

Growing Branches

Update from *New Beginnings - A Home for Mothers*

Denver, Colorado

April 2004



Emptiness

By Rev. Doug Bode

Emptiness. It's terrible! It's great! At *New Beginnings* we can see both sides of these seemingly contradictory statements.

Emptiness can be a feeling of loneliness, of having nowhere to go and no one to turn to for real help. We can imagine how Jesus' disciples must have felt at the end of that first Holy Week. There was a hole in their lives, an aching void that must have hurt so deeply it was practically indescribable. That's the terrible side of emptiness.

Then came Easter Sunday with the stone rolled away from the grave revealing an empty tomb, and the angels' message: "He is not here. He is risen, as He said!" Initially the women visiting the tomb and the disciples were skeptical and full of doubts. But the empty tomb did not lie. The carefully-folded grave clothes sent a positive message: He really had arisen, just as He said He would! Then they knew all their sins and shortcomings, their denials and betrayals of Jesus, had been forgiven. God had accepted His Son's sacrifice on behalf of all sinners. Emptiness — it's a great thing!

At *New Beginnings* we frequently see the emptiness that comes as a result of the residents' unhappy upbringing and dysfunctional home life. Perhaps the pillars of support

God planned and implanted into the family were not there. Perhaps they were flawed and crumbling. As children, they may have been left on their own to fend for themselves. When children are not brought up in the instruction of the Lord by their parents, there can be significant emptiness in their lives. They may lack the information and resources necessary to become satisfied and productive members of society. When these young women are now trying to raise their own children, they often don't have very much to fall back on. Compounding the problem is the lack of confidence our residents may display because of a lack of education, training, experience, or parental support.

Adding a baby who is totally dependent on them can contribute to a downward spiral that often leaves these mothers with a lack of joy and purpose in life.

Emptiness can be terrible, but maybe these mothers reach a point in their lives when they are more open and receptive to the Word of God than ever before. Their emptiness can be filled with a Savior who left behind an empty tomb.

That is really the purpose of *New Beginnings - A Home for Mothers*. Sharing the Savior in a setting that also helps residents turn the rest of their lives around to get a fresh start is really why *New Beginnings* was established and continues to exist.

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Negotiating the Learning Curve

When a driver is going too fast around a curve and his vehicle leaves the road, he fails to “negotiate the curve.” Because he didn’t listen and learn fast enough, there were consequences.

At *New Beginnings* we try to help residents successfully negotiate the *learning curve*. One night each week we have a group class for all of our residents. We typically teach these classes ourselves, but occasionally volunteers from outside *New Beginnings* give presentations. Just as in most families, we realize residents are sometimes more likely to accept advice from an outside “professional” rather than from us, the houseparents. Here are some samples of speakers we’ve had to help our residents negotiate the learning curve in life:



A dental hygienist recently gave a presentation stressing proper dental hygiene for the residents and their children. We saw a need for this presentation as residents are often tempted to purchase individually packaged sugared drinks for their children since it’s so convenient. It is our hope that the red flag raised by the hygienist leads our mothers to reconsider their buying habits and purchase more healthy beverages for their children.



We also invited a nurse from one of our local WELS churches to discuss and demonstrate infant CPR.

While the residents are at *New Beginnings*, we are able to get babies emergency medical help quickly. However, we recognize that once residents are on their own, it may be difficult to get their infant to a medical facility quickly. We’ve also had classes on basic first aid for the residents. Clear knowledge of these procedures could mean the difference between life and death for their child.



Local agencies periodically send presenters to educate our residents on healthy nutrition. Any good parent recognizes the value of proper nutrition for a child. Yet there are many temptations to grab the most convenient and appealing packaged food (and junk food!) from the grocery store shelves, regardless of its nutritional value. These classes are geared to help our residents make good choices in the meals and snacks they give to their children.



What does reading have to do with parenting skills? A great deal! Statistics demonstrate how a child advances educationally when a parent reads to the child at an early age. But how do you do this with an antsy, fidgeting child? There are various tips and techniques to follow to help make reading more exciting and enjoyable to a young child. Some are common sense suggestions, but a professional librarian from one of our WELS churches will soon be leading one of our weekly group classes to share her expertise and experience in this field.

As you can see, our weekly group class provides valuable information, education, and encouragement in various aspects of personal and parenting skills. These classes help our young mothers “negotiate the learning curve” and keep them on the road to successful parenting.



Teaching Children to Pray



*Step 1: Teach a toddler to fold his hands during prayer.
Step 2: Teach the child a short, simple prayer.
Step 3: Try hard not to react inappropriately to the child's prayers.*



One of the young children at *New Beginnings* recently started praying with us during our regular mealtime prayers. Her mother said she had already been saying prayers in their apartment. For

some reason, however, the little girl did not want to say those prayers at our meal together each day. Her prayer was, "Thank you, Jesus. Amen." However, she kept on praying that prayer over and over until we were finished with our common meal prayers. Talk about a test of concentration! Yet we are thankful that she is now praying with us before meals.

Another little one adds his firm note of conviction by yelling out "AMEN!" at the end of our mealtime prayers. At least he's getting the hang of it!

Recently, we learned that when one of our resident's children stayed with someone else for a few days, the young mother told them, "Be sure to pray with him at meals and bedtime!" How gratifying that was to hear!

Plant the seeds. Do some cultivating and watering. And don't be surprised at the results!



"Change for Life" Baby Bottle Project



Be a voice for the victims of choice.

Christian Life Resources is a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. We use life and family issues to convey the love of God and share the message of salvation through Christ...**but we can't do it alone.**

Be a voice for the victims of choice.

Your church, school, chapter or branch can be heard when you join forces with Christian Life Resources and make a "Change for Life." Your voice will be heard as a plastic baby bottle is filled with coins, cash or checks. Christian Life Resources will loan you the baby bottles and provide promotional materials.

Be a voice for the victims of choice.

The "Change for Life" baby bottle project is easy, exciting and effective. Gifts from the project can be donated to *New Beginnings - A Home for Mothers*, or many other projects of Christian Life Resources.

Let your voice be heard!

To learn more about how you can run a "Change for Life" program in your area, contact Christian Life Resources at 1-800-729-9535 or e-mail us at <bottle@ChristianLifeResources.com>.



New Beginnings
A Home For Mothers



Rev. Doug and
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New Beginnings

A Home For Mothers

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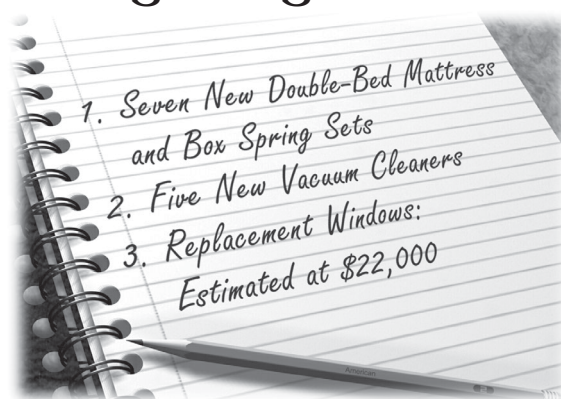
(Emptiness . . . continued from front)

Through our joint family devotions and individual Bible studies, together with one-on-one counseling sessions, we try to demonstrate the Christian hope that comes from a crucified and risen Savior. We attempt to model the Savior's joy in reaching out to those who are otherwise empty and purposeless in life. We plant seeds so that others in turn can reflect the fullness of joy that comes with knowing and following Jesus in their Christian lives.

Ups and downs, highs and lows, back and forth — we see them all in this special ministry. We are also privileged to share with these young women how to place their hope in Jesus. For our lasting benefit He left behind an empty cross — and also an empty grave! Happy Easter!



Top 3 Items Needed at New Beginnings:



Please call us if you are interested in donating any of these much needed items! *Thank you!*

New Beginnings - A Home for Mothers is a Christ-centered home for single mothers and is affiliated with Christian Life Resources, Inc. The home has been serving residents since 1993. It is supported entirely by the generous support and prayers of those who are committed to sharing Christ and reflecting His sacrificial love.

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New Beginnings appreciates your prayers to our gracious God on our behalf. We also appreciate your gifts. Would you consider helping us out?

Yes, I (we) would like to make a contribution to help **New Beginnings**:

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- ☐ Please contact me about having my gifts enhanced through Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. **Phone:** _____
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