

Being a Lifeguard... in More Ways Than One

Maribeth Spangenberg

Sitting on a seat-backed, park bench at the edge of the campground pool, dressed in street clothes and huddled under my purple umbrella, I guess I would be considered a little extravagant! The sun was battling with the clouds, but by the evidence of the steady drizzle, it appeared that the rain clouds were winning. Was it any wonder that my children and their friends had the entire swimming pool to themselves!

Knowing my aversion to “mixed bathing”, the Lord was gracious to provide that time of relaxing for my “young men” and their peers. I guess there is some truth to the saying that “every cloud has a silver lining.” And it was for the silver lining that I was sitting there in the rain.

“Micah,” I shouted to my newly-turned-ten-year old, poised at the edge of the pool in a diver’s position. “Be careful that you don’t jump on the others as they’re swimming under you!” My lifeguarding status was mainly for his benefit, but I felt that even the others, in spite of their older ages of 12, 13, 17, and friends, still required adult supervision.

Disappointment was surely not evident at the later starting time for work, the initial purpose for this camping adventure. We had arrived the night before after a two-hour drive, with enough time to set up camp in the daylight. The next morning was to be the start of an intense, 12-hour day, four-day work schedule for my older son and his two friends. Such is the “plight” of working for a landscaper, who was fortunate enough to win a bid for a short-term, well-paying, government job.

Not being comfortable with the away situation, my husband and I compromised with this solution. The Lord had provided our family trailer, so why not let it be a part of the answer? We found a campground conveniently located 25 minutes from the job site. The game plan was for me to take along our three youngest children, and, during the day, to enjoy field trips in the

area, while at night and early morning, to play den mom and chauffeur to the older boys.

The long and short of it is that the plan worked. Not only did I get in two summer field trips for my youngest children (that counted towards two days of school for the coming year) but I made it possible for my older teenager to earn money towards purchasing his own vehicle.

A silver lining was that of memories. The early morning “pool alone” time in the rain, the after-hours basketball practice, and the late evening campfire cookouts made the arrangement priceless. Yes, it took more time and planning on my and my husband’s parts to make arrangements for not only the campers, but also for those remaining at home, but we both agreed that the investment was well worth it and one of the *Smartest Things* we ever did as parents.

In years to come, I hope my landscaper son will realize my desire to help him attain his goals within the parameters of our parental protection. And someday, when he is a parent himself, to know the value of creative alternatives that love will provide.

About the Author

Maribeth Spangenberg is wife to Steve and mother to nine children. Having homeschooled for 25 years, graduating six and still in the trenches with three, she enjoys sharing her mothering and homeschooling experiences as an encouragement to others. Maribeth writes weekly devotionals for Homeschoolenrichment.com, and has articles published on Crosswalk, Eclectic Homeschool Online (eho.org), The Old Schoolhouse Magazine Devotional Door, and The Spirit-Led Writer. She is a contributing author for *Homeschool Enrichment Magazine*, *The Secret Place*, *Praise Report Anthology*, and *Cup of Comfort for Mothers*. Maribeth is also the proud grandmother of soon-to-be four grandchildren.