



Church of Christ in Gwinnett

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*The birds of the air come and perch in its branches.
- Matthew 13:32*

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In this issue: A familiar face becomes our sister in Christ – p. 1-3
Helping Mamas organize to serve – p. 3
Catching up with the Washingtons – p. 4-11
A sneak peek the Zambia Team's adventures – p. 12

Celebrating a new birth in the CoCG!

On Monday, May 26th, Nadia Howard began her new life in Christ! Many of us know her as Tanja Howard's daughter, but now she's our sister in her own right—opening up a whole new level of relationship with all of us in the Body of Christ. Here's a glimpse—

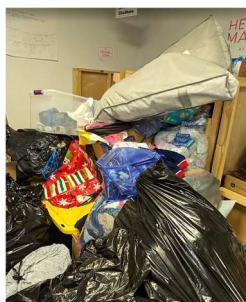
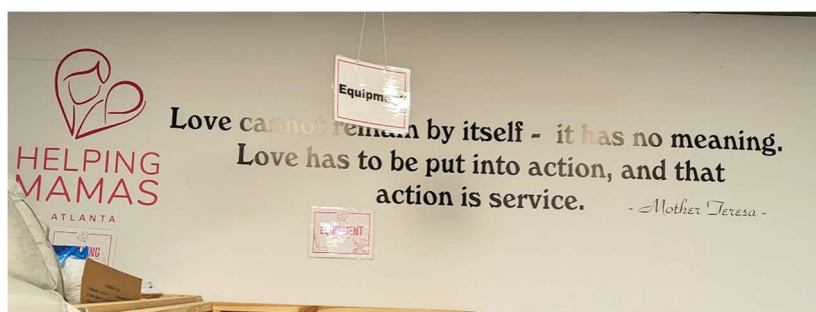






Serving hands behind the scenes

On April 12th, we had an opportunity to be “warehouse warriors” for Helping Mamas; on other occasions we’ve helped them distribute products for women and babies, but this time they needed help organizing donations in their warehouse storage area. A group of disciples joined with other groups to sort clothing and other items by size, condition, and more, and had fun doing it! Here’s a look—



Together, we helped turn this...



into this!

Catching Up With



Joseph and Lisa Washington

Where are you from originally, and what would you like people to know about where you're from?

Joseph: I'm born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, and that says everything you need to know about it—it is New Orleans! I did not realize how unique of a place it was until I moved away. I grew up in a very unique place with a lot of unique traditions, and food, and lifestyle, and parades—Mardi Gras—a lot of things that others just did not grow up with. I just assumed that's the way everybody lived until I moved away, and then I realized, "Wow, this is an incredible place!"

Lisa: I'm from Atlanta—I was born in Nashville, but my mom left there when I was 3 weeks old, so I was raised in Atlanta. I really love where I grew up; I grew up in a very historic part of Atlanta. My father knew Dr. King and Ralph David Abernathy—my father was part of the civil rights movement. Dr. King would do his rallies, and finish about 2:00 in the morning and would dine in my father's restaurant—his secretary's notes show that he would plan his rallies and his marches for the next couple of days in my family's restaurant. That's something I do love, the fact that I'm from here and growing up around the civil rights movement and all these really amazing historical black leaders that my dad talked a lot about, some who had already passed on, especially Dr. King. I grew up around his children—his daughter Yolanda King grew up around the corner from us. I'm very proud of the part of Atlanta I grew up in.

My father's restaurant was called Davis Brothers Cafeteria; he wasn't the owner, but he was the head chef there. He was the first African American chef to be head chef in a restaurant that only served white people, and he also helped integrate that restaurant—it was one of the first restaurants in Georgia to be integrated, to serve both blacks and whites.

How did you come to live in Lawrenceville?

Lisa: Being from Atlanta, I've lived all over the place, but Joseph and I decided to move to Lawrenceville because we wanted Bernard, my older son, to go to a school where there were disciples he could hang out with and be around. Before that we used to live in Alpharetta, and before that we lived in Roswell and were part of the ministry there.

Joseph: So we moved here originally in 2002; Bernard was in high school, and Tyler was a baby, he was just one, about to turn two, when we moved Lawrenceville. My trek went from New Orleans, and once I graduated from high school, I went to Florida State University, which is my heart, and my heart hurts for what just happened there. [This interview took place the day after a gunman killed two people and injured six more on the Florida State campus.] I graduated from Florida State in '93 and then moved here to work at CNN.

What do you do for a living, and how did you choose this field or how did you come to be in that field?

Joseph: I was a communications major—I wanted to be on a video editing track, but that wasn't God's plan! I stayed there just for a few months, then from there ended up working for administrative jobs, ended up getting a job at AIG that nobody wanted—the lady who hired me said, "You can keep this job as long as you want, because nobody wants it." So I said, "Hey, I'll keep this job, and use it as a way to get a job at this insurance company." Then I got rejected for an underwriting position---the best rejection that I ever received! They told me that commercial insurance pays better; I ended up getting a job as an underwriting assistant in the healthcare division. The manager really took a liking to me, and liked my enthusiasm, so she didn't ask me, she told me she was putting me in the training program. She put me in the training program as an underwriter, and my career took off from there.

Lisa: My husband is very humble about his job, but I want to brag on him a little bit. The reason why he left CNN was that he really wanted to seek God—they had him working all kinds of crazy hours, and he wasn't able to be at church or anything. So he decided being at church, being with the Body, was more important, so he gave that job up, His heart was, "I'll work at Blockbuster, I'll do whatever"—and that's when he got hired at AIG. And I love how God blessed Joseph, because this was not his background—his background was television, it's media—and God blessed him from being in this underwriting program, to be an underwriting assistant, to now he's vice president of underwriting at the company that he works for. He's been doing this for 30 years, so God really, really blessed him!

Joseph: When I first got to Florida State, I actually was a computer science major, but I did an internship and I realized the computer people at that point sat by themselves in a room with these huge systems and that's all they did all day, just sit by themselves and work with computers, and I thought, "This is not the career that I want to choose—work this hard, get this degree, and then I don't really want to do this job." So I started trying to figure out exactly what I wanted to do from there; if I look back at it now, I'd tell myself to major in business, get my business degree, but at that time I was thinking that what I really liked was television—I was very intrigued by it, so I went to communication school and really started developing a joy and a liking for it.

Another thing I would tell myself then, I would say, "You know what? You should be in front of the camera; take all the courses to be in front of the camera." Actually, because my personality was more on the shy side, I thought I needed to be behind the scenes more; I kind of let that get in the way of me doing that work. Now I would instruct myself: "Get a business degree, and if you get into communications, be out in front of the camera."

But God has blessed it; even though I work in the career of insurance, which is a field that kind of puts you in the background, I've gotten to speak, and I can't tell you how many conferences that I speak at! I've gotten to travel—I got to go to London, the Cayman Islands, I got to go to some really great places! I've visited half the states in this country through my job. There's been a lot of visibility where I'm not hidden away at all, I'm out in front—and that's where I prefer to be, out of front versus hidden away. Not everybody in insurance has this type of career, God has really morphed my career into having that, and so it's a huge blessing, really.

Lisa: I'm in health, wellness and beauty. What got me into that, I was chronically ill my whole life. I was born with chronic kidney disease; when I was about seven, the doctors told my mom that I probably would have a transplant—that's when I remember hearing about being a sick child. So I think wellness is about me trying to figure out how to stay healthy and alive naturally, because of my chronic illness.

How I got into beauty, Tyler had eczema really bad, and I was trying to help him deal with his eczema, so I ended up making this natural product, and it actually got rid of his eczema. So that's how I got into skin care—I was making several different natural holistic products. That also got me into health; I went back to school, and studied out natural nutrition and holistic medicine. I also went back and studied out psychology—positive psychology, mindfulness, yoga, meditation—anything had to do with health and wellness and beauty, that is what I do.

And then I get to do that on television—I didn't realize I'd ever be on television, but I did a competition on Food Network, and I had to do a whole lot of PR for that. And one of the places I had to go to do PR was on Fox 5, Good Day Atlanta, and they really liked what I was doing. They got Joseph and me to come back and do a story, and then because what I do has to do with wellness and food, they said, "Hey, would you want to be a media contributor, or media correspondent—that's the old word for a media influencer. So I've been doing that work with them for nine years.

Joseph: The story of how we came together—it's amazing! I came to Atlanta in May of '93, I really came up being positive, going to be really focused on growing closer to God—new Christian, new city, huge church, all the different things, I was really going to focus on God. And then I saw Lisa! I remember seeing her at a wedding shower and thought, "Wow, she is beautiful, but I know she has to be dating somebody; there's no way she's not dating anybody." Then the second time, I was with a brother in the church, Broderick Baker, we were living in a house in Buckhead with some other brothers, and Broderick and I saw Lisa and her roommate in Cub Foods on Buford Highway; we saw her roommate and I said hi and gave her a hug and everything, like we'd normally do, and with Lisa I just got stunned and just said, "Hi," and she said, "Hi," and that was it. We were just frozen.

Lisa: Yes, exactly! It's funny because I noticed him, and I was with my roommate, we're getting groceries, and I remember walking away and I told her, "That's my husband!" She said, "You're crazy!" I said, "No, that's my husband; I'm gonna marry him!"

Joseph: I didn't even know that, but you knew it! God made you sensitive to it. It's amazing, we went on a date that same month—on Memorial Day weekend. We went out on a date, just the simplest date, right before I went to work we just went over to Shoney's and went to Piedmont Park and walked around and just had the best time, and the best conversation. I thought, "Wow, she's really special! Okay, I'm gonna remember this." And really, from then on I just was hooked. Before we even started officially dating, I was already in love with her, and I thought, "This is who I want to spend the rest of my life with." I asked her to be my girlfriend and it was in October of '93 that we started dating. That was just when I was getting past the infatuation point and really getting to know her and make sure—"Is this the right person; is this the right one?"—especially with her being a single mom and she has a son, I want to make sure that this all comes together and this is going to work the best way and I'm the right person for Lisa, because I definitely do not want to do anything that's going to cause irreparable harm to her and especially to her son—that was very, very important. So I proceeded slowly, and then on May 19th of '95, on her birthday, I proposed at the Cheesecake Factory in Buckhead. So we got engaged, and got married in September 1995, and so now this September will be 30 years.

Lisa: So you know I was born with chronic kidney disease, I was a bubble child, I was always a sick kid. The great thing about my mom, she didn't raise me like I was a sick kid, I did everything that all the rest of the kids did, although I went to the doctor a lot, I was in the house a lot, I was out of school a lot. But I still learned how to live my life, so that when I did get the chance to get up and run and play, I'd get up and run and play hard—and I'm still that way now, at 55—and I thank my mom for that gift. She'd say, "Just do whatever you want to do, don't worry about all the stuff that's going on, just live your life fully." So when Joseph and I were dating, some of our dates, he would take me to Grady Hospital because I had no insurance—sometimes I would get sick on our dates, and he would take me to the hospital, and he was so patient. I'd say, "I guess we're going to have our date here at the hospital" And then, because it takes forever at Grady, I remember Joseph saying, "I'm going to marry you so you can have some insurance." We went into it with Joseph knowing, "I'm dating a sick person."

Right after we got married, I got really sick, my kidneys started going, I was constantly sick. But what really got me was when I got pregnant with Tyler, and my doctor told me, "Your kidneys are probably going to be shot after this—you'll probably have about seven years, and then your kidneys are going to fail." As soon as I had Tyler, I got even sicker and even sicker with my chronic kidney disease, and about the time Tyler turned 7, I was on dialysis. I was really, really sick—I basically was dying, and I could feel that I was dying. Joseph gives blood at the Red Cross all the time, but we never knew his blood type, I always thought Joseph was a different blood type from mine, so I didn't think anything about it. But he thought, "The next time I'm at the Red Cross, I'm going to ask what my blood type is." And it's really amazing, because I was at my sickest, I was unconscious for three days in the hospital, and I remember nothing, just some smells, but not really anything. I remember waking up, and Joseph was there, and the doctors were talking about doing surgery and saying I was probably not going to make it but they didn't have anything else they could do for me.

But once Joseph got me home, a day or so later, I remember being on the sofa and him running into the house and saying, "I'm O—I'm your blood type!" I was so out of it, I was so weak, I just said, "What?" So he called Emory, and Emory started testing him; there were two other people in our ministry in Gwinnett at the time that they were testing, and Emory said that Joseph has more markers than anybody—if anyone has six DNA markers in common with you, it's probably your identical twin.

Joseph is from Louisiana, I'm from Georgia, but Joseph had three markers—that's unheard of! I think he had two on my mom's side and one on my dad's side, or vice versa, but to have half of the markers was a big deal; you're not going to do better than that unless you're a twin. So they ran him through the testing, everything went great—he had some issues with the testing, there was a moment they wanted to deny him, because of his kidney stones, but he was like, "No, you're going to fix this and work things out." But my husband, it's who he is, he was like, "I am doing this!"

The really cool thing about this story, amongst everything else I've said, is that every year Joseph and I write a prayer list, it's our New Year's resolution, and the next year we exchange it to see what God has done. So that year after our transplant we pull our little lists out, we exchange the papers—and this always makes me cry—he had put on that list, "Lord, may I be the one to save my wife's life." I did not know that—I did not know that that's what he wrote down the year prior, and he didn't know how God would do that either, and it all worked out because God answered that prayer. I think that is the coolest thing about that—I had no idea that he wrote that down, because I would have told him not to write it down, because Tyler was 7, Bernard was 14, losing his mind, and I didn't want anything to happen to my husband, so I didn't want him to be the person that gave me a kidney, because then something could have happened.

So that's how that story came about and it's been really amazing, because Joseph and I have gotten to tell our story on Food Network around the world—this lady from Korea walked up to me when I was in a hotel, but she saw me on Food Network, she started trying to grab my stomach and speaking in her language; I said, "No, I'm fine, I'm fine— my husband gave me his kidney." So I'm trying to explain this to her—we've told our story in tons of magazines. The coolest thing is that our portraits actually hang in Emory University Hospital.

Joseph: For African Americans, understandably, there's some distrust as far as the government as well as medical systems, due to some things that happened in the past, so we understand that. So when it comes to transplantation, African American just as a whole really are not high on transplantation—they just don't trust the process, don't trust how things work out. So there's a lady who had a lot of passion, she was working with us at that time—she had a lot of passion for really wanting to highlight the stories of African Americans to really promote how people's lives change through transplants, so we were asked to be a part of this initiative. The man who does the portraits is a photographer and he's had his kidney transplant for over 20 years. So he did our portraits, and our portraits were hanging in a museum in Macon, Georgia, but they also got to tour, and show the portraits in different places in the United States.

Emory heard about this and reached out to them and initially asked them to have the portraits for two or three months; they came to us and asked us for permission—it was supposed to be up for two or three months to highlight transplants of African Americans that happened at Emory. And so as you walk into the main Emory facility, as you look to the left, you see Lisa's and my portrait there. And it's turned from three months into—

Lisa: They own it now; they actually purchased it, so our portraits are hanging at Emory University Hospital.

Joseph: And the impact that it's made, not only for the people that visit, but even for the people that work there, because Lisa and I have gone to visit, and I also took my parents to go see it, and the impact that it makes on people, especially on the workers, they're like, "Wow, we can't believe your portraits are hanging up here, this is giving so much faith and hope!" It encourages people so much that now it's also turned into a documentary. Lisa and I went with some of the couples that wanted their stories told in this documentary—there were five—and Lisa and I were chosen. On the Saturday before Easter, they actually are showing the documentary in Macon.

Lisa: So we're in a documentary! It's cool, too, that I told Joseph, when he gave me his kidney, "I'm going to tell the world what you've done for me!" And it is amazing how God has used the connections that I have with people I know, this story has been told all around the world, it's been told locally, it's in a museum in Macon, it's at Emory Hospital, and now it's a documentary. And I didn't realize how God was going to do that! I just told Joseph, "I'm going to tell the world what you've done for me," and it's amazing how God has worked that out.

How did you first get involved with disciples, and what was your first impression of disciples and of the church?

Lisa: I thought it was a cult, and the people were crazy; that's what I first thought. I didn't grow up religious—I grew up believing in God, and if my family had to attach itself to a religion it would have been Baptist, but we didn't go to church. My mom was very free-spirited, and wanted us to find our own way. I drank, I smoked weed when I wanted to, slept around, I just did whatever I wanted to do in my life, and I was not going to mix God with that. That's what I thought the Christians around me did—the people I thought were Christians were hypocrites, I felt that they just said, "God" but did what they wanted to do, and I just thought that was hypocrisy.

So how I got involved with the church, I was going to become an atheist; I was downstairs in the basement of my home and I prayed to God, and I said, "God, if you are true, if Christianity is true, then I pray that you will lead me to people who are really Christians. If you do not do this, then I'm becoming an atheist." Then the next day, I was at work—I worked in a shoe store at the Avondale Mall—and Leanna Cisco and LuVerda and Connie McDonald—she was Connie Smith at the time—came into the store and I was looking at them like they were crazy, because I was thinking, "What are these girls looking for?" And I remember Leanna's daughter Shelly ran back into the back of my office; I was assistant manager, and she ran into my office and she started throwing these bottles into the sink. I remember grabbing her hand and said, "Hey, sweetie, don't do that!" I remember this feeling came over me of just great love. I took her back to her mama, and her mother Leanna was inviting my coworker, who was very religious, to church and my coworker was telling her, "I got a church, blah, blah, blah"—and I looked at them and I said, "I'll go to church with you."

So the next week I went to a Bible talk at Cynthia Smith's house out in Clarkston. They said, "Do you want to study the Bible?" I said yes, and I studied for a couple of months and got baptized. All my mothers—Francina Walker, Carol Van Dyke—I was 19, and they were all my moms, and they were amazing! My view of them changed when we studied the Bible. When I got to Leanna's house, I found that she had two black roommates; and then we went to Bible talk, and the women's Bible talk was diverse and mixed! When they were talking about the Bible, I think that's the thing, because everyone was so real and they were very open about their lives, and I could tell, this is their lives, and they just used the Bible, it wasn't crazy. I had been reading the Bible anyway prior to that time, before I met them, so when we got into the Bible, I was reading, and I thought, "You know what, I think this is really the real deal, the real thing that I have prayed for." That was in 1989, and I'm still here!

Joseph: God knew that the way to better reach me is through Doug Harris, my best friend there on campus at Florida State. He met disciples there, and studied the Bible and got baptized. We had some good conversations, and I thought I was a Christian but it's almost like I was thinking, "Well, I'm a Christian, but he's a super-Christian because he's the one that's really, really trying to follow everything in the Bible; I'm just trying to live the way everybody else does that professes to love God, that's comfortable, that's as much as I want to do—I don't want to get uncomfortable." But the thing that started drawing me, when they started sharing about the word of God, there was so much I just did not know. There was very little I knew, because I was not reading the Bible, and when I would go to church not much of the Bible was discussed; it was more of preaching for emotions than it was preaching about convictions, about the word of God.

So finally Doug invited me to come to church with him. The thing that stood out to me more than anything was the minister, Kevin Fessler, that got up and preached from the word of God. I felt like I learned more in one sermon that I probably would consume my whole life. And then I heard the fellowship, and heard people talking about how they were doing and their quiet times and how they were trying to live their lives, and I thought, "Well, that's fine, that's good fellowship for Sunday, but I know that's not how they live the rest of the week, that's just the Sunday time and that's it." Then I would run into them on campus, and they're still talking about what they read in their Bibles, how they were trying to change their lives, what they were trying to work on to be more like Jesus, and I thought, "Wow, this is an everyday thing!"

Honestly, it took me a while to finally come around—it was convicting being around the church, because this campus minister actually invited me to go to Taco Bell with him—and I hate Taco Bell—and he really challenged me that “You’re not real, you have to get real.” And I go back to my dorm, and I was living by myself—I was a resident assistant—and I thought, “This is it: Either I’m going to leave God and stop playing church, stop playing like I’m a disciple, and stop playing everything, I’m just gonna go do whatever I want to do; or I’m gonna get really serious about this, be serious about following Jesus.” And everything in me really just wanted to go do whatever I want to do. The one thing that held on to me is that, “You do this and you’re denying Jesus.” I thought, “I can’t deny Jesus—that, I can’t do; not after what He’s done for me.” So I started praying, told the brothers, “Hey, I want to spend some time, get together with you”—so we absolutely got together the next day and I just poured everything out—“Here’s what I’m doing, here’s what I’m not doing, here’s where I’m living my life,”—everything. And then a week after that I got baptized.

But it’s incredible, because even the toughest times that I’ve had where there were temptations to leave, the thing that held me on is a love for Jesus, and not wanting to deny Jesus. Back in 2003, when everything was tough, when church was blowing up and everything, like I could just go off, and on Sundays I could just play tennis and go live my life and do what I want to do, but it came back to what happened to me in ‘92, and that’s helped me all throughout my time. It goes back to Jesus and what Jesus did for me on the cross, and my love for Jesus, for what He’s done, that makes me hold on tight till I can get stronger and stand on my own again. It always comes back to that.

What has surprised you most about life as a disciple?

Lisa: What it really means to have a relationship with God. It is not what I was taught—God’s taught me that, through my walk with Him from 1989 to this time. God has taught me that a relationship with Him is not reading my Bible and praying—that is something I do to know God, to know His word, but that relationship is just that. He wants a relationship with all of you. That’s the biggest thing I’ve learned. He wants a relationship with me when I’m not doing great, He wants me to bring that to Him when I’m frustrated, when I’m angry, when I’m straight up just wrong and not right within myself, He tells me, “Come sit with me with that.” I think that’s the greatest thing that has surprised me, and it’s something that’s transformed my relationship with God, what He has taught me about having a real and true relationship with Him; it’s the reason why I’m still here.

Joseph: I think maybe when I was young, I thought that my foundation or reasons to be around would change and flow with life and everything, but it still really comes back down to that same foundation, being about Jesus. When everything starts to go crazy and things are nutty and Satan gives you an easy way out and it’s so tempting to just take that easy way out, what makes me hold on, regain sanity and bring it back is Jesus—when everything else doesn’t make sense, it still comes back to that. He’s the reason why I’m here from the very beginning and that’s why I am still here. That’s the part that surprised me, thinking that at this point it would be a different motivation, but it really still comes back down to that same thing, that same foundation.

What do you wish people outside the church knew about following Jesus?

Lisa: It’s the same answer—I wish people would know what it really means to have a relationship with God, that it’s not a bunch of rules and regulations and laws and being perfect—your I’s are dotted, your T’s are crossed. It really is a relationship like you have with any other person; it has its times when it’s hard, when it’s exciting, when it’s joyful, when it’s a struggle, it’s all of that! I love the fact that God has blessed me with all of that—He said, “Let’s do this together!” Joseph and I, we have all of that, but it’s like we do this together. I want people to know that, that it’s a real relationship.

Joseph: Absolutely! More than anything, I want them to know that following Jesus, doing things God’s way, really brings the magic out in life. What I mean by that is, people tell us by doing relationships this way, that it’s going to be great and everything like that, but there’s so much hurt, so much pain, so much stuff that’s there. In following God and doing things God’s way, it eliminates all those things, and then it allows you to have a heart that’s free to truly live life, and truly have life. I’ve thought about all different ways that just left to myself I would have done things, some good and some bad; but I know that even the good would have been covered up by the bad—but with God allowing me to have those things clear, now I can have a good grasp of what the magic is. If people knew that, they really could think, “Maybe I should try to live that way, because I know I could have more joy, more fun and everything, and get more out of life.”

What has your biggest challenge been in following Jesus, and how did you deal with it, or how do you deal with it if it's an ongoing challenge?

Joseph: I would say it's the part where it's just easier for me to do things my way. But to wait patiently, to wait for God, to trust God, that God's going to work out things the best way—that's the challenge, because I want to go and just take control, because in that way I feel like I can guarantee that things are going to work out the way I want them to work. But that's not the best way, and more than anything, as life goes on, that's the biggest challenge for me. I have to slow myself down, because a lot of times I can be impulsive. Instead of making an impulsive decision, I need to pray and to seek wisdom from God, and wherever God is bringing that from—whether I go and seek advice from Lisa or from someone else, whether I go and read your Bible, or I just need to sit quiet, or I need to go live my life, but I need to go to God and wait. But if you really listen to the Spirit, the Spirit will teach you what you need to do. What's helped me is when I've done that, and I've seen the results of it, how God works things out even in ways that I didn't even think would work out that way, I've seen that God really does work things out the best way—"He really does know what He's doing! That's pretty cool! I'm glad I'm getting that!" That becomes my Jordan River (there are big ones and small ones), that's where I can keep on reminding myself of that so that I can remain faithful and I can gain in my patience and gain in my trust in God, versus just want to take and do things my own way.

Lisa: I think my greatest challenge as a Christian is very complex—"Does God love me?" That is a challenge for me; before I became a Christian and ever since, that is something that I think I've battled with almost every single day. Does God love me, am I loved by God? I think the challenge was how I was introduced to what love looks like from a father. God has shown me so many times how much He loves me! I always have to stand in scripture and in truth, because we're always going to have challenges and for some people the challenges come over and over again. I'm ADHD, and I also have obsessive-compulsive disorder, so I have a few disabilities—most people don't know that this is what I have because the way I move through them, but that's a lot of training, God, and tons of certificates, so I can help other people because I know. And because I deal with ADHD and obsessive-compulsive disorder, one of the things is our thinking—we have thoughts that go over and over and over again. What Satan uses for me, over and over again, is that "God doesn't love you."

There's a reference for that with my father—I grew up in a very emotionally abusive household, where my daddy told me pretty much every day for much of my life that "You are not loved, you're ugly, you're stupid, and you'll amount to nothing." You take that, you get that, and then you become a Christian, and if you're centered around "work equals love, work is how you get love, and if you don't do well, if you're not right, you are not loved"—that is a challenge for me every single day.

How do I work with that? I have an amazing therapist that I've been going to for 25 years; with the different things I've studied, I have certifications in positive psychology, anxiety and brain health and all that stuff from Harvard. You think, "Well, why did you get that many certifications, why did you do so much work?" This is for me, not for clients that I work with. And I thank God for professors and therapists that He can use to speak the truth through—they help me. I thank Him also for His word. And I'm very high on people getting the help that they need with God, with God's word, with spiritual mentors, but also things outside of that, because there are disorders that people do have that take a little more than just reading your Bible and praying. I think God provided that intellect and that love and that consciousness, for other people to do that, to help people like me, and I thank Him for that.

What's your favorite scripture?

Lisa: My favorite scripture is Ephesians 3:20-21, that God can do more than you can ask or imagine. That is my favorite, favorite scripture because that is the story of my life.

Joseph: That is an awesome one! The one that strikes me right now is James 4:7, "Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you." It's that promise at the end. As I became a disciple, I was wondering if God would accept me; I didn't know if my heart could change to where I really could follow Him. I remember sitting in the car with my best friend Doug and that scripture came to me and remember that in my mind I started doing the math on it, and I'm thinking, "Wait, hold on, there's a promise here! God does not break His promises—Okay, all I have to do is come near to God, He will come near to me! I don't have to worry about the devil—I'm not even focused on the devil, I'm focused on God, I'm focused on coming near to Him, He'll come near to me; that's all I'm going to focus on, and I'm going to be okay!" I remember that to this day, I still go back to that and remember that time; it really still resonates in my mind. I just have to commit myself to God, and He commits to me, and He will not break His promises, so I can hold onto that.

What are some things you enjoy doing in your spare time—interests, hobbies, organizations you belong to?

Lisa: There's so many--Joseph and I like to give back to the community. It's funny, I was on the cover of a magazine here in Atlanta, and they asked, "How many charities do you support and give to?" And I was like, "Well, through participation, writing checks, serving, going out, there's like 18. One of the charities that I've worked with for years is the Georgia Transplant Foundation; I was their keynote speaker, and Joseph and I traveled all over Georgia speaking about transplantation and how important it is. And then there's Alzheimer Association, and many other organizations. But we really do love serving and giving back to the community.

What I love to do in my spare time, I spend time with my grandchildren; I have a granddaughter who's 14 going on 15, and a grandson that just turned 11. I love gardening—I don't have a big garden, but I love digging in the dirt, I love planting flowers. I love painting, I love decorating. And I love taking people to lunch, or having people in my home and cooking for people.

Joseph: I'm really big into sports! I definitely love my team, Florida State, I love to watch them. As far as physically, I love running, and love playing tennis. I love the camaraderie and the relationships that God has built over time by doing that, and I thank God that at 54 that I can still be active and play tennis—that I can do it freely and no hinderance, I can just go out there and enjoy myself; I love that. And I love running, and I love that God has allowed me to still be able to run and to do it freely. I will do it as long as He allows me to do it!

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

Lisa: I love country music! I love Keith Urban, I love the Florida Georgia Line—I do love those two artists. I do love country music—

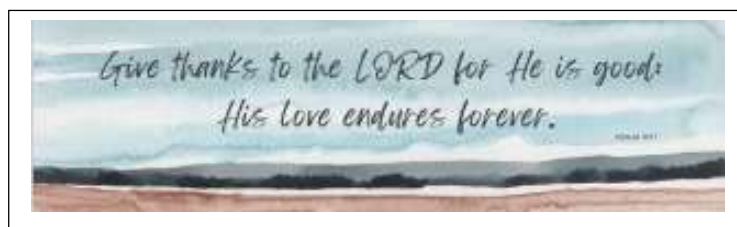
Joseph: —and I don't like it at all. What someone might be surprised to know about me, it's the legend that's kind of surprising, but when I was a young kid I believed it full-heartedly. They said that I was not born with the dimple that's on my left side. They said that when I was about two or three years old an aunt made a mistake and pushed me onto something sharp, and I ended up coming out of it having this dent here in my cheek. **Lisa:** I love it—I thought, "Oh, my God, he has a dimple," but no, it's an injury. I think God likes dimples, so He gave you one.

Joseph: I don't really remember it—I remember crying, but that's it, that's all I remember from it—and then all of a sudden I had a dimple! But, hey, it's great that it turned out that way.

If you could speak to yourself as you were 10 years ago, what advice would you give yourself?

Lisa: Looking back 10 years, I would tell myself that menopause is no joke! "You better enjoy this body, girl! You'll wake up one day and say, 'What?'" 45 was great, I loved being 45, I remember 45—what would I tell her? "You are lucky. You are loved. Drench yourself in that truth! Study it out, explore it and all that it means, because someday it's going to mean a lot more to you than you think right now." I think that's what I would tell her.

Joseph: I think that I'd say, "You're going to go through adversities in life—some things in life are going to be intense; that's okay, you're gonna get through it and come out stronger. Persevere—you're going to be okay." I think when such intense things happen to us, we don't know the future; we don't know how things are going to turn out—the pandemic, for example, we didn't know when it was going to end. And so there's a freak-out point when you're thinking, "Oh, boy, this is starting to last way longer than I thought—what's going to happen?" I would say to myself, "Just breathe; you're going to be stronger, it's going to work out, you're just going to have to trust God—it's going to be okay!"



The Zambian adventure begins...

After months of planning, saving, fundraising, and hard work, Team Zambia arrived at their destination on Monday, June 9th! The next issue of the newsletter will feature more of their story and their pictures, but here are a few pics of their arrival and a couple of highlights of their visit—these pictures courtesy of two of the host couples in the church there, Oumar and Carol Sylla and Greg and Tamara Marchand:



We welcome news and pictures on interesting personal stories, family group activities, and more. Please send them to Nancy Berry, nberry2@gmail.com. Thank you!

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