



Car Talk

BY ALICIA BRUXVOORT

It began as a simple conversation, not unlike countless others I'd shared with my three-year-old son as we maneuvered through traffic or waited for stoplights to turn green. Sometimes, the words that passed between the back of the van and the driver's seat were mere time fillers, a mom's gentle method of distracting a listless preschooler. But on that particular day, our simple "car talk" taught me a lesson that I will remember for a lifetime.

We had already discussed, in three-year-old terms, the details of the morning: the

toys that were shared at playgroup, the silliness that prompted laughter, and the cookies that were served for snacks. As our chatter subsided, I began to prepare a mental inventory of the lunch options that awaited us at home. But Lukas's sudden announcement cut my planning short.

"I don't like to play with Morgan," Lukas declared. "He's not very nice."

"Oh?" I asked, trying to forget about our nearly empty refrigerator and will myself back into the conversation. "What makes Morgan not so nice?"

"Well," Lukas said with disgust, "He's just always being naughty."

"I see," I replied, grinning at my strong-willed son's assessment of his spirited peer. "And how about you, buddy? What kind of friend are you?" I asked.

The voice in the back seat was silent. Finally, after a few moments of thinking, Lukas responded, "I think I'm sometimes naughty and sometimes nice."

I tried not to giggle at my son's honesty. Then I seized the moment to address our basic nature without Christ. "You know, Lukas," I said, "I think it's really hard to be nice all the time too. In fact, without Jesus, I wouldn't be very nice at all." I went on to explain how the more we love Jesus, the more He helps us to love other people, even ones who are naughty. I met my son's gaze in the rearview mirror and smiled.

After a brief silence, Lukas let out a big sigh. With obvious admiration, he marveled, "Wow, Mom, you must love Jesus an awful LOT!"

As the implications of his innocent response sunk in, I found myself gazing through my tears at the bumpers ahead of me. In the back of my mind, I'd always known that my children were watching and learning from what I do. But to hear it spoken so clearly was humbling. My son knew I loved Jesus from the way I loved others. It was that simple.

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:11-12).

I rarely drive my son to and from playgroups anymore. He hops on a big yellow bus each morning and leaves me and his sisters waving to him from the window. But I do think about our "car talk" now and then. And in those moments when I catch myself wondering if what I do day in and day out really mat-

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ters, I cling to a timeless truth that an innocent three-year-old once taught me: long before they encounter Christ in a personal way, my children may see glimpses of their Savior in me. *"Be imitators of God...and live a life of love" (Ephesians 5:1-2a).*

Alicia Bruxvoort is a freelance writer who drives carpools in Pella, Iowa. She savors life with three talkative young children and her relatively quiet husband, Rob. When she's not juggling multiple conversations around the dinner table, Alicia enjoys speaking to MOPS groups across the Midwest and participating in women's ministry events.