

JANUARY 2016:

01/01 - *As I look forward to the coming year, I know that whatever God throws my way I will never grow weary of doing good for others. For when the season is right I know I will reap the fruits of His Glory if I do not give up. No matter how long, strenuous and painstaking the road or trials are in my life, I know that there is always a new season ahead, a season of new beginnings.*

As believers, we need to be incessantly grateful and continually thankful to God even when our future seems unclear. We must stay firmly planted in our Faith so we will never wither; but always prosper and produce good fruit.

I will never stop believing and growing in my journey and walk in Faith. And although I may never fully understand what God's intentions are for me, I will always do my absolute best with where He has placed me right now. Only then will I learn all there is to learn about this loving and merciful God that loved me so much, that he sent His only begotten Son to suffer and die on the cross for the sins of all mankind so that we may recognize the fulfillment of a promise foretold by our heavenly father; a promise of a Savior who would come into this world to sacrifice himself for the sins of all mankind so that we could be born again as children of God, regain a personal, loving relationship with our heavenly father and be filled with His spirit to live a life for HIS GLORY!

01/03 - *Today marks the final day of this years "Check-Out Hunger Campaign"; a community-wide scannable coupon promotion sponsored by the Retail Grocers' Association in collaboration with the Harvesters Community Food Network. The program raised over \$450,000 last year that provided the community with over 1,350,000 meals.*

As the campaign comes to a close, I was tasked with removing all campaign materials for my assigned store and giving thanks to the store for their participation. - I am truly blessed to be have played a small part of this wonderful campaign to help provide food to those in my community who struggle daily with providing food to their families.

01/17 - *it's amazing how the Lord works in our lives. For even when we fail, He is there to catch us and remind us that there is hope in our Faith in Him...*

In this fallen world it is sometimes difficult to remain at peace in our spiritual relationship with our Heavenly father...the overwhelming pressure of work and family life sometimes takes a toll, and we begin to lose sight of the gifts and blessings that God has given us. We try to carry the heavy burdens of our lives on our own, and we begin to lose site of our purpose in life, which is meant to bring Glory to His name through our words and actions.

But Jesus offers us this promise of Hope...

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

An so it is, that no matter what we face today, Jesus is our hope. Even if we're weak and our hope is small, He has come to give us a bright picture of tomorrow, and in that we can find rest for our weary souls.

01/23 - *The other day I came down with the flu. Something that I'm not accustomed to, as I rarely get sick and cannot remember the last time I'd gotten the flu.*

But there I was, hit like a ton of bricks without warning, and suddenly finding myself unable to get out of bed for 3 days as the writhing aches and pains of my joints, and the hot and cold sweats left me incapable of sleeping, eating or even getting out of bed. It was a flu like no other that I'd ever experienced in my life.

But something happened during those 3 days that left me wondering if indeed GOD's hand was again at work in my life...

You see as I laid bed unable to sleep from the aches the ravished my body, I found myself falling into dreamlike states, where various parts of my life flashed through my subconscious mind as if I was thumbing through my life on a Rolodex (not the wrist watch, but the old fashioned desktop card index used to record names, addresses, telephone numbers etc...).

But for each index card of my life that was pulled out before me it was more than just a brief glimpse of that time of my life...it was as if I was feeling all the emotions, seeing all the sights and experiencing all the smells of that moment in my life as if I were actually reliving that moment in my life all over again...it was sort of like the same feeling you get when you hear a song or music from your youth and it brings you back to a specific time in your life when you can remember exactly what was going on, who you were with etc..., but it was occurring over and over again for every part of my life, like my life was being played on a jukebox for me to hear and see. But even more than that, it was as if I was seeing it from GOD's perspective as well, as if He were showing me how He was present and part of each of these experiences in my life!

As I pondered this most unusual experience, I begin to think about the many dreams and visions of Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, and how GOD used these dream-like visions to provide insight and wisdom to fulfill His purpose for those He chose to reveal His messages.

But what did my dreams mean? Was it just a playing of my mind during a time when my body was trying to expel and heal the flu like virus that plagued my body? or was is something more profound than that?

As I prayed and asked GOD to reveal to me the meaning and purpose of this experience, I did not get the profound and immediate response that I somehow expected. But what I do know is

that I came away with a renewed sense of understanding about all the times in my life that my heavenly father was there for me, holding my hand and guiding me through every experience in my life as reflected in those dreams so that His purpose for me would be fulfilled.

As I continue down this path and journey in Faith I know not what GOD has in store for me, but I do know that He has a plan and purpose for those who trust in Him, and love Him with all their heart and soul.

I also believe the He has revealed to me (through these dreams/visions) that His purpose for me was written long before I was born, and will continue to be fulfilled because of my Faith in HIM!

FEBRUARY 2016:

02/05 - *Throughout Jesus's early ministry there are dozens of examples of the healing power of Faith...The blind, the sick and even the dead were brought back to life because of the Faith of the recipients, and Jesus himself proclaims how nothing is impossible if we just have Faith.*

And so it is today that I want to share my own personal testimony of how the healing power of Faith has touched my life...for during my darkest hours of personal pain and strife, Jesus has always been there for me, answering my prayers for healing, comfort and peace. And just today, He has answered my earnest prayers for the healing of my little dog whose been struggling recently with illness...

THANK YOU LORD for hearing my prayers of mercy and healing. For through you all things are possible!

02/06 - *Today I feel compelled to share a testimony from one of my favorite bloggers who consistently proclaims her love for Christ by embracing God's grace through good times and bad.*

Her testimony hit home for me during a time when I was dealing with the struggles of my loved ones and the overwhelming feeling of not being able to "fix it". But it was her personal words of encouragement and wisdom that helped me to realize that God alone must be our strength!

And she writes:

"Self-sufficiency is a lie. Pride goes before the fall (Proverbs 16:18). Take off your masked pretense of strength and put on the real thing. Let God be your strength. Let Him fight your battles and win the war. It's the only way to find wholeness in a broken world. It's the only way to defeat a foe you cannot see. It's the only way to receive all God has for us in this life and the next.

Follow Him where He leads. You will get dusty dirty feet on the road, but in Him you will always find safe shelter. In Him, you are already the victor.

Be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. (Ephesians 6:10-12)

Let God be your strength. Let Him fight your battles and win the war. In Him, you are already the victor."

Thank you Julie for sharing your journey of Faith and helping us to understand how the power of Faith can change our lives - <http://www.juliesunne.com/most-important-lesson-too-weak/>

MARCH 2016:

03/13 - *Living a life in Faith is an amazing thing. For it is because of our Faith in Jesus Christ that we are given Hope through the promise of Salvation. And with Salvation comes a new spirit filled life that allows us to once again have a personal and loving relationship with our Creator.*

But living a life in Faith can be difficult, and one of these difficulties is learning to being patient with God's plan and purpose for us.

Growing up, I was introduced to the Christian Faith at an early age, and in those days one of the lessons that I learned was that "God has a plan and a purpose for each of us". However, in a world that is so focused on power, position and pride, where everyday we are constantly being bombarded with the pressure to fit in with society and the world around us, it becomes very difficult sometimes to be patient and recognize just how God is working in our lives to fulfill His purpose for us.

It becomes even more difficult when everyday we feel like we are trying our best to live our lives in ways that we believe are pleasing to our heavenly father; we study our Bible, we pray, we work hard to share our love of God and His message of hope with others, we set goals and make plans for our lives, yet at times we are still left feeling empty and unfulfilled inside because the plans and dreams we visualize or believe were part of God's plan for us do not come to fruition quite like we want them to. Eventually this pressure can lead us to become frustrated, and we start to become impatient with waiting for God to show us His plan for our lives.

HOWEVER, We must understand that God allows things to happen (or not happen) in our lives for His reasons, whether or not we understand them or not we must remember that God is good, just, loving, and merciful. Often time's things happen to us that we simply cannot understand. But instead of doubting God's goodness, our reaction should be to trust in Him, praise Him and give thanks for what we do have.

And so it is today, as I sit here struggling with the challenges and difficulties of my loved ones that I am reminded that God DOES have a plan for each of us, and when we put our complete trust in the Him and lean not on our own understanding we will recognize that God's gift of Grace is sufficient..For it is His power that is made perfect in our weakness, and when we open our eyes and heart to God and accept His Grace, we will understand that the only way to safely

navigate life in this world is to keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, not on ourselves or the circumstances or expectations of the world around us. For it is through our Faith in Christ that paves "the way" to our heavenly father who will help us complete our journey in this life, and eventually fulfill His purpose for us if we just TRUST IN HIM, stay Patient and Endure!

3/25 - *Suffering in a fallen world. You know the days I mean..*

The days of caring for a sick or aging parent while the world around you seems to be falling apart

The days of plodding through routine and relatively meaningless work for a company whose main objective is rising stock prices.

The days of teaching a child who refuses to learn from their mistakes, and accept the gift of grace.

The days of loving someone God has placed in your life whose needs and demands are never satisfied.

The days of praying without seeing an answer.

But these disappointments and suffering are nothing compared to that which our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had to endure...

For it is on this day (Good Friday) that we recognize the suffering and the most important act of love and sacrifice that anyone has ever seen; the day our Lord and Savior was crucified on the cross for us, absorbing our sins, and lighting our path back to the loving arms of our creator. For it was through this selfless act of mercy, love and grace that we find redemption and hope.

Thank you JESUS for your sacrifice and the suffering you had to endure, for it makes our suffering seem so small.

03/27 - *HE HAS RISEN!*

The most prophetic and profound words in the Christian Faith..For it is on this Easter Day that we celebrate and recognize the One and only Jesus Christ, whose ultimate sacrifice ripped open the vail of the Holiest of Holy's to reveal God's power and glory to all, giving light where there was only darkness, and salvation to all those who believe in His death and resurrection as the ultimate atonement for ours sins.

Remember..

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"

And so on this holiest of holy days, let us take time to recognize the ultimate gift of love and grace that our heavenly father has given us, and the ultimate sacrifice offered for us through our Lord and Savior - JESUS CHRIST!

APRIL 2016:

4/09 - Faith in Action; a testament to our belief in the risen Christ, which is exemplified in our actions...

But how do we maintain our Faith in this often difficult and fallen world in which we live?

Recently I was reading a post from one of my favorite bloggers, whose words of encouragement often sparks a light in my heart, compelling me to expand on her testimonies to reveal my own heartfelt testimony of how Faith continues to impact my life.

In her blog she talks about how our willingness to trust in God through Faith often gets overshadowed by the chaos and weariness of life, and she highlights her own personal struggles to do so...something that I think all of us can relate to.

She then points out Biblical references to many of Jesus's faithful followers, who in spite of their own human reasoning and understanding, submitted in Faith to do as they were asked to do, and how it is these men and women of great Faith who represent true examples of Faith in Action.

So how do we become like these men and women of great Faith that she refers to in the Bible?

To begin with, we must understand that life will always be filled with difficulties and temptations, but at the end of the day, we all have a choice...we can try and take on the world on our own, with its struggles, pain and difficulties, OR we can surrender ourselves in our weakness to the risen Christ and trust in Faith that what he has promised us will actually happen.

And if we choose to surrender our burdens and our lives to Christ, we will begin to feel a sense of peace and comfort that can only come from Faith.

Now I'm not saying this is an easy thing to do, and it requires a lot of work to become mature enough in our Faith to be able to consistently see and react to every difficult situation life throws our way with true spiritual clarity. But through constant Bible study, prayer and building our relationship with our heavenly father, we are able to understand more and more each day that "God's grace is sufficient", and if we continue to live our lives for the Glory of our heavenly father then we will have finally achieved true Faith in Action!

04/30 - Everyday is an opportunity to embrace God's gift of grace, to reach out to Him in humility and gratitude for the blessings He has given us through Faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Yet, in our daily lives we often do not embrace this simple yet empowering opportunity that has the power to carry us through each day and give purpose and meaning to our lives... instead, we seek to find love and acceptance from our relationships with others, or happiness in the material things of this world, and we carry our personal struggles (that we think no one else understands) with us and wonder why we feel so alone and unhappy when the true path to happiness is in our relationship with our heavenly father through Faith.

Since the beginning of time mankind has struggled with finding and understanding the meaning

and purpose of our existence, and I must admit it's hard sometimes to understand why things happen to us that seem to have no rhyme or reason.

But I believe that if we truly want to find meaning and purpose to our lives and reach our full potential we must embrace the concept of HOPE, And for me, there is no greater message of HOPE than that which comes through Faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who came into this world to serve, teach and become the ultimate example of love for all humankind by sacrificing himself for the sins of all humankind so that we could be born again as children of God to live a life for His glory.

And so it is on this day that I give thanks and praise to God's gift of grace, and reach out to Him in humility and gratitude for the blessings He has given me through Faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Your Grace is sufficient to get me through this day.

MAY 2016:

05/21 - *Four years ago I wrote an on article on the difficulties of "Being Patient with GOD's Plan", and as I sit here today on the verge of yet another cross road in my life, I find myself reaching out in my struggles to understand just how I will get through this most difficult time..*

And so it is today, that I reflect back on those heartfelt words written in earnest four years ago, to find hope and comfort during this time of need...

Living a life in Faith is an amazing thing. For it is because of our Faith in Jesus Christ that we are given Hope through the promise of Salvation, and with Salvation comes a new spirit filled life that allows us to have a personal and loving relationship with our Creator.

But living a life in Faith can be difficult at times, and one of these difficulties is learning to being patient with God's plan and purpose for us.

Growing up, I was introduced to the Christian Faith at an early age, and in those days one of the lessons that I learned was that "God has a plan and a purpose for each of us". However, in a world that is so focused on power, position and pride, where everyday we are constantly being bombarded with the pressure to fit in with society and the world around us, it becomes very difficult sometimes to be patient and recognize just how God is working in our lives to fulfill His purpose for us.

It becomes even more difficult when everyday we feel like we are trying our best to live our lives in ways that we believe are pleasing to our heavenly father; we study our Bible, we pray, we work hard to share our love of God and His message of hope with others, we set goals and make plans for our lives, yet at times we are still left feeling empty and unfulfilled inside because the plans and dreams we visualize or believe were part of God's plan for us do not come to fruition quite like we want them to. Eventually this pressure can lead us to become frustrated, and we start to become impatient with waiting for God to show us His plan for our lives.

In my journey to discover the answer of how to deal with this difficulty, I have found that the

reality is that we don't really know how God will use us to fulfill His purpose. Even though God made us in His own image, we do not possess the divine wisdom of our creator, nor do our plans always align with His. Remember we are talking about the creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in it! We are like grains of sand on the shores of an infinite universe, a universe that was made with a blink of an eye by our creator, a creator who knows every hair on our heads and takes the time to know each and everyone of us because He loves us.

We must understand that God allows things to happen (or not happen) in our lives for His reasons, whether or not we understand them or not we must remember that God is good, just, loving, and merciful. Often time's things happen to us that we simply cannot understand. However, instead of doubting God's goodness, our reaction should be to trust in Him, praise Him and give thanks for what we do have.

God DOES have a plan for each of us, and when we put our complete trust in the Him and lean not on our own understanding we will recognize that God's gift of Grace is sufficient, for it is His power that is made perfect in our weakness, and when we open our eyes and heart to God and accept His Grace, we will understand that the only way to safely navigate life in this world is to keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, not on ourselves or the circumstances or expectations of the world around us. For it is through our Faith in Christ that paves "the way" to our heavenly father who will help us complete our journey and eventually fulfill His purpose for us if we just stay patient and endure.

JUNE 2016:

06/19 - *Stormy days. You know those days when the wind blows in, the skies turns gray and the clouds release a torrent of rain as violent winds leave a path of destruction in its wake.*

Yet, after every storm the sun reveals itself once again, the rains absorb to produce nourishment and food for every living creature, and the rebuilding of nature and our lives begins...this is the cycle of life on earth by which our creator designed it to be.

Our spiritual lives are like this too...one day it's nice and sunny with God's light shining on us and everything seemingly going our way, the next thing we know our lives are hit with the storms of life leaving us to take shelter as we wait and worry whether we have the strength to "weather the storm" and deal with the destruction that's left behind.

But just like in nature, it's the storms in our life that produce the nourishment of our spirit that allows our relationship with our heavenly father to grow if we just learn to trust in faith that the greater good will always prevail, even when we don't always understand how or why. This is the essence and nature of Faith!

And so it is today that I recognize and commit my life to my Lord and Savior; the Christ Jesus, who I know will always be there for me through every storm (big or small), holding my hand and carrying my burdens so that I will not be broken or destroyed, but will produce and exemplify all things for the greater good and glory of our heavenly father - AMEN

JULY 2016:

07/10 - *Religious wars...we've read about them throughout history, and they're apart of our daily news even today.*

But just what is Religion, and why is it the subject of so much divisiveness and controversy?

To begin with, we must understand just what Religion is...

Religion is an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods.

With an estimated 4,200 different Religions in existence in the world today, it is no wonder that the clash of Religions is so prevalent! In addition, many Religions set themselves apart from others with acts of self-righteousness, judgement, and even death to those who do not conform to their Religious beliefs and practices.

This is where I believe the Christian Faith differs from all other religions (at least it should) ...

You see, Christianity is a religion in the sense that the Church was meant to be a center piece for believers to organize, worship and share their belief in Christ,..But true Christianity is really about having a personal relationship with God, it is about the acceptance of Gods grace that frees us from our sin through Faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, its about the total surrender of our lives to Jesus Christ so that our minds will be conformed to the passion and glorification of His ways; expressed in compassion, mercy, forgiveness and love for one another.

So you see, as Christians we are constantly at war, but this war is fought from within our hearts, and not with one another. Our job as Christians is to share Gods message of grace through Faith and not to judge or force others to conform, but to live our lives as examples by the way we live, and to bring glory and light to the One who gives us strength, hope and life!

AUGUST 2016:

08/02 - *Today we lost Mesha, our family pet. She was a 10 year old Black Lab who had been a part of our family since she was a pup.*

The loss of a loved one is a difficult thing..the suddenness of of not having your loved one there to talk to, to hold and share life's ups and downs with is painful, even when it's your pet.

I've never dealt with death very well..I think it goes back to my childhood when I first experienced the loss of 2 small kittens we had found alone in our neighborhood. We had taken them into our home to ween and care for until we could find a good home for them..I was 7 or 8 years old at the time, and I had taken it upon myself to personally take charge of their comfort, and had a deep sense of love and compassion for these helpless little creatures. But after feeding and playing with them all day, I decided to place them into a cooler like box so they could rest safely through the night, only to find out the next morning that they had died for lack of fresh air.

The pain of that first loss in my young life was like nothing I had experienced before. I had given so much of myself to care for these little animals, and had such high hopes that we could save them from the loss of their mother, only to see them taken away in the blink of an eye. Not to mention the guilt of knowing that I was some how the cause of their demise.

Since then, I've experienced many such losses in my life, and with each one bringing back the same pain and difficult challenges to overcome. But I have since learned that through Faith we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose <Romans 8:28>.

And even though I am deeply sadden by the loss of my walking partner, my protector and my friend, I find comfort and peace in knowing that despite all the difficult challenges we must face in this world, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loves us. —indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

RIP Blacky!

08/20 - *As I travel through this journey of Faith I've begun to notice that I'm writing less about the "good works" in my life and more about the struggles and difficulties.*

It's not that good works are no longer a part of my walk in Faith, but rather I've been spending most of my time dealing with my own personal struggles and those of my family and close friends, which has left very little time to commit to my writing and volunteer activities that I once enjoyed in my early walk in Faith.

But I believe in my heart that God has put me in this position to help me to mature in my Faith, and to recognize that although good works are important and a reflection of our Faith, there is a time and a place for everything when it comes to God's plan for us.

*Sometimes God allows the struggles and difficulties in our lives to help remind us of the most important part of our Faith; **OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER**, which was made possible through our Lord and Savior - Jesus Christ.*

And it's during these times of struggle and difficulty in our lives that we must learn to surrender ourselves to Him and pause in reflection to give our thanks and praise for the special gifts and blessings we often take for granted when we focus too much on our good works.

*You see God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so that His love and mercy could be shown to everyone. And it's only by placing our **FAITH** in Jesus Christ that we are made right with God. This is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.*

And as believers we must learn to accept that struggles, difficulties and trails will always be part of our everyday life (it's a guarantee). But how we react will determine if our Faith is real, or if we're just giving lip service.

As believers we must recognize that everything comes from God and exists by His power and is

intended for His glory. And in the end it is our relationship with God that will bring to light His glory.

Therefore we must constantly seek to strengthen our relationship with our heavenly father through worship and prayer, and always give thanks and praise no matter where we are in our spiritual walk

But most of all, we must learn to TRUST in God with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding. And when we do so, He will lift our burdens and direct our path towards His greater purpose for us.

So on this day I pray that our God, the source of all creation and hope, will fill each of us completely with joy and peace because of our Trust in Him. And may the confident hope that overflows in us through the power of the Holy Spirit and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ bring honor and glory to our His name. - AMEN

SEPTEMBER 2016:

09/10 - *Sharing the journey of faith...*

During a recent reading of testimonials (something I do daily to hear the experiences of other believers), I came across a certain testimonial whose words touched my heart and compelled me to share.

The testimonial centers on our responsibility to share God's message of hope, and our love for God with others, so that they too can hear and learn how to grow in grace and love for God. It spoke of this relationship as "mentoring", the concept of which is shared in scripture through many of Paul's letters to the early churches, and reflected in Paul's message that we are called to share the message of the kingdom of heaven with others, and help to build each other up in our faith in Christ.

The writer of the testimonial goes on to say that "even though we are all imperfect people, we are called to help other imperfect people to grow in the perfect love of Jesus. And like the training of a good soldier—effective mentoring requires discipline, sacrifice and suffering. If we wait to mentor until we feel perfectly qualified, we will never mentor. Those who influence the most feel the least qualified. They are vulnerable with their own struggles, sins and shortcomings. And like Paul, we are to invite sincere seekers of God's message of truth to join us in our journey with Jesus through life. For the great adventure of faith is not without tests and trials. But together— young and old—we persevere together"

So today I give praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For it is God who is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort, and it is He who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can in turn comfort others, and when we share in this suffering together, we also share in the comfort God give us!

OCTOBER 2016:

10/01 - Today I was reminded of the infamous words of our Lord Jesus during the scene in which a woman was brought before Him by her accusers with the expectation that He would pronounce judgement for the act of adultery for which she had been accused. But instead He told the crowd that "he who is without sin should throw the first stone". And one by one, the condemning crowd left.

Then Jesus told the woman, "Neither do I condemn you, now go and sin no more"

As I reflected on the message of this verse and the responses given by Jesus to both the crowd and the woman, there's at least one eternal lesson that I believe my Lord was trying to teach me here...

As believers, it seems we are constantly striving for perfection in God's eyes. Yet no matter how hard we try, no matter how righteous of a life that we think we're living, we all succumb to sin at some point in our lives.

So how can we be expected to be good enough to be a child of God when we cannot control our sinful nature?

How many times will God forgive us?

Will He always love and forgive us because of our FAITH in Jesus Christ?

The short answer is yes, but how do we respond in those difficult times of weakness when we give in to sin, only to be overcome with the mental and spiritual agony of shame and guilt that is sure to follow?

The answer to these questions can be found in God's word. For when we seek God's word for comfort and understanding we will find that God understands the pressures and difficulties of life in this fallen world. But as believers we are called to never give up. We must continue to fight our sinful nature and realize that although our flesh is weak and our bodies are dying, our spirit is being renewed every day through the difficulties and suffering we must bear. For it is during these difficult times of weakness that the power of God's grace, love and mercy can be found.

As believers we must understand that we will never be perfect or without sin, but our present difficulties with sin and temptation can be overcome if we just humble ourselves before God and earnestly turn to Him for forgiveness and strength. For if we confess our sins to Him in earnest, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And when we open our hearts and allow His Spirit and light to renew our thoughts and attitude, He will guide us from our former way of life (and sin) so that we can put on our new nature, created by God to imitate God in everything we do.

We do this by surrendering ourselves (and our sins) to our Lord and Savior - Jesus Christ, and in FAITH start living a life that's filled with love by following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ who offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins. And when we accept and allow His light to

dwell within us, we can be assured that our life will start producing only what is good, right and true, blotting out the darkness and the sin that follows.

10/30 - *As I've traveled and matured in this journey of Faith, I've come to realize that there is a PROFOUND TRUTH that can be found by hearing God's Word and accepting the gift of Grace and Salvation that comes from our Trust and Faith in Christ!*

And so it is that I hold on each day to this pattern of wholesome teaching that I have learned from hearing the Word of God—a pattern shaped by the Faith and Love that I have in Christ Jesus.

For it has been written, that the Lord searches our hearts and examines our secret motives. And He alone will give us our just reward according to what our actions deserve.

But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. For they are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought, for their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.

As the apostle Paul so profoundly writes to his beloved friend Timothy regarding our Faith in Christ..

If we die with him, we will also live with him.

If we endure hardship, we will reign with him.

If we deny him, he will deny us.

If we are unfaithful, HE REMAINS FAITHFUL, FOR HE CANNOT DENY WHO HE IS!

As I sit here today in quite confidence, I know that the prize awaits me; the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

NOVEMBER 2016:

11/07 - *It's been 5 years since my beloved mom left this world to return to the loving arms her creator and heavenly father, a day which will forever be etched in my memories as a day of overwhelming grief, pain and loss.*

As I reflect back on that day, I will never forget the moment I heard the news that my beloved mom had terminal cancer, the journey we walked together and the witnessing of her final moments here on earth. Words cannot express the experience of watching someone you love pass on in front of your eyes, and the helplessness and pain that follows.

But what I didn't realize on that day was that God was setting into motion the most amazing journey of my life, a journey that would reveal to me the true meaning of Faith and a profound truth that would forever change my life...

You see life in the physical world in which we live is temporary...we're born, we live our lives and eventually our bodies grow old and die leaving only dust and memories for those left behind.

For some, it's money, material things or pride in our achievements and recognition from others that give meaning and purpose to the life they live.

But for most us, there is a hope of something greater than ourselves, something that we can hold onto to that will help give meaning and purpose to our lives and make our lives worth living. And it is this Hope that is revealed from Faith in the living God, a God of omnipotence, grace and mercy whose written word reveals to us (His creation) a profound truth that explains to us the true meaning and purpose of our lives.

You see, in the beginning God created us to have a close, personal and loving relationship with Him. But because of our sinful nature we lost that relationship and are condemned to die, both physically and spiritually.

However, because of God's love for us, and by His GRACE, He decided to offer all of us a final choice for redemption, salvation and HOPE through FAITH in his son Jesus Christ, who came into this world to fulfill a promise foretold long ago by our heavenly father and revealed to us through his word; a promise of a Savior who would reveal himself to the world and become the ultimate example of love by sacrificing himself for the sins of all humankind so that through Faith in Him we could be cleansed our sin and be born again as children of God to live a life with HOPE in knowing that there is something beyond the short life we live in this physical world.

And this HOPE is more than any human being can promise or give, for it is a guarantee that whosoever shall believe shall not perish, but have everlasting life in a new world where there is no sorrow or pain, anger or turmoil, but only joy and peace in a world where the Prince of Peace, our Lord and Savior - Jesus Christ will reign for eternity.

So on this day I want to give thanks to God the father and our Lord Jesus Christ for allowing me to share my life, love and experiences with my beloved mom, for I will forever hold onto the memories I had with her. But most of all I want to thank my mom for the ultimate gift of love she left behind...the gift of Hope and Faith that was sparked by her passing - I love you mom, I miss you and I know I will see you again - AMEN

DECEMBER 2016

12/22 - Today I was blessed with the opportunity to share the blessings and abundance that God has given me with my friends and family at [Phoenix Family Housing](#); a low-income senior living community located in the inner-city, where together with my son we donated and delivered cleaning and personal products for the residents. These items will be used to replenish the communities "Busy Buck Store", where the seniors can earn busy bucks by completing educational programs to purchase items that they could not normally afford.

During our visit I was able to revisit and introduce my son to Karen, the housing coordinator and the residents, whom I've come to know and love from my past volunteering experiences. It

was a very special time, and one that I will cherish forever.

As I reflect back on the very special day, I give thanks and praise to my heavenly father and my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me this opportunity to share this special gift of love with my friends at Phoenix Family, and for allowing me to share this very special moment with my son!

12/25 - *On this this very special day I pray the we all take time to understand, honor and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas; the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, a celebration of the greatest gift of all, the gift of hope and redemption for all those who choose to believe...*

"For it was in the days of our Lord that a decree went out that all the world should be registered for a census. And so Joseph went up from Galilee in the town of Nazareth to the city of David, which was called Bethlehem to be registered with his betrothed wife Mary, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with great fear. But the angel said to them,

Do not be afraid! For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people, for today in the City of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord! And this will be a sign to you...for you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a great multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests!"

When the angels left and went into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And so they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in the manger

After they had seen the Child, they spread the message they had received about Him. And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, which was just as the angel had told them"

Thank you heavenly father for your loving mercy and grace, and for giving us the gift of hope through the birth of your son Jesus Christ, whom you sent to us on this day.

And just as the shepherds did on this day over 2000 years ago, may we too seek and worship Him, giving praise to you for all the you have done for us... For no longer do we have to carry the burdens or suffer the condemnation of our of sinful lives as we find all that we need in the One we call Jesus - AMEN

END OF YEAR SUMMARY

As I reflect back on 2016 I am reminded of a season filled with the struggles of dealing with family issues, personal failures, loss and grieve, shame and guilt ... all of which could have easily caused me to question my Faith and resolve to live a life for the glory of our heavenly father. Yet through it all I have found renewed strength, courage and maturity in my Faith.

*You see, as believers we must realize that there is a **PROFOUND TRUTH** that can be found in God's Word, and it's the gift of Grace, Redemption and Salvation that comes from our Trust and Faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!*

For it has been written, that the Lord searches our hearts and examines our secret motives, and He alone will give us our just reward according to what our actions deserve.

But blessed are those who Trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence, for they are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water, and such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought, for their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.

You see, we all face uncertainty, doubt and struggles in our lives, yet when we put our complete Trust and Faith in Jesus we are never alone as we walk hand-in-hand with Him and commit our lives to doing what is just and right. For just as the Son (Jesus) is a reflection of the our heavenly father, we should be a reflection of the Son, and when we do so we will find peace in our lives and rest for our souls.

As I began to focus on the promise and hope of the coming New Year, I sit in quite confidence in knowing that no matter what the new year brings, the prize of my Trust and Faith in Him awaits me, and that prize is the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And this prize is not just for me, but for all who eagerly commit their lives to Him and look forward to His return!.

And so on this day I pray that our God, the source of all creation and hope, will fill each of us completely with joy and peace because of our Trust and Faith in Him. And may the confident hope that overflows in us through the power of the Holy Spirit and our Faith in Jesus Christ bring honor and glory to His name - AMEN