



I almost didn't write a Christmas letter this year.

This has been a very trying year. Our landlord sold the house we had been living in for more than ten years. We've had to move twice since then. When we tried to buy a place of our own, we discovered that being debt-free and paying cash for everything doesn't make you appear credit-worthy in the eyes of a mortgage company. We've had to get credit cards and pay them off each month just to generate a credit score. We had vehicle repairs that, when coupled with the two moves, wiped out a large part of our savings. We've felt the pinch of the struggling economy and we've dealt with minor health issues. The last year has almost seemed like a cliché series of taking one step forward and getting knocked two steps back.

I was walking to my vehicle after Christmas shopping at Academy today when I was approached by two of the residents of Victory Temple Men's Home in Fort Worth. They were selling banana bread. For those unfamiliar with Victory Temple, it is a religious organization that exists solely to assist drug addicts, alcoholics, gang members and the like in finding Jesus and changing their lives. What has always impressed me about each of the men I've met from Victory Temple over the years is the heart of gratitude each seems to have. I'm sure that none of them are where they planned to be at this stage in their lives, but they are truly grateful for a warm bed and three hot meals and caring, compassionate men and women willing to help them out of a heart of Godly love.

I think running into these two young men, one just two years older than our oldest son, was a wakeup call from God. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Sometimes I need to be reminded there is joy to be found in everything. We have wonderful children. We may not be as spry as we once were, but we're healthy enough to play basketball twice a week. We may not be in our dream home, but we have a roof over our head. We may not be wealthy, but we are debt-free and we are lucky enough to own our own business. We may not have an overabundance of clients, but each of our clients... each of you... is family and we know each of you and your dogs by name. People like you are the biggest blessings in our lives. Thank you for being a part of our lives, for taking the time to talk to us, for sharing your dogs with us, for being our extended family.

May we always be as grateful for the rain as we are for the sunshine.

May we always look forward to the sunset as much as we do the sunrise.

May God bless you and your family this Christmas and throughout 2016.

Your HD!G family... Robert, Melissa, Lilia, Liam and Aidan