

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



"Away in a manger, no crib for a bed..."

While eyes may occasionally droop during a sermon, or minds daydream through an offertory, it's rare that the appearance of the Cherub Choir ever has less than the undivided attention of our church congregation.

With hearts and enthusiasm stretching beyond their often tiny heights, these youngest choristers unfailingly coax smiles from us "old folks." And, if a voice is a shade offkey, or words a bit jumbled, the love and exuberance that shines through these scrubbed, smiling faces proclaims the story of Christmas better than all the marvelous, technological wizardry of modern media could ever begin to do.

Fact is, the simple words of that beautiful children's Christmas song have a direct line to my emotions. Two lines into the words, and I start blinking pretty hard.

But the sweet voices of tiny children touch me increasingly for another reason, and more so this

time of year. For Christmas is especially a time for childhood innocence, and of wide-eyed, almost breathless, anticipation.

Wide-eyed innocence has become a scarce commodity in our household. We are, for most practical purposes, a household of grownups. A household of adults lacks the seasonal spice that small children bring to Christmas.

The traditional Santa visits and lists of Christmas wishes exist no more. We no longer focus on stuffed bears and rollerskates, namebrand dolls or miniature farm machinery or toy trucks. (Except for the "trucks" for a battered skateboard deck.)

Still, a mother feels a need to fill their stockings. But, what I'd really like to wrap and ribbon for them can't be bought, not with cash, check or credit card, not from the mall or a discount store or even through a catalog.

What I'd like to be able to gift them with first is Compassion. With a full package of Compassion, the frailities, shortcomings,

disabilities and inabilities on which we judge others could fade behind the more important measure: each individual's own capabilities and talents.

Next, it'd be nice to wrap up a package of Patience. With a little bit of calm waiting time — Patience — seemingly insurmountable problems sometimes just disappear, diminish to more solvable proportions, or offer their own solutions.

A super-duper, giant-size container of Common Sense is always welcome, though sometimes elusive to capture and tuck in the toe of a knitted stocking hung at the fireplace mantle. But a daily dose of the stuff, clinging to one like a gentle hint of perfume, helps eliminate indecision, procrastination, and occasionally even saves one from making a total fool of oneself (but not always!).

Nor dare we forget to add to this gift pile a heaping box of Good Humor with periodic smatterings of Belly Laughs. With increasing frequency, we read accounts of how medical researchers are tying good health with the ability to laugh and enjoy life. Or maybe we could just call laughter the butter and salt on the popcorn of everyday living.

Finally, if I could give them but one lone gift, it would be a lengthy measure of Faith. Faith. The "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," say the Scriptures. With a deep, abiding Faith, man can endure just about any hardship, any torture, any uncertainty. Without Faith, life simply has little meaning.

And, after all, Faith is what Christmas is all about, anyway. Faith as simple and pure and loving as that belonging to those

adorable tousled-hair angels... er, Cherub Choir singers... who blessedly yank us back from mental musings on material things to renewed attention to what

Christmas is really about. "...the little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay." To you and yours, a most blessed and peaceful Christmas.

Take Stock Of Good Qualities To Enhance Self-Esteem

BY SALLY BAIR

Lancaster Co. Correspondent
LEBANON — In order to have high self esteem, a person must have the ability to recognize her own good qualities.

Francine Gates, Lebanon County Mental Health Association, said the concept of self-esteem means being aware of yourself — "both the good parts and the bad parts." Gates said, "We must realize that it is okay not to be perfect, but that everyone is worthy and has something very unique."

Gates offered her program on helping people learn how they see themselves through the Lebanon County Extension Service through a grant from the Lebanon County commissioners.

Gates likened self esteem to a glass which may be filled to overflowing at times, or have a leak that trickles out the bottom at other times. There are also times, according to Gates, when one's "glass" of self esteem may be completely knocked over by someone.

"Self esteem is learned," Gates said. "We are not born with high or low self-esteem." She said a family has a lot to do with a child's self esteem and sense of worth.

People with high self-esteem have a high energy level, are confident, optimistic, pleasant and friendly and usually have good eye contact and posture. People with low self-esteem on the other hand, are usually not much fun to be with and are often a drain on those around them.

Gates told her audience,

"Feelings are one of the most important things we own. They belong to us and if we give that away, we give away the power of how we feel." She commented, "Don't allow other people to make you feel bad."

Gates pointed out that people who are not in charge of their lives allow other people to make decisions for them. "We decide how we feel, not someone else." She recommended the fogging technique for screening out negatives. She told her audience to imagine themselves surrounded by fog and to let unkind remarks pass without notice.

She said that society has taught us to be modest, not egotistical, not stuck-up and to put other people before ourselves. For that reason, it is difficult for some people to recognize their good points. She noted, "You must feel good about yourself before you can accept others."

She said the most common areas in which people put themselves down are: intelligence, the ability to be social, sexuality, physical appearance, talents, skills, spiritual life and the ability to earn money.

Writing down positive attributes helps people become aware of their abilities, though Gates cautions that most people have an easier time writing down their bad points.

Gates said there is a difference between self love, which is shown by a person full of hostility and arrogance, and love of self, which is true humility.

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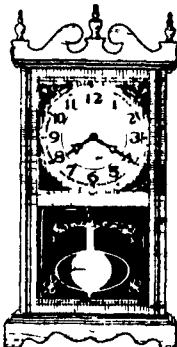
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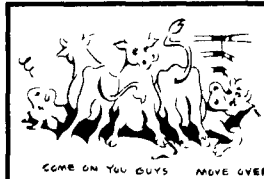
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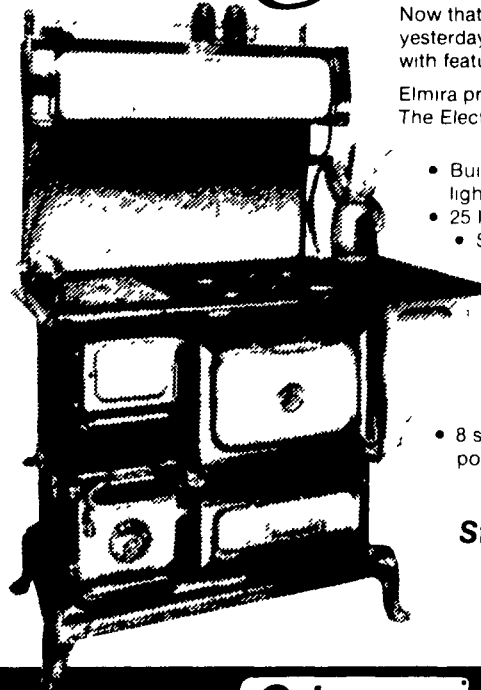
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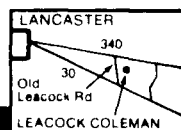


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