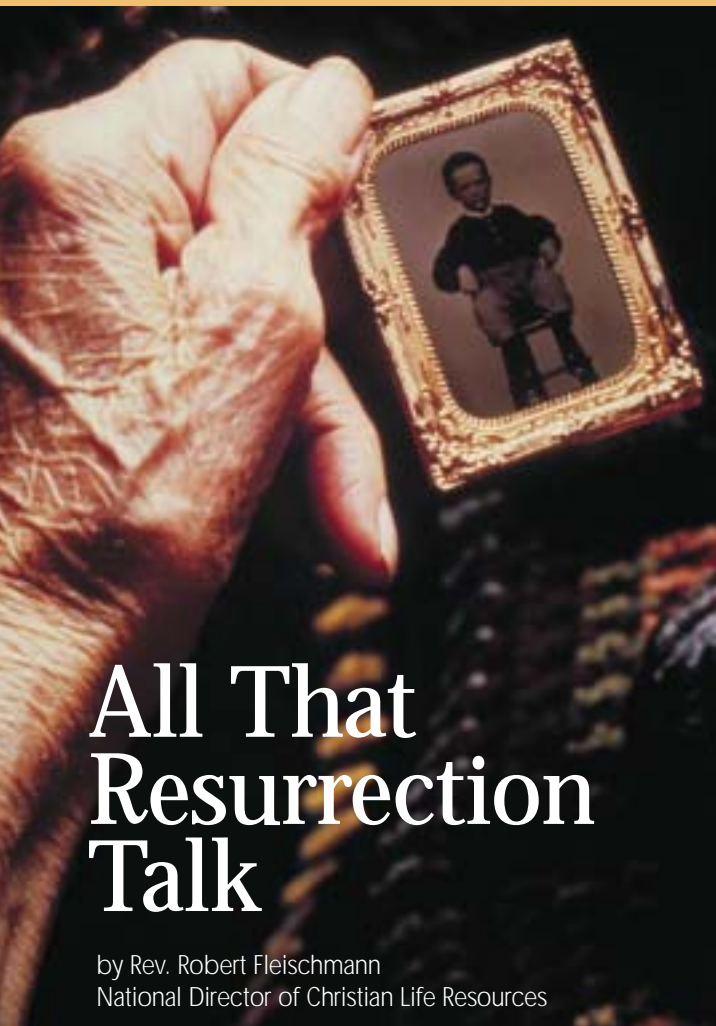
Free materials are available to help you plan a meaningful observance. Everything you need is right at your fingertips!

### LOG ON AT

[www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?ProLifeSunday](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?ProLifeSunday)

### OR CALL

Christian Life Resources for assistance.



# All That Resurrection Talk

by Rev. Robert Fleischmann  
National Director of Christian Life Resources

Don't be fooled by the resurrection talk (sounds pretty controversial for a conservative Lutheran minister to say). Let me explain:

The resurrection talk in Scripture is 100% true, 100% comforting, and should be proclaimed to 100% of the people. That is **not** the resurrection talk I am talking about. There is a different kind of resurrection talk going on – **and it's coming from Christians!**

I get this talk a lot from new acquaintances who learn I am a minister. They share with me personal heartaches as they care for an aging or disabled loved one. Sometimes, in graphic detail, they share the vignettes of lost dignity such as the help needed for a feeding. Perhaps it's the explanation of a loved one's loss of incredible intellect or humor which leaves him or her completely unaware of the surroundings. Maybe it is the account of soiled bed sheets, drooling, and the inability to be spoon fed.



As they share heart-wrenching details with me, they include their own personal sadness, inconvenience, despair, and frustration with regard to the many perfunctory routines that need to be done. Predictably, the story gets to the point. As if to assure me the caregiver knows something about God, he or she would remind me of how heaven is a better place than the misery their loved one was experiencing on this earth. For that reason the decision was made. It was difficult. It was sad. But ultimately the decision was made to stop medicating, stop feeding, and/or stop caring. Death then predictably came 10-20 days later. The story generally ends with the words, "I know we will be together some day."

It is this resurrection talk that is factually correct but is misapplied. Consider the facts:

- **Heaven is a better place.** No doubt about it. Jesus said heaven is a place of many rooms with one of them having our name on it (John 14:2). John's revelation speaks of a place with no crying, suffering, or pain (Revelation 7:16-17). It is great – no doubt about it.
- **Life on earth can be very harsh.** Paul and Barnabas reminded us that we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Jesus said that increasing wickedness makes it a cold world (Matthew 24:12). Even at a better moment in his life the Apostle Paul considered death and being with Jesus better than living – by far (Philippians 1:21-23). Even in the best of times heaven is always a far better alternative to living on earth.
- **Time on earth is the prerogative of God.** God reserves for Himself the authority over life and death (Deuteronomy 32:39 and Psalm 31:15). He does not allow us to make qualitative judgments over who lives and who dies.
- **Although life offers many opportunities and choices for us, we are always to make choices reflective of our faith** (Romans 12:2 & 1 Peter 1:14-15). That means our allegiance to God is the first and foremost determinant in how to care for loved ones (Ephesians 5:2). Even if we conclude

that death is better than life, it is God's will that rules supreme. In faith we trust that He works all things out for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

Practically speaking there are times when people lose virtually all quality of their lives. Some live in a condition apparently unaware of their surroundings. Others become deeply depressed as they mourn the loss of their independence, vitality, and maybe even their dignity.

Because these people are sometimes our loved ones, we know how they feel. We know they don't want to live in this manner. We are pained to see them like this and know that if the tables were turned, we wouldn't want to be the same condition. I cannot debate these points.

We must, however, accept the reality that life lacks equity and fairness when hardship and suffering come into our lives. Sometimes "good" people appear to suffer much and "evil" people seem to suffer little.

*We must accept the reality that life lacks equity and fairness when hardship and suffering come into our lives.*

After all, wasn't the ultimate Good Person tortured and executed on a cross (2 Corinthians 5:21)?

We must, in our heartache, examine the character of our faith and watch as God stretches its limits. Even in the worst of times, God comes through. The Apostle Paul said, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Yes, the glory is indescribable for a once-suffering loved one who dies in faith. Heaven is far better than their diminished existence on earth. But in fairness, it is far better than life at its best. Let's say we ignore, for a moment, that God does not want us to kill others. Where, then, do you draw the line? It is far too arbitrary.

There is a better way to approach these end-of-life circumstances, and it is all in the attitude. We are tempted to cut short a person's life because we see no value in its continued existence on earth. That is the error. We think this trauma is all about the person who is suffering. Have you thought about another lesson that may be taking place? How about the lesson of personal sacrifice on your part for the well-being of others? How about the realignment of priorities to get you back on track with what is right and off the track of selfish pursuits for a world that eventually ends? What about the janitor?

Yes, I mean that. What about the janitor? Remember the passage that says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). When someone observes you sacrificing to care for a loved one, even when there is no return in it for you, they wonder. Maybe it's the janitor. Perhaps God is preparing him with your example, and he may even ask how you can handle the situation. Your response may be to tell him about the ultimate sacrifice in Jesus Christ.

The resurrection story of Easter Sunday is pivotal to all that we believe in, not just for eternity but for now as well. We know that we are strangers here and that heaven is our home. We also know that the reason we are here is to serve God and share His message of life everlasting. We do that with an obedient life, a ready tongue, and a Christ-focused heart that faces all of life's trials with confidence. Even in the harshest of times, the Christian faith prevails. ✨



by Helen Fleischmann  
Life Witness Coordinator

To you who serve as Life Witnesses and branch representatives,

“Give His people the knowledge of salvation to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” (Luke 1:77-79)

You may have noticed that our magazine formerly called *Beginnings* has a new name and look. The new name, of course, is *Clearly Caring*. The title says it all, doesn't it?

As Christians we need to be clearly caring in our pro-life work. The value of human life is declining at a fast pace in our society. All we have to do is turn on the news or read the newspaper and realize how much we do need to be caring and concerned individuals.

I know that many of us are upset and appalled by the many life-threatening events that are taking place. In some cases, we may be very concerned the day may come when we might be in a similar threatening situation ourselves.

For these reasons, we need to be much more proactive. We need to act on these issues and educate others about the God-pleasing ways to deal with them. We, as branches and Life Witnesses of Christian Life Resources, can do that!

We need to stay current on the issues so we know how to inform others when election time comes around. This is an election year. Take the time to know the stance of the candidates on life issues.

The CLR office recently began mailing information packs to Life Witnesses and branches so you can learn more about these issues. Please share that information with others.

Do you have computer access? Want to subscribe to a great e-mail service which offers the most current life issues news? Then “LifeWire” is for you! What's more, it's free. “LifeWire” is sent directly to you twice per week. Just submit your e-mail address on our website to begin your free subscription. (Rest assured: your e-mail address is never shared with anyone else).



Is your congregation planning a Life Sunday and Bible class? We have materials available online. They include sermons, bulletin inserts, banner ideas, pro-life hymns, and Bible studies. Check it out at [www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?ProLifeSunday](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?ProLifeSunday).

Do you know about our special site for teens? It is a great resource to obtain information on movies, dating, interactive ideas, and games. Check out [www.SectionQ.com](http://www.SectionQ.com).

Our web site has been upgraded! Take a look. While you're at it, how about checking out our CLR store? You'll find many pro-life/pro-family pamphlets, books, videos, and gifts. We are especially fond of the many touching prints which would be a great gift idea for your mother, grandmother, or other loved one for Mother's Day, or any special occasion. Go to: [www.CLRstore.com](http://www.CLRstore.com).

Don't forget about the “Change for Life” baby bottle program. Reserve these adorable baby bottles for your congregation and assist the CLR ministry. These bottles are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Read more about this program in the “Activity Spotlight” in this issue of *Clearly Caring*. To request an informational packet on this program, just give us a call at (800) 729-9535.

As you can see, we are working hard to keep you current on life and family issues. We encourage you to continue witnessing to others on these important issues and contact us if we can assist you in any way. 🌸

**Q:** I am so frustrated about 31 years of legalized abortion in this country, but I don't know what I can do personally. Any ideas?

**A:** Being pro-life often means people identify you by the things you oppose. You are “opposed” to women's rights, you are “opposed” to the right to choose, and you are “opposed” to the abortion industry. It is true that your opposition in these areas is based on Biblical truth, but it is also good to be known for some positive positions.

Use this time to take positive action in the area of life and family issues. Here is just a short list of proactive ideas that will show you are pro-life.

- Read God's Word and pray for a pro-life ministry
- Send a congratulatory card to families who have had a baby (watch for birth announcements in local paper)
- Wear a “Precious Feet” or “Precious Hands” pin
- View pro-life videos (available from CLR)
- Ask your pastor to hold a Life Observance Sunday at your church (materials available on our web site)
- Suggest using the CLR video series, “Life: The Gift of Love,” in a future Bible study at church
- Maintain a “Current Events” bulletin board on life issues (CLR can help)
- Collect and donate pro-life books to your church library
- “Adopt” a family in need
- Sponsor a food drive or baby shower
- Consider being a Life Witness, starting a congregational branch, or opening a community life center (call CLR for more information)

For more ideas, go online to [www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?8655](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?8655) or call (800) 729-9535 for more information on any of these ideas.

**Q:** A friend of mine just had a miscarriage. She seems okay on the outside, but I know she is hurting. What can I do to help her?

**A:** Miscarriage is often overlooked as a painful event. You are very considerate and observant to recognize the loss and pain your friend is experiencing. The best thing you can do is show your concern for her by giving your time and attention. Don't pressure her, but allow her the comfort level to talk about her pain. Be a good listener. Acknowledge the life that was lost. You will not be able to remove her pain, but you can help her through the grieving process. We have a number of resources at CLR dealing with the pain of miscarriage available for you including some new brochures. Give us a call, or go online to: [www.CLRstore.com](http://www.CLRstore.com) to obtain these materials. 🌸

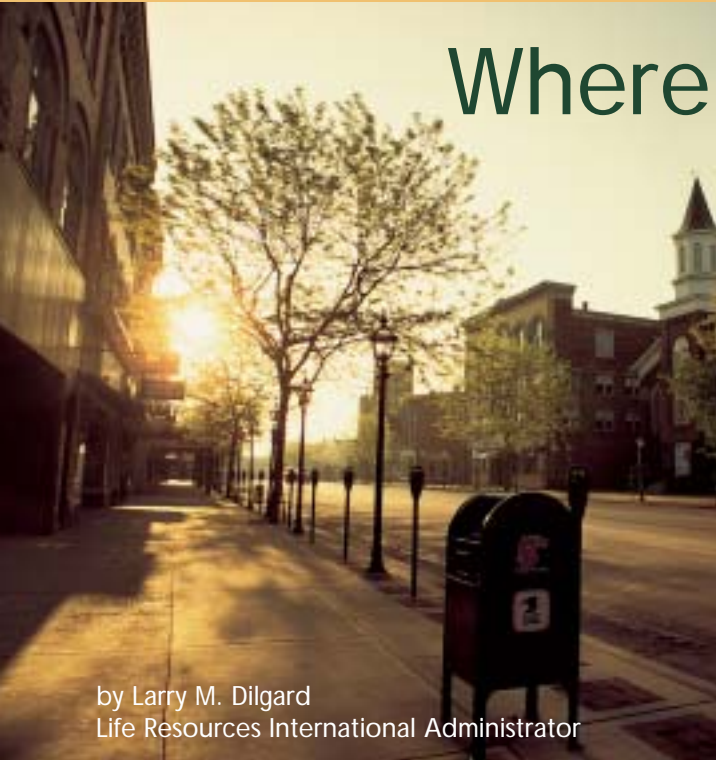


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Where every gift you buy benefits the pro-life cause!



by Larry M. Dilgard  
Life Resources International Administrator

## Where Did All the People Go?

In the March/April 2002 edition of this magazine, I wrote an article about the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) projections of the world's population in 2050. At that time, the UNFPA estimated it would rise as high as 10.9 billion people. In 2003 the UNFPA decreased its official population projections to 8.9 billion. The UNFPA further estimated that by 2300 the population could be as low as 2.3 billion (low variant) worldwide. The Population Research Institute in Virginia called the UNFPA's low variant projection of the world population "historically the most accurate."

Where did all the people go? Interestingly enough, even the UNFPA may have figured this out. It correlates the lower population projections to a lower-than-expected worldwide birth rate and the AIDS epidemic. Many countries already are below the 2.1 replacement rate that is needed to keep a level population. The UNFPA is predicting that by 2050 the worldwide birth rate will be at 1.85, well below the level needed to consistently hold the population numbers. Two main factors are involved: the high worldwide incidence of abortion as a main form of birth control and the increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS in developing countries. Some countries, especially those in Eastern Europe, are projected to be

hit much harder than other areas of the world and may lose a significant portion of their populations. These include Bulgaria and Ukraine, where WELS Lutherans for Life oversees the operation of pregnancy counseling centers. The UNFPA predicts these countries could lose 30 to 50 percent of their populations by 2050. The UNFPA also predicts that 80% of the world will have a below-replacement birth rate before 2050.

The UNFPA promotes abortion, family planning, and sexual and reproductive health services throughout the world. In 2003, the UNFPA was funded with \$294 million from a record 142 worldwide governments. In 2002, after many years of funding to the UNFPA, the Bush administration cut off their \$34 million funding support. In 2003, the U.S. State Department levied charges against the UNFPA, contending coercive abortion policies in China to maintain the country's one-child policy. The UNFPA has not responded to these charges.

One country has taken its declining population problem very seriously. In Uganda, with the support of its Christian President Museveni and his wife, the country is addressing its declining population problem through its HIV/AIDS program which integrates Christian education with the abstinence-before-marriage and faithfulness-during-marriage message. This program, started in 1994, has attained amazing results: from a 31% rate of adults with HIV/AIDS infection in 1986 to a current 5% rate!

Only through sharing the Gospel message, treasuring the sanctity of life and educating on what abortion really is, will this ominous trend of a worldwide population decline be reversed. With an estimated 55 million abortions a year worldwide, we must dedicate ourselves to support the work of educating about abortion abroad and turn to God in prayer for support and direction. ♡

## Evangelism Opportunities Abound!

by Sue Dilgard  
Affiliate Services Coordinator

WELS Lutherans for Life, a division of Christian Life Resources, consists of 24 affiliated Chapters nationwide which are served by over 800 volunteers. These men and women use life issues as "bridges" to convey the love of God and to share the message of salvation through Christ. The Chapters use several "bridges" in their outreach. They operate 22 pregnancy counseling and resource centers nationwide, provide education within their congregations, and do outreach in their communities. Life issues touch all of us at one time or another, so each Chapter has access to the latest information on the life issues that trouble their communities within and outside of the church.

The work of our Chapters provide excellent opportunities for sharing the message of salvation through Christ. In 2003 our pregnancy counseling and resource centers saw 3,368 new clients and 1,313 clients for follow-up and practical assistance. They shared God's love 1,364 times to their clients and presented sin and grace 1,069 times. Bibles were given to 307 clients along with numerous biblical tracts. Statistics show that our Chapters are seeing increasing numbers of women and men searching for comfort from post-abortion syndrome (the emotional fallout after an abortion). Our Chapters counseled 127 post-abortion clients in 2003 and comforted these people with the love of Christ.

Consider volunteering at and supporting one of the WELS Lutherans for Life pregnancy counseling or resource centers in your area. Help them to use life issues as a bridge to share Christ's love with hurting people. As you can see from our statistics, the



evangelism opportunities are many, and most of them come right to your door! For more information contact Sue Dilgard at (800) 729-9535 or go online to [www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?chapters](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?chapters). ♡



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- Total Circulation: 70,358 per issue
- Total Readership: 180,930 per issue

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For information on publication demographics, circulation, ad sizes, advertising rates, or to reserve ad space, contact us today at (800) 729-9535 or email [sharonb@ChristianLifeResources.com](mailto:sharonb@ChristianLifeResources.com)

### Age of First-Time Mothers Hits Record High in U.S.

American women are waiting longer than ever to have their first child, according to a government study released on December 17, 2003. The study also showed that the teenage birth rates dropped while the number of women in their late 30s and early 40s having their first child rose. The average first-time mother in 2002 was just over 25 years old, continuing a steady three-decade rise according to annual data compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Birth rates in 2002 for women aged 35 to 39 and 40 to 44 were the highest in more than three decades.

[12/17/03 - Reuters]

### Feingold to Lead Fight Against FMA

Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold, D-WI, pledged to lead the fight in Congress against the Federal Marriage Amendment. Feingold told reporters he finds it "unbelievable" that the nation's founding document would be "used" to deal with an issue like marriage. Polls indicate nearly two-thirds of Americans (and 55% of Wisconsin Democrats) support a constitutional amendment affirming marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Feingold faces re-election in Wisconsin this year.

[01/08/04 - Citizen Link]

### New Jersey Governor Signs "Unethical" Stem Cell Research Bill

New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevey signed a bill that pro-life groups say is the worst legislation ever concerning stem cell research. The bill allows human embryos to be cloned and implanted into a woman's uterus and the unborn child can be killed at any time from that point until the end of the pregnancy. Former actor, Christopher Reeve, appeared with McGreevey at the signing. Reeve has been criticized for using the paralysis he suffered after a 1995 fall from a horse to become a leading advocate for destructive embryonic stem cell research. Pro-life groups have long supported the goals of stem cell research, but say more ethical

alternatives are available and one life shouldn't be taken to advance another person's life. "Proponents continue to shamefully mislead individuals suffering with illness and disease by making false and unsubstantiated claims about human embryonic stem cells," Marie Tasy of New Jersey Right to Life explained. "Unlike adult stem cells which are curing people, embryonic stem cells have never been used successfully in clinical trials in humans and carry significant risks, including immune rejection and tumor formation."

[01/05/04 - Lifenews.com]

### President Bush Wants Abstinence Program Funding Tripled by 2005

In his State of the Union speech, President Bush asked that funding for federal abstinence programs be doubled now and tripled by 2005. Bush has been praised in the past for increasing funding for abstinence efforts to reduce the incidence of teen pregnancies and abortions. "We will double federal funding for abstinence programs, so schools can teach this fact of life: Abstinence for young people is the only certain way to avoid sexually transmitted diseases," Bush said. Bush's proposal would increase abstinence program funding from \$80 million a year to more than \$270 million in 2005. The President said Americans need to be more willing to present the abstinence message to young men and women.

[01/22/04 - Lifenews.com]



### New National Abortion Poll Shows Majority of Americans are Pro-Life

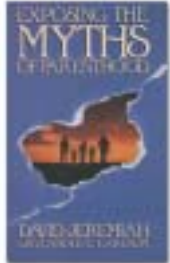
Polls consistently show that Americans are becoming more pro-life. A December 2003 poll conducted by Zogby International, a respected nonpartisan polling firm, confirms that by a 53% to 36% margin, the public supports the statement, "Abortion destroys a human life and is manslaughter." As previous polls have shown, a strong majority of Republicans take a pro-life position, but so do a sizable number of Democrats. Some 68% of Republicans agreed with the statement that abortion "destroys a human life and is manslaughter" while 43% of Democrats in the U.S. also agreed. The Zogby poll also showed that Americans are more inclined to support "restrictions on abortion" compared to five or ten years ago.

[1/18/04 - Lifenews.com]

### UCD study shows marriage break-up effects on children

The death of a parent has a less harmful effect on children than divorce or separation, according to research conducted by University College Dublin. The research showed that children of divorced parents performed worse at school, had less social skills and a greater chance of developing depression. It also found that children felt a greater sense of loss when their parents broke up than when one of them had died.

[2/9/04 - online.ie]



**Exposing the MYTHS of Parenthood**

David Jeremiah takes on ten myths of parenthood and explains the fallacy in each. This book urges readers to reevaluate their priorities and responsibilities as parents.

Borrow this item from CLR's Lending Library (suggested donation: \$5.00). Call 1-800-729-9535 or e-mail Cathy at [cathym@ChristianLifeResources.com](mailto:cathym@ChristianLifeResources.com) to borrow this book. Ask for EP1-1 Exposing the MYTHS of Parenthood.

Much is happening with parish nursing, and exciting things are ahead! After only a short 18 months, our parish nursing program has developed and expanded in many areas. Here is just a short list of developments:

- **New parish nursing programs are starting throughout the country**
- **Better communication and networking are taking place**
- **A dedicated parish nurse webpage is available with resources and announcements**
- **Parish nurses evaluated the benefits of defibrillators in their churches or schools**
- **Health awareness, screenings, and fairs are coordinated on a regular basis**

This past January, the latest Parish Nurse Gathering was held at the CLR national office in Milwaukee. The nurses appreciated the opportunity to network and share during the meeting, and provided feedback and direction for future efforts to enhance the parish nurse program. The nurses also reviewed their short and long-term goals which were established in September 2002. We agreed that much has been accomplished, but much more is going to be done.

The parish nursing materials are available to any nurse or congregation who is considering the program. The materials are free and available through our website at: [www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?Parishnursing](http://www.ChristianLifeResources.com/?Parishnursing). ♥



# Entertainment Ratings You Can Trust



by Tim Snyder  
Media Production Coordinator

So you're planning to take the kids to a movie this weekend. A new film is just released and seems like good family fare. How do you make sure the content is appropriate for family viewing? For that matter, how do you decide if it's appropriate entertainment for yourself?

A parent can check out the rating, but that doesn't help much. Once you get past a G rating, it's pretty much a guess. PG and PG-13 films may be fine depending on the age of your kids, or they may be totally unsuitable due to language, sexual content, or violence. Even a G-rated film may not fill the bill if the message it sends isn't one your kids should be receiving.

Critical praise of a film can produce a winner. Then again, maybe not. Movie reviews really only reflect the critic's tastes, and his or her idea of entertainment may differ from yours. Even recommendations from friends are iffy. What the Joneses feel is fine for their kids may be quite different from what you want for yours.

Here's a resource that can be very helpful. It's a website from Focus on the Family called Plugged In Online ([www.pluggedinonline.com](http://www.pluggedinonline.com)). This site

contains movie, video/DVD, music, and television reviews from a Christian perspective. A typical Plugged In movie review starts out the same as most other reviews but it adds some very useful information. That information is organized under the following categories: Positive Elements, Spiritual Content, Sexual Content, Violent Content, Crude or Profane Language, Drug and Alcohol Content, and Other Negative Elements.

Like other reviews, a Plugged In review is subjective. It expresses an opinion on whether or not a movie is well made. You won't always agree with the review, but that's okay. The content information is what you're really looking for. This detailed inventory is the kind of information concerned parents can appreciate as they struggle to decide what movies are appropriate for the family.

No matter your age, it's a struggle to find wholesome entertainment. Whether it's movies, television, or music, Plugged In Online can help you make good choices. ♡

(Plugged In is a registered trademark of Focus on the Family.)

# Calling All Parents!

by Thad Jahns

Certain moments in life profoundly change us. Such moments redefine who we are and why we exist. For me, one such instance began on a warm, sunny day in July of 1994. That was the day that God alerted me to my special calling in life. God didn't speak to me through a burning bush or strike me down on the way to work that day. No tongues of fire, no oil anointing my head, not even so much as a gentle whisper. Yet I knew that God was calling me to a very important task – a task that in many ways is no less important than the work faithfully carried out by the great men and women of God in the Bible.

As I stood in a hospital delivery room that evening, watching my wife lovingly wrap her arms around the small child she had carried for the past nine months, I couldn't help but feel a little sick to my stomach. Don't get me wrong. I was the excited and proud new daddy of a beautiful baby boy. I was thankful that God had guided my wife through the agony of labor and had given us this unbelievable gift. Yet, as the day's events replayed like a tape in my head, the full impact of my new responsibility hit me. God was entrusting to me the task of taking care of this new life. I would now be responsible for making sure this child had everything needed for a healthy and fulfilling

existence. Even more importantly, I was responsible for the spiritual welfare of this young soul! I was feeling the pressure. I was the man. God's "go-to" guy. Like Moses (minus the flaming, talking vegetation), God was, in a very real way, calling me to lead my own little flock to the Promised Land.

## "Who am I?"

Have you ever noticed that God never spares us the "dirty details" when it comes to stories in the Bible? We don't get the sanitized version of the story to protect the not-so-innocent. Rather, we often see these real-life characters for who they were – very ordinary people with extra-ordinary calls to do great things for God. Think about it! Peter appears to have spent much of his life with a foot inserted in his mouth. Paul spent many of his early years making sport of terrorizing early followers of Jesus. Even Moses, when called by God to deliver his people from Egypt, was full of questions: "Who am I to do this job? Certainly, you could find someone much more qualified than me. Someone whose resume includes at least a few years of formal leadership experience, maybe some skills in conflict resolution." Moses was hanging out with sheep, running from a past he couldn't quite shake.

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By all human standards, he certainly didn't seem to be the man for the job. But God had other plans. In fact God is in the business of making faithful "heroes" out of seemingly worthless "zeroes."

Perhaps you have asked similar questions in your life: "Why me? Who am I to be called to shepherd my children? Isn't there someone – anyone – who could do this job better than me?" Scripture clearly teaches that it is a parent's responsibility, a unique calling, to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6). Yet our sinful nature questions, redirecting us to ourselves and all of our weaknesses. Then the excuses start: "Are you talking to me? I don't know if I can do this. Isn't that what we pay pastors to do? I don't have the Bible background to speak intelligently with my children about Jesus." But God keeps calling your name, letting you know that the Great Commission, making disciples of all nations, needs to begin within the four walls of your own home before it can be taken to the four corners of the earth.

We often fail to recognize what Scripture clearly states and what studies continually affirm – that

*...every day I awake to three little reminders of why I am here and what God would have me do in this life. And in the eyes of my boys I occasionally catch a glimpse of the Promised Land.*

parents have a greater impact on their child's spiritual development than any other human being. No teacher, no pastor, no classmate or friend can replicate the relationship you have with your child or the opportunities for faith-nurturing available in the day-to-day life in the home. Yet, most of us fall into the trap of compartmentalizing our lives into the sacred and the secular. We reserve the sacred stuff for an hour or two on Sunday morning, maybe even say an occasional prayer before a meal or when we go to bed, then shed our Christian garb as we head out the door to work or school. What a waste! Life

is full of teachable moments. Every day is full of chances to share Jesus with your child. And when you rightly view your entire life as an opportunity to live out your unique calling, God continues to provide endless opportunities to intricately weave your faith into every situation.

**"I will be with you."**

God always seems to know just the right thing to say. After all, he is God. And when the Master of the universe makes a promise, you can take it to the bank. Moses, stuttering and stammering and desperately searching for a way out of God's plan, is offered reassurance with five simple, life-changing words: "I will be with you." When you find yourself doubting your qualifications, balking at God's call to parenthood, when you're overwhelmed by the demands of selfish kids and a life that is spinning out of control, God shares the same words with you: "I will be with you. You don't need to go it alone. I'll give you what you need and never leave you hanging. Trust me on this."

As a parent, you know that no calling in your life will be more challenging than that of raising a child to know and love Jesus. There are days when you will wonder if it is all worth it or if God is really true to His word. Yet, by God's grace, you also recognize that few other calls have such potential to impact future generations for Christ. And no other call can provide as much joy.

For almost ten years my wife and I have been leading our growing clan through the "wilderness" of this life. Like you, there are days when we find ourselves lost in the vast desert of frustration, doubt and self-reliance. But every day I awake to three little reminders of why I am here and what God would have me do in this life. And in the eyes of my boys I occasionally catch a glimpse of the Promised Land. 🌸

*Thad Jahns, M.S., has served as a career counselor and marriage and family therapist.*

*He currently serves as Family Minister at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Wisconsin Rapids, WI.*

*Thad and his wife, Ann, are parents of three energetic young boys.*



*news you can use*



*Is It  
Morning Sickness  
or Something  
More Serious?*

health. Unfortunately, some women are dismissed as having psychological or imaginary symptoms, when in fact the symptoms are very real and may be very severe. Women are frequently under treated and left feeling stigmatized by a disease inaccurately presumed to be psychological.

Depression and anxiety are side effects reported by many women. In extreme cases some women, out of desperation caused by overwhelming physical and emotional symptoms and the lack of support from loved ones and their doctors, abort their babies to get relief from this overwhelming condition. These women get relief from their physical symptoms when their pregnancies are ended, but on some support web sites they sadly pour out their feelings of pain, heartache, and grief over the loss of their babies. Some women are so affected by HG that they have repeated abortions and eventually give up on bearing a child.

Treating HG can be very challenging, and early intervention is critical. Many helpful treatments and medications are available to treat the symptoms of HG, and it's important that a woman experiencing moderate to severe morning sickness symptoms report them to their doctor right away.

Women and their families dealing with HG need our support. If you know of someone who may be experiencing HG, please give them your help, understanding, and support.

If you have been diagnosed with Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG) or know someone who has, you can get more information by visiting the HER Foundation web site at: [www.helpher.org](http://www.helpher.org). 🌸

**M**any women experience morning sickness in the first trimester of their pregnancies. There is a more serious condition, however, that can have similar symptoms called Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG), that can cause a woman untold physical and emotional pain. HG is defined as a debilitating disease of pregnancy marked by moderate to severe, persistent nausea/vomiting causing rapid weight loss, malnutrition, and dehydration in the mother and unknown consequences for her unborn child. HG usually extends beyond the first trimester. HG may resolve by 21 weeks, but in up to 50% of women diagnosed it can last throughout the pregnancy.

HG is generally diagnosed when there has been a loss of greater than 5% of pre-pregnancy body weight (usually 10%), dehydration and production of ketones, nutritional deficiencies, metabolic imbalances, and difficulty with daily activities.

Determining the cause of HG is very difficult because there isn't a lot of knowledge about this condition, and doctors suspect that HG is most likely caused by more than one factor. HG symptoms may vary between women depending on biological make-up, body chemistry, and overall

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