

No Fear, Just Love- Rough Drafts....Normally, I would never put rough drafts online, but I procrastinated and I think that if I do not listen quickly then I might upset God. I'd rather have messy writing with plenty of rambling than for God to be past God's desired timeline. I'm sure I will work more diligently to get these more presentable since it is a bit embarrassing and I'm kind of hoping that not too many people stumble upon it before I can fix it. But since the whole idea is to have no fear and just love, love wins and embarrassing has to take a back seat.

No Fear, Just Love

Part I

By: Ty Stinespring

The Coal

It was a cold winter in the early 1970's. A young mother and her three small children were facing the harsh weather with a very limited income. The mother did not know what to do. She was very concerned about how to keep the old farmhouse above the freezing temperatures. The family continuously wore their coats indoors to stay warm. There was just no money for heat. She had been raised to know and call on Jesus for help. She did what she knew how to do. She prayed that God would provide a way for them to stay warm.

Shortly thereafter, there was a knock at the door. It was a truck driver. He explained that there were plenty of cops on the main road. He had accidentally been overloaded when getting a load of coal. He asked if he could dump part of the coal in her driveway. He didn't want to take a chance on getting a ticket. The young mother was quick to accept the coal. She was grateful and thanked God for answering her prayers. My mother-in-law doesn't know how they would have made ends meet if it weren't for the stranger who dumped coal in her driveway.

Years later, I shared this story with my mom. She informed me that I also had a story involving a truckload of coal. During the winter of 1977, my family was also living in an old farmhouse and experienced financial troubles. Sharon and Allen Haynam offered my parents a load of coal. They said that they didn't want any money for it. My mom told me that my dad said it was "good coal" and that it kept us warm all winter. It was only by sharing the first story that the second story of generosity was discovered. I was only four years old when the coal was given to us. This is an example of why we need to share our blessings with others. Don't keep God's work a secret!

St. Patrick's Day

When I was in high school, my mom went to work about an hour before my sister and I left for school. My dad worked during the night and was usually still asleep at that time. One morning, as I was getting ready to leave, I noticed that my Dad was awake, whistling, and looking like he was ready to go somewhere. He appeared to have a specific destination in mind.

I asked my dad what he was doing. He planned on visiting his parents. That was strange. I hadn't heard my parents talking about this. Visits with my grandparents were scheduled in advance and it was expected that you would arrive on time. It was never a possibility that you could arrive sometime in the morning or afternoon.

I asked my dad if he had called. Answering with a "no," he didn't seem worried about breaking social etiquette rules that he had followed for over twenty years. Instead, Dad said that he thought he'd surprise them. Surprise them? He was surprising the whole family! He didn't even tell my mom. Dad was acting weird. To me, it didn't sound like a good idea. I was pretty sure he was going to get "in trouble."

My sister and I went to school. My dad left for his impromptu visit. I'm told that during the hour's drive to his parents' house, my dad started to cry uncontrollably. He pulled over to the side of the road until he could compose himself and safely continue. When he arrived at my grandparents' home, he found out that his dad had just died.

Something caused my dad to wake up and do something that went against the family's norm and, to a degree, involved personal risk. I sensed no hesitation in him. It was as if he didn't need to call my grandparents and ask permission. The Holy Spirit was leading him. Logical thinking would have only interfered. Calling on the phone would have probably resulted in discouragement because of the short notice. In my grandma's limited mind, there would be no reason for such a sudden visit. Painful as it was to lose Grandpa, my dad could comfort his mother in her time of great sadness because he followed the tug of the Holy Spirit.

It is a gift from God to be able to feel the connection that goes beyond our human understanding. It's not logical and can't be seen with our physical eyes. It is, however, very real. Nobody denies the force of a magnet. The force is invisible, but we can feel its power. Being led by the Holy Spirit might be viewed in a similar way. It might be referred to as "listening to one's heart" or "having a feeling." I remember a powerful and humbling story my dad shared with me.

Around 1960, Dad was in 9th grade at Newark Jr. High School. He wanted God to prove that he was real. My dad thought of a deal so that God could prove His existence. Dad would train faithfully in track for about a year. God would prove His existence to my dad by putting him on the front page of the Newark newspaper. It would not have been very likely for this to happen. Making the front page of the sports section would have been difficult, but it would have been within the realm of possibilities if my dad would have performed flawlessly. My dad recognized this and believed that the only way for him to be put on the front page was through an awesome athletic performance AND God's influence. Looking back, the "deal" sounds foolishly bold, conditional, and egotistical for a teen talking to the creator of the universe. Nevertheless, these were the terms in my dad's mind. God does say that if we seek Him, we will find Him.

The big meet approached. Coaches in the area knew that my dad had the fastest times and was expected to win. A day or two before the race, my dad demonstrated to other students in a shop class how to safely use a power tool. In

the process, he accidentally cut off two of his own fingertips. Rushed to the hospital, a doctor was able to stitch his wounds... but could not repair his broken heart. He wanted God to be real. How was God supposed to prove Himself real if he didn't even run the race?

The Newark newspaper came out. On the front page, an article described an unfortunate accident that left a Jr. High track star unable to compete. Dad was fully convinced. God is real! Some might argue that God was cruel. God is supposed to be good. How can losing two fingertips be good? These are questions for those who can't see the end picture.

Notice the difference between the teen who tried to put conditions on God compared to the man twenty-five years later who jumps up from a dead sleep to follow the Spirit without questioning. My dad learned an important lesson he wanted me to know too. Laughing heartily at his own younger self as he shared his story with me, he exclaimed, "Do not test the Lord your God!"

I have included the earlier events though I personally wasn't alive to witness them because I observed the effect of the experience through my dad's beliefs and actions. When faced with disappointment or hardship, he grew closer to God. God's ways are always higher than our ways. He can see how everything fits together.

For some, it may be difficult to believe that God cares about one person's feelings or needs living in the world today. Now, try to imagine the needs of more than seven billion people at the same time. Some may argue that God only intervened in people's lives thousands of years ago. This is simply not true! God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He can part the Red Sea, organize front page news, and deliver coal. People need to know about God's involvement in your life.

The Seagull

Brent and I were opposites in most ways, but we've had a few simple characteristics that have held us together in a way that onlookers really didn't seem to understand. Looking back to our high school sweetheart days, I can see the confusion for adults "trying to talk sense into us." We were young and the odds were against us. We were opposites. They didn't see that where I was weak, he was strong and vice versa. They didn't see that we were brought up in homes with a strong Christian influence and chose to start our mornings in high school with a handful of others in prayer. God was the invisible force that made all the other differences insignificant.

One day when at my house, Brent saw a piece of scrap soffit that was left over from a building project. He asked if it were needed for anything. It wasn't. It was in the scrap metal pile of things that wouldn't burn.

Brent took the piece of scrap metal and cut away the unnecessary bits until there was a beautiful seagull in its place. I didn't think much about it at the time, but over the years I realized that the seagull had an impact on my dad. We didn't know it, but my dad loved seagulls. Behind the Bible, his favorite book was about seagulls. Having a piece of trash salvaged and turned into something that he could appreciate touched his heart toward my young boyfriend and future husband.

Just like the unwanted and useless piece of metal, Jesus saves us and slowly transforms us as we walk with Him, taking away the parts not needed to form a more beautiful and refined version of ourselves.

Take Them Away

About thirty years ago, when I was a teen, I used to have a very vivid, reoccurring, dream. I always woke up with overwhelming sadness, many times hyperventilating or sobbing uncontrollably. It felt like my heart had been stabbed. The content and my distraught feelings are as clear as yesterday's memories. I tried to understand what it meant.

In my dream, I approached my home as if I had gone to the mailbox to check the mail. My parents have a very long driveway. Their home sits below the driveway, overlooking a small valley and mostly hidden from traffic on the main road. As a teen, there were many times I walked from my home to the mailboxes, get the mail if we had any, and return.

My dream started near the mailboxes. I moved toward my house as if I had just checked the mail. When coming closer to the house, I could see an ambulance parked in front of our home. I ran the rest of the way into my house. In my young mind, I lived with my parents. I was puzzled that I would have gone to check the mail with an ambulance by the front door. Why didn't I notice it earlier? In all my analyzing, it never occurred to me that it might be a glimpse into the future. I wouldn't always live with my mom and dad. I didn't like the ambulance dreams.

For some reason, I was convinced that God was responsible for the dreams. I didn't want them. I didn't like waking up sad. I asked God not to give me any more dreams. Why would God give me something that made me sad? It didn't make sense. My request was granted. For more than a decade, I didn't remember any dreams.

The Lincoln Memorial

The first vacation Brent and I took together was about a year after we were married. In 3 days and 2 nights, we hoped to see Washington DC, visit the National Aquarium in Baltimore, and finally go to the beach. We were country bumpkins. To me, our adventure was both exciting and daunting.

Traffic was terrible and it was hard to find a place to park. We wanted to see the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and surrounding historical landmarks. First, we visited the Washington Monument. I bought a couple of T-shirts for souvenirs. Since our car was far away, the shirts were stuffed in a small bag, and we continued with our new purchases.

Next, we walked to the Lincoln Memorial. Tourists that we were, we wanted a picture of everything. Brent had the camera. This was back in the days before cell phones. He took a picture of me sitting on the steps of the memorial. Then we stood in awe, looking at the giant statue of President Lincoln. Sightseeing continued. Finally, with tired feet, we made our way back to the car.

Problem! I did not have my purse with me! Problem! All our money was in my purse. Problem! The keys were also in my purse. Panic set in. We had no money, no way to get into our car, and it was at the end of our day. Places would be closing soon. We would be stuck in DC at night! I felt so naïve and vulnerable. I'd been robbed and didn't even notice.

Brent and I retraced our steps in hopes that we could at least find my purse. Without digging too much, we looked in trash cans. We were hopeful that someone would've just stolen my wallet and ditched my purse. Perhaps we could

recover the keys to the car. Maybe, if we were lucky, I might even find my driver's license. I didn't have any credit or bank cards... just cash. We figured the cash was long gone, but we'd deal with that problem later.

As we made our way back to the Lincoln Memorial, we saw a man riding a bike. My first impression was that he looked homeless. He approached us and asked if I had lost my purse. For a moment, I was speechless. "Yes," I replied. He said that he saw it on the steps of the memorial and left it with the staff in the little office. He found my purse on the steps!?!

I was used to carrying my purse in my hand. I must have picked up my bag of souvenirs and didn't notice that I was forgetting my purse. My hand was still carrying something. Ouch! I was at fault but had mentally blamed an imaginary thief. Surprised, relieved, and thankful, I asked if we could take his picture. I didn't want to forget the nice man who had saved my purse! He seemed a bit awkward but gave me a giant smile.

With a click of the camera and a quick "Thank you!" we ran to the memorial, hoping to reach the little office before it closed. I think I got the words, "I lost..." from my mouth before my purse was handed to me. There was no claiming process. They knew it was mine. (I'm guessing they saw my Driver's License and recognized me.) What a day of diverse emotions!

Not one thing was missing from my purse. As we walked back to the car at dusk, I was very humbled and grateful to be leaving DC safely. I think angels were working double time. With God's protection, we continued our vacation and had a wonderful time.

What Are the Statistics on That?

Brent and I had been living in California while I taught for two years. The original plan had been for me to gain teaching experience for one year. That had been done. Brent had only originally agreed to relocate for a year, but when he saw how much I really liked teaching and living in California, he agreed to another year. Now, after two years, he was firm. He wanted to move back... to be as close to our extended family as possible.

We remembered how expensive it was to move our belongings to California. We did not want to spend another thousand dollars simply renting a vehicle to move our belongings again. Our stuff really wasn't worth that much. To buy everything new again would be expensive, but we would never do that. If needed, we would find things we needed at thrift stores once we found our new home. Plus, we still had some of our stuff in a storage unit in Ohio. The expense of moving everything seemed to hinge on our emotional attachment to our belongings.

We were never the ones to do things the "normal" way. So, we thought that if we could buy an RV (a camper that you can drive) to haul our stuff back to Ohio, we would have an RV to stay in until we got settled in our new home. That sounds logical, right...? Well, we had a limited budget and found an RV for \$650. Now you're starting to get worried about me, aren't you? It made sense at the time. If memory serves, this story took place in 1998. Yes, in 1998, \$650 was still cheap. We invested about another \$150 in maintenance, updating its appearance, and making it feel more comfortable. Have you thought about the weight factor? You're right. We shouldn't load it down too much because that would be hard on a vehicle... especially with the deserts and mountains when traveling across the country. That's a good point.

We considered these factors. We had a big yard sale, sold a couple of bigger items, and gave away things to which we had no emotional attachment. We kept most of Roman's toys, small things that we used frequently and memorabilia.

We had a tight schedule. After the school year had finished, I planned to attend a job fair in South Carolina. Two days after that, I had an interview scheduled in Cleveland. When we had moved west, we took five days to make the journey from Ohio to California. Now returning to the east coast, we planned to stop at my parents' house to drop off the RV before driving our car south to the job fair. We budgeted five days. From Ohio, we would have two days to drive and be ready for potential interviews.

Our plan was for the three of us to ride in the RV together, hauling the car behind us. I'd never driven long distances before and was certainly not an experienced city driver. There were several big cities on our route. (Remember, this was in the days when we didn't have cell phones or GPS. We had maps made on big pieces of paper.) Back in the old days, arriving at a distant location required good teamwork. You had a driver and a navigator. Good navigators were just as important as good drivers. Navigators watched the map and told the driver the next road or exit to use with enough of a warning that the driver had time to get in the correct lane, but not so far in advance that the driver might forget. Brent and I made a pretty good team. We said farewell to our home in the San Bernardino mountains and headed east.

Not even two hours into our journey, it became apparent that something was going to need to change. (That's right... we didn't have time to do a distance test to see how well the RV would handle pulling the car for a long period of time.) The RV was running too hot. We had only made it to Bakersfield, CA in the high desert. We determined that the weight of the car added too much stress to the aging RV. I'd drive the car and follow Brent. It wasn't ideal, but it was the right choice. We would drive for a while and sleep in the RV at night. The overheating was temporarily resolved.

This system worked well until we reached Arizona. We were a little nervous about overheating again in the heat of the desert, especially when we would be climbing in elevation. We thought it best to avoid driving during the day. We decided to drive in the morning and evenings when it was cooler outside. It was the first time we were using the RV's headlights for a long time. Originally, we had only planned to travel during the day and had not tested running the headlights for a long time. As we traveled, it became apparent that the headlights were becoming increasingly dim. The alternator was not keeping the battery charged.

We pulled over to discuss the situation. We would rest for the night. Brent had seen an auto parts store in the little town where we had stopped to talk. In the morning, he would go and buy a new alternator for the RV and change it. Roman went to sleep, peacefully unaware of any problems. Brent wanted to remove the alternator that night so that he would be ready in the morning to get right to work installing a new one. I was glad we had the toolbox with us.

Once the alternator was removed, I was out like a light. Holding a flashlight is hard work. Anyone who has had this job should completely understand. Honestly, I am surprised that with the stress of a broken vehicle, in an unknown town, and far from our destination that I was able to sleep. I snuggled next to Roman. Brent went to look at something else under the hood.

I woke up to Brent saying, "Wake up. Let's go." The sun wasn't up yet. I didn't think that an auto parts store would be open so early. Brent explained. He had stayed awake, torn the alternator apart, rebuilt the alternator, and installed it while Roman and I slept. All without my flashlight holding assistance! I knew Brent was good at fixing stuff, but that one caught me off guard. Now that I think of it, would a small auto parts store have had the right one in stock? Brent's late night of work gave us a few more hours of driving time. By now, because of our complications, we were cutting it close to attend the job fair.

We made it safely back to Ohio! It was the first time Brent had driven unfamiliar roads as both the navigator and the driver. There was one time in a big city when he had to change lanes suddenly to merge onto a different highway. I was afraid that I wasn't going to be able to change lanes fast enough and we'd be separated. Then I would have no idea of where to go. Praise God, that did not happen. It was a close call. My little chatterbox in the backseat never noticed the near mishap. I wonder how many times I'm protected and don't even realize it.

We finally pulled into my parents' driveway with just a few hours to spare before needing to leave for South Carolina. Brent's mom went with us. She was concerned about all our driving and lack of sleep. I made it to the fair and was offered a job with one of the school districts. With a couple of weeks to accept the offer, I waited to see how the Cleveland interview went before replying.

Once back at my parents' house, Brent and I decided to take the RV to a state park just about five miles down the road. It would start but wouldn't move. Brent literally drove the RV from California to Ohio and it stopped moving in my parent's driveway. When I think back, every time I prayed, I asked to make it there safely. That was done. We were able to sell the RV for \$750 to someone who had to tow it away. It was evident to me that God was with us!

People Worry Too Much

It was the year 2000. We entered Y2K without modern society collapsing. Grandma Ethel's health, though, was failing miserably. Brent's grandma had signed a DNR. A DNR is a do not resuscitate order. If her heart stopped beating or if she stopped breathing, CPR was not to be administered. A DNR prevents any machines from being used to sustain life.

Grandma's DNR order had been "misplaced." For several months, she had been in a coma following her vitals crashing. Life support machines kept Grandma alive. Shortly before her birthday, she just "woke up" but still needed professional care for other health needs. Grandma probably didn't know or understand the severity of her recent health problems. Who was going to tell her?

We planned a surprise birthday party for her. She was very happy to see all of us. Instead of complaining to her husband, she smiled at him. Her complaint of the day was that the staff wouldn't open the windows. We were on about the 8th floor and the windows were stationary. She said that Jesus was trying to come and get her, but the windows wouldn't open. Grandma tried to convince us to open the windows. She wanted to go with Jesus.

The following weekend, I planned to attend my sister-in-law's baby shower. I lived about 2 hours away and followed the directions carefully. It was before the days of GPS, texting and googlemaps. I could follow most of the directions, but I couldn't see the house indicated on my invitation. I didn't know the phone number and was frustrated. Not wanting to drive a total of 4 hours for nothing, I decided to drive 5 and visit Brent's grandma again.

Grandma Ethel was surprised and happy to see me. We were able to talk more personally since there were just the two of us. In our conversation, I shared some of the challenges I faced while teaching. She said, "There is no sense to all this worrying. People worry too much." At the time, I worked for the Cleveland City School District. I thought that people, my students especially, did not worry nearly enough. Grandma said that everything was going to be just fine.

Brent and I were expecting another baby but hadn't told the secret yet. Grandma heard the news during our private visit. Instead of a disappointing drive, we shared a very nice visit. God turned lemons into lemonade. A few days later, Jesus was able to take her home.

When Grace learned of my experience, she shared another interesting part to the story. On the morning her mom passed away, Grace had awakened to a dream. In the dream, Grandma was with her family in their old home singing "I'm Coming Home." A few minutes later, the hospital called. Grandma Ethel was no longer with us. She went "home."

Our Own Home

After moving from California, I worked for Cleveland City School District. I thought I could be a positive role model for my students. Love and forgiveness were taught along with reading and math. Two years later, I felt as if my strength, hope, and love had been depleted. I was a drained battery.

For my own good, I could tell that I needed a change. We lived in a nice apartment, but neighbors were increasingly disrespectful. I wanted a calmer neighborhood and a job with less stress. Brent agreed. We didn't know where we would land, but we started looking for different options.

Instead of looking for a different job, we started looking for cheap housing solutions. If we could find a house that we could afford in a more peaceful place, we would be able to find something to sustain us. Focusing on Sheriff Sales in rural settings near our extended families, we did research to ensure the offer accepted by the Sheriff would be the total amount due. We did not want any surprises from any old liens or mortgages. We found a house appraised at \$6,000. According to the rules, the house could sell for \$4,000 if nobody bid against us.

We made it a priority to investigate the property in person as soon as possible. We were told by the Sheriff's Department that there was no key to the house. A "little bird" told us that we could get in if we climbed through a window. The house had been vacant for a long time. I was "very pregnant" and there was no climbing in a window for me. Brent easily opened a window, went inside and unlocked the door for me.

Built over 100 years ago, we noticed a firm foundation, solid hardwood framing and floors to match. Beautiful trim left me wondering about how it would have been treasured years ago. It was built to last and had updated wiring.

Unfortunately, it now had battle wounds from years of neglectful living. We were told the house was nasty inside. It was. Do you think a house that cheap is going to be free from flaws? No way! There was a ton of garbage inside. We were looking for a way out of our situation... free from renting. This could be it. We imagined improvements.

You had to look past the muck. It was the muck of the “stuff,” however, that made the house appraisal so low. Nobody with \$4,000 cash wanted to do the work themselves. They would have to hire someone else to clean it out, increasing their investment. People who would have wanted the home for themselves either didn't know about it or didn't have \$4,000. At the time, we were paying \$685 per month in rent. Even if the house sold for \$8,000, it would be cheaper than one year's housing costs in Akron. To most people our modern apartment and lifestyle was much more desirable. We tend to take the road less traveled. We would have to be humble.

Would it require sacrifice? Yes. Selling his prized camera, Brent sold his Canon A2E for \$1500. A place to relax and a symbol of freedom, he also let go of his motorcycle. Ouch! His GFS Suzuki Bandit 650 sold for \$2500. We still had some income coming, but we were hopeful that we would be able to use that money for updates and repairs. By selling those two things, we had the exact amount for which the house could sell.

The sale was upon us. There was one other bidder. Advanced in years and a shrewd businessman, he owned many properties. We were warned that this house was “not the kind of place you would want to raise a family.” It was a good investment property. With four bedrooms, isn't it somewhat logical to think that

a family would be renting the “investment property?” The property investor bid against us several times. After our bid of \$4800, he said, “Aw, let the kids have it.”

At less than 30 years old, Brent and I were blessed as the new owners! No loan payments, mortgage or rent. Brent’s mom chipped in the other \$800 so we could still have money for repairs and moving expenses. God provided for our family’s needs so I could replenish my drained spirit. Our family of three had a new home. It was almost time to meet the fourth member of our growing family!

9 Pounds 8 Ounces

When Brent and I realized that we were going to have another baby, we started a search for midwives in the area to support a homebirth. Brenda was perfect for us. She had delivered several of her own children at home and was expecting to do the same about a month before I was due. Of her clients, the one with the nearest due date to mine was due about two weeks after me. Brenda assured me that this wouldn't be a problem. In her many years of being a midwife, she never had to miss a birth. My due date came and went. I was hoping for the baby to come sooner, not later. I felt like I'd swallowed a bowling ball.

I was thirteen days overdue when I finally felt contractions. While waiting on our new arrival, we worked to improve our new home. This was quite beneficial, even if I was uncomfortable. My husband and his brother were digging a ditch for a pipe that needed replaced. Stepping out for a bite to eat, I noticed contractions and started timing them. They were about five minutes apart. I thought I had Brenda's phone number with me, but apparently it was at home. I went back quickly and reported the news.

With an hour's drive ahead of us, we hopped in the truck and headed back to our apartment. The bouncy ride made me think that the trip was never going to end. As my contractions intensified, I remember holding very tightly to the hand grip above my window. Finally reaching the apartment, I called Brenda and relayed that the time between contractions was about three minutes. Brenda lived about an hour away. She said that she'd be there soon. Unaware of the excitement about to unfold, Roman went to sleep.

Brenda arrived with her apprentice, one of her older daughters, and the newborn. At some point, Brenda's new baby would need fed. Brenda watched to see how much I struggled through the contractions and said I was doing a good job. She

was surprised that I could talk on the phone as well as what I had. I sat, stood, walked, and leaned on furniture or walls as I desired.

My water had not broken. Brenda asked if I wanted her to break the water or if I wanted to wait for it to be broken naturally. She said that once my water broke, I could start pushing for the baby. I was surprised that I wasn't in more pain! Yes, it hurt, but it was nothing like the first time. Yes, please! Let's get on with it! I was grateful for ice chips and reminders to breathe. Small red dots appeared as blood vessels burst in my upper chest. After pushing enough to have the head, we paused for a moment. The shoulders just barely emerged. Brenda told me to reach down and get my baby. "What!?!"

I bent over a bit and grabbed the baby under the armpits. It was kicking my insides like crazy. I pulled him right up to me. What an awesome moment! Brenda said he was a big baby and the scale agreed. It's no wonder that I felt like I was carrying a bowling ball. He was 9 pounds and 8 ounces. Yikes! God was with me. There were no problems, medications, or machines.

Shortly thereafter, as we were recovering and Brenda's group was preparing to leave, Brenda said, "Well, that worked out just right."

I wondered what she meant so she explained. Brenda had received a call from the other client who was expecting her first child because she had started labor. Because of that, Brenda called her apprentice, who lived about 30 minutes away. The timing of the other client's contractions was monitored while the apprentice traveled. During this time, I called saying that I was in labor. Because it was my second child and my contractions were closer together, the decision was made to come to me first.

While sharing this information, it occurred to me that Brenda never once told me that I should have the water broken to speed up the delivery. She mentioned it as a possibility. She didn't tell me of the other client's labor until I was resting, and they were ready to leave. Brenda wasn't done with her work. She was heading straight to the home of the other expectant mother.

Welcome to the world little Isaiah.

God's timing was, is, and always will be perfect.

An Opened Door

Moving into our home in July of 2000, we were ready and willing to tackle remodeling. Yes, a ton of work still needed done, but renting was now in the past. We just had one little problem... no job! Another paycheck was coming from my previous job, but it wouldn't last us very long. Time was ticking and a new source of income was top priority. I put in applications to be a substitute teacher, but little work was anticipated in August and September.

The new school year started. I subbed a few days with a district nearby, but we needed something more reliable. Personal satisfaction with the job was a luxury we couldn't afford. A random retail job wasn't my preference, but it was no longer a matter of what was wanted. I went to K Mart and filled out an application. A few days later, someone called to schedule an interview for the following week.

A few days later, news revealed that a grant had been awarded to my local school district. Even though the school year had already started, two full time job openings were advertised. One opening was to teach first grade. Desperately wanting to teach first grade again, a letter of interest was sent immediately. I had four years of experience with that exact grade level. The other job was for an alternative education teacher. A teacher was needed to support in school suspensions. I had just taught two years for Cleveland City Schools and had experience with some challenging students. To my delight, the school administration called and invited me to an interview. Now I had a chance with two different employers!

Not quite! When told the time for the interview, it was nearly impossible for me to go to both. They were scheduled about an hour apart. If everything went perfectly, the interview was short, and traffic was good, I could probably make it to the second interview. That was a big risk with too many variables. Everything

in my gut told me to go to the interview for the teaching job. My passion was for teaching... not retail business.

I respectfully notified K Mart that I wouldn't be able to attend. My other interview resulted in a job offer for the alternative education teaching position. Because of my prior experiences, I had a much wider perspective about how to intervene to prevent future classroom disruptions. Most of my students that year just needed a little redirection.

As a first-grade teacher, numerous hours would have been spent working after the regular school day ended. My little one was just three months old. In hindsight, the alternative education job was much better for me. When the bell rang, I was free to go. There were no lesson plans to make or papers to grade. God gave me more time to enjoy my family.

The "good money" made from working in Cleveland was gone, but so was the stress. Comparing my new salary to my previous one, it was about half. The little lull in income made me appreciative of any steady job. Humbled and mentally accepting of work with minimum wages and no job satisfaction, I was extremely grateful for the opportunity that went above my expectations and used my strengths. It was a bonus.

For 19 years, my classroom remained my home away from home. Thank you, Jesus for opening the door.

The Pirate Ship

This is a tough topic for me to talk about. This experience happened about nineteen years ago. Aside from a few close family members, I didn't talk about it for over 15 years. With my new philosophy of "no fear, just love" I have started to tell it to others.

The 4th of July was approaching, and the country was getting ready to celebrate. My neighbor, the one who has had a history of consuming large quantities of alcohol on a regular basis, was getting ready for her son's birthday. Fireworks would be set off and lots of people would be drinking. Wanting an excuse as to why we wouldn't be able to join the festivities, I called my parents.

On July 3, I talked to my dad and explained the pending drunken birthday party invitation. Yes, I know that most people invite others to a party further in advance, but this was an individual that would most likely invite us over at the last minute. My dad said that we could come over to visit, but Mom would need to do the laundry. I didn't care if she was working on laundry. Again, he said it would be OK, but that my mom wouldn't be able to watch over the boys because she needed to work on the laundry. I thought he was acting weird. Why did he keep talking about laundry? He never worried about it before.

He asked if we were staying cool enough. It had been very hot and is probably why Mom had not been doing laundry. She was probably waiting for a cooler day to run the dryer. They cooled their home by opening windows during the night. I told him that we were running three different room air conditioners and made plans to visit the following day. My plan worked. Later that afternoon, I was able to decline the invitation.

The next morning was beautiful. My mother-in-law had recently bought an inflatable pirate ship pool for Roman and Isaiah. It was cute and a perfect way for

us to completely cool off before visiting my parents. Because Isaiah was not quite two years old, I sat in the pool with the boys splashing and playing.

I thought of all the chores I could be doing. I could be doing dishes or cleaning something. Our house was in the process of being remodeled and there was always something that needed done. It didn't matter. It was a perfect moment. The sun was shining. The flowers were in bloom. My children were playing nicely together. I never wanted to forget the moment.

How many times do you think to yourself that you never want to forget a specific moment in time? There are times when I have had great joy. In those times of great happiness, I never stopped to deliberately think about the specific moment and deliberately plant it in my head as a time not to be forgotten. I just assumed that I would remember. Just as memorable are times with the opposite feelings. For my parents, they remember exactly where they were when they found out that JFK had been shot. For me, I don't forget where I was when the Challenger exploded or when the planes hit the towers. In times of intense emotion, you don't vow not to forget. You just don't. Yet, there I was, sitting in a little pool several inches deep promising myself never to forget the simplistic beauty of the moment.

Then, a strange thing happened. Physically, I was fully aware of sitting in the pool with my two children. Mentally though, I saw the three of us from an overhead view. The image formed in an instant and disappeared just as quickly. I remember thinking that it was very odd. I decided that we probably needed to get out of the pool and get ready for our visit.

"No!!!!" came a shout from inside my head. The voice wasn't angry, just very firm. I was not to get out of the pool. Once again, a strange thought. I argue with my conscious just as everyone does. This was different. There was no arguing. The decision was not mine to make. I needed to obey. OK. I could spend more

time in the pool. It didn't really matter. Nothing earth shattering was going to happen if we arrived a little later. They wouldn't care. I let the kids play for about 5-10 more minutes and again thought to myself that it was about time to dry off. There was no protest in my head. My brain had gone back to normal. I wasn't thinking of an extraordinarily beautiful moment never to be forgotten, seeing myself from a different perspective, or having shouts of protest from within my own head. I was ready for a nice visit with my parents.

The Ambulance

Cool and refreshed from our swim, I went to my parents' house with the boys. As I drove up my parents' driveway, the dream from my youth suddenly became my reality. Instantly, I knew why I had awakened in such devastation. Even before I ran past the ambulance, I knew Dad was gone.

Once inside, an EMT told me to calm down and to breathe. My dad's empty shell was still upstairs. In recent years, my former bedroom had been converted into his office. Mom asked if I wanted to see him. It was a normal question. We have funerals so that loved ones can have closure. I already had my closure. Not thinking about how insensitive I might sound to a woman who had just lost her husband, I asked, "Why? What would be the point? He's not there." Luckily, my mom completely understood my feelings.

As his flesh had failed him, his spirit soared. Mom reminded me that we never know when these things will happen. Dad wasn't sad. He was finally free! He knew Jesus was waiting for him. He was ready to celebrate his own personal Independence Day!

It has been about nineteen years since my dad "moved on." Mr. Hallberg... who you will learn more about later... asked if I could see how the dreams were helpful. Helpful? I had never thought of them from that perspective. I only saw sadness. At the time, I didn't understand that God was trying to prepare me. When Mr. Hallberg asked the question, I needed time to think about it before I could answer. Now I can say that it was rather obvious. God was trying to ease the pain and develop my spiritual eyesight. I cried many tears that day, week, and months to follow but not for Dad. I cried for my own loss.

Don't worry. I asked God for forgiveness for being ungrateful and apologized for not wanting His gift. God has since given me more glimpses to ponder. Because I've seen past dreams become reality, it brings a spiritual awareness to the moment. "What is significant here? Why would I have been shown this place at this time?" Now that I have been shown and have begun to understand the connection, I have a greater faith and hope during times of hardship. This process didn't happen overnight, it took several decades for me to connect the dots.

The Phone and the Chainsaw

One day Brent was alone at our rural property of about 15 acres cutting some trees with the chainsaw. I was at school teaching while Roman and Isaiah were in their classes. Although our home is in a neighboring town, we have raised goats, chickens, rabbits, pigs, quail, turkey, and fish. We even had a cow and a llama for a while. We spent a great deal of time there enjoying the great outdoors while practicing some homesteading skills. In time, we hoped to build a home and live there.

When school was through, the boys and I went to this property. On that day, we followed the chainsaw noise through the woods and found Brent. He was perfectly fine, but his jeans were not! I asked, "What on earth happened?!?" Brent looked down and casually replied that the chainsaw got a little too close. Too close! His jeans were completely ripped across one of the pant legs in the front. With a sheepish smile, he said that I should see the phone.

When he pulled the phone from his pocket, a groove the width of the chainsaw blade was revealed on the back cover. Incredibly, the phone still worked! While removing a difficult branch, the spinning blade had fallen against his leg exactly where the phone was in the pocket of his jeans. (They were cargo jeans with big, deep pockets in the front of them.) If the phone wouldn't have stopped the chainsaw blade, Brent could have easily bled to death. As it were, he didn't have a scratch on him.

I used to worry about Brent constantly. It seemed like he was always doing something that could be dangerous. For example... installing trusses for a house above concrete, hunting, driving a car with poor brakes and bald tires, using a tractor on a hill, riding a motorcycle too fast, using power tools and very sharp things, running into a burning building with no fire gear, helping at accident scenes, lifting very heavy things, and speaking his mind to those who might not

always want to hear it. You get the idea. I never knew what could be next. Finally, I was given relief in the form of a dream. In the dream, Brent was a much older version of himself. I've never really worried about Brent after that. Somehow, God will protect him.

Another Home

For over a decade, children seemed to swarm to our yard. Most days, there were at least four kids playing, but it was not unusual to see six to eight. The swing set, trampoline, sandbox, playhouse, and picnic table were all popular places to gather. We hosted numerous bonfires and picnics. We had one rule for anyone who came into the yard: be nice.

When Roman was 2 years old, Brent and I took classes to be able to adopt. We were confident and willing until a social worker showed us pictures of real children who were waiting to be adopted. Suddenly we got cold feet! We decided to postpone this sort of commitment until Roman was older.

Years passed. Roman was in high school and Isaiah was in Jr. High. Finally, I thought we had come to a time in our lives when we were ready to adopt. The training was identical for fostering, adopting, or doing both. Fostering could allow us to ease into the adoption commitment.

To prepare for this potential change and to have the most stable environment, we wanted a home that would be easy to live in and didn't need much maintenance. Our current home always had some sort of remodeling project in progress.

We found a house for sale nearby for \$17,000. Advertised as having two bedrooms, we easily envisioned the conversion of two more rooms so that we'd have a home with four bedrooms. It wasn't perfect, but with minor work that could be done before we moved in, we felt that it had everything we needed.

It is an unusually difficult process to be approved for a \$17,000 mortgage. It doesn't cost enough for a bank to finance through traditional loans. Bankers want homes to be free from flaws. If the house would've been perfect, it

would've cost more. A personal loan for that amount was out of our reach. As we tried to figure out a way to get it financed, the price suddenly dropped from \$17,000 to \$10,000 on the HUD website. We didn't understand why, but suddenly the home was within our grasp.

We were able to view the home. Copper pipes in the basement had been stolen, but the rest of the house looked to be in good order. The missing pipes explained the price reduction. Brent would be able to replace the plumbing in a short amount of time.

Only real estate agents are allowed to bid on HUD auctions. I called the agent, said that I wanted to place a \$10,300 bid, and sent the necessary paperwork. We watched the time count down online and saw that no bids had been accepted. How could I offer \$300 more than the minimum bid and the home had not been sold?

I took my questions straight to HUD. The representatives explained that for houses selling at such a low cost, the real estate agent usually charges a \$500 minimum fee. Because HUD wanted \$10,000 for themselves, someone would need to bid \$10,500 to cover the costs. It was the agent's job to explain this. Why would she place a bid for me knowing that her own fee would cause the bid to be rejected?

The average person does not know these details. I explained that it seemed unfair for me to lose the auction because I had not been informed and offered to pay \$200 more to make up the difference. When asked, I agreed that this home was going to be my primary residence. People interested in a home for themselves are given the option to buy before agents and investors. They would be eligible to bid on the home the next day if nobody bought it for their own housing.

With a short pause for management approval, the \$10,300 bid was accepted. HUD agreed to sell the home for \$200 less. Investors and agents would have wanted the home simply to increase personal wealth. God knew we were motivated by love. Through a series of seemingly unrelated events, He used His perfect timing to provide us with a suitable home, within our budget, that would allow us to pursue adoption.

Forward, Not Backwards

Brent's dad left his family when Brent was 2 years old. Approximately 25 years later, Brent summoned the courage, found his phone number, and called him. It was disappointing. His dad took no responsibility for his absence and shifted blame to Brent's mom. During the call, he encouraged Brent to visit a certain church with beautiful chandeliers. Of all the things to talk about, a pretty church building was not on Brent's mind. Aside from a letter or two sent from his dad shortly after the call, about 15 more years passed with no further communication.

While Brent and I were in our classes to become foster or adoptive parents, Brent got a call from his brother. Relatives had invited the three brothers to see their dad in the hospital before his death. Brent had a decision to make. The first choice was to drop his plans to go see a man who shared one phone conversation with him. The second choice was to finish the class so that we could offer a home to a child in need. We were hoping to adopt one girl... possibly two, if circumstances were just right.

Brent chose not to dwell in the past. In hopes of helping someone he had never met, he invested his time and energy in finishing the process we had started. A new phase of our life was soon to begin. If we would have left that fostering class early, our license to open our home would have been delayed for several months. God has a plan. Our lives were about to change faster than we ever imagined.

Three Girls

We had our license from the state less than a week when the agency called and asked if we could take three girls. What? Three? We had never discussed the idea of bringing three new faces into our home!

Since I was at work, I said I needed to talk to Brent before making this sort of decision. A few minutes later, an aide unexpectedly walked in the classroom and asked if I needed help. What a relief! After the call, I was flustered, couldn't concentrate on teaching math, and needed to make a big decision quickly. I excused myself from the room, called Brent, and briefly discussed the idea. We decided that we were willing to give it a try.

We didn't want to see three siblings be separated from each other. They had just lost their regular routine and family. We didn't want them to lose the companionship of their sisters also.

They were the only ones ever placed in our home. God has a way of slowly preparing us for challenges ahead. God knows exactly what we need to be encouraged as we take each new step. We had no way of knowing, but that one decision would have an unimaginable impact on our lives. There would be both joy and pain.

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Free Diving

This is a controversial subject. I am writing about it anyways. This book is called No Fear, Just Love for a reason. I'm not sugar-coating experiences just because it might make you or me feel uncomfortable. If you think I've gone beyond your ability to relate or if you get too queasy, simply turn to the next chapter. It's OK.

Before I get into my main topic, I may be beating around the bush a little bit here, I'd like to talk about dishes. Yes. Dishes. Dishes all serve the same purpose despite their value. Fine china is expensive and delicate, but pleasant to the eye. Antique dishes are desired because of their rare and historical qualities. New sets of dishes are routinely sold in stores so that many can keep their kitchens and dining rooms looking fresh. The new dishes are chosen simply because people want a change. Nothing is wrong with the dishes to be replaced, but they are outdated and have lost their original appeal.

This leads me to dishes that are less desirable and cheaper to get. They can be found at a thrift shop. For a discount, you can get the dishes that were in someone else's cupboard a few days earlier but are no longer desired. There's one step lower. For free, you can find sets of dishes in a dumpster. Not selling in the time allowed, the store must make room for the new stock.

Perhaps you believe that thrift stores are only for the poor and dumpsters only for useless trash. Perhaps you believe that the only preowned thing that you might ever want is a rare antique or something that has been with your family for a very long time. Overall, we appear to appreciate the very new and very old things. Everything in the middle seems to lose value.

Free diving, also called dumpster diving, has been a part of my family's life for about five years. Our family has been blessed beyond imagination because we have been willing to accept this resource. In many areas, it is perfectly legal. If you have any questions about the legalities of this in your local area, please do your own research. To go diving, there are mental and spiritual challenges. You must rid yourself of the preconceived ideas attached to dumpsters and your reputation. You must also humble yourself. There many ways to practice humility. Free diving is just one avenue with unexpected blessings.

Free divers use and share things that have been discarded as trash. These things are going to a landfill if someone doesn't salvage them. Many times, the difference between paying retail or retrieving for free is an hour in time and the location of the product. If I told you the things I've seen, you would probably have a difficult time believing me. Sometimes, it is only when you see with your own eyes that you can really understand.

If your family has been blessed with plenty of resources and you know that you are blessed, free diving is probably not for you. If you find yourself not satisfied with your own belongings, but would never look in a dumpster, I dare to suggest that you are already blessed and don't realize it. Ask God for the vision to see your blessings. If your family struggles with meeting expenses, this may be an untapped blessing that your family has overlooked. Maybe you will find ways to reduce spending and will never peek into a dumpster.

There are people around the world who barely have enough food to feed themselves or their families. It is their reality every day. God loves all of us. Perhaps you have been blessed so that you can help others with limited access to food. Imagine inhabitants of a refugee camp thinking of everything our society throws away. Do we see their needs and act or look away?

My family decided to take diving more seriously, but not to help those less fortunate than ourselves. We were trying to save money for a bigger piece of land. We were concerned about dwindling resources on the planet and wanted to secure land and food for our future descendants. In less than a year, we saved half of the money that we anticipated needing for a down payment simply by eliminating most of our grocery expenses.

Usually, when Brent returned home with salvaged goods, he was giddy with excitement. It was a treasure hunt. There were the predictable items with a short shelf life, but there were almost always surprises. One time, Brent came home with many emotions, but cheerfulness was not one of them. He was sad, angry and frustrated. That evening, my family found approximately \$800.00 worth of ham in a dumpster. We researched online to try to understand why there was so much of one product in one dumpster. We found an article that answered our question.

The ham was not pink enough. What? In the processing facility, not enough red dye had been added to the ham. When cooked, the ham did not look quite as pink as normal. Some customers had complained. As a result, the company recalled all the ham that lacked the proper amount of red dye. I didn't even know there was dye in ham. Because the weather was cold when the ham was thrown out, it was still cold when it was discovered. Our freezers and refrigerator were packed to capacity with ham. We knew of just two other people who would accept a gift from a dumpster. We enjoyed several big ham dinners per month for over a year. What a blessing!

In Luke Chapter 6, we find Jesus and his disciples eating the grain from the wheat field that had been left for the poor. Jesus had the ability to perform a miracle to produce food for Himself and His followers. Why didn't he just make a feast appear? Perhaps He wanted to set an example of humility. Be satisfied. You don't need as much as you might think.

A Rock and a Hard Place

Nearly 3 years after the girls came to stay with us, they were available to adopt. We wanted to adopt them, but there was a big obstacle in our path. Three people with the legal authority told us that we could not adopt them until after Desi had her surgery. This might not seem like an unreasonable demand or an obstacle to most, but there was a very big difference in what the agency wanted and what Desi wanted for herself. Desi was born with a cleft palate. She had undergone numerous surgeries in her young life to correct issues so that she could eat and breath normally.

An appointment at a very prestigious hospital was the main deciding factor to determine if Desi needed the surgery or not. At the appointment, that the plastic surgeon said that the surgery would be reconstructive cosmetic surgery. Anyone looking at Desi would not be able to tell that she had ever had a cleft palate. The bone graph taken from her hip would be inserted into her top jaw creating more room for her teeth. He also said that she is fully functional without the surgery.

We were told that if we as foster parents didn't encourage her to get the surgery that we would not adopt her. After a disappointing day in court, Desi called her doctor and asked specific questions about what would happen if she did not have the surgery. The doctor said she could function normally but eventually she would have an underbite and her teeth wouldn't be straight. There are many people with an underbite, overbite, or crooked teeth. It didn't seem fair for her to be forced to undergo a surgery that some insurance agencies refuse to cover.

For the surgery, they would skin out Desi's upper lip to see the bone. They would get the extra bone by drilling into her hip and removing some bone. Then the doctor would break the bone in her upper jaw to insert more bone. She would not be able to eat solid food for 3 months. It was expected that her mouth would probably hurt for 6-8 months. She would also have trouble walking for 6 months to a year until her hip had healed.

Desi's counselor asked Desi if she wanted the surgery. Desi had done extensive research and gave many reasons for why she didn't want to have it.

It seemed as if we couldn't win. We had an agency holding the legal power over 3 children that we had loved for more than two and a half years. Shortly thereafter and following additional, private court proceedings, we were told we would be able to adopt.

We had absolutely no power. Only God could intervene to change the hearts of those involved. Without the unwanted surgery, Desi and 2 of her sisters were adopted.

The Giving Tree

God gave me a strange dream. The setting was an unfamiliar room in a dark building. There were clothes hanging on circular racks like you would see in a retail store. There was no plot or characters. It seemed boring and invoked no feelings in me. Why would I have, and then remember, such a drab dream? What was its significance?

Brent and I had just adopted three girls. We were considering relocating and wanted to reduce our carbon footprint. We looked for communities known for having people with similar goals. In our online research, we found a place that we wanted to see in person. We wondered if the online presence was an accurate reflection of reality. It was time for a road trip.

Nearing our destination, we ran across a little thrift shop called The Giving Tree. Intrigued, I wanted to stop. I didn't want or need anything, I just wanted to check it out. Everyone in the car agreed.

The business had a confusing setup. The store consisted of three separate buildings but there was just one cash register to pay. The first building had three doors. The door on the right went to a separate, but more upscale thrift shop. The middle door was an apartment. The door on the left was open and had a handmade sign directing potential customers to pay for items in that room at the third building. Who does this? Aren't they afraid that someone will steal something? Nope. The unique community that I was looking for, the one that I wanted to know if it was real, yes... it's real.

Seeing a dark room with lots of used clothing, most in our group went to the other building to look around. Desi quickly grabbed a dress she liked and joined the others. Not me! Just one glance and I recognized the room as the place in my dream. I saw nothing interesting for sale, but my curiosity had been sparked. The room was exactly as I had seen it. I investigated. What was special about this place?

Why was it dark? When I stepped into the room, I saw a sign by the light switch. It told people to turn off the light when leaving. It is logical, but what business in America does this? To me, it seemed like a lawsuit waiting to happen. Perhaps the owner wasn't worried about that. I was in an area where people are concerned about conserving everything... electricity, clothes, building materials,

and anything else you can imagine. The business provided a service to the community. Personal convictions outweighed typical business plans. It was a place that locals could get used items for next to nothing.

With the lights on, I saw a sign for a restroom. I still couldn't see what was so special about this place. Unusual... yes. Worth a dream? I didn't see the importance. My family had plenty of clothes and our vehicle was already full. Since we had been traveling for a while, I took the opportunity to use the restroom located in the back of the room. It looked like it had not been updated since the building was built, but it was functional. I realized my own judgmental attitude and scolded myself.

Just as I was about to leave the bathroom and turn out the light, I looked down and saw a box of books just outside of the bathroom sitting on the floor. On the top of the stack of books was a copy of my dad's favorite book, aside from the Bible. When my dad passed away, my mom asked if I wanted anything that belonged to my dad. I wanted the book I had read so many years earlier.

About 15 years had passed since then. I had been wondering how to pass down one book to five children. Now I had two books. Perhaps during my lifetime, I would "find" three more. Now I knew why this room was significant!

About three years later, I had a revelation. My mom had also asked my sister what she wanted from my dad. She wanted the same book! My mom gave it to me because I was the "first born." One day, it just occurred to me that the book was not for my children at all. It was for my sister. The message of the book is to "keep working on love." If I held on to the book just because I was born first, that wasn't love. I was led to that spot in the thrift store. If I had not had the dream, I wouldn't have gone inside. Our car was already full, and I didn't want any more clothes. The books were in the very back of the room.

I gave my sister my dad's copy and kept the one I found. Sometimes I have wondered why a book would be so important. Perhaps it's not the book. Maybe it's the message to "keep working on love." Maybe it was an exercise to build my faith and to trust.

A Premonition

Over the past 3 decades, students in the local school district have been consolidated into fewer buildings to reduce operating costs. At one point, the state of Ohio was willing to contribute the vast majority of funds needed to construct new schools because our facilities were considered to be some of the worst in the state. Voters needed to pass a levy with just a small increase to pay for the small portion with local taxes. Historically, voters in our area just would not pass a levy.

Time marched on. As voters, we had missed our chance less than 10 years earlier for the state to pay for most of the funding for new schools. Times had changed. Big industries and revenue miraculously poured into the area. Our district no longer qualified for the big grants. The district tried again for another levy that would require much more from the local people. For some reason though, I had a feeling that the levy was going to pass. Historically, it was against the odds. The campaign strategy had changed.

Taxes would only be increased only for property owners. Emphasis was placed on getting renters to the polls. They would not directly see any increase in tax. Parents of students would also be most likely to vote for a new facility and were encouraged to get registered and get to the polls. I believed that the levy would pass, but I thought I would never be a teacher in this new building. I didn't know why. I frequently wondered where I would find new employment. Logically, I surmised that I would be working in different district. The levy passed.

Since I didn't think that I would be part of the teaching staff at the new facility, I frequently wondered where I would find new employment. Logically, I surmised that I would be working in a different district somewhere. I felt a calling. I didn't and still don't know exactly what that calling is, but it is a feeling that I am supposed to be doing something else somewhere else. For several years, I have felt that God has wanted me to have a different job, but I have been at a loss for direction. I have struggled to hear His voice concerning this. I really liked the job that I had at the time. I wanted to continue teaching somewhere in Ohio because I didn't want my retirement benefits to be negatively impacted.

I was putting limits on where I would allow God to put me because of my perception that my retirement was important. I had the illusion that my work and my savings would care for me as I aged. I was not dependent on God at all for blessings or health. I could do it by myself. I had good medical coverage and a steady job to support my needs. Compared to others in my area, I had frugal spending habits and had no debt. By my own power, I worked toward a sustainable future for both myself and my children. I suspected hardship was coming in future years due to an increase in population and dwindling resources. I wanted to be prepared. I wanted my kids to have the knowledge and practice to know how to survive in more dangerous and extreme world.

I was convinced that I needed to apply to other districts. Then administration met with the teachers' union without lawyers and came to an agreement in one day. To some with negotiation experience, that is a miracle in itself. Teachers would get a 4%, 4%, and 4% raise over the next three years. I'd be crazy to leave now. There had been many years that I had taken a pay freeze along with the other teachers because we understood that there was simply not enough money to offer anything more.

I didn't want to leave. I loved my job, my students, my coworkers, the parents, and the community. I was very comfortable. I didn't want to go. The school where I taught was being honored at the state level because of our

improvements. I could wait one more year. My resume was almost perfect. I was part of leadership teams for both the building and the district. I determined that I would close out my time with the district with the closing of the school. The school had one more academic year before the new building was completed and the old one torn down. It seemed like perfect timing.

I was wrong. My days of teaching in the classroom ended on March 1, 2019. I was crushed. Did you notice the number of I's in the last paragraph? Apparently, God wasn't worried about my retirement or my comfort. My world was about to be shaken a way I could never imagine. All of my plans were in vain. I was focused on the wrong kind of preparation. God has different plans for me that I do not clearly see yet. I have been focused on the physical realm, a world that I can see and touch. I don't have all the information. God knows what lies ahead. I have been put into intense training for an unknown purpose. I believe that my premonition was to soften my heartache. I anticipated the closing of the school building. I didn't foresee the turn of events awaiting me in the hours and days ahead.

God knew that Brent and I were very independent and took pride in living a self-sufficient lifestyle. We tried to teach our children skills that would help them in a world with fewer resources and more people. God is trying to help us with our eyesight. He is in control and we must put our faith in Him to care for us. He has given us time to refocus on Him. He is allowing us to have experiences that will strengthen our faith and advance His Kingdom because He loves all of us.

We do need to be prepared, but not in the way we perceived. We must prepare for a spiritual battle. I believe that God is closing doors at the perfect time knowing that He will soon open another. He must properly prepare us so that when the new door opens, we will gladly walk through it. If we are too comfortable, we will stay where we are and never walk through the other doors that have been opened for us.

Update: When I wrote the rough draft for this time in my life I only knew of my own immediate and personal “shaking.” About a year and a half later, when I was working on revisions, I realized the “shaking” that was about to come to the whole world. Response to covid-19 has dramatically impacted life as we knew it for almost everyone. I realized that America basically shut down in March of 2020. The district where I worked announced on March 11, 2020 that it would be closing as a precautionary measure and planned to reopen on March 18. In reality, doors to the brand new school closed for the remainder of the academic year.

One year and 10 days after I experienced an enormous change in my life, all of my former students, co-workers, and community members experienced a big change also. I would not have been quite as affected. This type of situation was what we had prepared for. God had to give my family something unique to humble us. His timing has allowed us to prepare our armor that was in desperate need of restoration. We all need to work on our armor because the enemy is very tricky, a master of manipulation. He comes to kill, steal, and destroy... a wolf in sheep's clothing.

It's Too Remote

For years my husband and I have been looking for a remote piece of land. We took everything we could into consideration... acreage, local ordinances, distance from large cities, in a higher elevation area, distance from power plants and the direction of the winds surrounding them, access to water, fault lines, and light density maps. Everything was always too expensive.

Then we came into an unexpected larger sum of money, with the

My family decided to take diving more seriously, but not to help those less fortunate. We were trying to save money for a bigger piece of land. We were concerned about dwindling resources on the planet and wanted to secure land and food for our future descendants. We thought we knew how to protect our children. We weren't trusting God to do it. We failed to acknowledge the verses about where we should put our treasure and not to worry about tomorrow. In less than a year, we saved half of the money that we anticipated needing for a down payment simply by eliminating most of our grocery expenses

The First Shaking

Our family has always placed value on being self-sufficient. Hunting, growing our own food, and an emphasis on primitive skills were important to us. We looked around the world and saw numerous potential threats to the survival of our descendants. We saw a growing population with fewer resources available. Our logical conclusion was and is that modern life in America is not sustainable. It is mathematically impossible.

In order to help our children survive the changes that we foresee in the coming decades, we wanted to teach our children a diverse range of skills. We wanted them to be able to be knowledgeable in problem solving, academic areas and primitive survival. From the time our children were young, we introduced them to these skills by raising animals, growing food, preserving food, building projects, and entertainment that encouraged thought and social skills such as chess and board games. We taught them self defense strategies to protect themselves in a variety of different scenarios. We felt and feel that knowledge is very valuable. Someone might be able to steal belongings, but it is much more difficult to steal the knowledge. Unfortunately, we did not include God. Our armor against the devil lay in the closet gathering dust.

Like in baseball, we didn't just read about, watch it, and talk about it. We practiced. There is a learning curve to almost everything. Everyone knows that it would be silly to buy bats and gloves, but to never walk out on the field and practice throwing, hitting, and working as a team. We did not want to start learning on game day!

Brent had his conceal carry license for years. Because of changing laws, he felt a desire to be more open about Constitutional rights. He opted to be more visible and to carry openly, which was and is legal in the state of Ohio. Being legal and reality are two separate things. Although legal, public opinion varies greatly depending upon local culture. Being from a very rural area, Brent was accustomed to generally supportive people. Shane, Brent's brother, had a prophetic word. He said that open carry may be legal, but if you do it, eventually you will find yourself in jail because people who don't understand are uncomfortable.

On a day in early September, Brent went to a big outdoor auction with the girls. Isaiah and I had to work and Roman was in college. He knew there would be potential bargains and lots of produce was always thrown away. Vendors fill dumpsters with produce that will be rotten by the following week. Not finding any bargains that day, but plenty of produce for our animals, Brent had boxes of produce stacked on the rear of our vehicle. Rabbits, chickens, goats, and pigs are not as particular about their food as people.

On his way home, Brent stopped along a rural road to admire a piece of property. We had been saving for a larger more rural piece of land. In our research, it seemed as if the biggest threat during times of uncertainty is mankind. The unprepared ruthlessly overtake the resources of the peacefully prepared. While parked along the shoulder of a back road discussing the beauty of a particular piece of property, a woman pulled her vehicle in front of our vehicle and prevented Brent from moving forward. With the path ahead blocked, Brent looked to back up from the woman who was approaching our vehicle while yelling

aggressively about dumping on her property. Unfortunately, cars were now behind him also because they could also not pass the woman who had parked in the middle of the road. When she approached the car enough to see in the window, she yelled to her friend that he has a gun. The two women quickly left in their car.

Apparently, they called the police because on their way home, my husband was pulled over. He said police cars kept showing up behind him until with 6 cars behind him they turned on their lights and Brent pulled over to see what was wrong. Approximately 10 officers pointed their loaded guns at my husband and 3 children. Brent was taken to jail and charged with aggressive menacing. The girls were taken to the police station until I could arrive to pick them up.

While in jail, Brent heard other inmates talking about aggressive menacing. Federal law has not changed, but the way state laws read have changed. If anyone feels threatened, even if you are not physically or verbally threatening someone, you can be charged with menacing. If you in possession of anything that the police believe can be used as a weapon, you can be charged with aggressive menacing. This allows the public and localities a broad range of power. It is a way to make things very uncomfortable for people to exercise constitutional rights.

Brent was held at the jail in what he described as dog cages. There was a drain in the middle of the floor where people urinate. A toilet and shower for both men and women were available for all to see. Brent said a drunk woman was in the office topless as they flirted back and forth. Brent was disgusted. Since there was no court on Wednesdays and he was arrested on a Tuesday, Brent was booked. A big man who said that he was just being rough but had been charged with rape begged for Brent to be his cellmate. Brent asked if he could go somewhere quiet. He said that he was put in an isolation cell next to the other man who yelled all night and punched the window of his cell so hard that he splintered the plexiglass in the window.

In Brent's cell, there was a place for water to drink. The button to press for water was broken causing the water to run down the wall that had numerous unidentified bodily excrements on it. Brent said he didn't eat, drink, or use the restroom while in either location. It was only when he was about to be released and the jail had a lockdown did he use the restroom in the release area. When he was released, it was almost 96 hours later. Some of Brent's personal belongings were not returned to him. His stainless steel zippo lighter that Isaiah gave him, Kershaw knife, wooden sycamore spoon, and one credit card were missing. If you want to leave the jail, you have to sign a paper saying that you have your belongings. I quickly cancelled Brent's missing credit card.

When Brent saw us he burst into tears and said, "I'm sorry." He wasn't sorry for doing anything wrong. He was sorry for inconveniencing us and for our sadness. His third word was "water." We got him a drink. He told us of the conditions inside.

Two guards were standing outside in the parking lot. Brent indicated that one of them was the warden. I went over to him and said what I had just been told was not right. I told him that I had a voice and that I would speak. Yet, it is only after writing about over 80 topics and several years later that I decided that I needed to write, raise my voice, about it. It is a perfect example of how we can sometimes bury our painful experiences allowing the same experiences to continue.

Brent said that he was planning the ways to be able to end his experience. He said he would die if he went back. The thought of losing him was too much to bear. If there was a 1 % chance that he would die, I did not want to take that risk again. I would do whatever I could to protect him. Instead of going to his next court appearance, Brent went into the woods planning to never to leave. The world was too painful. For two and a half years, Brent's plan was a reality.

When I look back, the foreshadowing is eerie. The rural location... The guns pointing at Brent and my children... The isolation cell and corruption with virtually no transparency. A female with a story... Loss of personal property. Conclusion... Learn from the past. Call on Jesus to save.

Mr. Hallberg

Between my two doctors, I had gone to 27 appointments during the summer months. Now that break was nearly over, even though God's healing process wasn't finished. I prayed to God that He would somehow carry me through this time.

Over 200 sick days had accumulated over the years because every effort had been made not to miss. Due to my health, I had to release control and trust a substitute. The beginning of a school year sets the atmosphere for the year ahead and is so important for meeting state goals!

How would I manage the demands of working multiple days in a row? Not ready to give up, resigning was not an option. I purposefully scheduled a doctor's appointment during the already shortened first week just to have a chance to recuperate. My daddy didn't raise a quitter, but I was well aware of my limitations! My struggles during the summer months had reminded me that I have a God who saves! I prayed for help for both myself and my unknown students.

God answers prayers! He is so good and faithful! In the morning of the first day of classes, Mr. Hallberg just showed up at my classroom door. Recognizing him as an older gentleman who had substituted in the building during the prior school year but forgetting my prayer, I wondered why he had arrived at my door. Was

there a mistake on the date of my sick leave form? He explained that he was volunteering. He said he just felt like coming to school and thought that someone could use extra help. Arriving at the school, he had learned that he would be my sub for the next day. He wondered if it was alright if he could observe my routine, set up, and get to know some of the students. He stayed all day. Alright? It was a very direct and quick answer to my prayers!

What a Godsend! God not only heard my prayer, but He showed me favor beyond my expectations! My body needed more time to heal and additional challenges that could not have been foreseen were just around the corner. I missed about 30 days of school that year. Mr. Hallberg was able to be there for the vast majority of those days, providing consistency. On days that he subbed for other teachers, he worked with my students as his schedule allowed. More help arrived at my door that year than any other year, providing certain students with the individual and small group attention they needed.

Mr. Hallberg became more than a substitute for my class. News had spread amongst the staff that he was a former pastor. God knew my love for my job and students, but my trials were just beginning. He also knew that I was preoccupied with my day-to-day life. He brought one of His servants to me.

When I faced great challenges, Mr. Hallberg, an honorable man, offered great wisdom when asked. His insight came from God. I am thankful for his help and example. He is a living sacrifice to God. A couple of years after working with Mr. Hallberg, I found out that he was in his 70's. How many people that age are capable and willing to lead a class of youngsters? His energy comes from a mighty power source.

It is not the academics or money that drives him to continue. He genuinely cares about other people. In the process of caring, his light shines. He must be physically around others so that when the Holy Spirit opens a door in someone's

heart, he is ready to respond. He is God's soldier working on the front lines allowing the Holy Spirit to work through him on a continual basis. I thank God for putting him in my path.

The Bible tells us that the harvest is great, but the workers are few. You do not need to be an overseas missionary to spread the Good News! You don't have to put Jesus into every sentence. When you show concern for others, unexplainable peace, and joy abounding, others will see the light within you. In time, they too will reach for the light.

A Healing

Several years ago, on a very warm March day, my family decided to do some work on some land that we owned. Nature had taken its toll over the winter months and the driveway needed some maintenance. Using our old dump truck and a tractor, my husband unloaded the gravel slowly. I worked with a rake to smooth it out. My body started hurting because I had not been as physically active during the winter months. The "younger generation" was taking over more of the physical tasks.

I expected to feel better in a few days. Days turned into weeks and weeks into months. Instead, the pain got worse. Never one to miss work and proud of my stockpile of sick days, I took over the counter pain reliever 3 times per day. I still had pain, but it was reduced enough to be able to complete my job. My teaching style was modified to minimize physical exertion. Even with medicine, the pain intensified and was now visibly affecting my mobility. A few of my co-workers asked if I was OK. I lied by saying I was fine, just recovering. The opposite was true. My condition continued to deteriorate.

One day while at work, my leg started to tingle. That got my attention very quickly. Pain was one thing. The tingling scared me. I googled "tingling leg" and didn't like the search results. With a general mistrust for the pharmaceutical and

medical communities, I searched for a more holistic approach and tried chiropractic care. Not about to be man handled, I found a female chiropractor within driving distance. My voice must have conveyed my desperation to the secretary because she suggested an appointment for that afternoon.

I didn't know what to expect. After my paperwork was finished, I started looking around the waiting room. Its interesting information put me into sensory overload. The radio played a soft mix of music that included my favorites. Quietly, via closed captioned services, a documentary about monoculture farming practices and the pesticides used to combat increasingly resilient weeds played on the TV. A rack held magazines that offered healthy choices for me personally and for the environment. On a different wall was an assortment of laminated medical articles. I wanted to absorb it all at once.

When the doctor was ready, she listened to my symptoms. Pressure on my sciatic nerve was causing the tingling sensation. There were other problems, loads of pain, and mobility issues, but the scary feeling was gone. I was grateful and left in a daze.

Almost to the end of the school year, I forced myself to make it through May. Then, I would rest and heal during the summer months. With flawed thinking, I only acknowledged physical exertion as the reason for pain. Unrecognized at the time, complex elements for disaster gathered in and around me... chemical, physical, and psychological stressors. Worst of all, my spiritual life was in limp mode.

The school year ended with my hobbling about. More rest didn't help. Neither did more chiropractic visits. Instead of getting better, my pain increased. Baffled and humbled, I went to a medical doctor. When the doctor hit my knee with a hammer type of medical tool, nothing happened. She hit it again. Again, no

response. Lab results showed that 17 of 35 categories were “out of range.” I was anemic, low on Vitamin D, and my nerves were not responding properly.

Over time, dosages for the nerve medicine, Gabapentin, kept increasing. Potential side effects were nightmares and suicide. The doctor also prescribed Naproxen with possible long-term side effects including an increased risk for a stroke and gastrointestinal bleeding. The point of going to the doctor for medicine was to prevent damage from my reliance on over the counter pain killers.

My chiropractor was also concerned by the increased dosages of medicine, but it was obvious that things were not getting better. The recommended stretches only made me feel worse. She talked about the 3 kinds of stress: emotional, physical, and chemical. After 27 months of loving three foster girls, we were told that we would be able to adopt them... only if the oldest had a surgery she didn't want. There's emotional stress. My original overexertion of raking had been a physical stressor that had worsened dramatically with time. I thought chemical stressors were absent. Not a smoker or a drinker, I was oblivious to preservatives and chemicals hiding in food, pop, and treated water.

What had originally started out as just back pain now had moved to include my joints... especially my knees. Soon after, my entire body hurt, a trait of undiagnosed fibromyalgia. My summer break had arrived and instead of enjoying it with my family, I was lucky just to walk from the bedroom to the living room. What was the point and how long was I supposed to live in pain? Depressed and frustrated, I felt like I was 100 years old and that someone had taken a baseball bat to me.

I don't want to sound like a baby. There is a happy ending to this misery. This is written so that if anybody with this type of pain reads it, they might be encouraged and know there is hope. Completely broken and desperate, I put my desires aside and cried out to God. I couldn't deal with the thought of endless pain with no hope for improvement. I didn't want to kill myself. I just wished for

death, freedom from the constant, horrible pain. When Roman was born and I technically died, I had felt an amazing sense of peace. I was ready to go back, but it seemed unfair to leave Brent by himself to finish raising the family. I was supposed to be his helper...not another person who needed his help.

One night I hobbled to my bed, flopped down, and cried myself to sleep. Sleep was needed, but it meant another morning would follow. Mornings were always the worst. Upon awakening, my whole body felt like it had frozen in place. It hurt to move anything. Despite the pain, I wiggled my toes, then my foot. Stretching systematically, it hurt as each part "broke free." Pain, a constant companion, did reduce as the day progressed. The process relentlessly repeated itself. How humbling to realize that I only recognized the blessing of good health when it had vanished! I had gone through life thinking that good health was entitled to me.

Strength left me. At 42 years old, I was practically unable to get out of bed. A strategy needed to be implemented. I flopped my arm over my torso and pulled on the side of my mattress to turn my body from laying on my back to laying on my side. Then, I grabbed my nightstand and pushed upwards. Sometimes, my hands were needed to pull on my legs so that they were pointed toward the floor. My legs felt incredibly heavy, too heavy to move by themselves. Furniture and the wall were used for support as I made my way to the bathroom. In the toughest times, this "unfreezing" process took about an hour. I know because I watched the clock while stretching. This unwanted challenge greeted me each day.

I talked to my mom about my symptoms. She put her hands on me and prayed for my healing and to find the right doctors. I had a chiropractor and a primary physician. What other doctors could I need? Perhaps the Great Physician would be a good choice. My primary physician told me to take medications for the rest of my life to minimize symptoms. By then, I was taking several prescribed drugs and numerous supplements. My chiropractor encouraged me to research about stressors on the body and the impact of my diet. She wanted me to think of my

body as a broken machine and try to discover what could repair it. Countless hours were spent learning via the internet.

How could I eat plenty of hamburgers and be anemic? Obviously, my body was not absorbing the nutrients it was given. Researching my every symptom and the effect of different foods and chemicals at the cellular level, God led me to a medical doctor on youtube. He claimed that fibromyalgia symptoms could disappear with a diet change. There was no drug that could do that! Without prayer, I would have dismissed his claim as “too good to be true.” Now, he had my attention. He said that our bodies were not designed for the preservatives we consume, for the sugar we love to eat, or for so much grain. Everything I love to eat can cause inflammation, which puts pressure on nerves and thus creates pain.

What if this man were right? What if eliminating sources of inflammation while eating great quantities of anti-inflammatory foods could heal me? Wrestling within my mind, a negative voice told me that it wasn't possible. It would require an immense amount of motivation and control. There was no proof.

God provided very nutritious plants and animals for us to eat. Mankind has transformed naturally helpful foods into unhealthy, highly processed, addictive substitutes. My selfish desires wanted the most intense delicious flavors. Was it worth a try to be healed simply through continual prayer and a completely natural diet? Yes!

At one time, my question had been, “How long must I live with this pain?” If there was some sort of time frame, at least a goal could be created. If prayer and a diet change could prevent or eliminate this pain within a year, was it worth the struggle? Yes! Research continued. Again, on youtube, a video explained the life cycle of a cell within the body. To produce healthy new cells, it would probably take about 3 months. My cells were sick and needed the very best. Over time,

my body had accumulated contaminants. God gave me the peace, faith, hope, patience, and self-control as I waited to be transformed and restored.

Fresh fruits and vegetables were my exclusive diet for about 3 weeks. After that, meat and cheese were gradually added. What is a salad without cheese? My personal grocery list consisted of single ingredient foods, with a major emphasis on anti-inflammatory ones. I did not want to add more stress to my life by forcing myself to eat something that I disliked or that was expensive. If food was sold in a box, can, or plastic, every ingredient on the label was read. Food with preservatives, any sugar, corn syrup, or gluten never went on my plate! Taking no chances, all restaurants were avoided.

We had an abundant supply of blackberries and raspberries growing wild on a piece of our property. Hobbling about, as many were eaten straight from the plant as put into the freezer for later months. My husband helped me to identify wild edibles that grew in nature. Plantain, clover, nettle, and other “weeds” found in nature were now on my menu. They were free to harvest and had extremely rich nutrients.

Perhaps God knew I was too frugal to buy “healthy bacteria,” but that it would help me. When free diving, many packages of discarded probiotics were found. For no additional cost, it was added to my gut. Water was my only drink, the vast majority coming straight from a spring. With lab results showing a lack of trace minerals, I wanted to provide every building block possible for new cells to be healthy. Regular salt was replaced with pink Himalayan sea salt.

God gave me strength to resist temptation during this major lifestyle change. When others thought that my diet changes were too extreme and told me to indulge in “just a bite,” it was politely declined. Hiding my condition as much as possible, they didn’t realize the seriousness of my situation. Faced with intense

pain and a long list of things left to do, my earthly desires for ice cream, pizza, spaghetti and bread were denied. Sometimes it really seemed like torture.

Doubt played games with my mind. There was no guarantee that these attempts would have a positive impact. Some pray for and receive an instant healing. That was not my expectation and did not happen. We prayed for an understanding of the problem and a solution. Accepting either a healing or death, either scenario was more appealing than enduring a life of constant pain. It didn't seem like it would be God's will.

Realizing my mobility limitations, I inquired about an online job to replace my regular teaching position. It was supplemental, not a full-time job. Working at home was not an option. I was not an invalid, but responsibilities needed to be reduced. My job as an after school tutor was the first to go. I prayed to God for help through this time.

That summer, 27 doctors' appointments filled my calendar. I wondered about the logistics of maneuvering through a school building. Just the staff meeting held before the school year began was challenging because of the pain from sitting in a hard chair. How was I supposed to teach if I couldn't even sit in a chair? Serious doubts about my physical ability to manage a class of energetic first grade students haunted my mind.

The secretary expressed her observations that I was moving at turtle speed down the hall. Genuinely concerned, she didn't want me to become addicted. The Gabapentin prescribed was a controlled substance with a "street value." Her apprehension was understood. I was concerned too and hoped to eliminate the medicine as soon as possible. Praise God, addiction was never an issue!

Not trying to lose weight, 10 pounds for 3 months in a row melted away. It just happened. For those who had not seen me all summer, they were surprised at my condition when school was ready to start again in late August. With a hobble

that couldn't be disguised and 30 pounds lighter, my own children teased me. Waddling like a penguin, especially if I'd been sitting for any length of time, I was happy just to move.

Guess what? I started to heal! It took about 3 months for me to notice improvement. Feeling especially good one day, right after Gabapentin had been increased again, I wanted to test my limitations. In my ambition, I decided to burn some trash in a burn barrel. A bag was added to the metal barrel. I waited in a lawn chair until it had burnt away and repeated. In this process, two embers popped out of the barrel and landed on my left wrist. Looking at them confused me. My mind said that it should hurt. It did hurt, but not as much as my joints and muscles.

Even on a high dosage of Gabapentin, the pain running throughout my body was worse than two burning embers laying on my wrist. I decided to flick the embers off because it didn't seem like they should be there. Walking to a freezer to get an ice cube was an unappealing option. The pain of walking to the freezer would have been greater than the relief of the ice cube. A few minutes later, I was surprised by two blisters on my wrist. It was a sign that even though healing had begun, the road to recovery was far from over! To this day, the scar reminds me of this time in my life and of how God came to my rescue.

Continuing with the very careful diet, in 5 months I felt great. Eating two bites of stuffing and a small piece of pumpkin pie with whipped cream on Thanksgiving, no side effects were caused by the gluten, sugar, or preservatives. The next month, my medical doctor noticed my improved physical state and prescribed medications were reduced. God continued to give me self-control and peace as I followed the strict diet... allowing approximately one serving of gluten per month. After about 9 months of a drastic lifestyle change, ALL medications had been eliminated.

New lab reports showed every category analyzed was within recommended specifications. Asking the doctor about the medicine she had told me I'd need for the rest of my life, she replied, "You don't have to take it. You're all better."

My mind heard, "You're healed!"

Thrilled to be pain free, my focus shifted to improving strength. There was a time when it was a struggle for me to carry three clean shirts or one pair of jeans from the laundry area to my bedroom. Any more than that amount of weight was just too much. Improving, I found joy and thankfulness for being able to carry 7 shirts at one time. Once needing to put both of my feet on every step, grip the handrail with one hand and use the wall for additional support with the other hand, now I had improved stability and coordination. In time, I walked up and down steps with one foot per step and let go of the wall. Finally, the handrail was no longer needed. By the following year, I was able to help my family gather and carry small pieces of firewood on a hillside!

It would be nice to end this story here with healing and learning my lesson... but that was only partially true. I slowly increased servings of gluten to once per week instead of once per month. At times, my tongue felt like needles poked it or it went numb. Occasionally, I lost feeling in the side of my mouth and accidentally bit it. It was very odd. My mouth was incredibly sensitive to gluten and preservatives. When this happened, I leaned on God to again give me more self-control and my symptoms disappeared.

You might think that by now I would have learned to stay away from food that causes me problems. Unfortunately, that fleshly side of me still tries to find the fine line of how much gluten and preservatives my body can handle before feeling the consequences. Ice cream, strawberry licorice, and "real" pizza still tempt me on a regular basis. Fortunately, now subtle signs of distress quickly cause me to change my habits to avoid greater unpleasanties.

Many times, illness is directly related to stress and diet. I had imposed all three types of worldly stressors on myself at once. Mental, physical, and chemical stressors from the world confronted me with negative energy. God has given all of us the answer to the stress problem. He has said many times not to fear. Don't worry. Trust Him. It's not His fault if we disobey and insist on carrying unnecessary burdens.

God is the ultimate power source emanating positive energy. His power can recharge and renew us from the negative forces in the world. We are our own barrier to His solution. Like a battery, we need a solid connection to fully recharge when we have been drained. Unfortunately, because of my stubborn, self-reliant pride and indifference to the living power source, I had seldom recharged with His positive presence. It took an extreme situation to get my attention, draw me closer to Him, keep me plugged in, and give me new life.

In September of 2020 I was watching The Return event hosted in Washington DC. Through a translator, two people speaking Spanish asked for people who needed healing to reach upward and accept it. I knew that God had already healed me a few years earlier, but I raised my hands anyhow and prayed a short prayer that if there was anything else God wanted to do, that He go ahead. The next morning, I easily reached down to the floor and picked up a towel.

This might not sound like a big deal to you, but for me, it was incredible! Both my chiropractor and MD had told me that I'd never bend beyond the point where my hands went lower than my knees. Strategies had been developed for picking things up from off the floor. Without thinking, with my legs together and knees completely straight, I was able to touch the floor! I did it again just to make sure it had not been imagined. God completely restored my back. My only actions for this gift were to raise my hands and tell God that He could fix anything. Those two things do not scientifically result in any change. Happy for so long not to be in

pain and to have strength, I had forgotten about my previous flexibility. God remembered and fixed me! What a Great Physician! Praise God!

I'm not Telling

When working at school one day, the secretary received a phone number for me to call someone regarding my mom. Nobody had ever contacted me at school about my mother, so I called ASAP. The mysterious caller said that my mom had been admitted to our local hospital and intended to keep it secret from my sister and me. As soon as I finished with my work, I went to visit my mom.

I arrived at the hospital and found my mom's room. With the door open wide, my mom's voice wafted into the hall as she casually talked to another lady. Trying not interrupt my mom's visit with this other woman, I quietly waited outside her room. I was standing there for about thirty seconds to a minute when I heard my mom very clearly exclaim, "and I am not telling Ty and April." (April is my sister.)

That was it. I couldn't wait any more. I walked in the room and asked, "What are you not telling Ty and April?"

Surprised by my presence, she didn't answer me! Instead, she asked me how long I had been standing by the door and how much I had overheard. I said that I had been standing by the door long enough to hear her say, "I'm not telling Ty and April." I wanted to know the big secret.

My mom's sugar level was 585 when she was admitted to the hospital. Then, in response to treatment, her sugar level had dropped dangerously low. Below 70 is considered dangerous. 90-120 is the normal range. If you are above 300, you should seek medical help. At 600, diabetic coma becomes a reality. She didn't want to worry us. When I arrived, her sugar level had stabilized in the 300 range.

I later told a friend who works as an EMT about my mom's sugar level. She said that 585 was the highest sugar reading she had ever heard of without the person going into a coma. God's timing was perfect. My mom's friend, who is a retired nurse, had stopped at my mom's house to pick her up for church services. She noticed my mom's state of confusion. Another lady at church was struggling with high blood pressure that evening. Friends urged her to go to the hospital to have it checked out. Since the lady with high blood pressure was headed to the emergency room, friends also decided that my mom should go also as a precautionary measure. At the hospital, the lady with high blood pressure was treated and released. My mom was admitted.

God fit all the pieces together to get my mom necessary medical care and for me to overhear at exactly the right moment. Why? We hear of unfortunate incidents where someone was at the wrong place at the wrong time. This was the exact opposite. There must be a purpose, a reason for everything to "fall into place" that evening. God knows.

Dairy Queen

As a young child, my mom taught me the joy of garage sales. When just 5 or 6 years old, I used to count out nickels and dimes to buy clothes for my doll and

stuffed animals. Finding treasures at yard sales continues to be a blessing and adventure in my life.

One sunny summer day, my mom and I had gone to yard sales in a neighboring town. It had been a good day, finding lots of bargains, but a hot one. The sun and the activity had worn on us. It was time for sales to be closing and we were ready for some ice cream! Reflecting about the day and talking about general family matters, my mom asked about Roman's new girlfriend.

Not wanting to be judgmental or to worry my mom about Roman's "significant other," I spoke carefully. Roman's girlfriend was polite to me and there didn't appear to be conflicts, but under the surface I sensed danger. Something bothered me. The only book she brought for her daughter to read while visiting me was a book about witches and potions. I did not agree with her reading selection but was thankful for the insight as to what she wanted her child to learn! Knowing how persuasive feelings of love can be, I wanted to proceed with caution. If forced to take sides, my son could choose to distance me and become more entangled with this individual.

My mom asked about her again. Answering briefly, my mom commented that I wasn't saying anything bad, but not good either. I told her that there may be more to this girlfriend than what Roman could see. My mom asked if I wanted to pray about it. Absolutely! Right there in the Dairy Queen, we asked for Roman to be able to have clarity and to see this woman for her true colors... whatever they might be.

The next weekend, Roman came to visit us. He informed our family that he had seen a side of this woman that could not be tolerated. Curious, I asked Roman when this determination had been made. It was a couple of hours after we had prayed. I then revealed to Roman that we had prayed for him to see her true personality. He had to see it for himself.

For the first time in his life, Roman thanked me for praying for him. He was so grateful that he made a special trip to my mom's house to thank her in person. For all of you moms, dads, grandparents, and prayer warriors out there praying... don't stop! It makes a difference!

The enemy is very persistent and very clever. He has had plenty of years to study human behavior and knows how to attack our weakest area. Our armor is vital for our own protection, as well as for our vulnerable loved ones! Intercessory prayer is an offensive weapon against enemy plans, even when it goes unrecognized by the recipients. Have faith and don't doubt that your prayer is being heard. The devil wants you to question the effectiveness of prayer so that you will stop praying and your loved ones will be easier to devour! Jesus reminds us to have patience.

God wants none to perish. When you pray for the salvation of others, you are praying in alliance with God's Word. It may not be when you want, but He Himself wants your loved ones to be saved!

Headlights in the Night

I have a great respect for nature and wonder at its beauty. My family and I have been compelled for some time to reduce our carbon footprint. As much as possible, we sought knowledge to improve our environmentally friendly lifestyle while sharing skills we had learned with others. This general mindset leads me to the setting for this story.

Nestled in gently rolling mountains, there was at a gathering of individuals from many different walks of life. We had two commonalities, a love for the earth and a desire for a more natural existence within our modern world. I had enjoyed a rejuvenating day mentally. Physically, I was exhausted. I shared the responsibility

of providing fun and educational activities for youth at the event. I felt as though the day had been worthwhile and productive. Now, rest was needed for the busy day awaiting me in the morning. There was just one problem. My mind was racing!

I laid awake on my cot in the tent for a long time. The night was cool, completely dark, and quiet. Then the inevitable happened. You guessed it. I had to go to the bathroom! Not wanting to leave my nice warm blankets to go out, in the middle of the night, I assured myself that it could wait until morning. You can guess again as to how well that worked. You might think, "Get up and go. Then you won't have to worry about it." That would have been the logical thing to do, but that would have been too easy. There were temporary facilities about 25 feet away, but fearful of a snake or spider going unnoticed with my dim headlamp, I didn't want to risk it. Modern restrooms were about 100 yards away. Again, I decided to just wait.

A big reason that sleep eluded me was that I knew Roman would be arriving sometime during the night. He was a primitive skills instructor at a camp in North Carolina. As soon as his workday finished, he would travel to join the group so that he could share his expertise. Because of nominal cell service, the variation in possible travel time, and the difficulty of finding the remote location in the dark, I had no idea of when Roman would arrive. He frequently drives slower than most travelers and has actually been pulled over by a police officer for driving 55 mph in a 70 mph speed limit area. When questioned about why he was impeding traffic, Roman simply stated the truth. He was trying to get the best gas mileage possible.

I was concerned for Roman's safety. He was driving a great distance after working all day and I had seen his ex-girlfriend earlier in the day. I wanted to protect him from any evil that might still be lurking. Tossing and turning for a long time, this also kept me awake.

I finally gave up on the idea of sleeping and walked the approximate 100 yards to the restroom. Surprising myself, I walked even further, past the restroom and towards several cars parked at the entrance of the event. Roman had said that afternoon that he planned to park there and sleep in his car until morning. Concerned that his ex-girlfriend might look for his car and try to persuade him to get back together, I went to check the models of the parked vehicles. None of them looked familiar. I started to turn around and head back toward the restroom when through the trees, headlights appeared in the distance. I paused and waited. What are the chances the lights would be from Roman's car? The lights grew brighter. It was Roman! I just happened to be standing in the middle of the road as he arrived at his destination.

Voicing my concerns about parking at the entrance, I asked if he would park beside my tent. The staff knew Roman and were already aware that he would be arriving during the night. He could officially check in when the registration table opened in the morning. I quickly explained how to find the tent and said that I'd be there in a few minutes. He agreed and went to park his car.

Getting back to the campsite about 5 minutes later, Roman's ex-girlfriend had already found him. My concerns were validated! In Dairy Queen, intercession had been strictly spiritual. This time, my physical presence fought in alliance with my prayers. Making myself an awkward third wheel, I stood with them until Roman was almost done preparing for sleep. Then I excused myself to the tent about three feet away. Comforted by God's perfect timing and obvious love for my son, I fell asleep almost instantly!

My summer break was almost gone and I still did not have a different job. I had a lack of motivation. I really didn't want a different job. I liked my job. I just didn't feel as if I would ever teach at the new building that was currently under construction for our district. The current buildings were supposed to be in use for one more year. After that, the buildings would be torn down or given to local communities if they were wanted by the elected officials.

I remember one day praying to God that He just "give me the ones who need love." What I meant by that was that I was willing to focus more on the emotional needs of my students than on pure academic achievement. Just a clue... don't ever say that to God unless you really mean it.

The first day of school came and I met my students. Wow! The previous year's teachers all stared and shook their heads as my class walked by. I heard, "Wow! You got all of them." "That's not fair." "You should complain." and "We did not do this. We divided them, but you have all of them.

What could I do? I knew it wasn't the principal's fault. I, after all, had been the one to submit myself to the extra work that I knew would ensue by giving permission to God to "give me the ones who need love." I felt that my emotional battery had been fully charged and I was ready to tackle such a challenge.

After the second day, I was talking to God about the problem. With a slightly different tone, I simply explained to Him that I was not going to do my students any good if I were absent and missing a bunch of school because I couldn't move. The stress was causing my entire body to ache. I was beginning to feel like I was waddling like a penguin again. I told God that if I were to be effective, I was going to require some help. Something needed to be done to meet the diverse needs of my class and to relieve my stress from such a workload. Was the district going to hire an aide just for me? That idea was highly unlikely.

It was either the very next day or two days later that God answered my prayer. No, the district didn't hire another aide. The head teacher came to my classroom door and asked if I was interested in hosting someone from a local college to observe. I had one question. "Is the person allowed to help?" You guessed it. Yes, she was able to help!

In her training to become a teacher's aide, this young lady was able to work on various tasks within the classroom, including redirecting students' attention. Helpful to me in the classroom, this individual had some of her own challenges. She wore two hearing aids that were absolutely needed. She had her permit to drive but had never obtained a Driver's License. I was able to help this individual with a ride back to her home after the school day had ended when she would have had to walk several miles to her aunt's home. She didn't let adversity stop her from achieving her goal. She demonstrated perseverance.

After about a week of classes, I thought that God must have made a mistake on my class roster. There was a little boy who had never made it to my class. I figured that the boy must have moved. Maybe God didn't account for that. Then again, I have been wrong before. God didn't make a mistake. I saw in the payday news for school employees that a homebound tutor was needed. What are the chances that the tutor was for the missing student still on my class roster?

I submitted a letter of interest to the district stating that I was interested in homebound tutoring, but only if it were for the student who was listed on my class roster. You guessed it. It was the same little boy. In my heart, I really didn't want to tutor. I had reduced my responsibilities by eliminating tutoring. My class was the "most energetic" of any class I had worked with in 20 years. I was exhausted. In addition to the regular academic activities, I was even doing the "extra" motivational activities with them like making ice cream from scratch, having a garden harvest tasting, and making homemade applesauce. I was determined for these kids to like school, even if it took everything I had.

I was given a notice that I could start homebound tutoring 5 hours per week after the school day had ended. The homebound student has a disease that results in very brittle bones. Thus, broken bones seemed inevitable each year. Along with physical challenges, this smart young man had an intense aversion to academics. He did everything possible to ignore anything educational with me. My patience was tested. He didn't think he would ever need to read. He was planning on staying at home with his mom for the rest of his life. What an interesting conclusion! It was a challenge for the entire family. I hope I was able to encourage both my student and his family. I appreciate the time that I was able to spend with them.

God listened and gave my request. Be careful what you say to God. About 6 months later, I would learn that this was just one group that needed love. Soon, my eyes would be opened to another group and then finally to an immeasurably wider population than I could have imagined.

Part III No Fear, Just Love- Shaking and Awakening

I Didn't Mean This!

Then something happened that I never imagined....

We thought that with the adoptions finalized that a new chapter was beginning and that struggles would ease away. We were ready for a new chapter... a time for healing. We didn't realize that our challenges were about to increase. If I

knew then what I know now, I may not have signed on the dotted line. I would've said that it's too much to bear. I can't and don't want to live through it.

God's smart though. Our eyesight grows stronger only as we grow and can handle the responsibilities of the improved vision. He only gives us as much as we can handle. Each time, refining us like gold. Impurities refined until we shine. Like a blacksmith, He often uses fire or hardships to help us reach our potential.

The events in our future would challenge my family and I beyond what I ever imagined. I don't suppose Joseph was very happy when his brothers threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery. The betrayal must have crushed his spirit just as his new surroundings brought humility to his life. The time at hand offered us the greatest opportunity ever to be humbled and to depend on God. I

I got a call that one of my daughters that I had adopted, had run away. Our future dreams crumbled. My family was scattered. In one day, my world turned upside down. I did not have a chance to say good-bye to my former students, co-workers, or youngest children. My privacy that I had guarded for so long was quickly taken away as I was strip searched and given a jumpsuit to wear and foam crocks. My underwear, bra and socks were taken. I was put in a room with a toilet in full view of everyone in the room and anyone who passed by the cameras... most likely to be recorded. Just to pee, complete strangers could watch as they pleased. This would probably unnerve many people. For someone who had their second child at home to preserve privacy, it was a definite obstacle to overcome.

I never entered my workplace again. The school closed on schedule and has been demolished. I am not permitted to step foot on the beautiful property that we thought would keep us from harm during difficult times we foresaw facing our country. I can't hardly believe this is my life. In a very real sense, I died on March 1, 2019. My life as I knew it vanished.

You're Approved

I was able to get paid from my employer for 5 days without a doctor's excuse. After that, I needed a doctor's note. I was able to provide two notes from two different doctors. One excused me from work for one month. The other had no given time frame. I still was concerned about long term

Again, I found that I was asking God for His help and the help from additional prayer warriors.

Wake Up!

Isaiah was ordered to appear in court at 9:00 am. Shortly thereafter, Isaiah had been given an appointment for a job interview in North Carolina the day before his court appearance, an approximate 8 hours driving distance from the courthouse and in the opposite direction of our home. I thought it was too big of a risk to go to an interview and possibly risk some sort of complication that would make it impossible to attend court on time. At the time of the interview, Isaiah was not even eligible for the job because of the charges pending against him. It seemed like very bad timing.

Isaiah thought I was being overly cautious and went to the interview. He drove for about 12 hours and made it there with just a little bit of time to spare. The interview had gone well. He thought he might be offered the job if all his charges were dropped. He was tired but now needed to drive approximately 8 more

hours to make it to court. This was another concern for me because he would be driving through an area with spotty cell service. There was no guarantee that anyone would be able to reach him. He planned to get a little sleep before court in the morning, but he would still be tired. Isaiah can be difficult to awaken. He sleeps like a rock.

Desi and I agreed to meet Isaiah at 8:00 am to make sure that we were all ready and looked presentable. Desi and I were attending just for moral support. 8:00 came and went with no signs of Isaiah. We tried calling him. His phone was going directly to voicemail. Either he had his phone off or he had no service. I was desperate and felt completely helpless. I believed there was absolutely nothing that I could do to help him. Wrong! A memory flashed in my mind, along with a renewed sense of hope.

Sometime within the past two years, while sleeping I had heard the words, "Wake up." I didn't know why these words were chosen on that particular day. There was no dream or vision to accompany them... just the two words. The voice was the same voice that about 15 years earlier had told me to stay in the pirate ship pool. Without hesitation, I obeyed and was fully awake. For once, my snooze button had a day to rest. I wondered if there was some sort of danger. There did not seem to be any reason why I should have needed to wake up at that given moment. After the day passed by uneventfully, I forgot about it.

Waiting in the parking lot, the words, voice, and my reaction to them came back to me. Quickly, I prayed a fervent prayer. Having complete faith, I did not see why God would not take care of this problem. God had intervened so many times in my life when I hadn't even known to ask. Why would He skip it this time? Fully convinced that Isaiah was sleeping and not out of a service area, I asked God to stir Isaiah... to wake him up... to speak to him... to get his attention.

A few minutes later, we called Isaiah again. This time, after several rings, instead of getting the voicemail message, Isaiah picked up the phone. He had been sleeping. When learning the time, he was shocked that it was so late and promised to meet us in a closer location to conserve time. He got there with just enough time for us to run a lint roller over his suit before heading into court.

In court, the prosecutor offered to drop all charges against Isaiah if he would agree to say that the police had a justifiable reason to suspect him of wrongdoing. Isaiah had to repeat a statement to the judge that he would not sue the law enforcement departments for their actions. It is reasonable to assume that if Isaiah had slept through the proceedings, a bench warrant would have been issued for a failure to appear in court. Praise God for His divine intervention!

I believe that God told me to wake up on that random morning so that I would remember how effective His voice can be. I had obeyed the voice without question. How powerful God's voice can be when we are listening and obey! If I had ignored the voice telling me to wake up, I probably would not have thought to pray. God steps in when He is wanted and needed. When we try to solve problems using our own methods, God allows us to try and fail on our own.

Over time, I've also wondered if the words were meant to serve a dual purpose. They certainly reminded me to ask God to physically wake up Isaiah. I wonder if they were also encouraging me to wake up spiritually. I wonder how many have received the same message.

A Quest for Truth

When my family was first arrested, we went into a shock. Nothing made sense anymore. To see my husband on a video visit through a computer monitor type of screen, we traveled 10 hours round trip. My husband, 2 children over 18 and I were all arrested on March 1. It was cold outside. Extended family went to a court appearance in early March and insisted that we stay in a hotel with them. It was still very cold, so we stayed at a Motel 6 one night between video visits.

We were allowed two, fifteen minute visits per week. We scheduled them on days that were back to back to that we could drive about 5 hours, stay overnight, and then drive back the next day. This would allow Brent to be able to see us on 2 different days. It might seem like a lot of trouble, but we want to do everything we can on the outside to keep his mind as healthy as possible. Yes, it is a lot of driving and expense just to see someone on a screen that could just as easily be a million miles away. Our concern was my husband's sanity. We felt that the visual, even through a video screen, was helpful for his mental stability.

In the beginning, Brent was in isolation for about 2 months. My internet research about inmates' mental health after extended isolation were not encouraging. Even though expensive, we used and still use every method available to help Brent's mental health.

We started doing the math and realized that we needed a cheaper alternative. We started looking for temporary housing. There were no vacancies anywhere that would rent month by month. All landlords wanted us to sign a year lease. We looked and called everywhere. I did not want to keep renting a room. At \$60 a night, we would be out of money very quickly. I was so sad. Every time I had stayed in a hotel room in my entire life, it had always been for a happy reason. Now I was looking at paying a big expense and I didn't even enjoy it. When all hope seemed lost, I thought of an acquaintance I had met awhile ago.

We call her Squash because she gave us some squash seeds a few years ago. Squash lived about an hour away from where my husband was being held. I had only met her on four different times, but I thought that there was a chance that she would let us stay with her. She had struck me as a person of character... not really fitting into society's standards. Adhering to her own rules and devoted to being a living example by living in a minimalistic way. She was happy to let us stay overnight. I hated to intrude. It was a very humbling experience for me.

Try to imagine this... it is a true story. Squash said that we could stay, but that her family wouldn't be there that night because of a previous obligation. I was not wanting to stay in her home without her, but she insisted that we should come and stay and we needed a place to go. We went to meet her and her family at her home so that we would already be set up for the night when we came back. Instead of being upset by the inconvenience, she was happy to see me again!

We moved some furniture around in the room that was offered to us to use. We had our cots and blankets with us. She showed us an old credit card and showed us how to break into her house because she didn't have an extra key to give us. The house was minimally heated since she is concerned about the environment and normally the whole family piles into the room with the woodstove on winter nights. We didn't see her after the video visit because she was gone, but we texted our thanks. What a strange night!

It really touched my heart that Squash was willing to give us a place to rest our heads when the rest of the world seemed to disown us. Squash's husband went into rehab shortly after our first visit. She said that she was struggling financially because they earned their living by doing odd construction type of jobs and he was in rehab when she needed him the most. She doesn't know it, but I prayed for her. She has such an open heart. Many would claim that she is rough around the edges. Her heart is sweet and she is kind.

The next time that we saw her, Squash had two travelers staying with her, along with their seven dogs. Squash said that she felt like a “holy roller.” She knew she needed help with her workload and while in town, she ran across these two travelers. She said that they looked worn out. She told them of a safer way to navigate through the town with their dogs. If they walked along the railroad tracks, they would run into fewer other dogs and minimize potential conflict. The nice person that she is... simply led by her heart or perhaps the Holy Spirit... she let them stay in her home. They were thankful for a place to rest. Squash was grateful because he was able and willing to help with some construction projects.

If I would have gone just by their belongings or appearances, I would’ve been way too judgmental of the travelers. God says that I shouldn’t judge at all. I am so guilty of judging and stereotyping others. It is a difficult habit to break. They were very good for me to expand my thinking. They were both veterans. Ten years ago, they would’ve been honored as defenders of the country. Now, most would turn their heads to not have to think about their dismal condition.

They hoped to give a couple of the dogs to wounded vets in other states. They were on foot and had a wagon to pull the little dogs and their belongings. They had much more knowledge and thought about the world than I would have ever guessed. They were loving. I could see it in their eyes, by how they treated each other and their dogs. They said that they were on a quest. A quest to find truth.

Their traveling names are Trinket and Snoopy. With the passing of time, we heard they had made it to their destination and were headed back west. I hope that one day we meet again under better circumstances. This craziness of my life is causing me to meet all kinds of new people that I would normally look away from. What a humbling look into my heart to see how judgmental I have been for many years. I am on my own quest for truth. My mind was perplexed. I could identify more with them more than many others I had encountered. I pray for them whenever they cross my mind. I hope that they find “the way, the truth, and the life.”

We stayed with Squash a couple more times when we traveled south for video visits. We decided that maybe it was for the best that we didn't get an apartment. In this tough time, it was helpful for me to be in the same house with Roman, Isaiah, and Desi. Extended family was also nearby for emotional support. It was worth the drive to maintain somewhat of a life back at my regular residence. It was a life... it was just a life with extreme changes.

Now that it was April, it was getting a little bit warmer. In our traumatic state, we had forgotten that we love the outdoors. We are not afraid of weather challenges! We started camping between our video visits. This brought nature back into our lives and helped remind me of the simplistic beauty that is around me every day. I just need to stop and realize the gift in front of me.but

After Snoopy and Trinket headed back out on the road, Squash still needed help. She ran into someone named Billy. He needed a place to stay, and she let him stay. He said that it has been a life changing experience for him and that he has been able to get the help that he was needing. Sometimes, people just need the kindness of another person or family to completely change their lives.

cal

Update: We heard that Trinket and Snoopy now have a home and have settled in the south.

Another update: The day before I revised this topic, Desi sent Trinket a message letting her know that we had changed our phone number. Trinket replied that Snoopy had been put in jail 4 days earlier for prior marijuana charges and an unknown warrant. He had been arrested and had no money for bail. Desi notified most of our other contacts 4 days ago about our phone number change, but had to notify them separately on facebook because they did not have a phone...just the facebook page that they use occasionally when they have internet access. If Desi had messaged immediately, we wouldn't have known

because we very rarely check facebook...in fact she used my son's account to send the message and usuSally we don't have a reason to check his page.

Desi and I called Isaiah and Roman to see what they thought about the situation. Without getting the opinions of anyone else, all 4 of us immediately thought that we should help get him out of jail if possible. Isaiah was a couple of hours away from where he was being housed and was able to get the bond together so that Snoopy wouldn't have to wait until Jan. 13, his next court date. The day before we talked to them, I was given notice of a Jan. 13th court date also. It appeared that I was going to be ordered to pay child support for my children in foster care.

We were able to bail Snoopy out for \$1500. Snoopy said it was a miracle that he was out and couldn't believe it. Some might think this was extremely foolish and that we were simply nuts. A few days later, Snoopy found out his dad was in the hospital. Snoopy didn't know it, but it would be his last chance to see his dad alive. He didn't go to visit. We talked to Snoopy later as he lamented his decision not to visit his dad. He thought he would get better. I believe we bailed him out not knowing that there was a man about to die who wanted to see his imprisoned son. When you feel like a miracle has been given to you, be careful with your gift. Don't take it for granted. Now, Snoopy must deal with the heartache of knowing that he was given a last chance to see his dad and he didn't do it. That is rough.

Later, we were again contacted by Snoopy and Trinket wanting some money to stay in a motel, this time the 4 of us had mixed feelings. We agreed to one night, but the Spirit was telling all of us not more than that.

One day in the mail we got a surprise. It was from the court system. Snoopy's bail money was returned to us. He must have kept his court date. We figured that we would probably never see it again. I am hopeful that the prayers are having an affect on their lives. I have a feeling that this topic is still a work in progress. I will keep praying for them to find the truth we all need.

Key point- generosity...Listen to the Holy Spirit

Challenge- Squash vs church members... action vs spoken words of love

- Reach out of your comfort zone
Be ready – I was unprepared when he said they were on a quest for truth--- Jesus says He is the way, the truth and life

2013 Scion FRS Vs. Deer

Isaiah fell in love with a 2013 Scion FRS. I can understand why he wanted it. It was a tiny, sporty black car, sitting very low to the ground. Although I thought this car was extremely impractical for our lifestyle, Isaiah said he would make payments if I would loan him the money. Against my better judgement, I was persuaded. He was so excited to show it to me and take me for a ride. Once inside the car, I was hopeful I could climb out.

Then came the arrest of four in our family. Our finances changed dramatically. Then my truck broke AGAIN! Toyotas are not supposed to break! When it rains, it pours! Two 15-minute video visits with Brent were allowed per week, but only to those who came to the jail and sat at a kiosk. A kiosk is like a computer monitor attached to the wall. For us to make the approximate 10-hour round trip repeatedly, we needed something reliable. In an isolation cell with only insults hurled at him, Brent's mental health was extremely fragile. We wanted to do everything we could to support him.

I asked Isaiah about selling the Scion. He had another vehicle that didn't get as good of gas milage and wasn't as dependable for long trips but would be sufficient. He did not want anything to do with the idea. He said that the family

could borrow his car when we needed it, but he wanted to continue to make payments and know that he had paid for it. I was grateful he was willing to share his car, but thought he was blind to our unique circumstances.

After having a video visit with Brent, Isaiah drove 3 ½ hours before stopping for gas and to switching drivers. Late at night, we continued north. After driving for about half an hour, there was a big buck on the highway walking very slowly towards the middle of the two northbound lanes. The road was a 4-lane highway with a grassy median dividing the north and south bound lanes. The deer was almost to the middle of the 2 northbound lanes, walking towards the median. There was a guard rail to my right, due to a steep hill on that side. If I tried to switch lanes, I would be heading directly into its path. I didn't even have enough distance for a smooth lane change.

The instant I saw the deer, I slammed on the brakes. I hoped the deer would walk into the passing lane, but he stood frozen as we came closer. Traveling at 70 mph, it was just a brief moment before impact. The airbags went off and suddenly I found myself not able to see anything. I thought I was keeping the steering wheel straight, but the collision had sent the car moving diagonally. I heard rumbling and thought that the car had gotten a flat tire.

When the car came to a stop, Isaiah told me to get off the road so that another car would not hit us. (He had rolled his window down to see since the airbags were blocking our view through the front windshield.) I turned the wheels in what I thought was the right direction. He said, "No, the other way." I didn't understand but followed directions. When he could see that the car was off the road, he told me to put it in park.

I tried to open my door but couldn't. Isaiah and Desi were able to exit from the passenger side. With a crunch and some tugging, Isaiah was able to pry my door open with just enough room for me to squeeze through. Once outside, I

understood my son's directions. We had traveled over the grassy median and had been in the southbound lane. Praise God there was no other traffic!

Looking back, I'm glad for praying before we started our journey. I had prayed that God would get us home safely. That He did. In the smallest car that I'd ever ridden in, we all walked away without a scratch. The car was totaled. Somehow the front license plate disappeared. I learned something about God's protection that night. I had never thought to pray for the safety of the vehicle too. It seemed too materialistic. Would God really care if a car were destroyed? That's a different story for later. Who would guess that one day I'd find out? God tells us to bring all things to Him in prayer...protection for ourselves, others, wildlife, and other things. Why not try it?

Very quickly and without much effort on our part, the insurance company issued a check for just about the same amount that we had spent on the Scion. God knew our needs and had provided. The search began for new transportation....

2016 Carolla

The 2013 Scion FR-S was a gonner due to the deer in the middle of the road (on 3/20/2019 1/2 hr before Cambridge- ½ way between Marietta and Cambridge). A new challenge began-- State Patrol offered for us to sit in the back of the Trooper vehicle to write out the statement. After we accepted the offer, he said Stand in front of the car, hands to your sides. As we were being frisked, I asked why we were being frisked. In order for me to let you in the car, I have to clear you first. I said that I would have rather stayed outside... for future reference of anyone who doesn't want to be man- handled... if you agree to sit... you are agreeing to be frisked. On April 1 we were able to get the Ohio salvage title.

We began searching for a new vehicle to replace our most reliable form of transportation. (We still had the Pilot and the Sienna... both with major issues.)

Within just a few days, I think two days, Allstate had deposited \$6980 into my bank account. They said that they would also reimburse me for the sales tax on the purchase of another vehicle within 30 days.

Isaiah found the 2016 on Facebook Marketplace. It was 5 hours away in Pennsylvania. It was listed for \$7200. There were 50,000 miles on it. There were water spots on the seats, a couple of minor scratches on the body, and the carpet by the driver's area had a stange hole 4-5 inches in diameter. We drove there in the Pilot. The transmission fluid overheated while on the way to look at the Carolla. Isaiah pulled off to the side of the road to let the transmission cool down. Isaiah calmed down his driving and the Pilot did not overheat for the remainder of the ride there. We test drove the Carolla. We talked to the guy. He said that he would take \$6,900 for it because someone else had offered that price and he was willing to accept that offer but he would have to take it to the docks. We had to go find a tow dolly to tow it home since it had a slvage title due to flooding. Rental on the dolly was about \$100 for 3 days of use. After we went to the Uhaul place, we had to go and get a ball and hitch because we had the wrong sized ball for the tow dolly. Then we tried to hook up the tow dolly, but because the lights were not working properly, we could not drive the dolly off of the lot. We went back to the hardwarrre store to get a new wiring harness. We went back to the Uhaul place to install the new wiring. Then we drove 45 minutes back to where the car was waiting. The guy helped us load the car onto the tow dolly. It took 4-5 tries and we had to keep adding more boards to adjust the slope so that the front bumper wouldn't hit the front of the tow dolly. I drove the Pilot back, hauling the Carolla. We stopped three times to allow the Pilot to rest and to try to prevent any overheating issues. The transmission light never came on.

We got the car to the house and parked it in the driveway. Isaiah returned the tow dolly to the uhal place so that we didn't incur another fee. The soonest we could get the vehicle inspected was 9 days later. We had to get the salvage title from pa switched to a salvage title inn Ohio. We were able to do that and get an inspection receipt stating that we were able to sign up online for an Ohio vehicle

inspection. That piece of paper let us drive the Carolla to the inspection station. The inspection station approved the vehicle on April 9, 2019. Now we were able to get a regular auto title from Ohio that would allow us to get it registered and get license plates for it.

We had never done any of these things before. The fact that we were able to go through this unknown process and it all worked is to me a miracle in itself. This was within a few weeks of four of my family members being arrested. At the time, I couldn't hardly have a complete coherent thought I believe that we were able to replace the Scion for the Carolla for about \$100- \$150 from out of our pocket.

Pray for Emma

With the recent legal battles, expenses were crippling. Theft at the homestead had been swift and incomprehensible. Fortunately, our home in Ohio had not been subjected to any looting. My sons had four motorcycles in the garage. All but one was sold or traded within a couple of months of our arrests. Someone contacted Isaiah and wanted to trade the last motorcycle for an older car that he had. The Sienna that Roman had been driving during his student teaching was now overheating after just a few miles. An estimate at a local garage indicated that the repair would cost several times more than the value of the car. Roman needed a car to finish his last semester of college. He needed transportation for one more month before he would be finished.

The man interested in trading the motorcycle for a car said that he couldn't leave his home. He lived in Zanesville, a city over an hour away from our home. Against my better judgement, Desi, Isaiah and I loaded the motorcycle into the bed of the truck and went to Zanesville. We didn't have a guarantee that he would want to trade. I thought it was too much work on our part with no sacrifice

of time or money for the other person. Isaiah persisted, so I went along with his wishes, thinking that the potential trade would probably end in disappointment. To me, it was worth the trouble for Isaiah to have a painful learning experience now so that he could avoid them later in his life.

I had only driven through Zanesville a couple of times in my life and had never been off the highway in the area. We followed the directions towards the man's home using Isaiah's phone. We missed a left turn. Then Isaiah's phone started malfunctioning. Isaiah needed to restart his phone to get the directions again. It was ridiculous to keep driving. I wanted to pull over and wait until his phone was fixed and we had the directions before continuing. Isaiah told me to just keep going. Driving on back alleys did not make any sense to me. Finally, I decided not to go any further. My son was going to listen to me. I would go to the main road and wait until his phone was ready.

I stopped at the stop sign and looked up at the main road. There, a real estate company had a sign in their yard. The sign had interchangeable, plastic letters. It said, "PRAY FOR EMMA." I couldn't believe my eyes. Was God telling me to pray for Emma? I didn't want to pray for Emma. I couldn't even figure out how to do it. Because of Emma's words, four of my family had landed in jail.

In the preceding month, our dreams of an independent homestead had been shattered. Over \$40,000 worth of assets had "walked away." My husband had been sitting in solitary confinement for over a month. Two of my children, husband and myself had been strip-searched, jailed, and publicly humiliated by the media. The youngest was probably very confused and sad. Roman had to deal with all of this during the most stressful time of college. We had all suffered great loss and hardships beyond my imagination. All of the chaos stemmed from Emma's words. It seemed as if God was asking too much for my human capability.

I told Desi and Isaiah to look to the main road to read the sign out loud. They read it but were appalled. Isaiah's phone started working again. It told us to go in the opposite direction. We left the spot and found the man's house. To my surprise the trade was a success.

Through a series of unlikely events, a new challenge had surfaced. I had to pray for Emma and really mean it. Not just words. There's no fooling God. It took some time and prayer, but I earnestly pray for Emma. It is hard to know exactly what to pray but have learned to accept the unknown. It's actually quite liberating. Chains of unforgiveness do not bind me. May God help with the need that He sees. His eyesight is far better than mine.

In the name of Jesus, I put Satan behind me and plead for my family by the blood of Jesus. May His grace abound. May we all be weakened sufficiently that the Holy Spirit is our strength.

Wink, Louie, and Tyler

Our world had been shaken. Our faith in justice and humanity seemed a distant ideal of the past. A couple of months before our family unit was shattered, my favorite vehicle needed major repairs. The rear differential exploded. My truck had been at the repair shop for over a month awaiting a replacement part to be shipped to the garage. It was an expensive repair, but I depended on the four wheel drive feature and after doing some research, it was more reasonable to fix the truck than to buy a different used vehicle with in an unknown condition. I had been driving the truck for about a month when I saw the pumpkin leaking fluid. I

didn't even know at the time that trucks had pumpkins. Apparently, a pumpkin is the metal housing of the rear differential. I took the truck to a repair shop who tried to seal the leak. I did a lot of driving. The next time I took the truck to Kentucky, it was apparent that the seal was not successful. We stopped and bought more differential fluid and a tool to be able to add it. Unfortunately, the garage had just used an air compression tool to make sure that the bolt was very secure. Both Desi and Isaiah attempted to turn the tool. It wouldn't budge. We asked the workers at the hardware store if they knew of anyone who could add rear differential fluid. They referred us to a Fast Change at the top of a hill. We were unfamiliar with the town. We drove about ½ mile in the direction we were pointed. We asked the employees if they would be able to add the fluid that we had just purchased. I was hoping that they could help or would give us a reduced price because we had already purchased the fluid. A man said just a moment and went to talk with two other employees. There were no other cars being worked on at the moment. The employee returned to the truck and said that they could do it. They added the fluid for no charge and would not accept a tip for their time. As we thanked them and drove away, another car pulled into sight to be serviced.

Can I Give You More?

My oldest son had been trying to sell his Sienna that was overheating for \$300. It sat there for months with no one offering and taking up a space in our driveway. My daughter asked my son if she could try to sell it also. He said that he didn't care.

The first call to a junkyard offered \$200. The next call offered \$500. Do you think we sold it? You bet! I had the title notarized and a man came the next day, gave us a check for \$500, and towed it away.

Which Lawyer?

Four members of my immediate family (including me) were arrested and put into jail on the same night. It was something that took me completely by surprise. Once the initial shock wore off, we faced the challenge of finding a lawyer. But who? None of us knew anything about the legal system or how to find a lawyer. I thought to myself, we'd better just leave this one to God. We are out of our league.

At our first court appearances with no lawyers, a public defender was assigned to my son. I am not sure if he was assigned to 3 of us or not, but I remember the public defender telling me that we were going to need lawyers. Yes, I had already been told. Who? How do I know one lawyer from another?

I asked the public defender's opinion of who he thinks would be good for us. He recommended Campbell in Morehead, KY. Since I had prayed asking for guidance in this selection, I decided not to ignore the advice. Brent's brother said that he wasn't going to eat until Brent got a lawyer. After that court appearance, we went to Morehead that day to Campbell's office. He stopped what he was doing and listened to our predicament.

Because four of us had been arrested, we really needed four lawyers. Yikes. We all agreed that we wanted Campbell to represent Brent. Isaiah would be represented by the public defender and Desi would be represented by one of Campbell's associates. My lawyer would be determined at a later date since my pretrial was set several months after the others.

Time marched on as my husband sat in solitary confinement. I kept wondering who my lawyer was going to be. People kept nagging me. I had a lawyer who had been assigned to the family court case, but I had the feeling that she didn't really want to represent me and was not legally able to represent me against my criminal charges. Everybody wanted to know who my lawyer would be for the criminal case. I was quite nervous about it too. The retainers for Brent and Desi's lawyers had left us with just a small amount and I prayed that I would be able to afford the retainer.

A potential name was mentioned to me, but I was to wait for a time because the lawyer was from out of town and I would need a referral. That sounded expensive. Finally, I felt like I couldn't wait any longer and called Mr. Hart, the lawyer that was recommended. He said that he would take the case, but I needed a retainer. It was the amount that we had. He said that after the retainer was used, that he would bill us by the hour.

I asked about my upcoming court date because the lawyer that had been assigned to me could not find it on the court date that was listed on my paperwork. He looked and said that he couldn't find it either. He kept looking and said that I would not have a pretrial court date because they indicted me on that day. The same day that I felt like I couldn't wait any longer for a lawyer, I was indicted. He was the one that informed me because I had simply asked a question that I couldn't figure out.

I didn't realize that the courts could do that. He said that is why you just hired me. It was rare, but a legal move that meant that we would not be able to ask questions about my case before trial. I was glad to have a lawyer. Everything in God's time.

I Go to Jail... Again

I didn't realize it, but the day that I was indicted via my husband's charges, an indictment warrant was issued for my arrest. I never had a preliminary hearing. The grand jury that indicted Brent also indicted me through his case. I'd never been through this process before, so I had no idea of what to expect.

Desi, Isaiah, and I were in the habit of going to the jail that housed Brent for video visits each week on Mondays and Tuesdays. On Monday, Desi's birthday, we pulled into the jail parking lot and parked the car. We started to walk towards the jail. The State Patrol pulled in beside our car. I asked if they were there for me. They were. A judge signed an indictment warrant earlier that day for my arrest. I'm told that local law enforcement expected me to follow my predictable pattern and anticipated that I would be arriving at the jail for the scheduled visit.

Alarmed, Desi asked the officers to please be nice to me. Isaiah asked if he could hug me before they took me away. The officer familiar with our case said that he didn't want to arrest me but that he was just following orders. They let me hug both Desi and Isaiah before taking me into custody. They handcuffed my wrists in front of my body instead of putting my hands behind my back for greater comfort. Desi and Isaiah went to the video visit and explained my missing appearance to Brent. Then, they notified the rest of the family that I was in jail also. They prayed for me.

In retrospect, it was a blessing for them to incarcerate me when I was already at the jail. I was informed that if the state patrol had not picked me up at the jail, the plan was for them to call my local police department to have me arrested in my hometown. I could have sat in jail for several months waiting for a transport to their jurisdiction. Instead, my police escort lasted about one minute. I never left the parking lot. They drove me from the visitor side of the building around to the new arrival area.

This time, I knew somewhat of what to expect. The process was only slightly different. They put me in a locked glass room with lots of chairs by myself for about an hour and a half before I was booked. Perhaps it was a gift from God. Inside of this glass room, there was a restroom with a door and no camera. I didn't know the next opportunity that I would have any privacy, so I counted my blessing and used the restroom. I assumed that I would be put into "drunk tank" for 24 hours. I assumed that they would strip search me and take all my underclothes again. I was right. This time I did not have a daughter with long arms to hold a blanket for me and block the view of the toilet from the camera. I was trying to figure out how I was going to manage a bit of privacy with a jumpsuit that had to have the top portion removed just to be able to pee.

I prayed. I was sad, but I had an unexplainable peace. I did not fear. I started listening to the stories of the others in the holding cell with me. While waiting, state inmates transferring to this county jail gathered information from another lady who was familiar with this specific jail. They felt that they were being sent to this jail as a punishment for participating in a documentary and for voicing their opinions about their previous experiences. They did not like the fact that there was a camera in every cell that covered all areas except for the bathroom area. I made up my mind to stay in full view of the camera as much as humanly possible.

Lolla, one of the people in drunk tank, had been sleeping like a rock. When she finally woke up, she looked awful. She was coming down from some sort of high. Lolla said that she was cold. There was only one in ten of us that wasn't cold. Call

me a baby if you'd like, but it was freezing in that holding cell. We were all trying to keep warm with our blankets.

I witnessed something that I vowed not to forget. A lady that went by the name of Smurf, her real name is Stephanie, gave Lolla her long sleeved thermal that she was wearing under her jumpsuit. Without hesitation, Smurf literally took the shirt off her back and gave it to a stranger she saw suffering. Lolla put it on for additional warmth. Smurf was an inmate of this jail but had gone somewhere and had been placed in the holding cell until she was allowed back to her regular cell. Smurf said she had another thermal in her tub that she would be able to have later when she was transferred back to general population.

It may not seem like a big deal to you. To me, it was such a heartwarming gesture I thought I was going to cry. I had not shed a tear since I had been rearrested. I had been brave. I had cried plenty of tears in the previous month. It was evident that God had me in His hands.

While others were sleeping, Smurf shared with me some of her pain. Smurf's best friend died in her arms after being accidentally shot when she was about 13 years old. Smurf was an addict along with other family members. A drug overdose killed her father. She holds herself responsible. When Smurf gave birth to a baby, it was placed with her mother since she was deemed unfit. While still in the hospital recovering from the birth, her own mother overdosed. The newborn went into foster care. Smurf appeared to be about 30 years old and had no teeth. She overdosed approximately 16 times and claimed it was a miracle that she was even alive. She said that she was just tired. When talking to me quietly, she expressed her desire for change.

When the others woke up and started reliving their highs, it was completely different. I saw Smurf's eyes light up and she smiled as she lived vicariously. The draw of addiction is so overwhelming. Her flesh was weak. Her idol was any

narcotic within reach. She was a slave to sin with no hope for escape. Only by the grace of God, can she be restored.

Let's think about Smurf's circumstances and spontaneous actions for a minute. All of her worldly possessions must fit in a container about 2' X 1 ½' X 8." She had two warm thermals to her name. She gave one away to someone that she recognized as more needy than herself. That is love. What a humbling experience for me! I was reminded of the poor widow who gave all that she had. (Mark 12:41-44) Smurf's generosity far surpasses mine.

Before going to the more permanent cells, called general population, and at the request of a state inmate, little bags with toiletries were passed out to each of us. The bag given to me by the guard had already been opened and was missing the toothpaste. I was hurt by what seemed like a purposeful jab at my heart, but I was determined not to let my spirit be broken by the unfair treatment. I remembered how Jesus suffered without complaining. I accepted my fate. One of the other inmates noticed. She voiced the injustice that I felt pulling at my heart to the rest of the group. I didn't realize that I was charged \$1.90 for this little bag of stuff until I saw my account.

Smurf to the rescue again. She offered me her toothpaste. She said that she already had some toothpaste in her tub and didn't need it. I literally had no way of having toothpaste until I could get money put on my account and order some. That process would have taken about a week. Smurf was going back to her original cell. I had no way to repay her.

Most people would walk past Smurf and only see an addict. Yet, I believe that Jesus sees His tired child. A child constantly tempted but quick to give what little she has. The guard's mistreatment opened the door for me to see the kindness of another. Smurf is imprisoned by concrete walls. The guard is held captive by a

hard heart. I pray for both the guard and Smurf. They both need God's help and love.

Though it is a humiliating problem to encounter, God gave me a solution to maximize privacy in my impersonal and intrusive surroundings. I observed that everyone leaving "drunk tank" was told to put their mat and blanket on the floor of the booking area. A different blanket was issued before going back to a regular cell. I was able to strategically wrap the blanket over my shoulders and back to form a cape of sorts so that I could use the restroom in as much privacy that one can have while in a room with nine other people and an overhead camera.

Later, an inmate, who seemed sincere, noticed that I preferred privacy and offered to hold the blanket up for me. She had short arms, but I took her up on her offer. It was another thoughtful gesture that I was shown. When times are tough, you must focus on the little positive things that you can find. I had survived the boredom and uncertainty of "drunk tank."

I had been given an eyewitness account to learn about generosity. It forced me to open my eyes to the wide spectrum that exists and to realize my own selfishness. Compared to my peers, I have lived a modest lifestyle. God isn't comparing me to my peers. He judges us by what He has told us to do. I have cared for the needs of my family, but I have not worried about strangers. I have felt that resources exist through society so that if someone has a need, the need can be met by going to an agency for help. Jesus told us that even pagans look after their own children. Yes, we can be systematically generous, but Smurf showed me through her example that generosity shines when it is spontaneous, and a need presents itself.

My lesson in generosity had been provided. Now it was time for a lesson in God's protection.

Cell 304

Cell 304 would be my home for an undetermined amount of time.

When I was able to, I called Desi. Desi said that although “someone” was sad that I was in jail, it made “someone’s” month to be able to see me. Desi didn’t tell me that Brent told my kids to get me out of there as soon as possible. My bail was \$ we could and spent \$25,000 on lawyer retainers. I was preparing my mind for staying until I had a trial. I was glad that I had taken some financial precautions while I had the time on the outside. I was glad that I had showed Desi how to pay the bills. 15,000 cash. 100 % was needed. We did not have that. We had just sold as much as

Brent had called our phone right away. He did not know how soon he would be put back in his individual cell and wanted to share the news right away. Inmates of different cells are not allowed to communicate... especially between males and females.

I must have looked like I didn’t belong. Lola explained that it was my first time in jail. Within the first 5 minutes. Somehow, underwear, a bra, socks, and a t shirt were gathered from around the room for me to wear. Whites would arrive whenever a guard felt like bringing them. I had a top bunk in front of the camera. With the stories I had just heard in drunk tank, I wanted to be as visible as possible. and someone was helping me figure out how to step on the bottom bunk and an approximate 2 inch by 3 inch metal piece sticking out from the wall. I had to be very careful. Someone helped put the sheet on my mat. Lola got the bunk beside me.

I couldn't concentrate at all. It was too loud and I felt very uncertain about my new surroundings. Slowly, everyone seemed to finally fall asleep. I sat up and put my back to the camera and the lights that had been dimmed – the number of fluorescent lights on were fewer so that I had a quiet time to reflect and talk to God. After a short time, a guard came in and asked me if I was OK. I said that I was fine but couldn't concentrate with all of the noise and was using the quiet time to think. From the conversations I had heard, she was raising her grandchildren. I told her that she had a very important job... taking care of the little ones is not easy, but it is very important.

The other inmates were quick to accept the breakfast and lunch I had no desire to eat. I tried to force myself to eat something because I didn't know how long I was going to be there. Most of the food had gluten. I was already thin because I had not been able to eat properly for the previous month or so. Normally I want to eat many things, so it had been quite a surprise to me that I had no interest in food. I didn't realize it, but the other inmates thought that I was thin because of my drug habit. They didn't seem to understand the idea of not eating gluten. It was only when I was very serious about refusing Mt. Dew did they realize, "She's a health nut." They could not believe that I had never done a drug or smoked. To be honest, I may have been the only one that they had ever met who had not or who made the claim.

Bridgette talked on the phone and started crying. She was furious with Brent's charges and that I would defend him. Suddenly the cell was in an uproar and I Lola no longer wanted to be next to my bunk. I was told that I was not to speak. Then the same person asked me a question. Being in a no win situation, I did what came spontaneously. Tears started streaming down my face. They were confused. Why wasn't I aggressive? Why would I start crying when asked a question? Feeling like I was in high school again, I explained to the older lady that I had just been told not to speak and then a moment later been asked a question. I was incapable of doing both. The one who had told not to speak quickly responded. Don't talk to me unless I ask you a question.

Many of the women in the cell had experienced trauma in their pasts. Some of them had told their mothers, who either did nothing or refused to believe their former younger selves. To them, I represented the mom who had failed to protect them as a child. It was natural for them to dislike me. They told me how they were doing time for their man and how they were not appreciated and how I needed to do whatever I needed to do to protect myself. After some time, they told me that no harm would come to me while in the cell, but that I needed to tell anyone else that I was in there because of drugs. I tried to explain that it would be a lie. They told me that they couldn't protect me but if I ever went into another cell, that had better be my story. They told me I was allowed to talk as long as I didn't mention my husband.

Several times over the next few days, I had to stop in the middle of my sentence or refer to "someone." Do you know how hard it is to say anything about your life excluding your soul mate for the previous 30 plus years? I could have shared many stories that I've shared with you... many positive stories... but it is difficult eliminating a main character.

Bridgette said she prayed about it last night and decided to forgive . She made a comment that it is always the ones you think you're going to hate that you wind up liking the most. She had to leave the cell for a court appearance. My childre

No Fear Just Love- Rebirth Part IV... Blessings Bit by Bit Rough Draft

Symbolic Sandy

When in an isolation cell, a nurse named Sandy checked on Brent. He says that she treated him like he was human. About a month and a half later, he was moved to a medical cell. The “rec” area with the TV and kiosk was shared with her work space. Brent asked Sandy if she would pray for his family. She said that she would.

Going back to a church building for the first time in years, there was an extraordinary lady teaching the Sunday School class. Teachers for that class rotate, but for that Sunday in particular, it was Sandy’s turn to lead the class. That’s right... Sandy. A different Sandy, miles away from Brent, led the Sunday School lesson that touched my heart.

Was it a coincidence that two people named Sandy played a role as God’s ambassadors when Brent and I leaned on God or did God have something to do with it? Brent had never asked anyone at the jail to pray for his family. This “coincidence” with me happened the Sunday after Brent asked for prayer. I think it is one simple example of how God can connect anyone to anything at any place at any time. It’s important that we share these “coincidences” with believers and nonbelievers alike. God isn’t giving me special treatment. If we allow Him and we have the heart to follow, God is guiding each of us. The more we seek Him, the easier He is to find. The Bible said it too in _____.

To me, the 2 women named Sandy in 2 different places represent God’s vast presence and unity through Him. There are many people, many children of God, serving Him. Faith in Jesus is the one commonality that binds us. There is just one church... one bride. In this simple display of a name, God shows how foolish it is to be divided by unimportant details. The common name was simply a symbol to remind me that God is everywhere all the time. Though my husband and I may be separated by hundreds of miles, if we are both close to God,

During the church services, an invitation was given for those seeking additional prayer support. Sandy and her husband were the first prayer warriors that prayed with me for our broken family. I know that many other people were praying for our family. I just find it interesting that for a man in an isolation cell, asking for Sandy to pray for his family, that within a week, another woman named Sandy prayed with Desi and me.

Kristie, Kristi or Christy?

When I was in jail, I could hardly wait until Monday because that was when church services were offered to women. The Bible had been my comfort in more than one way. By day, it renewed my spirit bringing hope. At night, it was my pillow. Isaiah and Desi bailed me out on Monday morning, so I never made it to the church service available to inmates.

I told my family of my intentions to attend a church service. I'd never felt so strongly. It was not just a want. It was a need. I didn't want this feeling to fade away over time just because I was back in the "real world." I didn't want any distractions or excuses. Our family had been given a wake up call and I didn't want God to have to do anything else to get my attention. The Bible says that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Using a Bible as a pillow for the previous five nights had left an impression on me. We were in a mess that only God could fix.

Six nights came and went. I was still trying to figure out where to go. It just so happened that the next day would also be Easter. I thought that it would be best if we went to church with Kristie, my sister-in-law. She regularly attends a church that is just down the road from her home. We were going to her house for lunch.

I never called to tell her my intentions or to ask when the church services started. I figured that the information would be online. Really, I expected to type in the church location and that the hours of services would appear. They didn't. By the time I found out that the information wasn't there, it was nearly midnight and I didn't want to chance waking her.

I wasn't sure what to do or where to go. I was sure that I should be going with Kristie. Searching my brain for another option, I remembered that Mr. Hallberg, the man who had subbed for me numerous times was a retired pastor. On a whim, I googled his name, the local area, and the word pastor. Immediately, promising search results were in front of me. A church website listed service times and an address so that we could find it. It wasn't what I'd planned or wanted, but it would suffice until I could talk to Kristie about the missing details.

Desi and I arrived in time for Sunday School. A man pointed us to a room down the hall. It was the "mature" class. That is a nice way of saying "the class with people who have had many birthdays." The Holy Spirit was speaking through a nice lady who led the class. Filled to the brim with heartache, all someone had to do was to mention anything like love or sacrifice and another tissue was needed. A burden of seemingly senseless pain was being lifted from me.

By the time Sunday School was over, almost all my tissues were gone. If Sunday School left me in tears, I'd better stock up on tissues before the regular service started. As my daughter and I quickly left the building to replenish my tissue supply, the guy at the door exclaimed, "You just got here!" Explaining the need for tissues as we kept walking, he casually replied that the church has tissues available.

At the car, I caught up with my runny nose and loaded a bunch of tissues into my purse, double or triple what I thought might be needed. As we approached the building, someone was fast approaching behind us. Glancing behind me, I saw

Mr. Hallberg. He was happy to see us and said that it made his day to see us there. After talking for a minute, he showed us where he and his wife typically sat in the sanctuary. It was good to meet Mrs. Hallberg. My previous assumptions made about her were right. Opposite of the bundle of energy she married, she is nice and calm.

The service was louder and less formal than what I had anticipated. There was a praise team, leading the church in worship, using a guitar, keyboard, piano and drums. As part of the service, teams of prayer warriors offered to intercede before God with those seeking additional prayer support. Then the pastor presented the sermon. Throughout it all, there was God. I could feel His presence.

When going to church as a child and earlier in my life, I went because it was routine. I sang the songs, and heard the message, but didn't feel God in the room. My impression was that we were worshiping in a building on earth but that God was far away in heaven. Little by little, drifting further away, praying and reading the Bible became less important parts of my life. Morality was defined by me, not the Bible. To me, God was to be respected as the Creator and Giver of Life but I failed to recognize that looking through Jesus was the only way that God could have mercy. Over time, my mind was deceived. I put more faith in my own good works than in Jesus.

This time was different. I could feel God in the room with us. It was a very humbling experience. In all my years of attending church services, I may have felt myself emotionally touched and holding back tears once or twice. Now, there were no walls and my tears wouldn't stop! It was like the time when I was a teen in my room during the rainstorm and the tears wouldn't stop. I went through all my tissues!

After the service, as I gathered my things, a lady came over, offered me a Bible, and thanked us for coming to the service. Introducing herself as Kristi, she said that she hoped she would see us again. There was an instant revelation in my mind. God knew that there was another Kristi. He just didn't spell it out. There would be no reason to ask Kristie about the times for other services. God had led me exactly where He wanted me.

I am so grateful for following the Holy Spirit's prompting. I wonder how many times the Holy Spirit tried to lead me in the past but was ignored. Society teaches us to be rational and to make logical deductions. Believing in a world that we can't see, faith, is not logical. How many times do we think and lean on our own understanding instead of trusting God? In the process we make things harder for ourselves.

Fast forwarding about a year, our world faced Covid-19 and governments across the globe closed nearly all churches citing safety as the reason. Acts 2 really started to weigh on my heart. The early church met daily and their numbers increased daily. This was the time to pray in unison... not to close churches! Who can bring help faster than God? I searched online and found a virtual prayer group that met 5 days per week. In this group was another Christy. Although never meeting these believers in person, they became a source of encouragement and my spirit grew stronger. Joining these prayer warriors in Jesus' name, we fight the enemy and plead for God's mercy.

What If Your Story Is Enough?

The second week that we went back to church, the first week happened to fall on Easter, the pastor's message was titled, "What If Your Story Is Enough?" During

the whole sermon, I felt like he had tailor made it for me. I agreed. I needed to tell my story. I already knew this to be true, but I didn't know how to do it or what part of "my story" I needed to share. As the service ended, my former co-worker tapped me on the shoulder and whispered, "That one was for you, Ty." I wasn't sure of the audience, point in time, or method of delivery... but I was certain that it was necessary. If my story was enough to help anyone walk with Jesus, it was my responsibility to tell it.

What was my story? I knew God was disappointed in me for not sharing with others my experience during Roman's birth. Why had I not told others? Fear? Thoughts in my head saying that people might think that I was dumb, crazy, or a liar? Someone might judge me. This hardly seemed like something to be concerned about now!

I had a moment of clarity. These were lies driven by fear! The devil put doubt in my head because he wanted to keep God's love, help, and presence a secret. The devil didn't want me to speak! He knows the power of God's work! By myself, I am vulnerable to his schemes. The Holy Spirit working within me is something for the devil to fear.

Shortly thereafter, I awakened with the words, "Write it down." At first, I thought the story to be told was about my recent encounters with the legal system. My thoughts were consumed with my recent research and experiences Brent relayed to me. I started a list of things I thought God would want me to discuss. Originally thinking of just 3 or 4 experiences, the list quickly grew to about 15 in about an hour's time. The memories kept coming to me. In just a few short days, I had recalled about 40 times when I'd seen God's hand in my life. When I reread my list, I was surprised. The overwhelming theme was evident. God had been active in my life many times. I had failed to recognize His handiwork.

The things I am writing about are not easy for me. In fact, some are quite difficult to think about. I find myself sitting and staring as I wait for the right words. Many times, I've seen God working when I'm struggling. It's not fun to write about such times. It's humbling and sometimes can be embarrassing.

I pray frequently and ask for the Holy Spirit to guide me. I imagine that for some reason, I am no longer able to speak to my children. Most of us do not know how much time we have left on earth. If I died today, what would I want them to remember or to know about? I should have a better attitude about this task, but the truth is that I'm very much like Jonah. Jonah eventually did what God told him to do. He just did it after a very unpleasant encounter with a big fish. Jonah's experience should teach us all not to run from God's work.

I started writing about each of the incidents. I hit many blockades in my mind. I found excuses not to do it. Words weren't coming to me... but my list of things to write about kept growing. I am talking about all of the little things... when I knew that God was near... or He sent words of encouragement... what ever I needed at the time... and how good my ears were at listening and my eyes for seeing. Early on, while working on this project, I learned to ask for the Holy Spirit to guide my words and to keep me moving. I hope that you are able to find some encouragement through my words.

I'm just one of over 7 billion souls alive at this given point in time. Imagine all the instances that exist around the world that we fail to recognize or do recognize but keep to ourselves. Please share your stories. They are gifts from God and it is selfish not to share a story that could help someone else because of pride. Encourage your friends, loved ones, strangers, and even your descendants that will live after you have breathed your last breath. You have a credibility with people who have known you for years that I don't have. We each have a group of people we can impact for the Lord. What if God helped you so that you would later be able to help someone else? What if YOUR story is enough?

If God tells you to do something, do it. Don't worry that it won't be perfect or that it's useless. Just do it and let God take care of the rest.

What if my story could help just one person in their walk with Jesus? What if I was only able to strengthen my own faith by remembering the times that God had been with me? What was I even talking about? God was and is always with me. These were just the times that I was able to recognize his presence.

The Job Fair

Roman was in the final stages of completing his student teaching. Because of our family's arrests, he had missed the maximum number of absences before it would affect his grade. The day before a job fair at his main campus, his college professor asked if he was planning on attending the job fair. He said that he wasn't planning on it because he had already missed the maximum number of days. His professor said that if he wanted to go, that it would not count against his grade because it was considered a professional development work day.

Roman was excited for the opportunity. He had originally wanted to go to the job fair but the two days that he spent helping our family he thought had ruled that out. He jumped at the chance. He quickly updated his resume and prepared for the long drive the next morning.

At the Job Fair, Roman visited different booths that were representing different districts in Ohio as well as some out of state districts. After gathering some initial data, he signed up for several interviews, but one especially grabbed his attention. It was a booth for the largest district in Alaska. Roman has talked about and dreamed about going to Alaska since he was little.

Roman said that he arrived about 10 minutes early for his set interview time and just started talking to the person at the booth while waiting for the interview. Roman shared his interests in different cultures and how he has used his life experiences and skills at camp to teach primitive skills. He said that he talked to this man for about 45 minutes. Interviews were scheduled in 15 minute blocks. He came to find out that he was talking to the Assistant Superintendent.

Roman felt that the interview went well. The man said that he would have the Personnel Director talk to him within the next week or so. Roman said that the next day, he had an email wanting to share more information to make sure that they had a school that would best suit Roman's personality and lifestyle. Within a couple of weeks an official job offer was made to him. Forty-eight hours prior to the interview, Roman didn't even know that he would be able to attend. I feel that God, in his perfect timing, worked out all the details of getting Roman to the exact right place at the exact right time to perfectly mesh Roman's strengths and interests with the right job. Imagine that.

Be Still

Thinking about our finances and trying to think of possible solutions, I was reminded of a comment that one of my acquaintances had made a couple of months before I was arrested. She had asked me if I knew of anyone who could help take care of Granny. At the time, I didn't know of anyone. Now in my current situation, I thought that Desi and I could possibly be that help.

Not having a facebook account, knowing her phone number, or where she lived, I asked my son for help. Using Isaiah's facebook account, we were able to find her profile and sent a message letting her know that it was me trying to contact her and not my son. There was a reply the next morning. Desi and I arranged to go and visit her. Help had been found for Granny, but her daughter had just had

surgery. She and her daughter were both temporarily homebound and in the need for some visitors.

I found it both comforting and encouraging that I had the time to go and to be able to be supportive of her in her time of need. She also helped me with some of my insecurities. She has a tattoo that says, "Be still." She says that it is her reminder when facing a challenge that God says to be still. Let Him take care of the situation. Some of the things that she said were exactly what I needed to hear. It was a tough time for me. As I type this, it still is a tough time, but I have been given an incredible sense of peace. This is unexplainable unless you simply can believe that all things work together for a greater good. Faith allows God to work and for His plan to flourish.

Legally, I am still in the exact same circumstances as I was a year ago. My charges carry up to a ten year jail sentence. Added separately, Brent's charges carry more than a 1,600 year sentence. My lawyer says that Brent couldn't get that many years because it is over the limit of years allowed to be sentenced. Does that help? No! There is a song that has been very helpful to me. It reminds me that I need to "be still" as the storm rages around me. My mom has told me that I am "holding up very well." I think that I'm a complete mess. Many people started praying for my family. I believe this is allowing us to grow in our broken state. I have been blessed with an enormous amount of time to read the Bible. According to James, we are very lucky family to face such trials here on earth because we are developing perseverance!

Get Me Out of Here!

Brent had been in solitary confinement for almost two months. He came to a point where he felt completely broken. He thought he was done. If you've ever researched the mental health of people placed in solitary confinement, the statistics are not good. This is one reason why we prayed constantly for Brent's

mental health and encouraged him to call as frequently as he was able. It took me some time, but I have had to realize that the strong, leader of my family was now, in a sense, a helpless castaway and object of scorn. The devil attacked his mind on a moment by moment basis. One day, Brent called and said he believed me. He was referring to my experience when Roman was born. He had seen the light.

Some may say that Brent went crazy and hallucinated. Others, who have been placed under extreme stress and have had a similar experience, will understand. God sends angels to minister us when we are at our breaking point. They guide us back to the path of safety. Hagar cried out in the desert- an angel told her to go back to what seems like a heartbreaking environment... but gave Hagar hope through her son. The angel came again when the two had been cast out again... giving hope once more of a promising future...this time in a different way with a fresh start but without the shackles of past relationships. The angel came to Joseph when he thought that his betrothed had been unfaithful to him. Angels came to protect in a furnace and to tend to Jesus after the devil had tempted him.

Brent pled with God, "Get me out of here!" Shortly after that prayer, a certain charge was dropped against Brent. He was moved to a medical cell where there was one other person in a different medical cell. The two had significant limitations, but they were able to hear each other. Brent had meant for God to get him out of the jail. God answered, but not in the way he had expected. Although not what he wanted, the new environment allowed for renewed hope. Brent started to make plans about things he wanted to do after he was released. The negative insults were greatly reduced.

The Contraband Pillow

Brent was in a medical cell. The guard was helping him out because he couldn't handle the noise in isolation. Across the hall there was a guy that Brent could talk to via the crack at the bottom of the cell doors. CJ told Brent that he was over 500 pounds when he entered the jail. When Brent was talking to CJ, he was about 375 pounds. Over the course of 4 days, Brent found out that this person did not have a pillow. He is sleeping on what is provided by the jail. Brent was happy because he felt like God was finally giving him someone to talk to. How is God supposed to use him if he is by himself? Brent was able to talk to him about the Bible and other things too.

Brent ordered an extra pillow by using his commissary money. He received it, but Brent left it on the table (still in the plastic) so that when CJ got out of his medical cell, he would have access to it on the table in the general rec area for the medical cells. It was there for a couple of hours. Two guards opened Brent's door and broke the news to Brent that he was now in lockdown. They wanted all of Brent's belongings, his mat, his blanket... everything. Brent asked why... the answer was that he was passing contraband... the pillow on the table... Brent had no idea that he wasn't allowed to do this. He had never seen a rule book, any rules posted, and had not talked to any other inmates about the rules of the jail. Note: I have read that jail rules are subject to change without notice, for any length of time, by any guard. Why have a rule book on paper if you also have the disclaimer that they can change at any time? (There is a general rulebook on the kiosk if you know where to look for it. It assumes that the person reading understands jail terminology and rules are different depending upon different classifications. I didn't even know that there were different classifications of inmates. It is very confusing if you are jail for the first time and have never done research on jails or have never talked to anyone about their experiences in a jail.)

Apparently, when you are in a cell by yourself, you are not allowed to give anyone anything. Everything is contraband. The only way to have something not provided by the jail is for someone to put money on your account. If that doesn't happen, everything sold to other inmates through the vendor that the jail uses is considered contraband for you. I thought that contraband was something like

drugs or weapons. Nope. I was very vocal on the phone about such an evil system. How evil is it that a system punishes someone for kindness or compassion? Pure evil. A 150 pound person squishes the mat down to perhaps half an inch. I was about 120 pounds when I was in jail. The mats are about 2 inches thick. When I would get up, after laying on the mat, I could see in some places about an inch to an inch and a half indentation from my body weight. The elevated end of the mat provides about a 1 inch incline when the weight of your head compresses the mat.

Brent was confused because he did not have a warning and had been told in the past that people have a warning to avoid lockdown. The guard in charge said that Brent would have to talk to the person in charge in the morning, since the decision was made by the dayshift for him to be in lockdown. All he knew was that Brent was to be in lockdown.

The following day, Brent went to court in the morning before he could talk to the main person in charge. When he returned from court (the day he was 2 hours late for family court... he thought something was wrong lockdown... now not going to court), he talked to the person in charge during the day shift. He went back to his medical cell. Before he got any of his stuff back, they told Brent that he was being moved to general population.

Maybe Brent needed to practice compassion and discussing faith with just one person. He was about to meet eight new people to try to plant positive seeds.

Safety in Cell 112

Brent was in solitary confinement for a little over two months. He was having great difficulty being alone for such a long time. He came to a breaking point saying, "God, get me out of here." Brent meant out of jail in general. Although in

solitary confinement, many of the other prisoners would yell insults, the one next door would thump on the wall right where Brent's bunk was, and another crowed like an out of control rooster.

He had nothing to do. For over a month and a half, he wasn't even allowed to have a Bible. When it seemed as if he could take no more due to the constant noise, bright lights, and insults, he was moved to a medical cell by himself. He said that when we would come for a video visit that the whole area would be noisy to the point that he didn't think that he would even be capable of hearing us on the other end of the line. We were his only bit of cheer. In the medical cell, he was able to talk to one other person in another cell. This lifted his spirits, but he still felt that he was not being used. Brent figured that if he were in jail, he could at least try to make a positive out of a negative and try to encourage others towards a more positive existence. How could he do that if he were by himself or just with one other person?

After a phone call where we discussed the fact that Brent was not indicted on his booby trapping charge, Brent called and told us that he was being moved to the general population with protective custody. What did that mean exactly? He would be put in a cell with other people with similar charges. That sounded terrible! Brent's charges are awful! I called immediately for prayer reinforcements. We prayed for a "hedge of protection" all around him.

Brent called later and told us that he was OK. His physical body was safe. What we learned later though was that slowly his spirit was being chipped away. The lifestyles of the people he encountered were very different from his own. His values were the opposite. He tried for a long time to explain why a different lifestyle might be more rewarding, but nobody seemed to agree. After a while, Brent thought that the most repulsive man in the cell, had a secret side to him. That underneath all the layers of filth, there was a positive motive. He was trying to prepare someone else for prison, he was looking out for everyone in a jail sort of way. Or was he? We later realized that he was very manipulative and was

pretending to help, but was really scheming... In just four months, Brent was losing his common sense. Because of the constant evil he was surrounded with, he was thinking that the lesser of evils must be good. No! Evil is still evil.

Finally, Brent had to draw the line. (I had been worried about him, and I changed my prayers to our wills lining up with God's will... that seemed to help.) Brent told the "cell boss" no. That did not go over well. Brent's life was threatened as well as our entire family's lives. Despite this, Brent still wanted to stay in that cell. We prayed that Brent would be safe, even if it meant that Brent was the one to be moved.

Within three hours of Brent telling the cell boss "no," Brent was moved to a medical cell by himself. For the first couple of hours, Brent seemed upset, as if he were the one being punished. With more prayer, and a little more time, Brent was able to reflect upon the situation he had just come from. Sometimes when you are so close to bad decision making, it helps to step away and refocus. It may be a small thing to you, but I praise God that the temperature in the medical cell was warm enough. (In the past, Brent has said that he shivered the whole time he was in a medical cell.) This time, Brent was grateful for the ability to turn off the TV to have quiet. He was grateful for the ability to turn the TV to programming that wasn't offensive. There was a Life Below Zero marathon, so he was able to watch 12 hours of that show, a place that was very close to Roman's new location. By those simple things, I feel that God provided for him. Brent was able to get a good night's sleep. He felt as though a huge weight had been lifted off his shoulders. Thank God for safety while in Cell 112.

A Motorcycle for a Jeep

Because of our legal expenses, we were tried to liquidate our assets as quickly as possible. As painful as it was, our children helped us liquidate their assets also. We had 4 motorcycles in our garage and only two possible riders. We were looking for cash, instead of a different possession, but God and His opportunities should never be confined to work within our set of rules and limitations.

Roman tried to sell his motorcycle for \$1,500. Nobody wanted to buy it at that price, but someone did want to trade a truck with blown brake lines for it. At the last minute and already enroute, we told Roman not to go through with the trade. Because of our sudden change in advice, Roman spent several hours riding his bike in the rain for no apparent reason. When Roman returned to the house, the bike had acquired a knocking sound. He lowered the price to \$1000. Someone came to look at it, but the new sound, didn't want it. Water from the rain must have gotten is somewhere causing the noise.

Someone else called and wanted to trade the motorcycle for a Jeep Cherokee. By then, the knocking was gone, but we really did not want a jeep. We wanted cash! Roman made the trade anyhow. Now we had a jeep with a lift kit, monster tires and other accessories... not practical at all. Roman listed the Jeep for \$3000. Someone came to look at the Jeep and offered \$1500. That satisfied Roman since it was the original asking price for the motorcycle. Roman was working in North Carolina at the time, so he couldn't make the deal until the weekend. The arrangement fell through because the man did not want to wait until the weekend.

Then, a different person who arrived in a jeep and works on jeeps, offered \$2500. It was a perfect for both of us. So, with some extra steps, patience, and God's help, we were blessed nearly double the amount of our original asset. This gave us the provisions needed in a difficult financial time. Praise God for His help!

I Have a Better Idea

Legal battles had proven to be very expensive. Monthly expenses were through the roof. It was the last and most expensive semester for Roman's college. He had been able to take all his classes at regional campuses. For his final semester, student teaching was only available through the main campus, which had much higher tuition rates. Under normal circumstances we could handle the cost although it would not be pleasant.

I had agreed to a payment plan and the first payment had been made. Then 4 members of my immediate family were arrested in one day. The college payment plan flew out the window. I used to plan for things far in advance... like retiring in 15 years, like having the perfect vacation spot because it had been booked 11 months and 3 weeks in advance, and like having certain things on stockpiled for a natural disaster or civil unrest. Silly me. Not once had we planned for our family going to jail. The thought never crossed my mind.

Telling my son that I was very sorry, the news was broken that we could not afford the tuition. He would need a loan to pay for the balance. The first payment had already been made. He loathed the idea. He absolutely did not want a loan and viewed it as making himself a slave to debt. He said that our country didn't have the money to loan. Even if most Americans in college incur debt, Roman didn't consider it an option.

I prayed and thought God would eventually change Roman's heart to accept the loan. Why go through all your college classes and then not get the piece of paper that makes it legal to get a job? To me, it is not logical. Sometimes Roman does not follow my logic. He was almost done with his student teaching when he finally submitted the application. According to the numbers and time frame, he qualified for a loan.

We received notice that he got a grant for several hundred dollars, but there was no information about the loan. Over \$2,000 in tuition was still outstanding. We asked for additional prayer through some of the prayer warriors at our church for God's assistance. We needed that loan! That week, we kept checking on my son's account, waiting for the loan to be approved. Finally, Roman's account showed a zero balance. Relief! Now his diploma could be released.

Reviewing the details of how the balance got to zero confused me. The loan had not been processed. How could he have nothing due and no loan to cover the difference? Apparently, God had been at work and had a better idea. Roman received a grant that he had never applied for or considered. The grant awarded was for the exact amount due. This mystery grant was the vehicle that allowed my son to graduate from college debt free. When I was no longer able to meet my son's need and called on God for help, God stepped in and took care of it. He went further than my expectations blessing us beyond my imagination. Incredible! Praise God!

God Has a Plan

We were going to visit Brent at the jail. We saw her struggling with the kiosk and asked if she needed help. She said yes, it's so hard to see. She told us the buttons to press and we were able to help her add money to her loved one's account. She said thanks. We went in to our visit.

The second time we saw her was a repeat of the first time. She needed help again. That time she asked us if we knew the Lord. We said yes. We had a little more small talk.

The third time we saw her in the parking lot. She stopped to talk to us. She asked if she could give us a hug. We said yes. She said I just love you girls. She encouraged us saying, "God has a plan."

She was going to be getting cataract surgery but she needed to do one eye at a time because it was getting hard to drive at all. We noticed the smashed bumper. She asked us to pray for her safe travel back home.

We thought and planned to offer to pick her up and take her to her visit because we didn't want her driving unsafely and knew the importance of family visits. We discussed it with the family as a matter of safety and thought it would be ok. We planned to tell her the next time we saw her, but we only saw her once and were running late after that so didn't have time to talk. We never saw her after that.

Grandma Adams #36 is empty and #104 is blank

Pneumonia when Beth went to see Dolly graduate. Beth asked for prayers. Grandma healed. Several months later, after saying good-byes to loved ones, Grandma went to be with Jesus.

Tolls

My two sons were going to work in North Carolina at a camp for the summer. They would camp during the week and come back to visit as often as they could. I was used to my oldest son traveling to this camp, so I didn't worry even though it was a long drive.

Both of my sons got in the car and left with all of their supplies. They had a full gas tank and Roman was expecting to be paid from the previous week's work. Somehow, they both left with \$9.00 between them. As a mom, this makes me

want to pull out my hair wondering how I could raise children who would fail to consider taking enough cash on a journey through several different states.

Imagine this... they take a toll road not realizing that they only have \$9.00 cash. (I think they had a bank card with them.) They spend the \$9.00 going through several booths. At the last booth, they roll up to the window thinking that they are going to have to ask for directions to the nearest ATM. When they get to the booth, the person inside says, "Don't worry about it. The person in front of you paid for you." They now remember that \$12.00 is needed for tolls on this trip. Even though I wasn't even aware that my children had a need, God was looking out for them. Roman seems to think that everything always works out. Thank you, Jesus, for your help! Thank you, random stranger, for listening to your heart to pay for the car behind you. I imagine that you had no idea that the car behind you was in need. I appreciate your kindness!

A Mayfly and a Killdeer 6-10-19

Brent had been in isolation for 2 and ½ months. Then he went to general population and had the hopes of going to recreation. Inmates are supposed to have daily access to recreation, but in isolation recreation is the ability to go into a larger room, have access to a tv, a kiosk where you could buy items or look at your scanned mail, and take a shower. He found out that everyone in the cell had to agree to go to rec but there was someone who never liked to leave the cell because he got out of breath and started sweating just walking to the phone

within the cell. If memory serves correctly, about 1 month later Brent thought that he had a unique opportunity...

Brent asked a few of the guys in the cell if they wanted to go to rec. They said yes. The next time a guard came in, Brent asked if those four could go to rec... The guard said yes, that the 4 could go by themselves. A different guard came in to get them for rec and said that they were all going. Brent said never mind, the guard said no you're going anyway. They all went to rec for about 2 hours. Brent and several of the other guys played cornhole. Brent got proficient at getting the bag in the hole. Once, he was far away by the other stand and casually with his back turned, threw the beanbag over his head. It went exactly in the hole. Even the upset one smiled... he likes sporting events and competition. They came back and Brent had a price to pay by the TV being turned up very loud. About 3 days later, Tony got over the fact that he had to walk down the hall.

6-11-19 Desi and I walked around the jail 7 times. Brent told Tony to take a shower. A few hours later Brent hugged him and said sorry. Tony muted the TV during the commercials... first time ever... everyone stopped because there was no sound on the TV.

Lauren

I met Lauren in jail. She was nice. She showed me how to step up to my top bunk. Lauren was the one who cleaned and did the dishes most of the time. She woke up early, but she stayed in bed reading so that she wouldn't disturb others. Charity was also nice. She gave me shampoo, a pen, and 2 sheets of paper when I had no shampoo and commissary items would not be available for another day.

One of my favorite jail memories, dear to my heart, was when Lauren and Charity decided to have a Bible study. They were doing the homework from a prior Bible study for another inmate in the cell. Until then, I was quiet and stayed on my top bunk mat about 90% of the time. If I was asleep, I used the Bible as my pillow. If I was awake, I was either reading it or had it within a foot of me. Yes, I confined myself to a 2X6 foot space by choice rather than to roam the jail cell. In a sense, I felt safer because it was “my space.” People are more likely to leave you alone if you are on a top bunk than if you are in the space shared by 9 others.

When I heard the two discussing a Bible study, I gathered my courage and climbed down from the top bunk. I was hopeful that they wouldn't mind me sitting at the table with them. I sat across from them and joined in the conversation a few times. They did not ask me to leave. I was hoping that they would accept me as a fellow participant. Very quickly I found myself judging them. They were so cute and endearing to me. They cussed their way through the Bible verses trying to decipher the meaning. I lived in a very sheltered world. People around me generally don't cuss. These women were from a very different culture. I was the odd ball. They weren't meaning to make God angry... they were trying to learn about how God would want them to live. God knew their intentions.

The process may have seemed messy to me, but I believe that God views our attempts as messy. I am pretty sure that is why He sent Jesus. We are like little children, three years old, trying to play a real game of basketball on a regulation sized court. Nobody would ever score a basket. We wouldn't even get close. If, however, we were being held up to the basket by Jesus, it might be possible for us to drop the ball in the hoop. It is only with Jesus that we experience the joys of Heaven. My heart had a special place for Lauren. I decided not to forget her. Privately, I prayed for her while in the same cell and continued my prayers for her and her family when I was released on bond. I assumed that God heard my prayers. Hearing and intervening are different. I had no way of ever knowing if

my prayers would be granted. I had no way of contacting Lauren. I didn't and still don't know where she lived or lives. I don't know her last name.

At home, I folded my lawn chair. The phone that was in the cupholder flopped out onto the concrete sidewalk and cracked the screen. After that incident, it was hard to hear Brent and for him to hear us using that phone. So we went to Morehead for a video visit. After the video visit we went to Walmart to get a new phone. We just wanted to go straight to the electronic department because we wanted to get back to the campground before Brent called. We didn't want him to worry. So we walked straight back to the phones. Lauren was there getting a phone card right where we needed to get a phone card with her son.

I excitedly said, "Lauren, is that you?" We hugged and asked each other were doing. She introduced her son and I introduced my daughter. I said that it was good to see her again. Then we parted ways.

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The Skunk

It was dark at the campground. Desi and I were on the phone talking to Brent. From the corner of my eye, I saw a skunk approaching. It had already walked within inches of our tent for several feet. Sitting only about a foot from our tent, it was headed straight for me. Uncontrolled and having lost all rational thought, I squealed like a little girl and lifted my feet from off the ground. Do you think my response helped the situation? Watering eyes, a headache and unpleasantness unfolded in my mind. Fear seized me and I forgot to pray! It was about 4 feet away from me, but less than a foot from our tent. If it sprayed, the tent and our night would be ruined. Everything, including both of us, would smell!

The skunk turned around and wandered away into the darkness. You may not think this is an extraordinary story or deserving mention in a book, but I choose to praise God. The skunk simply walked away. Maybe God prompted my girlish

reaction and kept the skunk in a calm state. What a reminder of how our lives can change in big or small ways in just an instant! The entire scenario from beginning to end lasted no more than ten seconds. What an excellent example of panic and relief! In this case, relief came within three seconds. Most times, relief comes much later. We must remember that God's ways are higher than our ways and that God is a good Father. He wants what is best for us and His other children.

If we open our eyes, God can redirect our focus. Before the arrival of the skunk, I was sad and depressed that my husband and the rest of my family weren't camping with me. After the skunk left, I realized that life could be more challenging. I know that James says to consider it pure joy when faced with trials of many kinds and that testing faith will develop perseverance. This is easier said than done.

A Change of Heart

Brent had told us many times that he wanted the remainder of our family to remain together. He felt that we needed each other in close proximity for emotional support and for our physical safety. This posed a conflict when Roman was offered the job in Alaska.

Everything about the job in Alaska seemed perfect for Roman. Roman had wanted to go to Alaska since he was a boy. Roman loved different languages. He was not intimidated by harsher living conditions and he had a love for preserving indigenous culture. Brent acknowledged all of these things. He thought that it was just the wrong time for Roman to accept a job that would put him physically so far away from us. Brent thought that the job would still be there next year, and it would be better timing for our family. I felt that perhaps we did not see the big picture and that it was perfect timing for us, even if we could not recognize it with our limited view. What if we were supposed to go to Alaska and Roman's job

was the catalyst to move us in that direction? I really wanted to express these ideas to Brent, but he was in such a fragile state.

I did the only thing that I knew to do in this type of situation. I prayed. I prayed and I asked other prayer warriors to touch Brent's heart and for God to be in control of this decision. I expressed my concern God and to the prayer warriors that I wanted love to be in control. I did not want fear to have any power in this decision.

I talked to Brent later about the job opportunity available to his son. I expressed that I did not want fear to be a concern. I wanted Brent to only respond out of love. Without argument, Brent agreed. He not only agreed, but he went beyond my expectations. Brent called Roman and supported him. Somehow, Brent had all of the words that Roman needed to hear the most, words that as his mother, even I didn't have to give him. Instead of a division, there was a greater sense of unity and love. If you knew of the strong feelings involved, you would know that this could only be a result of the Holy Spirit's prompting... a complete change of heart.

An Independent Contractor

I had put in long hours preparing for a very successful and specific online service. I had passed various stages of the interviewing process and continued rigorous training to meet company objectives...They had high standards for their employees and were noted by Forbes magazine as a number one company. Here was the number one problem for me... I didn't know if I would be able to pass the background check. There were so many variables that I could control. That one I couldn't. I was hopeful, but I had my doubts. I had been looking for a way to try to earn some income to offset the legal bills. This company offered more than twice the pay of other online companies.

While I waited for the company that I liked the best to finish processing my background check (they at first said it would take 2 days, then about a week, but in reality took about a month,) I applied for two other similar independent contracting jobs. They paid half as much. One followed a specific curriculum. The other was basically general conversation teaching English. The day after I got the approval from one of those companies stating that I had not passed the overall background check, but that I had passed the independent contracting portion, I was approved by the leading company.

Again, I found that I was asking God for His help and the help from additional prayer warriors. I received an email. I was approved as an independent contractor.

Perhaps I needed to be humbled. I needed to accept the job that paid half as much. When I could mentally accept the lowest paying position and be grateful, that is when I was handed the job that paid twice as much. The funny thing is that after awhile, I found myself stressing out about the job that paid twice as much. There was so much preparation time. I had to stick exactly to the given curriculum. The job that paid half as much, had no preparation time. For the job that paid twice as much, I was willing to open my schedule to hours of the night so that I was waking up at weird times. It was messing with my sleeping schedule and I found myself drinking a Diet Coke to wake up and to be enthusiastic in the middle of the night. It just wasn't my style. I had to market myself as someone that you should pay \$25.00 per hour to teach English to your child. I wouldn't pay that. I realized that I was teaching only the children from the richest families in the distant country. A student would only book for one class.

On one hand, I could be very disappointed that I didn't get many bookings from the top rated company. On the other hand, I did gain a great deal of knowledge about how to present myself to potential students who wanted to learn English as a second language.

Because I had taught only children for over twenty years, I thought that I was limited to teaching children. By exploring these different companies, I began to realize that I have several different options. I just need to allow myself to adapt. Trust that God will open the right doors.

Stuck in North Carolina

Isaiah bought a 1971 Buick Skylark. He drove it around(to Scio 3 times)...1/2 hr journeyed 3 times Ohio for about one week after it had been sitting in someone's garage for 6 years. Isaiah decided that he was going to take it to North Carolina where he worked. Desi and I tried to convince him not to do it and offered to let him drive our 2005 Honda Accord instead. Isaiah decided that he would rather take the Buick. Roman and Isaiah headed down to North Carolina together to work.

They successfully drove about 7 ½ hours in the Buick. ½ from their destination they stopped for something. Isaiah turned on the dome light to show Roman that it worked. All of the lights got really bright and then everything stopped working. They popped the hood and the battery was oozing. They walked 3 miles in the dark to buy a battery. They walked 3 miles back to the car, carrying the battery. They put the battery in, hooked it up, and the car still wouldn't start.

They called Owen, a friend and co-worker. Owen drove ½ hour to pick them up and then dropped them off by their work. They went into the woods to sleep for just a few hours before they had to report to work. After work, Isaiah called a garage to tow the vehicle and work on it. They looked at it and said that all of the electrical in the engine was fried. They replaced a couple things but had to wait for a distributor since the part was coming from Texas. Before they got to replace

the distributor, Isaaih told the garage to stop working on the car and he bought his own distributor from ebay. The car was still not fixed at the end of the week, so they stayed in North Carolina. (This is 2 weeks of camping in the woods because they couldn't drive to their normal campground spot because they lacked transportation to get to work.)

On Tuesday of the second week, Roman found out that his ex-girlfriend Randi was in North Carolina in Asheville with her ex-boyfriend Peyton. By Friday night, Isaaih tried to put the distributor on the Buick that we had sent to him in the mail (it had arrived at our house and we had to mail 2 day priority-air... driving to St. Clairsville for the fastest shipping option.) By Friday night, he had the distributor on, but it still didn't work.

Roman had been messaging Randi for the past several days. Friday night, Roman asked Randi if they would drive to Durham... 4 hours away... an 8 hour trip. They picked them up at 10 am Saturday. They drove them north. Because of a different route taken, they drove 6 hours to drop Roman and Isaiah off to Desi and myself. We met them at Randi's place of work in Cambridge so that they didn't have to drive even further. Peyton got a speeding ticket on the way from Asheville to Durham for going 90 mph. he was going 25 mph over so he would have to travel back to appear in court. 25 mph is a felony... the least type of felony, but still a felony.

Selling the Teapot

Desi listed the teapot for sale on Craig's List, Marketplace, and Ebay. About a month later, someone emailed because they saw it on Craig's List and wondered if it was still available. Desi said yes. We set up a meeting time, and the next day we met at the Wendy's near our home. Travis and Stephanie drove from Cuyahoga Falls (about an hour and a half drive) When they saw the teapot, the sugar and cream cups, they said that it was perfect. The spout was broken off of the teapot, but they knew someone who could sauter it back on. The design on it completed their set with a glass teapot. They wanted to know the history of this

teapot. We told them that we had bought it at Goodwill several years earlier. It had just been sitting around and there was no sense in us having it but not using it. They paid us and told us to keep them in mind if we ever run across any more teapots.

As we were saying our goodbyes, they invited us to church at E Angelys. I had mentioned that I had lived in the Akron area in the past near Cuyahoga Falls and they wondered if I had ever been to that church. I said that I had driven past it, but I had never been there before. They said that if I'm ever in the area, that I am welcome any time at the church.

This encounter and conversation may not seem that odd to you, but there is only one person that I have ever known to talk about that church specifically. The one time that Brent's biological father talked to him, he told him about the wonderful chandeliers that were at Earnest Angeley's church and that Brent should go there.

First on the Scene

My 19 year old son does not seem to take my advice about how to improve his driving skills. I am a very defensive driver. I like to leave plenty of space between cars. I like to slow down by using less gas and hitting the brakes less often. It is apparent to me that my verbal reminders are ineffective. I have many years of driving experience behind me. I can see accidents just waiting to happen. He is oblivious to all of this. There is a reason why young men have the highest insurance rates.

Realizing that his driving habits are out of my control, I had a conversation with God about it. I am concerned for the boy's safety. If he won't listen to me, maybe God will do something about it. I am not asking out of greed. I am asking out of love. Sometimes lessons are painful.

The same week that I asked God to help Isaiah to be more careful on the roads, Isaiah was the first on the scene of an accident. Isaiah stopped for gas. After he got gas, he got back on his motorcycle. After driving just a short distance, Isaiah was the first one to pass a car that had just flipped over. Horrified at what he might find, Isaiah

The Campground Bathroom

We were staying in the campground because we had two 15 minute video visits with Brent on consecutive days. Desi and I went to the bathroom to get our showers. We were both actively in the shower stalls getting showers. Two women and a bay came into the bathroom. The one woman was talking on the phone. The other woman was changing the baby on the counter. The baby was obviously upset. The baby was young enough to not be talking... it was just crying. (We never saw any of the people because of the shower curtains and because we were both in the process of getting showers.) Then the woman changing the bay's diaper said, "You're fine. Everything is going to be OK Desi." They walked out about two minutes later.

Desi said to me after we were both out of the shower, "For a second, I thought she was talking to me."

I asked, "What do you mean?"

Desi said there was a lady changing a baby's diaper who was named Desi because she said, "Everything is going to be OK, Desi."

I said, "I think that was a miracle. I was just singing Angels Among Us in my head while in the shower, wondering how often do we have spiritual encounters that we fail to recognize. I mean what are the chances?"

Desi, "I don't know. I don't think so." After some thinking, Desi decided that it was a unique coincidence... possibly a divine appointment.

Brent agreed that it was very unique because Desi isn't a common name and agreed that it was probably a divine appointment. How many times do you have two people named Desi in the same bathroom? How easily could the woman have left off the name Desi? The baby would have still known that she was being reassured, even without using her name. It was only because the name Desi was used in the sentence that Desi took note of the conversation.

We were and still are in the midst of emotional pain. We are gaining strength... by being completely broken. However, I am constantly asking God for reassurance that He is still with us. He may not want to change some of the big things shaking our cores, but it seems that He is willing to provide us with encouragement along the way to not despair. We must have listening ears, though! For some reason, He seems to think that our current situation is for the best. We are gaining painful knowledge. We are learning patience, humility, and that it is OK not to be self-reliant. We have both felt for a number of years that the storm is coming. We have worked hard to prepare our family physically for hard times ahead... but we had a major failure. We failed to put our trust in Jesus to deliver us. Not just that. We failed to consider the fact that sometimes death is an OK option. Sometimes God will not deliver us from our troubles. That doesn't mean that God hates us. That just means that suffering on earth can lead to enormous peace for eternity. Yes, it is nice to be happy and to enjoy life. However, if we fail to recognize that our blessings are from God, it is better for us to lose them. If salvation is at stake, it is better to lose all of our possessions.

If God knows that my husband and I have a better relationship with Him by separating the two of us physically, then it is out of love that this may be our reality. Learning to truly die to oneself is really a big time serious commitment. I always thought that my husband and I had on long-term glasses. We were concerned about how our children and grandchildren would be 20 to 100 years from now. Allowing the Holy Spirit to use your flesh to carry out the will of God...

that is some far sightedness. How many are willing to “kind of” let God have control?

Part of me wonders if my experiences are occurring because Christians are going to be facing more and more persecution in the coming days. Perhaps my words are to encourage them... to encourage you to hold on to Jesus with everything you have. Even if it means losing your job or your family or your stuff. Even if it means going to jail. Even if it means suffering. Even if it means that you are killed.

Satan is not nice! I stopped watching the news years ago because I didn't like all of the terrible things that were being reported. I chose instead to protect my brain from the negativity. I wanted to stay in my own little happy world where I could focus on the important things... like how many more days until this wiggly tooth will fall out. Purposefully keeping my mind like a child... doesn't Jesus say that we have to be like a child to enter his kingdom? What are kids like? Quick to forgive, just wanting to be loved, enjoying the simple things, needing protection...

Now however, I think that Paul would tell me that I need to quit drinking milk and to start eating some real food. He would tell me that I need to mature so that I can help the newer and newest members of the Church. Maybe some might pick up a book that is written by me just to condemn me further in their mind and somehow realize that God has been working on their own hearts. The book isn't just about my experiences. It is about helping you to realize that God is all around you. He is just hoping that you open your eyes to see Him. Open your heart. Don't just think. Practice feeling. Feeling God. Feeling the Holy Spirit at work.

If you don't feel Him, read the Bible. Pray. Every day... as much as possible. Not boring prayers that are impersonal... the real stuff. The stuff that only you and God know about. It's OK. He already knows anyways. The prayer is to help you.

Do you think that God needs help? He doesn't need help. He just wants you to love with everything that you are... for your own good.

A Free Chair

Desi and I had recently set up a corner of the living room to be my online work area. I had a desk, bookshelves, and an appropriate background for teaching online. I was using a padded folding chair to sit in when I worked. Although this chair worked and I was grateful that it was padded, I soon realized that I would be uncomfortable if I needed to sit in it for hours each day.

I was a little sad because I knew that I had used and owned chairs in the past that were quite comfortable. I felt that these things had been taken from me. Many things had been stolen. I could either be angry about it or get over it. I made a conscious choice to get over it. There was money in our bank account that I could have gone and bought one. I knew, however, that with all of our expenses that I could not mentally handle buying a chair. The folding chair that I was using had actually been a gift from my mother in law from several years ago. She didn't want it and had given it to us. We usually only used it when we had a group of people come over for dinner.

Anyways, I had kept quiet about my desire for a different chair. It doesn't do any good to complain. Besides, it was a want... not a need. I was just being selfish by wanting something more comfortable. A few weeks or a month went by. I used the folding chair. It worked. I even found a cushion that we had on a different chair and added it to this folding chair. It made me more comfortable. It also added an inch to my height so that I was off centered on my computer screen. No worries. I found a plastic box, just about the same size as my computer, to put

under the computer to add an inch of height. Nobody looking at me from halfway around the world would be able to tell of the silly setup that I had to appear “professional” on screen. It worked.

We were on our way to somewhere that we didn’t typically go. Desi and I can’t remember where we were going, but I’ll revise this sentence if we remember. In any case, we drove through New Athens. I saw a chair just sitting on the sidewalk with a piece of paper on the sidewalk beside the chair. I felt as if it was a chair that was for me. As we were approaching New Athens, I told Desi that I had seen a chair when we had driven through earlier. I told her that if it was still there, that I wanted to check it out. We drove by. It was still there. I told Desi that I thought that it was free. We had to make another loop around because there was no parking available where the chair was located. I parked in a side street so that we weren’t blocking traffic while Desi ran to check out the chair just sitting on the sidewalk. The piece of paper that was laying on the ground beside the chair said, “Free.” The wind must have blown the free sign off of the chair. She wheeled the chair to the car. It was exactly what I had been hoping for. It fits me perfectly. It is even more than I was hoping for. It

Complete Surrender

I shut myself in a little room with the normal things in it, but my main goal was to eliminate distractions. I brought just a laptop, my Bible, and the notebook that has my rough draft of topics that I feel led to write about. I feel that God has been trying to get me to write about these topics and I keep falling into every sort of distraction imaginable. They aren’t even selfish distractions. However, they are distractions keeping me from what I feel God has asked me to do. Therefore, I would guess that they are all put there by the devil. Just in case, someone would be encouraged to grow closer to God by reading these words. I think the evil one is trying to stop me.

I was typing about another topic when my husband called and my daughter brought the phone into the little space. They don't know it, but I have been praying in earnest secretly. Earlier today I was able to find a quiet space and get my mind completely focused on God. Admitting all my faults, insecurities, and weaknesses, the Holy Spirit helped me in my prayer.

Something that I struggle with is control. Yes, I struggle with giving God control. I also struggle with giving my husband control. I struggle when I feel like God wants me to act in a particular way, but my husband tells me that I am not understanding properly. According to the Bible, he is the head of the house. How am I supposed to contradict my husband and be submissive to him at the same time. Surely God's will surpasses my husband's or my own... so how can I get them all to be in line with each other?

Short answer. I can't. God and the Holy Spirit have to hear my plea for help and take care of it. At the moment it seems so silly to sit in a little room and type when the comfortable world that I have known has disappeared. Everything in my life tells me that I should be working, trying with every bit of energy to earn some money. The bills are crazy! How many times have I heard that God helps those who help themselves? He has no reason to help someone sitting in a room typing when so many things need done.

Perhaps, though, this is exactly what He wants me to do, even though it makes no sense to me. I am like a little child. I need help. Like an earthly father, He wants me to obey. Even if it doesn't make sense. Have you ever heard your dad say to do something and not explain why. Yes, it is great when we understand... when our kind father explains every reason why following his rules are a good thing. But sometimes there is just not time. For example, in the case of an approaching car, a dad might just tell his son to stop. Immediate obedience is necessary to avoid getting into an accident.

God gave us His explanations in the Bible. We certainly can't blame Him if we don't read it... or if we say "Are you sure about that?" I am pretty confident that He is sure about what He has said.

In any case, I was struggling and asked God for His help by touching the hearts of those involved. There is nothing I can do. It wasn't just a sentence... it was a plea, with real tears, a messy face, and the Holy Spirit's help. About 2 hours later, as I was obeying His voice for me to type, my husband called and said that we were to disregard his previous words. He wants them destroyed and I am to not even see them. I am not sure what they are... but since I was asking for help from God and the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus, with no selfish motive, I am pretty sure that there was something harmful in the words... with a selfish or independent spirit.

I will continue to pray that my will, my husband's will and God's will are all aligned together.

I had also been wondering about what to do with all of my classroom supplies that are stacked in my bedroom. I have spent the last 23 years collecting and now the collection sits unused in boxes. They are an intrusion to my space and yet I would hate to have to buy all of that again. The answer came to me that I should give all of it away. He didn't say to sell it. (He apparently is not worried about any bills!) So of course I started asking questions in my mind. What if I need it later?

The voice in my head came back, "If you need something I will give it to you." It is just that simple. If I have learned anything from the Bible, I should pay attention to details. I should not sell it. If needed, don't buy it. Be patient. If I need something, He will GIVE it to me.

Looney's Garage

Roman and Isaiah and Owen started out in North Carolina together in the Honda Accord. They drove 6 hours to go pick up Mary. Then they drove 6 more hours to Ohio to be able to go to Roman's Going Away Party / Crawdad Bash at Shane's house. They made it here in time for the going away party, but they were very tired. We all went to the party. All was well.

Everyone got some rest that night. The next day, at about 1:00 in the afternoon, Isaiah and Owen left our house in the Accord to go back to North Carolina. At about 3:00 we got a call from Isaiah asking us to go look at a Mercedes that he saw along the road for sale about 45 minutes away from our home. Roman, Mary, Desi, and I stopped what we were doing and went to go look at it. We thought it would be a good fit for Isaiah. It was shifting fine and was in a price that we could afford. Roman drove the Mercedes back to the house with Mary. Roman really liked it.

After we got back to the house and were all eating ice cream, Isaiah called to ask about the Mercedes and if we had been able to buy it. As we were talking about how awesome the Mercedes was, Isaiah said something like "Oh no, hold on..." about 5 times. I think the Accord transmission just went out." He was able to pull over to the side of the road. He said that it was pouring out transmission fluid. He was on a 6 line divided highway going up a mountain. After looking at it, he assessed that he could back it down the mountain that he was trying to go up. Then he was able to get off of an exit at the bottom of the mountain. He went to the gas station. After being there, on his phone he looked up nearby garages. He found that Looney's Garage was a mile down the road. He was able to drive it to the garage. While he was doing all of this, we were trying to figure out how to get Isaiah to work on time and Owen back to his house.

He was 5 hours from here and 3 hours away from his place of work. The only thing we could think of was for Roman to drive down and take him which would be 12 hours. Owen called his dad. His dad said that he would pick them up. That solved that immediate issue.

Theh next day, we had a video visit. Roman and Mary took the Mercedes to just south of Charleston. It was along our path and Isaiah only would need to drive 3 hours to get to Charleston from his work. He could accomplish that after his work day and we would not need to miss our video visit.

Roman, Mary, and all of Roman's stuff that he had to take on the plane with him, along with all of our camping stuff for the night were in our car... the Carolla now. After Isaiah got off of work, Isaiah, Owen, and Ramsey took Owen's car and drove to pick up the Mercedes near Charleston. From there, Isaaih drove the Mercedes with the other 2 following in the car behind him. They went to Looney's to get Isaiah's stuff from out of the Accord. A mile away from the garage, the Mercedes stopped shifting. It was stuck along the road. It would not move. Isaiah never made it back to North Carolina in the Mercedes. The other 2 picked him up and they took him to his accord to put his stuff in Owen's car. Then they drove back down and dropped Isaiah off near his work because he had work the next morning.

The next day, during a break at work, Isaiah called Looney's and asked if they could pick up his car. They said yes, so now they had 2 of his vehicles at their garage. They picked up the Mercedes, but couldn't look at it because Isaiah had kept the Mercedes key. A day later, Leif drove to Looney's to drop off the key (about 6 hours round trip) so they could fix it.

Looney's bought the Accord so that they could try to fix it and resell it. They fixed the Mercedes, enough to get it back to our house (then it needed to go to Mattern's for another part.)

Mary Sits with Desi

Through a series of strange events, a girl that I only ever met for a few days, entered our lives quickly and disappeared just as fast. While she was with us, she was able to sit with Desi while Brent and I were at family court proceedings. Isaiah was at work in North Carolina and Roman got a plane and left for Alaska the day before. Since it is family court even though Desi had been a member of the family for as long as we had, she was not permitted in the courtroom. In the past, she at least ad her brothers to sit with her for emotional support. Desi was spared that challenge. A girl named Mary jumped into our lives just at that critical moment. It is kind of ironic. One of my adopted daughter's legal first name was Mary. It may not mean much to but it left us with the impression that even though we may suddenly lose one, we may gain another just as fast. It was very odd. I still have that Mary on my prayer list. She helped me to open my eyes and for a moment in time brought joy to us.

As one Mary sat in the judge's office saying terrible things, another Mary sat quietly supporting the sister in the hall left to heal. Sometimes things are just weird.

A Dead Battery

Desi and I went to Grandma Grace's house to have a Bible study inbetween Cambly classes. After our Bible study, with just a 15 minute buffer before my next scheduled priority hour, we headed out the door. We got in the car. It wouldn't start. We popped the hood and saw that the battery was corroded. We used a toothbrush to clean the terminals and tried again. It still wouldn't start. We went back into Grandma's house and asked to use the phone to call Darell. We called

Darell. He said that he would be there in 15 minutes. I realized that I didn't have enough time to meet my obligation, so I cancelled the upcoming hour.

Darrel arrived and jumped our car. Once it was running we immediately left and went to Advanced Auto. The person working there tested our battery and said that it was completely dead. We bought a new battery. He installed it.

We went back to the house and I had 20 minutes to spare before my next obligation.

Mary's Airline Ticket

I never said Mary was perfect. It was awesome that she was there for Desi, but she and Roman were hoping to start a relationship and he just hopped on a plane. I prayed. I was very hopeful that she would get distracted by her life and would not follow Roman to Alaska. I was concerned that things were moving way too fast and that she might not be as dependable or as cheerful in the long term. Roman gave her money to purchase a ticket. She did. A few days later she canceled the ticket saying that she couldn't leave her life. The money was never returned and she disappeared. It was an expensive lesson, but sometimes it takes a painful experience for us to grow and learn. Sometimes I wish I was able to learn with little things and lessons so I could avoid more painful extremes.

Update: While in Alaska, Roman has been talking to a girl in the Phillipines. Wouldn't you know? Her name is Mary. Because of the prior "Marys" she asks that we call her by her middle name. I guess most people call her by her middle name. I have prayed about this relationship as well. So far, all prayers seem to be having a positive effect on them. I never would have wanted a wife for my son from a different country. I would want him close to me! It is good for me to

know that I have been praying for them and that the bond seems to be stronger rather than cutting off immediately. It helps me to be more open minded to a potentially wonderful individual as a family member even though my mind may have told me “beware”. Without prayer, I would be concerned that she would just love Roman because a desire for American citizenship.

That is a very unfortunate attitude and yet truthful. It is because of my faith in God to intervene when his spirit is in danger and to see her as one of God’s many children living around the world. I can’t imagine that God has boundaries in heaven for people from different geographic countries. The idea would probably make him sad. Regardless one’s earthly citizenship, in God’s eyes we are all brothers and sisters. Our home is not earth. This is just a temporary place to practice loving. Our home is with our Father.

Oil Change at Walmart

We went to Walmart because we needed an oil change. There was an approximate 2 hour wait we decided to wait the 2 hours in the car. 2 and ½ hours later, a worker came out to get our keys to do the car. At that point we went inside. After a quick restroom break, we didn’t need anything so we sat on the bench by the automotive area. I had brought my Bible in to read. We were talking... about JW (sitting about 30 seconds – just long enough for us to make a comment about JW since I was reading the Bible and Desi was dressed conservatively), when out of the corner of Desi’s left eye she saw a man and woman come in . Desi said I think that is the woman who was in drunk tank with us. We both looked at each other and stood up instantly. In the process of us both getting up, I asked if she thought we should go talk to her. Desi said yes. Then we tried to find her. 2 aisles down we saw her at the end. We went down

the next aisle so we could get a better look to see if it was the same person. Is it her whispered, shook head yes.

I said you may not remember us but we were in drunk tank together. Oh yes, I remember you. Wow! That was clear back in March. She said she was in for a DUI and was surprised that we recognized her because she got a new nose. Desi said that she recognized her from her eyes. She asked if we ever made it out of there that night because we were the last ones left when she got out. She asked how we were doing. We said we were fine but still dealing with the court system. Desi said that she couldn't remember her name. We reintroduced ourselves and she said her name was Ashley.

We hope you find what you are looking for. It was good to see you again. We went over to sit back down on the bench. We waited for about 30 seconds. The mechanic walked by and told us that our car was finished. We just walked over and with no waiting, paid for the oil change and left. Wit only about a minute total of down time, I would call that a divine appointment. I don't know the purpose, but it doesn't matter. Only when we get an oil change to we sit and wait. How many times do you walk in by the automotive section of the store? Most people go in the front door. It was perfect timing. God is always on time.

It was only as we left that I noticed my Bible in my arms that I never got to read. God had other things for me to do. Studying and reading is important, but we need to be careful. We don't want to study and read so much that we forget to implement. Jesus did not spend all of his time praying alone or studying the scrolls. He was a living example to those around Him. At the right time, He started teaching others and doing what He was called to do... even when it was very hard.

Do you think I like writing about my family going to jail? It's not fun. When you have charges against you, most people treat you as if you have already been tried and found guilty. Judging others is something our society does all the time that Jesus does not like. We judge by clothes, haircuts, size, color, age and behavior.

We need to stop this! God has an interesting way of choosing the underdog for big challenges. God sees the potential in the broken. Joseph was from a family of shepherds. Shepherds were considered to be detestable by the Egyptians. Yet if it weren't for God's intervention through Joseph, they would have all starved. The woman at the well was a Samaritan. First of all, Samaritans were rejected by Jews. Jesus specifically walked through Samaria to be able to talk to a woman that others rejected. She had already been married several times and was currently living with another man. Yet, Jesus chose her to be the first evangelist. Apparently, he was able to look past all her sins, see her potential for change, and love her.

Sometimes I think about fasting and that it would be something that God would want me to do. Why fast if he specifically told me to write it down and I ignore Him. If God told you or tells you to do something, you better do it. Chances are, you will do it sooner or later. One way is just more painful. Look at Jonah. I bet when he was in the big fish that he lamented and begged for a second chance if God would just save him. There is a purpose. God doesn't just tell us something for no reason. We are his hands and feet on earth. You don't have to know the reason. God will put it all together.

I'll Never See You Again

I had determined that God wanted me to act in faith. He wanted me to give up something that I had worked for a long time. Something that I had worked hard to keep and to increase. Something that gave me security in my future, for I felt that hard times lay ahead. My retirement. I delayed moving to another state because I knew that I could never make up the difference in another state. I had so many

years vested in Ohio. In a sense, I was a slave to working in the Ohio area. I did not see another option.

I struggled with this. There is no logic in this. Everything I had learned from the time I was a child told me to prepare for my future. Plan wisely so that my descendants would have a more secure future. There was a problem. I was depending upon myself for security... not God. Society taught me to be independent. God says to be like a little child... dependent on Him.

I drug my feet. Finally, I typed up a letter of resignation. I looked for an excuse not to do it. Maybe God would give me a sign. I prayed earnestly, asking God that if there were a way for this not to be part of the plan, that this task be kept from me. Finally, I went to the library to print out my letter (I have trouble with ink and printers so the library is just an easier, more dependable solution for me.)

I told God that I would do it, trusting that if He were just testing my faithfulness, that He would send someone with a message saying, "Ty, don't do it." In the library, I saw one of my former students. He was watching Spongebob via the internet on one of the computers. I went over to greet him. As my daughter was printing out the letter of resignation on a nearby computer, James asked what I was doing. I said that I just had to run some errands. He said, "I'll never see you again."

I guess that was my answer. It wasn't what I was looking for. In fact, it was the opposite. We left the library and went directly to the new school that had just been built. It was the first time I had seen it close up, let alone walk into it. I turned in my resignation. I closed the chapter. Although waiting was involved, I knew a new adventure was around the corner. I just had no idea what it was... I would just need to have faith.

No Fear, Just Love Part V God's Grace Rough Draft

Grace Six Times

I had not had any VIPKID classes for a month or two so I wasn't opening any more slots. One night a message popped up saying that Grace requested 2 classes with me. The times were not open, I would have to open the times. I accepted both of the times requested. I had never gotten a request before. About 4 days later, I had not had any of the classes yet, but she requested 2 more classes for a couple of weeks in the future. After 4 were scheduled, I taught the first two with her. After the first class, that same morning, she requested two more (always 2 back to back classes.) So total, she requested 6 classes, the next day, after I had classes with her, she cancelled the last two. She cancelled with in 6 hours of requesting. I taught her 4 times on 2 different days because the classes were back to back.

Four times was not enough to get my attention. It was only when I saw Grace 6 times on my screen that I thought, wait a minute here. Why do I only have classes scheduled by one person named Grace. When I look at my screen, all I see is Grace. I looked up the definition of grace. Grace is "the unmerited favor of God towards man." Grace is a gift from Heavenly Father given through His Son, Jesus. Grace refers to the enabling power and spiritual healing offered through mercy and love. No one can return to the presence of God without divine grace.

Once I realized that God was sending me a message, two classes were cancelled. When I had four classes scheduled, I was still too slow to catch on to God's clue. I just thought wow... 4 classes with the same student... that has never happened before. It was only when she was scheduled for 6 classes that I thought this is too much. When I look at my screen I had no other students... yet I had one student who requested six classes. I believe the point was for me to think about grace... not teaching a little girl named Grace.

Timing is Everything

Brent was in a medical cell and had very little control over anything. His small comforts of using the phone or looking at mail on a kiosk were gone unless permission was granted and given by a guard (that required a guard's time and effort... therefore less likely to occur... they are very busy.) They didn't have time for him to get a shower for 6 days. He finally gave up hope and tried to wash off the best that he could in the sink that only has cold water... hoping not to get thrown into isolation for having his jumpsuit down long enough to wash off. We are still confused about that. His toilet is in full view of the camera. How is he supposed to use the restroom and not expose himself? The rule is that you always have to have your jumpsuit on the whole way unless you are covered by your blanket while sleeping between certain hours.

Anyways, finally, after asking all day, Brent was given the phone! He had been told, "sure," "in just a minute" and "not yet" all day long, but the first two comments had been lies from numerous guards as they turned and walked away. That made Brent even more sad than just being told, "no." It was now about 7:30 PM at night. It just so happened to be at the exact moment that I was starting to speak. For over 23 years, it has been very difficult for me to speak about the birth of my oldest son. You would think that I would want to shout it from the rooftops, but you'd be wrong. I was ashamed. I thought people would judge me and think that I was stupid for wanting a home birth. Unrealistic... reckless... that I deserved to die... these were all the thoughts that kept me from sharing one of the greatest experiences of my entire life.

Now, I felt I was being renewed by the Holy Spirit... breaking the chains of doubt and fear. I had prayed earlier that day for chances to encourage others in their faith. Then, in class, the pastor was asking people to share what helps them with their faith. I knew I had to share. To that point in time, I had probably only shared the story of Roman's birth with 10 people... all of them being family or

friends that had known me for years. I felt compelled... but there were an estimated 20-30 people in the room. I didn't even know all their names. I was ready. I was going to share.

I listened to the others as we worked our way around the room. My daughter shared that she was adopted by the best family ever. That was enough to make me want to cry. I was already nervous. My turn was next. I said, "When my..." Our phone rang. My daughter whispered, "It's Brent."

I had a choice. I could run off to answer the phone... I love Brent dearly and I know how much it would hurt him for me to not be there on the other end of the line. I also knew that this was a test. The enemy did not want me to talk about Roman's birth! It might encourage other believers!

I continued my sentence and went on with my story. My daughter left the room and answered the phone. She was gone for several minutes. When she returned, I was almost finished with my experience. I continued telling the remainder of the story, even though she was motioning with her eyes and tilting her head for me to stop talking and to leave. I finished telling about Roman's birth.

I really wanted to hear what the others had to share, we were only half-way around the room when I shared, but I also knew that Brent was sitting by himself and that he usually only had the chance to talk once per day. He did have the opportunity to talk that one time per day, as long as there was enough money on his account. We left the building and sat outside. Brent called and I explained. I said that he had to understand that it was a direct attack from the enemy. He said that he had been trying all day and that even when the guards said "sure" or "in a minute," nobody ever gave him the phone until that moment. Brent hates it when people lie. He would much rather someone just say "no."

I said that I had to speak because I could not let the devil win that battle. I was grateful for the eyes to see past his manipulation. Let's think about this for a moment. Does God lie? Does the devil lie? The guards lied to Brent. I don't know if the guards profess to be Christians or not. What I do know is that they were being influenced. Would the Holy Spirit influence you to lie? Would the devil influence you to lie? When you think about this scenario in spiritual terms, the guards don't have a clue as to what is going on. They are not expecting to see a spiritual battle. They are only making sure that the flesh of Brent's body is still breathing. They had no way of predicting that I was about to give a personal testimony. There were many guards who denied access to the phone. Maybe they didn't feel like it. Should I hate them for spreading sarcasm and lies? No! I should pray for them! Those who lie regularly and without remorse are obviously falling into the devil's snare. They may think it is harmless. It's not. Who is able to roam the earth and tempt people?

There are many things in our lives that become habitual. I know that everyone makes mistakes and sins, but please, at least try not to sin! If you are finding enjoyment by sinning, please ask God for help to stop. Ask others you know to help you. If you think that sinning is no big deal... everybody does it... the old people are just too strict... think again. Our culture is way too comfortable with sin. This is making God very sad! Satan is ruthless!

Just an interesting note... the next day, Thursday, Brent had the phone at his door available to him for about 6 hours. On Sunday, Brent was given the phone and called exactly when our pastor got up and started his sermon. The topic for the day: doubt. We left the sanctuary and went into a room nearby. I explained that we were at church and I felt like this was another test of the devil. Brent agreed to that we would go back into the sanctuary to hear the lesson for about 5 minutes and leave the phone on so that Brent could try to hear also. We stayed in the back by the door.

After the 5 minutes, we went back into the little room. Brent said that he could only hear a few words. I was overcome because in a sense, we were all at church together. We talked for a few more minutes. Brent said that he thought that he could hold on to the phone long enough that we could talk to him after the church service was over. That is what he did. We went back for the remainder of the service. I was able to write down the notes and scriptures covered during our absence from the screen. We had just sat down in the car when Brent called again. We were able to talk to him. We just sat in the parking lot.

On Tuesday, two days after Brent was only given the phone while we were at church, Brent was put into a regular cell again. This means that although he is once again subject to negativity of other inmates and the TV... yesterday the remote master had the tv on a marathon of horror movies all day... he also has access to a phone all day. He can call for a good morning prayer, a lunch prayer, and a good night prayer... along with any other time that he feels the need to share and has money on his account.

Of Course, that Is Your Name

I was really in a slump. I was feeling very sad. Brent had called to say that he did not feel safe in his new cell. Someone got into his box and took several pieces of candy while he was sleeping. The TV was louder than what it had been before his arrival and the inmates' sleeping patterns had changed (according to another inmate.) While Brent was in the shower, someone used his sock as toilet paper. Brent said that his coffee looked funny and it appeared as if someone was messing with his other stuff while he was in the shower. Based upon stories he had heard from the other cell, he thought it wise to dump his coffee. Obviously, he was not welcome in the cell.

I have tried to be patient. I pray for the Lord's will to be done... trusting that He has a plan. It is just very hard to see or to imagine it sometimes. We are utterly helpless. Having someone purposefully pee on a loved one and to have a sock used as toilet paper two days later is rough on our minds. I couldn't concentrate on anything. I was trying to read a book about the Holy Spirit, miracles, and the modern church. It was difficult, but I managed a short prayer. It would be nice to know that God hasn't forgotten us. His plan seems to be more mysterious than I can follow.

As of today, we are down to one running car for our family. When I just typed that sentence, I realized how spoiled I am. For years, we have had three or four running vehicles for our family. We each had different places that we needed to go at the same time. We would have one back up car in case one of the others needed repaired. I am not used to sharing a vehicle. Yet, somehow, I just had two people come to my house to get things. I didn't need a car. I thought I needed a car because it has been a constant in my life for the past 25 years. I thought it would be an inconvenience, but I allowed my son to take the car for several days. I assumed that I would just stay at home and not talk to anyone other than my daughter and anyone that called on the phone.

I wanted assurance from God, because it seems like the big request on my list must not be matching with His will or for some reason that I do not understand, my request is not being granted. I have seen His presence so many times, I just thought for sure that He was going to deliver us from our torment. To me, it feels like we've learned all that we can. Anyways...

My son was in North Carolina with our car but had talked about selling an item to a man that he had met about a week before. We normally don't have people come to our house if we have something for sale. Since my son had already talked to him for about an hour and a half and we didn't have a vehicle, we agreed to meet him on the front porch.

He was planning to pay for the item with a check as a sort of receipt. My daughter said that it would be fine, but I said that I could write him a receipt. He said that would be fine and went to the bank to get more cash. I asked for his name so that I could make out the receipt. He said his name and I was too confused to write it. I asked him again. He thought I was having trouble spelling it because of too many double consonants. Nope. That wasn't it. Emmitt Elliott

That name might not mean anything to you, but to me it meant that God was still hearing me. I just needed to be more patient. I don't see the big picture yet. Let me explain. Emma is my daughter that ran away. All of my husband's charges and my charges are from Elliott county. We talked about an hour and a half about a variety of topics. I shared the story of our cross country trip in the \$650 RV. I said that if that happened and we arrived safely to my parents' home, then I am sure that this will work out. I just need to be patient. After talking with him, I felt ready to type again. I was drawn out of my foggy stupor.

The same day, two people came from 2 hours away to get my old truck cap. It had been advertised for free for about 3 months. At least 10 people had called during those months and assured us that they were going to get. One other person who was local showed up but decided not to take it. We did a little snooping on them since they were coming to our backyard. We saw that he had several posts about prayer. Before they left, I asked one of them if he was a praying kind of man. He said yes. I asked if he could pray for my family. He hopped out of his truck and said, "How about right now?" The two older gentlemen, my daughter, and myself held hands in a circle and prayed... right there, halfway in the driveway and halfway in the alley. I remember that he said, "Consider it done." And he thanked God in advance. He said that he would have his wife pray for me and his church. It certainly couldn't hurt.

I walked into the house comforted. My mind asked, "Which part of praying for my family... in my mind I had so many categories that need addressed... was done?" Then I thought that I don't need to worry about it. Just keep trying. Trust

God to take care of it. The Lord will help us to do His will. He just sent three strangers to my house in one day. He can and will do what he knows is best when it is the right time.

Praise God!

I will admit a sin to you. As a parent, I failed to teach God's Word and power to my children. I know, it is awful to confess this. I cringe at my lapse. I believed in God and Jesus, but I did not take them to meet with other believers. I kept my beliefs to myself. I quit praying with my husband. I talked to Jesus less and less. In turn, it was harder and harder for me to see His work in my life. Although God or a Supreme Intelligent Being was never in question, the belief in salvation through Jesus was in question. They didn't see a need for Jesus. It was limiting. How could God judge all of those in the world born into an Islamic culture? In society, I blended. I still had core beliefs that kept me from the temptations that many people in the world suffer from, but I was falling into Satan's lies. Satan was putting a fear in me. Satan knew that if he could keep me silent, that my inaction would work towards his evil plans. I was becoming part of the world and I was allowing this to happen to my family also.

As I had grown through my recent hardships, this glaring flaw tormented me. How was I to teach my children about Jesus? They didn't want to hear my ramblings. They thought that I was weak and was only turning to Jesus because I was desperate. I was weak and desperate, but they did not see how I was truly free because in my weakness, I allowed Jesus to take over. When I felt strong, I thought I could handle life's challenges by my own strength and abilities. It is only when I was completely broken that I would allow Jesus to take all of my burdens. I had to consciously and literally say, "You'll have to take care of this. I don't have

a clue as to how to even begin.” There were so many areas of my life for God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit to fix.

It seemed to me that God had slowly arranged for me to have an enormous amount of time on my hands. At first, I did everything I could to try to set up more income potential. Gradually, it became clear to me that God was not concerned about my finances. It seemed as if He wanted me to pray and to read His Word as much as possible. At first, I felt guilty spending so much time doing this. When you live in the world, the world says that you are to earn money. Reading a book is something someone does as a hobby. It is an activity for your free time. It is not supposed to take up all of your time in your day unless you are studying for some type of test or knowledge that will advance your career. If you recognize the power of God’s Word, you see that it is not a hobby. It is an essential part of your Christian armor. If you don’t see the power in prayer, then prayer time is in a sense a daydreaming of sorts. I always thought that two or three minutes of prayer would be enough each day. I thought that I could effectively multitask. I could pray and drive a car at the same time.

Although I do think that you can pray while doing something else, I think that is a very limited connection... think of it as a slow, dial up internet connection. I am sure that Satan likes Christians to only talk to God while preoccupied with other thoughts. God says that He wants to be number one in our lives. How can we in good conscious say that He is number one if we don’t even devote individualized attention to Him? He is not a computer that is OK with four tabs open to be thought of at once. He is not an app that you can have several others running in the background. Yes, God wants us to constantly recognize Him in our hearts as we go about our daily lives, but He wants us to spend intimate time with Him in prayer every day. Jesus set this example for us. Jesus deliberately withdrew from others so that He could talk with God with no distractions. If Jesus, being perfect, knew the importance of prayer, then with all of my faults I would need so much more help and communication.

I completely gave up and told God that He was going to have to reach my children. Roman was in Alaska. Isaiah was in North Carolina. Emma and Maddi were in Kentucky. I was in Ohio. God would have to do it. I didn't want God to take 40 years to answer my prayers. I was determined to be a quick study. Let me learn from all of the examples that God had provided in the Bible. Humility, lining up with God's will, and bringing glory to God seemed to stand out to me as key components of a worthy prayer.

I felt humble. I was sure that God wanted my children to know Jesus personally. If God would grant this prayer, I would give the glory to God for being willing to orchestrate events to reach my children. In fervent prayer, I asked God to bind Satan, demons, and evil spirits in all assignments or plans surrounding my children. I asked God to touch their hearts. I asked for God's Harvesters to go and get them... to intervene... I was persistent in my prayers.

Two days later, we were talking on the phone to Roman. He said that he needed to go because he had been invited to a Wednesday night Bible study.

The following Wednesday, we were talking on the phone with Isaiah. He said it was the weirdest thing, but he was just getting back from Youth Group. He told two friends that he would go with them, lost the friends while playing frisbee, found himself lost in a church, and found a small group of young adults playing music. The group needed help with the percussion because the person attempting the percussion part had no sense of rhythm. Since Isaiah had played the drums in high school, he was the missing piece to this group. They stopped practicing to go with a larger group, study some Bible, and play a game about gathering flashlight pieces. Later, the group performed the song that they had practiced earlier. Isaiah said that he had fun, that there were lots of nice people, and that he had agreed to come back in the future to continue playing the percussion piece. Later that night, people asked him to go to a big house where someone had died and they were trying to give away everything in the house before they sold the house. They told Isaiah to get anything he wanted. This was

very helpful to him since he is on a very tight budget. Also, it is inspiring because it is so unusual. Isaiah witnessed so much of our belongings get stolen. It is easy to become discouraged. To see such kindness offered at an unexpected time, means so much to a fragile heart.

Earlier, on this same day, we had Family Court. To my knowledge, I could only see negativity in my upcoming court experience. On the way to court, I asked God to please let something positive come from our time in court. My prayer was answered. Before court, my lawyer was able to share some information with me that helped me to better understand how to pray for the others. During court, a request was granted that I believe will help our entire family. My legal opposition must not have wanted this request to be granted or they would have done it themselves. If our lawyers would have asked the judge, he probably would have denied the request. The lady seemed unsure of herself and seemed to want to justify her request, hoping the judge would agree. The judge agreed and the request was court ordered. The next Family Court date was set for the same time as our criminal cases were scheduled for trial... in approximately 6 months. The judge said that it will be rescheduled if it needed to be.

To put the icing on the cake, Family Court was rather quick. With just a few adjustments to our traveling plans, we were able to make it on time to our Wednesday night Bible study!

What a bright blast of light when we have seen so much darkness around us in the past six months! Praise God!

The Simple Things

Desi and I travel each week to Kentucky to visit my husband who is awaiting trial. We have learned that we are able to have a half an hour per week of free video visits, but we must be present at the jail to have these visits. It costs us about 10 hours of traveling time, gas money, wear and tear on the car, and a camping fee. We camp because it is cheaper than renting a motel room. We could eliminate the camping fee if we traveled for about 5 hours, had one half hour visit for the week, and drove 5 hours back to the house. We have discussed that option, but for as long as we are able, we plan to break it up into two 15 minute visits to make it a little bit easier to handle the mental hardship of being separated.

We looked into different camping options to see if we could reduce or eliminate those camping fees. We were able to find a couple of cheaper places to camp. None of them have access to running water or flush toilets. We are tough. We have stayed at a couple of different places, one without any amenities at all... but it is free. We planned to stay there again, so we did not pack any towels or showering supplies. We figured that we could skip one day. We are tough after all, right? We went to one of the places but did not feel comfortable. We are tough, but we try to use statistics, logic, and a “gut feeling” when setting up for the night. We just weren’t feeling that confident at the first place. We drove to our other free backup. There were a couple of uninhabited, out of state cars with an unmarked car that had official plates beside them. We didn’t like the feel of that either. For all we knew, it was a moonshine bust. This free camping area was essentially a few pull off spots along a road along a mountain ridgetop. From what we could see, there was just the very steep side of a mountain. Why would people leave their cars to hike in the dark on a steep mountainside? I don’t know, but I didn’t want to stick around to potentially find out something that I didn’t want to know.

We decided to go to the campground that had flush toilets and showers. It looked safe to us and we had no bad “gut feelings.” Another family was camping

nearby. We decided to stay, even though we didn't bring our showering supplies. Safety was the main concern... not showers. Did I mention that it was in the 90's that day? It was late September, humid and in the 90's. The previous week it had been in the 70's during the day and low 50's at night. When you are camping, this can be quite a difference. In short, we were feeling kind of sticky.

My daughter just wanted to just rinse off and to get the kink out of her hair that had been left from a ponytail. I went with her to the restrooms. She announced that there was a bottle of shampoo in the shower. Wahoo!!! Neither of us had towels, but I had worn a long jean skirt the previous day. I was resourceful. A skirt would work as a towel. She just used her T-shirt from the previous day as her towel. Getting a shower may seem like a little thing to you, but I just feel so much more prepared for the day when I can stick to a regular routine and wash my hair in the morning. I felt so blessed for this shampoo. The story gets even better. My daughter got what she needed from the bottle and put the bottle by the shower door so that I could grab the bottle. I went to the next shower stall armed with the treasured shampoo. Guess what I found. Conditioner!!! Yes, my excitement reveals how tough I really am. I thought I was about to cry. I was mentally prepared for taking a hike to the "great outdoors" for a restroom break. Now I found myself with the comforts of shampoo, conditioner, and hot water.

We have camped approximately 30 times in the past 7 months. I have always been prepared with my own supplies. I have never seen extra supplies left behind by another camper. The one time that I was unprepared, what I wanted (not even needed) was available for me to use. Some would even say that a cleaning staff member would be responsible for removing anything that is not supposed to be left in the restroom. I relayed this story to my mother-in-law a few days later. She said, "If God takes care of you that much for the small things that you need, just imagine how much He is taking care of you for the big things that really matter." Maybe He thought that I needed assurance that He was looking out for me. That security is so much more important than the shampoo and conditioner.

A Beautiful Day

This may seem like a small coincidence to you, but I'm simply telling you about the things that I notice in my life.

The church that I attend was planning a free community outreach event on Saturday. The date had been set far in advance. To celebrate fall and to potentially invite others to learn about Jesus, a big event was planned. Big inflatables were rented, hay wagon rides would be available, face painting would be offered, and yes, there would be plenty of food.

The Sunday before the event, a lady reminded us to pray for good weather during the event. She did not want any reasons or excuses why people would not show up. This event was to strengthen young families already familiar with the church and to potentially add new families. Forecasters were predicting rain. It was a rather dreary week. I woke up on Saturday and it was obvious that it had just rained. It was cold outside and there were lots of gray clouds. It just looked like it could rain again at any moment. I didn't want to go out there.

I remember saying another prayer. God, we are not asking for nice weather for ourselves. We just want a chance that others can be drawn to this event and their hearts may be touched to know You better. Over several hours, the clouds slowly dispersed. About an hour before the outdoor event was to begin, the sun shined brightly and I couldn't find one cloud in the sky. The temperature was perfect for kids to be running around having fun.

Some might say, "The weather is unpredictable this time of year." True enough. If you have good motives and can potentially bring glory to God, why not say a prayer. If God sends the clouds away a little sooner, he gets no glory if we don't

tell people how we have prayed about it. The fact that it looked so miserable just hours before heightened the awareness of how we were blessed with an absolutely beautiful day.

Over the Hill

On December 9, 2019 Desi and I left our home at approximately 5:30 in the morning so that I would be present for court at 11:30 in the morning. We didn't like to leave so early in the morning, but it was the best solution so that we could have amenities available to dress and to be neat in appearance before the judge. Now that it is winter, campground facilities have been turned off for the winter months. When we go camping in a national forest, we have no access to running water or electricity. I don't always pray before a journey because sometimes I forget. This morning I did remember. I prayed for God to put a bubble of light...a shield of protection around the car... to protect both our car and our bodies from harm. After the Scion incident, I learned to ask for favor from God to protect our vehicle also. Our car is three years old with liability insurance only. The car originally had a salvaged title and the premium for full coverage with a new driver is expensive.

It rained almost the entire way to our destination. Approximately halfway along the way, I saw a semi had run off the road and was sitting in the grassy mud along the three lanes of traffic running in each direction. I was grateful that only one lane was blocked with numerous emergency vehicles and that traffic was flowing with just a very small delay. It looked like the semi just ran right off the road. The vehicle appeared to be unharmed. It just looked like a challenge to figure out how to get this massive vehicle out of the wet grass and mud.

We traveled onward. We arrived safely, but we had a mentally tough day in court. Brent's trial that was set for the early part of February was moved to May 27th. Immediately, it was crushing to our spirits. Every month meant additional months of very limited income with big expenses per month trying to keep in contact with Brent. It is four more pretrial dates paying two different lawyers. On paper, it meant four more months before any determination of our futures. On the other hand, I had been asking God if He could please work things out before trial. I expected our trials to be very expensive and stressful. As I write this, I don't see why God won't move faster on this. Once again, it is probably because of my limited perspective. Maybe He knows that this is all for the best. Even though this was a difficult thing to hear, the judge set our next court date for January 13th. This is also the same date that was set for family court to determine my child support for the children under 18 but no longer under my care due to the court "no contact" order. If you look hard, you can see His favor within the court system. Because my lawyer travels from quite a distance, his travel time is expensive. It is really a blessing that I have two appearances in two different courts on the same day set for two hours apart. As we left the courthouse, Brent's lawyer told us to drive safely. "We will," Desi responded.

Now that you can probably understand more of our mental states, Desi started to drive towards the town where Brent was housed. We knew that we had good cell service in that area. There were two main roads to get there. She chose the very curvy road instead of the straighter road because the straighter road was further out of the way and a greater distance had no cell service. We were fairly certain that Brent would be calling as soon as he was able because he was visibly upset at court due to the additional wait time and expenses.

It was raining and I had just reminded the driver that I was uncomfortable with the g-forces that I was feeling. All the sudden, I wasn't feeling g-forces, the car was fishtailing. Then we hit a big puddle, went across the road, through a barbed wire fence, and down a steep hill. We went down approximately 35 feet and then upon reaching a bunch of wet leaves, slid to our left about 5 feet. The car came to a rest about three feet in front of a big tree about 18 inches in diameter.

This didn't seem to be our day. On the other hand... Wow! We were incredibly "lucky." Let's talk about this luck... the state patrol told us that we should buy a bunch of lottery tickets because we were extremely lucky. In his opinion, our car should have flipped because of the angle of the hill. I don't believe in luck. I believe in God's protection! For some reason, it must have been God's will for us to safely continue our journey with just a small financial price to pay. Maybe God knew that our safety would increase the faith of others who were involved at the scene or who would hear of the story later.

We met nice people and I was assured that even though our family may be facing difficult times, God must want us alive. He must also be willing to protect our belongings that He thinks we need either now or in the future. Perhaps the numerous stolen items from our homestead were not protected because God knows that they are unimportant in our futures. Perhaps God doesn't want us to focus on farming or primitive survival skills. Maybe God has a different future planned for us and certain things needed to be pruned to prepare us for our next assignment. I will just have to trust God that He knows what He is doing and that all things will work together for good.

Ashley

We went for evening video visits with Will and Brent. There were 2 women sitting in the waiting area with bags of stuff and yellow to brown jail shirts that were once white. We went past them to go to the visitation area. We sat down at the kiosk until it was time to click the start button. While we were waiting the girls were talking to each other and with the guards. We heard one of the guards ask one of the girls if she wanted to use her phone call from the jail to call her dad. He took her to the office and about 3 minutes later she came out with the guard

discussing that she was unable to reach her dad. Then it was quiet for awhile. Then we heard pretty singing. At that point it was time for our visit with Will.

After the call with Will we heard singing again that stopped. We had a 15 minute gap between visits so Desi got up to compliment the singer. When she went out to the waiting room, there was just 1 woman. Desi asked if she was the one singing and said yes, putting her head down like she was embarrassed. In the conversation Desi said it was uncommon for 2 to get out at the same time. She said they had just been pardoned by the governor. Desi told her that her singing was beautiful and she had a very nice voice. She said thanks... she has liked to sing since she was 3 but never really in public.

Desi went back to the kiosk and remembered that she couldn't get ahold of her dad. Desi asked if she wanted to use our phone to get ahold of her dad. At first she said no and that her dad was going to take her to the hotel. As she walked away she said if the offer still stands can I use the phone. Dad was at work. She called her dad and told him what was going on. She thanked us for allowing her to use her phone. She said that we were really nice and it was uncommon these days. You're welcome. Not a problem, try to help when we can.

Visit with Brent while she sang. After the visit, Desi complimented again, and said we liked both of the Alison Kras songs. Did you listen to country clips, we had requested it for Brent but she had not heard it. She told us about rainbows and butterflies. I asked if we could pray with her. She said yes that she prays all the time.

I asked for a specific prayer need, she didn't want to go back to the way things were. She wanted different friends and to start over and not make the same mistakes. After praying with her, by the way my name is Ty, Dsi, Ashley. We wished her good luck in starting over.

I felt like something was left undone

Next day, we went to the library to get dressed and set up for the day. Desi finished and went to the car to put dirty clothes, I was taking too long... for some reason I felt the urge to clean the sinks in the library...I had brushed my teeth and wanted to make sure that I left it better than I found it. (The time to do this made it so that Ashley was entering at exactly the time that I was leaving.) God must have thought it was important enough for us to meet again so He set up a Divine Appointment.)when Desi walked back in, Ty was talking to Ashley. I was walking out and she was walking in at the same time. She was staying at Best Western and had walked about ½ mile to the library across 4 lanes. She was very glad to have fresh fruit for breakfast and to turn out the lights to sleep. Her hair was braided differently so at first I didn't recognize her.

I said I had a book I wanted to give her. She didn't want to have it in the library for fear that someone would accuse her of stealing it so she told us her room number and to drop it off at the front desk and they would give it to her. (Before Christmas because nov/dec because we gave her a card with the book The War Room with the website [nofearjustlove](http://nofearjustlove.com) referenced.

The Ring

Desi really likes to visit a Christian thrift store near the jail where Brent is housed. While Desi was shopping, a volunteer at the store was visibly upset. The volunteer had lost her ring that was very special to her. Trying to look for a ring in a thrift store is like looking for a needle in a haystack. The odds of finding it are stacked against you. The woman asked Desi if she would pray for her to be able to find her ring.

In the car, we discussed the situation. Compared to our recent losses, losing a ring didn't seem like that big of a deal. I didn't think a ring would make a difference in anyone's faith or salvation, so I thought it was "small potatoes." I felt a little silly asking God for help about such a thing. Then again, who am I to judge what is important or not important? Maybe it could help someone's faith if it were lost and then found. Desi and I prayed that God would help the woman find her ring.

A few weeks later, we were once again at the thrift shop. Desi again saw the woman who had lost her ring. It was the woman's first day volunteering in the shop since she had lost her ring. Desi asked if she found her ring. She was surprised that Desi remembered her problem. The lady excitedly held out her hand and showed the ring that had been found. She said that on the day the ring was lost and as she was leaving, she looked down before she got into her truck. The ring was laying in the gravel. She felt that God must have helped her find it because she normally wouldn't have noticed something so small in the gravel. Perhaps the lady's faith was strengthened because she was able to find something dear to her against great odds.

I was glad Desi asked the lady about the outcome of the missing ring. The lady had completely forgotten their conversation. Only when Desi asked the near stranger if she had a resolution to the problem was it possible to share in a praise report. The lady was excited to share that her prayers indeed had been answered.

Don't be afraid to ask others for help and don't be afraid to share good news! These times are not insignificant coincidences. They are modern day works of God to strengthen ourselves and others. Do not fear that your story is too small to be shared in a praise report or with others. Collective sharing by lots of witnesses can influence unbelievers and give them freedom!

Let's Pray for your Family 5/5/20

I had been attending a virtual prayer closet for a few weeks. I joined the meeting one morning and was a minute early. Vito said that Betsy wanted to pray for my family. If I were honest, these people could shun me... block me from a "safe place" I had grown to look forward to each morning. I found the group encouraging and treasured time spent with other believers who praised God and appealed to Him daily. They didn't know about my family's circumstances. They only knew I had been joining the group.

I was glad for the warning. My thoughts raced. The night before, Brent's blood pressure was 220. He had been taking medication each day because it was continually high. The PRAY FOR EMMA sign continually came to my mind. I could be vague and say to pray for my husband with high blood pressure. I could say to pray for my daughter who needed help. I really felt the need to unload it all though. How can God's glory shine brightly if we try to keep people in the dark about how desperate we are for His divine help?

Betsy's husband said that a scripture from Genesis was really on his mind. It was Genesis 42:36. Of all the scriptures, why was that one on his mind? It is a strange scripture to ponder and discuss... unless you are being influenced by the Holy Spirit. "Their father Jacob said to them, You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!" That verse hit me too close to home. In my mind, Emma was no more and Madison was no more. The thought of Brent's blood pressure and the danger that it posed had my heart aching. I could still talk to Brent on the phone, but I was concerned that he might die in jail. The thought was too much to bear and I felt like everything was against me.

There is an important point here to remember. Our feelings do not always portray the facts. Jacob was wrong. From what he could see, Jacob was speaking the truth. In reality, there was much more going on behind the scenes than what Jacob realized. Soon, Jacob would be reunited with all of his children. Perhaps Joseph was given the dream about the sun and moon bowing to him to encourage Jacob when he saw the blood stained coat. Maybe Jacob thought that the dream was wrong or wasn't from God. Maybe the dream was so that when Joseph asked him to come to Egypt, Jacob would have an easier time of believing the new reality.

So, when this scripture was discussed on the day when someone wanted to pray for our family, I couldn't refuse. If asked, I would be real and tell them my real concerns for my family. As I was thinking about this, Vito said he really felt the Holy Ghost working. Almost immediately, his phone battery died. The prayer meeting continued for various needs. I stayed quiet thinking that if someone else brings up prayer for my family, I would speak openly. If not, I would keep quiet. With about 3 minutes left of the call, Vito came back and said that his battery died. He asked if they had prayed for me. When it was discovered that they had not, it was asked how they could pray for my family. I stated that I felt the scripture was perfect for me because since my adopted middle daughter ran away, made accusations had landed my husband in jail for the past 14 months as he awaited trial. Now his blood pressure was 220 and I was concerned that I was going to lose him too. I also said that despite these circumstances, I was greatly encouraged by his choice of scripture on the same day that they wanted to pray for me because although these were the words spoken, they were all inaccurate. They were based on Jacob's feelings and not reality. I also told them about when Desi, Isaiah, and I went to trade the motorcycle, the phone lost signal and we traveled the wrong direction until we stopped right where the sign said "PRAY FOR EMMA." Vito said that I was a person of substance and they prayed for my family.

The Man by the Road May 23, 2020

I was excited. After spending a school year in Alaska teaching, Roman was flying back “home.” Desi and I were driving to the airport to pick him up. We were just a few miles from our home, nearing a curve in the road, when we spotted a motorcycle accident ahead. Someone had crossed the center line at the wrong time. We were one of the first few to arrive...I would guess about a minute after it happened. My first thought was how long will this delay traffic? I think we were the third car to come to a stop behind the wreckage. The two big semis moved around as someone directed traffic around the mangled motorcycle. Once the trucks moved, I could see that a group of people were standing below the guard rail. My next thought was, ok. The person already has help. There’s nothing more you can do to help. As a passed the group, now along the side of the road, PRAY, came into my mind.

Normally, if there is an accident, I might think to pray for the individual or for the family involved. This time, it meant that I stop the car in a safe location, and get to the person as quickly as possible to pray. I’m normally a bit shy about expressing my faith, but the Holy Spirit must have prompted me, because completely out of my character, I found myself running toward this individual... slowing down along the way to walk quickly since I was already out of breath.

When I arrived, a small group was gathered around the individual trying to keep him conscious and as still as possible to not cause further damage. When I had started running towards the scene, I did not have any idea of what I was supposed to do except to pray. I didn’t know where I was planning on going, I felt like I was supposed to be as close as possible, but I wasn’t sure how that was going to work with 4 or 5 people already surrounding him. As I approached, it is as if I was led to the grassy bank just below the group. I told Desi to help me pray. As I walked toward the spot where he lay, a friend of the man told me to give him space. I stooped down and started to pray with the Holy Spirit. I extended my arm toward him. I didn’t know what to pray. I felt like I had been told to stop the car and

pray. Now I was there and I didn't know what to say. I had always been by myself, or had been in the midst of those speaking loud enough so that nobody could hear my quiet whisper. For a fraction of a second, I thought what if they think I'm weird. It was a risk worth taking. With Desi's hand on my shoulder, I interceded for the man. I don't know what I prayed for. I allowed the Holy Spirit to pray for me. The Holy Spirit knew more of what was needed than what my mind could find.

After a time, I realized that of all the people there, I was the closest for him to be able to communicate. Although a struggle, he was able to say a few words to ask me to contact his loved one. I relayed the information to the friend who had asked me to give him space. The group surrounding him was all standing and so was about 5-6 feet away for his feeble voice. I asked the man if it was ok if I touched his arm. Through sky blue eyes surrounded completely by pink instead of the whites, he said yes. I looked for a spot that wasn't bloody, and touching his arm continued to pray. I realized that I didn't even have to fully extend my arm to reach him. God provided the perfect opportunity for me to minister to him.

In the distance, I could hear an ambulance approaching. I no longer felt the need to pray. I told him he actually looked pretty good for being in a motorcycle accident. I added that he was going to be just fine. I gave him a big smile just as I saw a police officer I had worked with appear. I knew God had done His work and it was time for me to move on. As I stood up, I realized that I was almost standing on a big blood streak in the grass. As Desi and I walked away, a man who was with a crying woman, walked toward us and thanked us for our prayers. Desi overheard the woman asking through tears, "Why right here? Why right now?"

These are good questions. I was in a bit of shock myself. In retrospect, I believe she was the driver of the car that hit the motorcycle. She needed prayer too and I didn't recognize it until later when Desi explained who she was. The thought that comes to my mind is that all things work for good for those who love the Lord.

Who will benefit spiritually from the situation? An older man who was closely observing, I think a truck driver blocking the scene from other drivers, commented to the man, "You'll be fine. You've even got people praying over you." The woman who was upset for an accident she had no control over? One of the onlookers? The young man laying battered on the road? Me? Was this an exercise helping me to listen to God's voice. Did I have ears to hear? Will I have another encounter in the future and this was preparation?

If nothing else, it reminded me that when it seems like there is nothing I can do to help a situation, I am wrong. I can always pray. The Bible tells us to pray without ceasing.

Desi and I were surprised that the next day we both felt extremely tired and mentally drained from the experience. I don't know how I stooped down for so long without falling over. Normally, my knees are too weak to stoop. I realized that I had started to kneel in the grass when I saw the blood. I changed my mind and stooped down. Crazy. I don't think I could stop right now if I tried. In fact, when I'm done typing I'm going to try it just to see if I can. The man on the road would be experiencing a physical challenge in the coming days. We noticed a mental weight as our minds began to process the physical realities of what we had just seen. With prayer, our minds were able to come to grips with what we had just seen.

We continued on our way and had a joyous reunion at the airport.

(Interesting side note- on our way back to the car, Desi twisted her ankle and it hurt for about a month. We said that it was our reminder to continually pray for a healing for the man on the side of the road.)

Soften the Blow Wed. August 26, 2020

Perhaps time is an abstract concept. Frozen in time with a student= 16 extra minutes. Cindy lived a lifetime to share the story that took 20-30 years to unfold in 2-3 sentences... we're very hungry.

As I write this, custody for my 2 youngest daughters has not been terminated. I have had hopes of healing and a reunification, but court proceedings and the pain in our hearts makes it appear as if this will not happen any time soon.

There's a lady that has been coming to the church services for about 2 months. Over time she told me that she had come back to a regular church to be a good example for a recovering addict that she had met. Cindy, a widow, had been married to a pastor for many years. Now she goes to retirement homes providing services for the residents. With the coronavirus, she was not permitted to go into the retirement homes. The Holy Spirit led her to our church. Desi and I recognized the fragile state of her friend (we knew they didn't match.) We wanted to help give her more of a support system and asked them out for lunch. We normally don't do this, but I remembered how welcoming it felt when Gary and Gloria asked us to lunch, so I wanted to follow their example.

We figured it wouldn't work out for that time, it didn't, but wanted to put the offer out there to encourage them to return. We have not been to dinner yet, but we are planning on it for this coming Sunday. We need to pray because Nora has cancelled on the last 3 opportunities to go with Cindy to a church service.

Anyhow, somehow it came up that she adopted 2 boys when they were 6 and 8 years old. She said they were so bad sometimes and she loved them even though there were times she didn't like them. She said 3 months before the one graduated from high school he dropped out and went to Florida. They didn't hear

anything from him. Years later she reports that there was a knock at the door. It was her son and his 2 children. He said that they were very hungry and wondered if they could come in. She says that now they have a wonderful relationship. As she sat beside me in Bible study I realized that to my knowledge she doesn't know anything about my situation or the challenges that I am currently facing.

I wonder if she is an angel sent to help me. Her words speak a message of hope and of a triumphant ending. She spoke about it with ease because she had time to heal from the disappointment and frustration. She thinks she came to the church to help her friend Nora. The process of helping Nora led her to helping me.

Sometimes we don't see the ripple effect that we have. If I don't tell her how the story helped me, and Nora never comes to the church again, she might go on thinking that she has failed or that her actions had no impact. Thinking about my own words I had written down, the next time I saw Cindy at Bible study, I told her how I appreciated her words of encouragement and that perhaps she was in that place for me. I thought I should tell her so that she knew that even if she didn't see an impact for Nora, her words were helpful for me.

We suspect that on September 18, 2020 that parental custody of 2 of the girls we adopted will be terminated. I believe that this encounter with Cindy's story is to give me hope that a termination is not final in the spiritual realm. An earthly judge can legally separate us until the children are 18 years old. After that, the children have the right to pursue whatever relationships they choose. I am being given the opportunity to increase my faith. I will have to continue to trust in God that He will keep them safe. He loves them too. Perhaps time will make the heart grow fonder. Someday, I hope to feel the same joy as the father of the prodigal son. I must note: the father did not chase after the son. The father waited until the son was ready to come to him. This is the example I have been given. It is the example I will follow.

The last week in August, school is back in session despite the coronavirus controversy. As a sign that my financial needs would be addressed, God gave me a full workday. From the comfort and safety of my home, I am able to connect with students around the globe. Without my realization, it appears as if God has slowly given me a full time job. With this job, I have the ability to set my own schedule, putting time with God in prayer above all else. I would lose that freedom if I were given a schedule to follow. Also, the demands of the job would probably distract me. There are many people who want teaching jobs. The Bible says that the harvest is great but the workers are few. I suspect that I am to encourage new growth and help to harvest those ready to come to Jesus. I'm not sure how, but I'm sure He will qualify me if I am truly called.

I believe that I will lose my ability to teach in the public school system. Perhaps that is what God wanted, but I did not want because I was so comfortable. One year after my time at school finished, schools shut down around the globe. We went to online schooling across the world. Perhaps I was given the 1 year head start so that I could have time to draw close to God. I am His warrior. I understand how chaos can lead to beauty. I can't say that I'm out of the storm yet, but I can say that I can see the process slowly coming together. I was prepared

God in His Loving Hands really does weave everything together with perfection.

God's Handiwork 8-27-20

9:22 Am message sent to Brent

Brent,

I love you. May you always know that God walks before you, behind you and is always with you. May we find peace knowing that God knows our hearts and how much we can handle. All things will work for good because we love Him.

In the morning prayer and Bible study group, someone said that they were thinking about how Paul and Silas were in jail and the storm or earthquake came opening all of the doors. They stayed even though physically they didn't need to. Because of this, the jailer is the one mentioned that came to know Jesus and his whole family was saved. You would think that if God were going to reach someone through the circumstance, it would have been a prisoner who has limited access to good news. However, the story has a twist in that the authority figure and his family are the ones who are saved spiritually while the prisoners are held captive physically. The needs of the spiritual battle outweighed the desires of the physical world. We never know how God is at work. This was the setting and circumstance needed for everything to fall into place for this family. It required Paul and Silas' sacrifice and example of letting their lights shine in tough times.

I am hopeful that we may see God's handiwork.

I love you.

I didn't know it at the time, but when I sent the above message at 9:22 am, Brent had been awakened at 6:30 am by a guard who "needed his help." The guard explained that he was between a rock and a hard place. The only place to put a certain inmate was in the same place as Brent. That inmate had an order to be kept away from Brent because of past conflict. The only to put this inmate in with Brent was if Brent agreed to it. Brent really did not want this individual back in with him, but he could also see the the guard's dilemma. Brent told the guard that he would not tell the guard how to do his job and the individual was put back in the cell with Brent. This took forgiveness and self-sacrifice on the part of Brent. It took humility

on the part of the guard to ask for Brent's help. In time, I am hopeful that a healing will take place between Brent and this other individual. It is very difficult when you've experienced such betrayal and have been treated very poorly, but Jesus knows all about betrayal and unfairness. He expects us to follow his example.

Surprisingly, when this inmate was brought into the cell, the relatively new inmate that Brent finds to be arrogant and presumptuous (the one that nicknamed Brent Triple OG- meaning very, very, very old guy) told the inmate that he liked the way the cell was being run, he likes the old man, and that there wasn't going to be any trouble. In a sense, he made a declaration that he was going to choose light over dark. He likes the open environment that Brent and a few others have worked to create....an environment where every inmate has a voice and TV programming is not determined by one person. A schedule exists

Also on this day, Brent had court via zoom. A female guard was supervising Brent during this time, an unusual fact in itself since female guards don't normally interact with any male inmates unless another male guard is present, While waiting for the court session to begin, the guard shared that she was going through a divorce with her wife. She wanted to know if Brent had any good advice about lawyers. This conversation may on the surface seem insignificant, but she was able to share a personally difficult situation with someone who was accused of some very bad things. She voluntarily made herself vulnerable to ridicule. To me, this seems to suggest that she didn't view Brent as a threat physically or psychologically. I'm hopeful that they both experienced a degree of healing through the conversation. First, she was able to talk about her difficult time without any judgement. Secondly, Brent was able to have a face to face meaningful conversation with someone. He enjoys helping others and is understandably discouraged by poor choices that he sees other inmates make on a regular basis.

As I write, I'm reminded of the second to last sentence I wrote to you this morning... I am hopeful that we may see God's handiwork. This was done... even

if it wasn't what we in our physical bodies wanted. I can't imagine the challenge for you, but I believe you did the right thing by working with the guard this morning. You put your own needs aside to help someone between a rock and a hard place. I think this situation exists so that you have the ability to see your growth in understanding and compassion. It is a test. I know my expectations are high, but it is because I know you.

Events in court and on 8-27-20

-am when working with Claris in Hong Kong bout proper nouns and common nouns on ixl, Emma came up as a proper noun in a sentence

6:30 am Guard needed Brent's help at 6:30 am and asked if Tony could be brought into the cell

-Annoying 2nd tto last guy brought in that is arrogant enough to nickname everyone- Brent Triple OG- told Toy that he likes the way the cell is run and that he likes the Old Man and that there won't be any trouble

-Sponge told Brent he hasn't snorted anything recently- proud of himself

-(update on 8/30/20 Brent reported 6 are back to snorting via Tony's help... was it a mistake... forgive yes, but keep evil at a distance so that the weak have time to get stronger.)

-guard Melissa told Brent she was getting a divorce from her wife

-Campbell made a reference that he had already met Dr. Daniels at the disposition hearing earlier that week (I had no knowledge of such a hearing- I had not been informed of this date by the court or lawyer at all)

-We lost Brent during the court proceedings. We had to wait for him to reconnect for about 5-10 minutes. The judge reported a power surge at the jail and that the jail needed to switch to the back up generators. Brent reported that he was moved to a different room because of the power issue. Inmates reported that the lights flickered. Brent said the air conditioning was out for several hours.

God's Math- 8-29-20

I had another unique student. She is from Saudi Arabia and just got accepted into college. She's unique because I talked to her for 8 minutes as a trial student before she ever had a subscription at the end of January. At the time, she was worried because she was supposed to get married in 3 months and didn't know how she could manage going to college and married life. Most teachers don't like to spend time messaging because you get no monetary compensation for the time spent. Trial students are the least likely to call again because at that point they have not spent any money. I responded back to her with messages and relayed the story of how supportive you were, encouraging me and telling me that you'd carry me up the steps if needed...there were an awful lot of steps from the parking lot to the top floor...5 flights?...and how Roman kept us busy, but it was possible. She thanked me and said she hopes she will be so lucky.

Today she said she was excited to see me again. Now she has a subscription and says she is supposed to get married in 3 months. The virus delayed her wedding date... she had more time to study.

I was supposed to have a 30 minute class with her but she arrived 6 minutes late. What is interesting to me is that I had a student scheduled right after her so we should have only talked for 24 minutes. When she called, the minutes did not count down. Her time was frozen. For 16 minutes the timer did not move. The internet connection was lost and she called back. We should have only had 8 minutes left to talk because another student had reserved the time immediately after hers. (This is my 3rd attempt to type this paragraph. The computer has locked and shut down twice and I have had to restart the computer to continue typing.)

I had checked my schedule at 5:25 ish am before talking to the boy who thought I was 87 at 5:30 am. She was scheduled for 6:00 am. Another student was scheduled for 6:30 am. Between 5:25 and 6:30 am, the other student cancelled the class.

I was surprised I was able to talk to her for 30 minutes more. I didn't know that the other student had cancelled. We finished talking and I had enough time to send her a message before my next student that was scheduled...that went on as planned. After I sent the message, I checked my reservation screen again and she had reserved 2 more classes for next week. I thought to myself, well, that sure seemed like a divine appointment.

I was tired and had a break between 9 and 9:45 am, so I took a nap. During my nap, I had a dream that I saw a shining man and He said, "I am Jesus...the way, the truth, and life." Then, in my dream I was resting very peacefully. Later, in a different image, I had a stream of words flowing through me with a thankful heart. I was left with the impression that I need to stay focused on Jesus. Don't look at the storm. Look at the Savior only.

The Reserves

Many people view our country's military in many ways. I understand that you may disagree with me on some of my perspectives, but it is the way that I feel and my point here is not to debate politics, but to illustrate how God can intervene when we are helpless.

We have struggled financially in the last six months. We have never been in need. Expenses and income have fluctuated along the way. There have many times that I have wondered how we are going to survive financially. Somehow, although we have modified our behavior, sold our many of our assets that weren't stolen, cashed in my retirement, and maxed out my available credit, we have managed to have funds available when they are absolutely needed.

In order to help the family financially, Isaiah has said that he would like to join the military... the reserves. At first, he said that he could get a \$15,000 signing bonus. Then he found out that information was incorrect. He tells me that he could earn extra money, get trained in a specialized field, and that the government will pay \$6200 per semester for college. He says that if there is a draft that he could not watch his fellow citizens have to go to war and just stay home. Isaiah says that if he enters the military now, he can choose the branch and area of interest. In the event of a draft, he would have no input in that decision.

Because of the changes I see in our world and government, I feel like war is looming. I have always tried to protect him. I don't want him to have to suffer the way that many of our veterans suffer. I was completely against his decision to investigate this any further. I believe that he is just desperate. He was very upset in recent years when his ex-girlfriend was considering joining the military. How could he change his mind so quickly? I think that he sees it as an answer to get

additional funds. I don't want him to make a permanent decision to solve a temporary problem.

Despite my personal feelings, Desi and I have been helping him to gather the necessary documents to proceed with the process. Even if I disagree with him, I still believe that he needs to know that I love him. I can't stop him. I can talk until I'm blue in the face... it doesn't matter. He knows how the whole family feels. Knowing that I can't stop him, I did the only thing that I knew to do.

I prayed. I thought that this was such a big decision that I needed my mom for back-up prayer support, but she was out of town and I didn't want to bother her while she was away. To my knowledge, she would be back before Isaiah would make a hasty decision. I decided to get a head start on the prayers to God. In the event I was being the unreasonable one, I asked God that if there was some reason why Isaiah needed to join the military for the greater good, that I be willing to accept that as his fate. If, however, there was no need for Isaiah to join and if this was a poor decision that would negatively affect his salvation or relationship with Jesus, I asked that the darkness be kept from him. If God's glory could be shown for one direction or another, then let God's will be done. I really didn't see how training for war could be part of God's plan. To me, God is about love... not fighting.

Today Isaiah called and said that he had been temporarily denied for the military. It wasn't a homeschooling issue... he passed the test and had many options available to him. It wasn't the fact that his name on his social security card was misspelled. He passed his physical... except for one thing... acne. Isaiah said that he has been temporarily denied for two months. He has to go to a doctor and get a prescription to show improvement. In two months, he is eligible to reapply. Isaiah said that the recruiter that he has been working with was furious. He said that he has seen people with acne four times as bad be approved without a problem.

I think that answers my question. I know God listens, but I didn't think He would work so quickly. I will continue to pray about this. I think it is even possible that Isaiah will get mad at me for my prayer. He may blame me. Everything was going fine for him until I interrupted his plans and prayed. If my prayer is that effective, then I think he should thank God for saving him from the darkness. If prayer can be "blamed for changing one's future," doesn't it mean that an unselfish prayer that can bring God praise and glory is awfully powerful? Intercessory prayer... God is listening! Let Him do it His way. He always has a better idea than what you can ever imagine.

By having the two month delay, Isaiah entered Boot Camp and was able to attend church services when church services all around the country and world were banned because of exceeding the CDC's recommendation for no groups of more than ten. Because the new recruits are already isolated, their church services continued with no interruptions. During this time, Isaiah wrote and told us that he decided to give his life to Jesus. Perhaps this was the influence Isaiah needed. He stopped his job and stopped staying with roommates right before the coronavirus would have prevented him from having his job at the camp. The timing shows me that God knew what was going to happen and events "fell into place" protecting his finances and encouraging his spiritual growth in Jesus.

Completely Healed

In September of 2020 I was watching The Return event hosted in Washington DC. Through a translator, two people speaking Spanish asked for people who needed healing to reach upward and accept it. I knew that God had already healed me a few years earlier, but I raised my hands anyhow and prayed a short prayer that if there was anything else God wanted to do, that He go ahead. The next morning, I easily reached down to the floor and picked up a towel.

This might not sound like a big deal to you, but for me, it was incredible! Both my chiropractor and MD had told me that I'd never bend beyond the point where my hands went lower than my knees. Strategies had been developed for picking things up from off the floor. Without thinking, with my legs together and knees completely straight, I was able to touch the floor! I did it again just to make sure it had not been imagined. God completely restored my back. My only actions for this gift were to raise my hands and tell God that He could fix anything. Those two things do not scientifically result in any change. Happy for so long not to be in pain and to have strength, I had forgotten about my previous flexibility. God remembered and fixed me! What a Great Physician! Praise God!

Warnings to Get Serious

On September 10, 2020 I woke up at about 6:15 am. You might wonder why this is significant. I was supposed to get up at 3:15-3:30 am to prepare for my classes that were beginning at 4:15 am. I slept through 4 of my classes and the 5th class was already halfway over. The night before, when I had finally gone upstairs to go to bed, I found my alarm clock blinking. The breaker had blown earlier in the day and I had not known to reset my alarm. When I awakened on my own in the morning, I realized that the alarm had not gone off when I had expected because I got am and pm mixed up.

I remembered in the past when I had awakened suddenly from a nap or from a night's sleep to realize that in a very short amount of time I needed to be ready. I thanked God for waking me. Also, there have been times when I have had internet issues and I have asked God for help. Now, it seemed as if God was trying to gently get my attention. I was spending more time working and less time writing. In fact, I had not looked in my binder or typed anything for God in a month or two. I knew God had told me to write it down, but He didn't give me a

deadline. Now it seemed as if I were failing some sort of test He was giving me. I felt as if He was sending me a warning that if I didn't get busy He was going to do something more drastic to get my attention.

The next day, September 11, 2020 I had another scare. It is my routine to write down my plans for the following day in the night before I go to sleep. This way, I have the most up to date reservation schedule. On the night of September 10, I made a mistake. I always write down a time period for me to wake up, get ready, and to log on. When I woke up on September 11, I realized that I did not leave any time for this. The first time I had written, the time the alarm was set for, was the same time that I had my first student listed. My human error had left no time for me to even walk to the next room! My heart sunk. This would be two days in a row that I would miss this student's class. His family is the one I spend the most time with. They reserve more class time than any other.

I went directly to the computer to face my consequences. When I logged on I found that I had 30 minutes before his class started. For some reason, I wrote his name by the wake up time, didn't write down that task, and never wrote down his actual class time. God was merciful to me while reminding me that I am flawed and need His help to guide my steps throughout the day.

About 6 hours later, I wrote down that I need to work on this book. I wrote it into my schedule. On the side of my paper I wrote, "4 hrs/day No Fear Just Love- Just try your best. Time on task. God said to do it. Don't make Him treat you like Jonah with NO distractions and harder!" While writing this little note to myself, I heard a bell ring indicating that I had received a message. Aljohara had just cancelled her lesson. Later, I received a message from her apologizing for the abrupt cancellation. She said that she had a fever and had to go to the hospital.

Apparently God did not want me to procrastinate any more. Looking at my own note about Jonah and not wanting the modern day version of Jonah's experience. I thought back to the words I had told Natalia not long ago when she was about to start a big project with many steps that needed done soon. I told her that my

calendar said that the journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. I was part of the way through this journey. I had stopped to rest and gain strength. Like a journey, once you have rested, it is time to get moving again. You can't stop because the mountain ahead looks too steep. You need to remember why you started the journey in the first place and take the first step toward your goal for that day.

I thought back to a note that I had sent her. During my classroom teaching days I would create a visual aide to help students see progress when working on a big goal. We would celebrate small successes before reaching the main goal. If the big prize for reaching 100 was a pizza party, we would celebrate 9 smaller goals with smaller rewards. We colored in a graph to plot the progress. It is an elementary concept, but if it worked to motivate kids and I offered it as advice to someone else, perhaps I should take my own advice. I took a little piece of paper and divided it into 4 parts labeling them hours 1,2,3,and 4. Then I divided each part into 4 sections to signify 15 minute time blocks. In the past, I only worked when I felt the Holy Spirit prompting me. Now, I was concerned that I was blocking the Holy Spirit's prompt. Perhaps just sitting for 4 hours would spur some sort of progress. So far, I've tried this on 3 days. I have never achieved my goal of 4 hours...not even 2. I have however resumed typing. Time will tell, but so far, thoughts are readily available. I don't worry about the revisions. That is for the next step. I used to keep my old failures of timeline goals thinking that I would extra hard and go back and make up for last time. I don't do that anymore. God's mercy is new every day. If God can forgive me for the mistakes of yesterday and have fresh hope for the new day, I should do the same.

Two days later I went to church and heard about a movement called The Return. It is a call for God's people to repent for our nation's crimes against God's laws. I was moved and did some research about the movement and about some of the warning signs that others see regarding the atmosphere around America and the rest of the world. If my time is short, I don't want to die regretting that I didn't type or write something because I might not have the right words and be rambling. It might not be perfect, but if it relays my story and helps God's

purpose, who am I not to try. I have heard the saying that God equips the called...not God calls the equipped.

When I read about the movement, I thought to myself, "Oh, I can fast and pray. I can do that. God will like that." Then I started examining my heart. Would God care if I did that but ignored what He Himself had to me to do? I think he would. The flyer I read about The Return and the few videos I watched made me think that time is of the essence. I don't have the luxury to think about my feelings of being uncomfortable. I need to obey now. What if I stopped breathing tonight? My thoughts and God's work within my life would never be known to my children. The flyer urged me to think about what it would be like if I devoted myself to 10 days of seeking God. God gave me a job where I can set my own schedule. Aside from the classes that were already scheduled, I cancelled remaining openings and wrote a message to my students telling them that I have a responsibility that will require all of my attention. Working with students has been a coping skill for me to heal from the loss of my career and separation from my family members. This coping skill can easily be removed through malfunctioning internet or my human errors. I need to prioritize and give this time to God not just by praying, but through action. Faith without works is dead.

As I type, I think ahead to Friday

Revisiting Grace

Our world fell apart a year and 7 months ago. Brent had been in jail for all of this time. The 2 youngest daughters that we had adopted were still in foster care. At first we had hoped for a reunification, but as time dragged on it became easier to see that it would be very difficult to ever be able to trust. Brent's lawyer seemed confused that he would even want to give her another chance after everything that she'd said and the loss that we had suffered financially and the mental torture Brent had been through because of his charges. We hoped that through Family Court we could at least get some answers that might help us with the criminal cases. The day arrived when we all suspected that termination would take place. There had been numerous times in the past that we thought this would happen, but for some reason or another, there was always another delay. On September 18, 2020 at 1:00 however, via a zoom video conference call, the process continued. After about an hour, a judge ordered that our parental rights be terminated. We had not participated in a case plan. The social worker couldn't even find a case plan that had been offered. We saw one once upon a time early in the case. It wanted Brent to complete a Sexual Offender class. The very first part of the class is to admit that you are a sexual offender. How could he do that? It was a catch 22. If you don't do the plan, you can't have the kids. If you do the plan, you admit guilt and go to jail and don't get the kids because you just said you were a sexual offender. It is not really a choice. It is a legal loophole that is sealed away in family court since it involves minors. The social worker also stated that I had not provided any support for the children even though I had paid child support ever since I was ordered to do so by the same judge. He gave 2 weeks for motions to be filed because the commonwealth had not provided some of the discovery that was supposed to be given to our lawyers. The attorney argued that she had one more day to provide these documents.

One might think of how terrible this is, but after thinking about it, I have grown to think that it is what is necessary for the healing of all parties involved.

When Desi checked the mail, we had an envelope with no return address. When opened it revealed a beautiful autumn scene along a country road with a curves ahead sign. It was from Philip Yancey. Brent had read the book *What's so Amazing about Grace* and liked it so much that he wanted to write a letter to the author expressing his thankfulness for the opportunity to read the book. Brent gave our address in case there was to be any further correspondence. At the jail, he would only have a scanned version and it would disappear from his screen in about a month's time. In reality, because of the original picture and type of card, the jail would have thrown it away because they do not allow people to send that type of card. Anyway, our mail almost always is delivered between noon and 2:00 in the afternoon. It is very likely that the mail was delivered during the same time that we were having court. We know that it was delivered within 3 hours of the judge terminating custody because that is when Desi checked the mail.

The card reminded us of grace and said that he hopes my husband can see more of God's grace in the future.

God didn't have to do that! The card could have come a week ago or a month from now. Because of God's timing, it arrived at exactly when He knew we would need some encouragement and to be reminded of His grace. I thank God that we were able to see this work of God and that our eyes were not limited to the disappointment of the moment. My mind had prepared my heart for losing the girls, Brent said that he realized that for someone to say such things it was evident that we never had them in the first place. You can't lose something you never had. We had the illusion. When Desi showed me the card, I couldn't hardly believe it. Instantly I was overcome with how good God is and how He cares for each one of us. He wants what is best for us and for others. God showed us that we were not forgotten. He still loves us. We have His grace. We have His unmerited favor. We just need to trust Him that the day's events were favorable to us.

What really amazes me is that we didn't even ask for encouragement. It was a gift... a bonus letting us know that He is good and works in mysterious ways. He is so good.

Genesis 42-46

Their father Jacob said to them

On May 5, 2020 in a virtual Bible study Armando said that a scripture on his mind was Genesis 42:36.

“Their father Jacob said to them, ‘You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!’”

Out of over 30,000 verses, why pick that one? At the time, the scripture really rattled me because I was so concerned about Brent's blood pressure and I already had lost, in all practical purposes, my 2 daughters. The only thing that consoled me was that when Jacob made the statement, he was completely wrong.

I was about to see this same part of Genesis continue. September 19, 2020 I was teaching one of my students online and she said something that made me instantly know that I was supposed to help her outside of the typical teaching platform that connected me with students. I told her about my website and said that if she went to the website that I thought it could help her and told her that if she sent an email that it would come to me. This was sign I was waiting for. I told God that if she did this that I would help her practice her English and study the Bible at the same time. She sent a message. With the Feast of Trumpets and 10 days of prayer, I decided that I wanted to start another Bible study as quickly as possible. Every extra prayer would help. Instead of waiting until the following week to begin, I suggested a test to make sure that it would work. She had

experienced technical difficulties in the past and I thought that we might need some help getting started. God must have been with us because with just a 3 minute delay we were able to get it sorted out. Our test run turned out to be over an hour. Mostly we were talking and setting up and getting used to the new format. I was ready to leave because in my head I thought we were only going to meet for half an hour. She asked when we were having the Bible study part. I said that we could start on Monday or now if she wanted. She went to get a Bible. She said she read from it every day... it was a children's Bible and she was still in Genesis. I was confused, but asked her where she wanted to start. She said Genesis 42-46. At first, I didn't understand. I thought she was saying a chapter and verse. Then I understood. It was a paragraph that explained 5 chapters in kid friendly vocabulary. Joseph saves his family from hunger and the family is reunited. That sounds like a happy ending!

Once again, I think of the timing and wonder about my future. The day before this happened an earthly judge terminated parental rights, but at the same time the One True King was sending me a message of grace and unmerited favor. The next day I'm told to read at the same place that had made such an impact on me in May. I believe that my family will have the opportunity to be reunited. Joseph waited a long time and Jacob had completely given up hope. I'm not saying that it will happen soon. I believe that I will see it happen "in the land of the living." In faith, I will look forward to that day.

Side note: In our next class my student I discovered that her husband is a pastor. She thought she had told me in a previous conversation, but to my knowledge, she had not. As we were about to start the next lesson, she wanted to go to 1 Samuel where Jonathan and David become best friends. I was confused that so many stories would be skipped. She explained that the previous day she had grabbed her daughter's Bible because she didn't see hers right away. Had she been able to find her Bible, I would not have had the extra encouragement of the family reunifying. God's timing and how He puts everything together really is quite incredible!

122 Safely Repaired 10-3-20

Timeline....

Mon. September 21, 2020 At night, Isaiah drove from Durham to Ohio in his truck with Roman's motorcycle in the back so that he could bring his motorcycle...at Scott's... to Durham... arriving on Tuesday September 22 at about 3 am. We helped him unload a giant motorcycle on a board without He says he will need to leave that night so that he can get to his Amazon orientation the next day. When discussing it further, we realized that the orientation was on Thursday, September 24 so he had time to get some sleep and try to arrange to get a trailer so that he could take more furniture with him.

Wed. Sept 23, 2020 Isaiah truck wouldn't start while trying to get a dresser from Darrel's house... Isaiah had decided not to get a trailer to haul because there wasn't enough stuff to haul and he thought he would need it to haul more furniture on his next trip down.

Thurs. Sept 24 Isaiah realized the orientation was at the Hilton where he had left from before going to Boot Camp and disappearing for 7 months.... Panic attack not to go in...

Sat. Sept 26, 2020 Isaiah went Doordashing with Ramsey.

Isaiah did Doordash in the Honda by himself and \$85 in 3 hours.

Wed. Sept. 30, 2020 Got notice that Isaiah's truck would be towed if not moved by Monday, October 5, 2020.

October 2, 2020 Isaiah drove from his apartment in Durham, North Carolina to his Marine friend's house in Lexington, KY to visit.

October 3, 2020 Isaiah drove to Ohio from his fellow Marine's house in Lexington to fix the truck that was stuck...not moving... at Daryl's apartment... Isaiah said he only had that Saturday to fix the truck and couldn't stay longer because he was supposed to be riding motorcycles with Peterson in South Carolina on Sunday...October 4, 2020. Isaiah arrived and went to work replacing the cellinoid. It didn't start. He went to the auto parts store again to get a new starter. The first time he had ever worked on a vehicle like this, he managed to get it replaced. The truck made a noise, but was not starting. Realizing that the cellinoid was hooked up backwards, the wiring was switched and the truck started. Noticing that one of his tires was getting low, Isaiah headed to the gas station for air. When about to get air, he saw that a plug was old and decaying in the tire. We were able to go to the auto parts store, get a container of slime and a tire patch kit to repair the tire. The plug was pulled and replaced within just a few minutes. I am glad that this was able to be repaired before he started back on the road to North Carolina again.

Prayers for Isaiah.... Too much driving in too short of a time... like Brent... can't tell him anything.

October 4, 2020 Isaiah went to South Carolina and rode motorcycles with Peterson.

October 5, 2020 Isaiah called wanting to buy a Silverado to resell... Isaiah discusses coming back to Ohio with Ramsey to get the Honda. Isaiah says that he can't do Doordash in the truck... prayers for Isaiah to have discernment. Roman ran out of gas in the Forerunner. He called Isaiah to bring him some gas. While going to get gas for Roman, Isaiah's fuel line on the truck broke.

October 6, 2020 We got the message saying that Isaiah's fuel line broke while going to pick Roman up who was out of gas. Silverado was not pursued because it sold for a higher price than what Isaiah was willing to bid.

In late September of 2020, Isaiah brought his big, old truck from North Carolina to Ohio so that he could get his motorcycle and bring it to North Carolina. He was about to make the trip back down to North Carolina that day, but went to Darryl's apartment because Darryl said he had a dresser he'd like to give him for in his new apartment. Isaiah went to get the dresser. When he tried to leave, his truck would not start. Because he was in a rush to get back to North Carolina for a job orientation the following day, Isaiah needed to leave that day for the orientation. He did not have time to repair the truck. He had to leave it in the parking lot and said that he would be back next week to get it.

Words that Heal 10-1-20

Healing words can come from a variety of sources, but in the Bible we are told to have words that speak life and healing. In the morning I joined a prayer and Bible study group.. The scripture of the day was very specific. Psalms 62:5-8 and I Peter 5:7 were chosen. Yes, I agreed with the scripture and thought it was a nice reminder, but I didn't really feel that it was utterly meant for me...despite my circumstances, I really didn't feel stressed.

That day I spoke to one of my students... the one who came from Armenia. I wondered what had happened because she had cancelled her class the prior day which was out of character for her. She was very upset because of the war it looked like Armenia was fighting. To her, the conflict was personal and the destruction made her very sad. With the verses still fresh in my mind from several hours earlier, I told her about the message I had heard that morning. As I read from Psalms, Karine said that her whole house was glad. Apparently, her family was listening to our conversation and found the words from a stranger thousands of miles away to be comforting. If I never tell the original person, she will never know how she was used as God's instrument to bring hope to a saddened family.

We must remember that on earth, we are God's hands, feet, and voice. Yes, He can speak to others Himself, but sometimes He uses others to send His message. The devil can work in the same way. Sometimes we do not realize what we are doing. When you are able, think about your words before you say them and your actions before you do them. If they are words that heal, they are from God. If they are words that seek destruction, they are not. Remember, the mouth reveals what is in the heart.

Pending Bankruptcy 10-7-20

For about a year and a half, I have thought about bankruptcy. When I lost the ability to keep my regular job and many things were stolen from us, it was a crushing weight. We had loans and credit card debt and the expenses were outrageous. Still, I did not like the idea of bankruptcy. To me, it represented failure. I really struggled with the idea and pushed it out of my mind for as long as possible. Maybe some miracle was going to happen...Maybe I was supposed to find a way to work my way through it. The hardship would do me good. I didn't

look at envelopes or emails that I thought would upset me. I had enough negative energy. I didn't want more stress that I couldn't handle.

On October 7, 2020, we got a card in the mail saying that I needed to get a letter from the post office. We did not delay. It said it was from a court and the thought of not knowing what it was about would have been worse for me. The card indicated that it was a last notice, but we had not heard a knock on our door. We were home that whole day. When I got the letter from the post office, it showed that they had attempted delivery on 2 other days, but that I wasn't home.

Opening the letter, I found that I was being sued for approximately \$6,000 from a credit card company. The letter was from my local courthouse. It was the final straw. I could no longer look away from the situation. I had to respond within 28 days. With a heavy heart, I resigned myself to filling out the necessary paperwork to make this become a reality. I was crushed, but I thought that it was a piece of humble pie that I was ready to eat.

I went to my computer to send an invitation to my student that I worked with at no charge because she had shared with me that she wanted to speak in English to be able to tell her story.

When I went to her email, I found that several hours earlier that she had sent me a scripture Leviticus 25:35-39 and a note saying that she had a driver's test and would not be able to attend class for that particular day.

Not knowing what was in Leviticus that could possibly be a reason to share with me, I turned to my Bible to read the message.

"If your brother becomes destitute and cannot sustain himself among you, you are to support him as an alien or temporary resident, so that he can continue to live among you. Do not profit or take interest from him, but fear your God and let

your brother live among you. You are not to lend him your silver with interest or sell him your food for profit. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.”

Originally, I had felt an overwhelming sense of failure and had a defeated attitude. As I started to read, I felt new life pour into me. I felt like God was directly sending me a message not to carry this burden. It wasn't mine to bear. My circumstances were the exact same, but my state of mind had had immediate peace and gratitude.

Later I learned that Karine sent me the message without reading it herself. She sent me a picture of her calendar. It was the scripture for that day. I thought of all the things that had to line up for me to get the message. Someone had to think of and publish the calendar. Someone bought or gave the calendar to Karine. Karine felt prompted to send the scripture to me. I wasn't home the first two times delivery of the letter was attempted. I felt like immediately going to the post office to read the letter. Fifteen minutes before I read the message, I decided that it was time to pursue bankruptcy. Then, I wanted to invite Karine to a Bible study / English lesson and found the message.

That was a lot of events to fall into place from a variety of different sources all to send me a message of comfort and hope. Surely if God put all of those things together perfectly to comfort me when I hadn't even asked for it, He will care for me when it is important. We might have a difference of opinion about what is important, but when I look at circumstances like this, I am reminded that He has the knowledge of how all the pieces fit together for good. I will trust Him and try not to interfere with His plans. I will trust that He is good beyond my imagination.

Internet Issues 10-17-20

I had 6 minutes before I had a class scheduled with Louie. I was heading to the computer, telling Desi that I'd be talking to Louie and his sister Anna for the next hour and a half. She said there's no internet. What! I had been working on other things. She said that the internet had been out for about half an hour. I said to please give me the phone so that I could at least use data to send a message. As I was heading for the phone, Desi said, "Never mind. It's back on." Thank you, God, for providing for me with the means to earn an income while doing something that I enjoy!

God Goes Ahead of and Behind Me... and Always is with Me! 1/7/21

At 9:50 Remas' mom sent this message to me.

Ty.. I am so sorry we have a problem in electricity here and connection also .. It is too hard to call you today.. sorry I have to cancel to be able to speak to other students

At 10:05 I typed this to Remas' mom on the phone because I could not see her message because the computer was in the process of reloading

That is so strange. I just dropped something on my laptop and my computer just shut off completely

At 9:59 I dropped the stapler. We had a 29 minute class.

I apologize for the sudden disappearance in the last minute. I was telling Aslan about my basketball stapler while removing the clip. It fell from my hand. When it dropped on my laptop the entire computer shut off and had to be restarted. Please tell him I said good-bye and great job talking about animals!

1/13/21

I talked to Desi about having trouble connecting to the internet the previous night when she was having class. I tried 8 times to connect and each time was denied because my connection speed was too slow. Desi said she was using zoom which uses more internet. It seems that our service can't support both of us using it at the same time. I wanted Desi to help me load a library book on my computer so that I could screen share it with a student (Danny.) She only had a few minutes before class and thought it would be easy, but then realized that because I run a cleaner everyday, the information she entered a few weeks ago was off of my computer and the process would take longer. She had class and didn't have time for it. I figured that I would have to review old material with Danny since we had finished a book the day before and I thought I'd be able to screenshare the new one with no issues. I knew he'd be disappointed because he really enjoyed the series and we had discussed it the day before. Desi's class was supposed to be an hour long, but after awhile I noticed that she was quiet. I wondered if the class had been shortened and was hopeful that if it were the case, that I would be able to join my class with no internet issues because there be enough bandwidth. When I asked Desi what had happened, Desi said that her student said that she had to go somewhere so they had a shortened class. It was just enough time to make arrangements for my class.

After about 10 minutes, I realized once again that God is the God of opportunities and that I had another chance to be able to get the book ready before my class. Asking for Desi's help, her computer suddenly could not connect to the internet and so I logged on. About 1 minute after I started talking to Danny, her computer was connected to the internet with both the teaching platform and book loaded. I asked Danny if he would call back in 30 seconds. He did and we were able to read the book with no issues using Desi's computer. Learning to recognize the help of God is so encouraging. Some may say just a coincidence...I don't think so.

The same day, about 4 hours later, I was again experiencing slow internet. I was 3 minutes late joining because I could not get a fast enough connection speed to support both audio and video. Looking back, it may have been because I had not run the cleaner again and for some reason, it seems to play a role in how

smoothly I am able to interact with others online. Anyhow, when I was able to connect 3 minutes late, I sent a message to Mayar in Saudi Arabia. I was hopeful that she might still be waiting for me and not be upset. Instead, I got a message that apologized to me. It said that her family was having internet connection problems.

These internet connection issues are so interesting to me because I can look at the exact minute that each message is sent. It is fascinating because I am nowhere near Egypt or Saudi Arabia or wherever Desi's student is from. I have now way of controlling situations, yet at the exact moment that I need help, God intervenes providing solutions that I couldn't even think of, let alone accomplish. Yes, I want to be a reliable teacher, but these things are not big things that have serious consequences. When I look at how small these things are and can see how God is providing for me, just because He can and to make my life a little easier, it really makes me realize how close He is. Not just close, but interactive and wanting good things for me. If this is how much He is helping just to make a day a little more pleasant, there has to be a very good reason for the trials facing my family. There is no other logical conclusion.

Mayar's class start time 4:15 pm I connected at 4:18 pm. At 4:19 pm her parents sent a message apologizing. Mayar connected for class at 4:22 pm.

Once again, God is in front of and behind me!

God's Protection 11-9-20

We had court on zoom and a video visit with Brent, so we left early in the morning to go to my lawyer's office approximately a 5 hour drive. Desi had spent the whole night working on homework and still had a paper due the next day, so I was driving. We were behind a big dumptruck and a deer came out of the woods and ran right into the right front corner of the dumptruck. The truck barely slowed down and kept driving. We wanted to make sure the deer was not suffering so we stopped and found it dead just a short distance from where it met its fate. We called someone so that the life could at least be honored and the usable meat salvaged. I am thankful that God protected our vehicle and our safety. Since the dumptruck was about 30 feet in front of us going about 45 mph, if the deer would have run out about 3-5 seconds later, our car probably would have been totaled and it would have been much more difficult or impossible for us to meet our destination on time. Thank you, Jesus!

On the same morning, a guard talked to Brent in the hall discussing some problems in the cell. Once again, violence was offered as a solution to "take care" of the problem. When questioned as to why this was not an option for Brent, Brent simply replied that it wasn't biblical. Being questioned further, the guard gave an illustration of one of his loved ones being assaulted. Brent said that his first suggestion would be to get away as quickly as possible and then to ask security in the store to review the video so that charges could be pressed. This would make it less likely for others to face the same treatment. It was a more difficult question for Brent to answer because he is protective of his family.

In the dark evening, after our video visit, we started driving to a regular secluded place where we go "car camping." Brent appreciates being able to see us on two different days, so when possible we do this so that we can see one another on

two different times per week. The amount of time per week does not increase, but somehow mentally it is easier to see each other for 2 15 minute visits on different days than for one 30 minute visit on the same day.

As we neared our destination for the evening, Desi noted to me that we were being followed. In a rather rural location, the car behind us had turned as we had and was decreasing in distance. When we pulled onto our dead end, one lane, gravel road destination, it was a clear indication that we were indeed being followed. Rather than traveling on, we pulled over onto a small patch of grass so that the vehicle behind us could pass us. I held the phone up so that we would be ready to call or livestream video if needed.

Instead of passing us, the vehicle quickly turned around in the middle of the dirt road where there was only about 3 feet of grass on either side of the road. I am not sure why, but they did not want to pass us. All of a sudden, they could not get away from us fast enough. We don't know why, but my guess is that if they had good intentions and just wanted a place to camp for the night, they would have gone to their destination. It was when they became aware that we were aware of them that they fled from us. We decided to head back into town. Because of covid restrictions and the time of year, campgrounds had been shut down. We spent the night in a Cracker Barrel parking lot. Thank you, God for protecting us from the dangers that we do not see. Your hedge of protection is greater than any force of evil that may try to come against us. We thank you for taking control at the right moment and allowing us to sleep peacefully.

Speak to Me

I was at church asking God to speak to me. I knew He was watching over me. The night before was when I had almost missed my Taiwan reservation. As a church, we were singing, but I was also praying that He would speak to me. Usually, the singers that lead the congregation just sing. Once every few months, a person has a word from God to share. I told God that if she would just say something, that I would know that the message was for me. A singer that I've never heard speak before said that she felt compelled to share a story.

She said that she visits the jail with Pastor Gary. She said that usually when women are asked why they chose to come to church, they say to be closer to God. This time a woman said that some others in the jail were talking about God, so she came to learn more. This lady was obviously touched by the experience. She wanted us to remember just to talk about God and that God would do the compelling of their hearts.

How can I apply this to my life? I asked for a word and someone spoke. It wasn't from the source I had imagined, but I was waiting and heard the message. God is telling me that I should talk about Him. I don't need to fret about someone agreeing with me. I just need to share the message.

A Scheduled Outage 12-29-20

Someone from the electric company stopped by while I was teaching one day. Desi found out that they were planning on trimming the trees in our yard to keep the branches away from the power lines. They said that they planned to do this in January but would tell us ahead of time closer to the date because it would cause a disruption in our electric service. Normally I wouldn't care, but because of

online teaching, it is very helpful for creating schedules to know two weeks in advance so that I don't have students reserving a time when I will have no power. I didn't want to close my schedule for weeks simply waiting on a time and date.

I remembered what Geoff had said one day in our online prayer group. He said that God is the God of opportunities. Then last night I was reading, Psalms I think, and it said that God delights in caring for His children. He wants us to ask for help. If we told our children to ask for help if needed would we then turn our backs when help was requested? I prayed that the electric being shut off would not interfere with teaching classes and forgot about it. I opened my schedule to take reservations and finished with a morning class. When I had a half hour break, I sent a few quick messages to students and then went to release Marlin from the room he was in during the morning so that he could go outside and get his morning restroom break.

As I was about to let Marlin outside, I saw 2 men in a truck. As I stood contemplating if I should wait to let Marlin go outside, the 2 left the truck and started walking closer to my home. The dog definitely needed to stay in. Instead of just closing the door, Geoff's words from a recent prayer call came to my mind. He had said that our God is a God of opportunity. (Like using a cracked crock pot as a reason to fill it... extending kindness and letting out light shine.) I left the dog and went outside on the porch. I had a decent shirt and carnigan on for teaching online, but I was wearing my pajama bottoms.... The ones with clouds and moons... I couldn't pretend they were "casuals." Leaving my pride behind, I engaged them in conversation.

I was hoping to find out if they know when they would be cutting the branches for the power company. I was hoping to inform my students in advance to minimize any inconveniences and optimize the chances that we could reschedule successfully. I briefly told the two that I had classes online and hoped to know so that reservations could be made outside of the outage. They said that they didn't know when, but that it should only take about 20 minutes. As an afterthought, I

said I didn't have anything scheduled between 11 and 3 so if it was between then, it wouldn't affect any classes anyhow. One of the men said, "We can do that." Apparently, he is going to tell the workers to come to our home to work between those hours so that I don't have to reschedule anything.

This is a simple situation of God's ability to provide in ways that we can't comprehend. Shortly before this, I was reading about how God delights in helping us and wants us to look to Him for answers and advice. God can prepare a heart to be willing to help. Instead of leaving things to chance, why not ask God to help you with things you can't control anyhow. Don't try to manipulate or get what you want through your own power. Leave the door open for God to problem solve for you. Do you have children? Think of when they were 2 years old and thought that they could do everything for themselves. Didn't they create bigger problems for themselves than if they would have tried with your approval and assistance to help them when they came to a more challenging thing to do? Did you ever laugh at the idea or stood nearby hoping they'd ask for help? If they did ask for help, did you walk away or help? If you helped, was it always the way that your child thought it should be done? Were there times that your child may have even fought the help you were trying to give? Is it possible that we act the same way towards our Abba Father?

130 The Ones Who Need Love Continued

Approximately two years ago, I told God to just give me the ones who need love. Looking back, I can see how my view of this request has expanded exponentially with time.

I'll repeat a sentence I already wrote earlier. In a very real sense, I died on March 1, 2019. Jesus tells us that we need to die to ourselves. Die to our worldly desires. I was baptized when I was about 12, but over the years I had drifted away from God. On March 1, He brought me back in a way that my adult mind could understand.

Over time, God has opened my eyes. I see and talk to people from around the world. God wants all of them to love Him and for His gift of the Holy Spirit to live in each one. By teaching English through general conversations, I get to know each student personally. When the Holy Spirit has done it's work, God will show me the open door at just the right time. What a beautiful opportunity I have been given to learn about others and their cultures!

I have been given a unique perspective of humanity from over 1,200 different people from around the world. Instead of learning about national news from a reporter on TV, I have heard personal stories of frustration from individuals experiencing injustice and pain from around the world. It's hard for me to ignore individuals expressing their concerns about tear gas, protests, corruption, inequalities, persecution, and financial strains. Educated people are trying to flee from many countries in search for a better place. A year and a half ago, many thought the United States was the answer to their problem.

There is no place offering peace. You can't find peace by yourself in a geographic location. Only the Holy Spirit, sent by God, can give you comfort under any circumstance in any space.

I have been exposed to a jail full of broken people needing love. With my own eyes, I saw the effects of hardened hearts and the wages of sin. I was confined with drug dealers, an armed robber, carjacker, and numerous thieves. What is interesting to me, is that they thought of me as "the bad one." I saw the

hopelessness. They may be feared by society, but they are slaves more than any others to sin. Addiction is relentless.

Brent briefly describes the struggles of some of his cellmates. They do not understand him. It bothers him because he feels useless. He sees no desire for change. Perhaps they do not desire because they are believing the devil's lies that they are not worthy of love. Their early life's pain has been compounded over time. There is no escape. Even if they weren't behind block walls, they would still be a slave to their own immorality. Only God can save them.

I had very limited eyesight when my main concern was educating a class of students per year about academic skills. As my eyes gradually open, I see a slowly forming vision to help others in a completely different way. I told God to just give me the ones who need love. You! You need love! God knows that the world needs reminded of His love.

I can't possibly talk to or reach everyone. God can! If, guided by the Holy Spirit, my words and experiences can help others to realize God at work within their own lives, it is worth considering and a reason for me to continue writing! Ask God for eyes to see. Then, examine your own life and find ways that God has worked with you.

I need love too! It may sound selfish, but sometimes it is good to realize how much we need to love ourselves. If you are a Christian, you have been promised the Holy Spirit... a part of God...to live within you! I need to actively work on my relationship with God each day. It is not a chore. It is a great gift! By searching with all my heart, soul, and mind, it is easier for me to hear God's voice and to do His will. I always fall short, but I believe that God appreciates my attempt. Plus, I have Jesus interceding for me. Thank God for Jesus!

I could be bitter about my life's circumstances or I could take a different perspective. I have been given the unique opportunity and time to read, study, listen and write as I wait for God's plan to unfold in my life.

I pray that I properly allow the Holy Spirit to use me to help others find Jesus. Perhaps my days of teaching math, reading, or English are gone. Perhaps all the changes are leading my family, myself, and others to a love that goes beyond our human capacity to understand or feel. Perhaps my new task in life is to lead, teach, or encourage others to find perfect love. Love that only God can provide. I'm talking about the living God. God that always has been and always will be. God that loves His children. God that heals, restores, and is good.

Do you realize how much you need God's love? We all need God's love and Jesus' sacrifice.

No Fear Just Love Extras to follow Parts I-V Rough Draft

June 16th

On June 16th in the early 1970's, a little baby girl was born. She grew and became close friends with my future husband, Brent. For years, they attended the same church and were in classes together at school. She was known for her many seizures and he was known by their teacher for instinctively knowing when she was having one. Despite the challenges that they both faced, somehow Brent was aware of when she was seizing or about to seize. He helped to keep her safe and walked her out of some of her seizures. In time, Brent's family moved away and the two slowly drifted apart.

On June 16th of 1973, another little baby girl was born. This time it was me. At some point, Brent asked me my birthday. He was surprised when I said June 16th. He had always struggled to remember dates and times. In this case, though, he said that he would not forget. He already had many years of trying to remember that day.

Some things are just strange.

What Just Happened?

I was about 14-15 years old when these events unfolded. Brent was an acquaintance who I had seen at school. Brent used to invite me to church for youth group. He intrigued me, but I certainly was not going to go somewhere with a boy that I barely knew. The church that he attended was known for being a bit more expressive than what I was used to. He went to an Assembly of God church. I attended a Church of Christ. We were both Christians. We differed because we worshiped Jesus in different ways. Because of my narrow perspective, I allowed my interpretation of the Bible to get in the way of recognizing that we were all members of His church. There are many buildings full of people expressing their love with a variety of methods. The collective group of people is the one church. The believers in Jesus... past, present, and future are the one church. This is important to remember! God intervened.

Trish, a girl I knew from my Spanish class, invited me to go to youth group with her. She seemed nice. I agreed. She and her brother arranged to pick me up and drop me off at my house. Wouldn't you know it? It was the same youth group

that Brent invited me to visit. It became a pattern for Trish and her brother to take me to youth group each week.

Brent and I started spending more time together. I liked him very much... enough that for a long time I resisted calling him my boyfriend. Everyone knows that boyfriends and girlfriends in high school often break up after just a short period of time. Friends were safer. Friends were friends for a very long time. I wanted him to be around for a long time. After about six months of becoming "best friends," we decided to jump to the boyfriend / girlfriend status. He started to go with my family to worship on Sunday mornings. I wasn't allowed to attend church services on Sundays where he worshipped.

Brent thought that services with my church were dull. I thought they were rather exciting. We had a quartet that would lead our voices in songs from the song books. There certainly were not any musical instruments. That would be considered sinful. He was used to several instruments that would accompany the singing congregation to the songs projected on a screen. People would lift their hands in praise... that would be complicated if holding a song book. The hymns that I knew from my childhood experience were different. I thought that modern songs were too enjoyable to sing at a church service. Many songs have been written over the centuries by mankind to worship, honor and praise God.

As Brent and I progressed in our relationship together, we found ourselves praying together almost every day. I can't remember all the details of a particular time in prayer, but I will tell you what I can remember. One day, we were praying and talking about God. Brent asked me a question. I think he asked me if I wanted to feel the Holy Spirit. I wasn't exactly sure what he meant or what might happen by my answer, but I loved God and I trusted Brent. I didn't think that either of them would want to hurt me.

We were sitting down. I don't remember if Brent said anything else or not. I do remember that he just reached over and just gently tapped my forehead. I immediately fell back. I do know that I was not expecting to fall over! When I became aware that I had fallen over, I remember having a mixture of emotions. I was confused, surprised, and completely at peace. How could I fall over with just the tap of a finger?

It seemed a physical impossibility that I would lose my balance and fall over with just one tap of a finger. It was not logical at all and my brain could not make sense of it. I had no knowledge of this type of experience. I knew I was having some sort of religious experience, but I thought that religious experiences only happened in churches. We were in a personal home. If you think about the definition of the Christian church, it involves all people seeking God through Jesus. We were two people seeking God.

God was sending the Holy Spirit through Brent. I don't remember how long after the incident, perhaps a week to a year, I was alone in my bedroom praying. I was sad. Outside it was dark and raining very hard. Going over to my bedroom window, tears ran down my face as I continued to pray. I knew that I was sad, but I didn't understand my uncontrollable crying.

I was unloading all my stress on God. I started speaking words that I didn't understand. I didn't know where these words came from or if they were even words. All I knew was that I liked saying these sounds or words. In my heart, they felt like words even though my mind had never learned them. Even though I continued to cry, I felt so much better. As these strange words came rushing from my mouth, I enjoyed an incredible sense of peace. I looked out of the window at the dark night as the raindrops poured from the sky. Gradually, the crying stopped. Nothing in my life had changed. I still had the exact same circumstances that had originally left me feeling sad and overwhelmed. The only difference in me was that God had taken my heartache.

I never talked to anyone about these experiences. I just thought they were strange. I was afraid that people would think that I was crazy... part of me wondered if I were crazy. Can someone be peaceful and crazy at the same time? Had I imagined these things? What was going on?

Approximately 30 years later, I am finally understanding and being given words to articulate what was happening to me so many years earlier. I was slain or resting or consumed by the Holy Spirit. I was talking in tongues. You can think I'm crazy if you want. It's OK. Some may read or hear this and completely understand. Others will think that I was influenced by the power of suggestion. There was no suggesting. I had never seen, heard, or read about my first experience. I had read and heard about the apostles speaking in tongues, but I thought that it was a kind of miracle that only happened when the original Christians met. I had not physically seen a flame of fire resting over my head. I thought that to have the Holy Spirit in you or to speak in tongues, you had to physically see fire. To my knowledge, this had not happened in approximately 2000 years.

About a year ago, I believe that God had told me to write down my life experiences. Shortly thereafter, I told someone at church that I thought that I was supposed to write down times I've seen God working in my life. She said, "Oh, your testimony." Perhaps that is the definition that I have been looking for. In any case, I don't know who I am writing these events for... myself, my family, or an audience that I have yet not found. It is OK. I will, with the Holy Spirit's help, continue to write and let God figure out the rest.

I believe individual prayers to God are important, but I also see the value in group prayers. I want to use all my available resources to communicate with God. I know He can hear me, but I don't think asking others to intercede on my behalf is going to hurt anything. I am compelled almost every week to ask for additional support. I am not too proud to ask for additional prayers. One week I briefly explained this writing project to some prayer warriors. I told the prayer warriors that I needed help with clarity and help to avoid the daily distractions of this

world. We prayed for just the right words to help others understand the message that I am trying to convey. By sharing the times in my life when I have seen God working in my life, I hope that your faith will be strengthened. After our prayer, but before I returned to my seat, the wise older man reached over and grabbed both of my hands in his. "He's always with you... not just when you see Him." How true! The same is true for you. Hallelujah!

Roman's Birth

This a tough one for me. For years, it has had the most significant impact on my spiritual being. It is also the most difficult to speak of because it is the most touching to my spirit. It has the most potential for people to think that I am either crazy, lying, or just mistaken. If I ever had doubted the existence of God, Jesus, and heaven, this experience sealed the deal. There is no doubt in my mind. I am 100% sure that Heaven and angels exist. Since I am 100% convinced of this, I must also believe in the existence of the devil, demons, and evil spirits. Why would Jesus talk about these beings and places if they weren't real? There's so much going on in this world that we as humans can't see because of our limited eyesight. Recently I read a passage in the Bible that I should only fear God... so here goes.

When Brent and I were young, newly married, financially poor, and uninformed of our rights, we found ourselves expecting a baby. We were both very modest people. We faced the hard reality of obtaining medical care, in an area of our lives that we were both extremely private. We went to the first appointment where a nurse confirmed that we were going to have a baby. Then we went to a different doctor for my first exam. It was horrible. The doctor kept saying that I needed to relax. How could I relax in a completely sterile, impersonal, and imposing environment? My next appointment was to have an ultrasound to see the age of the developing baby.

We went to our appointment. Brent was told that he was not allowed in the room for the ultrasound. The nurses said that it was hospital policy. They said there wasn't enough space in the room for him to stand and for doctor / patient confidentiality in case the age of the developing baby would upset my husband. (They implied that the developing baby could possibly not be Brent's! He might get angry and possibly cause harm to the equipment, the staff, or myself.) The nurses gave me a choice. Go in by yourself or leave. They obviously didn't know us. We left. I felt hurt and outraged at the same time. It seemed unfair. Looking back, the staff either lied or hospital policies have changed. Much later, I learned about the Patient Bill of Rights.

Because we were so upset at the exclusion of the father in the development of his growing baby, we sought out other options. We studied as much as possible and planned on a homebirth. This was in the days before the internet. At that time, we were unaware of how to contact a midwife and we had very limited funds. We prepared our apartment the best that we could for our bundle of joy. We had everything we needed and more. We were able to find lots of good things at yard sales from neighboring communities. Brent asked me what I really wanted for the baby. I didn't want to tell him because it was so expensive. He persisted and I finally confessed that I really wanted a video recorder so that we would always have our first moments captured. The cost was huge for us. Somehow, the video recorder was purchased and ready for our new baby to join us.

The day approached and I was having severe backpain...duh... contractions. We timed them and they were still far apart. Because my back hurt and I had not taken any medication at all since learning of my pregnancy, I asked Brent to massage and push on my back and lower back. He kept asking, "Are you sure?" I kept wanting him to push harder because my back still hurt. I was used to his massages working and taking away my discomfort. Now it wasn't working. In retrospect, I suppose that is why women say that labor is painful. A massage won't make the pain disappear... trust me.

This pain went on for about a day. At least the contractions were closer (about 5 minutes apart.) We were not seeing this painful process progress and I was already tired. My water had not broken yet. We started to second guess our decision to have the baby at home. We drove to the hospital.

At the hospital, the staff was outraged that I had only had one visit with the doctor. They were also upset that I refused to sign a paper that permitted extra people in the room to observe my child's birth. That's right. They wanted me, a very private person, to just show the birthing process, to complete strangers so that they could "observe." No thanks! Staff told me that everyone says that and changes their mind when the time for delivery comes. Well, I'm not everybody!

I went to a delivery room and was hooked to all sorts of machines to monitor both the baby and me. Pitocin was given to increase the speed and intensity of my contractions. At some point I noticed what I thought were toolboxes in the delivery room. They appeared to have been hidden behind pictures in the room. I realized they were cases for medical supplies. I asked a nurse what time the staff had a shift change. In my research, I had read that the number of cesarean births dramatically increases before a shift change. Speculation may lead some to conclude that it is for the staff's convenience. I did not want this to happen to me. I looked at the clock approaching a new hour and again asked my simple question. Nobody would answer me.

Someone came in and notified the doctor that I had not signed a paper. The doctor became very upset and asked Brent if he was going to watch me die in front of him. Brent signed about five papers in about as many seconds. Immediately, approximately ten people came into the delivery room. My heart dropped. How could ten people come into the room the second that Brent signed papers to save my life and I was at my most vulnerable? I felt so violated. My heart sank in an instant. The feeling in my heart wasn't just my imagination. The doctor yelled for them to all leave. The heart monitor relayed my instant distress at the arrival of the people. If they all entered the room to save me, as the doctor

had suggested to Brent, why did they all leave when my vitals got worse? I suspect, they were there to observe the delivery now that the proper paperwork had been signed.

Unexpectedly, the lights and all other electronic monitors went out in the delivery room. Staff scurried everywhere. The doctor demanded to know why the backup generators weren't kicking on. Nobody knew. They were upset because my unborn baby's heart rate had been dropping before the room lost power. Now all machines had stopped working. Nobody knew when my next contraction would be... except it was obvious to me.

Amid the confusion, I said, "There's Roman."

Everyone stopped. Time stood still. "Where?" the nurse beside me asked.

"Right there." I pointed in front of me, but slightly to the left. Roman Hershberger was standing right beside the doctor on the left side. I was not upset by his presence. I was greatly comforted. I forgot about the intrusion of people. I forgot I was in the middle of giving birth. His presence was a shining brightness, so bright that the doctor's headlamp was very dim in comparison. When I saw Roman, I never considered the fact that he had fallen off a ladder several months earlier and had died. All I knew was that I was so happy to see him. He just appeared and stood by the doctor smiling. He never said a word. I recognized his being, even though there was a brightness all about him.

The staff looked at one another. The nurse beside me said, "You are going to have this baby on this contraction. You are going to push with everything you have."

I nodded in agreement. The contraction came. I pushed with all I had. The nurse pushed on my womb. The doctor yelled that she had the head. With another contraction and another push, my son came into this world.

I felt such a sense of peace, but suddenly everyone else went crazy again. The nurse yelled that she had lost my pulse. The doctor said that they were losing me. I thought to myself, how could they be losing me... I was right there. That is all I remember before I lost consciousness.

The next thing I remember was that all the electricity and lights were back on and Roman was gone. My heart monitor showed a flat line and I was zip tied to the hospital bed. I heard the nurse say that she still couldn't get my pulse. Then, she said, "Wait, I have it..." I watched my heart monitor as it changed from a flat line to a line that indicated a heartbeat.

I asked why I was zip tied to the bed. They said it was for my own good. I asked where my baby went. They said he was being taken care of. Someone asked if I had a name for my baby. Brent and I had discussed James, Roman and a few other names, but we had not decided for certain. I looked at Brent and asked, "Roman?" Everyone looked at Brent to see how he would react. They had no idea of who Roman was to me. To them, Roman was a hallucination caused by a lack of oxygen in my brain. Brent shook his head in agreement. Everyone seemed relieved that Brent was satisfied with the name choice. With an exasperated and agitated tone, the doctor looked at Brent and said, "You are lucky to have your wife and son. You almost lost them both." Then she left.

Later I was told that the electricity in the whole hospital went out for a second. The backup generators kicked on for the hospital, but the electricity on the floor where I was at stayed off for a minute or so. In my delivery room, all electricity stayed off until after my son Roman had been delivered. I am confident that the

electrical interference came from Roman, our friend from church who had recently passed away.

Roman Hershberger was raised in an Amish family. He fell in love with a Mennonite woman named Carol. Despite their devotion to God, both were excommunicated from their churches for marrying someone of a different religion. They chose to worship in the same building as my family. As humans, we tend to view ourselves as members of different churches. There is just one church... Jesus' bride.

My dad, Roman, and Brent had worked on some construction jobs together. Brent and I agree that Roman Hershberger was one of the kindest people that we have ever met. I think God also likes Roman. I firmly believe that Roman is now some sort of angel. He was sent to help my family in a time of great need. Praise God!

You would think that I would have immediately gone and proclaimed this experience to everyone I knew, but you would be wrong. Instead, I was told that I had hallucinated. I was crushed. I didn't believe it, but it put fear in me. I feared that if I shared my story that people might think that I was a liar, mistaken, or just crazy. The longer I let this fear rule me, the more ashamed I became that I had been quiet about such a wonderful gift. Now, I had acquired fear and shame.

About a year and a half ago, I was talking to God. Four simple words came to me. I have thought about them almost every day since. Sometimes, they come to me many times in a day... depending upon my circumstances. "No fear, just love." It is very close to the verse in I John 4:18 that says, "Perfect love casts out all fear."

You can think I'm crazy if you want. I will not fear that label. I will love you regardless.

(One more thing... we completely forgot about using the video recorder. It sat untouched, on the floor, in its case the whole time.)

A Sweet Treat

I love ice cream. I know it has too much sugar. It's a weakness. Don't even get me started on mint chocolate chip or strawberry with chocolate chips added. I try not to buy it because then I rationalize with myself and eat it. It isn't all evil. God won't get too upset for my indulging. If I eat more than I should, I'm the one with less flexibility and pain in my joints. Finally, after several weeks of wrestling with the desire, I broke down and bought some.

A few days later, Roman went free diving. He found about twenty cartons of good quality ice cream in a variety of flavors. We had salvaged the occasional container of ice cream in past winters, but this was by far the most ice cream ever found at one time. Our freezers were packed with ice cream. I could have kicked myself. I wasn't patient enough.

What a lesson! I thought I'd resisted temptation long enough. Not even on sale, I had paid full retail when an enormous blessing was waiting for me a few days later. I don't really think that God was concerned with giving me ice cream. I think He was trying to get me to understand that He can provide for me and bless

me in ways that I don't understand. I just have to be patient and allow God to work in His time.

No Fear, Just Love Additional Thoughts- Rough Draft

Future Persecution

At first, I was thinking that the book was supposed to be about everything that I was learning about the legal system, jail, and our specific case. (I am still concerned that Christians are going to be finding themselves more frequently in jail because of their beliefs and behaviors.) Maybe we were being placed in jail to learn survival techniques to share with others that are completely unprepared. I know that I was completely unprepared for time in jail. If you think living in the world is bad... imagine the worst of the world... that's jail. Now, you, as God's child, are supposed to live amongst those who are in Satan's snare. You don't have all of your church friends to comfort you. You don't have your family beside you. Your flesh is separated. This is why we must prepare now! You need to know that all of their love is still with you, even though you can't see it. In those times, it will be easier for you to endure if you have put on the armor of God before you are completely surrounded by the enemy.

(Ephesians 6:10-18 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of

truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.)

What is that tip in the Bible? Submit to the Lord and the devil will flee.

(I found it. James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.) This is a good example of why it is good to read the Bible yourself. Even if you can't remember the exact words, you will be able to remember enough to put it into the internet, find the verse, and confirm it in the Bible yourself.

Additional Thoughts: Comparing a House to a Person

Thinking back to our first home, I see how a house could compare to a person. Some are beautiful on the outside but lack quality on the inside. They may come with a heavy price. Some are a bit broken outwardly but have potential. Sometimes, with years of neglect or rough living, a building or person may appear to be less valuable. They may need a lot of help. Ones in good condition and that don't need extra attention are easy to enjoy. We distance ourselves from those needing too much work. We don't want to risk time, energy, or love into what might hurt or disappoint us. God says that we can't just love the easy ones. In God's eyes, we are equals...a mess, unless He sees Jesus first. Somehow God loves even the toughest of us and tells us to do the same. God help us!

Thoughts about St. Patrick's Day...Share Mistakes

Sometimes God's work in our lives is when we are the most vulnerable or have experienced trauma. Some of us don't want to remember these difficult times. We want others to remember our successes and like to recant the good times.

I was a teen before I learned the full story behind my dad's 2 shortened fingers and over 40 years old before I learned about the truckload of coal. Why? Who wants to share financial defeat or admit our own arrogance? It's embarrassing. We like the illusion that we're strong, capable, and independent.

For the longest time, I knew Dad's shortened fingers from a shop class accident. Then came the part that he was demonstrating safety as an example to others. Finally, the truly painful and important truth came out. He was testing God.

One day, when I was married, had a son of my own, and a piano in my rented home in CA, I heard my dad beautifully playing Amazing Grace. There were no mistakes. It is the only time I ever heard him play the piano. I learned that he wanted to be a concert pianist before the accident. Afterwards, he thought his fingers were too fat. Maybe he didn't want people to focus on his hands. The deformity stopped his dream. Was it a reality or was it a fear in his head? It could have been an amazing testimony but would have required the humility that was perhaps too great for him at the time.

It's taken me over two years for me to write my experiences here. It's not a problem with the physical writing or typing of words. It's because I know that I

have to relive a few chapters that I don't want to think about. However, these are the things that others need to know so that others can see how much God cares for us. The more I write, the more those few chapters glare at me. When I simply procrastinate, I silence the 95% because I don't want to face the 5%.

Additional Thoughts: Satan's Patience, a Gradual Distancing from God

Early 1970's- early 1990's- Sunday School and church services 2 times on Sunday and Wed nights

Late 1980's-early 1990's- Morning Prayer Group, Youth Group, Sundays at church daily prayer with Brent

Mid 1990's- after married, no church services in Ohio – perhaps weekly prayer with Brent

- About 1 year of 3-7 church events per week in CA 1996

1997-2019 – attended 1 church service – occasional Bible reading by self- Buddah enters and takes hold (Satan thinks he's won, but God's not done.)

Mid 2018- I prayed from the bottom of my heart for help- I can't get rid of Buddah and admit I need God to take control.

2019-2020 Sunday mornings and Wed. night Bible studies, online morning prayer group, Bible reading, LOTS of prayer, prayer via phone with Brent 2019 before meal and at night- some Bible discussion

2021- Prayer group disbanded, Sunday and Wed night Bible studies, praise

Psalms 40.....

