

Interview with L. Elizabeth Krueger!

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I am so pleased to introduce you today to author L. Elizabeth Krueger from [Raising Godly Tomatoes!!](#) I hope you have had a chance to check out her website and glean from the wealth of wisdom there.

When I was a brand new mama, I was determined that I was going to have well-behaved children. Period. Ha! The only problem was that I was not sure how to accomplish that! When my precocious little firstborn was about eleven months old, he was walking, running, climbing, into everything ... and I was going crazy! My plan to have a well-behaved child was not working out very well and I truly did not know what to do with my little guy to teach him anything. After all, he was only eleven months. Surely you couldn't teach a baby how to behave, right?!

That was when I providentially "happened upon" the Raising Godly Tomatoes website. (Although it had a different name back then.) It was truly a God-send. Elizabeth's down-to-earth, practical, no-nonsense approach to training children in obedience was JUST what I needed!

Ever since then, I have enjoyed interacting with Elizabeth online and my entire family has benefited much from her wisdom. I recently was able to meet her in person for the first time as well and spend some time with her family. I can affirm that they are everything in real life that they seem to be in print. I had a wonderful time. I am so pleased to be able to introduce her to you now! **SHE HAS GENEROUSLY OFFERED TO GIVE AWAY A FEW COPIES OF RAISING GODLY TOMATOES TO MKB READERS AS WELL!! SCROLL DOWN FOR DETAILS ON HOW TO WIN YOUR COPY!** And now, for the interview!

Interview with

L. Elizabeth Krueger

Please tell us a little bit about your family:

We have 10 children ages 8 to 28 (1 about every 2 years - don't ask me their exact ages, I can't keep track :-). 2 are girls and 8 are boys. Our oldest son and the youngest of our 2 girls both got married last year and a few weeks ago we became grandparents for the first time.

What is the most (mutually) enjoyable activity you regularly do with your children, or what are some of your fondest memories with your children?

Hmm, you've got me stumped already! Actually, my 20 year old son was looking over my shoulder as I read this question and he echoed my thoughts on the matter: "Well", he said, "Just say that it's all the ordinary, everyday activities that are the most enjoyable." Yes, that's really it. Sure, we have taken a few trips and we do various fun activities (some of my older kids are at a Tiger baseball game tonight for example), but

those things really are not the most memorable or the most enjoyable over all. Instead, it's just the daily pleasure of living and sharing and engaging together all day every day.

What do you find most challenging about motherhood, and how have you handled this challenge?

Getting enough sleep. Seriously, I've always needed a lot of sleep and it's rough when I don't get it. I've managed to "handle" it by taking almost daily naps. They really have been a special blessing though throughout the years, because I almost always took a little child or two (or sometimes three) to bed with me to all cuddle and nap together.

What do you do to stay strong in order to fulfill your daily tasks as a mother?

If you mean physically, I think the last question answered that. I try to get as much sleep as I can. I also take herbs and vitamins and try to eat healthy and so on. I horseback ride and walk, but I didn't have time for those things for about 20 some years when I had little children. Somehow I survived on a lot of chocolate.

When life gets hectic, how do you maintain a feeling of connectedness with your children?

Life is often "hectic" around here, but my kids come first so I just have to practice saying "no" to outside activities and anything optional that would prevent me from staying "connected" with my kids. On a daily basis though, I work to maintain the habit of always being "available" to my children. That means, that if they come to me for just about anything at just about anytime, I stop what I am doing and give them the time and attention they want and need. I make a conscious effort to never brush them off, whether it's a 5 year old who wants to show me his latest Lego creation, or a 20 year old who wants to chat about his day at work.

How did you come to the decision to homeschool your children?

Well briefly, I just loved the idea the first time I heard of it. My firstborn was about 3 years old at the time and I'd already taught him to read. I was starting to panic thinking that he'd soon be in school and someone else would be teaching him all the things I wanted to teach him. My husband and I both embraced the idea of homeschooling right away and none of our children ever went away to school. I must add that at first we wanted to homeschool for "educational" reasons - we thought we could do a better job than the schools. But very quickly we discovered the "spiritual" reasons for homeschooling and found that those reasons FAR outweighed the educational ones. Since then, our commitment to homeschooling has been based on our firm belief that it provides an unsurpassed means by which we can instill in our children a true and firm faith in the Living God. If your children are home with you all day, you can be teaching them the ways of God all day. If they are in school, someone else will be teaching them the ways of the world all day. It's that simple.

How do you find time for romance and building your relationship with your husband in the midst of the busyness of a household full of children?

We've never had any problem keeping up our marriage relationship, even with 10 kids around virtually all the time. Our children have enhanced our relationship - not been a burden to it. Raising them to be godly is our mutual goal. God's Word calls children a "blessing" and as we have attempted to raise them according to God's Word, they have been a blessing to us indeed. We've always enjoyed them being around and have never had any problem talking to each other or nurturing our relationship even with little ones climbing all over us.

One reader also added this question about bedtimes: " I think they don't really do specific bedtimes and let the kids just play quiet, etc till they go to bed basically on their own - how does this work with "couple time" and when you just have littles - or how does she do a structured bedtime?" --- Jenn

No, we don't do specific bedtimes, but neither do we just let the kids stay up until they decide to go to bed on their own (that would probably be never). What we do is let them stay up until WE are ready to go to bed. That way they sleep in in the morning - and I can too! I know some people have expressed concern for our "privacy" at bedtime, but when our kids go to bed, they are sound asleep in seconds and we have as much "privacy" as we could possible want. Oh, and of course we have always put our babies to bed earlier than the rest of us.

And yet another reader asks: "What I don't get is what seems to be some attachment parenting ideas thrown in there. She says something to the effect of 'if your baby isn't ready to go to sleep, let them stay up'. What?! I am an Ezzo follower and that totally runs counter to my way of thinking and also seems at odds with her behavior management style."

Well personally, I've read Ezzo's book at least 3 times and I'm still not a fan. Strict schedules seem to be an encumbrance to me and they certainly don't teach kids "flexibility". I'd rather my kids learned to adjust to MY varying schedule than me being forced to follow THEIR (Ezzo or clock determined) schedule. As for "Attachment Parenting", I not a fan of Dr. Sears either. I read his "Discipline Book" and couldn't find any discipline in it. It's all pop psychology. I do believe in encouraging closeness between my children and myself, but I certainly don't embrace the totally "child-led" philosophy that Sears promotes, nor do I believe that an "attached" child will automatically become a well-behaved respectful child.

What's your favorite book of the Bible and why? (or if you would prefer to talk about a favorite verse, that is okay too.)

Proverbs is definitely my favorite. The first chapter says that Solomon wrote it to teach his people wisdom - "how to become understanding, just and fair...." That seems like a worthy goal to me. My husband and I listen to the book of Proverbs almost every night as we go to sleep. At night, and often during the day, our children listen to either the Bible or Bible story tapes, and they like Proverbs too.

What are some ways you are/were able, as a mother with small children, to spend time with the Lord? Also, one reader would like to know more about your personal Bible study time – haven't you said that you read through the Bible alone rather than "studying" other things? (from Kim)

I do read the Bible far more than I read any other "theology" or "inspirational" books. I think this is as it should be. The Rev. Billy Graham once said that if he could do it all over again, he'd spend more time reading the Bible and less time reading books "about" the Bible. I agree with Billy. I try to read it through every

year. That's only about 3 or 4 chapters a day so it's really not that hard to do. Last year I read it through in Spanish, which was wonderful and gave me some new insights to verses I'd perhaps become a bit too accustomed to skimming over. Although we listen to the Bible on tape very frequently, but I still like to read it in print. I don't have a set Bible "study time" but instead, I always have my Bible handy and I read it on and off in small doses during the day whenever I have a spare moment or two. During the 20 some years that I had little babies, I often read my Bible as I nursed them, and I prayed at night when I was up walking and rocking them. That added up to many hours, but besides that, I also tried to work a little reading into my day on and off (if I could find any spare minutes).

Another reader question: Could you tell us a little bit about what a "typical" day in your life might look like? (Misty)

Well right now it's summer, which is always busy, and we have some special projects going on, so things are unusually busy and hectic. A typical day would start with me getting up and checking my website, my "to do" items for the day, and starting in on a few chores or reading a little in one of my Spanish books or my Spanish Bible. Lately I've been taking a 30 minute walk with a friend every morning, so by the time I get back from that the younger kids are starting to get up. (The older ones have already gotten up and gone to work at my husband's office with him, or are working on one of the two houses we are building/renovating next door to us.) The younger kids make themselves breakfast, and if we don't have music lessons (which we do twice a week) I try to spend the morning doing schoolwork with them. We have lots of interruptions, but I just keep juggling. We do whatever housework needs to be done AS we are doing schoolwork and music. For example, I'll read a chapter of History to them while they load the dishwasher, and I'll read with one child while another practices piano and another helps his big sister with the groceries. I try to make dinner in the morning (tomorrow it's going to be Chicken Pot Pie) and have the kids set the table and help me as needed, while I'm cooking. By lunch time (which is about 2pm here) I like to be done with schoolwork, so we can do other things. This summer there is plenty to do on the other 2 houses so any kids who are able and available go help over there to help out. Our 20 and 16yos are putting a slate roof on our oldest son's house and the 14yo has the job of sorting the slate for them. The younger ones help with clean up, watering the new trees and fetching and toting and doing any odd job that's available. There are usually things to do on the houses but when there isn't, they catch up on chores here, like laundry, yard work and so on. I try to take a nap in the late afternoon with a couple of the youngest kids then get up and get dinner on the table if my oldest daughter hasn't already beat me to it. The older kids will often take the younger ones outside to play catch or similar while they are waiting to be called for dinner. Dinner is usually a time of talking about everything that's happened to everyone all day and planning tomorrow's special jobs and events. The evenings are spent finishing up odds and ends of schoolwork that we might have missed (of course sometimes we just skip them), then gathering together in our "office/family room" to work on various computer projects and watch old reruns of Andy of Mayberry or a maybe a favorite movie. I use that time to quilt or knit as well. Throughout the day there are always short spurts of time for playing or taking a walk or going for a swim in the pool. It's a wonderful life!

About Your Book:

Can you tell us first off why you chose this particular name for a book on raising children?

My website, from which the book evolved, was originally called "Loving Parenting With Only Occasional Trips to the Woodshed". I later changed that to Raising Godly Tomatoes because I felt it placed the emphasis on the main premise of my book, that of "Tomato Staking", with the goal of godliness.

Please tell us, in a nutshell, the basic premise of the book:

What I call "Tomato Staking" is probably the most unique idea expressed in the book, but really it is just what a few generations ago was called "watching your children". I encourage parents to teach their children to respect and obey them via the old-fashioned "say what you mean and mean what you say" method, then to continue to keep them close so that they can follow the biblical admonition to teach your children the ways of God "when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." (Deut. 6:7 NAS) I also attempt to address some of the most common problems parents seem to be faced with today when it comes to childrearing - most of them rooted in the acceptance of the wrong teachings of secular psychology. I spend a considerable amount of time encouraging parents to teach godly character rather than letting emotions rule the home.

When did you begin writing, how long did it take, and when/how did you decide to publish? (Another reader asks why you decided to self-publish?)

I wrote the first draft of my book at least 10 or 12 years ago, maybe more, just so I'd have something in print to give to my children when they became parents. Then I began discussing parenting with other moms on the internet and began changing what I'd written, expanding it so that other parents (not just my own children) could benefit. During this time I started my own website and was blessed to be able to draw from the many questions put to me there. Finally, after much pressure from the moms on my website to publish my writings in book form, I locked myself in my bedroom for about 2 months, rewrote everything, had it edited, rewrote some more, edited some more, repeat, repeat and finally got it ready to go to print. We decided to self-publish just because it was cheaper and easier in some ways.

How did you find time to write with so many children under your care?

Well most of it I wrote in short spurts, the way I do everything else. I joke that I can write a decent paragraph, but I have no clue how to write an entire book. The couple of months I spent actually putting all those paragraphs together were pretty intense and I really needed the help of the rest of my family to get it done. My older kids took over all my household duties so I could write, and my younger kids were my little gofers (go fer this, go fer that). My husband of course, financed my little endeavor and my oldest son did all the computer and other paper work necessary to finish things up.

And, lastly,

Before we close, is there anything else you would like to share with other mothers?

Identify and throw out the popular psychology based parenting thinking taught by the world today. Ponder Proverbs (and the rest of Scripture) and let it bring God's ways into every moment of your life. Keep your children close to you and love them by training and mentoring them in God's ways as directed in Deut. 6:7.

This is a picture of the entire family at their daughter's wedding. This photo was a "remake" of an early 1900's family photo, hence the antique look and serious expressions. =) They really are not this serious in real life, but it is a classy picture, don't you think?

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2) **LEAVE A COMMENT BELOW.** You do not have to be a member to leave a comment.

PLEASE NOTE: The comment box will appear **BELOW** everyone else's comments, so scroll all the way down!

The drawing will be held on August 31st. =)

One Last Note: Some readers submitted questions for Elizabeth about more specific situations that we did not have space for here. However, Elizabeth has graciously offered to answer those questions, and they will be posted separately as she has time to get to them.