

How did I get to this point? Only by the grace of God, I can assure you. Even writing these words, the child within me is screaming, "Don't say anything, it may not last!" The truth is, it won't last, but I'm okay with that. God allows these mountaintop moments to give us courage for when we inevitably find ourselves in the valley again.

This will be my last blog for the remainder of 2025. I can hear the voice of Albert Finney, from my favorite version of *Scrooge* that came out in the 1970's, say, "I'm going to spend Christmas with my family." I usually take a break from writing this time of year. But this year, I have extra special reasons why.

First, and foremost, I am free of unyielding grief that I have been under for the last decade, if not more. I had a few 'come to Jesus' moments, where truths that I needed finally came to light. I know I will still feel exasperated at times, but I fully accept my life as is, and I'm finding the good in it. I'm still raising my grandsons, but I am embracing the blessings they have added to my life. I am still not sure that I would be here today if it weren't for my having the responsibility to care for them.

It is tough the second time around, but I have also found there have been moments when I am better able to handle situations due to my experience as a first-time mom. I'm the first one to admit these two boys get away with a lot more than my kids did, simply because I get tired and I have to pick my battles. But I am also not as uptight, so I'm enjoying watching their transformation from boys to young men. I am very proud of them. Their mom, Chelsea, is also very much a part of their lives, and I'm so proud of her too.

Added to the freedom from grief, I am grateful to be near my grown sons. Benjamin and his wife of one year, Isabella, are very close by, making visits much easier. My Samuel is also close by, and as I write this, we are exactly one week away from his wedding to a beautiful young woman, Morgan. These past months have been a whirlwind of additional expenses, planning, and family gatherings. It has all been worth it, and I am so excited to share this beautiful moment with my entire family.

I have even more secret treasures I could share, but I'll keep those safe in my heart until the time is right. But we can't forget the ultimate blessing of Christmas. The last two Christmases here in our new state weren't memorable. For me, they were downright sad and cause for many, many tears. Still trying to deal with divorce, the responsibility of the boys, and all of us going through emotional turmoil, I will not look on those two Christmases with fondness.

But oh, here we are now. So much to be thankful for, so many new changes in all our lives, and of course, Christmas! If you've read any of my blogs before, you know I adore the Christmas holiday and have for as long as I can remember. From the decorations to looking for the perfect gifts for those I love...it is truly magical. And of course, I cannot forget the real reason why we celebrate. Heaven came down in the form of a precious baby, to dwell among us, and to ultimately save the world. Jesus. My precious Jesus. The greatest gift of all. Like I said, my cup is overflowing.

May God bless you all this Christmas and throughout the new year.

Lisa Jo

