

This true-life adventure was provided by [Graceful Touch](#) massage of Rapid City, SD

Introduction

NOTE: Names and places of those involved in the following true story have been changed to protect the confidentiality of everyone involved. Even with that being the case, the actual story itself remains as a vivid experiential memory to this writer and as you journey through the pages you will come to understand exactly why.

I've done it and you have too probably which is likely why I reflect upon it within the following content as it related to my near-death experience.



Oh, silly me, I forgot to tell you what it was.

It was and is God's will and wondering what it could possibly be for you.

After all, when I was spared from death I offered no real unique value to the world. I simply performed, day upon day, my daily grind called life.

Why was I spared when so many others hadn't been? It didn't seem right.

It didn't seem logical.

In fact, it seemed to make as much sense as moving from one state through two others till reaching the final all within the course of 3 years. But there we were and all because of him though we hadn't even the foggiest clue of it till long after we arrived.

Come join in the adventures of real-life drama as we explore the pathway of two professional online marketers who are called to care for a man suffering from Alzheimer's who they had never met prior. Not only will you discover an eventful journey to be part of but in the process, I believe you will come to understand a bit about what it is like to live with and care for people suffering from the ever increasing condition of Alzheimer's.

They say it's not reversible.

I personally know better now, based on my own firsthand experiential evidence.

This has led me to understand that it is not always wise to listen to what "they say" as gospel. Before we start the story, there are several people I would like to thank.

First and foremost, would be my Lord Jesus Christ who considered me worthy of carrying out my part of this amazing story. Without Him, I'd be lost. In fact, without Him, I'd never have been created. Hence I thank Him for life, for love and for this special mission.

Second up would be my bride Irene. We've endured a lot, as a result, of this calling. I remember telling her that I could never go on a mission without proper financial backing. I was just

reflecting on that the other night while pondering our current reality. Irene fulfilled the part of providing highly nutritional food that was seen to have amazing results for everyone involved while I handled the major part of caregiving at least with him.

I'd also like to pay a special tribute to those who were, are and always will be a part of this story. The family is always hardest hit when these tragedies take place. Without this family of J's this story would never have taken place or been written for that matter.

And finally, I'd like to thank my mom for choosing to birth me into existence. I embrace life though sometimes I haven't. However, no matter whether I was wanting to live or not nothing would have been possible had she not chosen to bring me fully into this world and raise me to be a God loving and fearing man.

There is one last person I would like to thank for the creation of this book. Perhaps they are the most important of all and don't even know it. While they will not likely be mentioned during the journey they play a vital part in the reason it's written.

I thank you the reader for taking the time to bring this work into your life. May you be blessed as through the following pro's you discover the reality of persistence that sometimes comes full term when you choose to place your hand in that of the Master and follow wherever He may lead.

Chapter 1: Project Michigan

Bills.

They have a funny way of causing one's life to change.



Most people would get a job, and I did. In Michigan! That might not seem like a stretch for someone in Michigan, but I lived in Spokane, Washington. In today's world, you have to go where the work is and that was what I had set out to do.

The only problem was that I knew without a shadow of a doubt that this was not God's perfect will. It certainly fell within the scope of His permissible will but somehow it was not part of His greater plan.

Given my stress level and the failing Real Estate market in Spokane, my wife and I decided to move ahead anyway. So in April 2010 I boarded a plane and headed for Michigan while my bride of 3 years remained behind to sell off almost all our worldly possessions and take care of other pressing business matters.

Not sure if you've ever operated within the scope of God's permissible will instead of His perfect will but that was what we choose to do. See, the difference between preferred and perfect is that when you are in God's perfect will you are right where He wants you to be. With the permissive option you have not left His arms but His divine plans. For me, this became quite a stressful proposition.

Not to worry though, I just had to remind Him frequently that there really was no other option. Little did I, know.

Anyway, as I began working with as an SEO Digital Specialist with the team in Michigan life was good. The pay was decent, the work was right on the line of any true online marketer and the temporary housing was more than anyone could really ask for other than the fact that it was so temporary.

Combining that with the fact that I deeply missed my bride and continued to have this overwhelming feeling that I was operating outside of God's perfect will which began to plague me day in and day out. I got so agitated during this period about my plight that I actually quit my job.

In Michigan, without a job and my wife back home, what was I... nuts?

Richard, the guy I was working for, sat me down before I left and asked point blank what my options were.

I had none.

So before I had a chance to fully make my exit we agreed that I would stay on and continue serving him as his Online Digital Marketer. Never-the-less, I still had this nagging conviction that I was not operating in the perfect will of God.

I took up residence with a friend from church named Gail while waiting for my precious bride to arrive. Those were hard times.

I missed my bride bad.

We talked every day and some days I cried from pure outright loneliness. I'd gone through both death and divorce with previous spouses, but being without my love simply because we were in different states was incredibly new to me. New and unpleasant both.

Finally, the day came.

The cell phone dialogs commenced as I was receiving moment by moment proximity reports of how close she was getting to where I lived. Anticipation mounted into excitement which exploded into pure joy when I was at last able to hold my Irene in my arms once again.

She arrived in our burnt orange Ford Focus which contained most all our earthly possessions including my sweet Sassy cat. Okay, so if you name a cat Sassy there must be a reason. I still consider her sweet despite her sassy little self. She's been through a lot with me since 2001, including a couple of times when I thought I'd never see her again. But here she was. Here they both were. Boy, was I happy!

Never-the-less, I still knew I was not in the perfect will of God but certainly didn't know what to do about the matter now.

One day I was driving down to the store to pick-up some Tylenol PM to see if it would help me sleep better. I'd been having trouble sleeping. A lot of trouble. Serious trouble.

I was talking to God as I do when He spoke back.

No, it was not an audible voice but more of a mental impression. He had marching orders for me.

Prepare your family to move to Texas. TEXAS???!!!

I'm sure there are people that love Texas, I'm just not one of them. It would be kin to Siberia. I knew absolutely no one in Texas.

There was no secure job prospect in Texas.

No living arrangements existed for us in Texas.

Now I knew I was losing it. Not only would Texas be the last place in the world this Online Marketer would ever move, I somehow thought God was behind the suggestion.

So I did what any logical thinking Online Marketer would do in a struggling economy. I put the idea clear outside of my head.

It didn't stay there though.

Actually, it woke me in the night and I wasn't able to get back to sleep. It, being God's marching orders to move to Texas.

Let me say right here that I've never seen greener more beautiful grass than in Michigan. The lakes there are also quite amazing as are the people I met. Now I was going to give up my stability to move to, to Texas? I wouldn't do it.

A funny thing happens when you strive to live within the will of God and yet refuse to follow His calling. He removes His peace, or at least He did for me.

And like any rebellious young child, I fought back with everything I had. But without the peace of God, I'm literally a basket case. So eventually I gave up and agreed to move to Texas.

It was at about that time that something would happen which showed me we really needed the finances and I could not leave Michigan. That's why I would rescind my agreement with God and reposition myself for staying in Michigan. This would result in His peace being taken away again and there I was once again, stuck.

This went on day after day about a couple of months till my resolve was completely worn away. Reluctantly, I approached my boss and advised him that my wife and I were moving to Texas.

Texas? Yes, Texas.

Do you have family there, he asked? Nope.

Do you have a job, a house, anything? Nope.

Then why would you move to Texas?

Because I've been given marching orders by the God I serve and I must follow was my response. I'm quite certain he thought I was nuts at that point. If he didn't, I certainly did.

He did try to convince me to stay like he did when I first arrived, but this time my resolve was strong. I had operated long enough outside of the perfect will of God. While the preferred will of God may be easier, there is nothing quite like living within the perfect will of God.

So there they were. Richard and the rest of the office team all bidding my cat, my wife and I farewell in our little-burnt orange Ford Focus. It must have been quite a sight.

Chapter 2: Charting God's Course

When this whole idea of Texas began taking shape I decided to do some research and found that most Online Marketers were in Austin. I happened to know one person in the Austin area who would be willing to put us up for a short time so we set the compass and began to make our way to Austin.



Mile after mile passed.

Sassy once again sitting on top of most everything we owned. She was quite the trooper. She had traveled all the way across the US with Irene and now only a short time later she was on her way to Texas.

As the miles passed and we made our way into

the desolate desert of treeless mountainless Texas my heart sank. I fully understood the plight of Jonah. Not only the whale but the part about being barfed out onto the shores of Nineveh. For him, it was anywhere but Nineveh. For me, it was anywhere but Texas.

As we neared Dallas mileage calculations were for about 3 more hours of travel.

It was then that God had a strange announcement. He does that from time to time. Or at least He does that to me.

I suppose you would like to know what the announcement was? When I heard it, I didn't.

Our marching orders were to stop.

Stop?

Stop!

But this isn't Austin! God, your GPS is broken, I exclaimed. This isn't anywhere near Austin and that was clearly our plan.

Funny thing how God's plans and our plans are not always the same plans, or perhaps not so very funny after all. I went back to wrestling, He went back to removing His peace and we landed in Dallas.

I've never seen 5 freeways stacked together as one like in Dallas. What they lacked in scenery was certainly made up for in concrete. I'm sure that there are people that love it there; I'm just not one of them. Never-the-less, I know better than to step outside the perfect will of God; now.

Again, a friend from church took us in and I got busy trying to find work. For an Online Marketer that's not difficult, but it is stressful. I was offered a search engine optimization position which I accepted and began my new career, again.

The job paid well, but I surely liked my friends back in Texas better.

I just couldn't fit into the working life here. Getting the job done was a piece of cake. Establishing deeper friendships within the fold was an altogether different matter for the most part.

Shortly after I arrived a second Online Marketer was brought onto the team. I immediately knew that the reason I was here now was specifically for him. I certainly didn't know how or why but I knew what the mission was so I went to work trying to make connections. He and I hit it off quite well.

That is, we hit it off quite well until about one week later.

He arrived only to inform everyone there that he had accepted a different offer and would be leaving. Dumfounded and watching in utter disbelief he bid everyone farewell and was gone. After he left I called my wife and asked if she remembered me telling her of the reason I had been hired.

No not work.

To connect with this man was the reason.

She acknowledged to which I responded, well he just quit.

As far as I could tell this must be nothing more than a funny joke God was playing. Either that or I got the signals way off because that chapter of my journey was over.

Whatever the case I continued doing my online marketing gig and getting into the day to day grind of my new position. At the same time, I met a neat family at church which was preparing to do missionary work in California.

While I liked the idea of doing medical missionary evangelism, I knew my life was headed in a different direction. That's why I wished them well and continued in my position.

Have you seen the amazing way that God works?

I have and I was about to watch it all over again. See, about one month later a man walked through the door where I was working. A man I had met before. It was the new recruit to our online marketing team. My mouth dropped open as I came to realize that this man was the same man that had left one month earlier. The very man that I had been called to Dallas Texas for.

We commenced to building our friendship once again and once again hit it off like at the first.

The excitement was mounting with my church family that was getting ready to depart for California and it was hard not to want to be a part of it all. But I knew I was where I was supposed to be and where I would remain.

Then God laid a bombshell. We were not only supposed to support this missionary team, we were to be part of it.

This I knew was utterly insane.

I'd already left Michigan to come to Texas for God and was gainfully employed once again. There was no way I was going to leave Texas for California no matter how important the need might be. Besides, the reason I was working where I was working was right here in Dallas and he certainly wasn't going to be opting to relocate to California anytime soon.

Chapter 3: Not Again God

Funny how things work.

Just when you think your life is nice and stable, just when you think you're headed in the right direction, just when think you know the course; something happens that changes everything in an instant.

See, I'd been hired for a new project rollout so that my company would get to the top of the search engines fast with this project. The plan was a good one. We had all the bases covered. Social media, newsletters, affiliate marketing and of course search engine optimization. We were fully geared up and ready to go with only one problem.



Problem? Yes, problem.

What problem? Developers.

Or, perhaps I should say, development. See, the project that this team of marketers was hired for still hadn't gotten out of the gate when we were brought on. As month after month passed by the story remained the same with only one variance.

Desoto.

See, in Desoto, things were very much moving forward with project medical missionary. The team had even located the place where they would put down roots in California. Preparations for the move had been finalized and people were preparing to relocate. My wife and I went as far as to offer to build a project that would market their new ministry online. After all, we wanted to be of support to this noble cause and could think of no better way than to use our online marketing talents to do so.

Well, that's until the news arrived.

While I was busy about my task at work, as usual, I began to have the sense that something was different this day. Something was out of place. It was almost like one of those square pegs in a round hole type things. Something just didn't seem to quite fit.

And that something was me.

My manager requested to have a conference which was not highly unusual. Seems she needed to speak with me in private to go over some of our marketing objectives which we did.

The meeting turned out to be relatively short.

See, “Project X” which I had been hired to get launched still wasn’t out of development. Almost six months later and it still remained dormant. There’s really only so much you can do with a marketing ace that has no project. That’s right, let him go.

And that’s what happened.

Now I was stranded in Texas, without a job and sinking even further into debt.

I had an emotional moment over the entire episode since God didn’t have a whole lot more time than that available. Then I decided it was time to do something outlandish. That’s right. My wife and I drove over to where they were, got out and walked up to the door, secured our stance and made the announcement.

What announcement?

You know the announcement. The one that’s made anytime you have the equipment and talent and time. We wanted to watch a movie.

So the librarian dutifully pointed us to the right section and we decided to make it a double, no a triple feature.

One of our movies was about this little lady who was born into a large Philippine family during a very rough time in their culture. She went through a great deal of trauma including finding shelter in caves, enduring economic hardships, watching her political father die unjustly and dropping her baby doll without being able to retrieve it while being whisked away from the only home she really ever knew.

Life was hard for this little princess.

But she fought back as hard as any little girl could. She even started working for them as a teacher as the years would have it. The conditions were deplorable and her life in constant turmoil. However, with God by her side, she made it through and ended up winning the battle as a result.

It was quite a touching movie to watch and helped me to escape reality for a while, which is something I really needed. After the movie was over and my wife and I had a chance to grieve the loss of income we began to make new plans.

First, we would go to the unemployment office and secure some income coming in which would help with this turn of events. Next, we would let the team know that we would be coming with them to California as their online marketing team. Then we would begin the process of packing things up for our next move.

It really made sense to us now.

Chapter 4: Hooker for God

With our plans announced and mission moving forward, it was decided that we would arrive with the last team members that were relocating at that time. We would join the efforts with my wife as the graphics artist and me as their full-time online marketer.



There was only one problem. It's a common problem found with most any missionary work.

The problem now was money. Or should I say the lack thereof? So we would be joining the efforts without a salary which was really not a problem since we ourselves would be the income generators for the group.

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ourselves would be the income generators for the group.

I'd followed God far enough now to have full confidence in His ability to provide. All I had to do was chart the course and move forward with His power having full faith in His ability to provide.

If only it were that simple.

The truth was I was a nervous wreck with mounting anxiety and continued trouble sleeping at night. I prayed, believed and followed but I sure can't say I went through this process willingly. Especially when the unemployment office told us that I'd not been working long enough to qualify for financial assistance.

We were practically penniless without a job and moving from concrete hell to a place in the woods of California. Yes, there are beautiful woods where people can enjoy living while in California. called Brownsville. No not Brownsville, Texas. Brownsville, California.

As it turned out I was asked to drive the last moving truck up to our new place. That was not a problem till I found out that this was not just any moving truck. This one had a car being towed behind. I'd driven big rigs before so this would be a piece of cake, right?

I'd driven big rigs before so this would be a piece of cake, right?

Never really being a spatial type person I couldn't see what the big difference between 14, 26 or 36 would really be. That is I couldn't see it till it was smack dab in front of me sitting there with tow dolly attached.

It was huge.

It was huger than huge.

And I was the one to be driving it. All I wanted to do at this point was rescind my offer. But I didn't. So the trip began once everything was loaded.

The miles once again began to click by.

This time our burnt orange car that was packed to the brim with everything we owned including Sassy cat would be driven by my bride while I sat in the driver's seat of this big behemoth heading across the states.

Sure glad God knew how to handle this thing because I didn't. And we were off. All together it took about 3 days for the journey to be made.

I have never decided which part was actually the most stressful.

Was it driving late at night without a motel insight fighting back sleep as we prayed for a place to lay my head? Or perhaps driving down five skinny lanes of traffic through Vegas with road construction and vehicles darting everywhere. God certainly wasn't my co-pilot during that part of the journey. Instead, I gave Him full control of the co-pit and went into the back to take a nap. I wish.

But somehow we made it.

Yup, we made it to our resting place for that night and were approved for parking the big rig right in the parking lot. I pulled it in, which was quite a struggle. Once done I prepared to close up shop for the night only to find out that they would be refusing to accept pets.

We begged.

We pleaded.

And we were refused.

So I climbed up into the big rig, prepared to depart and was instantly horrified.

Being tired and all I had brought operation move to a standstill by parking wherever I could. I'd deal with the repercussions in the morning. It was now that I realized there was only one way I was going to be departing and it wasn't driving forward out of the drive.

My only option would be to back up.

If you've ever tried to back up this type of rig and if it happened to be towing something behind you'll know in an instant what an ordeal I was now facing. Can anyone say, fishtails!

If it were not for that man who came out of his room to stop my process I would have broken the hitch clear in two. With his kind guidance, I was able to safely get turned around and park the rig as my bride went out to seek shelter for the night in our faithful Ford Focus.

At least that was the plan.

Not long after she left, in the middle of the night, midnight to be more precise. The manager came out of the motel and advised me that I would need to move the rig off the property.

Move?

But I had no idea where my wife was. If I moved now I might not find her or worse. The cell phone was dead, so I had absolutely no way of communicating. I explained all this to the manager and advised that I would be moving as soon as possible but no grace was offered.

Move and move now were my orders.

Somehow we did find each other that night. Her, with her, beautifully flowing brown hair resting against her tender Caucasian skin and I. Lips like roses so beautiful to behold even through these tired eyes of mine. It was like a dream or a distant vision to be wrapped so tightly together while leaving all cares behind.

How could this be happening and happening to me?

See, as I pulled out of the drive to go to places forbiddingly unknown I chose to make a couple of turns hoping they wouldn't be wrong and came to rest as close as I could to the meeting destination to begin waiting for what seemed like an eternity.

That's when the woman of my dreams entered the scene.

We knew at once we had found each other and the very sight of her took my breath away. Some may call it love at first sight, others perhaps even lust. What I called it was the pure and beautiful treasure of finding my bride again.

That's right.

Despite being whisked into the darkness we connected back up and found the place where we would be able to rest for the evening. In the morning we were on the road again and headed for our new place in California.

What a beautiful night that was.

Fully rested or at least as much as possible this online marketing team was ready for the next leg of our journey. The one that would find its end in California. The one that would commence with us taking up temporary residence at the long-term care facility for Alzheimer's as there was nowhere else for us to live.

This would be a very temporary arrangement. That's one thing both my wife and I required.

Chapter 5: Left

I remember the first time I saw them, two beautifully lush peaks towering above all else. I was utterly awed by their unveiling as they entered into my dry and barren sight. What I saw before me literally brought tears of joy into my very being. It seemed as though God had made them exclusively for me and no one else.



I had returned.

I had come home.

I was back in the mountains. I'll have to admit that I never quite understood how much I loved mountains and trees and such until I spent a year in Nineveh, I mean Texas. I'll not do that again, I hope.

We were still far from our final destination at this point, but I certainly enjoyed the scenery

that waited for me which included the beauty of the Little Grand Canyon. Eventually, we began winding and climbing the roadways to our final destination.

This is California?

I'd never imagined California to be so beautiful and lush. It was amazing. It was breathtaking. It was our new home. But where were they? You know, the ones in misery and pain suffering from their deplorable conditions of mental trauma which some also call Alzheimer's. Everyone here looked normal.

Everyone here was normal.

Perhaps their families had taken them on an outing? After all, it's so good when a family is involved with the care of those that are afflicted.

It's also so amazing how those afflicted can look and seem so utterly normal at first glance. I found this out the hard way over our first meal.

He was busily doing something on the other side of the kitchen and I wanted his attention. So I did what any logical thinking man would do by hollering out "Hey Joe."

I got his attention alright. That and a whole lot more as he angrily assaulted my being except for the table between. Turns out, I was to learn, that Alzheimer's people enjoy peaceful serene environments and this man, in particular, hated being hollered at.

I had much to learn, or I could turn tail and run which is what I wanted to do. After all, I'm an online marketer who does online marketing which has nothing to do with old people. But I'm also a God follower and God had brought us here temporarily. Very temporarily, so I decided to make the best of it which included attending a church that next Sabbath.

By this time Joe and I had become cordially acquainted so I decided to be his right-hand man for the service. This particular worship service, our first, was led by the youth which included the orchestra. There were many people moving about with action taking place throughout the entire event.

And I felt it.

It started out small at first and began to mount. Suddenly I knew I was in trouble but had no idea what to do so I simply prayed for the service to end.

No one else saw.

No one else knew.

Then my whole world began to move beneath my feet. This was not your typical California quake, it was much worse. As a matter of fact, it wasn't an earthquake at all; it was him as he rose to his feet. See, all the pandemonium that had been taking place during the service finally got to him and he proceeded forward.

I quickly followed. Followed to the front.

Followed to what I feared would be the pulpit.

Followed to who knew what lay ahead until he reached it while cursing all the way.

I did try to stop him, I really did. But at this point, I was both inexperienced and out of control. He, on the other hand, grabbed the small cylindrical object and securely fastened it into his hand. Next, he pressed it forward and began to speak as in dismay I did the only thing I could think to do at the time.

That's right; I followed him out the door.

Once on the outside, I reflected back. That went well, I thought. Which, of course, it hadn't.

Fearing to return into the service for the cause of what would happen next we waited outside for all to end. All but the commencing of the potluck that is. It was an enjoyable meal. We laughed and got to know other attending members. But like all good things they do eventually come to an end.

This end included us walking out into the beautiful mountainous scenery for which we lived. It was breathtaking, it was awe-inspiring and it was a car door which he wanted in.

Yes, a car door. Which may seem innocent enough, innocent that is if it had happened to be our car door; which it wasn't.

So I commenced to leading Joe away while he commenced to his demands of getting into the car. That car. The wrong car.

No worries, I had this all figured out this time. All I needed to do was position myself securely between the door and him and all would be well.

This is, of course, what I did. It was after all the logical thing to do as I began to explain that our car was another car and not this car. Thinking I was winning this time I really didn't see it coming. Oh, I felt the increased agitation building again in conjunction with his temper but I didn't see it coming. Why should I? After all, I'd never experienced it before.

It, this time, despite my logical emotional appeal delivered more power than a locomotive or at least it felt like it as my cheek disintegrated below the impact of his left hook. The lady on-looking was horrified and shouted out. My own raging emotions wanted to respond in like manner and set this dude straight.

I've never experienced the power of exploding rage like this. No, not his, mine. I wanted so to return the delivery of pain and fought every inch of my being as I refused. Thank God, I refused.

Otherwise, who knows what would have taken place.

Finally, the episode was over and we were headed home. Well, we were headed back to our temporary housing anyway. Very temporary now because we were moving to who knows where. Anywhere, including a cave was fine with me as long as I could get away from him. I was finished. It was over. I'm an online marketer, not a punching bag.

Back at home my wife and I began adjusting our plans when He spoke again. No, not Joe, God.

Exactly who I had no interest in hearing from at that moment. After all, it was because of Him that we were in this deplorable condition.

He only asked me one question now. Do you love me?

Of course, I do, I retorted. I left a well-paying job in Michigan to move to Texas where you informed us we were to move to California and while reluctantly at times I followed. Now, you have the audacity to ask if I love you?

On a personal note, I believe God loves to connect with our feelings and isn't afraid to hear them. In fact, He appreciates them and works with them like He did this time with me.

Are you willing to do whatever I ask? He continued.

Do I need to review the above? I responded. I'll do most anything for you short of being abused by a left hook.

So you have your limits in our relationship?

Obviously, this wasn't going anywhere except in directions of insanity so I stopped talking altogether.

But He didn't. He kept going with love and compassion as He outlined His will for my life in these days. I had two choices.

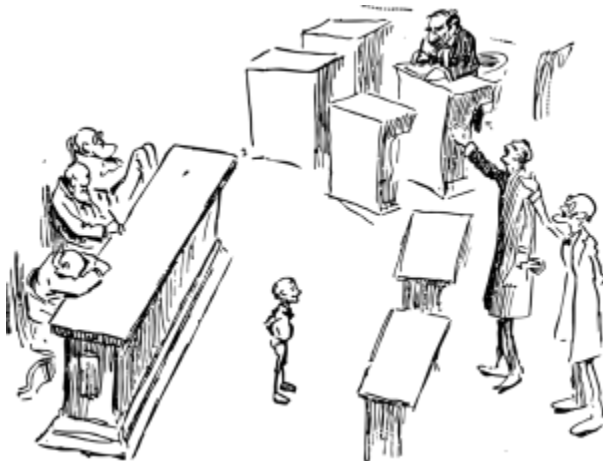
Live life as I wanted or follow Him.

We wrestled. We fought. We, we stayed.

Chapter 6: Arrested

Red tape.

I'm not to overly fond of it. If you ask my wife I'm not fond of it at all which probably is why she practically has to sit on me to get paperwork done, especially paperwork of the hard copy offline variety.



None-the-less, if we wanted to continue living where we were then we would need to have police records completed successfully, fingerprints and all. Perhaps for most this is not a stressful event but for me, it was quite another story.

Why?

History.

One police record required filing the 6th-month restraining order. Fortunately, I was the one filing in that case so it shouldn't be an issue. Other minor skirmishes including traffic violations also existed on my record though these really had little to do with my concern.

My real concern was how things had gone between my x-wife and I. Have you ever made a really bad choice in life which you regretted having done but were forced to live with it anyway?

I have and this was certainly one of those.

It was 82 days after my wife died when we tied the knot. Almost immediately I knew I was headed for trouble as she explained her belief of never paying compliments based on the principal of the other person getting a “big head.” As time would have it one thing she was solid about was telling the truth at all times and this certainly ended up being no exception.

Despite the issues we had I tried my best to make it work but things just kept heading in the wrong direction. Arguing erupted into fighting which transgressed into the rage as the days went by.

Then it arrived.

It was quite possibly the ugliest fight we ever had. Failing to maintain my composure through it all she stormed upstairs into the bedroom and slammed the door.

I was in hot pursuit.

Yes, I was angry but I really just wanted to work things out.

Attempting to enter into the bedroom behind I suddenly found myself locked out. My rage exploded into a violent thrust of physical aggression from foot to the solid door. Afterward, I peered down at the resulting destruction in horror. My father was the one with this type of misplaced anger, not me. Yet here I was.

I decided it was time to flee.

Being the online marketer I was even in those days, I secured my laptop and began to leave. Her son responded by calling the police.

Given that it was my computer I felt justified in removing it from the dwelling. As I exited our condo and headed for the parking lot the Holy Spirit was screaming “put down the computer” extremely loudly.

At first, I refused but then decided to comply.

Once into my vehicle the Lord then instructed me to drive directly to the police office and explain what had taken place. In the process of doing this, I saw an officer headed the other way and flagged them down.

Turns out, they were the ones headed to check out the domestic violence at my place.

I explained the situation and after several minutes was horrified to find myself being cuffed.

Wait.

I left without physical violence to any person, flagged the officers down myself and now was being cuffed? This didn't make sense.

Our next stop was jail where they let me sit in the cell with the door open while they sorted out the details. Turns out there were no records filed and I was released while needing to appear for a court hearing.

Remember that red tape and my dislike of it? It was about to haunt me big time, this time.

I showed up for the hearing without any associated paperwork. Why would I need it? I'd done nothing wrong. Finally, it was my time to go before the judge. I did exactly that while beginning to explain my plight.

He wanted to know one simple thing.

It had nothing to do with the case, or so I thought. He wanted to know where my paperwork was.

I attempted to explain and he became angry at me for not bringing the proper documentation. On the spot, I was handcuffed again while he went through all the other cases on the books for that day.

When he got back to me he had some extremely harsh things to say before giving me my marching orders. From that point forward I made sure to jot every "t" and dot every "i" until the entire ordeal was over many months later.

Because I had done so well, there would be no record of the case on the books or so I thought.

Now, many years later, this all came rushing back to me with extreme fear and dread of possible circumstances that could unfold.

We all know how government works or doesn't work. Was this issue really off the books forever? If not we would be unable to remain where we were and had no money to go elsewhere. We would be homeless, broke and abandoned like an old shoe.

No matter the case, police records were run and we commenced to waiting and still waiting some more. It felt like an eternity had passed when we finally got the report.

Nervous I was.

What would I do? What would we do? There seemed to be no other plan available and yet we needed options.

Fortunately, the news was positive. I was clean. We could stay.

We were now officially online marketers temporarily living in a long-term care facility where we would keep two crazies company for who knew how long.

This was what we wanted, right?

Chapter 7: The Proposal

With the stress of living conditions now behind us, Irene and I could set out to rolling up our sleeves and implementing the online marketing part of the package we were bringing to this medical missionary team here in California. We would be doing that while providing caregiving services for the two residents that were living with us.



It really only made sense given that we would be with them 24/7. At least for the temporary future. After all, how hard could it be to care for two elderly people with Alzheimer's?

Honestly speaking, we really had no clue.

As the hour passed into the hour and day passed into day both my wife and I found ourselves inundated with unexpected duties and responsibilities that we had not prepared to endure. However, this was okay, given that we

were all part of a medical missionary team effort. The only real struggle we had was with this team concept we were part of.

See, in a not so gradual manner, those that were to be supporting us were disappearing and providing less and less involved assistance. Given that we were providing our part of the services free of any type of charge we were surprised to find that the only real members of this "team" were my wife and I.

This, of course, directly impacted how much time we had for working on the online marketing aspect of the equation. The truth was we weren't able to do anything on that front. Instead, we were targeting full-time elderly care for two Alzheimer's patients with practically no experience or prior training. It was hard work.

It was exhausting. It was a nightmare.

It also didn't take long till I wanted out. I was getting out. My wife and I were going back to Spokane. This wasn't the first time I'd planned to go back to Spokane. But like with every other time God simply wouldn't allow for that door to be opened.

You know, it's strange, in my earlier years I had tried so hard to get out of Washington and over these last couple of years, my desire was to do nothing else but get back in.

Yet, it was not to be.

Then it happened.

I couldn't believe my ears. It was incredible really. Incredibly insane that is. Having been the full-time caregivers for some time we were being asked to take over this part of the ministry. It would be our own business. These two online marketers would be making a full-time income from elderly care services provided to Alzheimer's patients, which is a far cry from making a living on the Internet.

It just didn't make sense.

It didn't fit.

We had come to California to be the marketing part of the equation. Nothing else, well, at least nothing else long-term since we already knew about her. But all that would only be temporary.

I positioned myself to decline but asked for some time for my wife and I to talk and pray about the matter first, which we commenced doing.

It's strange how God works.

What doesn't make a lick of sense to us is oftentimes exactly what he wants us to do. This would turn out to be one of those times.

Reluctantly. Reservedly. We accepted.

We still really had no clue of what we were doing, but I'm sure glad God did.

Chapter 8: Our Little Princess

Now that we were the full-time caregivers of our new found business we really had to roll up our sleeves and get things done. Thoughts of online marketing pursuits largely became a thing of the past. Our focus was in learning everything we could about Alzheimer's care now.



Imagine.

Two online marketers being taken clear around the United States to end up as the main caregivers at an elderly care facility. It was crazy. It was preposterous. It was our new life.

That was until we received the news.

You know; the news that is born out of the darkness of night within the privacy of ecstasy when you know without a shadow of a doubt that you've gone further than ever before this time? That time. The time.

The doctor's report even confirmed it.

Our little princess was so excited. First, we met and then with all legal proceedings passed there was only one hurdle left. That's right, our TB results were negative. There was now nothing to hold us back from taking over this entire operation which is exactly what God had led us to do.

As mentioned previously there were two residents.

Joe, the aggressively dangerous one we needed to watch out for and our little princess. She would turn out to be extremely helpful when she wanted to be. As we got to know her it seemed that she had lived a most interesting life which started in the Philippines.

See, she had grown up in a very hard time in that country and watched as her dad who had been a high government official was dethroned, defaced, discredited and put to death. It was quite an elaborate story really. Growing up in a large family while living part of her days eking out a survival in caves.

It's sad to see what Dementia and Alzheimer's does to a patient's mind, but at least she could have fun with these fanciful memories of yesteryear. The only thing was that every time we heard these concocted stories they somehow made sense and were always logically integrated one upon the other. That and the overwhelming presence of familiarity left both my wife and I perplexed.

Then the day from hell arrived.

We turned to check on our residents which both my wife and I did regularly for obvious reasons when suddenly we realized in horror that this time would not be like any other. We found Sassy and Joe and the little princess, there she was, gone.

Things had been getting rather tense in the facility of late at that point.

Many nights previous she had also vanished. It took us over an hour to find her that time largely because of the pitch blackness of night. The one saving grace we could clean to was that the weather was warmer during this time of the year, but not being able to find the one we were caring for was the stuff made of panic attacks.

Finally, however, we looked into the cave she had crawled into and found her huddled and shivering in fear. Having no real cave to climb into she had instead crawled under her porch and bedded down.

Why did this all seem so strangely familiar?

My wife and I continued to be perplexed about the matter. Pieces.

Strange pieces.

Disjointed pieces.

Somehow they were all fitting together perfectly.

And now, we were dealing with the piece of our little princes' vanishing. But where could she be? We all continued to look.

Even our friends from the other part of the medical missionary team were helping this time. However, it was all to no avail. To no avail that is till we found her across the street talking to the medics at a nearby neighbor's house.

Upon her arrival, he had called emergency because of the breathing trouble she was experiencing. A thing of normalcy in our world. They had arrived and were doing a full check while finding nothing. They were certainly glad when my arrival on the scene became a reality, but she wasn't.

Instead, she had concocted an elaborately horrible story and commenced to its delivery. Fortunately, the reporting officer had known our little princess and her elaborate stories previously which led him to have no genuine concern of its truthfulness.

None-the-less, it was decided that she would be taken for a 45-minute drive down to the hospital for full checkup largely because neither my wife nor I possessed the power to rescind such a decision put forth.

So, as before, my bride boarded our burnt orange car and headed for the town while I stayed behind and provided care services for Joe.

Several hours later my wife and our little princess returned unlike before. This ordeal, unlike the one previous just months before would be short, lived.

Not long after we first arrived our little princess was rushed to the hospital as I watched what I thought would be her final departure. But after several days of absence, she returned and we nursed her back to health. It was really quite an ordeal.

Despite all the excitement, she brought into the equation she remained with one request. She wanted to know more about what we believed. She wanted a Bible study led by me.

Generally, I am quite willing to step up and lead out in Bible study but this time was different largely because we had been counseled that family members did not want this to take place. As I juggled everyone's request I finally chose to do the God thing and lead. I'm glad I did too.

Our little princess always seemed so knowledgeable about such things. She always knew what to say and when to say it even before the study and so I led on.

Then one day, the Lord prompted me to ask if she had ever said the sinner's prayer which I found out she hadn't.

Imagine.

Our little princess never having said the prayer of salvation simply because no one had ever asked her if this would be something she would want to do. We quickly rectified the situation while perplexity about this little lady continued to mount.

Then, one day, it dawned on us. Well, really my wife first but then me too. We had met before. Well, in a way.

In Texas.

But how?

It wasn't possible. But it happened.

Remember the movie we had watched after my layoff from the company I was working for? I do and I did. And it all made sense now. The stories that our little princess would share and the events in that movie paralleled so closely that there was really no other possibility. The Lord had led us to a movie about this specific ladies life.

There were too many exact parallels for that to not be the case. It was incredibly amazing.

It was an honor.

It was God.

Chapter 9: License to Kill

Now fully into this new commitment, we set out upon we slowly began getting our feet under us with one surprising turn of events unfolding.



See, “the team”, the one that was supposed to be providing amazing support. The team that we as newbies were leaning upon and counting on.

Well...

As the day passed into the day it became more and more apparent that there would really only be 2 functioning members on this team.

My wife, and I.

The more we pleaded for help the less assistance we received. It was becoming a nightmare of sorts in many ways, but we pressed on.

We pressed on beyond the first aid certifications we needed and succeeded.

We pressed on beyond the shopping expeditions (it was over an hour into most nearby towns) and succeeded.

We simply pressed on until one day we were advised by mostly non-existent team members that we would need a license to continue. Obtaining this particular license would take the better part of the week from either my wife or I. So we debated who would be best to go.

At first we thought it would be my wife because I certainly didn't want her alone with him. After all, should I be the one to go I wanted to come back home to a living bride and I knew how physically aggressive Joe could be firsthand.

But then there would be the cooking which is certainly not an area where I excel.

That combined with the fact that Irene hates taking tests largely because of her dyslexia found the final selection resting squarely upon my shoulders.

With that out of the way we began targeting the best date for the class and determined it would be in about 10 days. 10 days to make sure that while I was gone Irene would be able to manage. 10 days. That's not much time.

So we set out a game plan and began to move forward. It's then that I began hearing the voices.

It's not easy living with people suffering from Alzheimer's especially when they begin to show signs of physical aggression. Simple discussions can easily erupt into heated arguments especially when you don't have a real clue of what to do and we were so new.

I wanted to stop these voices this time just as I had done in times past but knew I couldn't. If I were to be gone the better part of a week they would have to find a way to work this out.

Even simple requests become extremely complicated.

That's just how it is living with Alzheimer's. I suppose this wouldn't be necessary if our focus was simply on making them comfortable in their final death and dying days but we believed in restorative care.

Restorative care is where you allow the patient the ability to perform as many responsibilities as possible for themselves so that they begin the healing process.

So if this class was to be then I needed to allow Irene the room to have Joe comb his hair and so the voices mounted as I continued working with our little princess. The more I tried to turn my focus away from the noise the less I could, which is why I was now outside of visual but standing at the ready across the room.

This had to work.

If it didn't we could be shut down in a moment's notice by legal authorities.

Barely able to hold myself back for my own mounting agitation I waited for resolve which hadn't come, wasn't coming and wouldn't be coming until I saw what could have been a sack of potatoes flying out of the bathroom.

It could have been a sack of potatoes, but it certainly wasn't. It was Irene!

My agitation turned into out-right rage as I rushed to her aid. It was one thing for myself to be clocked for no reason outside the church but quite another for some man, any man, no matter his condition to treat my bride this way. To put it bluntly, I was out of control with hostility.

I wanted to put Joe in his place, especially when I saw the deep opened wounds of the scarlet red scratch across her chest. Emotionally, this monster was going down.

Despite my rage, the Lord was speaking to me quite loudly now. Remember the cross.

My wife lay sprawled across the floor and bleeding and I'm too "remember the cross"?

That's certainly not what I wanted to think about just now. I had some podre to podre business to take care of and that was my focus.

Remember the cross, I heard again.

The cross where my sinless Savior died for a world that rejected His plea to come to Him and be free.

I glared angrily at Joe with my fist balled and ready to fire, heard those words repeated again and again, and time stood still.

What would I do?

Behave like any man coming to the aid of the one he loves in an angry rage? I sure wanted to. But, what would I do?

Every ounce of my being wanted to pulverize the man in front of me as time seemed to literally stand still. Then it happened.

Against every ounce of my will, I turned and positioned myself in the best stance possible to unleash aid to my bride. How I wanted so deeply to lash out with a physical retaliation, but praise God He helped me do what I really needed to do at that very moment.

Remember the cross.

Chapter 10: When God Doesn't Make Sense

A sure recipe for disaster is found when you take two professional Online Marketer's from Spokane, Washington and relocate them to California via Texas through Michigan and expect them to become primary caregivers of an Alzheimer's care facility in the middle of nowhere without support.



Yet here we were.

“Were” being the operative word.

After this event, I decided to take my wife back to Spokane. We were finished. I would not allow my wife to be treated this way, let alone myself. We began making plans.

But we made a mistake. Not the first. We prayed.

I was taken back to early summer 2001.

While out on a hike with my wife I decided to take a picture of a beautiful bridge with rushing water spewing out below. We were on Snowqualimiah Pass.

In order to take this picture, I needed to step down off the trail just a little onto a nearby rock. Never mind the sign that read “stay on trail” as this would not be a huge deviation.

The only problem with this particular rock was that it was slightly slanted at a 60% angle toward the rushing river. Not to worry though, I had hiking boots on.

I began to steady myself for the shot and noticed just a little water splashing onto this moss filled platform I had selected. Suddenly it happened and happened so quickly I might add. No longer was I standing still but instead I was moonwalking across my platform as I began to slide out of position.

Taking a quick assessment of the situation I determined all would be fine once I got to the flat part of the platform as long as I maintained my balance. So I did not panic.

It's a funny thing, really. How the laws of nature can play havoc with the plans of humanity. From debates about global warming to ozone and environmental pollution; God's creation fights back for survival. The law being tampered with this time would be found to be the victor. It would prevail as it elatedly claimed its prize.

It was not moss, nor rocks, water or vegetation. It was not sunlight or crevasses. It wasn't even the waterfall involved.

It was gravity.

And it was in control as my body became a speeding bullet that shot across this flatter surface and into midair. I was flying. But I can't fly, at least not without help.

Next thing I heard was the splash.

Judging from the sudden arrival of water all about I had a pretty good idea where that sound had come from and wanted nothing more to do with it. So when I surfaced I simply reached out for the nearby rock I had been propelled off and prepared to take hold.

My fingers desperately desired to find security within the land mass that lay just beyond their reach. It was ever so close and would be a simple move forward to escape my watery ordeal. Simple if the rushing water wasn't now demanding other things.

So as I began to move forward it became painfully apparent that my preferred plans of rescue would be unresolvedly abated. Oh, I was moving forward alright but the class 5 rapids I was in demanded that I move forward in the wrong direction.

There's nothing quite like being inches from relief while unable to reach its salvation. Nothing quite like; minus spinning beneath rockery water while praying to surface for air into lungs once again.

This was the lot waiting for me once propelled off the ledge and into the commotion below. Looking up from my watery grave I had a quick chat with the Lord.

It went like this:

Lord, this body needs that air up above. Help! I surfaced.

I assessed my situation.

I saw the nice size rock propelled above the water where I could escape this whole ordeal. The beautiful part was that I was heading right for this point of escape.

As I was brought closer and closer still I prepared to be able to climb up and out. Have you ever tried to climb a rock?

A wet rock?

A wet rock with 40 to 50 MPH water hitting your backside? It's practically impossible as I was to find out.

It didn't seem to matter what I wanted, and how, it was not to be.

Despite my own preferences, my body was moved around the rock and back into motion further down my water slide.

While all this horror was taking place my bride was watching in utter horror. Well, that's the way it started anyway. When she saw me plunge into the abyss she feared and went for help.

When the first car arrived she asked with a panic in her voice if they had a cell phone. The answer was "no" as they drove on. She was amazed at their lack of concern as would I have been had I seen that part of this event.

Fortunately, the second car did have a cell phone and she could contact 911 where emergency help was sought. The operator had asked her how far it was from the trail to the water to which she replied 50 to 100 feet. The logical assumption quickly made was that I had fallen that far into the water below.

Knowing that I was headed to a major tourist retreat less than a mile away, they went into action. Fire department dispatched.

Fire department dispatched.

Police contacted.

Even an eye in the sky was called to report to the scene.

While true it was that the trail and water had distance between, the rock I had slid across made for my entry point to be more like a zero footfall. Never-the-less help was indeed on the way as I continued to pray.

It seemed like an eternity stuck in motion. Turmoil, rage and uncontrolled controllability seemed my lot.

My wife and I certainly hadn't planned for this and I knew not where to turn. That's why I positioned myself to do what only made sense and return.

It was then that God spoke and I quickly understood that despite my every effort to depart my directive was to remain in California.

Chapter 11: Rescued

We were walking.

We walked often. It's when we had our private chats. I learned his favorite color was blue, at least for that day. He so enjoyed the trees and birds and scenery about.



I began explaining to Joe how God had made all this just for him as humanity goes. He was amazed to learn that 2000 years hence a man had been nailed to the cross so that we might be redeemed. We began talking about it more.

As our walks and talks went by day after day I began to see parts of my new friend that others had missed. Oh sure, he had an illness that affected his mind, there was no question about that. What I saw in living with Joe that others had missed was that to a certain extent at least this was a guise he had erected to hide his troubles behind.

Seeing the truth, I began working on that. That's when the unexpected fall took place.

We were in route to one of our medical clinic appointments when suddenly I heard my friend cry out with a loud noise behind. It was him. He had slipped. He had fallen. But he was always so stable on his feet.

I didn't know exactly what to do so I went for help inside in a virtual panic.

Doctor's assessed the situation and all appeared to be fine. As time passed it would become apparent that no long-term repercussions would result. I was thankful about that.

I was also thankful that we would be able to continue our walks. He was still stable on his feet just as he had always been. And I continued to believe that exercise was what he needed now, not to mention myself.

One day we were out hiking at the larger property of this new medical missionary project. We were with the group. It would only be a short jaunt through a bit of bramble to reach our destination and so we went.

Stepping over long grass and weeds was not too rough. Even the uneven ground below was not extremely difficult for Joe to navigate. The truth was I believe he had a certain amount of delightful enjoyment from the event which is why we continued forward.

When branches of fallen trees and stumps replaced our previous allotment I became concerned while he remained more than stable upon his feet. Fortunately, those who had started out as a team were greatly involved this time and step by step we all made our way through this unforgettable jungle.

Our destination reached we rested and enjoyed the rest of the day.

Then there was the walk we took at Walmart. It was a different sort altogether. One of the things I had decided to do was paint the stairs and ramp into our dwelling and so I did.

Finding it necessary to acquire said paint and brushes too, Joe and I had driven down to town to secure necessary supplies. If we had only entered the local Walmart once there likely wouldn't have been an issue.

Deciding it was too much expense we looked elsewhere for options and found none. We returned to Walmart.

I secured the paint we needed and made our departure without the brushes. Once out at the car I discovered my plight, we turned about to make our walk back in where this time I obtained all needed supplies.

With time moving swiftly by it was apparent to me that I was getting hungry. I knew that if my hunger was increasing, so was Joe's. Before making my final escape I reached for my wallet and discovered it gone.

Back out to the car we went followed by yet another return.

This would be the fourth time in and the fourth time out. While exiting it suddenly caught his eye as he secured it into his hand. He wasn't going a step further without the succinctly delicious morsels of chocolate.

The problem with this equation is that this would not be in line with his dietary requirements at all.

So I set about to remove the meal which I quickly found would be more difficult than I had imagined. As his voice of refusal began to escalate I feared others might assess and evaluate incorrectly what was really taking place.

Instead of responding in like leading to even more upraised voices I moved us away from the chocolate and then calmly asked for the release. He complied. I was beginning to understand how to work with my new found friend.

We left.

We walked even further through the journey God had placed us both upon.

One day while walking and talking of the love of Jesus for Joe I queried if he would like to ask the Lord to be His own personal Lord and Savior both. This wasn't the first time. But this time, he responded that he would. I was excitedly amazed.

We prayed.

I led first to which he would repeat word after word. Dear Jesus

I love you. I want you in my life and I want to receive your holy spirit into my life. Please come into my heart and make me whole. I desire to be with you forever more.

Amen.

He repeated these words exactly during our walk that day. Never before nor since had I heard him able to be so exacting in repetition than that very day. As a result, I believe he truly did receive Jesus Christ as His own personal Lord and Savior that day.

I was so overjoyed.

I called friends and family and of course my mother too. They each listened as I shared the salvation story in tears of ecstatic happiness.

When finally I was able to speak with his daughter I had trouble understanding who exactly was happier. Her or I, it certainly matters not. What is important is that Joe had accepted Jesus into his heart as His own personal Lord and Savior.

Chapter 12: Of Mices and Men

As we began to become more familiar with our surroundings it was inevitable. One day, the phone rang.



The person on the other end explained that they would be coming for a visit. We feared. We panicked. What would she think? Would she notice how truly unskilled we were. We really didn't know what to do besides suggest that she come ahead.

After all, when it's your father being treated it really only makes sense and so the day arrived when we were to first meet her. This day went far better than I could have imagined as we all visited fellowshipped and sang.

It was a good day with a little surprise of its own in-store for everybody.

When Irene opened the door it was like opening the door into the past, not future. Both exclaimed that they knew each other though they knew not where from.

Comparing notes began as histories were reflected upon.

Suddenly it was realized. Irene and roomed with Joe's daughter while going through college. It is a small world indeed.

During this visit, as is normal for his daughter, she began looking at all the pieces of the puzzle to determine if her dad was being taken care of in the way she would desire. As it ended up, her biggest concern was our lack of support or time away.

While this is an obviously relevant concern, Irene and I explained that God would meet our needs just as he had always done.

Even back in 2001, God had orchestrated a father to be fishing with his two sons downstream. The fire department, police and helicopter alike would not have arrived in time to rescue me alive from my watery ordeal.

He watched in amazement as this stupid idiot made his way downstream and into that next plunge. As he continued to watch and I continued to approach he changed not his opinion of my plight but instead added to it.

While indeed I was that stupid idiot. He determined I was a stupid idiot in serious trouble, which I truly was. Somehow, some way by some miracle it happened. Directly out from in front of him I managed to secure my feet though getting tired I was.

Glasses gone, and in a state of fear I looked over at shadows on shore and called out the only word I could think of. "HELP"

The response came back; to hold on they were coming and that is what I did though getting weaker by the second. Arm in arm they made their way. My human chain was expanding and rescue was headed my way. Finally, the last link was secured and I grabbed hold.

Now they began to pull with all their might but I did not move.

Adding insult to injury I could only imagine that my human chain was too weak to rescue and once again I began to panic.

The lead person of the chain instructed me to turn to my chest and that is what I did. It was at this point I was glad my mom had taught me to submit to authority. For when I saw my human chain I found the greatest fear risen.

See, I'd entered into this hellish nightmare unwittingly while my human chain of no more than one person instructed me to crawl forward, which is exactly what I did.

Out of the greatest turmoil now my body began to take over as I feared the worst may be yet to come. Suddenly I felt as if I would pass out and let him know before we got to the shore.

He secured us on top of a rock outside of the water and told me to do whatever I found necessary. After 10 minutes it seemed, we made our way further out of the water and onto the shore where medical teams had yet to arrive.



I remained there for a period of time then prepared to leave but not before the fire department arrived. I was leaving alright but upon a stretcher, it would be. I advised that a stretcher would neither be necessary nor desired but was ignored.

I then explained that if they were seeking to go up against a belligerent idiot I would be more than glad to accommodate their demands. For my own sanity, I knew it necessary to walk out of this situation propelled by my own strength.

They acquiesced when I agreed that they would be able to walk with me by my side.

Once this whole ordeal was over I had such an overwhelming feeling of wanting to live come over me

that I began to live. I'd experienced serious thoughts of suicide more than once, but never such a strong desire to live as I did this time.

Once that was passed I began to ask God why.

There are so many who fall into my plight and die, why was I spared.

He told me without equivocation that He had a special mission for me not many years hence. Knowing that I was in a job anyone could do while living a life anyone could live I had no idea what that could be. Yet I believed while storing this all deeply into my mind.

Back now with his daughter, I began to explain that somehow God would provide though I really knew not how. To my knowledge, she was satisfied with the answer and continued her visit with the real man she came to see.

Chapter 13: Cash Crops

You know.

Marijuana.

It's one of the most prevalent cash crops available in California. Perhaps that's why over 10 officers found it necessary to search my car simultaneously.

That; or the Pain Kickers signs that adorned my windows on all four sides led them to believe they had found a major drug lord.

You see, years ago my wife was in a traffic accident that has left her with back problems ever since. Given that we had been instructed to provide our services to this ministry absolutely free

the first several months while already experiencing economic hardship we were seeking helpful relief for her. One of our friends mentioned a pain relief product for her to try and even sent us a couple of samples.

It worked.

We were happy.

In fact, we were so happy that we decided to become an active part of the business.

This led us to go down to the weekly swap meet each Sunday and share our discovery with others. Joe had fun during these outings. Watching all the people milling around as each found their own incredible relief.

He quickly became kin to my shadow as our friendship grew.

It was fun to walk by people and sometimes stop. Stop so he could tell them what an awesome friend I was. He appreciated me and I was becoming extremely attached to him.

One of my responsibilities was to make sure my buddy stayed dry. This required frequent trips to the men's room to make sure that all was still okay. Most all the time we succeeded and when we didn't we simply took care of necessary business.

As men's rooms do they stank.

This time was certainly no different but a duty undone is no solution to have so we commenced to finishing needed responsibilities. Our heads rose above the stall doors in this particular room. No real big deal we thought and continued to proceed.

Suddenly there were voices heard for which we ignored. Seemed security was seeking to find who was smoking weed within which was certainly not us.

Then came the knock on our stall door to emerge while accusations were directed specifically at us. Come out – we know you are smoking in there, they shouted.

I responded by saying I never had smoked and don't plan to start anytime soon.

This, unfortunately, did not satisfy them so he pursued by telling me of his power to get me thrown off the premises.

Somewhat agitatedly I explained that I was a born-again Christian and had no interest or desire in that type of life. Then I explained that the place stank when we came in, therefore, the smell came not from us.

Still unconvinced he spouted back the assault that either we were smoking weed or homo's getting it on, and in either case, we needed to leave.

That for me was just a step too far and I cracked the door. Catching his eye I glared angrily out while exclaiming in a matter of fact rebuttal that not all was as it seems. I further went on in my attack that he would be free to say whatever he likes about me, but when you lash out at my buddy and friend the Wrath of Kain would be competitively pale. Then to solidify my point I placed the soiled diaper squarely in his hand and returned to my duties.

Thinking the matter over we returned to our booth but that would not be enough for me.

I next found myself in the office explaining how they could be facing a lawsuit from the attack I had received. One requirement only was my demand. The man who had falsely accused me of foul play come to my booth and apologize to my friend Joe which he sorta did.

He did arrive and apologize while underhandedly explaining that he still thought himself right and that was the end. Once done I responded by saying that to affront me would never an issue be but dare he ever decide to verbally abuse my buddy again there would be serious repercussions to pay.

Chapter 14: We Quit

There's only so much two people can take and we were well past the breaking point.

Whenever we received time off which was almost never it was always worse for us than better.



We would counsel our medical missionary fill-ins that processed food including cakes and cookies were to be avoided. Upon arrival, we would find boxed cakes and packaged food had been served despite the fact that menus were provided.

This was most utterly frustrating to us and especially my wife since she did most of the cooking.

I suppose though the straw that broke the camel's back was the week we were given of total freedom as the founder of the facility took full control. This was to be our vacation so why did it feel more like hell?

It could have been the endless questions that were asked upon our arrival from an outing no matter what the hour it was, but it wasn't.

It could have been the differences in how we managed daily activities comparatively, but it really wasn't even that.

What set us in motion for escape was the day we returned to find the kitchen completely rearranged. Now my wife had no idea where things were and she was the provider of meals at our facility. That was it.

It was over.

We were through.

This time it mattered not what God would do.

Then He put an interesting idea upon our hearts. Take Joe with us we would. All that was necessary was a simple phone call and it would be arranged.

With his daughter on the other, line we began to explain our plan. Boy were we excited. There would be plenty of room for all three of us in our Spokane dwelling. Not only that but it was God who had put this idea into motion and she would indeed want to follow Him.

We had everything planned and all was in motion.

That was until she said a single word that stopped us dead in our tracks. No.

No.

Knowing that it had been God who had orchestrated this plan I went back to Him.

Lord, I began; I've done everything you've required of me. I've left my job in Michigan to move into a place I would never want to be. Then without much capital, we moved on into the mountains of California. After about one year here I still followed your lead by offering to take Joe with us back to Spokane. It was You after all that clearly told me I was to care for my friend for the remainder of his days.

I've followed you though sometimes most reluctantly and would follow you still, but she declined and that is beyond my control. It is not me that refused to comply but rather the turn of circumstance.

He responded much shorter than I by telling me to continue taking care of Joe for the rest of his life.

So once again I began to explain we had tried but were refused. The plan we had made was a perfect one, but was not accepted; certainly there was nothing more we could do.

Your plan has strings attached He responded.

Now wait just one minute, I began but before I could continue He did.

Offer to his daughter to take care of Joe for the rest of his life while living anywhere in the entire world with her making the selection.

That was preposterous and crazy. How could it be so? Yet following my Father is indeed my heart's desire. I may not always get it right for life is a lesson. This time, however, I picked up the cell and waited for an answer.

With his daughter on the other end, I began again to explain that we were to care for her father the remainder of his days. She began to explain that Spokane was too far to which I responded of God's directive.

She was amazed at the offer and after talking to her siblings all decided to move forward with Joe, Irene, Sassy and I moving to a place called Red Bluff.

There was only one problem.

As before in this journey we had our burnt orange car loaded to the gill. We even had us travelers. And, of course, we had our Sassy cat still. But new on the scene was my buddy named Joe. All packed and ready with only the minutest of problems.

We had no place to live.

It was one thing living this way husband and wife but now we were traveling with an elderly man in the ranks. This certainly was craziness if it hadn't been God.

So, we started looking for places to rent with many options open.

None seemed quite right for the needs that we had till his daughter pulled out this paper ad.

Hurriedly we headed for its location and the first time I saw it I knew it was home. There was only one real problem at this point that being someone was still living there and they weren't intent on leaving.

We called the owner and after much dialog, it was determined that we could see the inside in about 30 days but no commitment prior. So we waited not so patiently as the days passed by.

Finally, it was time, we could see the inside.

This I didn't need to do for God had already told me we would be living here and that is indeed what happened.

So once again we loaded all our belongings and hit the road for our new home.

Chapter 15: Chicken and Eggs

Once established in Red Bluff we began once again setting up our home. The only problem now was that we had absolutely no furniture and only those belongings which would fit into our burnt orange Focus.

But God blessed.



Soon we had our laundry facility at the ready. A coach and recliner arrived next. The problem remained in finding room in the budget for a dining table and chairs.

But God blessed.

Yes, He did bless our new vegan home. It's the healthy food and water which saw Joe with such mental improvement. He blessed us with eggs. That's right and plenty of them all appeared to show up almost like magic.

Magic, that is if it would not have been for the five silly chickens that were living here first. When we secured the place as our own they were going to be moved but we requested they remain which they did.

Joe loved those cackling hens.

Or was it that he loved opening their pen?

Whatever the case they were a hit at our home just about as much as our neighbors enjoyed consuming the bounty.

Gave a reason for walks and meeting with them.

Walks Joe enjoyed and plenty to be sure. We would walk in the park and walk down the road. We would walk on a trail and walk all alone.

Wait!

There wasn't much walking all alone, except for the day Joe left that is. This happened shortly after we arrived in Red Bluff as my wife and I was going about the daily grind. Suddenly we noticed a very unusual site.

It was Joe. Yes Joe.

Gone!

We started our search in a panic we were. Upstairs and downstairs and in the garage too. He was not to be found, no matter how hard we did the search. As we frantically searched we decided to expand our endeavors outside beyond the six-foot-high fence.

My wife shot away in the car as I went on foot when suddenly I saw them not him.

They showed often across the street in the shady apartments we lived next to, but never at our other neighbors they were. This time was different.

First, one I did see, then two maybe three; no four vehicles it would be. I approached.

I gasped.

I saw Joe.

The fire department that had arrived was accompanied by the police and I could tell why. It made perfect sense. It was Joe the paramedics were treating.

I walked up and identified myself then explained who he was. Yes, this was normal though not the part about the car-jacking.

Seems he had been intent on stealing our next door neighbor's car and she had not recognized him as Joe. Her response was to contact legal authorities who quickly called medics when they confronted his disjointed thinking.

I'm just glad they didn't see it and as it turned out it wouldn't be the first time this would be the case. With everything explained and settled out straight my buddy and I headed back home.

Shortly thereafter she arrived so apologetically. It was our neighbor with a phone number, which we exchanged. Now that everyone knew who each person was it was all our hopes that this would be avoided by clear communication in the future.

Oh, and by the way, the Lord did bless as he had done time and time before.

We received our table and chairs from a local consignment store and a couple of new friends to boot. Life was grand in Red Bluff.

Chapter 16: Red Bluff

There once was a place an unknown time space

Where chickens did roam and others called home

Texas it wasn't, nor Troy or Nebraska

Not Washington, nor even remotely Alaska
So where could it be and what be the matter
Was it former or first not start maybe latter
Mountains of grandeur away and so distant
Heat like fire from dragon not so very absent
Now called I my home as into we'd yonder
What for I knew not, but still did I ponder
While so far away I'd be brought here and stay
By hook and by crook only following God's way
For Joe he was named from high into low
From hills of California to Red Bluff we did all go

Entering Red Bluff

Not exactly sure why that poem came here and now unless it was the musical side of Joe's family catching up with me. He was gifted. That much was without question. Only listening to his daughters would show that to be the case. No matter whether guitars or voice they both were more than pleasing to the ears.



Ears.

Now that brings up a memory or two.

No, I'm not talking about the outbursts of anger that our eardrums had to endure nor even the cursing that began stopping as everyone's love for each other grew stronger. Instead, I'm thinking here about the Red Bluff street fairs where we did find ourselves weekly during the summer. After all, it was our way of

supplementing our income and basic survival.

True, we could have charged through the nose for services rendered but that was not our desire. While making sure to be able to stay afloat was a must we did everything possible to keep expenses as low as possible and did.

However, this meant that we needed to find financial resources elsewhere which is why we showed up religiously at the Red Bluff Street Fair each Wednesday. It sure did help guide us through those days.

But those aren't the only ears we found time to enjoy in Red Bluff. There were ears of fellow church members we came to know and love. There were ears of Joe's family we began to appreciate.

There were even ears at Jolly Cone.

See, Jolly Cone was a major hangout fast food hamburger joint in Red Bluff and probably still is. While we never were found eating there good times were frequently found.

See, Jolly Cone is smack dab in the middle of our walk around the block a fact that I'm sure Joe knew. One day we were headed around the corner of this establishment when it happened.

It had happened before.

It was Joe's energetically live personality bubbling over as he came to greet the jeep lady. I tried to apologize and move on but Joe would have nothing to do with it.

Fortunately, she played along.

They both talked like long lost friends, perhaps they were. Whatever the case she made the event fun and Joe had a blast.

Soon after we left and headed for home.

Wish I could say those were the only priceless memories around that corner but they weren't.

On another occasion while into our walk, Joe rounded the corner and saw there a couple arm in arm. Understanding the love and intimacy shared I smiled till I couldn't believe my ears.

Joe came up to the man and exclaimed in loud voice words that made everyone stand still. Simply put he said, "what are you doing with my wife".

Kinda hard to know how to move on from that question to another man. I froze.

They froze.

Time even stood still.

Then everyone laughed.

Boy, what a memory that one was.

I wasn't sure whether to duck for cover or pretend I was lost.

Chapter 17: Lost

I've been lost before, how about you.

When growing up I always knew when my mom was lost. Somehow it would always be near train tracks. Try to figure that out, I couldn't.



What I could do and did was sell, sell, sell so we decided to participate in fairs and festivals. These were always fun times for Joe as he watched the people pass by.

Sometimes Joe was found speaking with this or that customer.

At other times Joe would make comments some of which we did the best to cover up. And still, at other times Joe would be right there, gone!

Gone? Gone!

Yes, but not normally out of eyesight before being right back to home base. I did say not normally didn't I? Yes, I did and there is a specific reason why.

This time we were participating in a rather long and busy event. I was rushing around speaking to this person or that and others needed breaks while my wife was away speaking with other vendors. Since I felt like I could manage I bid my friends farewell and continued to sale all the while checking to make sure Joe was lounging in his chair or at least wandering around in the booth.

On this occasion, however, I became so involved in what the customer was saying that I forgot to remember to check on Joe. That typically did not last long and I would shoot a glance back at the empty chair.

Empty? Empty!

Wait, that is supposed to be where Joe is. Why is it empty and where did he go? I began scanning as the customer explained that they had seen him rise and depart. They had thought nothing of it till I explained then everyone became concerned and went into action.

The sudden panic reminded me of the first time this had happened.

We were new to this and working in the California hills when suddenly Joe was gone.

We looked everywhere to no avail. Then suddenly I got the bright idea of taking the path we frequently walked over to the water company. Guess who I found?

It was Joe, but not this time. I searched.

I panicked.

I panicked some more.

Then I continued my search to no avail.

We contacted the grounds security and police. Everyone knew. Everyone seemed to go into action like a fine-tuned instrument. I was so impressed, but I was still without Joe.

Fifteen minutes turned into thirty and then a whole hour. I'd never been without Joe this long but he was gone.

Fearing the worst, he'd snuck by the exit. I was terrified. What would I tell his daughter. I felt like... well, it didn't really matter what I felt like; what mattered was that we found Joe and soon.

I must have walked the fairgrounds a half a dozen times or more and still there was no Joe. It was getting dark now.

The sun was going down and the temperature dropping.

I searched and I searched without success. Wasn't sure what I wanted to do most, kick myself for irresponsibility or wring his blooming neck. That was my anxiety in motion as I continued to seriously worry about my buddy's whereabouts and safety.

Now two whole hours had passed and the park was preparing to close for the night.

Joe was yet to be found.

I decided to place an official police report. I knew not what else to do. Now I really wanted to wring his neck or at least hug it to death.

As often happens in these events the inside vendors close first and they did. All was according to plan minus my friend not to be found.

As I rounded the corner yet again in search of my buddy with police report now filed I met the guy that had been driving me around on the golf cart. He had good news this time.

In closing the inside booths there was a man spotted talking to the vendors while taking candy from their display dish. He had been hob-knobbing with the vendors talking about who knows what at least when he was found.

Who cares what he was talking about, my buddy was found. Then I saw him and there was only one thing left to do.

In haste I walked up to him as he chatted, grabbing him to my attention I did what any buddy would do. I wrapped my arms clear round and would not let go for several moments.

He wasn't entirely fond of this moment but one thing was for sure. My friend was found.

Chapter 18: Search and Rescue

Wish I could say that Joe being lost was our most stressful moment experienced and in a way it was, but it wasn't. The worst was yet to come.



One day a friend needed to meet me in another part of California about 1.5 hours away. So my buddy and I jumped into (not literally) our burnt orange Focus and were off. When I went somewhere Joe almost always went with me. He was my co-pilot after all, and we both had fun.

Fun that is until it came time to get out of the car, or at least for him.

For some reason, while Joe enjoyed getting in and going for rides getting out would prove to be quite another matter repeatedly. There were times when it was raining or snowing when this really made sense. But then there were other times when it was a bright sunny day (not too hot) and the behavior was the same. Never could figure that out.

This particular day was on the warmer side. A lot warmer. It was downright hot. All was good.

Joe and I were chatting away while listening to the radio as the miles went by. At least I thought we were listening to the radio but suddenly it wouldn't even turn on.

I thought that strange and kept moving forward. Then it happened.

Suddenly our faithful Ford Focus had no power while we were traveling down the middle of the freeway.

Stopping out here was not part of my plan. Especially since there was no shade and it was actually very hot. The other problem was that we had no way of calling for help as I did not have the cell phone with me at that time.

I tried to turn the car back on as we were coming to a slower and slower coast, but to no avail. If only I could get over this hill perhaps we could coast further to a safer place?

The car crested and we began to pick up speed again. Whatever speed you can get while coasting.

Then I saw it.

It was right there waiting like a faithful soldier ready for battle.

So I targeted the exit and we coasted still further. Further into a park, further around a corner and further to the shade of a little tree that would be our rescue from the heat.

God is good.

Now I got out of our car while looking all around and seeing nothing. Nothing that would lead the way to our rescue or help.

So I prayed.

As I prayed a UPS truck happened into the lot. This was not your typical black UPS truck that can be seen all over town. Nope, this was a semi and I flagged it down.

Then I explained our situation and asked if he might have a cell phone we could borrow.

He obliged and I called my friend who showed up in his pickup truck a short time later. Along with him a security vehicle arrived and I thought this matter all finished, but it wasn't. Not even close.

See, this helpful security guard wouldn't even roll down his window.

Instead, he stayed in the vehicle and advised through rolled up window that help was on the way. I felt that strangely comforting and then was comforted more when I saw the officer arrive.

Now I knew we were at the end of the matter.

I began explaining to him my plight and he began asking questions like: What are you doing here, which I really had just answered.

Thinking things odd as this was taking place I looked up and witnessed the arrival of another officer. Now I wasn't quite so certain of my plight.

They both began probingly questioning my friend and I.

Now I could see clearly what they were thinking. He in his pickup and me in my faithful Ford decorated with "Pain Kickers" signs all around. I was working with an awesome pain relief product at that time.

Three men isolated in parked cars, that's likely why the next officer arrived and the one after that too. In total we now had about 10 officers drilling both he and I, this way and that.

I was temporarily amused when I witnessed them moving over to question Joe. After only moments I explained that my buddy had Alzheimer's and would not serve to be much help.

They decided that they were going to search our vehicles.

To which we obliged, but looking back on it now perhaps shouldn't have. Shouldn't have minus one point they were sure to find out.

It was the same point that I was thankful had not been discovered for the last 4 months and it could indeed spell trouble.

After several moments they decided that they would not be doing the search we just had to move on.

Perplexed and confounded with their request I explained yet once again that my car wasn't going anywhere until help could arrive. Strangely, they didn't seem to understand what it meant for a car to be broken down.

They advised that one car could remain but the other would have to leave.

Making sure I heard them correctly I asked if they really wanted my only source of help to leave me and my Alzheimer's friend stranded.

They would be there they advised.

Based on how we had been treated so far, I didn't like that. Coupling that with what I knew would be found out didn't add any extra comfort.

Oh, I forgot the best part. For me to stay parked in that space I would have to pay. See, I was in the state park without a receipt.

Again I was perplexed.

My car is broken down and I'm seeking help. Yet somehow they had the impression that we were parked here for a healthy outing. I couldn't figure this out.

Then they decided they were going to search the vehicles after all. This was all crazy.

They searched my friend's car first and found nothing but expired tabs which he had failed to replace. They were in his glove box though, so he rectified the situation immediately.

Next, they searched mine as I knew without question they would find it. Ten police officers all over my rig.

They found my natural pain relief cream I was selling. They found the wind spinners I also sold.

But God kept their eyes blinded to finding it.

In the process, I put forth an offer that if we paid for two vehicles my friend and I could stay. They agreed, and after not being able to find what they were looking for they departed.

I'll admit I've never been into drugs and certainly not selling them but I'm pretty convinced that those who are, don't plaster their windows with signs which identify it. At least this was over, and they had not found what was sitting right in front of their face.

Shortly after all the officers left while my friend and I were waiting for tow we saw the exact same UPS semi-truck come back into the lot and began piecing things altogether as it quickly did a U-turn and departed.

Before getting out of his rig he must have radioed into home base and advised of this plight. Everything went into motion causing our lot to be what it was.

Did he do this in error or was it a not so funny joke? Of that, we will never know, but at least it all was over.

Later, while being fixed we were advised that the exact part was not available. They did what they could and we pushed hard for home. If this battery died like the last one, then we would be stranded all over again.

As mile after mile passed we prayed. By God's mercy, we made it home.

Chapter 19: Unexpected Visitor

We came to realize that one could never know what really would happen next when living with Joe.



There would be good and bad days and times for us all to experience. There would be times of joy and times of sorrow intertwined with times of absolute amazement and surprise.

Like when my wife and I were struggling with some financial issues and I turned to ask Joe his opinion on the matter. His advice was that I calm down and take one day at a time. Quite an intelligent answer to the predicament I presented him if I do say so myself.

And so I did.

Quite frankly, I've learned a lot from my friend Joe in the time I've had to be part of his life. One thing I came to learn very well was to avoid the unexpected visitor.

People dealing with Alzheimer's need a tranquil environment where they can be comfortable with all that's taking place. For Joe this meant keeping things lively and fun but have you ever tried to do that 24 / 7? There are simply some moments in some days where you aren't at your best.

That's normally when the unexpected visitor shows up.

I learned this near the beginning of our journey and was on occasion reminded of it again.

However, on this particular day, I was a bit down in the dumps and not feeling well. I think we were also planning to go somewhere so I felt a bit pressed for time.

Word of caution here would be to give up time constraint concerns if you want emotional highs to remain in check. However, in such a world as to where we live that is not always easy or practical. But, that's the very moment when the unexpected visitor shows up.

We were starting our day and either cooperation or patience was not working well. I'd love to say that it was cooperation as that would put the results fully upon Joe. Truth is that as my patience lulled his cooperation very often would respond accordingly.

So perhaps it was both, perhaps not.

What I do know is that emotional levels were rising as we attempted to complete the morning shower routines. While typically these times met with little resistance this day was indeed different.

My best advice to myself at this moment would have been to find a way to take a break but breaks weren't always practical or possible so we moved on till suddenly the visitor arrived.

That visitor was the left hook which sent me coiling back in pain. I'd met this before but this was quite likely the worst time ever. Many emotions rage through one's mind after being struck all of which would be totally inappropriate to respond with.

This brings to mind the Bible verse which teaches us to turn the other cheek quite literally, which at times I struggled to do while struggling to gain the victory.

The hardest part perhaps is to receive such a blow and then 5 minutes later be best of buds. What about the apology or the recognition of wrong? What about my rights of vindication? What about...

This was a life of learning to forget the "what about's" and accepting the "what is". Of my own accord I'd not have ventured forward but with God, at our helm, we don't always get exactly

what we think is best according to our own desires. Looking back now, I'd not have changed a thing about the choice we made to walk this trail with Joe in his final days.

Chapter 20: Emergency

This chapter opens into a rainy cold winter morning at about 3AM.

I was just waking as is typical for me in those early hours of the morning when suddenly I heard a huge crash below.



What I knew was that was not the tree in the front yard which had come down only a few days prior. How it managed to dislodge itself while missing house, car and electrical lines out front can only be explained by the words of a miracle. This, however, was not that as the tree had already fallen.

Descending the stairs as quickly and safely as I could I approached Joe's room not knowing what exactly I would find. I came to realize that he had fallen, though it was not a hard fall, out of bed. Helping him up I noticed a bruise on his temple area that had not existed previously.

While all was okay, I decided to take him into ER just to make sure he was fine. After several hours and a cat scan later this event would be marked up as yet another day in the life of Joe with everything returning with positive results.

He was okay.

My stress level began working back into a state of calmness and our family went back to preparing for Christmas which would be arriving in only a couple of days now.

As the days went by we began noticing everything was not quite the same since Joe's fall. We decided that we would take him to his doctor on Monday as things continued to deteriorate quite quickly.

This Christmas would turn out to be unlike any other celebration we had ever had in our entire life. The morning greeted us with the sounds of Joe talking non-stop in his room below. This was very unusual as we'd never heard him doing so previously so I decided to check on him.

He was indeed talking but most nonsensical for him. It was all about numbers without any tangible connections. Given Joe's history of being responsible for decisions that would cost millions if errors were made I somehow think these numbers were an attempt to hold onto memories and life itself.

I tried to help Joe rise for the day and quickly found that this was suddenly beyond his capabilities. Had he experienced a stroke overnight?

We knew not what was going on only that it was the first time ever to call emergency for Joe. After assessing the situation the ambulance departed with my buddy inside. Now I was going through a ton of new and unexpected emotions which culminated in endless tears and prayer for God's will in his life.

It wasn't long till we were quite aware that things wouldn't be getting better for my friend and buddy this side of the grave. Made me thankful for having led him in the sinner's prayer of his own free will in the hills of California.

Death is never a kind friend especially when it comes to someone you dearly love. However, that is the risk you take of entering another's life. Of course, while it may pale in comparison we were actually losing far more than just a friend that we dearly loved in Joe's passing.

Yes, at the same time, we were losing our only source of income. Mix grief with financial loss and the results are not welcoming. I do however thank God that He had taught me how to cope much better than I had done in previous days with half as much trouble at hand.

Chapter 21: Kidnapped

Speaking of trouble we now had it coming up all around us.

No ability to pay rent moving forward.

No more fun with our buddy and friend Joe. No knowledge of what to do next or how.



No knowledge of what to do next or how.

One thing we did have though was our faith and trust in God despite the circumstances.

This was present when I waited for my wife in Michigan and when entering the ranks of unemployed in Texas. It was only by faith that the UHaul arrived safely in California and that we survived the stressful days ahead. Only by faith did we move forward to places unknown in Red Bluff and faith would be our guiding friend still.

I'd love to say it was easy to come by this faith but it certainly was not. It was simply a choice we made moment by moment day after day. It was even by the faithful hand of our Father's love that none of the 10 officers who searched our vehicle found its tabs to be expired by over 4 months. A fact I was not happy about, but one that could at that time not be avoided due to lack of finances.



Now here we were once again living by faith and choosing to fight against stress, fear, and anxiety. Emotions were high, stress was rampant and the day was closing into day until the kidnapping.

Actually, the kidnapping was perhaps the biggest blessing of that time as it gave us time to regroup, recharge and reestablish our walk with the Lord.

You see, one of our friends that lived close by offered to have us move in with her for a time. I welcomed it as that would mean no need to come up with an immediate rent payment. Sue was a true Godsend of that time just as friends can be if we allow.

I know, during times of grief the tendency is to want to pull in and be isolated from the rest of the world. I know that because it is a character trait that I personally experience.

However, we need others in our life perhaps more during the hard times than those that are easy. Actually, connecting with others in all times and building relationships accordingly is quite important.

Imagine a football game attempting to be played at the professional level with only one person on the team. Everyone has a part to play. Everyone is of great value. And this completely correlates with our own need for family and friends to help support us when life plays become more than just a little challenging.

During this time I also reached out to my social network of friends and started looking for a position to fulfill somewhere. In less than one month I was gainfully employed as an Online Marketer with SEO as the focus and beginning my new position even with the present economic conditions our world was experiencing.

I realize that such blessings don't necessarily come the same for all but they come according to that which God knows we can handle for which I'm forever thankful.

Chapter 22: The Beginning

Just as with most every journey in life, there is a start and an end. Some would say that we have reached the end and in some ways, they would be right though in others that is very much not the case.

It was the end of Joe's journey on this side of the grave.

It was the end of our time as caregivers which had been completely orchestrated by God. It was the end of our time living in the chicken house.

It was the end of our time living in the chicken house.

Yes, that's all true, but in many other ways, it was just the beginning of a new unknown adventure to come.

Will we stay in California, many a person has asked to which we have answered: "only God knows". There have been those dear ones who have encouraged us in one direction or another but I've learned on life's path that if I don't rely on my Savior to show me the way then those are the worst of times.

I could and sometimes do fret about the course ahead and what it will bring. However, I am learning to hand these moments to my Savior as really only He knows the way that is best for moving forward.

After all, never in a million years would I have considered it my choice to care for a man with Alzheimer's but we had done exactly that. Even more, how could I connect so deeply with a man that appeared to have lost such abilities to do so? Perhaps, the clinical diagnosis would be that this is not possible, but it had certainly been done on a two-way street.

I remember the first time such a deep connection took place between my dear friend and I. He was nothing more than an undesired duty inflicted upon two online marketers that were very much out of their element at that point. It was just after an angry outburst where I sat together with Joe on his bed trying my best to be a friend when suddenly he opened up to me in ways that others never saw.

It would be confirmed by medical professionals who had known him previously when they exclaimed that they couldn't believe this was the same person they had treated just six months prior.

That day we connected.

He knew it. I knew it. And from that moment to the end it would change everything.

But now as we turn back to the future of days coming for my bride and I, we realize that only God knows what is ahead.

More than anything I thank everyone involved for having given us this chance to touch and be touched within my forever friend and buddy Joe. I look forward to being reunited one day as we move forward through eternity having this time as little more than a pale reflection of events that had taken place somewhere in the past.

