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# PART III

# SHAKEN

## I DIDN'T MEAN THIS!

My world was shaken in a way I could never imagine. All my plans were in vain. We were focused on the wrong kind of preparation. God has different plans for us that we 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, but God knows what lies ahead. I have been put into intense training for an unknown purpose. I believe my premonition was to soften my heartache. I had anticipated the closing of the school building. I didn't foresee the turn of events just around the corner. Life as I knew it vanished.

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 wants us to put our faith in Him. He has given us time to refocus and is allowing us to have experiences that will strengthen our faith and advance His Kingdom.

We do need to be prepared, but not in the way we perceived. We must prepare for spiritual battle. God closed doors at the perfect time. He must properly prepare us so that when the new door opens, we will gladly walk through it. Knowing that we were too comfortable to ever walk through another door, we needed a situation that would make us want something different.

We thought that with adoptions finalized that a new chapter would begin and that struggles would ease away... We didn't realize that our challenges were about to increase. If I knew then what I know now, I probably would 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. 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 removed until we shine. Like a blacksmith, He often uses fire or hardships to help us reach our potential.

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. At the same time, Joseph's struggles prepared him for the responsibilities he'd later face. The time at hand has offered us the greatest opportunity ever to be humbled, rely on God, and gain unique knowledge through strange circumstances.

One of my daughters ran 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 former students, co-workers, or two youngest children. Waiting in handcuffs in the Sheriff's Office, the words, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," came to me.

For someone who had given birth at home, this next scenario could have been a devastating experience. I would call it a strip search because I had to involuntarily remove all my clothing in front of a guard. Jail staff would say it was a "change out" because I changed from my own clothes to an orange jumpsuit and foam crocks. I was not even allowed to keep my underwear. The legal system has determined that such searches are legal. A prisoner has no right to privacy. Though my mind screamed this isn't fair, God's Word gave me peace in the moment.

To be a prisoner and lose your "right" to privacy, you simply need an accusation... a charge. Mine was complicity to child abuse. The devil loves to accuse and runs rampant through this system. God's law and court is perfect. Man, influenced by the world, in control of courts with little transparency is a nightmare.

Inside my head, I had to choose between voices. The devil wanted me to be depressed, anxious, and angry. God says that Jesus offers peace, patience, and love. I was reminded and kept repeating to myself, "Fear not what kills the body. Fear that which destroys the soul."

I tried to view the situation through the guard's eyes. She didn't seem like she liked the process either. She was just doing her job. I reminded myself repeatedly that I am more than my physical body. I am an eternal spirit who merely inhabits a body for a short time. Praise God that He gave me the eyes to see this during the very stressful time.

In the Sheriff's Office the words, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," came to me. During the strip search, again, comforting words..." Do not fear that which kills the body. Fear what kills the soul." I remember thinking, "I am more than this body, in this moment of time. I am an eternal spirit." I repeated it over and over during the times when I could feel the devil trying to destroy my spirit, my love, and my hope.

It was hard for my mind to comprehend that 12 hours earlier I had led a class of students to pledge allegiance to the same flag and country that had enacted laws for my clothes to be taken against my will. Not only that, but if I tried to refuse, my clothes would be taken, a heavy green vest put on me, a turtle suit, and then I'd be held by myself in a glass box for "observation." It didn't happen to me, but I heard the process happen to another lady. She was moved because she pressed the buzzer and tried to ask questions. That's rough.

Held in "drunk tank," a room with new arrivals and a fully visible toilet for everyone in the room and anyone who passed by the cameras to view. Defined as a holding cell, not a bathroom, the

overhead camera recording is protected by law. Without the help of Desi's long arms and a blanket, any guard could have viewed me topless just so that I could use the restroom. At this jail, there are no tops and bottoms, jumpsuits only. This would probably unnerve many people. For me, it was a definite test of my willingness to forgive.

I never entered my workplace again. The school closed on schedule and has been demolished. To this day, over 3 ½ years later, as part of my bail agreement, I'm not allowed to set foot on the beautiful property that we thought would protect during difficult times we foresaw facing our country. It is a crazy twist of irony that the property we first walked on July 4, the property that was supposed to give us freedom and a chance to be independent, was an illusion. It was a counterfeit freedom. There is no safe place on earth. Only Jesus, as our personal Savior, can keep us from the madness of the world. In a very real sense, I died on March 1, 2019. Hallelujah! In my weakness, He is strong!

A "shaking" has come to the whole world. Response to covid-19 has dramatically impacted life as we knew it for almost everyone. All 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 one of many that we'd 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. The enemy is here. He comes to kill, steal, and destroy... a wolf in sheep's clothing. We need to be ready.

When hardship came, I had two choices... bitter or better. How have the covid days affected you? Are you bitter or better? I hope you are better! In all our preparations, we never considered a scenario in which we were viewed as criminals by our own government. Christians need to be prepared.

What is a crime? It appears as if crimes are defined by time, space, and social norms. What was considered a crime 100 years ago is celebrated today. If you remember my first shaking, menacing means that someone FEELS threatened by your words or actions. Give it time. Biblical truth already makes some feel threatened. Our government has created laws that defy Biblical truth. Laws created by the world's standards will be enforced by earthly judges. When God's law conflicts with man's law, we must be prepared and willing to endure whatever consequences the world deems suitable.

## ROMAN IS SPARED

Isaiah, Desi, Brent, and I were taken to jail and charged with various crimes. Emma and her younger sister were put into foster care.

Meanwhile, Roman was completing his final semester in college before he could graduate. Amid student teaching and with a very big project due to be qualified by the state, Roman had to deal with his entire immediate family being dispersed. We had to get cars out of impound. Even our little dog had to be picked up from the Dog Pound.

When we realized the chaos that had just ensued, we started praying that Roman be protected from any charges that would interrupt his placement. He had worked a long time and was so close to the finish line. I had a very difficult time concentrating or eating. Praise God that he was able to have clarity and endurance to handle so much stress at one time.

## GOD PROVIDES

According to my contract, I was able to get paid from my employer for 5 days without a doctor's excuse. Amazingly, with the help of friends, family, and prayer warriors, appointments were scheduled and excuses provided. These notes allowed me to use my accumulated sick leave. One excused me from work for one month. The other had no given time frame and carried me through to the end of the school year... and the summer months too.

God provided for me as my mind tried to sort through my new reality.

## 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, but with 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 went 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 too was a concern for me since 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 wake up. He sleeps like a rock.

Desi and I agreed to meet Isaiah at 8:00 am near the courthouse 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 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. I went around the house checking all the rooms and appliances. 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 surprised that it was so late and promised to meet us in an even 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. Isaiah still had other charges to confront on a different day, but the complicity to child abuse charge carrying a 5-year sentence was dismissed.

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. Praise God for His divine intervention!

## A QUEST FOR TRUTH

When we were first arrested, we went into shock. Nothing made sense anymore. Brent's mental health was extremely fragile. He was sitting in an isolation cell with only insults hurled at him. Our concern was Brent's sanity. We felt that the visual, even through a video screen, could make the difference between him losing his mind or not. We wanted to do everything we could to support him.

We were allowed two, fifteen-minute visits per week, but only if we physically came to the jail and sat at a kiosk. A kiosk is like a computer monitor attached to the wall. In the very beginning, we made 2 separate trips per week so that every 3-4 days we could have a visit... something to look forward to. After a couple of weeks like that, we scheduled them on days that were back-to-back so that we could drive about 5 hours, have a visit, stay overnight, have a visit, and then drive back the next day. This would allow Brent to be able to see us on 2 different days but would reduce the amount of travel in half.

It might seem like a lot of trouble, but we wanted to do everything we could on the outside to keep his mind as healthy as possible. Brent was in isolation for about 2 months. My internet research about inmates' mental health after extended periods of isolation were not encouraging. Even though expensive, we used and still use every method available to help Brent's emotional state. The Bible reminds us to help the poor or oppressed and to visit those in jail. There must be a reason to mention this!

We started doing the math and realized that we needed a cheaper alternative. We looked for temporary housing. There were no vacancies anywhere that would rent month by month. All landlords wanted us to sign a year lease. I didn't foresee our circumstances lasting longer than a few months and didn't want to commit to that. We looked and called everywhere. I did not want to keep renting a room, but it was cold outside. Even at the cheapest hotel in town, at \$60 a night plus all our other costs, we would soon be out of money. I was so sad. Anytime I had ever stayed in a hotel room, it had always been for a happy reason. Now I was looking at a huge expense and I didn't even enjoy it. When all hope seemed lost, I thought of an acquaintance I had met a while ago.

We call this acquaintance 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 occasions, 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 of high morality but adhering to her own set of rules. She is devoted to living in a minimalistic way in hopes that her example might impact others for global survival. She was happy to let us stay overnight. I hated to intrude. It was so humbling.

Try to imagine this... it's true. I hesitate to share it because if I didn't live it, I'd have a hard time believing someone else. Squash said that we could stay, but that her family wouldn't be there that night because of a previous obligation. I didn't want to stay in her home without her, but she insisted that we should come and stay since we needed a place to go. We went to her house before they had to leave and so that we would already be set up for the night after we finished our video visit. Instead of being upset by the inconvenience, she was happy to see me again and to meet Desi!

We moved some furniture around in the room she offered to us, setting up our own cots and blankets. She didn't have an extra key to give us, so she gave us an old credit card and showed us how to break into her house with it. The house is minimally heated and normally the whole family piles into the room with the woodstove on winter nights. We were in the room next to it and heat passively went through a hole in the upper part of the wall. Looking back, I can't hardly believe that we did this! 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 deals with a lot. Her husband went into rehab shortly after our first visit. She said that she was struggling because they earn their living by doing odd construction type of jobs. He went into rehab during the busy time for work when she needed the most help. She might appear rough around the edges, but her heart is kind. She reminds me of the good Samaritan. I asked God to please bless Squash.

During a later visit, Desi and I had Roman and Isaiah with us. Squash had two travelers staying with her, along with their seven dogs. Their traveling names are Trinket and Snoopy. Squash said that she felt like a "holy roller." She knew she needed help with her workload but wasn't sure what to do. While in town, she ran across two worn out looking travelers. 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 also volunteered to let them stay in her home. They were thankful for a place to rest, and Squash got some unexpected help with a couple of construction projects.

Squash is the only one I know who would offer the weary travelers a place to rejuvenate before continuing their journey... in her own home. I know I was grateful for a place to stay, and I had more options than these two. My own list of "concerns" limits the amount of love I can show. I'm not supposed to have fears. My goal is to live life with no fear and just love. I know it, but I'm a work in progress.

Some say that love and protection of others limits the amount of love you can show an outsider. If this is true, I think the threshold is much greater than we typically dare to go. The Bible says that true love conquers ALL things. The question that my human brain struggles

with is knowing how to show love and wisdom at the same time. How to be as shrewd as a snake and harmless as a dove can be difficult to discern.

If I would have looked just at 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. The time with them was very good for me to examine my own heart. As we sat in the shade of a big tree on an old trampoline, they gave me new insight into a different culture.

They were both veterans. Ten years ago, they were honored as defenders of our country. Now, most of us turn our heads. We're too busy, feel we're not to blame, think there are programs to "take care of this," or simply don't know how to help. We do our best to block them out of our minds. It's harder to block out once you've shared a night under the same roof. The craziness of my new life is causing me to meet all kinds of different people.

Trinket and Snoopy hoped to give a couple of the dogs to wounded vets in other states. They were traveling 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. I could see love in their eyes and by how they treated each other and their dogs. They said that they were on a quest. A quest to find truth.

I was on my own quest for truth. I found it... JESUS! My mind was perplexed. Why could I identify more with them than many others I've known for years? I pray for them whenever they cross my mind. I hope that they find "the way, the truth, and the life."

We never did find an apartment to rent. Every door I tried was closed. At the time, it was incredibly frustrating. Looking back, I'm so glad we were prevented. It was helpful for Roman, Desi, Isaiah, and I to all be in the same house. Extended family was also nearby for additional support. God knew just the right place for me to heal.

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

About six months later, we sent Trinket a message letting her know that our phone number had changed. Trinket told us 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 earlier about our new phone number but had to

notify them separately through Roman's Facebook account. If we'd have messaged immediately, we probably wouldn't have known.

Desi and I called Isaiah and Roman to see what they thought about the situation. Without knowing the feelings of anyone else, all 4 of us instantly had the same gut reaction. If possible, we should bail him out. Isaiah was a couple of hours away from where Snoopy was being housed and was able to get the \$1500 together so that he wouldn't have to wait in jail until his court date... a couple of months into the future and over the holiday season.

Snoopy said it was a miracle that he was out and couldn't believe it. Some might think that we were extremely foolish or simply nuts. But... a few days later, Snoopy found out his dad was in the hospital. Snoopy didn't know it, but it was his last chance to see his dad alive. Snoopy thought his dad would get better and didn't go visit. We talked to Snoopy later as he lamented his decision.

I believe the Holy Spirit touched our hearts to spur us into action. When you feel like a miracle has been handed to you, don't take it for granted. Don't waste time. 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's rough. On the bright side, it reaffirmed to us that we did what we should have. We didn't understand our compassion and it wasn't logical, but it was the right thing to do. It was only after we acted that we learned the significance.

We gave never expecting to see the money again. One day, we got a surprise in the mail. Snoopy kept his court date and all the money was returned. I am trusting that God is listening to my prayers and will lead them to truth. Please join me! Let's pray for them and for others to find the truth we all need.

## 2013 SCION FRS VS. DEER

About three months earlier, 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 our family. Our finances changed dramatically. Then my truck broke AGAIN! Toyotas are not supposed to break! When it rains, it pours!

I asked Isaiah about selling the Scion to buy a reliable family car. Then he wouldn't need to finish making payments because selling it would cover the cost of the loan. 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 switch drivers. Late at night, we continued north. The road was a 4-lane highway with a grassy median dividing the north and south bound lanes. After driving for about half an hour, there was a big buck on the highway walking very slowly in the middle of the two northbound lanes but going 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 rolled his window down to see since the airbags were blocking our view through the front windshield. He told me to get off the road so that another car wouldn't hit us. I turned the wheels in what I thought was the right direction. He said, "No, the other way." It didn't make sense, but I followed instructions. 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 so thankful 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. The front license plate was completely gone! 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? God tells us to bring ALL things to Him in prayer...protection for ourselves, others, wildlife... anything. Why not try it?

## 2016 COROLLA

Before the insurance company even issued a check for the Scion FRS, the search began for new transportation. Our Tacoma had only small foldable seats and wasn't ideal for 3 or 4 adults. The Pilot and Sienna both had major issues. They were OK for local driving but couldn't be trusted for multiple long-distance trips. Brent was in isolation and needed our emotional support. We also needed the connection. Reliable transportation was a must!

Isaiah found a three-year-old, 2016 Toyota Corolla on Facebook Marketplace with 50,000 miles on it. It was listed for \$7200 and was 5 hours away in Pennsylvania. 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 strange hole 4-5 inches in diameter. It had a salvage title due to flooding. The ad said that it drove great, but we wanted to see that for ourselves.

AAA had covered all costs from towing the Scion FRS. Within two days, Allstate deposited \$6980 into my bank account and said that they would also reimburse me for the sales tax if I purchased another vehicle within 30 days. We went to see the Corolla the next day.

We drove to the lot in the Pilot. The transmission fluid overheated while on the way causing our transmission light to come on. Isaiah pulled off to the side of the road to let the transmission cool down. Isaiah altered his driving style, and the Pilot did not overheat for the remainder of the ride there.

Satisfied with the test drive, we negotiated with the salesman. He was willing to accept \$6,900. The next challenge was to get it home.

We had to find a tow dolly since the car had salvage title. Rental on the dolly was about \$100. The nearest one was about 45 minutes away. After we found the U-Haul place, we had to get a different ball and hitch because we had the wrong sized ball for the tow dolly. After getting the right size from a local hardware store, we found that the lights were not working properly. We went back to the hardware store to get a new wiring harness. After installing the new wiring, we were finally able to drive back to where the car was waiting.

It took 4-5 tries of adjusting the slope so that the front bumper of the car wouldn't hit the front of the tow dolly, but we got it done. Now we just needed the Pilot not to overheat while hauling the extra weight. I drove, stopping three times to allow the Pilot to rest and trying to prevent any overheating. The transmission light never came on.

We got the car to the house and parked it in the driveway. We got the salvage title from Pennsylvania switched over to an Ohio salvage title. The soonest appointment we could get the



vehicle inspected was 9 days later. Once that was done, we were able to get a regular auto title from Ohio that allowed us to get it registered and licensed.

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. This was within a month of our arrests. At the time, I didn't hardly have a complete coherent thought. We had all been recently jailed and had to voluntarily submit our car to state troopers for critique. Somehow, God gave Isaiah and Desi the combined knowledge and stamina to overcome numerous obstacles and succeed at this daunting challenge.

Are you wondering if we've had trouble with this salvaged vehicle? We haven't. In about 2 ½ years, we've put over 75,000 more miles on it. At 105,000 miles, it needed the CVT belt transmission replaced, but this is routine maintenance for new vehicles. We figured the cost of repair with the anticipated mileage gained from such a repair. It was perfect timing and at a convenient place. At a cost of about 2 cents per mile, we figured that it was by far the cheapest option.

We had noticed a shifting problem starting on one of our trips to see Brent, but it resolved itself temporarily while we were far from home. A few days later when we were about 10 minutes from a Toyota garage and my sister-in-law's house, the shifting problem showed itself in a strong way so that we immediately drove it to the garage and called for a ride home.

God provided for our needs and safety.

## PRAY FOR EMMA

With recent legal battles, expenses were crippling. Theft at the homestead in Kentucky had been swift and beyond comprehension. To help put it in perspective, the entire cabin was disassembled and carried off. Fruit and nut trees were dug up and taken away. The solar and water systems, along with 2500 gallons of storage tanks were dug up and disappeared. Anything smaller had a very similar fate!

Fortunately, our home and property 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 transportation for one more month before he would be finished with his student teaching.

The man interested in trading the motorcycle for a car said that he couldn't leave his property because he was under house arrest. He lived in Zanesville, a city over an hour away from our home. Desi, Isaiah, and I loaded the motorcycle into the bed of the truck against my better judgement 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 it later in his life.

I had only driven through Zanesville a couple of times in my life and had never been off the highway. 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. 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.

In the preceding month, our dreams of an independent homestead had been shattered. Our 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 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 and 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 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 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. Please join me and PRAY FOR EMMA!

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 faith in justice and humanity seemed a distant ideal of the past. A couple of months before our world changed my favorite and most dependable vehicle needed major repairs. The rear differential shattered. 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 it than to buy a different used vehicle in an unknown condition.

I had been driving the truck for about a month after the repair when I saw the pumpkin leaking fluid. I didn't even know that trucks had pumpkins. Apparently, a pumpkin is the metal housing of the rear differential. I took the truck to a different repair shop who tried to seal the leak. The next time we took the truck for another video visit, it was apparent that the seal had not been 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 bolt using the recently purchased tool. It wouldn't budge. Unfamiliar with the town, 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 followed directions and drove about ½ mile farther. Hopeful about a possible solution, we asked the employees if they would be able to add the fluid that we had just purchased. I hoped they could work on it and maybe even give us a discount since we already purchased the fluid.

A man said just a moment and went to talk with two other employees. There were no other cars being serviced. The employee returned to our 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, a customer pulled up to the garage.

Hours from home and already feeling defeated, the act of kindness did wonders for my spirit. The Holy Spirit must have touched their hearts. They had no reason to help us. Their actions reminded me of a passage in the Bible, "whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me." God, please bless Wink, Louie, and Tyler for their unselfish acts of love.

It turned out that this fix was short lived, but the fluid added was enough to keep us safe. We were not stranded 5 hours away from our home. What I find interesting is that these truck problems happened the day after we took the motorcycle to Zanesville. If we would have had these problems ONE DAY SOONER, we would not have been able to transport the motorcycle,

and therefore would not have traveled to Zanesville. We would have never seen the PRAY FOR EMMA sign.

## CAN I PAY YOU MORE?

For months, Roman had been trying to sell his Sienna with overheating problems for \$300. No one expressed any interest. It just sat, taking up space in our driveway. Desi asked Roman if she could try to sell it also. He said he didn't care.

Desi was offered \$200 in her first call to a junkyard. Not satisfied, Desi called another junkyard. They offered \$500. Do you think we sold it? You bet! The next day the title was notarized, a man came with a \$500 check, and towed it away. What a blessing!

## WHICH LAWYERS?

Once the initial shock wore off from the arrests, we faced the challenge of finding lawyers. 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 we had no lawyers. A public defender was assigned to my son. I am not sure if he was assigned to the rest of us or not, but I do 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 thought would be good for us. He recommended Mr. Campbell. Since I had prayed asking for guidance in this selection, I decided not to ignore the advice. Brent's brother declared that he wasn't going to eat until Brent had a lawyer. After that court appearance, we went straight to lawyer's office. Mr. Campbell 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 Mr. Campbell to represent Brent. Isaiah would be represented by the public defender and Desi would be represented by one of Mr. Campbell's associates. My lawyer would be determined later since my preliminary hearing was set several months after the others.

Time marched on. I kept wondering who my lawyer was going to be. People kept nagging me. A lawyer had been assigned to the family court case, but I had the feeling that she wasn't the right one and wasn't qualified to represent me against my criminal charges. Everybody wanted to know who my lawyer would be for the criminal case. I was nervous about it too. The retainers for Brent and Desi's lawyers had left us with just a small amount left. I prayed for the right lawyer and to be able to afford the retainer.

A potential name had been mentioned to me, but I was told to wait before contacting him. The lawyer was from out of town, and I'd 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'd take the case after the retainer was paid. It was the amount that we had. He said that after the retainer was used, that he would bill us by the hour. This allowed us more time to spread out the expense.

I asked Mr. Hart about my upcoming preliminary hearing. The lawyer assigned to me for family court couldn't find it on the court docket on the date written on my court documentation. Mr. Hart looked and couldn't find it either. He kept looking and said that I would not have it

because a grand jury had just indicted me. On the same day that I felt like I couldn't wait any longer for a lawyer and decided on one, I was indicted.

I didn't realize that courts could do that. He said that is why you just hired me. It was a rare but legal move. It meant that we would not have the opportunity to ask questions about my case before trial. Really, my confidence isn't in a particular lawyer. I'm relying on God to work behind the scenes through unknown individuals. I'm waiting for good to somehow surface triumphantly.

Everything in God's time.



## I GO TO JAIL... AGAIN

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. 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. They were right.

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. 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. Prayers went up.

In hindsight, it was a blessing for them to incarcerate me when I was already at the jail. 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 just 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 and moved to drunk tank. I think it was a gift from God. Inside of this glass room, there was a private 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 didn't have a daughter with long arms to hold a blanket for me to 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 just to be able to pee.

I prayed. I was sad but had an unexplainable peace with no fear. Once in drunk tank, 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 ones 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! 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 the 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 cried plenty of tears in the previous month, but not one drop since being rearrested. 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. About 30 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 had 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 others woke up and started reliving their highs, it was completely different. Smurf's eyes lit up and she smiled as she lived vicariously. The draw of addiction is so overwhelming. Her flesh was weak. Her idol, any narcotic within reach. She was a slave, with no hope for escape. Only by the grace of God, can she be free.

Let's think about Smurf's circumstances and spontaneous behavior 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 an example 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. Other bags were unopened, but the bag given to me by the guard had already been opened and was missing the toothpaste. I had seen the guard doing something with the bags but didn't realize what it was until I was given the opened one. I was hurt by what seemed like a purposeful jab at my heart but was determined not to let my spirit be broken by the unfair treatment. I remembered how Jesus suffered without complaining. I quietly 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.

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. She has no teeth. I literally had no way of having toothpaste until I could order some. That process would have taken about three to five days. When I was able to see my account, I saw that I was charged \$1.90 for the little bag of stuff. 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 and weak but quick to give what little she has. The guard's willful attempt to sow seeds of anger or resentment were replaced by the kindness of another. Smurf is imprisoned by addiction and 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 haven't worried about strangers. I have felt that agencies exist and are paid for through taxes to meet the needs of those less fortunate. That has been my forced contribution. Jesus told us that even pagans look after their own children. Yes, society can systematically provide for the physical needs of

others. However, Smurf showed me through her example that generosity shines when it is spontaneous and offered in love, NOT obligation.

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

## A RAY OF SUNSHINE

I had survived drunk tank. Now I would be transitioning into new territory where I only had secondhand knowledge. Brent had told me about the decontamination shower with the lice treatment shampoo. Because of Brent's experience, I was very diligent about keeping my eyes shut very tightly as the guard squirted shampoo in my hair. Brent's description of the stinging in his eyes was still fresh in my memory. On the bright side, I was grateful to have a little bar of soap from my little baggie and the shampoo that Smurf had just given me. I was also thankful for a hot shower in the privacy of this little restroom. Freshly showered and dressed in a new fluorescent orange jumpsuit, it was time to move on.

I had a new challenge. How do you carry a mat, blanket, sheet, and tub all at the same time? The guards don't give directions. Confused about how to go about this task, I looked at Lola who was also going to a new cell with me. She knew what she was doing and was waiting for me while holding all those bulky things. There is a technique. I was grateful for the visual example of how to accomplish this task. It also was a reminder to me that I was in a new world and that nothing would be explained.

Do you remember how God has perfect timing? As I was getting the things together to carry, I thought I saw Brent. I saw a room with a glass wall that had a TV, kiosk, and a phone. It looked like what Brent called rec and what I had seen from his video visits but from a different perspective. While in isolation, but not in trouble from within the jail, Brent usually was let out into this room for an hour or two per day for his recreation time. This was the only time he could get a shower, check the kiosk for messages, and call. The person I believed to be Brent had his back to me so he couldn't see me. I was sure that it was him. I would be out of his view within 10 walking steps. Yelling wasn't allowed and was probably pointless since I couldn't hear any noise from the TV. How I desperately wanted him to turn around!

When I was about 15 feet away and walking towards him, Brent turned around, saw me, and immediately started crying. I could not hear him, but I could see him form the words, "I love you" on his lips. I did the same. Eyes wide and quick to observe, Lola asked, "Was that your man?" I said, "Yes." Smiling, Lola said, "You're sleeping under the same roof tonight."

How is that for perspective? I think of the complete chaos that appears to be my life. Lola helped me to see the situation from a positive angle. As the storm raged, God showed us His grace and arranged for Brent to be standing just where he was at the perfect time. We had no power to arrange this. In fact, it is very likely that if Brent would have turned around earlier that the guard would have seen the emotional response and realized our relationship. Brent would have been put back in his isolation cell before walking me down the hall. Seeing each other through a window would have been too much of a privilege. God knew our broken spirits and threw a ray of sunshine our way.

We are told to give thanks in ALL circumstances. Thank you, God, for answering my prayer and prompting Brent to turn around so that we could have that encouragement and moment in time.

## CELL 304

Cell 304 would be my home for an undetermined amount of time. Brent had called our phone as soon as I was out of sight. He did not know how soon he would be put back in his individual cell and wanted the family to know he'd seen me. When I was able, 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 \$15,000 cash. 100% was needed. We did not have that. We had just spent \$35,000 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 and had shown Desi how to pay the bills.

I must have looked like I didn't belong. Lola explained to the others 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 and donated for me to wear. Purchased "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. Lauren helped 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 to climb up. I had to be very careful. Someone helped put the sheet on my mat and Lola got the top 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. The lights had been dimmed, there were a fewer number of fluorescent lights on, so that I had a quiet time to reflect and talk to God. After a short time, a guard came in and asked if I was OK. I said that I was fine but couldn't concentrate with all 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 a 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 would ever make 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 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 naturally. 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 had been asked a question. I was incapable of doing both. The one who had told not to speak quickly responded. "Don't talk 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 of their pain, who either did nothing or refused to believe their daughters. 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. They advised me 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 if I didn't mention my husband. The next morning, Bridgette said she had prayed about the situation from the previous day and had 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.

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.

A bunch of us were sitting at the table. Suddenly, I felt like I needed to know what would happen if I were bailed out. Would a guard tell me if I was going home or being moved to a different cell? If I was going home, I wanted to leave all my clothes for others. The other women said that I wouldn't be told. They'd just tell me to pack my stuff... to word it nicely. Desi had just put a small amount on my account even though I wanted to order things I'd need for a long stay. Less than a minute, probably more like ten seconds later, a guard came in the cell and said, "Stinespring, pack your stuff..." to word it nicely.

One of the women sitting across me remembered what I had just said and repeated it to the group again. An older inmate that seemed friendly with the guard asked where I was going.



Instead of going directly to my bunk for my mat and tub, I forgot jail protocol of following guard directions instantly. I felt like I was going home. Learning from Smurf, I ran to the restroom area and took off my new T-shirt, bra, and socks. In the background, the guard asked where I had gone. Someone else answered, "to the bathroom." I put the clothes I'd been wearing in the dirty laundry and dumped everything from my tub on the table. They needed it more than me.

When I was released, this time I had a condition. I was only allowed to be in Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky. These were the states that were along the quickest route from my home to the court who filed charges against me. The place where I had purchased the car 10 days earlier was no longer part of my legal range of movement. I am grateful for the timing so that we were able to get the car. If I had the limitations earlier, Desi and Isaiah would not have left me alone to get it by themselves.