

I love having four kids! I love having four kids close in age. Currently they are aged 4, 6, 8 & 10! Yes - the early years were hard work...still is sometimes! I remember breastfeeding, reading a story, answering a toddler's 'whys', jumping up to wipe a bottom all at the same time! These days, there's the dinner to cook, homework to help with, a little girl with paint and glitter all over herself and the floor, and a son who comes into the room in the middle of it all and says, 'Can I have a hug, Mum?'

Well...no-one ever said that having kids would bring quiet, peace and order to your home! Life with four is full, that's for sure! It is full of challenge... and full of mess! But it is also full of joy, and full of laughter....and best of all....full of four little individuals especially created by God, who each bring an indescribable uniqueness to our family.

If you have a few young kids, close in age, and are finding it tough....then I do want to encourage you that it does get easier! For a start, they don't stay in nappies forever! They do eventually stop throwing their food on the floor (though you wouldn't think so looking under our table!). And you begin to count the nights that you are woken rather than the nights you sleep through (you'll only be able to work that sentence out if you have had a good nights sleep!!). In the struggles, do look for the small joys, the cuddles, the laughter...do relax about the mess (it's only going to get like that again the next day anyway!)...do get away from it all from time to time (leave the kids with your husband on a Sat morning or with a friend during the week)...do chat with a friend during the week...and do tell God 'I can't do this!' and let him step in and help you. Don't wish this phase away!

Time does move on and children do grow! Apart from being more independent and doing loads for themselves, my older boys often organize the younger ones too! A recent and absolutely wonderful idea that they had is to surprise Mummy & Daddy at bedtime. While my husband & I are clearing the dinner things, they older boys will sneak the younger ones upstairs to get them ready for bed to surprise us! They get them changed, clean their teeth and even read them their stories!! They then get ready themselves too! When we are 'allowed' upstairs, completely unaware of anything that has been going on (of course!), they jump out, eagerly awaiting our surprise, our wonder and appreciation! Which we readily give....in all honesty...and in the hope that they might 'surprise' us again another night! Then there are the games, and the activities, that the older ones organize and the younger ones eagerly join in. There were whole days in the summer holidays when I hardly saw my kids, so engrossed were they in building a climbing frame with the 'quadro' in the garden and then, when it was finished, filling it with their pillows and blankets and 'sleeping' in it; or when they decided to have a fair, each having a 'stall' and selling their unwanted toys to each other and organizing raffles, tombolas, hooplas and games!

Of course, there are still mad, crazy moments!! But it's moments now rather than whole days at a time! So do be encouraged! Take one day at a time and enjoy your little ones for all they are in this busy phase of life.

And...if you only have 2 kids and are wondering whether to have more....then go for it!!

(I am aware that there are some of you whose kids are older and it is still very tough. Do find someone to talk to about it, do pray for your kids, do arrange time out, do ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit and wisdom each day...In future copies of MKJ, I will share some stuff that we find works well with our kids to motivate them to help round the house, and to respect us and each other)

+++In previous issues of Mums.Kids.Jesus: activities, games, recipes, life experiences as a Mum, stories of God's goodness, practical ideas to staying close to God, God's promises for pregnancy & birth, ideas to help older kids adapt to new baby....all this and more. Visit www.mumskidsjesus.com for previous issues of MKJ +++

Moving from the desert...to a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs (Deut 8:7)

...continued from MKJ Issue 6

(written in Oct 2000 when I had two children - a 2 yr old and an 8 month old - and life was a challenge!)

The Journey

Stage 1 The Desert Years (read Deut 2:1-23)

So...how do we keep going in desert times? The following is an encouragement to me:

1. My Father leads me lovingly

*'...you shall remember that **the Lord your God led you all the way these 40 years in the wilderness.**'* Deut 8:2

Even in the desert it is **my Father** who leads me.

Deut 8:15 puts it even more graphically: *'the Lord your God...led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water...'* It may feel like it sometimes!

'...the Lord your God...went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day.' Deut 1:32-33

Even in the wilderness times He lovingly searches out resting places for us on the way to our promised land of inheritance, blessing & refreshing. Though, like the Israelites following the fire & the cloud, we do need to keep our eyes up...on Jesus. There's a lot of sand if we look down!

2. My Father knows

*'He **knows your trudging** through this great wilderness'* Deut 2:7a

That especially encourages me as I write this bit today. It's been a long few weeks - my boys have been sick. Everything's been a bit of a blur - sleepless nights; miserable children; and not being able to get out and see friends. Where I was feeling a new freshness spiritually, I seem to have gone back a step or two. I'm tired and weary. God KNOWS! Isn't that good? Life is very real, and we can be real with God. Tell him how you're feeling!

3. My Father is faithful

*'...the Lord your God **has been** with you...you have lacked nothing.'* Deut 2:7b

God has been, and IS with me; and all through the tough times he has provided for me & my family. We have known wonderful provision from furniture to baby nappies, from my husband's job to an ice-cream maker!!!

4. My Father longs to do me good

*'For **the Lord you God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills...when you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.**'* Deut 8:7-10

God has promised me much more than what I see now. He longs to *'do us good in the end'* Deut 8:16

Hold onto God's promises for you!

To be honest, it's easier for me to write this now. It wasn't so easy to know it and live it on the tough days. Likewise, it will be easier for you to read this than to live it! But it is truth, and we need God's help in knowing it on the bad days. So remember:

My Father leads me lovingly; my Father knows; my Father is faithful; my Father longs to do ME good!

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