

THE SECRET DIARY OF A PLAYGROUP NOVICE

Monday the 7th of June

CPN committee meeting tonight. I ask whether someone can give me some tips for dealing with mindless violence in playgroup: pushing, gouging, biting etc. General consensus was that prevention is better than cure, (enough appropriate, engaging activities) and that it's important not to over-react in case the offending child enjoys all of the attention and just does it more as a result. Which seems to me to involve near super-human restraint (especially when one's own child is the victim). I guess it makes sense though. Joy promises to write an article for the CPN newsletter on biters.

Tuesday the 8th of June

We do the second session of "40 days of Purpose". Jacqui's neighbour Kathryn has decided to come along too, as well as Jacqui, Ali, Nicole and Trish. Rick Warren's Hawaiian shirt is as alarming as ever, but we have a fantastic discussion. Jacqui is teary with "good tears", and so am I!

Monday the 21st of June

A new girl, Rachel, comes to playgroup today with her two-year-old son Flynn. She found out about playgroup through MOPS.

Rachel starts sharing about her experiences of visiting her clairvoyant. I am bursting to say that in the bible it says that one shouldn't consult mediums etc., and that even if they tell some things that are true, there's plenty of things God doesn't want us to know. However, I remember how Yvette Wynne shared at the CPN AGM about being positive with "not yet Christians", and encouraging what they say that is good, rather than having a go at them about things you disagree with. Some things can just "go through to the keeper", while you pray that God will reveal truth.

So instead, I take a deep breath and say: "Tell me more about it". Everyone else joins in the conversation about clairvoyants, etc. I'm seriously wondering whether I should have tried the "positive" approach... the whole conversation makes me cringe.

Monday the 12th of July

Playgroup starts up again after the school holidays. Only Jacqui and Nicole come, and they are really late. "When are my friends coming?" Matthew moans at me. Some days it's such a struggle, and I think I should be pushing to have a "big, successful" playgroup. Though I think I have a deep sense that a small, intimate group is the right call for us for now.

Monday the 19th of July.

Rachel comes again, and we end up having another conversation about how wonderfully helpful her clairvoyant is. I'm not convinced this positive reinforcement of good ideas and ignoring the not so good is such a great idea. Uggh.

Wednesday 4th of August

We have an evening Playgroup / 40 days of Purpose group dinner out at "Sweet Chilli's" in Heathmont. Great food... and great to have some child free time to talk. Must do this more often.

Tuesday 14th of September

We have finally finished "40 days of Purpose"... in our case, "Several Months of Purpose, with some social mornings thrown in due to childminding constraints." So I get together with the girls and lead a reflective session with candlelight, a water fountain, and a time of silent reflection on Ephesians 3:14 – 21. We then share what spoke to us from the passage, and then pray for one another. After the final "Amen", Jacqui says: "I hope you don't mind, but I have to pray too." She then prays: "Lord, this is the first time I've prayed out loud, and I'm nervous... but I just had to thank You for drawing me back to Yourself and for showing You love me. Thanks for letting me meet these girls who have helped me get to know you. Amen." She's crying, I'm crying... I don't think there's a dry eye anywhere. What an enormous privilege to have been part of her journey to this point.

Friday 17th of September

After consulting all the girls, we have switched to running playgroup on Fridays. As this is the last day of term, we have playgroup at my house. This is also a 5th birthday party for Kate. Dee and her family have decided to move back to Queensland, and this is her last day in Melbourne. It's lovely that she has wanted to share this time with us. It's a glorious Spring day, and I feel that our eating (and playing) all together is something of a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, and the great banquet at the end of time. The house gets completely trashed of course, (thinking on a far less spiritual plane) but the girls do help sort out some of the chaos.

I go back to Dee's place to supervise Kate and Matthew outside while she and her husband madly try to clean up the house (they are moving out today and the real estate inspector is coming to return their bond money, if possible. The chance of a full refund isn't looking good, if the chaos within is anything to go by).

I clean all the outside windows, do the lunch run, and other sundry tasks until school pick up time, then exchange fond farewells.

I tell my husband about my heroic helping efforts later that evening. He just looks at me and sighs: "I wish you'd clean our windows". It's far more fun to clean someone else's house of course.

Friday 10th of December

Yes, dear diary, I have been most remiss in filling you out. But I had to tell you of something exciting that happened today. It was our playgroup breakup, which we held at Wyreena café and outdoor playground.

Rachel, who has continued to share about her clairvoyant from time to time at playgroup, suddenly said to the group: "I know there's something missing in my life... I'm going to start coming to church... and to your prayer group too, Janet". She then went racing after Flynn, leaving me guarding the bags at the table as the other mums chased after their youngsters also. I prayed like mad, deeply humbled by the fact that God was drawing Rachel to Himself. What if I had "had a go" at her for her dabbling in New Age stuff... might I have lost the opportunity to keep loving her and showing Christ to her?

Sunday the 12th of December

I sit with Rachel at church... praise God!

Friday the 21st of January

I ring Rachel about her Mother's partner, Geoff, who is seriously ill in hospital. She tells me how she prayed for him when he was unconscious, and dying (she thought), and how he "came back." I let her know I will ask others to pray for the success of his next operation, and send the message on through the church prayer chain.

Monday the 24th of January

Geoff is much better. Rachel believes in the power of prayer all right! God is so gracious.

Friday the 4th of February

First day of playgroup for the year. Although Matthew has now started school, I have to stay involved with playgroup... it's been such a privilege to see God at work through this ministry. I think I'm hooked.

I've survived a whole year... I guess I'm no longer an outright playgroup novice.

Perhaps one day I'll write: "Confessions of a relatively inexperienced but enthusiastic playgroup leader".