



Adversity

When I first held each of my newborn children in my arms, never once did I think, “This child was born for adversity.” My heart has hurt when they were injured, bullied, or even when I had to discipline them. As they have grown, my heart is no less affected when I watch them wrestle through life’s heartaches, disappointments, loss, and pain. As a parent we would often choose to fight their battles for them, take their pain upon ourselves and even desire to protect them from the very lessons that will mature them in the end.

Adversity is unavoidable in a broken and fallen world, but there was indeed a child that was born specifically to face adversity. The Christ child would face not only his own hardships, but eventually take upon himself the weight of all mankind. That baby born in a stable would not only bear the penalty for all of our sins, but he would also walk with us through our own troubles. He would remove the weight of eternal damnation through His death, burial, and resurrection, but His love for us doesn’t end there.

He remains in our hearts to comfort and counsel us through this broken world. He gives us peace when circumstances would dictate panic. He offers healing where the world demands punishment and condemnation. It is because of His presence that in the midst of adversity I don’t have to ask, “Why?” I just need to ask, “How?” We need His wisdom to know how to navigate it, to remember His presence in the midst of it, and to lean on His faithfulness when we can’t see the next step. He truly is Emmanuel, “God with us”!

This Christmas season we pray that you take the time to truly embrace and appreciate our God who has come to earth to save us, and remain with us in all of our adversities.

Family Update

A last minute opportunity has come up for myself, Lydia, and Emily to go on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic with Meeting God in Missions. None of us have ever been on a mission trip outside of the U.S. so we are very excited for this opportunity to minister to the impoverished Haitians working in the Dominican sugarcane fields. We are so excited to say that within 2 weeks we had raised all of the necessary funding for our trip! Thank you Lord! We will be potentially helping with carpentry, gardening, children's ministries, and many more areas. The last hurdle is getting the girls their expedited passports for the trip.

January and February will bring many travel opportunities for our family. Grandma Pat returns to Lancaster and Jonathan plans to visit a friend in IN. Matt will travel to a wedding in IL and return the next month for a leaders gathering in MO. We both will be attending a camp conference in Feb, and Lydia will be interning at a counseling program for at-risk women in Lafayette, IN starting in March. In the midst of all of this, we will be starting our Marriage and Family Dynamics class. This is such a fun time getting to know the students.

Praises and Prayer Requests:

-Grandma Pat has had some health challenges but seems to be on the upswing. There are still some lingering issues so your prayers are appreciated.

-Matt continues to have challenges with pain in his hips despite trying various techniques of treatment. Unfortunately riding is one of the things that aggravates the situation.

-We've had a lot of unexpected expenses that have made the winter challenging, but we rejoice in God's daily provision. Please pray that we would rest and trust in His perfect timing, not only for us, but also for the Ranch's finances.

- We praise God for His safety in all of our fall travels and great attendance for our fall events. We ask for prayers for safety and wisdom in all of our upcoming spring travels.

- Megan and Simeon are expecting a baby in April! We are so excited to meet our next grandchild!

We want to thank you all for the love and support you have been to our family and our ministry. We are so blessed by the network of people that God has placed around us to encourage and support us as we serve here. We are humbled by all who have given so generously and faithfully over the years. We pray that you are each blessed with a joyous Christmas enjoying the presence of Emmanuel, our God with us!

In His service, Matt, Jenni, and family