

Holding It All Together

by Amy McCollom



And Just Like That

They didn't even ask permission. My kids didn't ask, my husband didn't ask, the world didn't ask. Last week-end the last of my children had their 18th birthdays, and turned into adults, and just like that, my life status changed as well. I had no more little children.

My kids grew up, and I was no longer a mama bear, per se. They didn't need me like that any more. They didn't need me to cut their sandwiches into smaller pieces, or tie their shoes, or hold their hands while crossing a busy street. They didn't need me to drill them on their times tables, help them build a science project, or bake cupcakes for their classroom parties anymore. No, my job of being a mommy is over, and now my position is more of a consultant rather than a care-giver. How do you just turn that off?

Thank goodness I still have a dog that thinks I'm her mom, and 3 cats that need hugs and fed and cared for. I also have a pet rat that looks forward to daily snuggles so I am not without company or an "empty nest," as some would say.

I also teach Sunday School, and I enjoy nurturing and

bonding with the little ones that come to my class. I think sometimes I have more fun in there than they do, because I can let my creative side run wild with puppets and music and silly voices. We all have a good time and learn some things too! I enjoy little kids.

Through the week, I am going to have to re-focus on what my new plans and goals are though. I haven't thought much about that, and now that the time has come that I will have free time in the summer and fall, new opportunities are available.

There are so many options for me now - college, jobs, travel, writing a book, joining the circus, going to clown school, starting an emu farm, learning to ski, taxidermy school, taking up quilting, moving to Florida, training flying squirrels,...the possibilities are endless.

One thing I know I DO NOT want to do is end up just sitting around waiting for my children to come visit me. They all have their own lives to live, just like I did. I remember how busy I was raising my family and as much as I wanted to make sure the grandparents had their time with the grandkids, sometimes it just was not possible due to our schedules.

I do not want to make my grown children feel guilty if their lives are too busy to come see me every weekend. But I would like a phone call to check up on me and a nice present on my birthday and Mother's Day, if it's not too much trouble.

I plan to have other things in my life going on that will keep me occupied enough that I don't rely on my children for all of my entertainment and socialization. Kids, if I happen to forget this, keep this column and hold me to it. I do not want to burden my children with unrealistic demands. I want them to know that I am still around if they need advice or need a soft place to land after a rough go in the world. But I do not want to try and control anything after they leave the nest.

I hope that I have done a good job giving them all the structure, good upbringing, Godly teaching, and love that I could have poured into them to make them great people. I did what I thought was right, and maybe I wasn't perfect, but at the time it was all I could do. I still pray for my children, grown-up or otherwise, that they embrace the good that I tried to impart to them and that they stand

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Hook, Line and Sinker

With Tony Hooker

Ma and Pa go to Vegas

I just flew home from Vegas, and boy are my arms tired. <rimshot> Although I'm sure this old joke has probably been told a million times in Las Vegas, Robert Q. Lewis, who is widely regarded as its author, probably wouldn't recognize today's sin city.

The smokey gambling parlors are largely gone, swallowed up by behemoth "resorts," each one capable of hosting most of Douglas County without having to ask for extra pillows. We stayed at Excalibur, and it is home to 3981 rooms. That total makes it the fifth largest hotel on the strip, with the MGM Grand, right across the street, topping them all with 5044 rooms. Next door, the Luxor, the one that looks like a pyramid, comes in second with 4400 rooms. Basically, everyone in the river city could have two rooms each if they could afford it.

Which brings me to my second point about my Vegas trip. Back in the day, gambling was the money maker and everything else was relatively cheap, to entice more people to the tables. While I'm sure people are still dumping tons of cash on the 100,000 square foot casino floors, the entertainment itself has become a money maker

for the hotels. David Copperfield. Chris Angel. Scorpions. Heck, Lady Gaga herself performed while we were there, at \$250 a pop. Want to see the "Tournament of Kings" at Excalibur? Be ready to lay out \$80 per ticket for the privilege. Of course, this also comes with a Cornish hen dinner that you're required to eat sans silverware, ripping it apart like the Knight of the Roundtable. (or like Mr. HLS eats at home when Mrs. HLS isn't present!)

Which brings me to my third point about my Vegas trip. Many of the resorts have changed their focus from adults to families. I swear I couldn't walk through the casino without some little ankle biter charging at me. Most of the time I saw them coming and was able to avoid them, but a few times the laws of physics insured that the little curtain crawlers bounce off me like a quarter off an inspection rack in boot camp. I guess I wasn't mentally prepared to be walking into little tykes on a casino floor at 11:30 pm.

Which brings me to my fourth point about my Vegas trip. Be prepared to get your

steps in if you travel to Sin City. The Excalibur covers over 70 acres of land, meaning ma and pa had to walk a far piece just to get out of the building. Oddly, everywhere we tried to go meant we had to walk through the entire casino. Heck we even had to walk a long way to get to the pool.

Which brings me to my fifth point about my Vegas trip. Yowsa, do they fit a lot of people into their pools. I was crazy full of people...for a half hour until they closed it because of the 70 mph winds and sandstorm that blew through, right as we opened our first adult beverage, but I digress. It was shaping up to be a prime people watching excursion, until it closed.

Which brings me to my sixth point about my Vegas trip. The Fremont Street Experience. Hereafter known to Mrs. HLS and me as the "human zoo." Do you want to see freaks, weirdos, jugglers, magicians, acrobats and things too exotic or obscene to describe in a single column? Fremont street is the place to go. I fit right in, but the Missus is way too normal for

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Pastor Stahl's Weekly Message of Faith

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! What a Blessing it is that we can share our faith with each other, and have the freedom to come together and worship the Risen Lord each week. Lot of places in the world today make worshiping the Lord illegal, and cause for imprisonment and even death. Let us pray for believers all over the world that their faith may be strengthened and blessed.

In the New Testament, the first believers gathered in the Upper Room where Jesus shared His Last Supper with the disciples. They didn't know what the future held. They were scared, they huddled together behind locked doors. After witnessing the Crucifixion on Friday, they all were in hiding still on Sunday. The women of the group came back and reported that Jesus' tomb was empty, some of them had even seen Jesus, but to many of the disciples it seemed foolish. Then Jesus Appeared in the Upper Room, right in front of them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus Was in their midst! He Spoke peace to them, He

showed them His Hands and Feet, where the nails had been. He asked for a piece of fish, and ate it in their presence. He was really Alive!

(Luke 24:39-43)

Now one of Jesus' disciples was not present on that night. Thomas had experienced all the pain of seeing his Lord killed, and he was still in hiding. When the disciples found him and told him that Jesus was alive, he refused to believe it. "I have to see Him for myself." The next week, Jesus Appeared again in the Upper Room and this time Thomas was there. "And Jesus Said, "Reach your finger here, and look at My Hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My Side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:27,28)

Jesus Wants us to come to Him with our questions, and He Will Provide the Answers. Let us go forward in faith, and tell someone the Good News.

God Bless all of you!

Pastor Jeff Stahl

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Psalm 14
New International Version
Psalm 14
For the director of music.
Of David.

1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.

2 The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.

3 All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

4 Do all these evildoers know nothing? They devour my people as though eating bread; they never call on the Lord.

5 But there they are, overwhelmed with dread, for God is present in the company of the righteous.

6 You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor but the Lord is their refuge.

7 Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!

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