The Drum Family

December 2015



My favorite nativity scene… I found this scene in front of a lean-to shelter when I was working in Mexico. It was put together with found objects… a baby doll Jesus, a couple of plastic circus toy elephants, a piggy bank, a stuffed doll angel, and random pieces of found people figures.

Expectations

This has been a year of confrontation for me. Let me clarify that… I had to confront ME, and that's never pretty. Actually, I've spent the past two years going down this path, I just didn't recognize it happening until I was in the midst of The Camino de Santiago in June this year.

During the Camino, I started to come to grips with a big issue in my life: My expectations are out of whack. To be more exact, my expectations of myself and how I live my life are unreasonable and it's killing me. It's funny, because my focus words (I don't do new year's resolutions, I do focus words for study and reflection) my focus words for last year were Peace and Joy – both are pretty much impossible to attain if all you ever do is beat yourself up because you can't meet expectations! Ha! And my focus for this year was Lean In… lean in to the discomfort, lean in to relationships, lean in to listen, lean in to the struggle, lean in and learn. Well, perhaps I leaned in a little too hard. It hurt. It was tough. It was, and still is, a major struggle. But what I learned in the process of trying to attain Peace and Joy, and in the process of Leaning In, I learned that I worry a lot about meeting expectations.

I worry. I worry A LOT! I worry if I'm doing enough. I worry that I'm not doing what others expect of me. I worry that I'll let someone down. I worry that I'll fail at something hugely important. I worry about what people will think. I worry about what I write (yes, I'm worrying as I write this!). I worry that I might offend someone. There is a certain amount of fear that is embedded in worry. I recently heard that fear is an acronym for False Expectations Appearing Real. And in thinking through all of this worry and fear, I realized that the root of it is the fact that I want to meet everyone's expectations of me.



Okay… there are deeper roots than that… I'm a counselor, so I hear it and I see it as I process through this each day. It's complex. It's about father issues, it's about abandonment, it's about insecurity, it's about wanting to be good enough, it's about needing to achieve and earn my place… there is certainly a spiritual aspect to it too…it's complex and messy. But I'm coming to grips with it. Just wish it hadn't taken 49 years to get there!

Life's messy.

So here we are, in the States at Christmas time. And my expectations issue is creeping up on me. I have to work hard to quiet the voices that are whispering, "What do you mean you aren't going to buy 900 gifts for your kids? That's just

Continued on page 2 . . .

...Expectations

un-American!" I have to squelch my own self-judgment when I realize that everyone seems to have a whole wardrobe of Christmas attire for the litany of Christmas parties and events they are attending. I'm watching TV and seeing all the 'perfect families', and I'm watching my Facebook feed and seeing all the gatherings and photos and I easily slip in to worry – Will my Christmas look like the traditional Norman Rockwell pictures? Obviously not, since both my boys have voiced deep hatred for turkey or ham or any traditional foods – they have requested Dad's chili for dinner and enchiladas for lunch. Norman Rockwell did not paint a Christmas portrait of enchiladas, but that's what it will look like here. Will we make it through this season with smiles and laughs, or dissolve in to grumbling and old arguments? Are my days of family photos over forever since no one can ever be in the same place at the same time? What photo do I put on the Christmas card when we don't have a photo with all of us in it? What will people think when they see that the missionaries don't do Christmas 'correctly'? I have one kid who doesn't want any gifts because they make him feel guilty during this difficult life season. I have another one who wants to receive some things he needs, but I still don't have a list from him or know how to accomplish that. And the 12 year old just wants money to put in to savings for her buy-a-horse fund.

Expectations.

When we were going through our initial missionary training before going overseas for service, we spent a lot of time talking about the stress and frustrations and disappointments that would eventually come. One of the biggest predictors for stress and frustration and disappointment is the gap that exists between expectation and reality. It is predictable that the bigger the gap between the reality that unfolds and expectations that we hold, the more intense the level of frustration will be.

So I'm trying to examine my expectations during this season. I'm trying to examine my feelings when the worry and fear creep in. I'm trying to keep my expectations in check. I'm trying to focus on what is true and what is real and what will bring true Peace and Joy.



Two-thousand years ago, some shepherds expected a normal night. They expected the sheep to lie down and sleep. They expected it to be chilly out. I can pretty much guarantee that they never expected an angel to show up! They never expected to receive the good news of a baby's birth – how bizarre! We miss some of the Christmas story's power if we neglect to see that the shepherds were unsuspecting, unqualified, and undeserving to be included. And God picked them anyway. (Acevedo, 2015)

Two-thousand years ago, a baby was born. He wasn't exactly what folks were expecting. They had expectations of a Savior, a Messiah, a King. They expected someone who would swoop in and save the day. They got a wiggly little baby in a stable. The gap between their expectations and their reality was WAY big! There were more than a few upset, stressed, frustrated religious folks in Jesus' time!

I'm trying to focus and remember that a lot of the things that are the root of my internal issues – my father issues and my perceived abandonment, my insecurity and my need to be good enough – all of those things have already been redeemed! I have a Father – a father who will never abandon me. I have no need to worry about my security in Him. I am loved, no matter what.

Prayer Requests -

- ***Pray for the global regions of Europe, the Middle East, and the Balkans****… we work as Care Coordinators for workers in these regions. Pray for the work that each of those cross-cultural workers is doing in their areas. Pray for political issues in each region. Pray for the refugee and immigrant situation that continues to move vast numbers of people across the continent. Pray for people who suddenly find themselves with no home, no job, no family connections, and no options. Pray that our workers can be a light in the darkness and love all people well as we continue to live out Jesus' love in our own lives. Pray for our missionary friends who find themselves far away from friends and family during the holidays… it's a tough time of year for those of us who live on the other side of the globe!*
- ***Pray for the disciple groups, bible studies, and relationships that we have in Spain****… pray that they stay strong in our absence as we travel to the States for a time or rest and reconnection with our families and with our churches and friends.*
- ***Pray for our boys (Ryan and Miles).*** *We have been able to visit with both of them, but of course, not NEARLY enough! They are busy young men with work schedules and lives of their own. Looking forward to Christmas and some more time together as a family!!!* ***Praises for Ryan's health!*** *Long story, but suffice to say we are thankful for rabies vaccines and lots of prayers!*
- ***Pray for Sarah*** *as she continues to work on her assignments for school in Spain… homework doesn't stop when we go on furlough! Pray for her as she continues to make connections in Texas and build memories with people here. Pray for her as she learns more about the culture in the USA… this is mostly new territory for her!*
- ***Pray for*** *our return to Spain. Pray that we say good goodbyes and that we travel safely and well. Pray that Sarah returns to school well prepared and ready for exams over the material that she has missed while in the States. Pray that we find our home well-cared for and our pets are healthy and happy upon our return.*

At Home in Texas

Just a few photos from our time at home in Texas. I have been so overwhelmed and I've been trying to enjoy our short time so much that I have missed out on taking photos of several people and events! :(But here are a few:

With Ryan in Corpus Christi



Miles and Sarah doing glasswork together.





Ryan and Sarah making art together

Thanksgiving with our moms





Granny, Sarah, and Grams

Hiking with The Couch family





Our Home Team put on a wonderful dinner event for us!

Miles works at the Texas Renaissance Festival each year.





DEAR BILLY AND LAURIE,

☐ I will pray for you.

☐ As God provides, I plan to partner with you by giving $ _____ Per month / quarter / year for _____ years.

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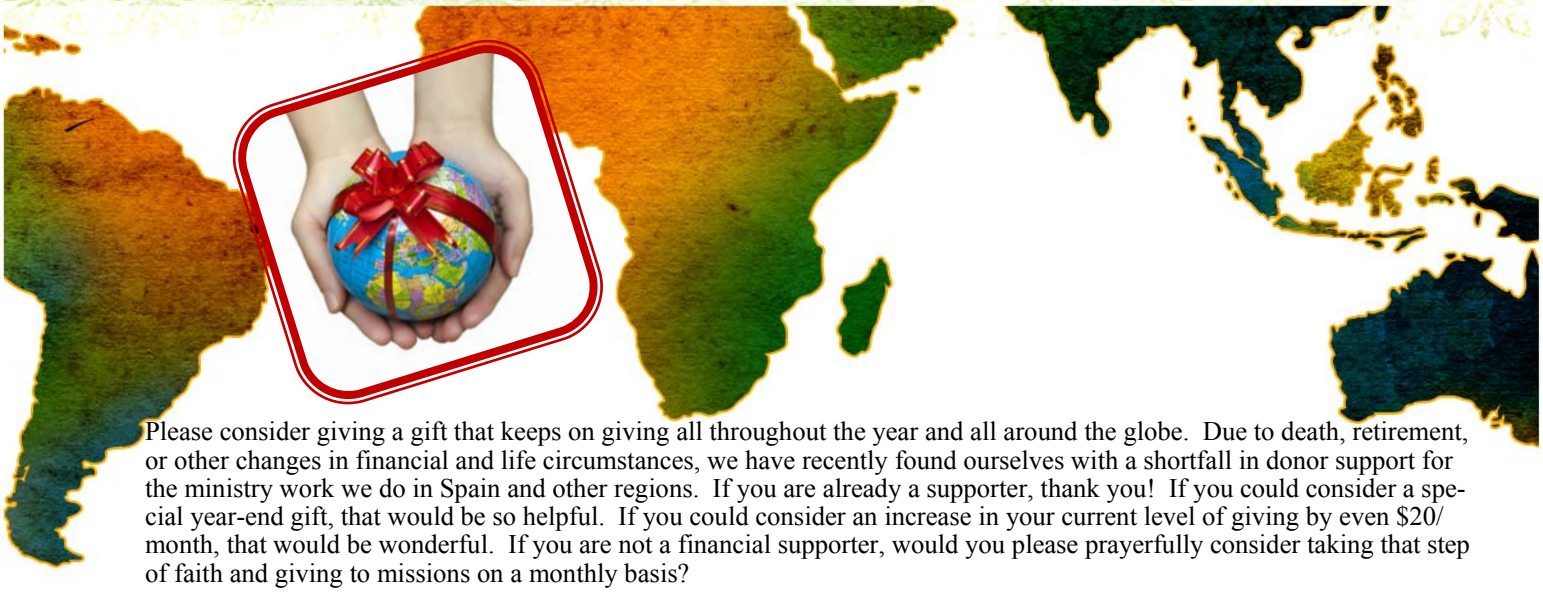
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