

# 2016: A YEAR IN REVIEW

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## HOME AGAIN

My journey back to Missions.

I've got to be honest: I've been sitting here for a while, wondering where to start. In June, I began a new life as a full-time staff member at Gleanings for the Hungry, a ministry of Youth with a Mission (YWAM), in Dinuba, California. How do I sum up the last six months of this new life? How can I possibly communicate the experiences I've had, and the impact they've had on me?

I guess that if I was going to put a title on this chapter of my life, I would call it "Rediscovery". These past months have been a time of rediscovering who I am, where my skills and passions are, rediscovering my sense of home and community, my sense of self, of rediscovering the God who I left everything behind to pursue, the God who left everything behind to pursue me.

These last few years have been tough. I hit my late twenties, and found myself nowhere that I had ever meant to be. "How did I get here?", I kept asking myself; nothing was as I had planned, or dreamed.

When I reached 24, and then 25, and 26, and (gulp!) 27, unmarried, no serious career, no clear "path to my destiny", I began to despair. "What about my dreams?! What about my plans?!" I had so many questions in my mind, and I had long since stopped looking to God for the answers. I had given up hope for my future.

But, God. Oh yeah, Him. He was not done with me yet. He still had plans for me, after-all. It's too long to get into it in

great detail, but I can tell you this: in my brokenness, in my questioning, in my bad decision making, in my cold-shoulder turning, God was there, and He never stopped pursuing me.



Greeting guests at our annual Donor Banquet on Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>.

God used the people in my life to break through my cloud of despair, and He rescued me up out of a broken life, and began to, again, recreate me, to give me purpose, and to give me hope.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Corinthians 5:17. I don't think this is a one-time deal; I believe this is a promise, that as many times as we break, Jesus will heal. This is what I have seen in my life, and believe me: if Jesus can heal me in my mess, He can certainly heal you in yours.

Last spring, I got a phone call from a friend here at Gleanings. She had remained in close contact with me, and had been praying fiercely for me

through my struggles. "We bought you a plane ticket," she said. "Get here – now!" And so with that, I made plans to visit for a few weeks, which turned into two months. During that time, I was so loved on by my family here, and I began to heal, began to rediscover.

A week or so before I left, I filled out a staff application form, and asked the base directors, and two close friends, to pray with me for confirmation that coming on staff here was what God wanted. During that time of prayer, I felt God highlight Isaiah 43, which says (vs. 1-2, 18-19): 'But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you... Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.'" God confirmed it in all of us during that prayer time that I was to come on staff. With that, I headed home to get everything sorted to return.

There were many challenges between leaving here in the spring, and coming back in the summer, but through it all, God was so faithful. The end of June came, and I arrived at Gleanings, with a suitcase in my hand, and fresh hope in my heart, ready for the next chapter of my life, ready to rediscover the God who never let me go.

## NEW CHALLENGES

### An unexpected job title.

When I made plans to come on staff here at Gleanings, we had discussed me coming to help in office administration. However, shortly before I arrived, I was told that our Bookings clerk would be gone for the summer, and was asked to fill in for her. Not fully knowing what I was getting myself into, I agreed. One thing that you should know about me, is that I am deeply creative, and get bored easily with routine.

My job as the Bookings clerk was to be in contact with groups and individuals who wanted to come volunteer with us, and arrange all the details for their stay. This meant constant emails and phone calls, making schedules and assigning rooms, arranging pick-up and drop-off of our international backpackers, communicating important details with volunteers, and creating spreadsheets to keep track of it all. Needless to say, I quickly discovered that the Bookings department was far outside of my experience and comfort level, and was full of routine, and formulas, and schedules, and this-is-just-the-way-we-do-it-s. I've got to admit - I was tempted to abandon ship more than once!

2 Corinthians 12 : 9 - 10 says: 'But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.' I had to remind myself every day this summer that I do not have only my well of experience and ability to draw from, but that I also have God's, which is infinitely deep and constantly accessible to me.

Through much prayer, trial and error, and more than one "Help! What do I do now?!" texts to the previous Bookings clerk, I made it through the summer. The day came when I made a Housing Sheet for the last time, handed the reins back over to my freshly returned predecessor, and finally, started the job that had looked forward to doing. I learned so much through saying yes to something that was outside of my comfort zone, and I am glad now that I accepted the challenge, and grew as a result.

## GIRL FRIDAY

### "What is your job exactly?"

Once my days in the Bookings department had come to a close, I started my new job as "Administrative Assistant". Basically, there are certain tasks that just don't quite fall under anyone's job description, so we made a new job title, and voila - these tasks are now mine! My days are filled with planning, and making lists, editing articles before they go to print, writing weekly posts for our website, answering phone calls, running errands to buy things we need, writing country reports for the newsletter, and helping to plan for special events. My days are

varied, and I get to be creative as I make invitations, and plan our monthly "Family Night", and write articles about donations, and events, and ministries that we help to support. This job is perfectly suited to me, and I enjoy it immensely. Come January, as we look ahead to next fall, I will be shifting into school planning as we prepare for our 2017 Discipleship Training School (DTS), which will begin in September of 2017.

[right: Polynesian dancers worshipping at the YWAM Together gathering in Kansas City.]



## YWAM GATHERINGS

This fall, I had the chance to attend two incredible week-long YWAM gatherings; YWAM Together 2016 in Kansas City, MO, and YWAM United: Presence Gathering in Chico, CA. In September, I flew out to Kansas City, Missouri with several other Gleanings staff members, to gather with YWAMers from across the globe, including Loren and Darlene Cunningham, founders of YWAM. I had a wonderful time of fellowship, learning, and of being reminded of who we are as a greater family, and of why we do what we do.

At the beginning of November, I drove up to Chico, California to attend the YWAM United Presence Gathering. There, I joined in incredible times of worship, teachings from John Dawson about right judgment vs. criticism, and seminars on organic gardening, basic medical care, and how to care for your team, on and off the mission field.

Both trips blessed me immensely, and I am so glad I took the time out of my regular schedule to go.

### Girl Friday:

"A 'go to' girl; a female who will help you get things taken care of; a female you can rely on when you are in need of extra assistance; a female who acts as a 'jack of all trades' and is capable of doing almost anything; a girl you can count on when you are overwhelmed with your own chores and the duties must be done."  
(urban dictionary)

## BLESSINGS FROM ABOVE (AND LIGHTBULBS TOO!)

One Saturday in October, many of us staff here at Gleanings took a trip into Fresno to see the worship band "Rend Collective" play at a local church. The music was incredible, and everyone was singing along and dancing like crazy. In fact, the dancing was so enthusiastic that the vibrations of our jumping, combined with the booming bass, caused a giant lightbulb to fall from the ceiling! Thankfully, the occupant of the chair directly under the light, Tristan (who is our new groundskeeper), had just gotten up to get a coffee. The lightbulb hit his chair dead center, and smashed into a billion pieces, sprinkling all our shoes in glittering glass. Not a single person was hurt, the glass was cleaned up quickly, and the show continued around us, most of the crowd having no clue of the commotion in our corner of the sanctuary. The concert was a hit, but the real blessing of the night was Tristan's near miss!

**"So we say with confidence,  
'The Lord is my helper; I will  
not be afraid. What can mere  
mortals [or lightbulbs!] do to  
me?'" – Hebrews 13:6**

## RENOVATIONS

### All things made new...

Upon coming on staff, I had the incredible privilege of moving into my own little one-bedroom house on base. My new home is about 700 square feet of "all-mine", and has become my sanctuary, my resting place, and somewhere I look forward to returning to every time I am away.

Since my house had not been renovated or updated in many, many years, I had the chance to spruce it up, and really make it feel like my own. It took a lot of work, but over two months, fresh paint went up on the walls, new laminate flooring (donated by Home Depot) got put in my bedroom and living room, as well as new vinyl tiles in my kitchen, and all the outdated light fixtures were replaced. Though I spent a lot of time those first months covered in sweat and paint splashes, the work was well worth the effort, and I am so glad now that it has been done.

I couldn't help, as I was renovating my house, to draw some parallels between the house, and my life. God Himself often made comparisons, in the Bible, between building a house and building our lives (see Matt. 7, 1 Cor. 3, Isaiah 28, etc).

The last several years, in my spiritual wanderings and wonderings, in my despairing and giving up on dreams, I stopped making plans for my future. I had given up hope and was no longer building the house of my soul. It felt as though all I did was tear down and break up what had been built. Thankfully, I had a strong foundation of faith in Jesus, and even though my troubles and bad decisions had left me broken, I found that I could be rebuilt, by the grace of God. Psalm 127 : 1 says: "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain..." I thank God for His grace and mercy, and His promise to never leave or forsake us. He is good, and will always respond to those who turn to Him, no matter the mess they've made of their lives.



BEFORE AND AFTER OF MY BEDROOM AND LIVINGROOM

## THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and thank you for whatever way you support me; prayerfully, financially, or just by being my friend. I pray you are happy and healthy, and that you grow every day in your knowledge of our good God. Feel free to contact me with prayer requests, questions, or just to say hi.

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## A NEW YEAR...

How to pray for me as we enter the new year.

- For continued financial support, and blessing to those who give.
  - Some of my needs include: \$200 for an eye exam and new glasses, \$400 travel expenses, \$200 additional monthly support, \$2500 outreach fees to work with refugees in Greece.
- That I will be permitted another six-month visa upon returning from Christmas break.
- Please pray that I can maintain healthy relationships with family and friends back home.
- For God to send me a missional-minded husband who loves Jesus, and will be my partner in ministry, and in life.

**“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”**