

Growing Branches

Update from *New Beginnings - A Home for Mothers*

Denver, Colorado

August 2006

IS IT WORTH IT?

By Rev. Doug Bode

It is said that confession is good for the soul. As the house parents at *New Beginnings - A Home for Mothers* these past 5½ years, we have our own confession to make. We wonder sometimes about our work here: is it worth it?

We must admit there are days and nights which cause us some rather serious misgivings. Between the apartment cleaning after one resident leaves and the disappointment of another interview appointment that doesn't materialize, the value of this work makes us wonder whether it truly is worth it.

Consider the time we looked for a "directions-challenged" resident who lost her way after taking a GED pre-test in the late evening hours and missed her bus! After walking in unknown directions and with not quite enough money to make a phone call, she was eventually tracked down, crying and scared, by house mother Charlene. The first thought was to give this young lady a stern scolding. The prevailing thought was to thank God for her safety.

Then there are the ever-present hormones – either messed-up, raging, or both. Add either a limited, or in some cases, complete lack of proper upbringing into the mix, and this volatile combination can certainly become challenging, especially at times when residents' street wisdom far surpasses their scriptural knowledge.

So it is times like these that the question repeatedly comes to mind: "Is it worth it?" In this case, is it also worth the considerable operating costs incurred each year by Christian Life Resources to keep *New Beginnings* open and the apartments filled and furnished? Is it worth the effort?



The answer to that question depends ultimately on whether its worth is based on human or divine standards. From a purely human standpoint, we often wonder if it's worth the hassle and challenges experienced by house parents in a maternity home. So often it seems that the efforts are rarely appreciated. Surely, these young women and their children have a roof over their heads, which is a lot better than sleeping on the streets. It's a chance for the residents to go to school and continue the formal education that was not previously completed.

We have to remember that whatever we're doing for the least of these women, we are doing it also for the Savior. We have to remember that often they don't know any better behavior, because they have never been taught correctly – and we need to teach them patiently.

We have to remember these girls have souls, too – souls for which Christ also died (even though they may not know that or care about it right now).

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ONE MAN AMONG MANY WOMEN

By Rev. Doug Bode

What is it like to be the only man in a maternity home? Well, it's different! After nearly six years of on-the-job training, here are a few observations.

There is no question but that this one man soon realizes (if he ever forgot!) that a pregnant woman can have her share of idiosyncrasies. Moods can shift quickly and easily. Her aches and pains tend to increase, along with her uncertainties about her physical well-being and accompanying emotional welfare. Concern for her baby grows along with the size of the womb as the months pass.

As babies are born and then young and inexperienced mothers begin to raise them, the house mother is usually valued and often approached (and sometimes even appreciated!) about her suggestions and advice on the many facets of child-raising. Since he didn't do those things on a daily basis in years past, the house father is usually either ignored or perhaps grudgingly tolerated as part of the house parents team.

A culinarily-challenged house father doesn't add much to the mix when it comes to teaching young girls how to cook. Besides grilling the occasional burger or chicken, he doesn't have a wealth of knowledge or experience to become much more than an occasional "taste-tester" for novice cooks.

Being a typical man, he doesn't always see the dust and dirt accumulating in out-of-the-way places when weekly inspections of residents' apartments are performed.

There are always precautions to take when entering a resident's apartment to inspect or fix something. That includes leaving the door open and being careful never to say or do anything that could even faintly be misconstrued as being abusive or harassing.

There are even deeper and more significant suspicions and distrust of a man among women in a maternity home. The house father belongs to that gender of the human race that perhaps abused them earlier in a completely dysfunctional home setting. Or maybe that male wasn't there for them physically or emotionally as they were growing up. Being a male, the house dad is a reminder of the man who got them into their present difficult situation and maybe even left them, stranded and unsupportive, to do the parenting alone.



So, what is that one man among many women in a maternity home to do? It's a place to practice patience, for one thing. He patiently waits for an opportunity to gradually help replace suspicion with a measure of

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New Beginnings

A Ministry Sponsored by Christian Life Resources

A Home for Mothers



**Rev. Doug and
Charlene Bode,
House Parents**

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Jesus once asked what one soul is worth. His answer was that souls can't be measured in terms of monetary cost or effort or time expended; each soul is indeed precious to Him.

At *New Beginnings* each resident not only hears about her soul (and that of her child) but also about how precious her soul is to her beautiful Savior. After all, He died for their souls too. The only trouble is: some don't know about that saving love. Some have never heard it before! Many are too preoccupied with themselves and their temporal desires that their spiritual side gets placed on the "back burner" until a more convenient time.

At *New Beginnings* that 'more convenient time' is right now. In His wisdom the Lord often guides lost souls to our doors, where they can receive housing and guidance and direction for a 'new beginning' in life. But they also

get a bonus in hearing about their Savior and growing in His love and forgiveness. *New Beginnings* becomes the setting where those Gospel seeds are planted and nourished in precious, blood-bought souls.

Measured in those terms, the question "Is it really worth it?" loses a lot of steam, doesn't it? As we, the house parents, look back on nearly six years at *New Beginnings*, and also look ahead to retirement, despite the difficulties and obstacles encountered along the way, we are grateful that God has used us in His seed-planting and -nourishing 'business' here at *New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers*. We thank all of you for your continual prayers and support!



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trust. He can help each resident realize that not all men are "bad" or abusive. He can also model the role God gave each Christian husband in a God-pleasing marriage by being a loving and supportive head of the house and help to the house mother. He can model the sinner-saint relationship we have with our heavenly Father in all the ups and downs of life – daily repenting of sin and always relying on God's grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

He can lead the daily devotion at our common meal together, as well as do the weekly Bible studies with each girl. As an aid in building a better life, he can help these mothers form the assurance that the Lord must be present and active through the Word to achieve the Apostle Paul's conviction: "I can do everything through him [Christ] who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)

A man among women – it can be a challenging and often difficult task. Yet at *New Beginnings – A Home for Mothers*, it is one that, through a divine call, God assigns; it is also a role for which God equips. Through it all, God's purpose is served in helping each woman and child get a fresh start, a new beginning in life.



A couple of our residents...





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A Home for Mothers

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The most needed items at *New Beginnings* are:

- **Diapers (especially size 3)**
- **Baby wipes**
- **Donations toward an office filing cabinet**

Most needed items at

NEW BEGINNINGS



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?

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