

UNTO THE LEAST OF THESE

***“I tell you the truth, whatever you did unto the least of these,
My Brethren, you’ve done it unto Me.” (Matthew 25:40)***

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*I met you on the sidewalk of a church the other day.
I asked you for directions... I saw despair upon your face.
I do not know your name, you wouldn't speak – but in my prayers -
I will call you "Mary", and lift that burden that you bare.
I asked the Lord to guide you, keep you safe... to let you know,
You were a blessing just for me, because my day held little hope.
You wouldn't speak a word, or even look into my eyes,
But I saw hope beneath your tears, I heard your spirit's humble cry.
I felt travail within my heart, realized how I'd been richly blessed...
And although you're among the homeless,
I saw your strength and felt its depth.*



*This is for you, Mary, to turn your sad and shame-filled face,
Into a glow that rises from the gift of God's abounding grace.
And it's for all of you who've reached depths of defeat and can't go on;
Know our Lord is watching... He'll keep you safe and make you strong.
With these simple words of love the Lord has burned into my mind...
I called an Angel of the Lord to come for you... to be your Guide.
You will see him when you walk to find some food a crossed the street.*

*Do not be afraid when he approaches you to speak.
Look straight into his eyes, and feel no shame, for he will see...
That you are strong and of good courage; your step in faith will set you free.
For there is hope within the Lord... if you will put your fears aside.
Let Him hold you in His Arms ...to keep you safe and warm tonight.
And when He has prepared you...you will step into your place;
In His Heart to help those like you... as you extend your hand in Grace.*



I will never forget one of the most pivotal moments in my walk as a new Christian. It occurred about three days before Christmas, 1990. Just a few months prior to this holiday, September 7, to be exact, the Lord prepared my heart by writing His thoughts to my mind in this poem above. The words were so profound, that I had to write them down. It was my prayer for “Mary”, a homeless woman. Just in time for the Christmas holiday, while everyone else was hustling and bustling around, a stranger, who later became a friend, asked me to volunteer at her Parish to help feed the homeless during a Loaves and Fishes Outreach.

At that time, I was a new Christian, and it still bothered me to see such poverty. I couldn't understand why God would allow it, and I couldn't wrap

my mind around the reasons anyone should be homeless, especially in the United States of America. To my shame, I declined Anne's request to help. I didn't decline because I was selfish, but because I knew I would be an emotional basket case all night. I didn't feel I would do anyone any good. I had all my basic needs met, and I guess I felt guilty for it, even though God's Word says ***"the poor will be with you always"***, (Matthew 26:11). Back then, I could never grasp the full understanding of that verse. As I pondered it, I realized Jesus made reference to it, in regard to a woman who gave everything she had, an alabaster flask of precious and very expensive perfume for the day they lived in. The woman poured it over the head of Jesus as he reclined at the dinner table, and the disciples became indignant at her gesture. They were angrily aroused by something they felt was unjust and of little worth. But Jesus rebuked them, because He understood the motive behind her heart.

She wasn't wasting something of value, she was taking the only thing of value she had, and pouring it out on her Lord and Savior. She was the only one dared to look like the fool and be obedient to the still, small voice in her heart... the voice that told her to prepare her Lord for burial, although she was not conscious of her actions. She was anointing His body, and God

consecrated Him for the greatest commission He would ever embark on... the Cross. Jesus recognized this woman's efforts and chastised His disciples who were decidedly shallow in their thinking. He told them what she'd done was a beautiful thing, an act of love that would be remembered throughout history, in her honor, every time the gospel was preached.

The night Anne asked me to participate in the Loaves and Fishes Outreach, to stand with her in the food lines to serve the homeless; I declined. I had completely forgotten about the homeless woman I had met just a few months before, when the Lord tried to prepare me for this ministry with the poem He wrote on my heart. Sadly, I didn't make the connection, but God was testing me. I had prayed for "my Mary", but prayer, at that point in my life, was something that didn't cost me anything except a few tears. God was asking me another question. Was I willing to go the extra mile and humble myself to serve her, to give all that I had, and consecrate her for God's service?

I made every excuse imaginable to the Lord, and some were quite justifiable, if only in my mind. But then something happened. God's Word came to my heart as a Sword, living and active... and it would forever divide

my soul from my spirit, at least in one respect. It would sever my flesh, and what I wanted out of life, from His Holy Spirit, and what God wanted out of me from my life. It's easy to give when it doesn't cost anything. It's much harder to give when you know you must sacrifice. The Lord spoke to my heart, *"true gifts require sacrifice, or they aren't gifts at all"*. That was a hard pill to swallow. I would learn this lesson the hard way, through a phone call I wish I had never received.

Anne called me after the first night of the Outreach and told me a very sad story. She said, in tears, that a homeless woman, who she had seen coming to the Parish for food and shelter on a frequent basis, was crossing the street. I lived in Minnesota at the time, and this night was dreadfully dangerous for anyone on the streets. Blizzard conditions, sub-zero temperatures and the streets were sheet ice. This was part of my excuse for not driving a half hour to the Parish to help Anne. I didn't want to chance an accident because it would've disrupted many things in my life, mostly convenience. Anne said that this homeless woman had suffered severe frostbite, and was clearly destitute, improperly clothed, as most homeless are.

While this destitute woman crossed the street in hopes of finding a warm dinner and shelter from the ensuing winter storm, she was struck by a vehicle and killed instantly, just a few feet from the Parish steps. Anne described the woman to me, as I sat shocked on my comfortable bed with tears streaming down my face. Anne remarked at how astonished this woman's face looked, so filled with peace. She said she was so serene; it made her cry all the more. Immediately, the Lord brought to my memory, the poem I'd penned just several months before, after meeting "Mary". Anne described her in vivid detail, and the woman who died that night, was indeed – my Mary.

One hour before Anne called, I was busy doing nothing, when the Lord spoke a verse to my heart, "***Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest***", (*Matthew 11:28*). I didn't realize it, until I hung up the phone, but God was trying to prepare me for the news that Anne would give me, just one hour later. I couldn't stop the bittersweet tears from falling down my face. Every time I think about this, even today, it still stings my soul. I think that's a good thing. It keeps my priorities straight. It helps me to remember that a split second is all it takes, to change someone's eternity. Five minutes of prayer called an angel to her

side, but five minutes of serving her, getting to know her on a personal level, and offering to help her overcome her setbacks, could've lengthened her life. I guess I will never know, until I see her again.

Anne's call that night, and Mary's death, would forever change my life and my prideful presumption of homelessness in general. This woman, like Jesus – as He walked this earth – was of no seeming importance to anyone. No one gave her a second thought, yet her silence spoke volumes as her blank stares pierced my soul the day we first met. The Lord reminded me of how when you help someone – ***“even the least of His brethren, that you've done it unto Him”***, (Matthew 25:40). We have an opportunity, in this life to impact souls. We can make a positive impact on the lives of those around us, or we can leave a negative influence, out of our own selfishness.

Every Christmas, I remember Mary, and often wonder, now that I understand more of scripture, if I entertained an angel unaware. Hebrews, the thirteenth chapter, speaks of such things. ***“Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those***

in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you were yourselves, suffering.” (Hebrews 13:1-3).

It has been many years that have come and gone since Mary walked this earth. She left an indelible mark on my heart that can never be removed. I remember her strength of character and determination behind her frail and broken body, and it gives me resolve. It keeps me humble. It keeps me on my knees. It keeps me grateful during the times I lack. What I learned is that the Lord is true to His Word, He takes care of His own. Mary has had her reward for turning my life around, for an eternity now. No longer is she cold. No longer is she hungry. No longer is she rejected, shunned and abandoned.

Naively, I thought my prayer would create a world I thought Mary should have. Freed from bondage, a home, a family who loved her; her life filled with inexplicable joy from the mercy of God’s grace. I thought it would come to fruition by natural means, and Mary would live to testify to God’s Faithfulness. I had no idea how much power our words hold.

Shortly after Mary’s “coronation” before her King, the Lord showed me in

His Word, that there is power of life and death in the tongues of men, (*Proverbs 18:21*). We can use our words to inflict pain or pleasure, bringing about life or death, sometimes very literally. I never knew, until that night, the power of my words. There are so many “confession preachers” that pervert the true meaning of this verse for their own selfish gain, that it saddens me. They use it like a magic wand to fool people into all sorts of things God never intended them to become involved with. Anything Holy will be counterfeited by the enemy, it’s just the way of the world. God’s Word is powerful, there is a definite supernatural effect in heaven and on earth when one confesses the Holy Scripture; but if we don’t understand how it is to be used, the enemy will turn what is Holy, into a weapon of destruction, as in the hands of an immature child, instead of a tool of instruction that will bring forth healing to the nations. We need to rightly divide the Word, lest we be held accountable for our ignorance on the Day of Reckoning.

I did not know that the words I spoke in earnest prayer for a stranger would come to pass exactly as I confessed it. My petitions before the Lord were out of innocence, as I was learning about a new spiritual law, and not one made out of chosen ignorance; there is a difference. There are those, who

call themselves Christians, yet treat prophecy and words of encouragement from heaven, the same as would treat a reading from a psychic. There are even those who call themselves Christian Psychics. They justify their ignorance by saying the only difference between the two is “where your heart is”. I find that incredibly blasphemous. To associate something so Holy, with something so evil, is beyond contemptible. Their justification is stemming from perversion and an anti-Christ spirit that has successfully bound them from True allegiance to the Christ they think they serve. Scripture clearly points out that you cannot trust your own heart, because it is wicked and deceitful by its very nature. Only a regenerated heart, re-born by the Spirit of the Living God can redeem it. When He does, you still must submit yourself to His Authority, and battle emotions surrounding the inspirations of your own heart, so that the enemy doesn’t pervert the work God intends for you to carry out. Satan laughs at us, every time we follow our own heart, because he knows that we are selfish by nature, and we will cater to whatever will serve our own best interests.

Those who say they have the ability to serve God and still call themselves psychics, God has a special Word, ***“woe to them who call evil good, and good evil,”*** (*Isaiah 5:20*). There is very high accountability for those who

choose to tamper in the wrong realm and publicly declare it to be a God-thing. We are not to treat prophecies with contempt; the Bible clearly warns us of that, (*1 Thessalonians 5:20*). There are some, who think that just because “words” are received from a supernatural realm, that all words stem from the same source; God Almighty. That is blatant ignorance.

I discussed in a previous chapter how words we hear can be inspirations stemming from our own heart, they can be straight from the pit, or they can be from the Holy Spirit, our Comforter sent here by Jesus Christ the day He ascended into heaven; to walk alongside us, and teach us. The Spirit of God will *never lead us into temptation*, because He IS the mind of Christ. He will always lead us into Truth and the focus will always be on God, His Will and the salvation and welfare of others. It will *not* focus on our own personal desires without the express understanding of His Will and how it will unfold through us, should we obtain the desires of our hearts. God will grant our desires in the process of us serving Him, but He will not supersede His own will to cater to what we think is best for us. Jesus said, ***“If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all,”*** (*Mark 9:35*). We were created for a purpose: to serve our King, and bring men unto salvation and to eternal life in Him, period. God clearly

calls those who consult the spiritual realm detestable, and it is an abomination to Him. ***“Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord...”*** (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

I learned a valuable lesson in accountability that night, and I learned the difference between a word that God gives you to prepare your heart for what is to come, for intercessory prayer purposes, and a word that comes from the inspiration of ones' own heart. I didn't even know this woman, I hadn't really given her much thought by comparison, but after I received those thoughts to my head, I learned that God will knit the hearts of virtual strangers together to accomplish what He needs to have done. Mary was a witness to all of us that night, and I was used as a vessel to write down the legacy surrounding her last night on earth, that this testimony might help change the face of society and how we treat those who are less fortunate than ourselves. No doubt, the memory of Mary will stick with me the rest of my life, because I learned so much.

I learned that God's ways are higher than our ways. And He is faithful to perform that which we say with a humble heart. He answered completely my prayers. Mary is free from worldly bondage. She has no earthly needs. His Grace is sufficient for her, for in her weakness, His Power manifest Perfect. She will never be cold, but sheltered securely in the warmth of His Compassion for all eternity. She not only has a home, but a mansion, enough to shelter those who've had the courage to walk through her same valley. She walks on streets of gold, and her limbs are healed in the Light of His Glory. She has a Heavenly Family Who loves her, and she experiences inexplicable joy, as she worships Our King of Kings and Lord of Lords. She is a crown of Glory... a royal diadem, in the hands of our God.

I challenge you to take a lesson in character, not only when the holidays roll around, but every day. If you have it to give... give unto those less fortunate than yourself. Do not be so quick to judge, like I once did. Life had made my heart hardened, until God apprehended me and made me realize that the tables could be turned in a twinkling of His Eye.

When you share His Love, don't just do it out of guilt because you have more than Mary did. Give, as you purpose in your heart to give, not

begrudgingly or out of compulsion, (*2 Corinthians 9:7*). Do it because you feel the compassionate heart of Jesus, understanding that everything happens for a reason, and if it were not for His Grace, you could be there. Be careful not to sit in judgment over circumstances you know not, (*James 4:12*); I learned that the hard way. Don't be so wrapped up in the giving that you forget what it's all about; in other words, don't make it a work unto salvation. Open your heart, and find YOUR hidden treasure in dark places, and bring good tidings of great joy to one in need, for God declares that as you give, it will be given unto you... good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For with the same measure you give (mercy, time, love, and compassion), it will be added unto you, (*Matthew 7:7*). ***“He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God,”*** (*Proverbs 14:31*).

There is another part of humanity that God considers “the least of these”. And these are the unborn, the pre-born, and the children who make it into this world. We are to be stewards of that which God gives us as gifts. With this introduction, I give you the awesome testimony of the birth of my own children, Caleb and Gabriel.

With intense abdominal pain, I found myself en-route to the Emergency

Room. I was symptomatic of a textbook case for ectopic pregnancy, a life-threatening anomaly which requires immediate measures to terminate. During the ultrasound, however, an ectopic pregnancy was ruled out, but the tumors were confirmed. I was told by doctors that the wisest decision to make was one that would abort my baby, because of the dangers of delivery, if it got that far. But the minute I saw that little microscopic beating heart, and heard it beat for the first time, I knew my child was a born fighter. Abortion was never an option for me. I was unmarried at the time of this pregnancy, experiencing all of life's horrific consequence. And suddenly there was another life to consider, right along with my own.

The doctors determined that this was a mass of very painful fibroid tumors multiplying at a rapid rate throughout my entire uterus, and that this was the source of my pain. They tried to push an abortion on me, but I wouldn't waver, even though I was convinced that life, as I knew it, was over for me. I became very disillusioned with life. I rebelled, at every opportunity. I was tired of it all and I threw the biggest pity party one could imagine. I had made one too many mistakes and now I was paying for it. Nothing had ever been easy for me. One trauma, it seemed, after another. Within those two weeks of being diagnosed, I battled severe depression, because I was

alone, (or so I felt), and things couldn't have looked more bleak in the natural. The baby's father wanted the child, but not me, after five years of relationship, and it was just too much to take. He told me I tricked him into pregnancy; after all, he prayed I wouldn't get pregnant, so I must not have been "in agreement" with him.

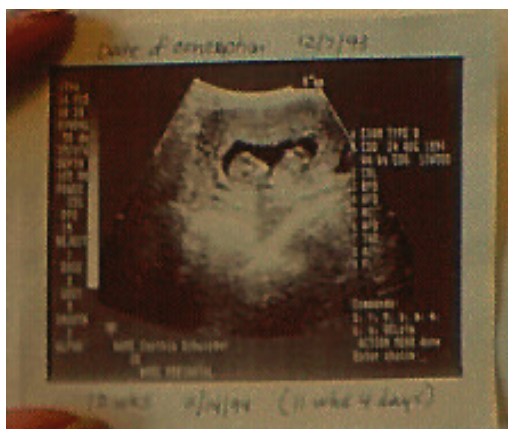
When I finally did return to the Lord, I fled back into His Arms, disgusted with myself, and helpless to help myself. I said a simple prayer with so many tears; I could hardly get the words out, "***help me, Daddy!***" That's all I said; that's all I needed to say. Within seconds, I felt a warmth penetrate my body, and the heat was so intense on my belly... my head began to feel like waves of electricity running through it, and the most incredible peace overwhelmed me, that I just laid on the floor, and fell asleep. I remember that last teardrop fell from my eyes to the kitchen floor where I laid, just plopping into a puddle. And then I drifted off.

When I awoke, I was so refreshed. My face stained with mascara streaks, I looked beaten and battered. I was -- by the torment of utter despair. But in that quiet time... in my exhaustion, finally submitting to The Father's will, He gave me courage, and He helped me to defeat shame. Every day, was a

new day, and as I trusted in His Provision, He supernaturally opened “natural” doors I never even imagined. The most impossible situation became plausible, for the first time, in a long time. Within one day, I had a safe place to stay, I had financial assistance which included complete medical coverage, and I found myself in the company of those who offered continual support, in every way that was important to the success of a healthy pregnancy.

The day I asked for my Heavenly Daddy to help, I broke completely into pieces, and I found myself in the middle of the Holy of Holies. God used my grief during that time, and even my anger. He turned it into courage to walk through doors I would never have otherwise known to open. I found a pro-life clinic, and I was counseled to find a Perinatologist, a doctor who specialized in high-risk pregnancies, and received financial aid to pay for it. And it wasn't any sub-standard hospital; it was one of the most prestigious, state-of-the-art hospitals in the country. My Perinatologist was one of the best in the United States. God provided for my every need, and that of my unborn child, but it was not without great pain and humiliation. It was very scary, but it was necessary. And that fear, for the safety of my child, drove me in a passionate resolve to not give up, but rather push forward. I was

now responsible for another human being, and I was not about to let him down. I was all this child had, and it was my responsibility to help him survive. I took action. Caleb's father had the entire Bible on audio cassette, so I played the Word, 24-7, on auto-reverse cassette, and I taped a speaker to my belly. I slept with it, I ate with it, I had the volume down low, but I knew that the Word had power to heal, and I believed that God would honor me, no matter how ridiculous it looked to anyone else. At my first appointment with the Perinatologist, we discovered an amazing thing... I was told that the tumors would be multiplied, but instead, in just 10 short days, those tumors had miraculously disappeared. They disappeared completely. After repeated attempts to find them, it was determined impossibility that somehow became possible. No one noticed the mass of light I have outlined for you here.



This is an actual ultrasound photo of my son, Caleb, when he was just 11 weeks old in my womb. God had His perfect timing. Three months after Caleb was born, I was struggling with post-partum depression, although I was not officially diagnosed with it. I was still recovering from a messy cesarean section, there were many complications and heavy bleeding, and it was still difficult to get around. I just had so many blue days, for really no reason. I had received miracle after miracle, and I still wasn't happy. I cried all the time. I realized that God had pulled me through a very precarious surgery that I nearly died from, and He saved the life of my son, skillfully using the surgeons' hands, giving them wisdom to act quickly to pull my child to safety. Upon delivery, the umbilical cord had been wrapped around Caleb's neck in a knot. His father, was terrified, (as he told me later), to watch the doctors' reactions. He told me they all said they had never seen anything *quite that bad* before. The cord was tied so tightly around Caleb's neck, it was literally choking him. They, according to their father, worked furiously for what seemed like forever, and were successful in their efforts.

Caleb was born August 19, 1994, a 7 pound 10 ounce, 21 inch long, perfectly formed and perfectly healthy child... just as the Lord had promised me. He suffered no ill effects from the lack of oxygen in the first minutes of

his life, and is now 14 years old. He is incredibly intelligent, and wise beyond his years; and as his name suggests, in honor of the Lord, he is a faithful gift of God.

As I looked through baby pictures that dreary day, trying to clear my head, and snap myself out of my pity party --- I came a crossed card after card, and more photographs that helped me to understand God's faithfulness in providing for me. All that love, all that support, all that wondrous beauty, now sleeping just an arm's reach from me in his bassinet. Three months passed as if it were a blink of an eye. As I recalled things to my mind, and held Caleb's ultrasound photo in my hand. I remembered just days before, their father commenting on the mass of light in the photograph, asking me if I saw something. At the time he asked me, I saw nothing but white shadows under the growing child. He brought to my attention that it looked like a dove. I still didn't make the correlation, but when I looked more closely at it, it seemed vaguely familiar, and my heart lept with joy! As I sat there, by myself, the Lord spoke to my heart. "***He who abides in the shelter of the Most High, shall rest under the Shadow of The Almighty,***" (Psalm 91:1). Then I looked at the ultrasound photo again. This time, I trembled with tears of awe. I saw an image of a dove, a popular

symbol to identify The Holy Spirit. It was right underneath a perfectly formed 11 week old fetus. The Lord continued speaking to my heart, ***I knew him, as I knew you before you were formed in your mother's womb. I have never left you, nor forsaken you; for I have called you by name, and you are mine.***" I learned later in a bible study, that those references came from Isaiah 43, and Jeremiah 1.

No one ever told me about that scripture before that day. God has perfect timing and truly amazing grace. The following words were penned by me during the first two weeks of my pregnancy. I was still in rebellion, but God knew my heart, and that its hardness was not toward Him, just toward life in general. When I finally grabbed pen and paper, the Lord apprehended me in such a way; I cannot fully explain it in words. I had always kept a journal of His words before, but when I found myself in such a mess, mostly of my own doing, I allowed shame and rejection to nearly take two lives. Caleb, my faithful gift of God, needed to be born for such a time as this, the end of days. God always fulfills His Promises, and when our hearts are open to Him, He reveals things to those whom He loves, and to those who try to follow Him. I learned that day, through His Mercy in "dictating" words I could not possibly muster up myself, that ***it is not a "walk of perfection"***

God desires.... it is a “walk of submission” He desires. The Lord spoke to my heart these words:

Rest Secure ...

*Do not fear the terror in the night, My Child for I AM here;
It is Me Who whispers gently in your ears amidst your fears.
You cannot change what is to come, but beloved, know for sure...
My Love for you has never failed, you needn't be concerned.*

*I will help you, I will guide you, if you take hold of My Hand;
I will hold you to my bosom child, one day you'll understand.
If you keep your eyes on Me, I will work all things for your good.
I will change the hearts of those you love, in ways no man ever could.*

*If you keep your eyes on Me, I will direct you in your path;
you will not want for no good thing; I will cover up your past.
Do not look to see behind you, child... but rest your thoughts on Me.
Do not be anxious, for all things are possible, if you will just believe.*

*This season will bring miracles, and joy shall never cease.
I will fulfill each promise I have made, so rest in loving peace.
Things look worse than they are, I'm in control... you need not fear.
I will never leave your side; I'm here to hold each precious tear.*

Do not question that I love you, for you're more precious than pure gold.

I gave My Son to save your life... I give you life that I behold.

Your sins have been forgiven the moment you looked into My Eyes.

Your sins were then forgotten as My Grace extended nigh.

There is no condemnation, child, for those who call My Name.

Your spirit's been renewed, beloved... accept it cleansed by faith.

Do not fear the shame that man can give, for none can cast a stone.

Believe me, child... they all have hidden skeletons of their own.

I will make provision child, I will become your strength.

Mercy's been dispatched to meet your needs and pave the way.

I bring healing in My wings, My child, I shall protect your seed.

For the child that you behold, and I AM creating for My needs.

Daily fill your soul with My Word so he will be...

strong and of good courage for the battles he will see.

No weapon formed against you will prevail, as I have told.

Apply My Blood upon your womb, so I may keep him from the cold.

Your child will be My Prophet; I will use to reach the world.

Prepare him in the womb, and help him feed upon My Word.

The months will quickly pass, so child, prepare and rest in peace.

Make haste in finding order, that your tasks may be complete.

*I have not removed your covering; I will preserve all I have given.
I have planned each step you take, that will bring bountiful provision.
Be obedient to My call, and watch for signs which shall confirm...
very shortly you will see, as I act upon My Word.*

*Finally child, just trust in Me, and My abounding Love.
I will hold you in My Hand, so rest secure in My Love.
<>< Always, Abba Father <><*

Scripture verses that popped into my mind at the time, told a wonderful story through the pages of *Isaiah 43, Psalm 72, Psalm 138, Psalm 91, Psalm 132, Psalm 7, and Jeremiah 33*. I would encourage you to read them, as they are laid out in their entirety, and you will see Amazing Grace at His Perfect Work, smack dab in the middle of rebellion. Having these words of such comfort given to me, knowing the mental and physical condition I was in, these words of encouragement were the epitome of Manifest Compassion. His father married me on Caleb's first birthday.

Later in life, just by a few years, Caleb received his prayer tongue with his brother. Caleb was 4 and Gabriel was 2. Excited beyond measure, I knew it wasn't babble, it was authentic. They were praying for an almost dead goldfish, the ones with big google eyes, as I call them. That fish, Shadrach,

was one of three in the middle of a 55 gallon aquarium. The other fish were named Meshach and Abednego, after the men in the Bible who wouldn't bow down to the king's edict, (*Daniel 3*). As the story goes, an Angel of the Lord was there with them when they were thrown into the furnace for their rebellion against the king. When the fire didn't set them ablaze, the king bowed down and worshipped the One True God. Well, we were obviously teaching our boys this story of the Bible, and suddenly one of the fish became ill, and floating intermittently to the top, we thought Shadrach was a goner. The boys were so upset, and so they had an idea. Caleb ran upstairs to their bedroom, and he brought down a dismantled night-light; a glow-in-the-dark Jesus, and they begged me to put it in the middle of the tank, "*so Jesus could be with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the water, just like He was in the fire.*" The logic of children is so simple sometimes.

Of course, we stuck that plastic Jesus to the bottom of the tank, and still that little fishy looked seriously ill. We thought we were going to have a crisis of faith on our hands, but our boys began to pray; one at each side of the tank, laying their hands on the glass. I remember it like it was yesterday. "*Jesus, you said you'd be there always, that you'd never leave.*"

You promised to heal us, so heal Shadrach, paleeeeeeeeeeze!”, they pleaded. Caught between laughing and total shock at the level of their faith at only 4 and 2 years old, I watched Gabriel follow his brother’s lead. Caleb said, *“Mommy, PRAY!”* And so I spoke in English, a simple prayer to save Shadrach. *“No, Mommy! Pray what the devil can’t understand... pray for real!”* I wanted to laugh, but the Lord apprehended me, so I prayed, in my prayer tongue. Within seconds, Caleb started to receive his own prayer tongue, and seconds after that, so did Gabriel. I was dumb-founded; literally speechless. That fish was a sign and wonder that followed them that believed, as it is written, (*Mark 16:17*). Shadrach got his wind back in his gills, and he out-lived Meshach and Abednego by a month, two years later!

I wanted to know if my children were just mimicking me, or if God really did give them their own prayer language, so I tested Caleb. I gave him a Bible, one he certainly couldn’t read, and I asked him to show me what “life verse” God had given him to stand on. I reasoned, at that time, that since this is what happened to me, it happened to everyone. It was my way of testing the spirits, to see whether they were really of God, (*1 John 4:1*). Caleb thumbed through my Bible, and page after page he turned, until he stopped

in the Psalms; specifically at Psalm 18. He said, *“it’s this one Mommy! This is what God said.”* ***“The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress, I cried out to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From His Temple He heard my voice; my cry came before Him, into His ears,”*** (Psalm 18:4-6).

When I read the lines of scripture that his little finger pointed out, my body began to tremble, and I began to weep. God wrapped His warmth over me like a warm blanket, and brought to my remembrance the umbilical cord that was wrapped Caleb’s neck and tied in a knot. There was no doubt in my mind that this child of mine, knew the Father, intimately from my womb.

Gabriel’s birth was a great trial of faith for me, but it brought about good tidings of great joy. I was *certain* I was having a girl this time, and my "faith" never wavered along those lines. The first trimester was incredibly difficult, because eight weeks into the pregnancy, I began to hemorrhage... badly. I lay in that Emergency Room for two hours awaiting the worst news a pregnant woman could receive. The doctors told me, after performing an ultrasound, that I had a 70-30 chance of “spontaneously aborting” my child.

My child, because of the bleeding, more very large fibroid tumors, and scar tissue from my first pregnancy, was about to be eliminated. They told me it was inevitable that I would lose the child, because the bleeding was consistent and heavy. They said that no child could survive under those conditions. Actually, they referred to my child as “live tissue”, but I knew she was the little girl I had prayed about having.... she was my Michaela Joy. The thought of losing her was devastating and I fought hard in prayer, because somehow I knew that I would never give birth again. She was my last chance.

I bombarded the gates of heaven and hell, and everything in between, in a struggle to keep her. I named and claimed and did spiritual back flips in an effort to help aid in her survival. When I saw my little “girl” on that sonogram, a little itty bitty thing sucking her thumb, oblivious to her unstable environment, my prayers for her were constant from that moment forward. I wasn’t about to let “her” go. I jumped through every spiritual hoop I could find, quoted religiously all the “faith” versus I memorized, as any “charis-maniac” would expect. Under the guise of “faith”, I wielded my Sword of The Spirit against the adversary and flung off every demon behind every door. I demanded that this child would ***“live and not die, and***

declare the works of the Lord", (Psalm 118:17); and I claimed every "right" as my standing as a child of The Most High. I was admittedly quite contemptuous in my prayers on most days during my pregnancy. Thinking back now, God ignored my arrogance, and granted me His Mercy, because He knew my heart. He knew I felt helpless, except to quote His Promises, and even through my ignorance, He provided me with His understanding and compassion. Little did I know what awaited me.

While I don't have a ultrasound photograph of my second child, what I saw at just eight weeks gestation, was a little human being who was sucking her thumb, and she was definitely not a blob of tissue. She was a perfectly formed, living, breathing vibrant life, with toes and little fingers, a strong beating heart and a developing brain. I couldn't let her die. And even though I couldn't tell for sure that she was a girl, I knew God. I knew He had promised me a little girl. I "named and claimed" her as such. A couple of weeks after my hospital trip, God confirmed His Word to me, by giving me the most amazing dream. It was so real, it was nearly surreal. I saw Michaela's face, and when she smiled at me in my dream, there was instantaneous joy... a bond between her and I that was nearly indescribable. God had given me a promise that she would live, and I clung

to it.

Miraculously, according to the doctors, my child survived. She lived and grew strong in my womb, and many times I would look at ultrasound picture - the one that shows the image of God's Presence - and I knew He was in control of my child's destiny. Soon, He taught her summer-salts and jumping jacks, and what felt like "hopscotch" to my tummy. Quite a fighter, that child was! In my expectation of a little girl, I bought beautiful little dresses, decorated the nursery with everything a little girl could imagine. It was 'baby girl heaven'. But the most precious thing she would own, was a pink satin and cottony soft scripture quilt I made myself. I embroidered her name on it, Michaela Joy, along with the date of 'her' scheduled cesarean birth, December 3, 1996. I stitched the quilt together with a bunch of "Jesus Loves You", phrases; I prayed one verse continually over that quilt, as if to saturate it by the Word, ***"you will live and not die, and declare the works of The Lord"***, (Psalm 118:17).

I believed that God would honor the "confessions of my mouth" every time my child was wrapped in it, and it would provide her security in His Love. It was my intention to hold her in my arms, wrapped up in all that love I spent

my entire pregnancy working on, and dedicate her back to the Lord in the quiet of the night while I fed her. I would tell her of all the miracles that took place to get her here, and tell her how much she was wanted and loved. I would share the dream I had, and tell her what an amazing God she would one day serve. I went under the anesthetic thinking about that, as they prepared me for my surgery. I went to sleep, overjoyed at the thought that my Heavenly Father would give me such a wonderful birthday present, because my birthday fell on December 7th. It was, by far, the best present the Lord could've ever given me. I would deliver a healthy, perfectly formed 7 pound, 9 ounce, 21 inch long baby.

But it wasn't over yet. I had a severe reaction from the anesthetic they used, and I began to display life-threatening complications. I didn't wake up for awhile. When I finally came to, I heard the sound of my husband's voice telling me to wake up to see the beautiful baby *boy* I had just given birth to. I thought I was delirious, surely, he meant our little *girl*? And then I heard my little boy, Caleb, who close to three at the time, blurt out... "*Mommy, we named him Gabriel, after the angel... because he looks just like an angel!*" And when I realized I *wasn't* hearing things... that they were serious, I felt horrible. My world came apart from the inside out. I was praying for a baby

that didn't exist! I had been praying for someone named Michaela, and I neglected my *own child!* I began to cry instantaneously, and everyone thought they were tears of joy, but they weren't. Just then, the nurse brought a baby in, and handed me a bundle with a blue hat on and blue socks, and... she said he was my child. That *wasn't my child! Where was my little girl? Who IS this baby? He's not mine! I had a girl!* My husband laughed, and I only felt worse. He made some ridiculous comment about being drunk with anesthetic. *Why wasn't anyone listening to me? This was not the child I saw in my dreams. No where near the child I saw in my dreams!*

I went into deep depression. I tried to be grateful for the healthy, very beautiful little boy I just gave birth to, but I felt so disconnected from him. I was *his mother*, yet I felt no *connection* to him. I felt horrible. My thoughts rambled, as tears dripped down my cheeks, and fell onto his face. When they fell, he appeared to be reaching up with his hand, his little fingers extended to my face, as if he was trying to wipe the tears from my eyes. He looked at me with this loving acceptance, so filled with grace and mercy... so filled with The Spirit of God... yet, I couldn't stop thinking about Michaela. I felt as if I had abandoned my own child, and prayed for a girl

that didn't exist. I didn't feel worthy of being blessed by a child I felt I neglected from the beginning. *What kind of mother was I, to be so concerned with my own agenda, my own hopes and dreams, that I would overlook my own child?* For eight and a half months; I called my son a girl. I had bought *him* dresses... and the quilt....

When I thought about that quilt I made, with *her name* on it, *and her date of birth*, praying *her scripture verse*, I felt like the worst mother in the world. I felt as if I had nothing to offer my child. I had poured all my efforts into someone named Michaela. I didn't even *consider* boy names; to me, it wasn't an option, my "faith" told me it was a girl. As a consequence, I didn't even get to name my own child!

Apparently, the name Gabriel came about when my husband and little boy were praying for my recovery in the hospital chapel. According to my husband, my son had seen a picture of an angel on a little book about Christmas in the chapel. It read, "I bring you good tidings of great joy". It was the story of the Angel Gabriel coming to the Shepherds, announcing to them the birth of Christ, (*Luke 2:10*). Caleb named his brother Gabriel. That name turned out to be a prophetic utterance, as the hours passed. My

husband was helpless to help me in my depression. Back then, no amount of human compassion could lift the burden I carried in my heart. Later on that afternoon, after I fed my newborn son a couple of times, my husband came back with a Readers Digest issue, and told me to read a story that he had marked, hoping that it would help ease my deep emotional pain. I ignored it, in my silent anger. I felt as though he couldn't understand. That anger drove me into the lonely isolation. I struggled with so many feelings over almost the entire time I was hospitalized. As it turned out, matters would escalate to domestic violence and we end up divorcing nine years later.

A few days after Gabriel was born – three days, to be exact -- I remember getting a room-mate, who had just given birth to a girl. The minute she was settled in her bed, she was followed by an entourage of family and friends, who were oohing and aaahing over her little girl. Even though the curtain was drawn, (I was by the window, she was by the door), and I had my television on for noise, it was very hard to drown out their conversation. When I heard the words, "*we were believing for a boy named Michael, but instead God gave us a girl... we should name her "Michaela"....*

My heart sunk. I *had* to get out of that room! I couldn't hold back the tears. *Why was God being so cruel to me? Why did He allow me to get my hopes and dreams up? Why was I so passionate about the scripture quilt I made?* I had a myriad of mixed emotions. I was still in a great deal of pain from my surgery, but I knew I had to get out of there, or I was just going lose it in front of everybody. I mustered up all the courage I had, to excuse myself and walk in between all of her guests. I knew I shouldn't be rude and overlook her child. So I congratulated my room-mate and she asked if I wanted to hold her. Everything in me said "no", "yes", "maybe"... and just by instinct, I held her child in my arms. Immediately, my dream came to mind. *Dear God, she was the child I saw in my dream... she was the child I prayed for. All of her features.... she was my child... my Michaela!* It wasn't fair! I quickly gave the child back to her mother, and I rushed out the door in a flood of tears. I fled to the "family room" down the hall. I couldn't stop crying. I couldn't stop questioning God. I couldn't stop thinking about how I prayed for this woman's child - a total stranger - and I neglected my own son!

I was so angry with God for fooling me; for allowing me to be fooled. My faith was shaken to the very core of my being. I was certain that God was

punishing me for manipulating Him into creating a little girl for me. I didn't understand at all. I felt totally alone, and totally forsaken, as if the faith I professed, was no faith at all; just a bunch of vivid imaginations. I cried and cried and cried. And the Lord had been trying to speak to me, but I didn't want to listen. Killing time in the family room where nobody could see my agony, I picked up one of the same pamphlets about "the angel" that Caleb saw and gave to me from the chapel. I had nothing but contempt to offer God. And I felt terribly guilty. I felt utterly ashamed. I felt... so alone. *How could I ever believe for anything again? Why should I bother believing for anything, if God isn't going answer anyway?*

My depression turned to utter despair, as I held that pamphlet in my hand. With nothing left to do, except walk the halls, or stare out the window, and cry. I went through the stack of magazines on the table, trying to clear my head. I found that same Reader's Digest magazine that my husband had given me earlier. I paged through, not really reading anything in particular, until I came to this one article on faith. Something inside me caused me to pause, and read it. I remember it vividly. It was a story about a pastor, who was traveling with his wife on a weekend retreat. He needed direction from God, and they went away to spend some time with the Lord. This pastor

had been contemplating a job change that would inevitably have a major impact on his family. A few days earlier, he had made a decision, that in hindsight, he felt was in haste. He was begging God for confirmation of his decision... and he put out a fleece to the Lord. He asked God for a “sign” that he was making the right decision. That if God loved him, and was “with” him on his plans... if it was God’s perfect will, and not His *permissive will* ... that God would prove His love for him by showing him a deer on the way home.

Miles and miles and miles were traveled, as the story goes, and hours and hours and hours passed, yet ... there was no deer in sight. Apparently, this was an oddity, for the area they were travelling through. The pastor became so obsessed with seeing the “sign” of God’s approval, that he lost sight of faith. Funny.... I felt just like him. In fact, I knew *exactly* how this man felt. I read on...

The pastor’s wife tried to reassure him that whatever decision he made, God would honor it. But the man became obstinate in “faith”, and demanded that God honor His Word, and perform a “sign and wonder” at his beck and call. I say that sarcastically, because that’s what / felt like.

The reality of the story was that this man was very sincere in his request of the Lord, and was devastated by the time they arrived home, and *still* saw no sign of a deer. Frustrated, angry, and confused he was no doubt experiencing the same myriad of emotions I was currently going through. The man drove in the driveway, picking up the mail that had accumulated in the mailbox over the several days they were gone. Further frustrated by bill after bill they were struggling to pay, was junk mail, after junk mail. The story closed with the poignant “sign”. On the last piece of mail, his eyes were drawn to the postmarked stamp on the envelope. The stamp was a picture of ... a deer.

Sometimes, God provides “signs” that are so obvious; we miss them entirely by our efforts to “see” them. I was so moved by that story. When I finished reading the article, something that was hard in my heart melted. Extraordinary peace flooded me, and I heard clearly, the audible voice of The Lord. He said, plain as day, *“the quilt doesn’t belong to your child, it belongs to the child it was created for”*.

He told me to introduce myself to my room-mate, and to tell her the story I just read. I was to explain my pregnancy to her, share my dream, and

share the pain of guilt I felt. I cried, and cried, and cried. He was asking too much. That quilt meant everything to me. I couldn't give it up, because to me... it meant giving up hope of ever having a little girl. It meant giving up my dreams, and it meant releasing the pain and anger I still held toward Him. Later that night, a nurse brought my Gabriel to me. He had, indeed, the most angelic face in the world. It was as if he basked in Glory of God. Suddenly, my heart melted. I felt an immediate connection, and the most overwhelming love for him. It was a tender moment, only a mother could have with her child. I apologized to my son for not praying for him while he was in my tummy, tears fell in solid streams down the fingers of his hand, that was now reaching to touch my face. He smiled. They say babies don't smile, but my child *smiled* at me, as if he understood what I was saying.

The next moment, an amazing thing happened. I lifted him up, wrapped up in the little hospital blanket from the nursery, and I dedicated him to the Lord, just as I had planned to do with Michaela. I whispered in silent tears, didn't want anyone to hear. Although my room-mate was sleeping, I needed to know I was alone in the room with no one except the Lord and my little angel. I repented tearfully for my pride, for my rebellion, for trying to manipulate His Word to get what I thought I wanted; while all the while,

God was giving me what He wanted me to have. I repented for my guilt and doubts and fears, and God heard me. He told me to open my eyes and look at my son. I did.

I touched my baby's mouth, outlining his precious little lips with my finger, and suddenly, Gabriel wrapped his fingers around mine. Then, he clasped his tiny hands together, intertwined as if one would fold their hands in prayer. With my finger held securely in his hand, the Lord spoke again, *"I bring you good tidings of great joy with this child you behold. Do not fear, for I am with you, and you needn't be ashamed."*

I totally lost it. I absolutely and totally lost it. It was a Divine moment. A definite God-thing. A current of electricity ran through my body, as if someone was pouring warm water all over my head. It felt wonderful. I didn't want that feeling to end. Just then the Lord spoke again, *"give the quilt to Michaela, it belongs to her."*

I waited, and prayed and cried until nearly midnight, when the Lord told me I was running out of time. My room-mate was to be discharged early in the morning, as I overheard her say, and so was I. She had given birth

naturally, and the recovery period for me with a cesarean had run its course, at least in the eyes of my insurance company. I put my sleeping child in the hospital bassinet, and walked over to my dresser and held the quilt. I took it back to my bed, sat for awhile, and prayed that I would be able to release it to this stranger, and that she would accept it, without thinking I was crazy. Stained with my tears, I held onto the blanket, opened the curtain, introduced myself, and muttered words I barely remember. Hardly able to speak without crying, I told her I made a quilt for my child, but as it turned out, it was for *her child*, all along. She saw the sincerity of my tears, and I could barely get out the things I knew I was supposed to share with her. I asked for her patience, and she lovingly obliged me. I told her what a miserable and scary pregnancy I had... and she said, "*me too!*" I told her that when my child was eight weeks old, I was told my baby wouldn't live due to spontaneous abortion. She said, "*ohmygosh, me too!*" We compared dates, and times, and doctors, and hospitals. She was at a different hospital the same time, on the same dates, was told the bleak report from the doctors, and quoted nearly the same scripture verses over the little "boy" she was believing for. The only difference we seemed to have were that we had different doctors, and we were treated at different hospitals!

We were absolutely stunned, and the tears of pain, turned to laughter at all the “coincidences”. When I gave her the quilt, it was extremely painful for me to do. I asked her to accept it, as a memory of the night we shared, and if she would use it for Michaela. I shared the dream I’d clung to with Rose, Michaela’s mother, and I told her I had prayed and held onto the look on her child’s face as it appeared in my dream; how much hope and joy she gave me in the process. Rose began to cry. As it turns out, she was also a believer in Jesus, and had done nearly all of the same things “by faith” as me. She picked out boy names, hadn’t considered girl names, bought boy clothes, decorated the nursery with boy things; she was sure she was having a boy, since God had already blessed her with a daughter, around the same age as my son, Caleb.

What are the chances? Millions of people in this world, and what did we experience? Was it blind coincidence or Divine Intervention? I think the story speaks for itself. God was making a point in a big way. He wanted to make sure that we would never forget the power of prayer and intercession for strangers. God definitely had plans and purposes in the births of our children, which were light years ahead of our limited understanding. Then I

remembered something. Gabriel was born three days before Michaela. I don't think that was mere coincidence. Gabriel, indeed - just like the angel in the bible - brought "good tidings of great joy" in the miracle of his birth.

We took pictures of each other's family before we went our separate ways. We kept in touch for a few months, and then unfortunately, circumstances and busy lives moved us apart. I often wonder what became of Michaela and her family. Over the years, at times I look at Gabriel, Michaela's comes to mind, and I know to pray for her and her family. I often fantasized at how remarkable it would be, if the two of them - Michaela and Gabriel - ever hooked up in the future, got married, had kids....

Perhaps. Only time will tell. And if it turns out that way, it will definitely be a match made in heaven, and I will finally have my little girl. If not, God is still faithful to those who love Him because I received the most important revelation one could learn in life; and that is this: God's ways are higher than man's. He knows your coming and your going, He knows the plans and purposes for your life, and He will always get His Way, when all is said and done.

I wouldn't trade my little Gabriel for anything in the world. Because he is proof to me that God is in control of life and death; of faith and fleshly works; of signs and miraculous wonders. And just as Caleb was my evidence of God knowing each child as he forms them in their mother's womb, Gabriel is my evidence of the miraculous, wonder-working power of intercessory prayer. That under the most dire of circumstances, if one surrenders to God in humility with a repentant heart, He will work out all things for the good of those who love him, to them who are called according to His Purpose, (*Romans 8:28*). In the process of the working, He will provide you with a testimony that will draw those struggling in the world, a little bit closer to Himself. It is for this purpose that every life is precious to Him. One can never know the full impact of one human life... but God does. (*Jeremiah 29:11*)

God is close to the broken-hearted, to those crushed in spirit. Anyone who tries to tell me that God only moves by my faith, simply doesn't understand the gravity of personal devastation, and doesn't have a clue to what it means to engage in real spiritual warfare; in the battlefield of the mind. Clearly, people with such limited understanding have not hit their own walls. It is religious condemnation to look at a person's situation, and sit in

judgment, for none of us is without sin. To preach the gospel without giving the practical relief of the gospel is heresy. Those that preach that restoration, healing and miracles are only wrought by faith, are - in my opinion - seeing the big picture, and missing the most vital of points.

Of course, it requires faith, but it's not *just* about faith. It can't be, because I had no faith left. I had no hope left. The bible says that God is not a respecter of persons, (*Acts 10:34*). What He does for one child, He does for *all* of his children. But it's not supposed to be about us. It's about God, and the way we view Him, and the choice we make to either know Him intimately, or ignore Him. If we listen to the still small voice, He will take the tiniest shred of humanity to restore our hearts, help us to recognize our motives. He will lovingly re-train our thoughts toward victory. All He asks is that we trust Him, and *that* is something that requires faith in an invisible God Who works miracles with the simplest prayer in the night.

In my opinion, based on my own experience, faith comes into the picture *after* you have met Unconditional Love face-to-face. We can't do anything apart from God, and although we do not realize it, by the time we come to acknowledge Him, He has been wooing us for days, weeks, months, or

even years... to get to the point of us asking Him into our lives. When you meet Unconditional Love, face-to-face, and finally acquire that type of faith... then it's *real faith*, not someone's copy of it. You can't get *real faith* from a pulpit. You can't get *real faith* from monotonous confessions of your mouth, and you can't get it from a book. You can only get *real faith* from a personal relationship with The One Who created you.

That type of faith, is faith that *sticks*, and suddenly - the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen - becomes *real*. It is the type of faith that remains *immovable* by the winds of adversity, no matter how powerful they are. It is the type of faith that remains *unshakable* by even the deepest quake. It is faith as *constant* as the rising and setting of the sun. It is faith as *practical* as breathing. It's the *only* faith that *works!*

On the next page, you will see for yourself what *real faith* produced. Caleb, (pictured on the right), born August 19, 1994 with his brother Gabriel, born December 3, 1996. They are God's greatest gifts to me and the truest joys of my life!



The photo on the left was when they were at the tender age of 5 and 7; the photo on the right, they are 11 and 14. When I look at what remarkable young men they have turned into; when I look at the innocence in their faces, I know they were born for a purpose in this life. The fact that they both nearly died before they were even born, tells me they have challenging times ahead. I also know that God will be faithful to finish the work He has begun in them. If I had listened to those who suggested I abort my children, I would've aborted the dreams God has for their futures. I would've squandered the heritage the Lord has left for me, and I would've killed a part of God Himself, for we are all made in His Image. I would've thrown His precious gifts in the trash. ***“Behold, children are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward,”*** (Psalm 127:3)