Once upon a time, my handsome and successful husband, my beautiful daughter, and my two precious sons were excited about moving into our new home in a coveted neighborhood within an exemplary school district.

I was pregnant with our fourth child – a much-desired baby girl and we were looking forward to welcoming her into our family.

Our family had a stockpile of savings, a church full of friends, and detailed plans for a secure future. We were healthy, happy, financially well-off, and living the American dream.
We were ‘blessed’.....

But that dream came to a crashing halt on Memorial Day weekend of 2010.

Our seven-year-old daughter, Rebecca, was hospitalized for the first days of what would become years of hospitalizations.

She had an unknown form of chronic pancreatitis caused from an unknown immunologic condition that prompted us to frantically travel from state to state in search of an unknown cure.

After 22 pancreatic surgeries and 30 separate anesthetic procedures, I became a full-time hospital mom to my daughter, an absentee mom to my two sons, and a part-time wife to my husband. And as we were fighting to save Rebecca’s life, our baby girl Annabelle died, shaking the foundation of my faith to the core.

The next few years were agonizing watching Rebecca suffer from an excruciatingly painful disease while my boys suffered from instability and fear.
We were faced with the loss of my husband’s job, a perpetual war with health insurance companies, and an uprooting move to Minnesota in order for Rebecca to receive a life-necessitating experimental transplant.

All the while standing helpless as our savings and assets drained into the deep abyss of medical bills.

We were no longer healthy, we were no longer happy, and no longer financially secure.

We were no longer ‘blessed’....
Or were we?

Was there a way for me to re-focus my mind toward God’s blessings as opposed to the earthly blessings I desired and craved?

This became the pivotal moment in my faith and the start of my written journey with God. The words I penned while living in the hospital re-shaped my view on this often misunderstood Lord.

*We somehow get into a trap of feeling this earth is our home.*

That God intended for us to live healthy, wealthy, easy lives while we exist in this sin-ridden world.
And yet, the examples of God’s most faithful lived anything but a life of ease. In fact, it was by their sufferings that the Lord was truly revealed.

Job gives hope to all enduring the unthinkable. The story of Joseph gives strength to those victimized and wrongly accused.

Moses allows us to persevere for future blessings we may never realize

and the disciples exemplify an unmatched passion for Christ straight to their violent, unjustified deaths.

Instead of waiting (years in Rebecca’s case) for a miracle to cure every portion of her damaged body, I am learning to accept the daily and sometimes hourly miracles that God bestows in our lives.

Rebecca’s past state of pancreatic remission for “only” a year and a half becomes a treasure chest of beautiful memories.

Our family living together under the same roof for an extended period of time becomes a cherished act of Providence.

Achieving five hours of interrupted sleep as opposed to a total of one is viewed as a blessing.
And in the midst of a severe pain attack when Rebecca smiles and says she loves me – now that becomes a true miracle.

Perspective is key to every situation.

When my future and the future of my family are permanently focused on heaven, then the abominations this earth has to offer becomes a side note – barely an honorable mention in the scheme of things.

That is not to diminish the trials we endure.

If I had a thousand adjectives, it would never begin to describe the intensity of hearing your child moan, scream, and writhe in unrelenting pain on a minutely, hourly, daily, and weekly basis – the nauseous exhaustion, the unanswered questions....

This seemingly never-ending cycle leads straight to insanity or straight to God.

Although by worldly standards I am irreparably scarred emotionally, and my child physically – it is only passing.
If you would have told me transplant day we would be in ICU for another major surgery 6 years later – I am not sure I would have survived?

Of course, if you would have told me over 10 years ago what Rebecca’s medical future would look like, I know I would not have survived.

In my past life, there were numerous times I wanted to know as God knows. I wanted to see my future with the thought that I could more adequately prepare and plan for myself and my family.

I begged God to share a glimpse of my life in order to understand my present hardships. That was then.

I no longer want to know my future.
The only way we can “cast our cares upon Him” is by casting our lives before Him.

He created us to rely on Him step by step for as long as it takes—whether it is a short stroll through muddy waters or a marathon across a desert.

Rebecca’s course was set for a marathon—I was prepared for the stroll.

"I basically want to have San Antonio be a haven for these kids. So, they can come in from all over the world and be able to receive this treatment they need. Rather than being told by their local hospitals that they have no options," Rebecca said.

Winston Churchill:

"We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills..."
Daniel 1:17  
17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

Daniel 2:1 Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him.  
2 Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.  
3 And the king said to them, “I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.”  
4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation.”  
5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, “My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap.  
6 However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation.”

7 They answered again and said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation.”  
8 The king answered and said, “I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm:  
9 if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation.”

10 The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, “There is not a man on earth who can tell the king’s matter;
therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean.
11 It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."
12 For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.
13 So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.

Daniel 2:
14 Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon;
15 he answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel.
16 So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation.

17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.
19 Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.
20 Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.

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Each of my children played some kind of school sport. One of the main temptations I wanted them to resist was playing for their own glory or finding their value in the praises of people. In order to reinforce their resistance, I would have them make eye contact with me before a game. They would point to their heart and then point to heaven. This was our way of saying to each other, “God gets the glory, win or lose.” We knew that if they won or lost, it was expected that our behavior and attitude gave glory to God rather than shaming the name of Christ with our actions.

While I can’t attest that every one of us executed this perfectly, overall I believe our family exhibited Christian values in our actions. Yet there came a time when I needed to give God the glory beyond the sports arena. I recently bought and sold a home in order to downsize. The day of the closing, I found myself and my family almost homeless. The deal could’ve fallen through due to one paper the buyer’s loan company hadn’t turned in. Not only would this have had an adverse effect on selling my house, but I could’ve lost the new home as well.

I decided beforehand in prayer that my actions and attitudes would result in God’s glory, whether everything turned out perfectly or I found myself sleeping on a friend’s couch for a few days. As we continued to pack and move things to our truck, I felt an incredible peace in the midst of great stress. God honored my desire, and everything came out as expected. There was something
about pre-deciding God’s glory that made all the difference.

PRAYER
Dear Lord, You are worthy of the glory whether I win or lose in this lifetime. Help me to always be ready to give You the glory at all times. In Jesus’ name, amen.

21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.
22 He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him.
23 “I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, And have now made known to me what we asked of You, For You have made known to us the king’s demand.”

Daniel 2:
24 Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation.”
25 Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, “I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation.”
26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?”
27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king.
28 But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be
in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:

Daniel 2:
48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.
49 Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

Daniel 4
10 "While I was lying in my bed, this is what I dreamed. I saw a large tree in the middle of the earth.
11 The tree grew very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see.
12 It had fresh green leaves, and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. All the world was fed from this tree.
13 "Then as I lay there dreaming, I saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven.
14 The messenger shouted, “Cut down the tree and lop off its branches! Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit! Chase the wild animals from its shade and the birds from its branches.

19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him...

20 “The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth,

22 it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.

Daniel 4:
24 “This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what the Most High has declared will happen to my lord the king.
25 You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.

26 But the stump and roots of the tree were left in the ground. This means that you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules.
Five years ago we began the process to foster to adopt in South Carolina. Soon after we were licensed, we moved to North Carolina, having to begin the process all over.

Here in North Carolina, they require prospective foster families to wait a year after a major life event.

During our year of waiting, the Lord changed our hearts from fostering to adopt, to straight foster care.

We began classes in February, went through the home study, revealed every part of our lives to the state, and were licensed in the fall. Then, a week before Christmas we opened our home to a four-year little boy.

While at a Christmas party, I was sharing that we had a little boy coming and a bit of what I knew about him. A friend there made the observation that when we began this process five years ago, he was not even born. His
comment made me remember a piece of advice that was given to me back in South Carolina by a veteran foster mom.

This foster mom has served over 50 foster children throughout the years. She has definitely experienced all the ups and downs of fostering. Her encouragement to me was in the waiting. It was good encouragement, as I have been waiting for quite some time! The exact comment was, “The child God has for you may not even be born yet.”

In other words – God always has a plan for the waiting.

Now, it is not in our plans for him to become ours through adoption, but for the time he is in our home, he is our child.

God has entrusted him to our care for however long this season may be.

I am loving a child who may or may not love me in return; who may or may not remember me in six months; who may or may not ever say my name right.

He may be in our home for a month, or six months, or forever.

Or it could be next week if they find a family member who is willing to take him into their home.

I may need to register him for kindergarten. I may need to find new caretakers that are closer so I can provide transportation.

Or I may need to pack up all his clothes and send them on in that big, black, plastic, garbage bag that is a notorious indicator of foster children.
My days are spent calming tantrums, breaking up arguments, teaching routine. It is intense and constant.

How do I provide consistency and stability for this little boy, when those two things are not reality?

Someone asked me once how I could handle the mental challenge of running marathons – so many miles, for so many hours?

My response was that

The unknown *can* be restful, once we accept that our goal is not in arriving somewhere or accomplishing anything.

Our goal is to become like Christ, and that occurs *within* the journey.

There are many miles to go for me, and likely you feel the same. Shall we settle in?

27 "‘King Nebuchadnezzar, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past
and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.’

28 “But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar.

29 Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon.

30 As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.’

31 “While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom.

32 You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.’

33 “That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails were like birds’ claws.

34 “After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal.

37 “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All His acts are just and true, and He is able to humble the proud.”
Daniel 6 (NLT)

4 Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they couldn’t find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy.
5 So they concluded, “Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion.”

6 So the administrators and high officers went to the king and said, “Long live King Darius!
7 We are all in agreement—we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors—that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions.
9 So King Darius signed the law.

10 But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.

Daniel 6:19–24 (NLT)
19 Very early the next morning, the king got up and hurried out to the lions’ den.
20 When he got there, he called out in anguish, “Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?”
21 Daniel answered, “Long live the king!
22 My God sent his angel to shut the lions’ mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty.”
23 The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him, for he had trusted in his God.
24 Then the king gave orders to arrest the men who had maliciously accused Daniel. He had them thrown into the lions’ den, along with their wives and children. The lions leaped on them and tore them apart before they even hit the floor of the den.