

Monday, December 13, 2004

Dear friends and family,

Well, another extraordinarily short year is gone and the time has come again to sum it all up. On the up side, it was mostly a quieter year than last. On the down side, that leaves considerably less to tell about this time. No, wait. That's on the up side too, isn't it?

Patrick is 2 ½ now, and quite the character. He likes to run around the house with a Superman cape, a Bibleman cape, a Spider-man mask, and a Batman belt. At the same time. I call him Super-Bible-Spider-Bat-man. He talks often and in great detail, but with somewhat less than perfect diction. "I'm Stuporman!" Or, "Hi, Gampagape." (Grandpa Great, so named by a cousin.) He is growing rapidly though. In August we left the kids with Mindy's folks for a few days and when we returned, he was like a different child. His vocabulary had exploded and his conversation was suddenly more direct and purposeful. It was a shock to our systems, but great fun to watch at the same time.

Cameron gave us a wonderful blessing this fall when he told Mindy he wanted to ask Jesus into his heart! We have always taken the approach of talking to the kids about this whenever they wanted to ask questions, but never trying to push them at all. When the discussions come up, we explain how we are all sinful and disobedient and that God has to punish us as He promised, but that Jesus came to earth to take our punishment so we wouldn't have to. When they've absorbed it as best they can, we ask if they would like to accept His gift. Usually they say no, and we say ok and leave it until it comes up again.

Megan and Christopher both decided to say yes to Jesus when they were three, and now Cameron has done so at four. This seems very young, so while we believe they are sincere, we continue to talk with them at opportune moments, to ensure that they understand the truth as well as possible for their age, and to allow them to consider whether their decisions were honest and true. So far they all remain confident of their salvation – daily reminders of the sin nature notwithstanding – and Cameron in particular has shown a real change in his behavior. Not exactly 180°, but we'll take every degree we can get! Megan and Christopher frequently demonstrate their hearts for the Lord as well. Megan, in fact, is well on her way to becoming the neighborhood evangelist.

Christopher is continuing his pursuit of an athletic career. He played football for the first time this year, and his team won the division championship. Mindy was a little iffy on the idea, but I thought that football would offer some lessons on teamwork, effort, and assertiveness in a stronger way than baseball and basketball can. And I'm pleased with the results. Christopher loves sports, but he is not a natural athlete. Nevertheless, he gave a great effort at all times, working his way to a starting position early in the season. Not to mention that during calisthenics, when I looked out upon a sea of butt-ups, head-ups, lie-downs, and grunt, n groans, *my son* was doing the only gen-u-ine push-ups on the field!