

IF YOU HAD TOLD ME... 2009

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY! THIS YEAR, VICTOR AND I CAME UP WITH THE PHRASE, "IF YOU HAD TOLD ME..." BECAUSE OF THE MANY, MANY THINGS WE FOUND OURSELVES DOING THIS YEAR. IT IS AMAZING HOW WHEN WE FOLLOW HIS PLAN, THINGS SOMEHOW TURN OUT JUST A LITTLE SWEETER. ENJOY READING ALL OF THE WAYS THAT GOD HAS CHANGED OUR LIVES THROUGHOUT THIS ROLLERCOASTER OF A YEAR WITH BLESSINGS, CURVEBALLS, AND VISITS FROM FRIENDS.

IF YOU HAD TOLD ME ... I WOULD BE SPENDING NEW YEARS' EVE ON A BEAUTIFUL AUSTIN LAKE AS CLOSE TO THE FIREWORKS AS THE LAUNCHERS, I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED YOU. AFTER CHRISTMAS LAST YEAR, WE FLEW OUT TO COLLEGE STATION, TX TO VISIT THE GRANTS (VICTOR'S BEST MAN AND FAMILY). WHAT A GREAT TRIP! IT WAS SO MUCH FUN HANGING OUT WITH THE FAMILY, SEEING GREAT PARENTS/KIDS IN ACTION, AND RECONNECTING WITH OLD FRIENDS. OUR TRIP INCLUDED LOTS OF BBQ & PECAN PIE, AN EXTREMELY FUN TRIP TO THE ZOO, GEORGE H.W. BUSH'S LIBRARY, TEXAS A&M'S BASKETBALL GAME (GO AGGIES!), AND HOUSTON'S AQUARIUM. IT WAS WONDERFUL TO EXPERIENCE THESE THINGS WITH KIDS WHO BRING SO MUCH EXCITEMENT TO LIFE. ☺ WE MISS YOU GRANTS!



FROM THERE, WE HEADED TO SAN ANTONIO TO "REMEMBER THE ALAMO", TAKE A BOAT ON THE RIVER WALK, AND OF COURSE ENJOY SOME MORE BBQ. NEW YEAR'S EVE WAS SPENT IN AUSTIN! WHAT A TOWN!!! LOTS OF PEOPLE; LOTS OF FUN; LOTS OF NEW YEAR'S EVE HAPPENINGS!



NOW, IF YOU HAD TOLD ME DISNEYLAND WOULD PAY FOR ME TO CELEBRATE MY LAST YEAR AS A 20SOMETHING WITH MICKEY AND FRIENDS, I'D HAVE SAID YOU WERE CRAZY! BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY DID FOR ME AND MANY OTHERS THIS YEAR. SO, OFF WE WENT!



IF YOU HAD TOLD ME THAT LATER THAT MONTH WE WOULD BE STARTING A CHURCH IN A MUSIC STORE WITH A DOZEN PEOPLE I WOULD THINK YOUR CONNECTION TO GOD HAD SOME STATIC ON THE LINE. AFTER 20 YEARS OF SERVING AND ALMOST 10 YEARS WORKING AS A PASTOR FOR VICTOR, IT WAS TIME TO TRUST GOD YET AGAIN. A FAMOUS IRISH MELODY MAKER ONCE SAID THAT HE WANTED TO BE WHERE GOD IS, BUT TOO OFTEN AT CHURCH, HE GETS SHOWN THE DOOR (GOD, NOT THE SINGER). THAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST DESIRE AND NEED FOR US LIVING IN THIS GOING-POST-CHRISTIAN COUNTRY. A NEED TO JUST BE WITH GOD! NOT POPULARITY OR PAYCHECK OR POWER. JUST HIM! DEEPER LIFE IS A PLACE WHERE WE ARE ABLE TO BLESS THE LORD AND PROVIDE SPIRITUALLY FOR OUR FAMILY. ALL THE OTHER STUFF IS FUN, BUT THIS HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST NECESSITY OF OUR LIVES THIS YEAR. AFTER ALL THE PRAYER TO START, WE ASKED GOD TO COVER OUR EXPENSES IN OTHER WAYS SO WE WOULD NEVER HAVE TO TAKE A BLOATED PASTOR SALARY. SINCE THEN, VICTOR HAS BEEN PASTOR/GRAPHIC ARTIST FULL TIME, AND WE HAVE SEEN GODLY RESULTS. HE COMPLETELY ENJOYS BEING ABLE TO SPEND SO MUCH TIME IN THE WORD AND BEING ABLE TO MINISTER TO PEOPLE AS GOD DRAWS THEM NEAR. IT HAS BEEN A BLESSING TO SEE SO MUCH GROWTH IN OURSELVES AND THE PEOPLE AROUND US. ONE HIGHLIGHT IS THE OUTDOOR LAWN CHAIR SUMMER MOVIE SERIES WE DID THAT BLESSED A MILLION FAMILIES! (OK, LIKE 200 OR SO). THE CHURCH HAS BEEN SUCH A BLESSING TO BE PART OF, AND IT APPEARS THAT VICTOR'S LOVE FOR THE WORD AND MY LOVE FOR TEACHING HAVE SHED LIGHT ON THE NEXT SEASON OF OUR LIVES.

IF YOU HAD TOLD ME THAT OUR PLAN WOULD HAVE FALLEN THROUGH TWO MONTHS LATER, I WOULD NEVER HAVE BELIEVED YOU! WHO WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT AFTER 5 YEARS OF TEACHING IN THE SAME DISTRICT, I WOULD BE THE RECIPIENT OF THE DREADED **PINK SLIP** DUE TO CALIFORNIA'S BUDGET CUTS?!?! OH, RIGHT! GOD DID! AT THIS POINT, WE WERE LIKE, "WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU DOING, GOD? WE HAD A PLAN, DIDN'T WE?!?" AND AFTER VICTOR JUST BOUGHT A NEW CAR AND WAIT! I JUST BOUGHT ONE TOO! YIKES! SHORT SALE, FORECLOSURE OR BANKRUPTCY HERE WE COME! OH IT DIDN'T GET THAT BAD, BUT MY HUSBAND LIKES THE BUDGET LIKE HE LIKES HIS BED – LOTS OF CUSHION! (COVER HOG!) AFTER ABOUT 5 YEARS OF DRIVING THE '94 BUICK (THE PASTOR CAR), WE STARTED LOOKING FOR A REPLACEMENT CAR. IF YOU HAD TOLD ME THAT WE'D BE ABLE TO FIND MY DREAM CAR (A CONVERTIBLE MUSTANG) FOR DIRT CHEAP, I'D KNOW YOU WERE TELLING ME LIES! IT WAS A FUN SUMMER PROJECT WORKING TOGETHER ON REPLACING THE INTERIOR.

APPARENTLY, GOD HAD A DIFFERENT PLAN! THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, WE SPENT DOING A LOT OF PRAYING, A LOT OF SEEKING HIS WILL, AND A LOT OF RELYING ON HIM! YOU KNOW A GREAT PLACE TO PRAY IS THE BEACH. WE FOUND OURSELVES THERE A LOT THIS SUMMER TO CONNECT AND TO WORK ON OUR TANS. FEW OF YOU MAY KNOW THAT VICTOR USED TO PLAY BEACH/INDOOR VOLLEYBALL DURING COLLEGE IN SANTA BARBARA. I USED TO JOKE WHEN HE WAS ESPECIALLY "MUSICIAN WHITE" THAT I WOULD HAVE LOVED TO HAVE KNOWN HIM WHEN HE WAS IN COLLEGE. WELL IF I PLUG MY EARS AS HE COMPLAINS ABOUT HIS ACHING KNEES AND JUST WATCH WITH A LITTLE SQUINT, I HAVE TO SAY THE OLD GUY LOOKS LIKE HE COULD GET CARDED. IF YOU HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD BE PLAYING PICK-UP GAMES WITH A COUPLE AVP TOUR PLAYERS AFTER 15 YEARS OF INACTIVITY, HE'D LAUGH THEN CLUTCH HIS KNEES, AND I CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE THOUGHT A FISH TALE WAS BEING TOLD. IT WAS ESPECIALLY SHOCKING FOR HIM TO HEAR THAT HALF A DOZEN KIDS THAT HE HAS COACHED HAVE PROFESSIONAL CAREERS IN VOLLEYBALL FROM NATIONAL TEAM TO AVP. THIS HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST CHANGE TO OUR LIFESTYLE THIS YEAR, AND OUR GOAL IS TO KEEP SUMMER GOING YEAR ROUND.

IN AUGUST, WE TRAVELED TO SAN DIEGO FOR OUR 6 YEAR ANNIVERSARY (COULD IT BE THAT MANY YEARS?) AND TO VISIT KIM, STU, AND EMERY. THEN, WE FINALLY GOT TO MEET OUR ITALIAN NEPHEW, HUNTER WHEN LINDSAY & ZACH TRAVELED FROM ITALY FOR A VISIT.



IF YOU HAD TOLD ME THAT I STILL WOULD NOT HAVE A JOB AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, I'D PROBABLY WALK AWAY FROM YOU AT THAT POINT! VICTOR AND I KNEW THAT GOD HAD A PLAN; IT JUST WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE IF WE HAD KNOWN IT! I STARTED SUBSTITUTING FOR A FEW MONTHS AND BEGAN TO PICK UP A FEW HOURS DOING TECHNOLOGY TRAINING FOR MOORPARK UNIFIED. OUR SEATTLE FRIENDS, BRYAN AND CHRISTY, CAME DOWN FOR A VISIT IN SEPTEMBER. EATING WAY TOO MUCH FOOD; KAYAKING IN VENTURA; BIKING IN SANTA BARBARA; THE FUN JUST KEEPS ON! OCTOBER MEANS VICTOR'S BIRTHDAY, AND IF YOU WOULD HAVE TOLD HIM THAT HE'D BE CELEBRATING AT THE STAPLES CENTER, 7 ROWS BACK FROM THE LAKERS, HE'D STARE AT YOU IN DISBELIEF! THOSE GUYS ARE REALLY TALL!



IN NOVEMBER, I WAS HIRED FULL TIME TO BE MOORPARK'S TECHNOLOGY TRAINER/MENTOR (AKA DISTRICT TECHIE). I NOW TRAIN TEACHERS TO UTILIZE EVERYTHING TECHNOLOGY IN THEIR CLASSROOMS. WHAT AN ANSWER TO PRAYER! YES, GOD COMES THROUGH HUGE YET AGAIN. IT WASN'T WHAT I'D BEEN PRAYING FOR, BUT IT TURNED OUT TO BE EVEN BETTER! NOT ONLY HAS GOD PROVIDED A JOB FOR ME AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE DOING WHAT I LOVE, BUT WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO SEE HOW THIS NEW POSITION BENEFITS THIS SEASON IN OUR LIVES AND HOW HIS HAND IS WORKING IN ALL AREAS OF OUR LIVES.

IF YOU HAD TOLD ME THAT YOU STILL DON'T BELIEVE THAT GOD TAKES CARE OF ALL OF US, I'D BE SHOCKED! IF WE CAN SHARE ANYTHING WITH YOU ABOUT THIS YEAR, IT'S THAT WE HAVE LEARNED TO WAIT ON GOD. HE HAS AN AMAZING PLAN, AND AS LONG AS WE'RE PATIENT FOR HIS TIMING, HE WILL KNOCK YOUR SOCKS OFF WITH BLESSINGS! THAT'S TRULY BEEN THE CASE IN OUR LIVES THIS YEAR. IT MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN EXACTLY WHAT WE PLANNED, BUT IT'S EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTED FOR US AND THAT TURNED OUT TO BE MORE THAN WE WERE EVEN ASKING! IF YOU HAD TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD GIVE US MORE THAN WE EXPECTED BUT WE HAD TO LET GO - WE WOULD HAVE SAID THAT SOUNDS JUST LIKE THE GOD WE SERVE!

WE HOPE YOU HAVE A VERY HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON FILLED WITH LOVE AND COMPASSION FOR ONE ANOTHER.

LOVE,
VICTOR AND TAMIRA