

## June 16<sup>th</sup>

On June 16<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup>. 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 weird.

## 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 modest home above the freezing temperatures. The family continuously wore their coats indoors to stay warm. There was just no money available to buy any additional heat. She had been raised to know Jesus. 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 tells me that the coal lasted all winter long. She 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 living in a very old farmhouse and experienced financial difficulties. 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. I didn't remember. This is an example of why we need to share our blessings with others. Don't keep God's work a secret!

Thanks to God for keeping us warm so many years ago. There are two coal stories for my children learn. Pretty cool!

## 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!

## St. Patrick's Day

When I was in high school, my mom left the house for work about an hour before my sister and I went to 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 about his deviation from his normal routine. He planned on visiting his parents. That was very strange. I hadn't heard my parents talking about this. Visits with my grandparents were scheduled approximately two weeks to a month in advance. Punctuality was expected. It was never a possibility that you could arrive sometime in the morning or afternoon. It was like an appointment. You arrived during the expected time frame. Anything more than ten minutes late or early needed a good explanation.

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, he said that he thought he would surprise them. Surprise them? He was surprising the whole family! He didn't even tell my mom. I thought my dad was acting weird. To me, it didn't seem like a good idea. I was pretty sure that he was going to get "in trouble."

My sister and I went to school. My dad left for his unannounced 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 composed himself enough to safely continue. When he arrived at my grandparents' home, he found that his dad had died while putting on his boots.

Something prompted my dad to wake up and to do something that went against the 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 because he had been called by a higher power. The Holy Spirit guided him. Any logical thinking would have interfered. A physical call would have probably resulted in discouragement because of the short notice. From my grandma's limited perspective, there would be no reason for such an impromptu visit. Painful as it was, he could comfort his mother in her time of great loss because of his automatic response to "go surprise them."

We need to follow the Holy Spirit's tug. It is a gift from God to be able to feel the connection that goes beyond our understanding. It is not logical or of this physical world. It is, however, very real. Being led by the Holy Spirit 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. It helped to explain how he learned about God.

Around 1960, my dad was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Newark Jr. High School. He wanted God to prove Himself to be real. He thought of a deal so that God could prove His existence. If my dad faithfully trained very hard in track for about one year, God would prove His existence to my dad by putting him on the front page of the Newark newspaper. It would have been very unlikely for this to happen. Making the front page of the sports section would have been a feat, but it would have still been within the realm of possibilities if my dad would have performed flawlessly. My dad was realistic and believed that the only way for him to be recognized on the front page was through an extreme 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.

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 upcoming 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. In disbelief, my dad still had hopes of competing. He wanted God to be real. How was God supposed to prove that He was 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 and missing an important race be good things? These are questions for those with limited knowledge.

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 experience with me, he exclaimed, "Do not test the Lord your God!"

I have included the second part of this story even though I personally wasn't alive to witness it because I observed the effect of the experience through my dad's beliefs and actions. When faced with disappointment and hardship, he grew closer to God. God's ways are always higher than our ways because He can see how all the puzzle pieces fit together.

For some, it may be difficult to believe that God cares about one person's feelings or needs living in the world in the present day. 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 not true! God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He can help cross the sea on dry land, organize front page news, and deliver coal. People need to know about God's

involvement in “current events.” Use your pain and joy to tell others about the one true living God. We can do this through our personal testimonies.

## The Seagull

Brent and I met when I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, but we did not consider ourselves to be a couple until my 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. We were opposites in most ways, but we had a few simple characteristics that held us together in a way that nobody else really seemed to understand. Looking back, I can see their perspectives. We were young. The odds were against us. We appeared to be opposites. Where I was weak, he was strong and vice versa. That didn't help things with my parents though. They had trouble seeing the strengths between us.

One day, 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 trash that couldn't be burnt because it was metal.

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. He softened his heart towards my young boyfriend and future husband. My dad loved seagulls. We did not know this. Having a piece of trash salvaged and turned into something that he could appreciate touched his heart.

We all have experiences that leave us feeling broken, insignificant, mistreated or unworthy. God transforms us as we walk with Him and restores us back to the beautiful creature He designed for us.

## Take Them Away

About thirty years ago, when I was a teen, I used to have a very vivid, reoccurring, disturbing dream. It woke me five to ten times. I always woke up with overwhelming sadness, many times sobbing uncontrollably. I cried to the point of needing to catch my breath. It felt like my heart had been stabbed. I tried to analyze its meaning. The content and my distraught feelings are as clear as yesterday's memories.

In my dream, I approached my home as I would have 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 the traffic on the main road. As a teen, there were many times I walked from my home to the mailboxes. I would get the mail, if we had any, and return.

My dream started near the mailboxes. I went toward my house as if I had just checked the mail. When I came 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 puzzled that I had not previously noticed its presence. In my young mind, I lived with my parents. I should have noticed the unusual sight the moment I opened the front door. In all my analyzing, it never occurred to me that it might be a glimpse into the future. I didn't like the ambulance dreams.

If this dream was from God, I didn't want it. I did not like waking up sad. I was convinced that God was responsible. I asked God not to give me any more dreams. Why would God have given me something that made me sad? It didn't make any sense. God granted my request. For more than a decade, I didn't remember any dreams.

## 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.)

## The Lincoln Memorial

The first vacation Brent and I took was about a year after we were married. We still had very limited funds, but we saved and planned for a quick trip to Washington DC, the National Aquarium in Baltimore and then finally to the beach. We were to be gone for 3 days and 2 nights.

We were country bumpkins. The traffic in Washington DC was terrible. We wanted to see the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and surrounding historical attractions. We visited the Washington Monument. Since it was our first vacation, I wanted to buy a souvenir. Someone was selling T-shirts. Perfect. I bought two. One, I remember very clearly. It had a picture of the earth and LOVE was written under it. I was quite happy. They were a bargain. Now, I had something to remember my trip that was also useful. The shirts were put in a small bag so that they were easy to carry. The car was parked far away, so we continued our sightseeing with our new purchases.

Next, we walked to the Lincoln Memorial. The 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 very nice picture of me sitting on the steps of the memorial. We continued our explorations and stood looking with wonder at the giant statue of President Lincoln. We continued our day and finally, with tired feet, made our way back to the car.

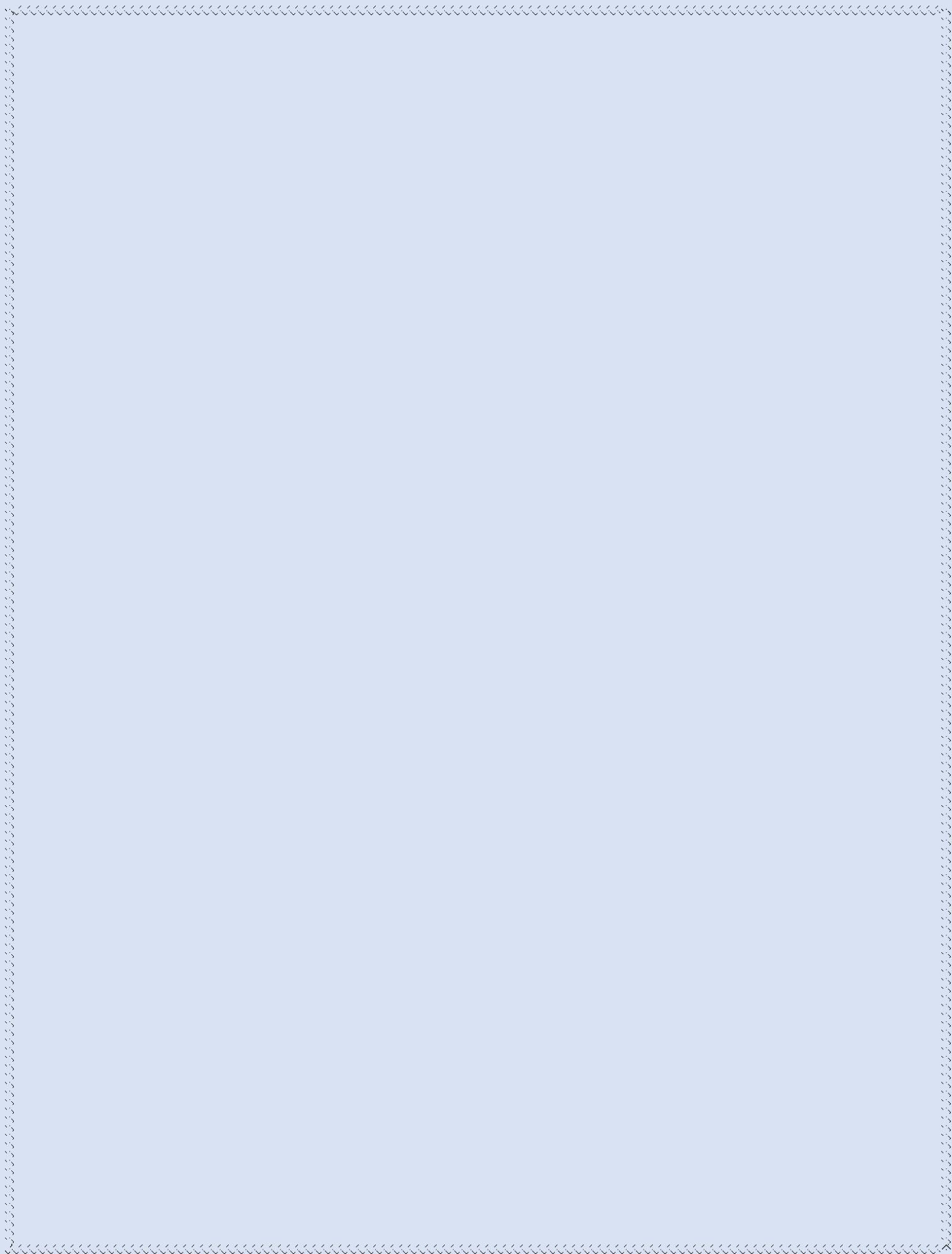
Problem! I did not have my purse with me! Problem! I had all our money with me in my purse. Problem! The keys to the car were also in my purse. I started to go into panic mode. We had no money, no way to start our car, and it was at the end of our day. Places would be closing soon. Then we would be stuck in DC at night! I felt so stupid, like a simple tourist who must have unknowingly fallen into a thief's trap.

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 taken just my wallet. We hoped that they may have ditched my purse and that we would be able to recover the keys to the car. Maybe, if we were lucky, I might even get my driver's license back. I did not have any credit cards or banking cards... just cash. I figured that the cash was long gone.

As we were making 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 gave it to the people in the office that is inside the memorial. He found my purse on the steps to the memorial?!? Did I pick up my bag of souvenirs and think that I had all my belongings because I was used to carrying one thing and was still carrying one thing? Ouch! Was this all my fault? Double ouch! I was so shocked and so thankful. I asked if we could take his picture. I didn't want to forget this nice man who had saved my purse! He seemed surprised and a bit awkward at my enthusiasm, but he gave me a giant smile. To this day, I can't look at that picture without smiling.

With a click of the camera and a quick "Thank you!" we ran off to the memorial, hoping to reach the little office before it closed. We found the office. I think I got the words, "I lost my..." from my mouth and the person in the office handed me my purse. There was no claiming process. They simply knew it was mine and handed it over. (In hindsight, they probably saw my Driver's License and recognized me.) I was so relieved. I walked away before stopping to look in my purse.

Not one thing was missing from my purse. As we walked back to the car at dusk, I was very grateful to be leaving DC and also very humbled. I think I had some angels working double time, thinking "Oh Ty..." We continued on our trip with no other potentially catastrophic happenings.



## 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. I had done that. 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. 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 that we had been storing for two years. (In retrospect, that stuff wasn't worth the storage fees either.) 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. 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 were happy to find 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 me correctly, this story takes place in 1998. Yes, in 1998, \$650 was still a cheap price for an RV. We invested about another \$150 in maintenance and updating its visual appeal. 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 is 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 sentimental attachment. We kept most of Roman's toys, small things that we used frequently and memorabilia. Brent made the interior much more pleasant and did mechanical maintenance to make sure that the RV was in the best possible condition.

We had a tight schedule. I was planning to attend a job fair in South Carolina. Two days after that, I had an interview scheduled in Cleveland. I had a week until the job fair. 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 on stopping to drop off the RV at my parents' house before driving our car south to the job fair. We budgeted five days. From Ohio, we had two days to drive and to be ready for unknown potential interviews.

Our plan was for the three of us to ride in the RV together, hauling the car behind us. I had never driven long distances before. We liked spending time together and I was certainly not an experienced city driver. There were several big cities that were 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 that could be folded to fit into a glove compartment.) Back in the old days, arriving at a destination 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 the next target location or road.

I think that 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 perform 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 would drive the car and follow Brent. It wasn't ideal, but it was the right choice. We would drive for awhile and at night we would sleep in the RV. 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 would drive in the morning and evenings when it was cooler outside. It was the first time that we were using the headlights for an extended time on the RV. 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.

Brent pulled over and explained the situation to me. We would rest for the night. He had seen an auto parts store in the little town where we stopped to talk. In the morning, he would go and get a new alternator for the RV and change it. Roman went to sleep, peacefully unaware of the transportation issues. 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 that we had the toolbox with us. I held the flashlight.

Once the alternator was removed, I was out like a light. Holding the 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, far from our destination that I was able to sleep. I snuggled next to Roman. Brent wanted to look at something else under the hood.

I woke up to Brent saying, "Wake up. Let's go." I was confused. The sun wasn't up yet. I didn't think that an auto parts store would be open so early. The store

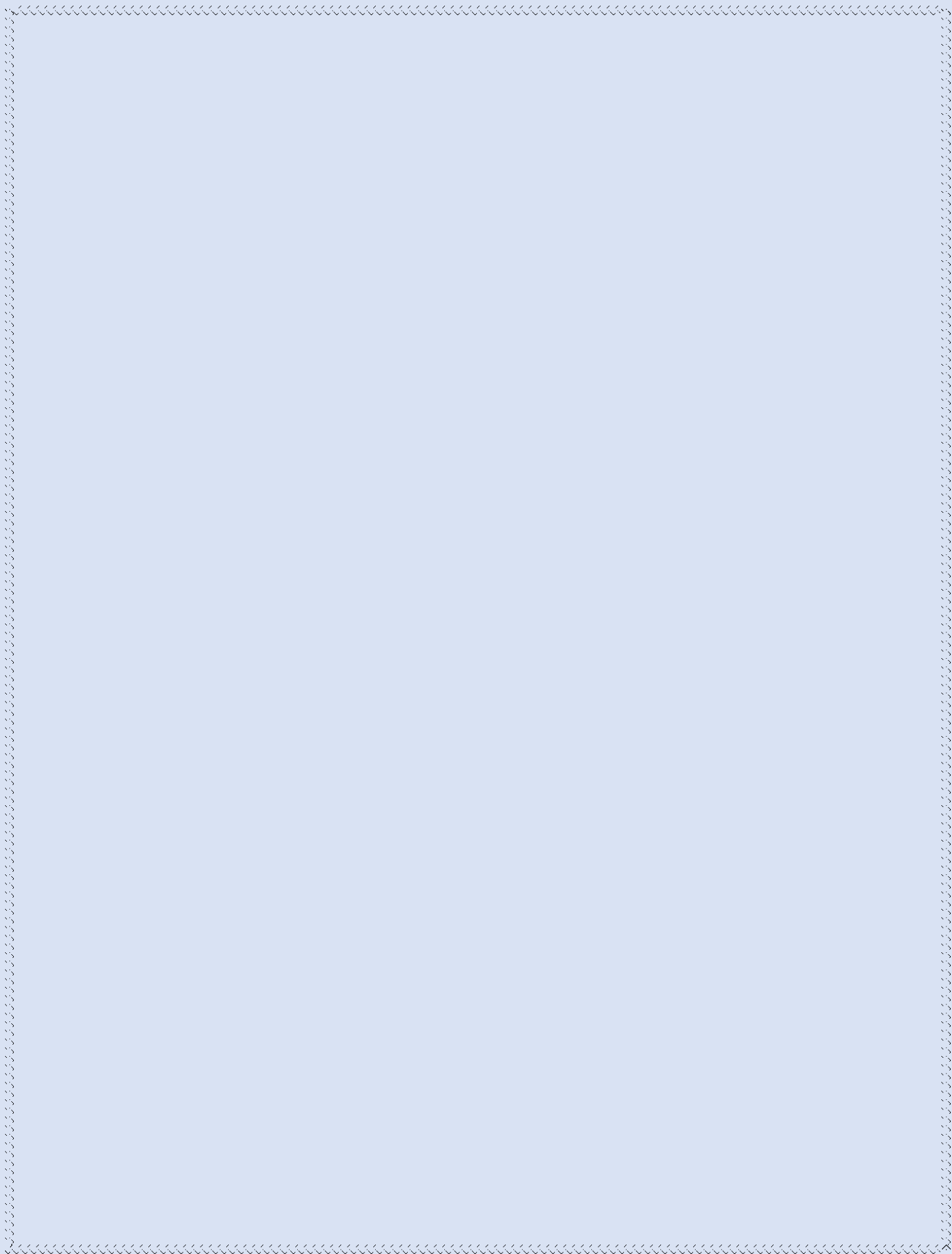


hadn't opened yet. Brent explained. He stayed awake, tore the alternator apart, rebuilt the alternator, and installed the alternator while Roman and I slept. All of that without my flashlight holding assistance! I knew Brent was good at fixing stuff, but that one caught me off guard. Plus, I was happy that we didn't have to spend the money on an alternator. Brent's late night of working also 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.

I am happy to report that we made it safely back to Ohio. This was the first time that Brent had driven unfamiliar roads as both the navigator and the driver. There was one time in a big city when he changed lanes suddenly. I was afraid that I wasn't going to be able to change lanes fast enough and would get separated from him. Then I would have no idea of where to go. Thanks to God, that did not happen. It was a close call. My little chatterbox in the backseat never noticed the near mishap.

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

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 wouldn't move. To the best of my knowledge, the transmission went out. We literally took 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 Ethyl's health, though, was failing. 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. She even smiled lovingly at her husband. Normally, she liked to complain to him. Her complaint of the day was that the staff wouldn't open the windows. We were on about the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 was planning 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 didn't see the house indicated on my invitation. I didn't know the phone number of my destination. I was frustrated. I thought to myself that I am not driving four hours for nothing. So, I decided to drive another half an hour to go and visit Brent's grandma again.

Grandma Ethyl was surprised and happy to see me. 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 had a secret. We were going to have another baby. I told Grandma the news during our visit. I had a feeling that she wouldn't go blabbing to anyone. A few days later, Jesus was able to take her home. I was probably the last of the family to talk to her. I am grateful for not being able to find the baby shower. I wouldn't normally have driven five hours to visit her that weekend. God changed lemons into lemonade. We had a wonderful visit. God had a more precious moment in store for me that day.

## The 4K House

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. Spreading a message of hope, I had a secret mission. 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 of scenery. I craved a more positive work and living environment. We lived in a big apartment complex. Outwardly, it was a nice place to live, but neighbors were increasingly disrespectful. Our family needed a calmer neighborhood. We were expecting our second child. Brent and I talked about it. He 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. Convinced that if we could find a house that we could afford in a more peaceful place, we would be able to find an income to sustain us. We looked all over. Focused 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 and went inside. He 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. Electrical wiring had been updated within the past 25 years. The core of the house was meant to last.

Unfortunately, it now had battle wounds from years of harsh and neglectful living, leaving the home in an undesirable condition. 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. The level of filth to describe it would take too many words and is not the focus of my story. We were looking for a way out of our situation... free from renting. With our hard work, improvements were imagined.

You had to look past the muck. It was the muck of the “stuff,” however, that made the house appraised so low. Nobody with \$4,000 cash wanted to do the work themselves. They would hire someone else to clean, increasing their investment. People who would have wanted the home, 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. We needed to be humble. To most people, our modern apartment was much more desirable.

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. With those two things gone, 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 new owners of our first home. 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!

Thinking back, I see how a house compares 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 great potential. Sometimes, with years of neglect or rough living, someone may appear to be less valuable. They may need a lot of help. People, like houses, in good condition and not needing extra attention are easy to enjoy. Human nature teaches us to distance ourselves from challenging individuals. They require extra work and attention. Our own emotions and time investments are at risk. God says that we can’t just love the easy ones. In God’s eyes, we are equals. Our challenge is to love all. God help us!

## 9 Pounds 8 Ounces

When Brent and I realized that we were going to have another baby, we immediately started to search for midwives in the area. We found Brenda. She was perfect for us. Brenda was also expecting a child about a month before I was due and planned for her own home birth. Brenda already had another client who was due about two weeks after me. She was confident that this would not 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 ready for the baby to come sooner... not later, as I believe almost all women would agree who have been overdue. I felt as if I had 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, but had not moved into it yet. My husband and his brother were digging a ditch for the sewer pipe that needed to be replaced. Stepping out for a bite to eat, I noticed contractions and started timing them. They were about five minutes apart. I went back to the house and shared the news. With an hour's drive ahead of us, we left quickly.

Brent, Roman and I 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. She wanted to know the time between the contractions. They were at about three minutes apart. Brenda lived about an hour away. She said that she would be there soon. Unaware of the excitement about to unfold, Roman went to sleep.

When Brenda arrived, she brought one of her older daughters to watch her own newborn and her apprentice. The newborn would need fed at some point. Brenda watched to see how much I was struggling through the contractions. She 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 and walls as I desired.

My water never broke. Brenda asked if I wanted her to break my water or if I wanted to wait for it to be broken naturally. She said that once the 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 the ice chips and reminders to breathe. 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 followed instructions. 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, medication, 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 got a call from her other client who was expecting her first child saying that she was in labor. The timing of this client's contractions was monitored while the apprentice traveled to Brenda's home. While waiting for the apprentice to arrive, I called saying 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 if I wanted to start the delivery process. She did not tell me of the other client in labor until I was resting and they were ready to go. Brenda was not 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 to be done, but renting was now in the past. We just had one little problem... a lack of money and 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 a 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 finances required something more reliable. Personal satisfaction with the job was a luxury we couldn't afford. A random retail job was not 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, a call resulted in a scheduled interview time 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 teaching experience with that exact grade level. The other job was for an alternative education teacher. A teacher was needed to support in school suspensions and to reduce out of 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. There were 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.

A message was respectfully left notifying K Mart that I had a scheduling conflict and wouldn't be able to attend the interview. The other interview resulted in a job offer for the alternative education teaching position. Because of my prior experiences, I had a much wider perspective on deviant behavior and how to intervene to prevent future classroom disturbances. The teachers at the little rural school had no idea how bad behavior could be. To me, there was a huge difference between throwing mashed potatoes at a friend and stealing a lollipop from the hand of a Kindergartener. Most of my students that year just needed a little redirection and accountability.

As the alternative education teacher, no preparation time was required outside of the school day. As a first grade teacher, numerous hours would have been spent outside of the school day working. My little one was just three months old. In hindsight, the alternative education job was much better for me. God gave me more time to spend with my own family.

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

Thank you, Jesus for opening the door for me. For 19 years, my classroom remained my home away from home. Now, I am left wondering. Where is the next door? When will it open? What will it look like? Faith and hope give me encouragement. Love will grow.

## The Pirate Ship

This is another tough topic for me to talk about. This experience happened about eighteen years ago. I have only shared it with my immediate family in the last fifteen years. With my new philosophy of “no fear, just love” I have started to tell it to others also.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July was approaching. The country was getting ready to celebrate. My neighbor, the one who consumed 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 lots of alcohol. 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 understand 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 he said my mom would need to be doing the laundry. I didn’t care if she was working on laundry. He said it would be OK, but reminded me again 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 working on 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. It was a perfect way

for us to completely cool off before visiting my parents. Because Isaiah was not quite a year 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 still had not been completely remodeled. 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 given moment and deliberately planted it in my head as a time not to be forgotten. I just assumed that I would always remember. On the opposite spectrum of the emotional scale, we remember times of great sadness or shocking news. 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 and when the planes hit the towers. In times of great disbelief, you don't vow not to forget. You just don't. It just happens. Yet, there I was, sitting in a little pool several inches deep vowing to 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 of my head. The command 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. It was a command.

There was no arguing. The decision was not for me to make. I needed to obey. OK. I could spend more time in the pool. It didn't really matter to me. 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.

If something like this ever happens to you, take notice. It is a sign...

## The Ambulance

Cool and refreshed from our swim, I went to my parents' house with the boys. As I drove up my parents' driveway, my dream that would wake me when I was a teenager suddenly became my reality. Instantly, I knew why I had been so sad in my dream. I knew that I had lost my dad before I even ran past the ambulance. The moment I saw it, I parked, unbuckled my son from his car seat, and ran to the front door of the house.

Once inside, I saw numerous EMT's in the living room. 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. My 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 her, "Why? What would be the point? He's not there." I realized that I did not want to remember his lifeless body. I wanted to remember his eternal spirit. I wanted to remember him alive, talking on the phone, and checking on me as I played in a little pool and he began his next and greatest adventure. Luckily, my mom completely understood my feelings.

As his flesh had failed him, his spirit soared. My mom reminded me that we never know when these things are going to happen. My dad was not sad. He was finally free! He knew Jesus was waiting for him. He was ready to celebrate with awe on 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 me if I could see how the dreams were helpful to me. Helpful? I had never thought of them from that perspective. I could only see the sadness. I didn't understand that God was trying to prepare me for the loss of my loved one leaving the physical realm. When Mr. Hallberg



asked me the question, I needed time to think about it before I could reply. With reflection, now I can easily say that it was rather obvious. God was trying to ease the pain He knew that I would later experience. I cried many tears that day, week, and months to follow. I never cried for my dad. He was and is surrounded by perfect love. I cried for my own loss.

Don't worry. I asked God for forgiveness. Even before I could see how the dreams were to help me, I told God that I was sorry for being ungrateful and for not wanting His gift. God has given me more glimpses into my future. In my dreams I'm in an unfamiliar place. It is only when I see these places in real life, that I perk up, try to use my spiritual eyes and think to myself, "What is significant here? Why would I have been shown this place at this moment?" From what I can tell, it is to encourage me along the way... to give me hope and faith for when life may seem tough or unreasonable.

Because I can directly relate the ambulance dreams to the physical death of my dad's body, I have greater spiritual eyesight and faith when I'm given another dream. When I face hardships, I can remember what God has shown me. The physical reality will eventually come around to match the spiritual. I have been blessed with hope, when others would have none. I'm not special. The Holy Spirit is available to all of us. That is special.