

31 Days of the Little Way: Bringing Home Crafts from School

When I arrived to pick our boys up from school, one of the after-care teachers reminded them to take home the crafts they had made that afternoon.

And maybe it sounds terrible, but whenever I hear we are bringing home more crafts, my heart sinks a little. There are many things we don't have enough of—time and cleanliness and patience and home-cooked meals that are prepared on time.

Crafts made in school? Oh, we have plenty of those. They sit in stacks in closets and on cabinets. Some are placed carefully in plastic bins. Others—the ones we love the most—are placed around our home as decorations.

Many of them are truly wonderful. I just don't know whether we can or should keep them forever. And unless they are really creative and an expression of our child's personality, I try to let them go. The drawing of our family I'll keep; the Christopher Columbus puppet I discard.

What would be bringing home today? I turned and saw that the children had made structures out of mini marshmallows and toothpicks.



“Wow!” I said, even though inside I wasn't sure I was feeling the wow. “Look at these!”

As I was standing there, trying to decide how to carry paper plates of marshmallow structures to the car, one of the teachers came over. She raved about our children's creativity. She talked about how hard our older son had worked to make his piece just so.

“Maybe he will be an architect!” she said.

I smiled at her and we chatted as she held the door for us. She even reminded us to carry them carefully so I could get everything safely to the car in the wind.

I thanked her—but I wasn't just thanking her for her kind words and for holding the door.

I was thanking her for reminding me to look at the marshmallows and toothpicks on the paper plate and see the work and the thought that went into it.

Yes, I don't need one more thing cluttering the kitchen table, and chances are good that the artist himself won't remember this piece tomorrow. But isn't it amazing that God gives a child the ability to take such simple items—is there anything simpler than a toothpick?—and create something so intricate? And really, how did our son manage this? I can't even figure out how it stays together or how he built it to be so tall.

I'll set it on a shelf or a table and work around it for weeks. Eventually I won't notice it. Then one day I'll need the space for something, and I'll finally get rid of it. Because...well...it's made of marshmallows. So I can't keep it forever.

But for now when I look at it, I will think of a child with a box of toothpicks, a bag of marshmallows, and an idea of how he can build the coolest project ever. If a child can make something this fantastic out of toothpicks and marshmallows, how much more can I do with what God has given to me?

