

Grace Notes

"God's grace for everyday living"

Kids are a mixed blessing

By: Debora M. Coty

Far be it from me to disagree with the Holy Scriptures, so when Psalm 127:3 tells me, "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward" (NASB), I figure I must be missing something.

Sure, my children *can* feel like a gift and a reward - on a good day when they're off at school - but other times they are definitely a mixed blessing. Like soaking in a tub of tepid water.

Now that my son and daughter are both in college, it's supposed to be easier to be their mother. At least that's what everyone told me through the trials of their growing-up years.

Like the time my two-year-old son escaped his stroller and climbed into the display of a posh women's clothing store in the mall to wreak havoc before I could haul him out kicking and screaming (both of us). I had to wrestle the poor mannequin's detached arm out of his grubby little fists before presenting it to the shocked store manager.

Or the time we were try-

ing to teach my eight-year-old daughter to listen in church instead of daydream and doodle on her bulletin. I had just given her a stern lecture on paying attention the morning a visiting minister waxed eloquent during the offertory. "Dear Lord," he began, with arms extended toward heaven and a rapturous look on his upturned face. "Without you we are but dust..."

He would have continued but at that moment my very obedient daughter (who was listening!) leaned over to me and asked quite audibly in her shrill little girl voice, "Mom, what is *butt dust*?"

And then they grow up and are supposed to be able to live independently and make responsible decisions when they're in college, right?

So how come my son sends me a get well card (written in Spanish, which I do not speak) for Mother's Day, and "accidentally" takes only twelve hours of classes during the many semesters his scholarship will pay for, then casually mentions he'll need to take eight more hours during the summer (which the scholarship won't cover) to make up for lost time?

And why does the daughter keep buying barrels of clothes when she can't squeeze another shoelace in her already stuffed closet?

Then I read further down the Psalm 127 passage, "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man (or woman) whose quiver is full of them" (verses 4 and 5).

I can't deny I love the arrows of my quiver, no matter how prickly their pointy little arrowheads can be sometimes. After a hard day at work, when I come home to a sparkling clean house and my daughter holding a tray of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies just for me, or my son calls every night for a week to see if I'm over my flu yet, I understand that these marvelous people God sent to share my life are indeed weapons.

They're my defense against depression, isolation, and boredom. They give me joy and purpose that no one else can. And best of all, they mirror my heavenly father's unconditional love for me, no matter how many motherly mistakes I make.

Come to think of it, King David was right. The fruit of the womb is infinitely more rewarding than a banana.