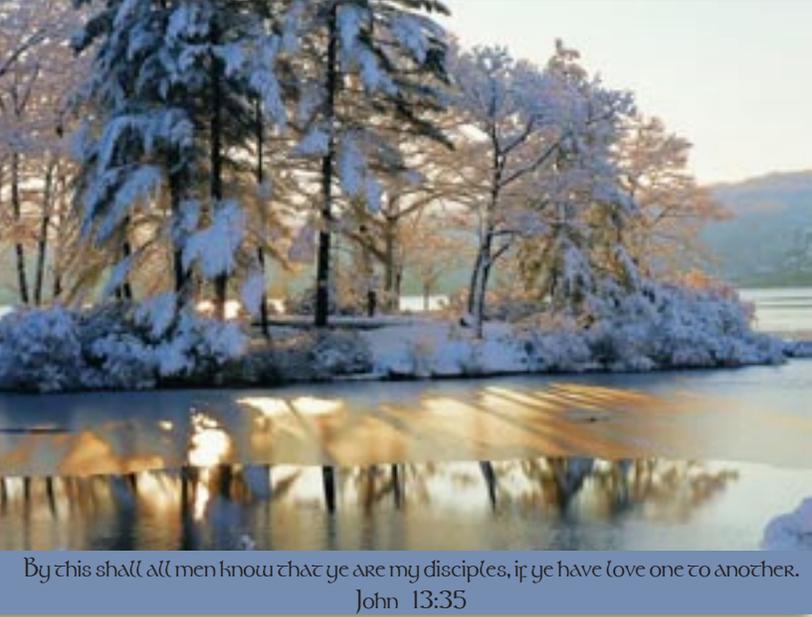




GRACE HAVEN

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By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
John 13:35

Looking back over the last year, I am glad that we cannot see all that the future holds. If my wife and I would have known that our anticipated baby girl would only be ours for three short weeks and that her body would suffer severely from Bacterial Meningitis, it would have been tough to live the abundant life during those nine months leading up to her birth. God knows what lies ahead of us, although this does not mean it will be smooth sailing. He knew what was ahead of Jesus before He was born to Mary. He knew what was ahead of Paul, Peter, and the rest of His beloved apostles before they were persecuted to death for their faith. Christians who believe life will be smooth sailing because they are children of the sovereign God are clinging to a false security.



The worst moments of my life occurred in 2015. Holding my baby as she struggled to breathe, helplessly holding her hand as the doctors again reported the seizures are still wracking her brain, and receiving that call telling me that survival was unlikely and would consist of a comatose state for the rest of her life- those moments rate as the worst of my life. My insides seemed to melt as I realized that my greatest desire and utmost willpower had zero ability to change anything. There were people praying for us, people from all around our nation and even around the globe. I did not doubt that God in heaven knew what was happening in our situation.

After Alayna died, we were surrounded by people who loved us, friends who cried with us, folks whose hearts were torn with the very pain that rent our hearts. As our friends and loved ones interacted with us, however, I began to hear differing bits of theology and won-

Our Broken Dreams

Where do you turn and what do you do when your core belief is tested?

The following article is written by Dean Yoder (father of Alayna) in response to the three questions asked in the previous newsletter.

dered about the meaning behind the words, "it's better this way", "God is in control", "it was God's will" and many similar sayings. I truly believe these sayings came from hearts that greatly desired to help ease the pain in our hearts, people who had an inner turmoil of pain and this was their way of reaching out to us. These sayings did not hurt knowing that they were motivated by love, but I did wonder about the theology presented in the words. I questioned whether they were true and if these sayings ever brought comfort and healing.

and no disease (Genesis 1:31). However, there came a time when humanity went against the wishes of God, stepping outside of His control, and consequently sin and death entered the world. Now we have diseases, sickness, and death which are all seen as being bad or evil. Yet, God gets blamed for death in many situations.

In all this I do realize that God made the decision to give up control of Job's children and livestock, the devil did not force Him. I also realize that Eve did not force God to allow her to make her own choices. In that way, God is absolutely sovereign and in control, not to be manipulated by anyone. Through scripture, we can see instances when God personally directed the death of a human. Other times, however, it is a result of demonic forces or diseases brought on by the consequence of sin.

Moving forward, I am faced with the reality that my identity as a child of God does not save me from pain or sorrow. Neither did Jesus' identity save Him from suffering. My ability to find joy in the minute details of life: the little birds in the feeders outside, the beautiful colors in the sunset, the loving embrace of my wife,

...continued on the other side

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these are all wonderful gifts from God, and they do not depend on a promise that everything will be smooth sailing. The ability to embrace life and loss in a way that allows me to live abundantly in 2016 hinges on my belief that Jesus has won the victory over the power of death and is interceding with the Father on my behalf (Hebrews 2:14, Romans 8:34-35). The power of death (fear) is escaped only by my confidence in Jesus and the fact that nothing can separate us from His loving care, not even death itself (Romans 8:35).

Our comfort does not come from knowing whether it was or was not God's direct will to take our daughter. We are comforted knowing that death and disease is not something our Father calls good, and that we cannot be separated from the love of our Father by anything (Romans 8:38-39). The fact that even in the darkest hour when I can make no sense out of what just happened to my richest dream does not change the goodness of my God. He loves me and will never abandon me, not even in my darkest hour, and that truth comforts my soul!

Dean Yoder

UPDATE ON OUR FORMER SECRETARY

Ryan and I are enjoying married life and are very happy in each other's love! I am so grateful for our exposure to the relational tools that Grace Haven uses; the level of heart connectedness we experience is wonderful. This past October we were blessed with a son, Chester Ryan Eash. Chet was 7lbs and 21 inches long. He is doing well and we love him so much! He was 9 days older than his cousin Alayna (her story was in the last newsletter) so her death is especially hard. It would be fun to watch them grow up together. Chet is starting to reach for toys and his smiles charm everyone. He wishes he could talk but he will have to wait a little while for that!

Tabitha



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