

MY CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER

I've gotten several newsletters this year, and I hate to say it but 1) they're boring, 2) they all sound the same, and 3) can you really relegate a whole year of your life to a short list of blessings? My year was chock-full of stuff. It included a lot more than a list of my kids and grandkids. It was overflowing with life—good life, bad life, sad life, joyful life, tired life, discouraged life, pleasurable life, painful life, struggling life, good-food life, questioning life, fun life, and not-so-fun life. It cannot be summed up in a short, cheerful, newsletter.

BUT, if it were, what would it look like? What have I learned? How have I changed? In my quest to focus on the pleasure in life have I enjoyed more pleasures this year? What has God spoken to me? How has my view of life changed, or has it? (For example, the year I worked for Wal-Mart my perception of humankind changed forever. Before W-M I would have sworn that people are basically good, they outnumber the bad. But post W-M I no longer believe that. I have discovered that there are more shoplifters than not, there are more bad parents than not, and there are more grumps than not. This past year I've become more aware of how sad life is for so many people.) How has life molded me into its cares and woes? Did life grab me by the throat and choke the joy out of me, or has it thrown me into the wind and taught me to fly? Or am I plodding along in my rut, slowly being dragged under by the current of life's routines? Does every year in my life look the same? Is my life measured by garbage day, Wal-Mart, haircuts, and doctor's appointments? What new spiritual thing did I try on this year? Did it fit or not? Did God offer me something this year that I turned down, or that I picked up? Have I heard God whispering my name? Did I respond or was I too busy? If I assigned a percentage to this year's pleasure and pain what would it be? How much of the pain did I walk out spiritually victorious? How much of this year stands out, and how much blends into routines and normalcy?

Can I name one event in each of these categories: Big pleasure, small pleasure, big pain, small pain, God spoke to me, I learned something new (spiritually and not spiritually), I prayed for a stranger, I enjoyed a movie, I got a new favorite song, I did something I've never done before, I read a book that impacted me (even if it's just in the pure pleasure of reading it), I now have control over one aspect of my life (organized part of the house, changed a bad habit, developed a good habit,

lost weight, etc), I had fun with God, I pursued a dream (however impossible), I fulfilled a goal, I did something I'm passionate about, I gave generously, God answered a prayer the way I wanted Him to, I saw God move supernaturally in my life. These are the things that speak of my life, be it good, bad, or ugly. For if we don't look back at the ugly, how will we appreciate the beautiful? To not acknowledge the ugly is to be false to who we are as humans, to pretend that life is something it isn't.

As humans we were created for change. There is something in us that begins to die when we stop changing and growing and experiencing. We begin to stagnate if things stay the same very long. The only difference between a rut and a grave is depth. Lately I've been resisting my routines, hating them. As I do them I dread them, hate them, rebel against them. They are good, practical routines: dress and wash my hair, put on my make-up, accessorize, eat breakfast, turn on my blanket, shower, same steps to get pajamas out and put clothes away, brush my teeth, same amount of toothpaste on my brush, same time to brush, same motions in the same order to the same sound of the electric toothbrush, and on and on and on. My spirit is rebelling. For one thing, it's a waste of time doing boring stuff. What exactly I want to save all that time for I'm not quite sure, but not for this boring stuff. After a week of rain I want a sunny day. After a week of sun I'm ready for a cozy rainy day. Humans were created with a curious mind that wants to learn and expand and experience and face adventure. We were created for not only life, but *abundant* life! For life filled with supernatural adventure walking with God. We were created to walk in joy and victory, wildly and fearlessly. We were not created to plod along, surviving and striving to make it, step by step and day by day. Yes, there are times in our lives where we can only face it a minute at a time to survive, but even through those times we are to learn how to walk in the shadow of His wings. Are we learning to, or are we just surviving?

Am I building up my inner strength? What am I doing to exercise my inner strength? God is my personal trainer, am I listening to him? Am I showing up for gym time or do I always have a good excuse for why I can't work-out today? I've come to a conclusion after a few years of life, and that is that we will always have a good excuse for what we don't want to do. There will never be a good time to do something unpleasant.

Anyway, these are the things I wonder about this past year. These things will tell

me, and others, what my year has been like. What if it doesn't look very good? What if I really would rather others didn't know my answers? That's good. It shows me that I have another whole, long, beautiful year to live differently. It shows me what my life should look like and how I want it to change. Last year is a measuring stick for this year. Because life is always a choice. No matter what life holds for me, every minute is a choice. I must be aware of my choices and take control of them. Take advantage of the life more abundantly that God has chosen for me, align myself with his choices of abundance, and then everything this year will change.

May your year be filled with your own choices, and may you choose carefully.

