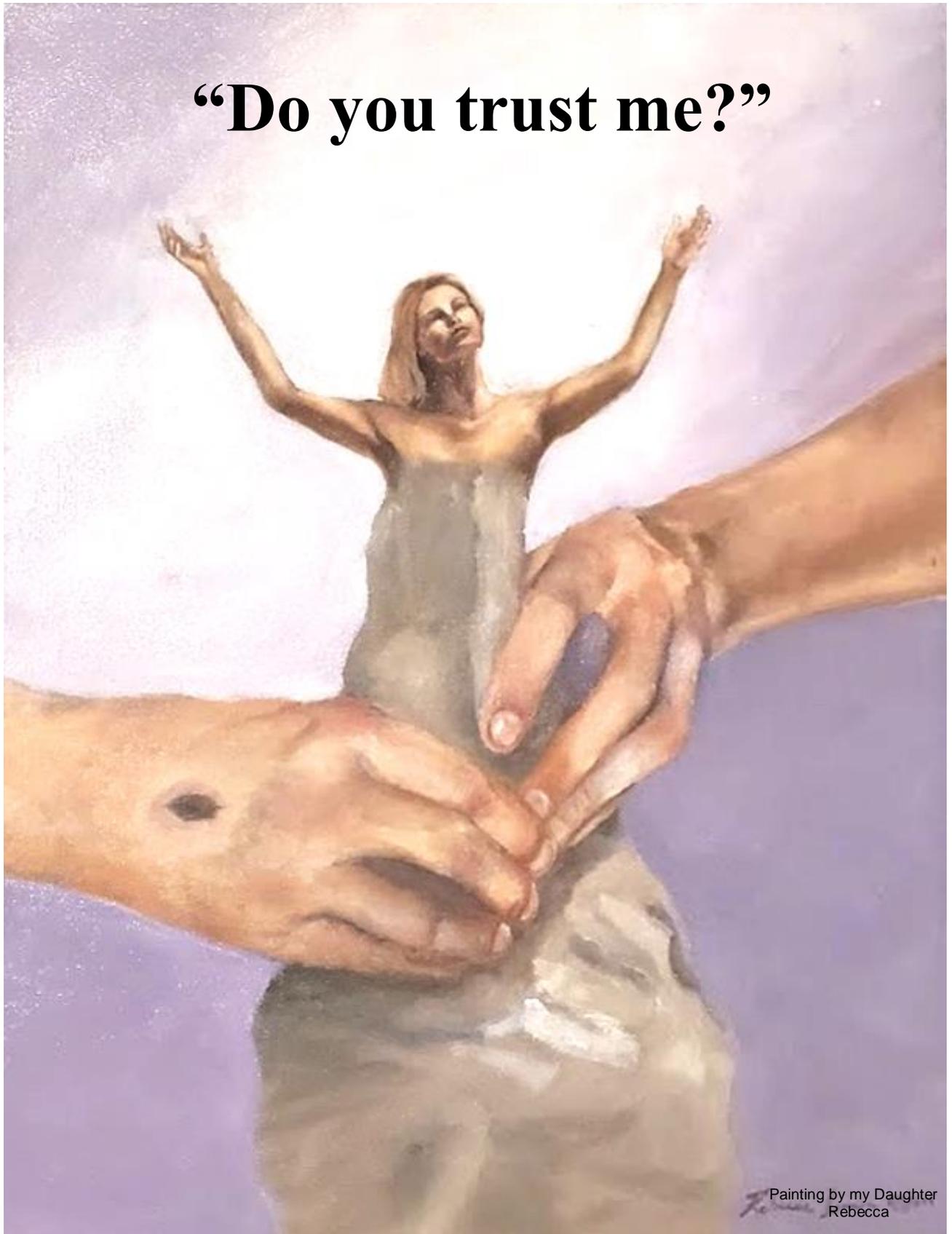


**“Do you trust me?”**



Painting by my Daughter  
Rebecca

*Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005 my wife of 20 years, mother of our seven children, my soulmate, partner in everything, my lover, confidant and BEST friend, went home to be with her Lord and Savior, Jesus. This 'paper' is a collection of things that have ministered to me in the wake of my beloved wife's death. It is aimed at people who have lost a loved one, but many people have shared with me that it ministered to them simply in whatever trial they found themselves. My prayer is that you might receive some comfort in reading this, and would hope that you might pass it along to someone else who finds themselves in the midst of a trial.

I have been a Born Again Christian for more than 30 years, and the most important thing I can tell you about my Christianity is that it is nothing more, and nothing less than a personal relationship with Jesus, my Lord. I love Him with all my heart because He first loved me. He proved His love for me on a tree called Calvary some 2,000 years ago.

Nothing on this earth can separate me from His love.

Approximately 12 hours before my wife died, the Creator of the Universe spoke to me in her hospital room. He asked me one simple question, and that question is the bedrock principle of this paper...

*“Do you Trust Me?”*

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**God Loves You**  
**He has a plan for your life**  
**His plan is a good plan**  
**He is way smarter than you**  
**We Love, because He first Loved Us**

# Joseph of the OT

Why does the life of Joseph take up so many Chapters in the Old Testament? Why is it such a powerful part of my foundation? Why does it affect the way I look at EVERYTHING today?

Lets examine Joseph. Part of 'understanding' is already in our understanding. If you know anything about the story of Joseph, and his Coat of Many Colors, you are already in possession of this amazing principle of trusting God.

Lets just for the moment, pretend that we know NOTHING about Joseph. We are about to meet him for the first time.. in fact, I would like you to put yourself in his place. Pretend you are him, actually living one day at a time.. TODAY, right now, you are Joseph. Now as we go through a condensed version (and I would encourage you to read the entire story in Genesis, pretending you are him and that you don't know the story.. you are given one day at a time, each day, one day.)

Some time, when Joseph was a teenager, he had a dream.. the dream is very significant, though I will say it is not of huge import to me. But he has a dream, and culturally it is not a dream he should be sharing. He dreams his OLDER brothers will some day bow down (be subject) to him. And as if that's not enough he shares that his parents will also bow down (be subject) to him as well. NOT a good thing, given the reverence for parents and authority, in the culture at the time. We know that Joseph WAS the favored son. And he abused that favor. Long story short... his brothers HATED him. Now it wasn't just sibling rivalry, it was HATERED. In fact when his brothers saw him coming they plotted how they could KILL him. Now remember, you're Joseph here... 17 years old (and remember what that's like) and feeling pretty good about yourself. You have this VERY expensive coat, that proves you are your father's favorite. You have been at home while your brothers are all out in the fields (sleeping on the ground) tending the flocks... Now you have been sent to check up on your brothers. You are pretty cool. 17 years old.... And you come up to your brothers, "Hey, guys.. how you doin?"

And they GRAB you, with the intention to KILL you... I mean really murder you. So they throw you in a pit. Now, remember, this is you we are talking about. You've just been thrown in a pit, to die, by your brothers. Look around, what do you see? Muddy, dark, dirty steep walls. No way out... you were thrown down here to DIE. Now it doesn't say this, but perhaps the landing wasn't too soft. Perhaps you had the wind knocked out of you when you landed. Cracked a rib? Broke an arm, or maybe a leg? Gotta hurt.

And I'm thinking that you didn't see this coming.

Now, if you're anything like me... you are PRAYING to GOD... HELP!!!

For real now, put yourself in his shoes.

Are you picturing it? A minute ago you were a favored son. Had it made in the shade. And all of the sudden, your whole world caves in, unexpectedly.

I know I'm PRAYIN. I'm wondering what God is doing.

Now the next thing scripture tells me is that the brothers figure that it makes no sense JUST to kill you... cause a caravan is going by. So they figure they could get rid of you AND make some money at the same time. So they decide to SELL their brother into slavery.

Now remember, you're Joseph, in a pit, praying as if your life depends on it... (cause it does. You are literally gonna die.)

Down comes a rope, and your brothers are pulling you out of the pit.

NOW what is your attitude? Now what are you thinking. Honestly... put yourself in the shoes of this 17 year old, who just thought he was gonna DIE, FOR REAL.

I'm thinking that I'm thanking God, from a VERY sincere heart, as I'm being pulled from this dank, dirty grave. No?

Circumstances...

First I'm cool... 17 year old kid, nice day, checking in with my bro's.

Then my own brothers try to KILL me by throwing me in this hole.

Now I'm being pulled out by my brothers, who obviously have repented of their evil ways.

So now, I'm out of the hole, and just for a moment, I'm thanking my brothers. Until I realize that the only reason they pulled me out was to SELL me into slavery.

Now how are you feeling? GOD WHAT ARE YOU DOING?????

Now you are literally a 17 year old SLAVE. A SLAVE. (do you have this picture in your head?)

So now, YOU are taken by force, as a slave to a foreign country. 17 years old.

You work hard, you are a good slave. (God gives you favor with your owner)

You end up as a slave in Potifer's house. He is head of the Egyptian military. You continue to be a good slave. Potifer is pleased with you and he sets you over his entire household. You are still a SLAVE, but you have been promoted, in a very prestigious household in Egypt. You can go anywhere you want in the house, and you are in charge of all the servants. (slaves)

As head of the Egyptian military, Potifer is not home a lot. And his rich, attractive, bored wife, takes notice of you. And she makes passes at you. And you ignore them. She gets more aggressive and you take a stand and tell her you can't give in for two reasons... 1) Your master, (her husband) has entrusted his entire household to you. You can't break that trust, ESPECIALL with his wife... cheezzzz. (How many men in our society take this type of stand? John Edwards comes to mind.... Running for PRESIDENT of the United States, his wife is dying of cancer... and he has an affair... I digress) And you decline the advances of this beautiful woman for a second reason.... *You can't because of your God.*

These 'rejections' just make her mad. And more intent on seducing you..... long story short, one day she traps you in her bedroom, and grabs you... you RUN out of the room, but she pulls your tunic off... naked you go. AND NOW SHE HAS YOU... She screams for the guard, and tells everyone that YOU attempted to attack her...

Now... remember, you're in Joseph's shoes here (or should I say tunic?) You just STOOD UP for your God, you did the RIGHT thing. (Unlike many men today) Would you not expect your God to REWARD you? Please pretend you don't know what is coming next. Joseph didn't... just like you don't know what is going to happen 10 minutes from now in your real life....

You did the RIGHT thing, you acted respectfully to your God, and your Employer.

AND YOU GO TO JAIL... you don't collect \$200. You go to prison. (and they are not pretty prisons with TV's and exercise yards like today.... Cold, damp, dank, stone floor type accommodations. For doing the right thing mind you.

Now what are YOU thinking? Are you mad at God? Are you perhaps doubting God's existence, or that He cares for you, let alone loves you? Doesn't scripture teach, don't you believe that God will bless you when you follow His commands? Haven't you been taught that God will watch over you, and keep you from harm? IF something like this happened in your life today... how would you feel toward your God? Honestly? How would you feel?

Now remember, put yourself in his tunic. He lived just like you and me. Day to day.

But you see, this happened a long time ago. We have the story... WE don't have to rely on one day at a time in this story... WE KNOW what happens next.

God gives Joseph favor with the jailer. He proves himself a good PRISONER, and is put in charge of all the prisoners. (Over a period of YEARS).

So now he (YOU) are still in prison, in a foreign land, sold by your brothers, falsely accused and imprisoned, but you are shown 'favor' and are put in charge.

Now, two of Pharaoh's servants are in jail as well. And they have these really weird dreams. And God gives you the interpretation. You reveal that one guy is going to die, and the other guy is going to be restored to Pharaoh's service.

And you're right... And when the one is released to go back to the palace, you beg him to REMEMBER you.... YOU'RE IN JAIL... not good. (Even though you are in charge, you don't like being in JAIL....)

But what happens?

HE DOES NOT REMEMBER YOU, in fact HE FORGETS ALL ABOUT YOU.

Now, aren't you tempted to look at your circumstances...??? I mean today, in real life. Don't you look at what is going on, and reason that into your thought patterns?

Would Joseph have not done the same thing? (Or wouldn't you?)

I did the right thing... God will reward me.

God gave me the interpretation to this dream.. HE is going to get me OUT OF HERE!

But TWO YEARS go by. TWO YEARS.... You are in PRISON for another TWO YEARS, before Pharaoh himself has a dream. TWO YEARS... 730 days...

And THEN your cell mate 'remembers' you.. 'Hey, I knew this guy who could interpret dreams.'

So they go to the prison, bring you out, but you stink, are filthy dirty. So they wash you, clean your hair, give you a shave and a haircut (cause you don't get that in PRISON) and give you new clothes.

You go before the Pharaoh, and he tells you his dream. And you ask God to tell you what it means. Long story short.. 7 years of abundance, 7 years of famine throughout the whole world.

So Pharaoh sets YOU up as number two guy in ALL OF EGYPT. NO ONE is more powerful than you. No one raised a finger without your approval.... In mighty Egypt. WOW.

Long story, short. For 7 years, you store the excess in great storehouses that you had built, and then famine hits.

Eventually your BROTHERS are forced to travel to Egypt for food, or they will starve.

You recognize them, they don't recognize you... (Duh... why would they ever expect that their little brother would be VICE PRESIDENT of Egypt? They sold him....)

Long story short... you get them to bring your Dad back to Egypt, and you have a fantastic family reunion. Now your whole family lives in luxury. From nearly starving to death, to living in the palace with the number two guy.

A couple of years go by and your Dad dies.....

Now your brothers are REALLY scared, cause they are afraid that you will now punish them for the evil they did. (You remember, they tried to KILL you.)

But.....

**Genesis 50:20** Joseph said:

*"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."*

It was FORTY FOUR years after his brothers threw him in a pit.. that he was able to say...  
you meant it for evil... **BUT GOD** meant it for good.

All throughout Joseph's life, circumstances were up and down. Just like ours. Day to day my circumstances vary. But Joseph was able to recognize that even though his brothers intentionally did him harm.. their very intent was evil, God was in control and orchestrated their evil intentions to accomplish God's greater purpose, to save thousands of people... AND I believe to give you and me an object lesson.

**The truth of a dual reality, a realer real if you will.**

So as I suggested at the beginning of this story, we already have the key to understanding because we know the story. Because we aren't experiencing it day to day, minute by minute, we know the beginning from the end, we know how it turns out, unlike OUR life. Only God knows the real beginning from the end, and He is both the author and finisher. He has a plan for your life, and it is a good plan. He works ALL things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes.

Now most of us, grab onto these truths, and hope against hope that everything always turns out 'good'. Since it IS true that God works all things together for the good. But be careful. Good for now, and good for the long term may be two different things. And I have talked with too many people who are crushed and disappointed because **'the good' wasn't obvious 'now'**.

I see this so real. God is outside of time. He sees the beginning and the end at the same time. When I was in the hospital at my wife's bedside. 12 hours before God took her home. I was praying, and God asked me one simple four word question.

**"Do you trust Me?"**

As clear as a bell, the creator of the universe spoke to me.

**"Do you trust Me?"**

He knew that He was going to take my wife home in less than 12 hours, and this one simple question has comforted me through the valley of the shadow of my wife's death.

Because I knew of Joseph, I said 'yes I trust you...'

## Proverbs 3:5-6

**Because Proverbs 3:5-6** are foundational to me... I said ‘yes I trust you...’

Trust in the Lord with all your heart.  
Lean not on your own understanding  
In all your ways, acknowledge Him,  
And He shall direct your paths.

Trust Him with your entire being.  
Don't try to figure out your circumstances  
Recognize that God is in control  
And He WILL

I have been a Born Again Christian for quite some time. I don't say this because it makes me special, it is just a marking of ‘time’. But early in my Christian walk, this verse in Proverbs became part of my firm foundation. It is interesting for me personally, now 30 years later, that God should ask me about Trust while I was praying at my wife's bedside in the hospital. When I was a youth pastor in New Jersey, a popular saying for me with the kids in my youth group was **“If you believe it, LIVE IT!”**

Another important scripture, also in my foundation, became my Wife's mantra during her battle with soft tissue, spindle cell sarcoma...

### **James 1:2-4**

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

I sometimes wish the Holy Spirit had penned this in reverse.

*Knowing* that you are being made perfect and lacking in nothing, through your trials, be excited, and count it all joy.

Once again, I see the principle of God's dual reality in play here. We get stuck on the reality we can see... the trials and tribulations, but God is using those trials and tribulations for a reality we can't see... to make us perfect and complete. IF we get a hold of this, and REALIZE God's reality, (perfect and complete.. ME!) then it sheds a different light on the reality we can see... the trial and/or tribulation.

And I have come full circle... to Trust.

Do I trust God's Word, do I trust God?

Jesus challenged us to simply ‘believe Him’.

Jesus is the WORD made flesh.

The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.

**Nahum 1:7**

# A Dual Reality for real.

## **2 Kings 6:17**

Then Elisha prayed: "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. This dual reality is key to my not trusting in my circumstances, nor my own understanding of what appears to be happening. Elisha's servant correctly saw the enemy, but God had a greater reality that was unseen.

This is a phenomenal story. Picture perfect illustration of the dual realities.  
Because I know this, I could say "Yes, I trust you..."

"So he sent horses and chariots there and a great army; they came by night, and surrounded the city. When an attendant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. His servant said, "Alas, master! What shall we do?" He replied, "Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than there are with them."

The attendant saw one reality... And that was a true reality. They were surrounded by the enemy soldiers who were there to capture Elisha. But Elisha had spiritual eyes to not only see the physical reality, but the spiritual reality as well.

Do not be afraid.

What do you mean don't be afraid.. we are surrounded. (Reality 1)

Yes, but there are more with us than with them. (Reality 2)

We constantly, every day, allow the circumstances we can 'see' affect us. We shake our fist at God and say 'Why?' I can't see any good in this, surely I could do it better, I would bail me out somehow. We find ourselves in a pit, in financial problems, in grief.... And we want to immediately see the answer.... We want to know now, WHY this is happening. We struggle to understand, to find any good in our current circumstances.

My wife and I were married for 20 WONDERFUL years. We have seven beautiful children. I can honestly say, I have never asked 'why' God took her home and left me alone. And I can only say it's because I trust Him. I may not be able to see the 'chariots of fire', but I know He can. I may not have any idea why He left my children without a mother, but I KNOW that He has a reason.

## Jeremiah 29:11

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

**This was spoken to the Israelites *while they were in captivity.***

**Their circumstances were terrible.**

**They were slaves, people taken as plunder.**

**Take me out to the ballgame...** Can you picture yourself as a young child, say 8 or 10 years old. It's a beautiful fall day, the sun is shining, puffy white clouds fill the deep blue sky and a gentle breeze carries the cheers of the crowd in the stadium to your ears.

You and your buddies go to the stadium, but you can't afford to go in, so like Spanky and the Gang, you find a hole in the left field fence just big enough to look through. As you peek through the hole, all you can see is the left fielder... and all he is doing is standing there... despite the fact you just heard the CRACK of the bat and the crowd is going CRAZY.

We don't get to see the big picture in life.. God shows us one second at a time. He is not only sitting behind home plate, but He is actually orchestrating the whole game. He knows what pitch is coming next, and He already knows who is going to win, and what the final score will be. And He knew it, thousands of years ago.... Chew on that for a moment. Before you were formed in your mother's womb, He ordained your steps. And He set a limit to your days. He knew both your birth date, and your death date, before you were born.

God has a plan for you, He LOVES you, and He is in control.

I found this traditional Hasidic story or tale on the Internet... I believe it is consistent with the premise of this paper...

Once there was an old man who lived in a tiny village. Although poor, he was envied by all, for he owned a beautiful white horse. Even the king coveted his treasure. A horse like this had never been seen before such was its splendor, its majesty, its strength. People offered fabulous prices for the steed, but the old man always refused. "This horse is not a horse to me," he would tell them. "It is a person. How could you sell a person? He is a friend, not a possession. How could you sell a friend?"

The man was poor and the temptation was great. But he never sold the horse. One morning he found that the horse was not in the stable. All the village came to see him. "You old fool," they scoffed, "we told you that someone would steal your horse. We warned you that you would be robbed. You are so poor. How could you ever hope to protect such a valuable animal? It would have been better

to have sold him. You could have gotten whatever price you wanted. No amount would have been too high. Now the horse is gone, and you've been cursed with misfortune."

The old man responded, "Don't speak too quickly. Say only that the horse is not in the stable. That is all we know; the rest is judgment. If I've been cursed or not, how can you know? How can you judge?"

The people contested, "Don't make us out to be fools! We may not be philosophers, but great philosophy is not needed. The simple fact that your horse is gone is a curse."

The old man spoke again. "All I know is that the stable is empty, and the horse is gone. The rest I don't know. Whether it be a curse or a blessing, I can't say. All we can see is a fragment. Who can say what will come next?"

The people of the village laughed. They thought that the man was crazy. They had always thought he was a fool; if he wasn't, he would have sold the horse and lived off the money. But instead, he was a poor woodcutter, an old man still cutting firewood and dragging it out of the forest and selling it. He lived hand to mouth in the misery of poverty. Now he had proven that he was, indeed, a fool.

After fifteen days, the horse returned. He hadn't been stolen; he had run away into the forest. Not only had he returned, he had brought a dozen wild horses with him. Once again the village people gathered around the woodcutter and spoke. "Old man, you were right and we were wrong. What we thought was a curse was a blessing. Please forgive us."

The man responded, "Once again, you go too far. Say only that the horse is back. State only that a dozen horses returned with him, but don't judge. How do you know if this is a blessing or not? You see only a fragment. Unless you know the whole story, how can you judge? You read only one page of a book. Can you judge the whole book? You read only one word of a phrase. Can you understand the entire phrase? "Life is so vast, yet you judge all of life with one page or one word. All you have is a fragment! Don't say that this is a blessing. No one knows. I am content with what I know. I am not perturbed by what I don't."

"Maybe the old man is right," they said to one another. So they said little. But down deep, they knew he was wrong. They knew it was a blessing. Twelve wild horses had returned with one horse. With a little bit of work, the animals could be broken and trained and sold for much money.

Now the old man had a son, an only son. The young man began to break the wild horses. After a few days, he fell from one of the horses and broke both legs. Once again the villagers gathered around the old man and cast their judgments. "You were right," they said. "You proved you were right. The dozen horses were

not a blessing. They were a curse. Your only son has broken his legs, and now in your old age you have no one to help you. Now you are poorer than ever."

The old man spoke again. "You people are obsessed with judging. Don't go so far. Say only that my son broke his legs. Who knows if it is a blessing or a curse? No one knows. We only have a fragment. Life comes in fragments."

It so happened that a few weeks later the country engaged in war against a neighboring country. All the young men of the village were required to join the army. Only the son of the old man was excluded, because he was injured.

Once again the people gathered around the old man, crying and screaming because their sons had been taken. There was little chance that they would return. The enemy was strong, and the war would be a losing struggle. They would never see their sons again. "You were right, old man," they wept. "God knows you were right. This proves it. Your son's accident was a blessing. His legs may be broken, but at least he is with you. Our sons are gone forever."

The old man spoke again. "It is impossible to talk with you. You always draw conclusions. No one knows. Say only this: Your sons had to go to war, and mine did not. No one knows if it is a blessing or a curse. No one is wise enough to know. Only God knows."

## **How quickly we judge. We look at the reality we can see, and we judge... God.**

In the garden, God told Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam chose to disobey. We are now cursed with this knowledge, the knowledge of good and evil, but without the wisdom to be able to distinguish. As the story above illustrates, we can only know what we know, we can only know the present, and past, but we don't know the future. Only God does.

**Only God is all knowing.**

**Only God is ever present.**

**Only God can work ALL things together for those that love Him.**

**The more we understand how much God loves us,**

**The more we will grow to love Him.**

**And I believe the more we know and love Him,**

**The more we will learn to TRUST Him.**

# Jesus wept

**“God’s timing stinketh.”** Quoting me.

God’s plan is outside of our comprehension because we are stuck in time. As the true “Water Bottle” story below shows, God is EVER present. He is at the same time present in the past, and future. He is ALREADY there, in both places right now. I LOVE this concept.

Lazarus died. Mary had sent for Jesus while Lazarus was sick, (she had effectively prayed that Jesus would intervene. She had the required faith that Jesus could heal him, and meet her needs.) **But Jesus PURPOSELY delayed going.** He purposely waited until it was “too late” He waited until Lazarus was dead. When He did arrive, Mary said, oh, if only you had come sooner. But now it is too late... don’t remove the stone... “he stinketh”.

Now it is interesting that even though Jesus purposely waited until Lazarus died, and that Jesus KNEW He was going to raise him from the dead... Jesus stood there and WEPT. Jesus completely understands our pain, suffering, and sorrow, even when He also knows the future. Our God is not one who says “hey, I’m in control, it’s OK, get over it... quit being a cry baby...”

Jesus wept.

And THEN HE RAISED LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD.

The more I learn, the more I realize that it is ALL about Trusting God. But to trust Him, you must know Him, and the more I think about it, I am impressed by the verse in **1<sup>st</sup> John 4:19**

**“we love because He first loved us.”**

Some find it hard to believe that God loves them, but John 3:16 says it all. God gave His only Son. While we were yet sinners, at the right time, Christ died for us. When we doubt God’s love, we must return to the cross.

**The cross on Calvary, where God died in our place.**

**The better we see the Cross,**

**the more we understand how much God loves us...**

**and then we can Love Him.**

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning,  
your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

**2 Corinthians 11:3**

## Isaiah 65:24

“Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.”

### **The Hot Water Bottle**

THE HOT WATER BOTTLE - A True Story By Helen Roseveare, Missionary to Africa

One night, in Central Africa, I had worked hard to help a mother in the labor ward; but in spite of all that we could do, she died leaving us with a tiny, premature baby and a crying, two-year-old daughter.

We would have difficulty keeping the baby alive. We had no incubator. We had no electricity to run an incubator, and no special feeding facilities. Although we lived on the equator, nights were often chilly with treacherous drafts.

A student-midwife went for the box we had for such babies and for the cotton wool that the baby would be wrapped in. Another went to stoke up the fire and fill a hot water bottle. She came back shortly, in distress, to tell me that in filling the bottle, it had burst. Rubber perishes easily in tropical climates. "...and it is our last hot water bottle!" she exclaimed. As in the West, it is no good crying over spilled milk; so, in Central Africa it might be considered no good crying over a burst water bottle. They do not grow on trees, and there are no drugstores down forest pathways. All right," I said, "Put the baby as near the fire as you safely can; sleep between the baby and the door to keep it free from drafts. Your job is to keep the baby warm."

The following noon, as I did most days, I went to have prayers with many of the orphanage children who chose to gather with me. I gave the youngsters various suggestions of things to pray about and told them about the tiny baby. I explained our problem about keeping the baby warm enough, mentioning the hot water bottle. The baby could so easily die if it got chilled. I also told them about the two-year-old sister, crying because her mother had died. During the prayer time, one ten-year-old girl, Ruth, prayed with the usual blunt consciousness of our African children. "Please, God," she prayed, "send us a water bottle. It'll be no good tomorrow, God, the baby'll be dead; so, please send it this afternoon." While I gasped inwardly at the audacity of the prayer, she added by way of corollary, "...And while You are about it, would You please send a dolly for the little girl so she'll know You really love her?" As often with children's prayers, I was put on the spot. Could I honestly say, "Amen?" I just did not believe that God could do this. Oh, yes, I know that He can do everything: The Bible says so, but there are limits, aren't there? The only way God could answer this particular prayer would be by sending a parcel from the homeland. I had been in Africa for almost four years at that time, and I had never, ever received a parcel from home. Anyway, if anyone did send a parcel, who would put in a hot water bottle? I lived on the equator!

Halfway through the afternoon, while I was teaching in the nurses' training school, a message was sent that there was a car at my front door. By the time that I reached home, the car had gone, but there, on the veranda, was a large twenty-two pound parcel! I felt tears pricking my eyes. I could not open the parcel alone; so, I sent for the orphanage children. Together we pulled off the string, carefully undoing each knot. We folded the paper, taking care not to tear it unduly. Excitement was mounting. Some thirty or forty pairs of eyes were focused on the large cardboard box. From the top, I lifted out brightly colored, knitted jerseys. Eyes sparkled as I gave them out. Then, there were the knitted bandages for the leprosy patients, and the children began to look a little bored. Next, came a box of mixed raisins and sultanas - - that would make a nice batch of buns for the weekend. As I put my hand in again, I felt the...could it really be? I grasped it, and pulled it out. Yes, "A brand-new rubber, hot water bottle!" I cried. I had not asked God to send it; I had not truly believed that He could. Ruth was in the front row of the children. She rushed forward, crying out, "If God has sent the bottle, He must have sent the dolly, too!" Rummaging down to the bottom of the box, she pulled out the small, beautifully dressed dolly. Her eyes shone: She had never doubted! Looking up at me, she asked, "Can I go over with you, Mummy, and give this dolly to that little girl, so she'll know that Jesus

really loves her?"

That parcel had been on the way for five whole months, packed up by my former Sunday School class, whose leader had heard and obeyed God's prompting to send a hot water bottle, even to the equator. One of the girls had put in a dolly for an African child -- five months earlier in answer to the believing prayer of a ten-year-old to bring it "That afternoon!" "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Isaiah 65:24

Helen Roseveare a doctor missionary from England to Zaire, Africa, told this as it had happened to her in Africa. She shared it in her testimony on a Wednesday night at Thomas Road Baptist Church.

This true story is SO cool, as it illustrates to me in a real way how God is functionally outside of time. Since God is EVER PRESENT, He was present when the package needed to be mailed, AND AT THE SAME "TIME", was also present when the little girl prayed. It is my understanding that had the little girl not prayed, God would have known that she didn't (wasn't) and would not have prompted the answer to be mailed 5 months earlier.

Since God is EVER PRESENT, and He sees the beginning from the end, He knows what 'circumstances' are required today, to accomplish His purpose in our life 10, 20, 30 years from now. I can look backwards in my life to see things that I didn't understand at the time, come into play 10 years later to accomplish great blessings in my life.

Some people have challenged me about this. They say that the hot water bottle would have showed up whether the girl had prayed or not. My only thought on that is, that would have been an 'unbelievable' "coincidence". And I don't believe in coincidences, and I do believe that God is ever present, both in the past and the future.

**Based on these scriptural principles,  
it is rationally logical for me to believe that what God is doing today in my life,  
will work together for the good, because I love Him.**

# Faith AND Doubt; companions?

## If; but if not.....

**I**f our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. **But if not**, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary, and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. **Daniel 3:17-18**

**God is not predictable. He is constant, consistent, unchanging; faithful; loving; and always true to His character, but He is not predictable.**

Mary sent for Jesus when Lazarus was dying, but Jesus 'refused' to go, waiting two days, ultimately till Lazarus died and in the tomb for days. We know His timing is always perfect to His plan, not to ours.

**God is not predictable.** Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had complete faith in their God, but they could not predict whether He would rescue them from their fiery furnace.

The apostle Paul is a hero of our faith (although I believe he was no different from you and me..) and I suspect he was unable to predict what God would do in a particular situation....:

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches.

**But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, "Why have you made me like this?"** Romans 9:20

God's timing is absolute, but He also takes us toward the precipice at 100mph and then doesn't apply the brakes until it is too late. And then we find ourselves 10 feet past the edge. And I have to say, He also lets us fall to the bottom, landing hard. Being Shipwrecked, stoned, hungry and battered. Lazarus died. Jesus died. Joseph was thrown in jail for doing the right thing. God does NOT always rescue us. **And this is the essence of faith.**

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth.

Heb 11:13

He rose from the dead, He called Lazarus from the tomb,  
and Stephen was stoned to death.

Heb 11:36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented-- of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

His love is infinite. His plans are perfect.

God is in control.

We have been taught a fairytale gospel, if only you have enough faith, all will be well.... But then when a loved one dies, none of our formulas work. Why is this? And I have talked with some who were chided for their faith, on top of their grieving.... We must realize that God has a bigger plan, and that in the larger picture it does all turn out well, but we are taught that everything will be peachy, rarely does anyone tell us about the stonings, train wrecks, persecutions, wandering in deserts, and death.

Beloved, if you are reading this, and you have lost a spouse to an illness, and you had, (or tried to have) faith so as to move mountains, and you were believing, believing against all odds... and now you are tormented with doubt.. was it your fault, did you not have enough faith... and I have even talked to some who had people from their own church chide them for their lack of faith.. or perhaps question if there was sin in their life.

Have you ever read of Job's friends?

C.S. Lewis wrote in "A Grief Observed"

"the greater the love,  
the greater the grief,  
the stronger the faith,  
the more savagely will Satan storm its fortress."

Don't beat yourself up, the enemy is already doing a good job of that...

We had people from all over the country praying, my pastor and elders came and anointed with oil.. we traveled to Nashville where friends cut a hole in the ceiling to let my wife down to be prayed for by a man who had a powerful healing ministry, who God had used to bring a powerful revival in Toronto... All these saints prayed for my wife's healing. Did none of them have faith? Not one? I fasted, prayed, begged, and pleaded...

No, beloved, it was not because you didn't have enough faith. That is misguided theology. God is simply bigger than we are, His ways are not ours. He IS smarter than we are, and He holds the universe together and works ALL things together.

I have talked to many people about this... and the enemy uses the same tactic on almost all of us.

It's YOUR fault, you should have done this, or that....

And you wrestle with "IF ONLY"...

IF ONLY... you were God... you would have done it differently...

OR

IF ONLY I had done this differently, God would have answered....

**WHY**

**And**

**IF ONLY**

Are the antitheses of this paper.

I'm thinking my faith is stronger than my reality or my emotions. I'm still very weepy and I miss my wife more than you can imagine. (Several people who have lost loved ones have agreed that until you go through it, you really have no idea how gut wrenching an experience it is...)

But my faith in Jesus sits under and over all my thoughts and emotions.

I know God, I know His character, I can't get to a place where I don't know He is in control.

When I wander toward doubt,  
I still know the Truth,  
even when I don't want to believe,  
I still believe.

From my journal.

# Grieving King David.

King David lost his son. His baby boy died shortly after childbirth. I find immense comfort in a statement in the Holy Scriptures in this gut wrenching story.

## **2 Samuel 12:22-23**

And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me

I **know** that some day I shall go see my beloved wife again, and we shall be in Heaven together for all of eternity. I do not, however, have a lot of romantic ideals of what that shall be like. Jesus SIMPLY said, we shall be like the angels, and there is no marriage in heaven. I don't know what that will be like, but it will either not be important... or it will be SO INCREDIBLY GOOD, BEYOND ANYTHING I COULD EVEN IMAGINE OR COMPREHEND here on earth. I have come to a deeper understanding of Heaven, since my wife's death, and believe Heaven itself is so indescribably incredible, that we will literally be blown away in AWE of God's GLORY there. But I will admit at the same time, that I believe God would have more for this incredible one-flesh relationship here, than to let it simply end at the grave. Marriage is such an incredible foretaste of how God loves us, that I have to believe there is more than just what we have here. I recognize the problem that the question asked of Jesus presents as well. I recognize that my marriage vows have ended. I am no longer married to my wife, she is no longer on this earth, and should I remarry, what then when all of us do get to heaven? I must simply trust God on this.

I have also realized in this story of King David's grieving, that he is NOT an example to me, of how WE are to grieve the loss of a mate.

Starting in verse 15 of 2 Samuel 12:

*Then Nathan went to his house. The LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became very ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child; David fasted, and went in and lay all night on the ground. The elders of his house stood beside him, urging him to rise from the ground; but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead; for they said, "While the child was still alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us; how then can we tell him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm." But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, he perceived that the child was dead; and David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead." Then David rose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes. He went into the house of the LORD, and worshiped; he then went to his own house; and when he asked, they set food before him and he ate. Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while it was alive; but when the child died, you rose and ate food." He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me, and the child may live.' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." Then David consoled his wife Bathsheba, and went to her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and he named him Solomon. The LORD loved him,*

Several things I see here...

- 1) David pleaded with God
- 2) David fasted
- 3) David lay on the ground for seven days

On the seventh day his son died.

His servants were afraid to tell him he died

They were afraid David would kill himself

When his servants told David his son was dead...

*David rose, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes.*

*Then David went to the temple and worshiped God, and went home.*

Some people have mistakenly taken this example and felt for them to be a good Godly example, that they must rise, wash, change clothes.... And go on "as normal".

This puts enormous pressure on the grieving survivor. And I don't believe losing a spouse is the same as losing a child. (Not better, not worse, not harder, not easier... but different.)

God took David's son as a direct punishment for David's sins of Adultery, and Murder. (However, the bigger problem was actually that David had given God's enemies reason to Blaspheme God's name because of these sins. David was a Godly man, and as such was an ambassador for the King of Kings. When he sinned, he brought direct reproach upon the Lord of Heaven.)

It is highly unlikely that God has taken your spouse as punishment. (Though I know the enemy will accuse you of this very thing.... That is NOT from God.)

If you are tempted, to "be like David"... Recognize that he "consoled Bathsheba, and she bore him a son...." There will be no one to 'console' you, if you have lost a mate, as compared to losing a child. Allow yourself to grieve but be careful not to sink into your grief. There is a balance, a natural healing in grief. We are not to sit in our rooms with the doors and windows shut, but we can allow the healing that comes from tears and sorrow.

Psalm 56:8 says God records every one of our tears and stores them in a bottle.

He cares for you and understands.

# The Train Wreck

There was a time, just a couple days after my wife's death, that I was feeling sorry for myself. I was feeling bad, that I was "feeling bad." Shouldn't I, as a Christian, be handling this grief thing better? Why was I struggling so with my emotions?

God spoke to me about this... He said "Steve, go get a knife out of the drawer and cut your finger.... If you do, you will bleed. You will bleed red blood, JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER HUMAN BEING I HAVE EVER CREATED. You are no different. I created you with emotions, and feelings, and sorrows, and grief." There is a natural, normal grieving process that MUST occur when you lose a loved one.

I admit, that I have no idea how someone could survive this without an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, but the grieving process, the emotions, and the depression are all common among men.

My encouragement to you, is simply trust in Jesus. Look to Him. Don't try to be a Super Human. Don't try to be a super Christian. Allow yourself to grieve. Don't wallow in your sorrows, but learn to lean on His arms.

And just as God is outside of time... time for grieving will not follow clock nor calendar. One year will seem as a thousand years and a second's passing all at the same time. Memories will overwhelm when least expected. As I walked through the valley of the shadow of my wife's death, I learned first hand of depression. I didn't recognize it until I read some books on grief, but I do now.

**Just because you trust God, doesn't mean you don't scream on roller coasters....**

Friends and relatives may sympathize, but they will never understand.

A friend of mine from church and I had lunch one day about a year after my wife died. He shared with me the following analogy that helped me a lot.

We need to realize that the death of a spouse, loved one, is like being in a terrible train wreck. Blood, guts, bruises, broken bones, wounded spirits. When Christians marry, God makes the two one. The two shall become one flesh. I experienced this in my marriage. I was truly blessed to have an incredible wife, and marriage. God made us one. I was no longer me, I was us. But when she died, there wasn't a dotted line that said 'tear here', it was a train wreck. However, unlike an actual, physical train wreck, the one you've been in doesn't leave physical scars, bruises, wounds, or deformities. People around us continue on rather quickly. If we had been in a comparable train wreck, we would probably be in the hospital for months, with IV's and tubes and bandages. People would see our pain, and struggle as we sat up for the first time. Or shuffled to the bathroom for the first time. We would count these as milestones. Maybe after a couple weeks we would shuffle down the hall, aided by a friend, IV's in tow, perhaps a walker to lean on.... And we would be excited by the progress... But the train wreck we've been in is just as devastating, but we expect that we should be able to 'get on with it', in a relatively short period of time. Now I am not encouraging you to sit in your room with the lights out and wallow in depression, but I also don't want you to think you can just jump up out of the bed and run down the hall. It is a long road ahead.

One person shared with me "people lie, they say it will get better"... I'm thinking that it is true, if someone hasn't walked in these particular shoes, they really don't and can't understand.

C.S. Lewis lost his wife, and wrote a book called "A Grief Observed". I would highly recommend this book. He used an example which has also ministered to me... He said losing a spouse is like having your leg amputated. It hurts like crazy, but eventually you will become numb to the pain. And then even months, perhaps years later, you will learn to live with the loss. But the leg is gone. I CAN tell you that you WILL learn to live with the loss, and it won't hurt as much. But my eyes leaked often, and without warning, for years.

## God has ordained our days...

“Since their days are determined, and the number of their months is known to you, and you have appointed the bounds that they cannot pass,” **Job 14:5**

“For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. **In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.**” **Psalms 139:13-16**

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” **Jeremiah 29:11**

I shared with my children that I had a vivid picture of God saying to my wife on the day she was born... “Now you need to come home on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005 at 6:30 in the morning... *and don't be late...*” He knows each of our birthdays, and deathdays. I am so intrigued by the fact that God is outside of time, He sees yesterday, today, 200 years ago, and 20 years from now, ALL AT THE SAME ‘TIME’. The death of your spouse, even if it was sudden, unexpected, and without warning, did not take God by surprise, catch Him off guard, or mess up His perfect plan.

I am not going to pretend to tell you why, or speculate what God is doing. He is God. I saw a poster 25 years ago and thought so much of it, bought it and it hung in our school room for years in our house. **“There is a GOD, You are not Him.”** I am back to Trust.

There was a time, shortly after my wife's death, that I had to meet a customer in town in the evening. So I stayed in town and had dinner at a local restaurant by myself. As I was sitting at the table, I had my own little pity party, but it was more ‘noble’ than pity, or so I thought till God spoke to me again. I started thinking that how much better it would have been if I had been the one who died. I have life insurance, my wife and family would have been financially ok, she could have continued to home school our seven children, (this was a major logistical challenge for me after she died) and she was beautiful, outgoing, smart, she wouldn't have had a hard time finding a new mate. It was then that it seemed God sat down in the chair across from me and asked, “So you think it would have been better if you had died?” And I sorta got puffed up and said, ‘Yes, I would have laid my life down for her, if I could have taken her cancer I would have. Doesn't your Word say ‘greater love hath no man than to lay his life down for another?’’ I was feeling pretty noble about my willingness to die in my wife's place. And then God just put me in my place.... He said ‘So let me get this straight, you would rather you had died instead of her? And SHE was sitting here in this restaurant, alone, grieving for you. Feeling the pain you are feeling now, and YOU were in heaven, with streets of gold, no more tears, no more pain, enjoying intimate fellowship with My Son?.....’ I was speechless.

As is true with this paper; God is SO much smarter than I. Who am I, when He is the Great I AM.

## Sad Good-byes.

I will be forever grateful for the good bye that God allowed me with my wife. Although her death was unexpected, and at the time I didn't know that these were her last words... her last words to me were precious and there is no way I could have orchestrated it any better. I recognize this now, but at the time, I didn't know that she would go to heaven within some 14 hours.

She was lying in the hospital bed and only semi responsive. I had been by her side for the last 5 days, with only a brief trip home to shower and minister to my children. About 14 hours before she died, I wiped the hair from her forehead and told her **"I love you"**. She replied back, as was our custom over 20 years of marriage **"I love you too."** Though whispered softly, barely audible, I cherish those words as they were the last words she spoke on this planet. When I share this blessing with others, we are all humbled by God's grace and mercies. BUT, I will tell you, I have spoken to others who have lost a spouse under very different circumstances. Perhaps you and your spouse had cross words in the morning, and an accident took them from you. Or a normal day, ended it's normalcy to become frozen in time when your mate died suddenly from a heart attack or brain aneurysm.

Whatever the circumstance of your "good-bye" I would encourage you to realize a couple things. First, **it is what it is**. None of us can go back and change a single second gone by. We live in this moment, are not guaranteed the next, and cannot go back to the previous. Secondly, and this one may have to grow within your heart, but it is at the heart of this paper, and that is God was not surprised by the details of your tragedy, and for reasons we may never know (sorta like Joseph, though he eventually was able to 'know' what God was doing after the fact.) He has His reasons. This is where I will say, Simply Trust Him. And lastly, **there is no good good-bye.**

Even my blessed good-bye words to my beloved, followed me for years, and tormented me. Whenever I would tell one of my children that I loved them, and they would simply respond "I love you too"... it would immediately bring tears to my eyes, at first it would be like a punch to the chest, it would catch me off guard and take my breath away. I can only imagine what the enemy would do to someone who lost a loved one without kind words, or with some type of regrets... but I will tell you that it would be good for you to realize that it IS the enemy who is tormenting you. Again I will say  
"If only's" are at their base, the antithesis of this paper.

IF ONLY.... I had been in charge,  
IF ONLY.... I would have done it differently.

But I will repeat myself... If we knew everything God knew, we wouldn't change a thing....

I know this may be hard to grasp, but I believe it with all my heart, because I trust Him.

# The big WHY

In Memory of Kori and Olivia Bryant.

I went to a memorial service today.

A week ago, on Good Friday, April 10, 2009, an F4 Tornado tore through Murfreesboro. Winds up to 170 mph destroyed more than 111 homes and damaged over 800. Two people were killed.

Two people were killed. I heard that on the news and thought how terrible, but thank God more people weren't killed. The tornado hit a subdivision in which I had built about 12 or 13 homes several years ago, so I knew a number of the families there. A former girlfriend of one of my sons lives there and told my daughter that one of their neighbors had been killed. I knew that two of the houses right next to theirs were ones I built. My concern deepened, from 'how terrible' to 'oh, I hope it's not someone I know...' my heart skipped a beat. Then on Friday night, I got a call telling me that the two people who were killed were Kori and Olivia Bryant. My heart was crushed. I started to weep, John Bryant is a friend of mine. Kori was his wife, and Olivia was his new-born baby girl, just nine weeks old. Oh how my heart grieved for John. Word came that John was in serious, critical condition. I have prayed, night and day, for John, since I heard the news.

How different the news, when you "know" the person.

John and Kori had been married for three years. Still on their honeymoon if you ask me. So much in love. I remember when John told me they were pregnant. And then when Olivia was born... Kori was just 30 years old... Olivia just 69 days old.... WHY them?

I am reminded of a song on the radio when my wife died. It seemed to be playing all the time...

Homesick by Mercy Me

You're in a better place, I've heard a thousand times  
And at least a thousand times I've rejoiced for you  
But the reason why I'm broken, the reason why I cry  
Is how long must I wait to be with you

I close my eyes and I see your face  
If home's where my heart is then I'm out of place  
Lord, won't you give me strength to make it through somehow  
I've never been more homesick than now

**Help me Lord cause I don't understand your ways  
The reason why I wonder if I'll ever know  
But, even if you showed me, the hurt would be the same  
Cause I'm still here so far away from home**

I close my eyes and I see your face  
If home's where my heart is then I'm out of place

Lord, won't you give me strength to make it through somehow  
I've never been more homesick than now

In Christ, there are no goodbyes  
And in Christ, there is no end  
So I'll hold onto Jesus with all that I have  
To see you again  
To see you again

And I close my eyes and I see your face  
If home's where my heart is then I'm out of place  
Lord, won't you give me strength to make it through somehow  
Won't you give me strength to make it through somehow  
Won't you give me strength to make it through somehow

### **I've never been more homesick than now**

I know emotions aren't logical. And logic doesn't address emotion. But I am struck by the truth of those lines... IF I KNEW THE REASON WHY, THE HURT WOULD BE THE SAME....  
Knowing the why, doesn't help with the amputated leg.

Why! we demand of God, WHY?

In Job, God answers Job, but He puts him in his place...

"Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding." " Job 38:3

I don't know why, but I have not had to wrestle with the question WHY.

I think it's because I understand that God is smarter than me. That is an indisputable fact.

And I know that God loves me, that too is an indisputable fact, proven on Calvary 2000 years ago.

And I recognize that knowing the why, wouldn't lessen the pain.

And ultimately, I do trust Him. I trust Him completely.

John was and is a good friend of mine. He is now in a unique fraternity... those of us who have lost a loved one. As I have learned, most who have never experienced this, can't begin to fathom the depth of the loss. I only pray that I might be of some comfort to John as he walks through this difficult valley in the shadow of death.

John, Kori, and Olivia were in their home, huddled under some blankets and mattress's when the tornado directly struck their home. John was sucked up out of his house, through the air when the roof was torn off and his house pulverized. He survived, Kori and Olivia didn't. What an incredible, horrific experience. I can't begin to imagine. But I can understand the loss of a beloved wife.

I am quite sure if you are reading this, that your experience is nothing like John's. But if you've lost a loved one.. the question is the same. WHY? I believe this question can torture you, or you can wrestle it to the ground and realize the why doesn't matter. Trusting God is the only answer.

Knowing that there is a 'why' and God is in control is enough for me.

Even if I never really know why.

## **Mark 4:37**

A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him up and said to Him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

We will all face storms in our lives. Everyone of us. In Mark we see the disciples coming to Jesus when they were facing a storm. It tells us that the boat was already swamped. (Does this mean that they tried to handle the problem on their own before they brought it to Him?) Some of the disciples were experienced fishermen, but this was a major storm, they were afraid for their lives. But Jesus was asleep, perfectly at peace. He already knew that they would make it to the other side. He knows the beginning from the end. He knows ALL things. One of the things to note is the disciples question to Jesus. I believe this is THE most hurtful question ever asked in the history of the entire universe. "Do you not care that we are perishing?" Jesus gave up His divinity, His throne in heaven to become a puny human, knowing He would face a horrific beating, and a horrible death by torture, IN ORDER THAT WE WOULDN'T PERISH....

How many times do we question God with this same thought... 'don't you care?' 'Why are you allowing this?' But God does care. In fact He loves you so much that He sent His only Son to die the brutal death that you deserved, so that you wouldn't have to perish eternally.

After calming the storm, to a dead, glassy calm, He turned to the disciples and challenged them in their faith. Now you shouldn't be discouraged to realize that your reaction to your storm might reveal that your faith is weak, cause the disciples had the same exact challenge... rather I would exhort you to rise up in your faith, realize that that is exactly what is being exercised here, and respond in faith... Even small faith can stand in the face of life's storms, and small faith exercised becomes mighty faith. James says that the testing of your faith is designed to make you complete, mature, and lacking in nothing.

## **1 Peter 4:12**

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when His glory is revealed.

## **James 1:2**

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

## **The reality of Truth.**

I really like this verse from James. But I don't live like it if I am honest. When things are tough I do turn to God, but we almost always talk of 'good' times as those free of troubles. We think of God's Blessings as times of peaceful bliss. Be honest, if things are tough, do you count it all joy? When you are being stretched, do you approach it as a positive thing in your life?

Do you REALLY realize that it is the tough times that make us ‘mature and complete, lacking in nothing.’? This is what the Truth says. In our day to day walk, we try to avoid tribulation, and trials, conflict and suffering. But as I have walked with the Lord for some years now, I have come to realize that it is TRULY in these times, that He has been closest. These times aren’t always enjoyable, but I have realized that by looking back over all the other times in my life where things seemed out of control and horrible, God sustained me, brought me through and I am better for it. He has ALWAYS been faithful.

The Truth says that it IS in these uncomfortable times, times of sorrow.

**Psalm 34:18**

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

**Psalm 147:3**

He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds.

**Isaiah 61:1**

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners;

And we all know, that even the Apostle Peter, fixing his eyes on Jesus, full of faith, stepped out of that boat onto the waves... crashing all around him... oh, what faith... Why couldn't I be like that... "Come..... walk on the water with me...." and Peter did... until he took his eyes off Jesus, and looked at the waves, which had been there all the time... his circumstances didn't change, only HIS focus. Jesus was still there; the waves were still there...

**(Matt 14:28)**

# A matter of Trust

The original Greek root for Trust and Faith are very close.

**Faith:** pistis, pis'-tis; from G3982; persuasion, i.e. credence; mor. conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially. reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstr. constancy in such profession; by extension. the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself:-- assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity

**Trust:** pisteuo, pist-yoo'-o; from G4102; **to have faith** (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), i.e. credit; by implication to entrust (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ):-- believe (-r), commit (to trust), put in trust with.

*Simply put, you can't trust someone you don't know.* If someone came up to me on the street and asked me if they could take my kids to the circus... no matter how much my kids wanted to go, or how much they would enjoy it.. I wouldn't let them go with a stranger.

However if my best friend called me and said he was taking his kids to the circus, could my kids go, I would say 'yes'. No questions. And that is part of it as well, the more I trust, or know the person, the less details I need. I know they've got it.

This is how I feel about Jesus. I trust Him.

I trust Him cause I know He loves me and wants only the best for me. He proved that to me 2,000 years ago on a tree on Calvary. God spared not His only Son, what *wouldn't* He do for me?

Now in all honesty, some people that I have talked to who have lost a spouse, are having a hard time trusting God.

But I can't not trust Him. Everything I have written in this paper justifies and reinforces my trust.

It is more logical for me to trust Him, than for me to doubt Him.

I trust Him.

I don't lean on my own understanding.

I acknowledge He is in control of all things.

Before you can trust Him, you have to know Him.....

Revelation says 'Behold, I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.'

To eat with Him is to have personal fellowship, you get to know someone when you sit down and share a meal, enjoy their company, and have intimate fellowship. Jesus desires to have close personal fellowship with you.

## **1 John 4:19**

*We love because he first loved us.* If you don't have a relationship with Jesus, if you don't love Him with all your heart, it is my considered opinion, that it is because you simply don't realize how much He Loves YOU.

**John 3:16**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

God loves you, unconditionally, you can't earn His love, you can't do anything to make Him love you more. He loves you, as the Groom loves the Bride, God is crazy in love with you.

When I was young, my mother drug me to church, literally. When I was 12 years old, I was "confirmed" by the church. I went to classes, and was taught about this guy named Jesus. I had to memorize the Apostles Creed, and could recite it on command. But you know, I didn't know Jesus. I knew about Jesus. It's exactly like picking up today's newspaper and reading a story about a terrible tornado in which a guy by the name of John Bryant lost his wife, his newborn daughter and his home, in an instant. We would say, oh how horrible. What a tragedy. BUT, if I read that, I would break down in tears, I would be devastated. Cause I know John, he is a good friend of mine. He worked for me, we worked together on some houses, he put beautiful custom counter tops in my Parade Home. John has a special place in my heart.

The same was true when I was confirmed. I could read/recite that 'Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, and on the third day He rose again and is seated at the right hand of God.' But it was like reading the newspaper about someone I didn't know. Cause I didn't know Him. But now, I know Jesus. He is my best friend. I KNOW Him. To read that account now makes me weep. To know that He suffered under Pontius Pilot... oh, my heart breaks.....

I KNOW Him,  
not just know ABOUT Him.

# Do you want to know Him?

It is my prayer that this 'paper' would bring some degree of comfort and solace; not only to those who have lost a loved one, but those that may be going through a tough time in life.

If you don't have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, I challenge you, to open up and ask God to reveal Himself to you. He desires a relationship with you, a personal, one on one relationship, with YOU. As a father longs for a wayward son or daughter, so your Heavenly Father longs for you to turn to Him, to return to Him, to start a relationship with Him. He is waiting on you. Ask Him to speak to you, be open to His answer.

If you make a decision to truly repent and turn to Christ, tell someone. If you know a true Christian, share with them that you have put your faith and trust in Jesus. If you don't know someone, tell the person that gave you this paper.

Or, I would love to hear from you, [stevejens@gmail.com](mailto:stevejens@gmail.com)

**My prayer is that the comfort I have received from my Father in Heaven could somehow be shared with others. It would be a horrible waste if my trial were of no use.**

**Grace and Peace,**

**In Him,  
Steve**