

MAGNOLIA MINDS: ‘She’s not falling down... she’s getting baptized!’

By Sarah Newell

I am the mother of two girls – Rachel, 2, and Lydia, 4. They have taught me some of the best lessons in life.

The poster advertising the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering has been posted at our church for about a month. Every Wednesday night, our family goes to the fellowship hall for church dinner. We would pass this poster with our church’s fundraising goal for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) offering. Rachel, my 2-year-old, would point at this poster and say in a loud voice, “She fall down!”

“She’s not falling down... she’s getting baptized!” I always replied to Rachel. This was the routine for a few weeks now – Rachel so intrigued by this poster and Lydia listening in.

Another time we walk by this poster is on the way to Youth Bible Drills, which I enjoy leading. The girls frequently “help” me lead Bible Drills. Their “helping” involved me keeping them occupied with coloring activities, snacks, and whatever they could quietly do while I was helping our Bible Drillers. Most of the time, I was unsuccessful at keeping them quiet, but our youth enjoyed the entertainment.

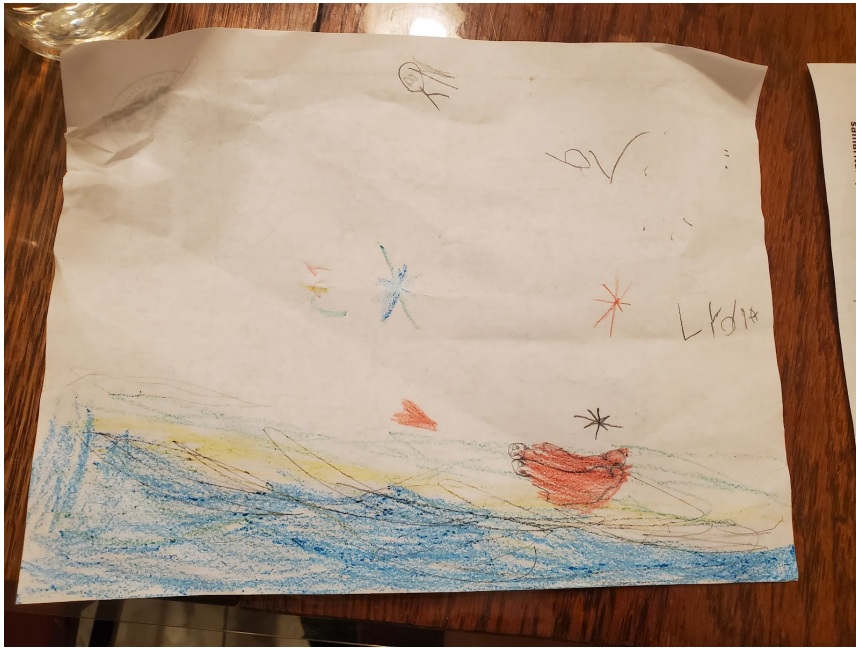
On this particular Sunday night, we walked by the poster, and I heard Rachel say something I couldn’t understand, but I could tell by her tone, she was very excited.

“What was that, Rachel?” I asked.

“She’s getting baptized!” Rachel exclaimed.

“Aw.. that’s right Rachel, she is getting baptized! That is so sweet that you remembered that!”

We finally made it up the stairs to our Bible Drill room. After practice was over and the youth left, a picture Lydia drew caught my eye. It was the first picture of hers where she used a pencil to draw and colored a very intentional scene of what seemed to be a boat on the water.



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"It's the picture from the hallway. The girl getting baptized." Lydia explained. My heart swelled with joy! The most beautiful picture she has ever drawn was this picture of someone making a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. We talked a lot about baptism and what it means to follow Jesus, and she is only 4 years old!

I put the girls to bed that night. Later I went to bed, but I didn't sleep long. Around 1:00 a.m. I woke up sweating and felt God convicting me.

"You don't get it do you? Your toddler aged children understand the significance of this offering, and you don't. I am using them to tell you, YOU need to give."

So many thoughts ran through my mind. Yes, I had not been wanting to give to the offering. A few weeks ago, I got a letter in the mail asking us to pray about what to give for this offering. I threw the letter away, not even showing it to my husband. With the rapid rate of inflation, honestly, I did not feel like we were in a position to give beyond our tithe.

Every time I walked past this poster or was reminded of the offering, my first thoughts were that's for OTHER people to give to. Other people with lots of extra money. Other people who aren't teaching a Sunday school class, leading Bible Drills, helping in SO many areas of the church like we were. Giving to an extra offering was not for us.

The Holy Spirit convicted me in the middle of the night, that we indeed had a part to play in giving to this offering.

God can do so much with our little insignificant gift. The boy with the two fish and five loaves, the widow's penny, the widow baking Elijah her last bit of bread. Time and time again God has used the seemingly little offerings of everyday people to do extraordinary things. There is truly no greater investment than giving to help the Gospel be preached so that the lost can come to faith in Jesus Christ. When we give, God lets US be a part of that. If we didn't give, many people would "fall down" like Rachel used to think this picture was showing.

May this offering help produce more people like the woman in this poster – people who decide to follow Jesus and desire to "Make Jesus Known."

Newell is a member of First Church, Clinton.