

**"D**o you see my mommy's BIG tummy?" my 3-year-old asked, loud enough to be heard above the tinny Christmas tunes cackling through the grocery store speakers. The man behind us gave a quick glance at my bulging midsection as Elizabeth stepped closer. "You won't believe what we're GROWING in there ... It looks like a basketball, but it's really A BABY!"

The stranger responded with appropriate awe and smiled at me over my daughter's blond head of curls. Crimson-faced, I grabbed my groceries and trudged to the parking lot. While Elizabeth never grew tired of announcing the marvel behind the bulge, I had ceased to revel in the miraculous. The "basketball" at my waistline had zapped my bounce and was deflating my holiday cheer.

That evening, I propped my swollen feet on the couch and rehearsed the week's to-do list: cookies for preschool, gifts for the neighbors, and food for the church Christmas party. I battled another wave of grumpiness, and picked up my Bible in search of relief. Immediately, I stumbled on the verse I had written at the top of our Christmas letter just days before: *"The Lord has done this. It is marvelous in our eyes!"* (Psalm 118:23). Tearfully, I realized my spiritual eyes were dim; I needed fresh vision.

### The Miracle Behind the Thump

The next night, God began to adjust my sight. I was cuddling on the couch reading bedtime stories with my 5-year-old. My full-term stomach insisted on being the uninvited guest. Each time Luke leaned in to get a closer look at the book in my hands, he received a prompt THUMP from the tiny foot beneath my stretched-out skin. While I was irritated by the uncomfortable boxing

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match in my belly, Luke was enjoying the vivid reminder of the life within me. After one particularly aggressive THUMP, my son turned to me. "I can't wait to meet those feet," he declared. Eyes agleam, he added, "I'm gonna count every toe!"

When my eyes are dim, I approach the Christmas season like the end of a pregnancy. I grow weary of the boxing match between my time and energy. My schedule

bulges with to-do's until the miracle behind the madness is reduced to an inconvenience rather than an unparalleled gift of grace. I want to follow my son's example and remember the Feet for whom I'm preparing.

The reason behind each *thump* on my holiday list is a Bethlehem baby whose footprints to Calvary have changed my life.

### Go Tell it on the Mountain

The day of our baby's birth was marked by great joy. When my children received the good news, they took it upon themselves to spread the word. Leaving Grandma and their half-eaten bowls of cereal behind, the bare-footed, pajama-clad messengers ran through the neighborhood declaring that their baby sister had arrived. Later, as neighbors stopped by the hospital to meet the joyously-proclaimed Hannah Faith, they delighted in retelling the story of the morning announcement.

My children's response reminds me that good news is sweeter when it is shared. We don't need to be three-foot tall to spread the good news of Christmas; a childlike heart will do. Pajamas and bare feet are optional, dancing and whooping voluntary, but the truth is essential. The people in our neighborhoods can't celebrate the birth of a Savior if they don't know He has arrived.

### Unwrapping the Gift

Once my children had alerted the neighbors, they came dressed in their Sunday best to the hospital. Though they tumbled through the door with excitement, my fast-paced children slowed to an uncharacteristic halt when they spied the tiny bundle in my arms. Elizabeth scooted shyly into Grandma's embrace. Luke stood frozen in the doorway. Finally, my eldest edged closer to the bed. True to his word, the first thing he did was unwrap Hannah's swaddles of pink and count each wiggly toe. Captivated, Luke caressed her tiny fingers, her pug nose, and her puffy eyes. In a word, he marveled.

The lesson my 5-year-old taught me as he cherished his newborn sister is simple: We can't savor Christ from afar. We may acknowledge His arrival from the doorway of our busy lives, but we will miss His glory if we never get close enough to marvel at the gift.

### Claiming the Promise

When her brother's inspection was complete, Lizzy crept from Grandma's wing and reached for her new sister. As I watched, I remembered. Nine months prior, I had been driving across town and savoring a secret between the Lord

and me: our family was growing again. Suddenly, Lizzy's voice broke through my reverie. "Mommy, I just asked God to put a baby sister in your tummy!"

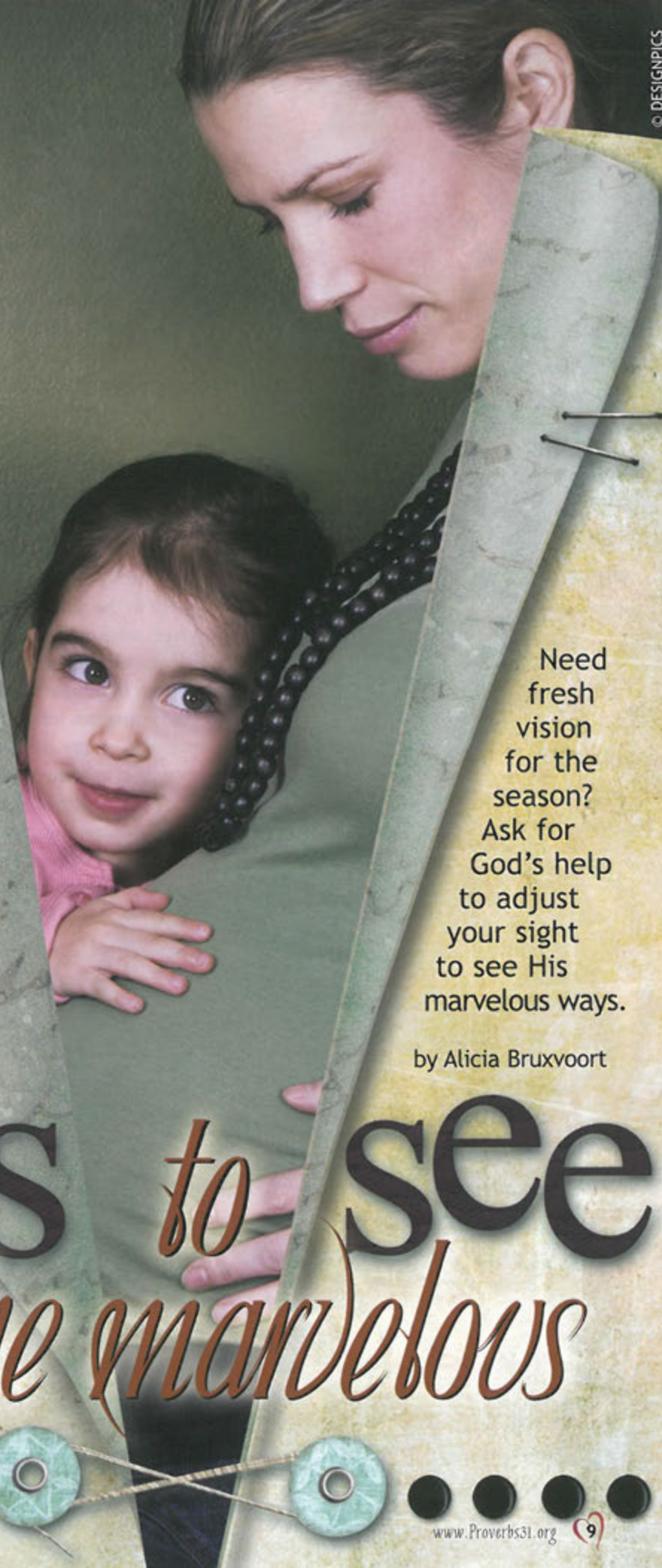
I nearly ran a red light as I craned to get a glimpse of my backseat prophet. "That's nice," I responded with tingles running up my spine, "but what if God puts a baby BROTHER in my tummy instead?"

"Mo-om," Lizzy laughed. "God can do anything He wants, but He knows my heart wants a sister."

Perhaps, at its core, that is what Christmas is all about. God knows our hearts. God hears our prayers. The nativity reminds us that God's ears are tuned to earth. Like my daughter, we simply need to trust Him with our hearts' desires and wait in faith for His answer.

As for me, I think I'll keep asking for those new eyes I've been wanting — the kind that see the Marvelous! 🌟

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Need fresh vision for the season? Ask for God's help to adjust your sight to see His marvelous ways.

by Alicia Bruxvoort

# eyes to see *the marvelous*

