



The Family Room

By: Dr. Roy Don Whitehead

There is a Baby in Bethany
In December 1998, a baby was born to a resident of Bethany House Abuse Shelter in Somerset. This is the column I wrote at that time, and I share it with you again as my Christmas card to you.

There is a baby in Bethany. This is the time of year for babies, so this time was very good. This is a time for carolers who sing of joy and celebration. And the time of year for angels. Ah, yes, angels. They come to announce the birth of a King.

The baby is small and cute as babies usually are. Ten little fingers and ten little toes. I have forgotten how small newborns are. After all it has been seventeen years since I spent much time around little ones. There are tiny, especially those toes. Perfect miniatures of adult toes, just without all the wear and tear.

No, the baby is not at my house, but I get to see him regularly. I am sort of an uncle, or let's face it, I'm old enough to be his grandfather.

This baby also had a problem finding a place in which to be born. A lot of the ins and relatives' houses had no room for him or his momma. They did find a place, though, a place in Bethany.

Sunday School stories will still linger in my mind about Bethany. That great story about Jesus teaching Mary and Martha. The even greater story about Jesus raising Lazarus, their brother, after he had been dead for days. Bethany is a famous place.

There is another Bethany, though, and this is where Momma and baby Caleb found a place. This baby is not a city but a house. This house has held Marys, Marthas and many of their sisters who have been abused. It is a place where a woman can go when there is no other place to run.

The inn is full at Bethany House these days. There is a full house with residents sharing one kitchen and two bathrooms. Not a lot of extra space, but there is always room for a baby and his momma.

Momma was alone and concerned. No help seemed to be forthcoming from any quarter. The father was definitely not interested in the child, and others were busy with their own lives. At first she cried because she would be bringing her baby home to

a "shelter" and not a real home. Later she grew more comfortable with the idea of bringing a baby to Bethany House.

Upward of fifteen aunts watch the baby's every move and vie to hold him. Only one uncle thus far (me!), so I can get almost unlimited holding time. There is a lot of support in Bethany for a new momma. Experienced moms are all around for advice and counsel. Momma is deciding it may be an OK place to bring a baby.

Bringing a new baby into the world almost always brings anticipation and joy. A new baby brings total strangers closer, sharing with each other that common bond of concern for the young one. One resident stayed with Momma in the labor room until they chased her away. What a wonderful gift!

A new baby means hope. There is always hope for a new generation. At Bethany House this hope is an antidote to the despair that many residents feel. Even in the midst of abuse, a child is born, a son is given. And his name shall be called... Caleb. Whether in Bethlehem or Bethany, join us in welcoming a new birth. Both babies deserve extra special care.

We Treat Family Worse Than Others

My son said to me, "I've never seen you that angry before except at me." He had overheard a phone conversation I was having. I was very upset because some people had not done what they promised, and I let them know how upset I was.

I laughed when my son said this, but the more I thought about it, the less I felt inclined to laugh. Instead I now take it as a very sad commentary on the state of the family. Why is it that we take out our worst feelings on our families while usually keeping a "happy face" for those on the outside?

It would seem that the people I love the most deserve the best treatment. But my son was correct in his observation. I have shown more of my anger to him than I have to other people. That hardly seems fair!

I have known many others who have the same problem. "My husband is liked by everyone," Vera told me. "They would never believe that

he is abusive to the kids and me." Abusers often show their best side to the public and reserve their anger for the family.

One thing this does it to help the family believe that they are somehow responsible for the anger. I have had many women say to me in counseling: "He is so nice to other people, but the minute we are alone he gets angry. I must be doing something wrong." This woman may have spent years trying to change herself so that her husband wouldn't get so angry.

However, she does not cause his anger. He is simply doing what many of us do: taking out his bad feelings on those closest to him.

Some anger is "old anger," meaning that it has been around for many years. Anger can build up inside a person and remain for a long time. An adult who had bad experience as a child may harbor anger toward the person who mistreated him. He may not even be aware of this anger but may take it out on his own family.

A preferred method for dealing with anger is generally learned from parents. If parents are violent, children may learn to give or accept violence. If anger means hollering at people, children will pick that up. If dealing with anger means talking calmly about the problem, children

will learn that instead.

If you find yourself treating your family worse than you treat others, try these suggestions.

1) Learn to count to ten (or twenty or fifty or whatever it takes!) instead of venting your anger at your kids or your spouse.

2) Aim some of your anger at a more deserving target. Instead of being so syrupy sweet to everyone but family, let others know that you are upset.

3) Learn to handle anger in ways that do not harm your family. Being angry is not wrong. Anger is a normal, human emotion. It is possible to learn to express your anger in ways that will not harm someone else. Hit your fists against a pillow. Go outside and scream. Exercise. Talk to someone about your anger.

4) Explain to family members why you are upset. If your anger is at the boss or someone else, this will help family members not to blame themselves.

5) If you find that you cannot deal with your anger without hurting your family, then it is time to get help. A trained counselor can help you find the source of your anger and learn to deal with it in healthy ways.

Families are our most precious possessions. Let's treat them that way.

Riders should avoid steep hills and should never hitch a ride from a car, bus, truck or other vehicle. Don't ride the scooters at night.

Here are a few general holiday toy safety tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Follow recommended age ranges on toy packages. Toys that are too advanced could be a safety hazard for younger children.

- Check the size of the toy and make sure there are no parts that could be swallowed.

- Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy that he has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully. If the toy is ap-

propriate for your child, show him how to use it properly.

- Children under three can choke on small parts contained in toys or games and balls with a diameter of one and three-quarters of an inch or less.

- Children under eight can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. (Four children died from choking on balloons in 1999.)

- Watch for strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.

For more information, see these websites: www.safekids.org or www.aap.org or www.cpsc.gov



Have a Safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!



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Public health officials urge caution when buying holiday toys for kids

Kentucky parents have been hitting the malls buying toys for the holidays this month. The Cabinet for Health Services want to pass along a few safety tips to make sure this holiday season is a safe one for all children.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission requires toy manufacturers to meet safety standards and to label certain toys that could be a hazard for younger children. Parents should look for these labels in toys and gifts their children receive.

Parents should evaluate toys as soon as they get them to make sure they are age appropriate and don't have small parts that could be a choking hazard for young children," said Mike Cavanah, program administrator in the Environmental Management Branch of the Department for Public Health. "Small parts in toys for older kids should be kept away from younger siblings."

One of the more popular toys this year are lightweight scooters. Ac-

cording to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 30,000 emergency room injuries associated with scooters have been reported this year. Nearly 85 percent of these injuries are to children age 14 and under.

The commission and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign recommend appropriate safety gear with scooters, including helmet, elbow and knee pads when riding. Adult supervision is recommended for children ages eight and under. Parents should check scooters for hazards and make sure the toys are ridden on smooth, paved surfaces.

(Two kinds of scooters were recalled this month because of safety issues concerning handles: Kent Kickin' Mini-Scooters and Kash 'N Gold Racer X20™ recalled a total of 97,500 scooters in cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.)

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Mike and Sue Brown

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from our family to yours. Remembering that Jesus is the reason for every season.

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