

Thank God for the bumps in the road



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Has everything in your life always gone according to plan? Have many of your dreams and expectations come to fruition? Or have there been bumps in the road that have jarred you unexpectedly, potholes that have shaken you out of alignment, or major construction that made you detour into unknown territory?

Growing up, I knew two things for sure: #1 I wanted to be a lawyer. #2 I never wanted to have children. Why? I can't say for sure but I remember some of the dreamy reasons in my mind for #1 being the promise of a financially stable future, the prestige of the title, a luxurious lifestyle, winning in court (I am very competitive), and attaining my parent's approval. As for #2, I did not want children to get in my way of being great.

Because of my academic excellence and determination, I was sure I would realize my dream one day ... until.

Until ... a bump in the road jarred me unexpectedly, a pothole shook me out of alignment, and construction sent me in a whole new direction I could have never anticipated.

On the first day of my senior year of high school, I discovered I was pregnant. With one bad decision, I had disappointed my parents, earned the disapproval of extended family, crushed my dreams, and in the eyes of many, gained a big black sin stain on my life. I had such heaviness in my soul from the judgment of others that the next eight months were a blur of emotions that took me on one of the most difficult detours of my life.

As reality set in and that little boy was placed in my arms a month before graduation, on May 5th, 1993, the world as I knew it, changed. I became Jake's mom exactly two weeks before my eighteenth birthday and I felt completely ill-equipped to shoulder such a responsibility.

However, with determination in my spirit, I embraced my new life as I began raising my son as a single mom and newly accepted nursing student at RCC. I put on my new hats and went after my future the best that I could.

Despite many hurdles I successfully jumped in the next several years, one thing that never seemed to fully lift from my soul was the extreme guilt I had for the sin I carried which left that big black stain that continued to plague me. I had been so harshly judged by myself and others that the negativity constantly haunted me and I didn't know how I would ever come out from under the heaviness in my soul ... until.

Until ... I met Jesus.

Have you met Him? Or would you like to? Maybe your experience with Christians up until now has meant people who don't have fun or who are hypocrites. Maybe you didn't grow up hearing about Jesus, reading the Bible, or understanding what it really means to be His follower. Or maybe there is sin or sins that plague you that you don't know how you can ever be forgiven. I understand—because that was me.

If you do know Jesus, do you live your life according to His Word so that it may go well for you? Or are you a Christian that believes that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and so, you can continue to sin and ask for forgiveness later? Or do go to church on Sundays but leave Jesus out of everything the rest of the days

of the week? Or do you believe in God but you don't understand what a relationship with His son is like? Or perhaps you've never fully tapped into the power of the Holy Spirit so that you can fully live a righteous life. I understand—because that was me,

My mother-in-law, Snooks, introduced me to Jesus many years ago. Oh, she was subtle and sort of sneaky at first dropping His name here and there. But soon it progressed to full-on Jesus' talk: Praising Him for things that seemed strange to me, telling me she was praying when I just wanted to share a problem and bringing every single situation back to Him somehow. Sometimes it all just exasperated me for I wondered how everything could possibly be about Jesus!

I remember where I was when it happened ... the moment I invited Jesus into my heart. I was sitting on the couch in my living room, with a Bible in my lap. My sin-stained life was coming out of me in a torrent of tears (so much more than just having a child out of wedlock). I was so broken in my soul for all of my iniquities, knowing I needed the forgiveness of this Savior Snooks was so confident about, that right there I accepted the forgiveness He offered.

I would love to tell you that I saw the light of heaven shine through the ceiling of my living room as Jesus took my sin onto Himself, but I cannot. I can however tell you that in that sacred moment, alone with Him, as I repented of my sin, I felt the burden of it all lift from my heart in a single moment. That was the day, 21 years ago that I started my journey with Jesus.

I have heard many say that the instant they became a Christian they turned completely from their sinful ways, their life was made new and they instantly began living for Him. That's not how it was for me. I was a baby in the beginning—and boy did I blow it so many times and in so many ways!

But I kept on keeping on. I spent time in God's word, I attended church, I led and attended various Bible studies, and I loved Jesus in all the ways I knew how.

Also, I sinned (knowingly) and sought forgiveness later. I attended church on Sundays but left Jesus out of parts of the rest of my week. I believed in God but I still struggled with what the "personal relationship with Jesus" was all about.

Little by little, I grew in my faith. As I grew, I had a deeper and deeper yearning to do life God's way. I was not only listening to His word but doing what it said, to the best of my ability, in every area of my life (James 1:22) ... looking carefully into His perfect law that sets me free (James 1:25, allowing His Word and goodness to be imprinted on my heart in order to carry it out well.

I have lived my life my way and I have lived it God's way. I have learned that God's way did not produce a boring hypocritical person as I have come in contact with—not when it's done right. It produces freedom and blessings and so much good fruit of the spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that I enjoyed every moment living my life for Jesus.

The thing is, a life lived in Jesus does not promise a life without trouble. On the contrary, He specifically says in His word, "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

Since knowing Jesus, I have also known much trouble. In those

troubles, I struggled greatly but Jesus used them all to grow me in ways that I would have never grown without them.

I still sin although not intentionally. My sins have kept me humble and cognizant of my constant need for my Savior. And as I repent, I grow and work to do things better.

This all sounds fine and dandy on paper, especially when one thinks they have given their whole life to Jesus. That was me—I thought I had given it all ... until.

Until ... a bump in the road jarred me unexpectedly, a pothole shook me out of alignment, and construction sent me in a whole new direction I could have never anticipated.

I have been told that I have a very strong type-A personality. I am a planner, I like to have control and I am quite good at juggling many things well. No matter which hat in life I am wearing, I strive to wear it well and be the best I can be. These are not bad things, but what I learned is that they can be bad if everything isn't first about Jesus.

For so many years I had the illusion of being in control of so much ... and that is when the "until" happened. I do not believe this is the time or place to share the details of what blew my world apart and shattered everything I knew to be true. But I can tell you this—in one single moment I learned I had absolutely no control.

I had devastating pain in my soul that I had never experienced before and there was not one thing I did wrong or could have done differently that would change the circumstances I was in. Even after this bomb exploded, I continued in trying to control everything I could for it was all I had ever known. When I finally learned that grasping and holding tight to that control was not working, I became fully and completely broken. And it was then that Jesus revealed to me that I had absolutely no choice but to surrender all control to Him.

What's more? I learned one of the biggest lessons of my life—that it is in my very weakness (of losing so much, including control) that He could show His strength. And that is when my relationship with Jesus changed.

I was no longer in His Word because I wanted to live my life well, I was in His Word because I needed it to survive. I did not go to church to hear God's Word on Sundays, I went to church because I needed the body of Christ to survive. I soaked in every single thing I heard from every sermon, podcast, counselor, wise person, etc., and carried it into every single day of my week—in order to survive. I needed Jesus—not only because He has forgiven me for all I have done wrong—but because I needed Him—His love, strength, guidance, and goodness—in order to survive. And I finally felt the full power of the Holy Spirit because I finally surrendered all to Him.

I believe God had been equipping me over the years for what was to come as He has put His Word in my heart. I believe that even in the baby steps of my faith, He was molding me more and more into His image. I know I have been a Christian for 21 years, but now, after surrendering all, I have become a full-on devoted follower of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I know this even more because of what happened next. The Holy Spirit transformed me for I know that what I am about to tell you, I could not have done without His great power.

Do you forgive people? I'm not talking about little grievances that are not difficult to forgive—I'm talking

about the doozies—the big ones that seem unforgivable in your mind? It's the big ones that fully transform us. I know this because that is what I have done in the power of the Holy Spirit. I forgave—completely forgave a person in my life for a doozy—something that was previously unforgivable in my mind. And I believe the only way I was able to do it was because it was first done for me. Jesus forgave me for all—and I am called to forgive.

Not only this, but when that person told me that they couldn't forgive themselves, I pondered this, and here is the truth that I have come to: We are called to forgive others, but we are not called to forgive ourselves. This is a feat of gargantuan proportion that does not work for it cannot be reconciled completely in our own doing. Our sin can only be reconciled by the blood of Christ that was spilled on the cross.

Sin leaves a stain—a deep black stain on our hearts, on our lives. A stain we cannot wash away no matter how hard we try. We might think we can for a while by not thinking about it—but then it rears its ugly head. We might try to counsel it away with different tactics which might seem to work, but it always seeps back into our lives.

The stain of sin can only be washed away completely by the Perfect One, Jesus Christ that came to take our sin upon Himself. He died a horrific death on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin in our place. And then three days later, he defeated death and rose again so that we would be reconciled to Him forever, having eternal life.

What Jesus has done for you and me is a gift—a free gift. We have only to accept it. Once we do, our extraordinary journey with Jesus begins.

My journey in this life has been extraordinary. That bratty teenager who wanted to be a lawyer for money, prestige, and without kids in order to attain greatness for herself no longer exists. In her place is a child of God, completely and utterly dependent on Jesus, who is grateful for the troubles that have transformed her, who strives to be the Proverbs 31 woman, who basks in His incredible blessings including four amazing children and an incredible husband, and who lives her life to bring honor and glory to the Great One.

Come to find out, Snooks was right—everything IS about Jesus. Jesus came so that we may have life—life to the full (John 10:10). There is no fuller life than knowing and walking in love and truth with the greatest man who ever walked this earth—my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

If you want to meet Him or if you have already met Him but desire a deeper relationship with Him, nothing would bring more joy to my heart. I invite you to join me tonight or tomorrow, at the Civic Center, where my church Eagle Brook will meet to celebrate Easter (Saturday at 4 pm & 6 pm and Sunday at 9 am & 11 am). It is there where you will encounter fun, authentic Christians, you will hear truth spoken about the Good News and all that it can mean for you, you will be accepted just as you are, and you will be loved with the love of Christ through His body—the church. And then, when there are bumps in the road that unexpectedly jar you, potholes that shake you out of alignment, or major construction that makes you detour into unknown territory, you will begin to be equipped to handle your vehicle well.

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**"WE CARE FOR PEOPLE
AND FIX CARS"**



**Happy
Easter**

**FROM OUR TEAM AT
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