

**January 3, 2007**

## **Toward Better Blogging**

Happy New Year!

Yesterday I spent two hours on the computer cleaning out emails from the past five months. I was also trying to wrap up a dozen little to-do items, printing this and that while I have access to my in-laws' printer and plugging away at some preparations for going back to Africa.

Somehow these hours on the computer drain me. I simply lack stamina for computer work. By the end of an afternoon, my brain goes numb and my shoulders ache. I start with one or two important tasks to accomplish, and two hours later have accomplished neither of those, but instead have gotten distracted by seventeen seemingly more urgent demands. How many times have I received difficult news from someone and written back a sappy "We'll be thinking of you," then thought of that person for no more than the next twenty seconds?

I consider correspondence important. I love getting letters and email. People who email, even to tell mundane news from their day, are my heroes. Friendships grow and last when people take time to say rub their lives together, which for us doesn't happen with old friends unless we use computers.

My new challenge to myself is to make correspondence worthy of the time I spend on it. In this computer age it's easy to believe correspondence takes no time at all. If I just zip off an email here and there, I'll have friendships with no time commitment. What a lovely dream! My time stays my time, for working and doing, and my friends stay out in some mysterious oblivion loving me and staying there for some day if I need them.

Lies. Friendship by definition is time consuming. It takes commitment.

Recently I heard an editor complaining about blogs. He claimed that writers start blogs in the hope of improving their writing, but really they solidify habits of poor quality writing. Anybody can send out words to an infinite audience through the web. It's like a taste of instant fame, without any demand for quality.

For a long time I rebelled against blogs for similar reasons. As a mom at home most of the day, I hated anything that would keep my husband in front of a computer screen for more of the day. In my mind, he was out reading other people's mindless egotistical drivel instead of keeping me company and playing with his children.

Then a friend volunteered to build us a website, and I caved in to the pressure. So here I am writing a blog about hating blogs.

The thing is, there's nothing inherently wrong with computers, blogs, or the daily dripping little emails to say hi to friends. It's just that I waste them. In the days when we wrote letters longhand and had to seal, address, and stamp every one, then wait days for it's delivery, we didn't waste time writing meaningless drivel correspondence. When I lived in Nicaragua, we wrote letters longhand to America, and we usually waited months before we might hear a response. I would spend days thinking and compiling ideas before I sat down to write.

So as a New Year's resolution I'm challenging myself to write, read, and live more thoughtfully and prayerfully and less driveling. I want to set a pad of paper beside my computer to write notes on prayer requests or news from people's lives, and take time pray and collect thoughts before I zap back a response. Here's to better blogging.