

Hadassah's Words

Dedicated to Hadassah,
who spoke from her heart through her pen,
for the love of God and to help us on our way.

“I am young in years, and you are old; that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know. I thought, ‘Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.’ But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding. It is not only the old who are wise, nor only the aged who understand what is right.” Job 32:6-9

2009

Hello. My name is Hadassah Bontrager. i am 12 years old and my birth day is june 21. i will wright in this book whenever i want to. i will worn you my spelling is very bad, and i have bad grammer, and bad handwriting. Well i have 4 brothers and 1 sister. My oldest brother is 15. his name is Malachi. the next oldest brother is another boy. his name is Gideon, and he is 14. i am next. then i have another brother. his name is Elijah, he is 11. then comes my sister. her name is Hannah, she is 8. then is another boy. he is 5. his name is Nehemiah. and my mothers name is Deborah and my fathers name is Ken. Well that is my family. i love to read and i do it a lot.

2010

On June 9th i gave my heart to God. It is diferent kind then most people. i became a christen when i was around 9 or 10. But last night i did more. i am not quite sure how to explain it but i'm not really sure myself.

So last night i gave God my heart. Just like you would give any lover your heart. Exept i don't plan on taking it back ever. So the only way i will ever get married is if God gives him my heart.

i have lost so much, but i have gained so much more.

P.S. Dear God please would you get as many people as posible to pray for me? Thank you! Love, Hadassah

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." John 3:36

"Your ultimate future--eternity--can be settled right now. You can know with absolute certainty that your future is in Heaven."

"Wherever He may lead you on this earth, through whatever experiences, careers and relationships, you already know that your last stop will be Heaven."

Dear God,

i know that my time on earth is so small compared to the eternity i will share with you. Please help that thought to get me through the times ahead. Love, Hadassah

i feel weird, depresed, and crapy! i don't know why. Maybe i am coming down with something. i hope not but in a way that would be nice cause then i would really know what was wrong! The weirdest thing is that my day really didn't go to bad. It was accually quite good. i just have this depresing feeling that something bad is going to happen. Of corse that probly isn't true at all but that dosen't mean i don't still feel it.

i really just feel like crying my eyes out, kicking everything posible, and either punching someone really hard in the stomick or slapping someone really hard in the face! What is my problem? Really!

If i would just be myself and not care what anyone else thought or said my life would be so much easier/better! If i didn't care, oh the things i would do! i could accually be myself for once!

Everyone always thinks i do whatever i want. Dress however i want. Say whatever i want, and don't try to fit in. They think that i don't care so i don't follow trends, don't try to be someone i'm not. If they only knew what i really am. If i only knew who/what/where i really am. Plus why in the world i am here!

Do i really have friends? i think i do. Everybody else thinks i do. Do i really like the way i dress? Or am i just trying to make myself someone i'm not!? Do i really like the music i listen to? The movies i watch? Do i try to be different or is that really me?

Who am i?

What is wrong with me?

Why do i feel this way?

Where am i going? What will i do when i get there?

Is this all just a game?

All my life i have planned to go to collage right out of high school. After that i wanted to teach 7/8/9th grade English. Stay like that for a few years then get married, have kids and be a stay at home mom. Do you want to hear my plans now?

i don't have any!

i don't want to go to collage right away! i'm not smart enough to even teach those grade levels! i mean look at my spelling! And you can just about forget about grammer! At this point i dought that i could even get through collage. Everyone thinks i'm smart. i'll tell you flat out, i'm not smart at all! So i'm dum right?

Well then the best thing to do would be to forget school of any kind and marry someone really rich. Well as you know i won't do that either! What does that leave me with? Why am i crying?

On Thursday, you know how i wrote a really sad letter? Well after i was done writing i read a bunch of Psalms, and after about 20 chapters i was feeling almost okay again. Right after i turned off my light Dad got home. i went down to greet him and we talked for about 20 minutes.

After i got back in bed it was the weirdest thing ever! i was just so happy that i couldn't stop smiling! i smiled so long and hard that my cheeks started to hurt. i really truly could not stop! i would try to not smile but it just felt really weird. i am pretty sure that i went to sleep grinning!

Wow i can't believe that this year is almost over! Time gose so fast! i remember when we were all so young and care free! No work. No worrying about testing. Or what you want to be when you grow up. Back then growing up was not something that was ever going to happen. You didn't have to worry about if you were smart enough to get through collage or how you would get the money. The hardships in life were not waking up mom from her nap, and if you did, making sure she didn't know it was you. My worst fear was spiders. Now there is just so much to be afraid of.

People always say they don't see why homeless people stay homeless when they could get a job. They say they are just too lazy to go to work every day. i am so sure that is not it. The reason is that they, just like me, are afraid of being adults, having the responsabily of having money, paying rent and taxes. Afraid of not being smart enough and messing up and loseing it all. When you don't have anything, you can't lose it.

My dream life would be to hitch-hike across europe, and then amarica, and then back again, etc. to not have anything to lose.

2011

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." I Corinthians 13:4-7

Just look how beautiful love could be. What we think of as love today is nothing anywhere near what real love is. Why did the way we think of love change? i wish i would love that way. The real way.

Dear God, isn't it great how you made it so that many of the great dudes of the bible were wonderful writers. Just tonight i was reading I Corinthians 13. You know the one about love? Is it not awesome that Paul was so great at writing. i mean i am so thankful that they weren't boring writers.

i mean think about it, when you read a chapter in the bible like that you are just wowed at how amazing the writing is. i just love it. Thank you so much God! Lots of love, Hadassah

"Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." Revelation 1:3

i think that reading revelations was a good idea and i think i am going to like it and i pray God will help me to understand it more than i ever have.

Psalm 25

I can put full trust in God. He is more than capable to take care of me. If I am feeling down about something, if I miss my family, if I am worried about how it will go here [Harvey Cedars Bible Conference summer job], I can always come back to God. What more security do I need?

Since I have been here I feel more pressure to read my bible and do devos and stuff, so I do more. I read my bible pretty much everyday, I write about what I read, and I am getting way more out of it then I ever have before. But I feel a little guilty about it because, to be honest, it was not really my will to do it, but in a way it is my way to look good, to be one of them...a teen who is trying really hard to know God.

Now believe me, in my heart that is what I am. I want nothing more than to know God. I just, I don't know, do it differently. I don't mean that me being different means I don't read my bible. I don't think you have to read your bible every day. I think you have to make it count. I wish I read my bible every day. I really do. I know I should. But I still think praying every day is more important.

The root of my problem is that I don't know whether the fact that I understand what I am reading more than ever before makes it ok that my push to read my bible has and still is the people around me. That does not mean I only read my bible when people are around. More often than not I am by myself.

The thing that I don't know is, is it wrong to read my bible more when I am pressured to by the people around me, or can I just think of that as them unknowingly keeping me accountable as to how much I read my bible. I want to think it is the second but I am not really sure.

Psalm 32

If I give my woes up to God, if I give my sins up to God, He will not judge me for either, but will freely forgive. I can be so sure of his never failing love because He showed it clearly to the world when he let Jesus die for me. He would never do that and then retract his love.

Psalm 33

God will never go back on his promises. And everything he says or does is always going to be good and right. And not only is all he does good and right, but he wants everything I do to be good and right. And if I ask, he will give me the ability to. Not so much do everything good and right, but to have all my motives be good and right.

Psalm 34

Every time I am down or sad, the Lord will be extra close to me. Whenever I need to be saved, God will always be there to save me. He will never go away. If I look, I will always be able to find him. God is the only one who I will always be able to trust completely.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him." Psalm 34:8

I think it is crazy that not only does God tell us to feel his goodness, but also to taste and see it. If you take that really literally, every time you eat an apple you are tasteing God's goodness. Every time you look at the ocean you are seeing God's goodness. It is so great that God did not take away all of the beautiful things out of the world after the fall. It was so good of God to do that!

So you know how you feel when you are trying to do everything on your own, and then you hear a sermon or read a devotional or something, and you are like "Wow I really don't have to do everything on my own. I can just ask God and he will help me." You know the feeling after that when you feel so light and happy, like a weight has been lifted off your shoulders. That is one of the best feelings ever.

That is why we should take refuge in him more often. It is so silly that we forget about that. I mean how can you forget about the God who made you, who you know can do so much. That we still do that is the crazy thing we still do.

"Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing." Psalm 34:9

Fearing the Lord has always been a hard thing for me to understand. The thought of fearing a God that we love so much was always so confusing. The first time I think I got it was when we first got our three wheelers. I was riding on the back with Gideon, and it was really scary cause he was going really fast over bumps and stuff. It took me a while before I finally got that if I fear God then I don't have to be afraid to die or to get sick or to get kidnapped.

God is all powerful. If he does not want something to happen to me, it won't. We may say that God does not get involved with stuff like that, but he sent his own Son to die for us. So really, after that, there is nothing he would not do. I mean what could be worse?

"No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began." I Corinthians 2:7

This verse pretty much says that God has a wisdom, a foresight into what is destined to happen. That does not mean that there is some crazy kind of destiny deal that everything happens by chance and God just happens to know what will happen but has no control over it. Cause that is compleatly false. What I think it means is that there is destiny but God was the one who created it.

Now I also think that we have free will. I think that means that we can choose on a regular basis weather or not to sin. Altho God controls everything it is not him who makes us sin or puts bad and sinful thoughts into our heads.

I think that God has given us and the devil a certain amount of freedom. Take the fall for example; I don't think that God wanted us to sin, and I know he could have easily stopped Eve from sinning. He did not have to put the tree in the garden, but he did. Now all along he knew Eve was going to eat the fruit. He knew Adam would too. He knew how everything would turn out but Eve still had a choice. She did not have to sin. She did not have to listen to the devil but she did and all along God knew she would.

That does not mean that God was any less sad and disipointed in Adam and Eve when they did sin. In Genesis 3 you can hear how sad God is that the beautiful creation he made was no longer beautiful. God would not make something beautiful just to make it ugly. We have to remember that God is the purest being in forever. He does not destroy things for fun. He loves perfection.

I think the reason that God gave us free will is because if he had kept it all for himself then we would just be robots. Yes we would be perfect with no sin nature but would that really be for the best? We would have no heaven to look forward to. We would not be thinking about how we want to please God in everything we do. It would just come to us like second nature. It would be second nature.

I think that in heaven it will be our first nature to glorify and obey God in everything we do. The reason for that is that as it is, we have lived in sin our whole life. It is really all we have ever known, but we have dreams of something bigger and better. We believe in God not because he makes us, but because he gives us the privilege, nay, the honor of being able to see and know in our hearts that he is real.

Now I believe that he only gives that privilege to a certain number of people. I don't think that means that at any point in time there was ever anybody who wanted to find God but could not. I think that if you want to find God and truly seek him, he will reveal himself to you. But I also think that in all of that God already knew who of us would search for him and we were predestined to find him and therefore could not help it.

I don't know what has been wrong with me lately. I have that weird feeling in my chest. I keep thinking the wrong things, feeling the wrong things. I keep thinking I am way better than everyone else even though I know I am not. I keep on saying to myself, why is this happening to this person and not me. I am cooler or prettyer or smarter, and then I have to rethink weather or not I really am cool or pretty or smart. Then I think to myself, since that happened to them and not me then they must be cooler or prettyer or smarter.

It makes me think maybe I don't have a good personality, maybe I am intimidateng, maybe I am annoying, maybe I am boring, maybe I don't have a sense of humer, maybe I am mean, maybe I make dum jokes or say dum things, maybe I am patronizeing, maybe I am too serious, maybe I am not serious enough, maybe I am too boyish, maybe I am too girly, maybe I am obnokshis, maybe I say stupid things, maybe I get too excited at stupid things.

But then I think about it and I don't think I am like that. I mean maybe a little of all those things, but not a lot I don't think. And then I think of all the times when the other person is like that, and I am back at the start again, and all the same things go through my head again. I hate it.

Maybe this is what it feels like to be jealous. The thing is that I have no one to be jealous of. I think it is maybe because I am questioning who I am. The thing is, I know who I am, so why should I be questioning myself?

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." Hebrews 4:13

Everything I do God sees. Everything everyone else does God sees. God has power over and rules the world, and I know that God is on my side, so why don't I just trust in the only one who knows everything and loves me more than anything in the world. Loves me so much in fact that he would send his own son to die for me.

Someone like that, who always wants what is best for me and has all that knowledge is someone I can have complete trust in. So in the end, as long as I have God there is no need for me to worry about anything concerning anyone. All I need is God.

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16

If we come to God with confidence we have the ability to receive mercy and find grace. I think that the key word is "come" or "approach". We must come to God!

It is so amazing that there even is a throne of grace after all the stupid, mean, bad, selfish, dumb, sinful things I have done. I don't know why, after all the wonderful/amazing things God has done for us, all the gifts he has given us, we don't use them. I mean, why don't we approach the throne of grace?

Why do we think we can do everything on our own? Why don't we ask for the mercy that God says he will give us. I mean he says he will, so why don't we believe him enough to act on that and let him give us mercy instead of trying to earn it on our own? It would be so much easier for us and would make God so much happier.

So why don't we? I really do need to start to rely on God and only God for mercy, cause he is the only way I will get it.

"...and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16

Do you know those times when you know you need the grace to deal with a situation that came your way? Well once again, if we come to the throne of grace, God will give us the grace we need.

When I first read this I thought it meant the kind of grace that we need from God, sort of alone, the same times as mercy. But the more I thought about it, the more I see that it is not God giving us grace but God giving us the ability to give others grace in our time of need...a time when we know we need to give grace but can't seem to be able to find it in us.

"I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies." Psalm 18:1-3

This is pretty much the perfect prayer. I love how at the end he concludes with "and I am saved from my enemies". In other words, he says all this stuff about how amazing God is. He actually says God is his strength, rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, where he takes refuge, the horn/strength of his salvation and his stronghold.

And when the living God is all of those things for/to you, there is no way in the world (or anywhere else) that your enemies will ever win.

"My dear brother, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." James 1:19-20

This is not a very spiritual verse, I don't think. It is more practical. I mean I guess whenever God is involved in something it becomes spiritual. But to be honest, God is involved in everything. Right? So everything spiritual is in fact practical.

This verse is just telling us, plain and simple, what God wants from us and what that happens to be is pretty much to be smart. That is how I see it. I mean if you are quick to listen you will learn much more. If you are slow to speak you will have time to think and you won't say stupid things. If you are slow to anger you will not do and say things out of anger, when you can't think straight. So in other words, God's desire for us is that we be smart!

So I know that this is something that I have to do because of bible lit [Calvary Christian School course], but please help this to come from the heart. Please help me to have a good attitude about this and to always have the right motives when I write. Please help me not to think, oh this sucks! It is just one more thing I have to do. But to think, thank you God for making it so that I have to because I know this will bring me closer to you.

Dear God I know this is supposed to be a spiritual journal, but can it be practical for just a little bit? Please God help me to sleep. I don't know what the problem is. I really don't. I know I am probably sleeping more than I think, but I still don't feel like it. So please Lord let me sleep well tonight.

Please Lord give me the ability to worship you, to really bring you glory. It has always been rather hard for me to not worry about what people think and see of me. Please help me to be able to just forget it all and just give you and only you praise! Help me not to think about how my voice sounds, or what I look like; help me just to think about you and the words I am singing.

Please help us Lord to stay focused in Stickers [Grace Fellowship youth group]. Please let us all grow in you like we never thought possible. Please let the pressure of having to tell what we have been doing with you make us really try harder. Please let everyone pay attention. Please help us stay on track. Just over all please rain down your blessings. Thank you!

Please Lord help me to remember to read my bible. I know that I neglect it sorry. The last time I remember reading it would have been not long after I got back from Harvey Cedars. I was doing so good there. I was reading my bible and understanding it too. I was able to pay attention and really got what I was reading. Please give that back to me Lord!

"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3

This is so great because we always wonder why God does not give us answers. We act like we deserve them but never even ask. We blame God for things we don't have the answer for when really if we would just call out to God he will answer us; he will show us the problem, he will show us the solution. If we call on the Lord he will tell us "unsearchable" things! Unsearchable! That is such a strong word. How can we even know what all that entails. It is just so great!

"Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?" Isaiah 2:22

If you think of this in really literal terms, what this is saying is that God has more than breath in his nostrils. Now this is kind of a weird thought but think about it, it means we have something way bigger and more reliable than ourselves. For some people this must be a bad thought because they want to be able to trust in themselves.

For me it is completely different. I love the thought that someone else better than me is in control. Bottom line is, trusting in ourselves or any other person is stupid. We don't need to depend on other people because we always have God.

I think that God put people in our lives for a reason, to help us through. But we must never look up to man before God. I mean "of what account is he?" That pretty much says it all.

Please Lord help me not to hate. I have a tendency to hate people that are better than me at certain things or are better than the people I love, or in some cases think they are better. I don't want to hate them but sometimes I can't help it. I just think mean things, and I just can't stop hating on them. So please God help me to love everybody, and not to judge.

Thank you so much for letting me and Malachi have some time together! It was so great because I felt quite distanced from him. Also our talk on the way home will help me in the future. It really helps to know that he is trying not to be judgemental. We have a lot of things in common. I just forgot. So thank you so much!

Please Lord help me to stop being so selfish about everything. I really think I have a problem. When something comes up, all I can think about is myself. So please help me to always think of others before me. Well I love you and thank you for everything you do for me!

Dear Lord please touch the lives of all the people that drove past the Life Chain today. Please help that to somehow change a bad decision. Thank you for the opportunity to do something for you.

God I also want to pray for Beth and Eric [young couple whose daughter was born with Trisomy 18]. I never really got their situation till today. It is so crazy that Livia can be six months and still so small. Please prepare them for what is to come and help them through it!

I always thought the bible was a salad thing. But it is not, it is a chocolate thing.

Salad

healthy, boring, not cozy

not something you eat when you are sad

you can take it however you want

you can add and take away

Chocolate

amazing

indulgence

makes you happy

love it

You think salad should be what we think of when we read the bible, therefore, it is counterintuitive. Whereas chocolate is sometimes thought of as unhealthy, it is really a happy food. You eat it when you are feeling bad.

God it is so crazy how fast time flies. It seems just a few days ago that I was seven and completely care-free. Please Lord help Hannah to enjoy these years. I know she is eleven and very old for her age, but please let her open herself up and get to have care-free fun before it's too late!

Dear God keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings. Please make it better. I don't feel anything except failure. I feel blank, lifeless. I feel like nothing matters.

I love you! Thank you for always being here for me. You are so amazing that after all I have done you even let me be here. So thanks again.

Wow time really flies! Thank you God for last night and letting me dig into your word. Thank you for letting me really understand and be able to grasp what I was reading. You know how hard it is for me to stay focused when I read the bible so thank you for how pure it felt last night.

Thank you for a wonderful day! It is great to know that I have a ton to look forward to! Thank you that it was such a beautiful day! I love you so much. Please help my capacity to love you more grow! Thanks for everything.

I guess what I want to say is since Christi [woman who was enduring great physical pain] could get through all she has gone through and still trust in you, all the pain she went through and all along she told herself that she had been through it before and it was all right now; then why do I make such a big deal about youth group?

It should be one of the easiest things I do all week but it is not. I always say the thing I don't like about youth group is the waiting around but that is only for like an hour. If Christi could go through all that and I can't even get through 1 1/2 hours of waiting, I mean, what is this? So please help me to get over it and just suck it up.

God another thing I need to talk to you about is you. I felt so close to you at Harvey Cedars and really most of the summer and now I can't seem to read my bible more than like once a week. It is so crazy cause before I went to Harvey Cedars I was at least reading my bible pretty faithfully (I think). And then when I went to Harvey Cedars I was really getting into it and understanding a whole ton of what I was reading. And it was great.

Now that I am home I am not only not understanding what I am reading, I am not even reading my bible at all. And not only that but I am not praying or anything. I mean remember that last week or so when we would go on bike rides at night and it was the perfect time to pray. I was doing it so much, and it was so great!

Why don't I pray or read my bible anymore? I don't get it. I thought I had grown in you while I was at Harvey Cedars. I thought it was going to last! Why not!?!

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to hang out with Nemo [Nehemiah]. It was really great and I need to do it more often. I don't pay enough attention to him. He is so funny when you take the time to hang out with him.

Please give me grace for what is ahead. It is hard for me with all my siblings sometimes. Thank you for letting us be here.

Please help me to be more loving to everyone, and not say mean things without thinking first. And then after I have thought about it, please help me not to say it.

Please give everyone peace tomorrow no matter who gets who in the play [Calvary Players]. Please help the offended party to be okay with whatever happens, because there will be an offended party. Not to sound like mom but please help us to all love each other. Please help everyone to forgive and please help it all to work out for your glory!

Thank you God for what you did today! Please help us to be able to pronounce all the french words! Please put your blessing on this play [Les Miserables]. Please help us with lines, blocking, directing, and please send your spirit to be with us cause without you we could never bring you any glory. Please help us to glorify you in everything we do!

Dear God I pray for Steve [Grace Fellowship youth pastor]. It must be really hard to have your mother in critical condition and find out that your brother has cancer that could be something major and even life-threatening.

Dear God please be with me this week. I am just so tired. Tired of everything. From tired of school, tired of camp, tired of trying to be nice, to just plain lack-of-sleep tired.

Please bless Dad for how giving he is, how self-sacrificing he is. Please bless him extra special.

Well God I feel rather blank right now. I don't know what is wrong with me, but I don't feel anything at all. I want to say how amazing you are, but I don't feel it. Not because of anything that you did or did not do but just because of me. I know you are amazing. I know it. I just still feel blank. Please let that feeling go away.

Dear God please help Elijah's knee to heal. You know how mad it makes me that Mom and Dad won't take him to the doctor! It is so infuriating! I mean really this is not just a cold or a flu. Yes it will probably get better, but over how long a period of time? And what if it doesn't? Wouldn't taking him to the doctor be the safest thing?

In a way I feel like it is Mom's pride that is keeping him from going. She wants to prove that her stuff works. She wants to be able to tell the story of how all of her compresses worked so well. How if he had gone to the doctor he would have gotten really sick with TB or something!

What in the world!?! The kid is 13. Just take him to the doctor! We are not in the 1st century! They won't bleed him, they will just make him better quicker! But No!

Thank you that Elijah was feeling better.

I am so tired right now so I don't have much. Please let me and Hannah get along. I don't know why it has been so hard of late, but it really has been. Maybe it is because everyone acts like they like her better. I don't know, but if it is that please curb my jealous nature and help me to get over it.

Dear God, thank you so much for the Loft! [Grace Fellowship youth group] Tonight was so great. It was so awesome that, even though we did not have an agenda, we were still able to keep on track.

We had such great discussion about things that really matter, and it was just really great. Please help the Loft to stay this way all year.

Wow! What a great day! Snow men, snow angels, sledding, snow ball fights, power outage, candle lit dinner, hide and seek in the dark, candle lit Scumbuddy, candle lit Uno, end of power outage, bed. I don't know if it gets much better than this!

I can't believe that it snowed this early in the year! And this much too! I never would have thought it would really happen! Thank you God for a wonderful day and all the snow!

Thank you God that I have such an amazing Dad. I really don't know what I would do without a Dad that I could trust completely, not only with my problems, but also to make the right decisions in my life.

Thank you so much for how patient he is. With all the bad/thoughtless/silly things we do it really is a wonder he has not fried yet. Thank you for showing him how to be an amazing Dad.

Dear God please keep all of the trick or treaters safe. I don't know how you feel about all this but I think that you don't like it. I know that I am afraid of it. I know that a lot of people don't think it is wrong/bad/scary. So just please keep them all safe tonight when so much bad can happen.

I have to go to bed really soon but...please keep Dad safe on this trip. Thank you for Gid and please help us to be friends again. It has not been all that bad, but we used to be so close and now we fight more often than not.

I know that I say this a lot but I am so glad that Micah [older cousin] came here. I remember before he came I was so worried. I don't know what of, but I really was. It was probably because I did not know what was going to happen. I did not have any control over the situation.

Now I know that you had it all under control the whole time. You knew it would be good and even though I did not want it, you knew best. Thank you.

Thank you for a restful day. Please help me to pay more attention in church [Grace Fellowship]. I just don't seem to be getting anything out of pastor Tom's sermons. They all just seem so dry and lifeless. Maybe it is because I am not looking at it the right way. So please open the eyes of my heart.

God I don't know why I can't get my head in the game. I really need your help with reading my bible and praying etc. I don't know why I can't seem to be able to do it. Normally I will fall behind and notice it, get back on track and go from there, but this time, no matter how I try, it is in vain. So please help me to read my bible. Please give me the time.

Please God help Steve [Grace Fellowship youth pastor]. I know that if I was in his spot I would get very discouraged. Also very angry. Please heal Steve's brother and please get his mother out of pain.

Thank you that he is willing to put this much time into us with getting so little in return. Not only little but it really is pretty negative.

Dear God I give this kidney thing up to you. I have to admit, it makes me really scared. I just know that I would not be able to deal with that so if it does you will have to do all the work. And please help me get over it now.

I am really having a ton of trouble with my kidney thing. I feel so selfish because there are all kinds of people really hurting out there and I am fine. Just knowing makes me so depressed. Like instead of thinking about or praying for Aunt Denise [received a kidney transplant from Grandpa Sharp], I am crying about what might happen. None the less this really hurts. I just can't seem to shake it. I am really depressed. Please help me.

Dear God, thank you/please help me to keep on trying not to dwell on my kidney thing. I still care but either the shock has worn off and I am used to it, or I have unconshisly given it up to you. I hope it is the latter but to be honest I really don't know.

Please help me to seek after you and your will with all my heart.

Thank you that I found out about my kidney problem now so that I can take proactive steps to make it better.

Thank you Lord for The Loft. Sometimes I don't want to go, but in the end I feel better. Please come be with me and please let me feel your presence with me. I really need you.

Please help me to sleep tonight. I was doing so well for the last couple of weeks, but I am not doing as well now. Please help me to not be too tired tomorrow when I am supposed to be doing school.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging." Psalm 46:1-3

Even in every worst case sinario, God is very present! Whenever I am down and hurting, whenever I say a stupid thing, even when natural disasters happen, God is our refuge and strength; not someone to blame!

Because of this we have no reson to fear the future, or the present for that matter. All we have to do is put our trust in God and take refuge in Him, let him be our strength, and look to him in all things. And you are good to go. No fear!

Well I don't have to write in this anymore...I am kind of glad but at the same time sad. This created structure in my life. It gave me a time when I could read my bible. I am afraid that now my discipline will suffer and maybe in the end even fail. I really don't want that. I have finally got into this great groove and just in the last two months too. I guess I just pray that even though I will not be writing in this every night, that I will still read my bible faithfully.

I have not read my bible at all in Iowa [Christmas vacation]. I feel like I forgot you even existed. I realized last night that I never even pray anymore. I am so sorry. I guess I get so caught up in my own little life that I forget how important a part you are of it. I get lazy, I get angry, and for some reason I have found myself lately turn to myself when I know I have nothing to offer.

All I can do is say bad words in my head. I don't even say them out loud. I know this. I also know all that you give. When I think about it even for a little bit I see how completely stupid I am. I know both sides, and still without fail I go for the one that is harder, less satisfactory, less rewarding (I'll be honest, there is no reward with my way), stupider, longer, more annoying, etc...

I am such an idiot. I see all of this, and yet tomorrow I will most likely be in the exact same spot I am in now! I don't know how you deal with us. We never learn, and we like it!

Dear God please help me! Please make me joyful, please make me content, please make me more pleasant, please help me to be able to understand, please give me a good attitude, please help me not to hate so much, please help me not to judge people, please help me stop being so greedy (I am the most greedy person I know. I disgust myself sometimes.), please keep me from being jealous, please make me not angry, please give me patience, please help me to love my enemies, please help me to love my friends, please give me tolerance, please teach me sacrifice, please give me discipline, please help me to be diligent (reading my bible), please help me to stop being such a glutton, *please* give me self-control, please give me peace, please help me to stop saying bad words, please give me temperance, please make me not so vain, please remind me to pray, please give me the strength to withstand satan, please help me to stop being mean, please keep me from running my mouth, please make me generous, please give me a drive to read my bible, pray, and really just be fired up about you.

Please make me not so greedy. I know I already said that, and I mean all that I have already asked. But I want this one to really stand out. I don't want it to be my vanity that makes me want to stop being greedy, so I guess those two kind of go hand in hand. Please make me not greedy just to be not greedy.

I am still not reading my bible. I guess it is understandable cause we are not at home, but come on! When we get home please help me get back into a groove.

2012

I really don't want to go home. I don't want to start school. I don't want to go back to my life! I don't want to go back to being sad and depressed every other day! I want to stay here and be happy! Why do we have to go home?

Normally I miss home and school and my friends, but this year I just want to stay away. I don't know why. I hate school. Something about home is really daunting.

"Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress." Psalm 71:3

God is our rock and refuge! We can always turn to him. He will never leave us. Ever. The problem is not that God is not there, or not ready to save us. The problem is that we forget that we can always go to him. Rookie mistake.

It really is crazy after all he has done for us. He is so perfect. So trustworthy. So why do we forget? We ask him to be our rock of refuge to which we can always go, and then promptly forget he even existed. We are so stupid God. I don't know why you tolerate us!

I am so happy! This week has been so fantastic! Number 1: It is the end of January and today was 60*! So crazy! Number 2: I really don't know! I just have not felt this happy for a very long time! I just don't know, and I am not on drugs or anything.

I can't say that I am excited for the future, cause I am most definitely not excited for the future! I can't say that I am happy about the past, although nothing bad has happened in my past. I just feel so happy and blessed, so content. I feel so free.

So different from what I felt just a few days ago. I don't know how to fully express how I feel. It is just so great! I just have such a happy feeling in my stomach, or maybe it (the happy feeling) is in my heart. I just don't know, but at the same time, does it really matter where it is, just that it's there?

I feel so complete. Like I lack nothing emotionally. I really hope this feeling lasts! I feel as if I could do anything, go anywhere, be anyone! I feel like there is nothing I can't do. I feel...unstoppable. Thank you God for giving me this wonderful feeling! I feel like it should be against the law to be this happy! I almost wish this was the middle of the day instead of the middle of the night!

I don't know why I am writing this. I don't know what I am writing about. I don't know anything. I have been so happy for the last few days. So carefree and content. Today was different. Today I was still happy, just a different kind of happy. I don't know why or how it was different. It just was. I guess in a way it was darker, if you will. I don't know if that is even possible. A dark happiness. Now by dark I don't mean that my happiness was perverted in any way. I was not joyful over someone's pain or loss. It was just a darker happy. A more subdued happy. But at least I was happy.

Dear God, I am so stressed. I never thought that I was one of those people who eat a lot when they are stressed or sad, but I guess I really am one. It is really bad. I just keep on eating and I don't know why. When I see food I just have to eat it. I guess the reason I do this is because when I am eating I feel safe. Like time will stop. Has stopped. Like I don't have to worry about tomorrow or the next day.

Lord, I don't want to need food to make me feel safe and secure. Please fill me with your peace so that I won't have to try to fill myself up with food. I don't want to overeat at every meal and I don't want to be stressed out. Please keep your hand on everything I do this week. Please be my safe spot.

Dear God, I really want to figure out what I believe on the subject of violence. I want to be able to back up what I believe. I want to make nonresistance mine. Make it mine and not just my parents. I think it is in a way already mine, but I want to be able to back it up on my own. So I think (with your help) that I am going to read the whole new testament again but this time look at it through violence/nonviolence eyes.

I think it would be good for me to read it all again with a new outlook. I just really want to know what it says in the bible about war and fighting. This is something I really care about and want to be educated on.

I don't want this so that I can tell all my friends and try to make them agree with me. I want this so that I can very clearly see what I believe, and know for sure and certain. Lord, please show me what is right. Please give me an open mind. Please show me Lord if in the end I feel like what I believed before was wrong, please help me to be humble. I really don't think that the Anabaptists were wrong, but there is always that chance.

Now I don't know if this is the most important part, but please help me to stick with it. Please give me a drive. Please let my want for doing this not wear off with time. Please help me to get even more excited as I go along. Also please help me to pay attention so that I don't miss anything good. Please bless this process and keep your eyes on me while I do it.

We did not get accepted to work at the conference this year [Harvey Cedars]. I guess they are down-sizing. What am I going to do? I spent all year planning to go, always saying that I did not know if we would get accepted, but always knowing that we would. I planned how much money I would make, what clothes I would bring, what I would eat, everything.

I keep telling myself all of the good things that will come of not going, and how it must be God's will that I don't go, but it doesn't help. Not at all. I just can't help it. I know that it isn't the end of the world. This is all just so hard. I don't know what to do and, honestly, it is not just about going. I really needed that money. It is just so hard.

This was so definite. I didn't think there was any way that we would not get accepted. All of this has shaken me up so much. I don't know what to do. I know that my life will go on. I know that there is something else for me. It is just so hard to picture me anywhere but there.

Maybe that is the problem. Maybe I was too sure of myself or my plans. I really need to stop planning things. Really, every time I make plans they fail. I know I need to give everything up to God and let Him make my plans. Maybe that is what he is trying to teach me through all of this. I am really glad that I wrote this down. I feel so much better. I feel ready to take on whatever comes my way. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! Thank you God!

"Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them." Matthew 7:17-20

I am not really sure what it means where it says that "a good tree cannot bear bad fruit". How can that be since none of us are perfect? Does that mean that none of us are good trees? If so, then how can it say that "a bad tree cannot bear good fruit"? Because don't Christians and even non-Christians every day do good things and bear good fruit?

Now I am sure that in the garden we were all good trees, but since then? Is it now impossible to be a good tree? But that cannot be because we are always called to bear good fruit, aren't we? So if we are called to be always striving toward Christ-likeness, always called to try to bear good fruit and yet sometimes bear bad fruit, then what are we? Good trees or bad trees?

Dear God, please don't let this end. Lord, it has been so long since I have been able to enjoy life, because I did not know how to love people even though they have faults. I feel so happy and free now! I am just afraid that it won't last.

Lord please, make me a loving person. Please help love to be a part of who I am not something that comes and goes. Lord I want to be able to love people no matter what they do, even after I have forgotten last Sunday's sermon. Do you know what I mean? I am just afraid that I will forget how wonderful and liberating it is to give love freely and not take offences freely.

I am afraid that I will forget and go back to hating my life and all the people in my life. I guess I really want to love freely for selfish reasons. I want to be happy, and a good way to get that is to love. But all the same Lord, please make this a permanent part of my life...not just a phase I am going through!

Dear God, please help me to selflessly love. Please help me not to confuse venting and gossip. Lord please help me to remember that no matter how much a person bothers me, that does not give me the right or even an excuse for talking about them behind their back, nor does it give me the right to be mean and sarcastic to them.

It is really hard for me to deal with, but I don't want to just love in theory, I want to love in actuality. I want to love when the rubber meets the road. I want to love when it would be so much easier to just ignore. Lord I will need your help so much this summer!

I think I would be ok with ignoring and very sarcastic comments. I think I would be able to make it through the summer that way, but not being mean, not being sarcastic, not ignoring, not talking behind someone's back, well there is no way that I would ever be able to do that on my own! If I am going to love the way you have asked me to, then I will really need your help! S.O.S.

Well it is getting really hard. I feel myself resenting her and for absolutely no reason! Yes she can be patronizing at times, and she does not get my sarcasm at all. But what does that mean? Does that mean that every time she says something that I don't like I can curse her off inside of my head? No!

No, it means that every time that I don't like something, I have to remember to love freely as I am freely loved! Jesus did not die on the cross so that I could curse someone off in my head every time they thought that I was truly stupid instead of just being sarcastic! No!

He died so that I could pour out my love on unbelievers! Lord, please help me to love her like you would, so that she will be able to see you through me, and see all the truth that you are!

I don't know why, but I am getting to that unhappy kind of hating everyone mood again. That is the last thing in the world that I want! I have been so happy and almost carefree for the last few months. Now it is like I have this burden on my chest all the time. Maybe the point of this whole thing is that I need to stop worrying so much. Or maybe the point is that I need to read my bible or else I will get sad and unhappy and start worrying about everything! Please God be with me!

"He who chooses to live well for eternity, will live in discomfort for the present. He will be subjected to all types of troubles and burdens as long as he is on earth, so that in the end he will have divine and heavenly consolation. On the other hand, he who chooses to live well for the present will fare badly in eternity."
Lactantius

Dear God,

I kind of want to write this in the form of a letter. I don't know why, but I have been very weepy of late. Like I feel close to tears almost all of the time. It doesn't make any sense either. It is weird, like I am pissed at everyone, but not. Like I am not pissed now, but I know that in the blink of an eye I could get extremely mad, annoyed, and angry at anyone that I know. And then most likely I would start crying. I really don't understand it.

Also (I know that this sounds like a pity party), it really feels like everyone is against me. Now I am sure that it isn't them, it's me, but it really does feel like everyone is taking sides against me. I keep thinking, maybe I should just let it go. Let them think that they are right. But I can't, I just can't.

I don't know why, but I can't let them think that they know me when really they have no clue. On that note, I also feel like all these people who I am close to don't know me at all. And I guess that I want them to know who I am. But I feel so much that they don't want to know me/have no interest in knowing me better. And, sad as this is, I can't swallow my pride long enough to tell someone about me when I feel like they don't care.

Nothing is as bad as all of that, but I really have a lot of emotions running around in my body, so everything seems way worse than it is. Even though, all of this does hurt.

I don't understand! Why is it my fault? Why am I the ugly one? I mean, at least my intentions are pure. I know I come off way too strong, and I know I sound and act mean. But why am I the one who gets talked to?

God, I am trying not to react the way I do. I mean, you know how much I think that I *don't* say, but point is, I am really trying! And I will try harder. I just don't understand. It feels so wrong! I know I should let things go. When my instincts are telling me to say something sarcastic, it is more than hard not to! I want to be friends, but it is so hard to give grace!

I guess I just pray that you will give me strength to give grace, and please help me not to be passive aggressive! Please let me love. I will try to give this all up to you. Please change me. Please let me see what I am. Please let me see what I do. Please let me see the need for change. Please show me when I am ugly.

God, I want to write down everything I am feeling, but for one, I don't even know what I am feeling! And that makes me want to cry. And secondly I can't write down everything, because I have no idea who will read this ever. God, I am such a train wreck! I mean, I have lied to people I love, just so they wouldn't know about my depression! So many things that I have never told anybody and never want to tell anybody because it seems weak.

God, is everyone as screwed up as me? God please heal me. And please take away these feelings. God, they are the last things I want to have. God, right now I am afraid of everything. I don't understand anything. Please make me better. Please protect me from myself. And please keep me from snapping. Please let these feelings go away. Please don't let them last. And if they do, please keep me from doing anything stupid.

2013

God, I hope I have grown some in the last year. You have done so much for me! I just read my writings from last year at this time. Thank you so much for the peace that you have given me! I look back at that, LORD. I was in such a bad place! I had totally forgotten how bad I was back then! I mean, I know I am not that good now, but at least I am no longer depressed all the time.

God, you have given me so much peace through the decision to move to the Philippines [senior year of high school at Faith Academy]. I am sad a lot, but I am at peace. It is a peaceful sadness, not a dreading sadness.

God, I still have huge problems and no one knows it better than you. I mean, I can't even write them all down. One thing I do want to talk about though is how weepy I have been lately. I just don't understand. I mean, yes I am sad, but not enough to cry! God, I am afraid I am going to break down and cry in front of people. Please keep me from doing that. That is the thing I am most afraid of happening right now.

God, you have given me the peace, now I am asking for joy. I feel like as soon as I am in the Philippines, I will be happy. I know that I will be homesick, but at the same time, I am really banking on that making me happy. I know that you are the only thing/one that can make me happy. And because of that, I don't have to wait till the Philippines!

LORD, please make this a joyful year. LORD, please help me to love my friends. I know I haven't done very well at that in the last year. Please help me to do better in this year. Also, please help me to remember to reach out to people that I am not friends with!

LORD, please bless this year! I love you. Thank you so much for loving me too.

I don't know what it is/was, but something about coming home has completely lifted my spirits! Maybe it is just being home in my own bed, with my own stuff. Whatever it is, it has made me feel amazing! I don't know how to explain how wonderful I feel! It is like I just have a happy feeling in my stomach all the time! Thank you so much! You never let me stay sad for too long! Well anyway, please help me to get back into healthy habits now that I am home again!

I have never wrote about leaving yet, and I think it is time. I am moving to the Philippines at the end of July. I am happy about my decision. I am excited about going. I think it is an awesome opportunity, and I think it will be really fun. But right now, I can't even look at August on the calendar without feeling like crying. I am about to cry right now! I am crying.

I don't know if it is that I am scared of being there, or scared of not being here. Or maybe I am not scared of anything at all. I don't know. I don't think it is fear of going to the Philippines, so what is it? Why do I get misty eyed whenever I think about anything pertaining to my leaving?

Leaving my family will obviously be the hardest part of the move. But most of the time when I cry, I don't cry about them. I just don't understand what I am crying for, why I am so sad.

Every part of me knows that I shouldn't be so sad about leaving. Why oh why then is it all backwards? Why are my feelings exactly opposite of what they should be? Nothing makes sense! Maybe when I am gone to the Philippines it will all be better. Hopefully.

I feel so sad. Everything is going fine. I have had a great couple of days, but I am crying now and I don't know why. I am not sad about leaving. I am not sad about anything that has happened to me in the last couple of days. I just feel rotten. It is probably from being so tired. I don't know. This is such a pointless thing to write! Nothing about this page makes any actual sense at all. Sorry for wasting whoever reads this' time. I feel like sleeping.

Well I have been writing quite a bit in the last ten months. You wouldn't know it though because it has been almost exclusively in letters to Hannah. The problem is that it is never really my feelings that I write about when I write to her. So I write a lot. But for the most part it isn't the kind of writing that releases me from pain and struggles.

Today I was reading some old journal and I rediscovered a pretty big fear/struggle for me. And something that will probably end up being quite the problem when I am in the Philippines. I always seem to get depressed when people don't know me. Also when they don't appreciate me. When I am not a big deal. When I am not someone whom they seek counsel or my opinion. I highly value being valued through advice seeking.

I love when people ask me for help. And when people don't know me, they don't ask me for help. I always feel as though I have the answers to the world's problems. It always depresses me when no one is around who loves me enough to listen to what I have to say, no matter how stupid or silly.

I am moving to a place where nobody knows me enough to do that. Where nobody knows me at all. Where I may be valued as a potential friend, but it would/will take a very long time of being there before any of them would ever even think of coming to me with a problem. Or anything along that line for that matter. And because of that, I can very well see myself become quite the mess.

Even though I know exactly how it goes, I have no idea how to stop it. I am pretty sure that there is no way to stop it. That dependency of those around me is something I have come to depend on. The only thing I can do is ask you LORD to free me from this and to depend wholly on you. Giving no thought whatever to how others think or treat me.

I just want to say that Cana [cousin] is like the coolest cat ever! And I am so glad that I am with her this year!

It is Monday. I got to Skype with mainly Hannah and Lydia [cousin]. Then Mom, Dad, and Nemo popped in and out. That was awesome, and we talked for three hours. So now I have the inside scoop on stuff at home. I feel like I haven't talked to them in a really long time. So it was really nice to just get to be around them. I guess I don't really miss any of them. But I really do love them and being around them.

This has become my life now. These are all familiar faces. I may not know these people on a very deep level, but I am used to them now. I think that is interesting. I never felt like this wasn't my life, but now I really feel like it is. And I like my life. As long as I have Cana, I think I will like my life.

So here is the deal: I think Sam [friend] could very well be becoming, or already is a form of idolatry for me. I think about him a ton. Probably way more than I think about God. I don't like that. I love thinking about Sam, but the last thing I want is for my seemingly harmless infatuation to become something that Satan can use. God please help me to put you first! Please take up my thoughts like Sam does. Please help me to fall in love with you!

It is hard when you think you know someone. When you think what they say matches up with their lives. And then you find out that all they had said before had to be a lie. Cause how can you have a week long pot fest and still say that Jesus means everything to you.

I used to think that all that bad stuff was okay. But as more and more of my friends started doing those bad things, I started realizing just how wrong those things really are. They are so harmful. Not to mention how bad they look on a Christian!

I used to say that I was going to wait to do bad things till I left home so that I wouldn't hurt my parents. I am glad I said that back then. Cause it gave me time to see how ugly those things are.

I never want my thoughts and beliefs to be cheapened by my actions! I think I finally understand the concept of ruining your "witness". It never really made a whole lot of sense to me before. So I hope that if I am ever in a tempting spot, that I can think about that and preserve my witness.

So I just had a bit of a revelation just now. In the past all the guys that I have liked have been pretty much the opposite of what I claimed to be attracted to. As far as I know, Sam is the first guy that I have liked that I liked because they were everything I would look for in a guy. For the first time I like a guy who is really a good guy and doesn't just make me feel good.

I would always like people who I felt connected to or that I could talk to. For the first time, I like someone because of their qualities. It is crazy how different this liking is! I think it is the first time I have ever wanted to talk about the person I like. I think it may even be the first time I have ever admitted to people that I liked someone. It is almost like me liking him isn't cheap.

I mean it is not like I actually talk about him with anyone. But if someone really asked me if there was someone that I liked, I would happily tell them all about Sam. Cause he deserves to be talked about.

I was just thinking on the way home. What I thought of was that we humans talk so much. Like how is it that we don't run out of things to talk about? Like almost every night at the supper table, we talk forever! How can that be? How can there still be things to talk about after all this time? How long would it take before we did run out? I don't know. I just think that the fact that we can keep on talking is awesome and somewhat of a mystery to me.

I guess I maybe start feeling lonely if I don't write. I guess I wouldn't say it is exactly that, but it is pretty close. Maybe that is why I haven't gotten very homesick. Maybe I need to write, and that makes me feel at home. I guess that could be it.

It is almost like when I don't write, I get a feeling of discontent. Or something like that. I wouldn't say it is that exactly, but that is the best word I can think of for the feeling I get. It is a feeling like something isn't quite right. And then I know that I either need to sleep, or write.

I really hope that when I go back home, I will keep on writing as much as I do now. Writing makes me really happy. Much happier than I ever thought it could. I hope I don't stop.

So it has been awhile since last I wrote, which is odd because I have had some unusual emotions of late. I think it was Thursday and Friday mainly, but also a bit on Saturday. I think I was more tired than anything else, but I was just feeling really depressed and angry and awkward. I was cursing a lot in my head and just feeling extremely discontent. Well I guess in the end it was okay because after getting some solid sleep, I feel way better.

Yesterday as we were driving to school, I realized that I haven't really talked to dad at all since I've been here. He dropped by for like a minute once while I was Skyping the family. But that was just a hello. And when I thought about that, it made me feel like crying. I think that is the first time that I have been homesick. I don't miss dad. I miss talking to him. I miss knowing what is going on at Camp and how he is dealing with stuff. I miss being his right hand man. And that made me really sad.

So when I got home from school, I facebook messaged him that I was sad that we hadn't talked yet. And this morning he messaged me back that he had bought a web-cam and that it should be coming soon. He said that he missed me more than he was comfortable with or something like that. It almost made me cry again. And when I just wrote that, I almost started crying, cause that is so not something that is normal for dad to write. Leave it to dad to make me homesick. I think I always knew he was who I would miss most. And now that has come true.

If I ever get famous, when I die, and someone decides to write a book about me by compiling all of my letters and journal entries (which by the way, I am giving them a lot to work with) they will think I am a really sad person with no life. I want them to know that I am not this crazy normally. Well, I guess if they get a hold of all of my writings, my track record doesn't look too good. When I get home I need to dispose of some of my letters!

I don't have much to say, but I feel like I haven't been writing enough. And I always start feeling incomplete when I don't write enough. So first order of business...I want to make a pact with myself to set aside the first hour after I get home from school to reading and napping. I want to stop going on the computer so much and I need to start reading more. I know that if I don't make a real point of it, I won't change at all. The computer is so addicting so I know that I really need to put it in writing so I will follow through.

I already wrote this in my blue journal, but I want to put it in more than one place so that I will be more pressured to do it. Pretty much I am making a pact with myself that every day when I get home from school, the first hour will be dedicated to reading and/or napping.

That means no just going on the computer for a quick check up. No going straight to homework. It means taking a break from everything but whatever book I am reading for an hour each school day. It is almost like a little mini sabbath once a day. By far the hardest thing will be staying off the computer. But I really think this will be good for me. So I am determined.

The other thing that I didn't write in my journal and I really don't want to write here because I don't want to put myself up to it, is that I also want to make a pact that I will read my bible every day after that mini sabbath.

I really didn't want to write that because now that I have written it, I have to do it. But I really do want to do it, so that is why despite all that the devil was trying to do, I wrote it down. Now I just have to pray that the devil doesn't get a single other victory, and I really carry out what I have written down.

I love this whole napping thing! I came home today totally dead, read twenty pages of my book, and then slept for two hours. I feel so great and I feel like I got stuff done even though I didn't. I think just the fact that I didn't go on the computer was amazing and made me feel so rested!

Being on the computer is not at all restful. Which is funny since when I go on the computer it is often to rest and not to have to think about stuff. It is funny that I go on to rest, and end up not feeling rested at all; yet next time I feel like resting, I will go right back on again.

I need to break out of that and go back to reading! It is so much better! Also, I did read my bible like I wanted. Although I almost talked myself out of it. Just like I thought, this is going to be a struggle every single day!

It is sad that we are made to look forward to the weekend. Not even look forward to. It is more like we are made to live for the weekend. I wish there was some way to create a learning system that was not tiring. That made kids want to get up in the morning to go to school. I feel like if schools or states put money and time into it, they could find some sort of program that worked but was stress free and not draining. At least for younger children. It makes me sad that elementary kids are spending the amount of time that they are listening to someone talk. There has to be a better, more interactive way!

Dear God, please help me to remember "this too shall pass." This stomach ache doesn't feel like it is going to pass. And it feels like there is something seriously wrong with me. But I know that you are in control. And you love me. Thank you for loving me.

"Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity." Joel 2:13

Isaiah 53

How hard life would be for us if we were "despised and rejected". If people turned their backs on us. That would be so hard. And yet he [Jesus] dealt with all that and so much more. I always think that if I was just back in bible times, I totally would have followed him, but the truth is I probably wouldn't have.

It was *our* weakness that was weighing him down. But we blamed his problems on something wrong that he must have done. Classic human nature! I just like how, so many years before Jesus came, someone wrote this. And it is so descriptive and so accurate.

It was the LORD's *good* plan. God deemed his plan *good* just like he deemed the earth and animals and humans *good*. I like the thought of Jesus being satisfied when he looks back on all that was accomplished.

Heroic? Protective of family. Honest. Brave, well not quite brave.

Social? Introvert. I don't really like any communication but face to face. I like big groups where no one notices me or small groups where I am an important part.

Fears? Not being loved. Not being enough like my mother for her to appreciate. Hell.

Father? Strong, overpowering, abrasive, in charge, over the top, too much for most people, big. All in the best and most comfortable for me way.

I grew up in a Christian home where making my faith my own and not just accepting it because my parents believed it was highly stressed. As a child, I really don't know if I had one of those "give my heart to Jesus" moments that people who grew up in a Christian home always talk about. I might have, but if I did I don't remember and my parents never made a big deal about it cause they think that until you are older and understand what you are doing, that it isn't really a commitment. (Which I totally agree with.) I don't want someone telling me I am a Christian because of something I said when I was three. So because of that I have to say my "conversion" moment was when I was around twelve or thirteen. And even that was less of a conversion and more of realizing how much I needed God.

I had been going through some really tough times and I was struggling with really heavy depression and feelings of abandonment. Feeling like my family hated me and I was an outcast. My depression and all that came with it was actually induced by a disease that I have, although I didn't know it at the time.

I would go on long walks, and not pray, but just rage out loud. It wasn't that I didn't know God was there. I never doubted God for a second. I just didn't think to go to Him with all the pain that was inside me. I honestly don't know what changed or what made me realize that God could help me. But somewhere in that time, I just started talking to God. At first it was just telling Him how angry and hurt I was. Then as time went on, it moved to asking Him for help. And He did help me.

I don't know how, but a couple of months later I realized how much my parents loved me, something that greatly surprised me. And how wonderful my life really was. The crazy thing is that my depression was a side affect of a disease. It wasn't me just randomly feeling low. It shouldn't have just gone away.

I still have the disease and I still struggle with depression from time to time. But I have learned to, as soon as I get down, remember that God is in control. I have learned to go to God right away and not waste my time trying to feel better on my own.

In a way, I thank God for those times of depression. They are the times when I am closest to God. I wish I would stay as close to Him all the time. But nothing brings you closer to something or someone than knowing that you need them to survive. I have learned over and over again just how much I need God to survive. Not on an eternal level (although I need him for that too!) but on a day to day level. I would not be able to function without Him constantly comforting and controlling my life. I just pray that things never get so good that I forget how much I need Him.

As Christians it is easy to hear words and phrases about our faith that we never fully understand. As a Christian, I think it is important to really understand and be able to articulate what we believe. We should be able to articulate it so that we can share our faith in an intelligent way. And we should really understand it so that when our beliefs are challenged, we can go back to what the Bible says, and be sure that what we believe is true.

Subjects like the validity of the Bible, what "made in the image of God" means, and especially what exactly the Trinity is are all questions that are often overlooked and seen as too advanced or difficult to understand. Especially where teenagers are concerned.

Adults overlook these things because they don't want to take the time to set things straight that maybe they don't even understand. And they think that if they don't fully understand it, how can a teenager ever fully grasp it? I think this is so sad. As a teenager, I know that right now, while I am still figuring out what I believe, is the most important time for me to fully understand the main bullet points of orthodox Christianity.

I think that *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* really begins on page one hundred and twenty one, less than fifteen pages from the end. The rest of the book is touching, sure. It helps you to get an understanding of the characters. Of course it needs to be there. But the real story starts when Ivan finally looks at himself for the first time.

Within the last few days of his life, Ivan looks back at the past, back to his childhood, through to his adulthood and all the way to the present. He asks the question, what was it all for? And for a brief second, you see him entertain the thought that he has not lived as he should have. As soon as the thought crosses his mind, he denies it. It would be too hard for him to accept that his actions could in any way be the cause of his suffering.

This is when the story begins and this is where I see myself so clearly. He thinks maybe he would understand and be able to come to grips with the illness and impending death, he could reconcile the pain, if he could see the reason. He thinks that his punishment would make sense if he had done anything wrong. But he can't believe that he has lived in any wrong manner. He quickly, and self-righteously, pushes the thought of his inadequate living out of his mind. He insists that he has lived well.

I think this is the same thing that lots of Christians do in regards to their walk with God. I know it is what I do. In the same way, Ivan consoles himself with the lack of large or grave sins in his life, telling himself that proves he has lived well. I think we say, "Oh, I am reading my Bible, I am praying. I am a good Christian."

We think that because we have done good things, we follow the Ten Commandments, or we haven't done any "big" wrong things, that we are living a good life. That we are living in a good relationship with God. The truth is, however, that we are just pacifying ourselves. We are too proud and self-righteous. We are like Ivan. We are dying.

There are so many things that this book made me feel. I read it in a couple of days and in those days I was feeling a lot of the same things that Ivan Ilyich was. Alone. Up all night. So much pain. Trying to figure out the meaning of life. To be honest, a lot of this book made me feel sorry for myself. It is maybe a bit sad that when I was reading this book, I really identified with the place that Ivan Ilyich was at in most of the book. In fact, it was the first thing to make me cry in a long, long time. And when I read about his desperation, all I could think about was how similar it was to how I felt. It is awkward to write this reality because it feels so self-pitying.

This semester I participated in A4J [All for Jesus]. At first when I was still trying to figure out how everything worked, I really thought it was a pain. I had to get up at 6:15 on Sunday morning to chase around little kids. But now with two Sundays left, A4J is winding to a close. And in all honesty, I can tell you that it is by far the most exciting thing of my week and what I look forward to most of all.

I think this is due almost fully to the amazing and beautiful kids that reached out to me when I was still unsure of how I should reach out to them. In the second week of A4J, I found out that I had a friend. I didn't know his name; I couldn't even recognize his face. I knew him by his flip-flops that were white with blue straps.

I am pretty sure I was a total zombie those first couple of weeks. Arms folded in front of my chest. Trying to stay clean and sweat free. Rarely smiling and when I did it was a pained and put on smile. But he seemed to like me. I don't know why. I was so mad that I had not caught his name by the end of that Sunday morning. I really wanted to keep him as a friend, but I didn't know if he would remember me by next week. And I knew that if he wasn't wearing those flip-flops, I probably wouldn't recognize him at all.

That next week, even though I really wanted to see if I could find my friend, I was once again sore at the fact that I had to wake up so early on a day that I obviously am supposed to sleep in on. As I was sitting on the bleachers that morning, lazily waiting for the kids to come up, Mr. MacDougall said something like, "I saw some of you last week who were standing around and not getting excited to see the kids." I totally knew he was talking about me. He continued to say that this could be the only time that these kids see Jesus displayed in other people. And that we needed to make sure that we were showing the kids Jesus and not tired teenagers, lest they think that is what Jesus is really like.

After he said that I knew he was so right, and if I was going to keep on doing this and count it for service hours, I could no longer sleep through every Sunday morning. So I decided to put myself out there, get excited, and act as loving to these kids as Jesus would, like I had signed up to do.

I thought this would be really hard and I was really scared (I am not so good with kids to begin with. Probably why it made me so happy when a kid actually liked me. That doesn't happen so often with me.) Then I felt someone jump on my back. When I turned around to see who it could be, there was the biggest, most welcome smile I had ever seen. Once he got his name tag, I found out that his name was Nash.

Nash reached out to me and showed me Jesus before I was ready to do the same to him. I don't know if it was because he saw that I looked a little down. I don't know if it was because I am white. Maybe God just knew I needed that help. Since that day, every Saturday night I go to bed anticipating Nash running up to high-five me. And getting to hang out and serve (though I know they have done more for me than I for them) the loving, eager, and often rowdy Kinder age kids at A4J.

I have just got to say again, I am such a fan of Cana. Like, of course, sometimes she is immature. But it never bothers me. I haven't been mad at her yet. I feel like we really just understand each other perfectly.

We don't have to talk, but we can talk. Sometimes we talk forever. Other times we don't even acknowledge the other's existence. But it is never awkward. I just really appreciate her personality, and I am really glad that I am getting to hang out with her this year.

You know what is crazy? Memories. They are bizarre! First off, that you can totally forget some stuff but remember some really random things. And how sometimes even if you want to remember something, you still forget it. And how sometimes you can forget about something for months or even years and then randomly you will remember it. And how memories can make us feel emotion.

It is like they are an escape from whatever is going on in the present, be it good or bad. You can be going through a very unhappy time and have a memory that will make you feel amazing and happy and joyfull. And vise versa. You can be really happy and having a good time and have a memory that sends you into a depression.

Another crazy thing is how memories can change. Something that made you unhappy or embarrassed at the time can turn into a good memory just because of the people you were with or the place you were at. So a bad thing can actually make you feel happy!

On Friday morning I helped at Shalom [Birthing Center] for the first time. It was a clinic day and I took blood pressure all morning. It was so much fun and I really got the hang of it. And it was all thanks to Larry Utter who taught me how a couple months before I came here. I really liked working at the clinic and I hope I can do it again sometime. I wish I could be there for a baby being born though! That would be really cool I think.

Last night I had a dream about Sam. I guess maybe I was starting to somewhat forget about him. Not really but a little bit. The dream totally made me remember him. I guess I was realizing that I might never see him again and any love I may have for him will be fruitless. But I guess the dream kind of reminded me that Sam is good enough to like without any hope in sight. I know I won't like him forever. But if I did, it would not be more than he deserves.

I was having a hard time with the whole money thing, namely that I am running out of it. I just had to pay \$150 for some meds and I was thinking about asking mom and dad for help. But then I had a bit of a revelation. I realized that I am out on my own acting like I am an adult, and I want to be treated like an adult. And adults pay for their own medication. If I want to be out on my own, then I have to be out on my own on everything. Not just the little things. Not just the things that I want. Not just the things that are easy for me or cheap. I have come to the realization that I have to spend money on things that matter and never think I am entitled to get something paid for me by anyone.

Dear God, this knee thing is really bringing me down. I don't know why it is lasting this long. Instead of my knee pain going away after Saturday like normal, it has stayed and continues to stay. And I don't know why or how I can stop it.

Ibuprofen hasn't been working very well, but I have been taking it anyway. But I have been taking a lot of it and I know I am just killing my kidney or liver or whatever that is bad for. I don't want to take any more, but sometimes the pain is so bad that it feels really hopeless. Sometimes I really just want to put myself out of the misery. Like I am not even joking, when it is at its worst, I seriously think that committing suicide would be so lovely. Not even at all lying, the only thing that keeps me here is my family.

God, I just want you to know that I would love to die young. Please take me in the next few years if not tonight. I just want to be with you where there is no pain. I just want to be truly happy, and I know I can't get that here. Please take me soon. But in the meantime, if there is a meantime, please ease this pain. I love you and I know you love me. If nothing else, please let that be enough for me.

Pursuing God is like trying to start exercise regularly. I see myself getting fat. I don't like it. And so maybe I decide to go for a run. Then I get a blister, but I push through it for one "exhilarating" week. But it's all wasted. My heart was never in it. I had begun it with impure intent. I did it because I was afraid of getting fat, not because I had any real love, passion, or interest for it. I will choose my couch over what I know is good for me, offering God the backseat once again.

The first time I had Lyme was in 2009. I took a six week treatment of Doxycycline. I got it again in the summer of 2012. I got a rash that I thought was a spider bite on my leg. Then I had a flu/fever/cold that lasted three weeks. Then in church for no apparent reason I passed out and although I don't remember a thing of it, I was told that I was hyperventilating and it seemed like I might have had a bit of seizure.

The next symptom came in November when I lost my appetite for four months. After four months, I started getting sick and feeling like I was going to pass out if I didn't eat every two hours or so. And when I did eat, it would take me forever to feel full. I didn't know at the time that unsteady blood sugar is a common Lyme symptom.

In January I started getting really bad joint pain and headaches. That is when I put it together that I might have Lyme because those were the same symptoms I had the first time. I stupidly didn't see a doctor till May. There was no reason for that and it was a huge mistake and probably part of the reason I am still having any problems at all.

In May I went to a Lyme specialist who put me on a three month round of antibiotics. He also had me stop eating yeast, sugar, and anything high in sugar and carbohydrates. After that I went to three new antibiotics. After three months I did six weeks of the same things but every week I would take it one less day of the week. So that had me ending treatment on December 27th. I am back to eating anything I want except I still stay away from yeast which the Lyme doctor told me was the worst one for me to eat.

My only symptom left from Lyme is joint pain. Every weekend my knees get really bad. Generally it is so bad that I either can't sleep or can't walk. And often both. I read online that the joint pain that comes with Lyme is a lot like arthritis. So I guess the real problem with the joint pain is that Ibuprofen isn't really working for me anymore. Sometimes it works but only if I take a lot of it. I am afraid that such a large amount could cause damage in the long run. Especially because I already have weak kidneys and kidney disease runs in my family. It would be really nice to have a painkiller that really worked.

2014

A year has come and gone. It is hard to believe that time flies this fast. Last year at this time I was journaling a ton because I was super mad. Now I love my family more than anything else. I guess that is a good thing that happened in 2013. I guess in one way when I think about last year it does seem pretty long and full. But then at the same time I feel like nothing even happened. I think it was a good year though all in all.

God, if you are answering my prayer to die young, I can't thank you enough. I am so ready to go!! Please take me as soon as possible. Although maybe it would be bad if I died in the Philippines since I think my parents would regret letting me go. God, when I die, please don't let my family take it too hard. Please let them remember how much happier I will be with you. Also I want my funeral songs to be Get This Party Started and I'll Fly Away.

I think if I don't die, I want to work with prostitutes or women who have been in the sex industry. I don't know what kind of degree that will take, but right now I think that is what I want to do.

I had forgotten what it felt like to miss my family. I guess I got so used to life here and I talk to them so often that it really hasn't been too much of a problem for me since the first month or so. But now for the first time since then, I truly just miss them. I miss being around them. I miss their characteristics. I miss the times we had. I miss everything about them.

And I am not going to lie, that kind of makes me happy. I am excited to go home in five months. I am excited for the next time I get to Skype with them. I love them so much. The amount that I want to be with them is amazing.

I can't wait till I can be with them all together forever. Heaven is going to be so amazing for so many reasons. I am so excited for it!!! And so grateful that I have a family that makes me feel this way.

I have way too much to write about. Way too much to actually write anyway, which is in part due to the fact that I didn't write at all in December, and partly due to the fact that a ton has gone on with me of late.

The thing that makes me not want to write about it at all is that writing is normally a way to understand what is going on, to clear my head, a way to process my emotions. And normally I can't do any of those things without writing. But this time I was able to do all of that without ever thinking about writing. In fact, writing is really more of an after thought, which honestly seems like a bit of a drag. Like I would just be documenting what has been going on and not how I feel about it, because the initial emotions have already passed. So it just feels kind of pointless and boring.

But then I think about when I die, and they are totally going to want to know what was going on. But also when I think of when I am dead and people are reading my journals, well I don't want anyone to think that I don't like them. So just to clear the air, I love everybody. Now that is taken care of. I can move on, and I think my plan of action will be to just write about the spiritual stuff. And just act like you know everything else.

So, pretty much when I first got the news about my blood work, I was so upset and unhappy, and I was just crying all over the place. Then I don't even remember why or how, but God really came into the picture and I felt for the first time in a very long time that nothing was forced or fake on my side.

And the other thing I realized is that it doesn't matter if I seem overly "spiritual". Like mom you know. I realized that that is actually quite a good thing. I want to be that person who is over the top. Because if this life is all there is, if I am not living for Heaven, then I might as well die.

I am so done with this life. And to be honest, all I want to do is die. I want to be done here so bad! I just want it all to be over! I feel like that would make some people sad to read. But it shouldn't. I am just so ready to be with Jesus, pain free, and totally happy. That is all I want. I have never loved my family more than I do now, but there is nothing here for me. All I want is Jesus.

I am trying to get back into writing. I always say it is something I love, but then I never do it. So do I really love it? I don't know, but either way it is something that I want to do more.

I do have one thing to write that really is worth putting down. For a while I had kind of lost my positive body image. I don't know if I really did get quite fat or if I just thought it. But in any case (and I don't know if this has ever happened to me before) I really didn't like the way I looked. So that was new.

It is not like before I thought I was super hot or anything. I knew I wasn't skinny, but I didn't really care. I was happy with the way I looked. And I think I had a fairly realistic view of myself.

Then a couple of months ago I started thinking I looked really fat. So I started trying not to eat so much junk. But I had no control whatever over what I ate. It was embarrassing. Then over break I started doing better with not eating huge amounts.

Then when I got sick, I didn't really eat at all. And since then I haven't been able to eat much. I think my stomach shrunk while I was sick. Point is, I am back to liking what I see. I am hoping to be able to continue controlling myself and eating healthy, small amounts. Pretty much if I am honest, the reason for this is that when I get home I don't want to be fatter. I don't want to get off the plane and everyone think to themselves, wow she got fat.

I just wrote a check that put me under \$2000. That was hard. Who would have thought living could be so expensive? I really just need to keep learning how to let go of money. I need to remember that it is okay for me to end up penniless at the end of this trip. I decided to use my money on this and that is what I am doing. But it was still hard to see my balance that low. And it will continue to be hard until I learn how to let it go.

I want to do more daring things in my life. But I want them to be for your glory. Please give me the guts to do daring things for you.

Psalm 1

Mocking/gossip/making fun of people is a pretty big deal.

Why is he meditating on the Law? I feel like that is a pretty dry subject. And I feel like nowadays people are more inclined to meditate on God's love than his Law.

It is hard because it says that the wicked will perish, but so often all we see is the wicked prospering. It is so hard for my earthly mind to accept that it might not be in this life but the next that punishment will come. And in some ways (well every way) I wish that the punishment would come in this life. Cause obviously punishment in the next is a whole ton worse.

I guess maybe I have a lacking sense of justice. I don't really find it comforting that the wicked man will not go unpunished. I want him to go to Heaven too. Cause why should I get the chance to go to Heaven and not him?

I could easily do everything that he is doing. I have just as sinful a nature. So how come I, in a way, get away with it and he gets eternal damnation? How are we any different?

Psalm 2

If we/I ever try to go against the LORD, it is the stupidest thing ever. And not only does God laugh at it because it is so idiotic, but it will also make him mad. And God is terrifying.

If you think about how powerful he really is, that should be enough to make you say your prayers. And not just to stay on God's good side, but also because if you are in communion with God, and you really love him and delight yourself in him, he will have your back.

He is so open to giving us good things. It is amazing! Think about it. All I have to do is delight myself in God and in return I have God, the all-powerful, getting my back. And not only that but he really, really wants what is best for me.

Goodbye worries. Am I right? We are dealing with some powerful explosives. God is no joke. But the benefits of being blessed by him is otherworldly! It is just so amazing that he even offers to give us refuge! It is beyond generous!

Psalm 3

It is so easy to believe that God will not deliver us. It is so easy to go looking for other solutions to our problems. When they get big. The Devil barely even has to tell us that God can't or won't help. It is almost like we are eager to believe those lies.

But God is so much bigger than that. When we cry out to him, he will answer us. He will protect us from our foes. We don't have to fear or worry about anything. God is everything. When we call on God to deliver us, it is already done.

Psalm 4

"The LORD has set apart the godly for himself." He wants me!

Bed is such a good time to meditate. I want to have a more quiet heart before I go to bed. It sounds so pleasant. I feel like the "right sacrifices" were like an Old Testament thing. But it still totally applies.

I think it is saying that we know what God wants. We have been told what will please him. *SO DO IT!* God can make my heart happier than any drink or drug ever could. There is so much safety in being a Christian. How can anyone else ever have any peace of mind or spirit?

Psalm 5

"Morning by morning..." Why am I not that consistent? "Wait in expectation..." Why am I not that trusting? Thank God for Jesus! God would hate me otherwise.

"But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield." Thank you God. That is all. Just thank you.

Psalm 6

God's love is what saves us. How come we want his love when it comes to us, but all we want is his justice when it comes to "bad" people. When the LORD hears my cry and I know it, that is when, that is the final point at which I have to push away from me all that is evil. How can I expect God to save me when I am holding onto evil?

Psalm 7

A true and unbiased view/expression of justice. He is praying that if he is in the wrong, he is the one that God strikes down. Does God really get mad over the little things in my life? Does he get angry when I get hurt?

"Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High." I love the way that sounds but I would never be comfortable actually praying that. I want to come to a place where that could be my prayer. It is so beautiful.

Psalm 8

Makes me want to still be a little kid. I feel like God must love getting praise from little kids. When we think of all God is and has done, it is crazy that he cares about us!

Psalm 10

"He says to himself, 'Nothing will shake me; I'll always be happy and never have trouble'." Psalm 10:6 It's like thinking that you will never die or get old.

Psalm 12

I don't own my mouth/lips. I can't say anything I want or do anything I want because my life is not my own. I will try (please help me) to be less vain in my imaginings. You own me so I've got to do what you say. I want to want to do what you say.

Psalm 15

The whole thing. Holy cow. I feel like I can never live up to this. But then I think about how you sent Jesus and the only thing that I can think about is how did David not go into deep depression after writing that?

Psalm 16

Even when stuff feels really hard and I don't know what to do, I know that in Heaven none of it will matter. And that is where I want my life to be. But really God, all I want is to go to Heaven. I know you know this well. But please, I think it is the desire of my heart.

Psalm 17

"I have resolved that my mouth will not sin." I don't know if I am able to carry out that resolve. Well actually I know that I am not. But I want to try as hard as I can.

"Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings." One of my favorite verses. And my biggest prayer. God, that is what I want.

"And I--in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness." Please just take me to Heaven. I will be satisfied to see your face and not before that!

Psalm 18

"The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry." Makes me nervous at first but at the same time proud and safe. I am proud to be on your side God. You are so much stronger and more powerful than another person or thing I could follow.

"To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd." God is always a fair judge. Scary or comforting? Since you sent your Son, at least it isn't scary. I wonder how you decided what were admirable traits and what weren't. Was there any deliberation? Or is it really just natural?

Was Psalm 18:33-45 written to be literal? I feel like now we would read it to mean spiritual battles. I wonder if David meant it strictly in an actual crushing people sort of way. David really did kill a lot of people. It almost seems like he wants this. I don't get that. I want to understand why you were so violent in the Old Testament. Could I be wrong about my views of self-defense, killing, and wars. It seems here like you are violent. I don't understand.

Psalm 19

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight..." *Ravish my thoughts.*

Psalm 20

I like this because it is like David was writing it directly to/for me. I wonder who it was actually for, or did you just put it on his heart for me? Is David and all the other greats up in Heaven freaking out when I have a victory?

What I wanted to write is a list of things that I want/the person I want to be/things that I want to change about me/things that I need to work on. So here it is.

- *I want to be the kind of person who wakes up and starts to pray.
- *I want to be the kind of person who smiles a lot.
- *I want to be the kind of person people are comfortable talking to.
- *I want to be the kind of person who people come to for advice.
- *I want to be the kind of person who people come to for prayer.
- *I want to be the kind of person whose opinion matters.
- *I want to be the kind of person who doesn't worry about money.
- *I want to be the kind of person who can always have deep conversations.
- *I want to be the kind of person who doesn't always need to have a deep conversation.

Psalm 21

I think I am seeing that I need to pray more. There is so much to ask for/pray about. And I feel like I can never get it all. But I feel like it is more than worth it to spend the time. I mean, how could anything else be more important?

So on that note, God please give me healing. I think that a desire to be active and able to be flexible again is not impure. So please, in your time and when I have learned all I can from this, please heal me completely. Please give me rest from this. Please restore my legs and my mind. And please restore Mom's peace of mind.

God I am so happy. But I have a feeling and I don't know what it is. I really don't know what this feeling is from. Maybe it doesn't matter how much I know something. Maybe I will still feel regardless. But thank you that even though I have this feeling that normally would bring me down, I still feel super high and joyful.

Psalm 22

"In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed." Thank you God that I can say that too. You have blessed me so much through my parents. Thank you that they put their trust in you and that you came through.

Psalm 22 is a prophecy of Jesus dying on the cross. That is so cool because the beginning is like when he was on the cross.

Psalm 24

"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Why don't you take hold of everyone then? Why can't everyone go to Heaven?

Psalm 25

"No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame..." Why is it so easy to be ashamed of you? That is a clever/cruel trick of the Devil. Please help me to never be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

"Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." On my list of things to memorize.

"For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great." Exactly what Jesus did!

"The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them." I want you to confide in me. That is my love language I think. Having you confide in me is the most beautiful thing I can think of LORD. Please let me fear you enough to gain your confidence!

I love all of Psalm 25!

Psalm 27

The Devil tells me "don't seek his face!" Your face LORD will I seek! Be strong, take heart, and WAIT UPON THE LORD!

Psalm 29

"The voice of the LORD is over the waters: the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic." I love to think of your voice as thunder. It is not that your voice is like thunder. You are like thunder. I love your powerful side. Well everything about you is powerful. I think power is very attractive to me.

"The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace." Strength and peace. Those are exactly the two things I need.

Psalm 30

"Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning." Please help me to remember this on the bad nights.

"You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy." Wailing to dancing. YES!

Psalm 31

"I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul." You always know what I am going through. In the dead of night when I feel so all alone, you have been there and will always be there with me. I am not alone.

"How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you." Once again I see that I need to fear you.

Psalm 32

You are my hiding place, you always fill my heart with songs of deliverance. Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in you.

Psalm 34

"I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears." You always answer don't you? I feel like this verse is a direct reflection of my life for the last couple of weeks. Except I think you sought me and not vice versa. Although I would love to think that it was all me. You know, the seeking part.

"Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame." Such a wonderful promise. I think that is what happened to Mom.

"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Why are you so partial towards broken things? I am thankful that you are not partial to the good looking "cool" people.

Psalm 35

I have never been able to relate to psalms like this until now. I guess I understand that the people around him were his affliction, just like mine is my health. I always thought it was almost wrong of him to be praying these prayers. But now I see that as much as it is no sin for me to pray for healing and good health, it is no sin for him to pray for deliverance. I feel like I can see this in a totally new light now and actually pray it for myself.

Psalm 37

"Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away." I know that when I go home it will be so hard not to slip. Maybe my friends aren't the greatest when it comes to morality. Maybe I am not the greatest. When I do go back, please help me to remember how fleeting life is and how much more worth it you are than anything else.

"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart." I guess this is what my goal is. All I want is to be with you. I know you can give it to me. Whenever you are ready and you think that I have delighted in you enough!

Psalm 40

I think you want me to be your slave. That is what I want too.

Psalm 41

God please give me more compassion for the weak. Please help me to care about everyone.

Thank you for helping me to seek you last night.

Where are you from? I am from New York. I live at a camp [Camp Deerpark] in the middle of woods on top of a mountain.

Where is home? Home is New York. Although there is a good chance that it won't be my home much longer when I go back. My family doesn't own the house and they are just at that ministry till called elsewhere.

I have only lived two places including here. So New York has always been my home. But I guess it is kind of hard to say where my home really is now. I guess that New York will always be my childhood home, but if I am serious with myself, I am really between homes right now.

My parents won't be living in New York temporarily when I get back from the Philippines. And when they do come back they aren't necessarily there permanently. I guess the other thing that makes it a bit hard to say is that I have no extended family in New York. So when my parents leave there, besides great friends that are still in the area, I will have no reason to stay there.

So really I guess New York isn't as much my home as wherever my family is. I don't know if I will try to stay close to where my family is in my adult life. I guess I actually don't really think I will. So at this point, I am sort of between homes and I am not sure that I will really find my next "home" till a couple years after college. But I am the kind of person who adjusts well to new places and it is easy for me to call wherever I am home.

Psalm 42

"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." I like this cause it reminds me of when I don't know what is wrong with me, but I know something is. It is a reminder that when I feel like that, I just need to put my hope in you.

Psalm 43

I don't know if I am right, but it seems like back in the Old Testament you had a relationship with Israel as a nation. David seems to measure closeness with you by the way their battles went.

And now I guess I measure my closeness with you by how hard I try to pray and read my Bible and seek you. I am wondering if that is wrong or right. Who am I to think I can regulate how much you love me? I feel like I have been looking at everything all wrong. But I don't know the right way to look at it. And I feel like I am losing it. If it is *me*, there will always be ups and downs. Ins and outs. I guess I want to find a way that I can be sure it is on you. I am so inadequate.

Prayer Requests:

*healing from Lyme

*to be able to run

*to be able to concentrate

*to stop judging people

*to keep wanting you

Psalm 53

If you don't call on God, you will eventually be overwhelmed with dread.

Psalm 55

"Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest." I want to draw that sometime.

Psalm 56

"When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?"

Psalm 57

AWAKE, MY SOUL!

I read in II Kings yesterday about Hezekiah and it was really encouraging. Sometimes even the people who love and serve you go through crap. It wasn't just like the ones who did evil in your eyes got evil and vise versa. Just because I follow and trust you doesn't mean my life will be a fairytale. My life won't always be beautiful. It will be whatever you want it to be. Please help me to accept when that hurts.

Psalm 60

"Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless." Can I apply this to my health? What can I apply this to? Reading that almost hurts. When is this going to happen?

Psalm 63

"Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you." Your love is better than life!

Please open my eyes, LORD, to your blessings.

Psalm 71

"Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up." So close to the thing about Hezekiah. It is so good to hear!

Psalm 73

"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Nothing else matters!

Psalm 83

"Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD--that you alone are the Most High over all the earth." Please God, show my Lyme that you are the most high over all the earth.

Psalm 84

"My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the LORD...Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked."

An undivided heart is what I need.

If I could just find a way to undivide it.

I don't even know what it is divided between.

Too many things to count or even be aware of.

An undivided heart is what I need.

How do I undivide it?

There are too many things I want so bad.

Too many things that hold 1/8 or 1/32 or 1/100 of my heart.

Too many things I am unwilling to give up.

Too many things I want too bad.

An undivided heart is what I need.

Psalm 101

"I will set before my eyes no vile thing." Does this mean no bad movies, no bad music, no bad anything? Cause if it does, shouldn't I stop watching bad things?

Psalm 103

"He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities." It is crazy that even back then, they knew that you were not hard enough on them. How much less hard are you on us?

God, I don't know what is going on with Tommy [friend]. I don't know what he could possibly be thinking. And I don't know how and what to say so that I am not feeding into the problem. I don't want to say nothing, but I don't want him to dislike me or stop respecting me or stop talking to me. I love him, God. Please show me when and if there is something more I should be doing than praying for him.

AM I SAVED

1. What is your secret life like?
2. True repentance
3. Love for CHRIST
4. Live for the will of God
5. Where is my mind?
6. Idols being killed
7. Testimony of the Spirit
8. New creation

9. Trusting CHRIST

10. Know CHRIST in a new way

"Jesus, Lover of my soul. Jesus, I will never let you go. You've taken me from the miry clay. Set my feet upon the rock, and now I know. I love you, I need you. Though my world may fall, I'll never let you go. My Savior, my closest friend. I will worship you until the very end." Hillsong

Thank you for showing me the idols in my life. I think not being passionate much can be a good thing because there are not a lot of things that I really care about. I know that my pride will try and tell me that I don't really have any idols. But I know that there are even more in me that I don't see or won't recognize. Please show them to me and please help me to overcome them.

I don't know if I should get baptized. Mr. Mac [teacher] seems to think it is a really urgent matter. But Mrs. Tuxworth [teacher] was much more reserved and didn't want my parents to miss it and didn't want it to be in the wrong community. I really just don't know enough about baptism. I feel like in the Bible there are mainly examples of it and not a whole lot of preaching/theology on it. So how can I really be sure. I know (I think I know) that it is not an assurance of salvation, but I want to do what is right by you. I just don't know what that is.

Psalm 119

Verses 1-8 show that there is no excuse for living on the edge. Just because we can live wrong is no reason to do so.

I have had to experience some loss of things and people that I loved dearly that no one else seemed to really care about. Or at least that no one else said anything about. Because I grew up at a camp, there were always people coming and going. I would become best friends with someone and then their family would have to move on to somewhere else and I was always left behind.

You may see me now and think that I am quiet enough that I wouldn't make a big deal about stuff. But for the most part, that isn't true. If something bothers me, I will almost always say something. That is unless I think my saying something will be offensive.

So as a young child, when people and places were taken away from me, I would always talk about it. Sometimes, unfortunately, I would make a big fuss about it. But for the most part I would talk through what I was going through with my dad. So I never really had that unspoken hurt. And for that I am truly grateful.

I disagree with saying that "seeds" of grief are sown in teenagers, but it doesn't show till you are older. I disagree because I think that not just the seeds, but also all of that grief is there in the teenagers. I think it is just that often we as teenagers can't tell what it is that makes us feel the way we do. I think we aren't mature enough to know that what we are going through is grief.

And I think the same can be said for our parents. They think we are just being rebellious or sulky (which in some cases can be true) but I think there is almost always a larger issue behind rebellion. I think there is always some kind of hurt that goes hand in hand with it.

I think that in most cases it is just in our 30's and 40's are our eyes opened to the fact that there is a deeper problem. It is only then that we are able to see why we have always had anger management problems or why we have always been insecure. It is then that these things are made clear to us and we can pinpoint it and talk about it.

It is not hard for me at all to say with certainty that when I am in emotional pain, I just get angry. In fact, for most of my life that was the only emotion that I was willing to let anyone see. I eventually came to find out that it was connected to unresolved grief. However, even though I now know that, it is still my fall back emotion. Old habits die hard.

The other one that is pretty classic for me is withdrawal. If I am mad at someone, if I don't think that confronting him or her is worth it, I will just totally withdraw from them. And on that same track, I also withdraw from things that hurt me. It is very easy for me to just decide to be by myself so as to not feel any more pain. Both of these things I know are unhealthy. Both I am trying to change in myself. Sometimes I am successful, sometimes not. But I am still trying, and will keep trying till I get it.

God, I want to care about you more than anything else. I want to put your word in front of other books and things I could be doing. I want to be productive with my life. I feel like I am failing you, not that I haven't already of course. I am so sorry. Please help me to not continue on this way. I don't like it. But of course you know I love it. And I hate that.

How can I change? I realize I need you. You are the only way. So I ask for your help. And at the same time I am scared that you won't come through. Why am I afraid of that? My lack of faith is disgusting to me. Forgive me for it.

God is my Shepherd

I won't be wanting

I won't be wanting

Lord, you know the desires of my heart.

If the desires of my heart are not in Your will for my life,

then help me get through this.

It is hard. All this pain. I don't know if I can make it much longer if things stay the same. I try to tell myself that I am okay with it. But I know as soon as I utter those words that they are lies. I can't do anything for the pain. So maybe these lies are all I have to hold on to. Maybe I need them to make it. I need them to survive.

But maybe they won't help me to survive. Maybe they don't do anything for me at all. Do they numb the pain? No. You are right. They don't help. Nothing helps. Will it always be this way? Probably. Don't get your hopes up for any sort of change. Stop holding your breath. Just sleep.

Mark 5:25-34

The sick woman knew that all she needed to do was *touch* Jesus. And she thought she could be healed. If I can touch Jesus in any and as many ways as possible, no I won't necessarily be healed. But the doctors don't seem to be able to help me either. So what else do I have to hope in but Jesus.

I don't know why I don't have enough faith to *know* that I will be healed. Still afraid of failure. God's failure. Which is the stupidest thing I have ever heard. But it is still true. I am hoping sometime that will change. Even though right now I don't have the faith, I will still try to touch Jesus every way I can.

Why does talk of healing always make me feel like crying? God, you make me cry all the time. You are the only thing that can make me cry.

I feel like I don't know how to relate to you anymore. It is like I am scared to talk to you because I am afraid that I won't hear an answer. I am confused about what prayer should be. I am confused about what I should be getting out of the Bible.

I don't think that acting righteous makes me feel closer to you. I look at my life and all I have is my good works towards others. My "loving" spirit. I look at myself and I see someone who for the most part has all those lists in the Bible down. But that is *all* I have.

I used to hate Christians like that. I am pretty sure that is why I started being "edgy" in the first place. And now that is me. I am the Christian who is just on the outside. And I hate that.

But as stated previously, I don't know how to relate to you. I don't know how to remedy this problem. The answer that everybody gives is pray and read your Bible. But I don't know how to do either. I am clueless when it comes to making either one of those things meaningful.

Today I was with my family at the farmers' market across the street from Union Church. I was experiencing a combination of not enough sleep and not enough water. And of course it is hot season. I was feeling quite faint and I decided to sit down. I found a chair beside a stall that was unattended. I figured I could at least sit there till the person who owned the stall came back.

I sat there with my head in my hands for some time. Then I heard the woman whose seat I was in come back. I started to get up while apologizing. She shushed me and told me to sit right back down. As I was thanking her, another woman came up to me and started fanning me. Meanwhile the first woman got out some kind of oil, put it on my hands and told me to smell it so I wouldn't feel faint.

Next the other woman asked me if I could use some water. I said thank you and that I was feeling a bit dehydrated. She leaves and comes back with a cup of ice water, and when I down it, quickly says that she will get more for me. Before she goes, she hands me her fan to use in her absence.

When you look at this story, you can just say, "Oh they were just being nice." And yes, maybe that is how everyone should be treating each other. But where I am from, my story would have ended with the woman who owns the stall coming back and yelling at me to get out of her seat, and do I think I can just sit anywhere. She would probably have ended by muttering something about stupid teenagers under her breath.

That would have been it. I would have moved on until I could find another empty chair and waited to be yelled at by that seat's rightful owner. I never would have gotten any water offered to me and I definitely wouldn't have had a conversation about how hot it was and how I probably wasn't used to it.

So, my interaction from earlier today stuck out to me, for one, because of the stark contrast between who the American is and who the Filipino is. But it also stuck out to me cause it was pretty much directly showing me just who exactly the Filipino is.

The Filipino doesn't care if you are sitting in their chair. The Filipino cares that you start feeling better before you stand up. The Filipino will gladly get you a cup of water even when she doesn't at all know who you are. The Filipino will start a conversation with you just because that is more fun than staying silent. The Filipino is nicer and more caring than probably any American I have ever met. That is the Filipino and that is who I have come to love, appreciate, and wish my nation was more like.

Crying. Alone.

Crying for myself.

Crying cause I know I'm dying.

Lying. Alone.

Lying to myself.

Lying cause the truth would kill me.

Dying. Alone.

Dying by myself.

Dying cause I can't accept the truth's life.

We are leaving the country in four days. Is this real? I can't believe that in a few days this whole time will just be a memory. I am ready to go, I think. It also really sucks to leave and I feel like I could stay here forever. I wish Mom and Dad could be here for graduation.

I feel like I still have so much getting to know people. But it is almost over and I just don't know how to feel. Just leaving in general is stuck in my head. Just the fact that I even got to come here, and now I am leaving. Ahhhh, it is crazy!!!

New journal! I guess it is good to start a journal with a little update on where your/my life is. So might as well. This is my 18 year old journal. Hopefully I will fill it by the time I am 19. But I ain't holdin' my breath (said in tweener voice).

Right now I am the best that I have been in years. I mean I really am just really happy and having a ton of fun. But also, I am taking prednisone for my Lyme and it is giving me so much energy. And I almost never feel sick anymore.

Anger. Why do I have it and why in such vast quantities? Sometimes I get so mad and for no reason. And that really ticks me off. It is not like I had a bad day or anything. In fact, I had a really good and productive day. And it is not like my future looks bleak. In fact, tomorrow we leave for our city/Mama Mia trip [New York City] which I am exceedingly excited for. But right now, and for the last 45 minutes, at least, I have been super angry. And I have no idea at whom or why.

It doesn't make sense and I hate that I am like this. Why do I have to be/feel so nasty sometimes. And why isn't there a way to fix this? And should I be scared that I am so good at hiding it? Who am I? How little do the people in my life really know about me? And why is it that I never want to let any of them in. I mean truly in. I mean, I guess I don't even know if I have ever truly been.

You know what I want? I want to be able to talk to someone and have the conversation just be about me and how I feel and think. I just want to talk about myself. I just want someone to know all of the things that I can't really, and probably never will, put into words. I have never had that, but I really miss it. I don't think that will ever happen, but that is what I want. That is what I am craving. I want to talk about me for once. Me and just me. I know I sound super selfish and nasty, but that is just what I want right now.

My anger is just piling up like crazy. I just thought of a possible reason, and this one is by far the most likely. I have not been interacting with God on a personal or corporate level really at all of late. I haven't been praying or going to church [worked in the dining room at camp on Sundays during the summer], and although I have been reading Psalms, I am not reading it deeply at all. I guess I am still going through the not feeling God or any spirituality at all. And so that is a real struggle. I still don't know what I should be doing about it.

My head is about to explode. I have so many things to say but no logical order to put them in. And no good words to express what I am feeling, thinking, etc.

I hate that girls like boys that they don't want to like. I hate that boys like girls that they don't want to like. Isn't that like the most pointless thing ever.

I used to think ticks were the most annoying and pointless thing ever. I realize now that I was wrong. How is it at all helpful that people who want to turn off their feelings can't? Who does it profit that I can't stop liking someone just with that choice? Why have I been made this way? Made to torture myself for hours upon hours. Endlessly hating myself more and more for that part of me that I cannot change. For that part of me that I have no control over. For that part of us all that gives us problem after problem. Heartache after heartache.

And for what? For the same reason that ticks exist. To create misery. To make me wonder how it could possibly make sense.

I am wondering if I am living my life completely wrong. What do I care about anymore? Nothing really that I can think of. I think that is wrong. What good am I to myself or anyone else if I don't possess a passion? If I care about nothing, I am useless. I can try to be as helpful as I can and all, but I am still useless.

No matter what I do, I will bring myself and others down. That is no way to live. I don't, however, know how to find a passion. Can I just force myself to care about something. Can I just pick something and go after it till I really am passionate about it? Can something like that be premeditated?

I know that since I am talking about passion, I should mention God. If nothing else, I should be passionate about Him. And if I am going to try to make myself passionate about anything, it should be about Him. But just that thought of trying to force it makes it a huge turn off. Sometimes I wonder if I really believe in God, because if I did I would have to believe His words. And if I believed them, I would have to follow Him and live for Him. So if I do believe in Him as I claim, why am I not living for Him? Why don't I have a passion? Why isn't it Him?

Maybe one day I will be okay. I don't know when that day will come, and I don't think it will be anytime soon. But one day, I will be okay. I don't know how long that okayness will last. But for at least a little bit, one day, I will be okay.

I need to start using my creativity. I'm never doing anything creative anymore. I miss using my brain. I think I am going to delete minesweeper. I don't want to though. It is my favorite game. Well, I did it.

Every time I am around Elijah, I am once again reminded of just how very much I love that kid. I think I have started crying because I just realized that there is something in the world that I really truly care about. And that is something that I have been trying to figure out for a really long time now. It is such a relief to know that there is really something that matters to me. Cause for a while I was wondering if that could even exist in my life.

I would seriously drown myself in tears right now if that were possible. Everything is hurting me. I used to not care at all about people. Now all I can think about is other people's problems.

It is like I care about them way too much and it is overkill, but I don't know how to stop caring so much. And caring like this wears me down. I don't have the energy to try to protect them all from every problem and disappointment.

But I would give so very much if I could just make everything right in their lives. I would give anything to ensure their happiness and prosperity for the rest of their lives. But I can't do that and it wears me down. I know they don't need my help, but I still want to give it so bad.

I just need to remember that they can deal with some disappointments in their lives, and I wouldn't even be helping them if I took all of those away. I just need to let them be.

I think I have depression. I know that most people have highs and lows and maybe that is all I have. But I think I am worse than most people. But I don't really know because I don't think I show the signs like most people. I don't know, but everything seems so bottled inside me and I don't know how to get it out. I don't know who I could talk to about this and I guess I really just wouldn't feel comfortable talking to anyone.

I guess I haven't prayed about it at all and maybe that is a part of the problem. I am scared that I would go to hell if I died today because I don't know what being a Christian even means. But I am pretty sure that the way I am living my life is not in a Christian way. I never thought I would fall this far but I really have, and I have no idea how to come back from this or where to go from here. The one thing I know though, and that I have tried to tell myself many times, is that anything is worth it to go to Heaven.

And maybe that is my problem. All I care about is where I go when I die. Maybe I don't have any real love for God. But how do I change? What I hate most about this is that normally when you finally see a problem, then you can fix it. But I have seen this problem so many times and for so long and I don't change.

I need to do something different and bigger if I really want a change, which I do. I need to really and seriously seek God. And I need to seek Him and not just Heaven. This has got to change or I am seriously screwed. Not only in the after-life, but in this one as well. I know that I won't be able to live with this heaviness on me. I won't be able to make it. It is just too hard.

"Jesus can be followed faithfully. His example can instruct us. His teaching can be practiced. Worship and discipleship can be integrated. Jesus can be the central reference point for all of life. And these convictions need not degenerate into legalism or moralism if we recognize him as the source of our life and as our friend as well as our Lord." Stuart Murray

I am sad today. Well, I am bipolar today. I think it goes to show that a discontent person is going to be discontented no matter where you put them, which is sad but also something that I already knew. I am sad that that is the kind of person that I am though.

I always thought I would be a happy person. But that hasn't seemed to pan out. I don't know. Maybe I am just a tortured soul. Maybe this is just a stage I am going through. I was just thinking this earlier though, and I think I want to mull it over a bit more, but I was thinking that maybe, subconsciously, a tortured soul is what I want to be.

I am realizing that a journal is not always a safe place where you can write anything you want, because at some point, unless you destroy them, somebody will read them and it could very well be the person you were bad-mouthing. Or it could be something really awkward or embarrassing that doesn't really matter, but you don't want others to know. Like liking someone who turns out to be a loser. Eventually someone is going to get a hold of that and then never shut up about it and you will forever regret writing that you ever liked them.

But at the same time, sometimes the things that you most need to write down are the things that you least want other people to know. So I guess there really isn't much of an answer as to what should be done.

Maybe the real answer is that we should all be more transparent with each other. Maybe we should be less afraid of that embarrassment. I mean, I think there is very little that we really should be embarrassed about. Most of the things that we do that we are embarrassed about are just human nature, and things that everyone else in the world does.

"I'm taking the Lord at His word, and I'm trusting Him to prove His Word. It's kind of like putting all your eggs in one basket, but we've already put our trust in Him for salvation, so why not do it as far as our life is concerned?" *Through Gates of Splendor*

This is brilliant. I don't know what else to say about it, but to say it is so true. There is no point trusting God with your eternity if you can't trust Him with the life you are living right now.

"The Holy Spirit can and will guide me in direct proportion to the time and effort I will expend to know and do the will of God." *Through Gates of Splendor*

First and probably futile attempt at a poem:

Dear Autumn,

Last time I saw your crimson majesty,

so long ago now I can no longer feel it,

I was unaware how much of unadulterated grace you held.

Last time I saw your bronze splendor,

distant now and long past,

I hardly realized the grave love you display.

I feel like for some reason I have this aversion to thinking and processing. I don't know why, but it seems to me that I have completely turned my brain off and I don't know why. It is like if I have a thought, I just say to myself, I will have to think more about that later, and then I promptly put it out of my mind and avoid ever thinking it again. Why?

I want to dance to 50's swing music with you. I want to dance to a song like *Cecelia* with you. I want to dance with you really badly.

I want to dance. I want to dance with a boy wearing a bow tie. I want to dance with you while you're wearing a bow tie.

I want to dance with you even if you are not a good dancer. Especially if you are not a good dancer. But I think any boy who wears a bow tie is destined to be a good dancer.

I want to dance with you till I am so tired I have to sit down. I want to dance with you to the kind of music where it doesn't matter if you "have moves." It just matters that you can keep time with your feet.

I want to dance with you and not care how stupid I look. I want to look into your eyes while dancing so hard I can't breathe.

I want to dance with you to a song we can both sing along to. I want to spend a whole night dancing with you. I want you to twirl me around in time to *Why Do Fools Fall In Love*.

I want to dance so long that I forget about my life. And everything else. I want to dance with you until I am sweaty and dehydrated.

I want to swing dance to 50's music with you.

Lying awake. Not really anything to do. Maybe the caffeine has something to do with it. Who knows. Would get up and take a walk outside to clear my head except I would probably freeze to death if I set foot outside at this time of night.

Wondering why it has been nearly twelve hours since I last ate. Wondering why I still don't have a job. Amazing that a band who sings about nothing but sex and drugs can make me feel so deeply inadequate.

But I guess that is how it normally works. The smallest things are always the things that set us over the breaking point. Your divorce isn't really about the clothes he left on the floor. That was just what made you hate him enough to let him go before death parted you.

Maybe I should start smoking. I need something to make myself feel cool. Something to calm this insistent unhappiness. Would picking up a bad habit make me any more likely to love my world?

Nice. Maybe I'm not totally screwed. Maybe my time isn't totally wasted. There are those good days. There is that good feeling. There are those people who make you smile. Or make your heart pump a little faster. Those times when staying up all night is a privilege. Those mornings when the sun is the most welcome sight. Those meals that are well worth any wait.

There are those tiny things that make your life totally worth it all. Those songs that make you wish you could stay, now, in this moment forever. That God in his mercy would stop time for you. That this feeling in my stomach would never leave. That you could spend the rest of your life with him. That she would never leave you.

Those days when my imminent crumble is out of view. There are those days when nothing you say makes me want to cry. But why are those days so few. Why are those moments so well hidden between the piles of dung that form the home I live in.

Why can that sun that shone so purposely have no other purpose but to rip my heart out? And the questions return. Where am I going? Will I ever get to that elusive somewhere? *Do I want to?*

Will I ever love you and myself the way you asked me to? Is everyone just as screwed up as me? Are they just better at hiding it or will I never find that person that understands me more than a foggy eyed nod. Why, why, why am I not still seven years old? Why am I still not sleeping?

My best writing has happened when I was either desperate or desperately happy. Not only do I then have content, but also there is a poetic beauty in word choice. I don't know why that is. Some of my stuff from those times, although not meant to be, could pass as poems or spoken word, and I love those pieces even/especially the sad ones.

But what I don't like is that I don't, at this point in my life, have any feelings strong enough to aid me in the writing of beautiful things. I am just riding right on average. No emotions that put me very far over or under that line of average.

I am too old to be doing this. To be doing nothing. I don't want to get addicted to highs and lows, but I can't stay here on this line doing nothing and feeling nothing. Life is too short and emotions too valuable to ride average for as long as I have. Average=Nothing.

Is it human instinct to be with somebody of the opposite gender? Is it something that we can't help but want? I hate that even though I have no interest in any kind of commitment, I still can't help but want some kind of someone in my life.

But if I am honest, that is never going to work out. How can it? How can a Christian have noncommitted flings? And beyond that, how can someone like me resolve the battle between the benefits of companionship and the shit of marriage. What guy would ever want the same things that I do, and how would people ever accept a way of living that doesn't include marriage?

People aren't going to be able to accept this part of me, and I am always going to be fighting people on it. And eventually I am going to give in. And then I will be miserable. I don't even want to be thinking about this right now. But I can't help it because I am such a girl. Why can't I be less like a girl? Why do I have to look at relationships and want them? It pisses me off.

And the thing is that I know that a relationship wouldn't make me any happier. I am not the way I am because I am not in some corny relationship with somebody. I am broken and a relationship would not fix it. I don't even know if anything can fix me. But there is no way in hell that some boy child could. That is not how the world works.

Staying pure is going to be such a hard thing. And I am honestly not totally sure that I am up for the task. It is something that I know should not be done. But it is still really hard for me to convince myself that it is that big of a deal. Cause the whole thing is that it will bring you pain and consequences if you don't follow the rules. But I can't convince myself that those things would really pain me.

Like, if you never get married, who are you saving it for? But at the same time I know that is totally crap and I don't even like that I think it. But still I don't know how strong I am at fighting myself. And I do know how easy it would be to talk myself into doing something. So as I said before, staying pure is going to be really hard.

Elijah can't come to Thanksgiving and it is bringing me down. I really wanted our family to finally be together again and now it won't happen till Christmas. It just won't be the same without him.

I wanted my whole family. I don't even know what it means for us all to be together anymore. It has been so long. I was 16 last time we were all together. That seems like a lifetime ago. And I guess since we have waited this long, what more is a month. But it is still disheartening. And this is probably how things are going to be for the rest of my life. I don't know if I can deal with that.

Why is happiness so hard to find? Sometimes I think maybe I am wasting my time. Sometimes I think I am looking for something that doesn't exist. But if that is true, what do all those other people have?

Today was a really good day. One of my best days in a really long time. Just the right amount of social interaction to make me feel a part of humanity but not too much to drain me.

Allison and David [cousins] are much cooler than I knew. I am glad that I am getting to know them. I am really happy that this trip is spent at their house [Virginia]. I haven't spent that much time with them, but they are cool and they are nice and they are welcoming and I like them. I also like how it sounds like a 12 year old is writing this.

Today was another good day although somewhat tainted by a lack of health. I was going to [visit a college] class and nearly as soon as I got out the door, I was so winded I felt like passing out.

I can't thank God enough for getting me home safely the other night. There were so many things that could have gone wrong that I didn't even know about. But anyway, after going a ways, I realized that I wasn't going to be able to make it and especially in time to go to class. So I just turned around and went home.

And although I would love to know why I am suddenly so much less healthy, and I can only hope/pray that it is the multi-vitamins that I am missing that is causing the problems, I still feel okay about this trip. Yes, if I had known that I wouldn't regain my energy, I probably wouldn't have come. But even with this all going on, I have been able to have a lovely restful time at Allison and David's.

Yeah, I probably won't have many, if any, crazy stories to tell when I get back, but I think I need to learn to love and accept my introvertedness and realize that maybe my best vacation is sitting alone in a house all day doing whatever I want. I think I need to just come to terms with how much I love solitude and, therefore, how perfect this vacation is for me. Even if I am feeling under the weather.

Another great day. Malachi came and picked me up, which was awesome, and I spent the day with him. And also being a prospective student. I have got to say, it did kind of make me want to go to college. And I guess what still has me scared is the social aspect. I think so far this week, I have really realized how much of an introvert I am and that I need to accept that about myself and not try to change myself.

Yeah, life is easier for extroverts, but I don't think I could ever be happy pretending to be something I am not. And not because of the pretending, but because if I never let myself be an introvert, I will never get the emotional nourishment that I so desperately need and wasn't getting for a long time.

I am afraid that college will put me back in a place where I can never have the alone time to heal my battered brain. But the classes do seem amazing! I want to take every lit class in the world. It all seems so interesting! I think I am ready to learn again. I just am not so sure about the people aspect of it all.

I have had some of the most stress free and purely happy days of my life. Monday through Friday, all rock star days. I am hoping that this rest will help with my mental sanity beyond when I leave. I am hoping that this respite will give me what I need to make it another two years without going crazy.

I wish I made myself write every night. And why not? It only takes a couple of minutes. And, yes, maybe I don't always have something good to say, or something to say at all. When they write my book, they can pick and choose. I mean, it is not like they will need to use every page I have ever written. So why not make myself do this little exercise. There is nothing that it can hurt.

I don't know how marriage could ever work. There is way too much riding on it. If you really truly love the other person enough that you actually should be getting married, you will be way more hurt by the little things that they say to you. Their opinion will matter way too much, and so when they say something slightly mean, even if they don't mean to hurt, it will dig into your very core, and eventually destroy you and the way you relate to your spouse.

If, however, you don't care so much about what they think, you can't love them enough to be able to deal with all of the things that are so human and they are sure to do. Eventually you will hate them so much because of those little things, and you won't have the love required to give them the grace that they need. And it will destroy your relationship. So, how can it work out? By two people deciding that they don't care how miserable and unhappy they are, they will stay together.

But still people flock to marriage. How do they not see how poisonous it is? They think it is a remedy for their loneliness. They think it is an improvement. Maybe it is. Loneliness is pretty rough. But I don't quite see how it is worse than marriage. Growing up is crap. I don't know any way to avoid it.

I have so many thoughts. I feel like I am thinking for the first time in months. I know I am not even thinking about that great of things, but it feels good to at least be thinking. Last night, I just laid in bed and thought. I never do that.

And I realize that I am not writing down any of my thoughts. But I feel like the point is that I am thinking. I don't know if I am not writing down my thoughts yet because I am not ready for that step. But I hope I am soon. I think I could if I tried, but I mean I spent all last night thinking.

I think a main thing that I will write about is that I really don't want to be in a relationship. I thought I did. I am trying to figure out if that disgust and unwanted comes as somewhat of a coping mechanism. I don't know if I feel this way in part (or whole) because I don't think it a possibility for myself. I have to think that it is a possibility.

But the thought of having it myself, it is so not me and would make me very uncomfortable and unhappy. I really am uncomfortable with the idea of being in a relationship that even slightly resembles every relationship I have seen outside of movies. So, I don't know, maybe that is what has screwed me. Either way, I am cured from wanting to have a relationship. So that is nice.

It is Christmas Eve and talk about a life-changing couple of days. A memorable holiday season. So, turns out I have cancer. I guess you are supposed to call it Leukemia. So, I have Leukemia and I have decided to be a hippy and treat it the old natural way.

I think, to be honest, losing my hair was the main thing that scared me most about chemo. I mean, there were a lot of reasons, but I think hair loss is what hit me hardest. So I am going natural. I don't know right now what all I am taking, but it is a lot. Mom has everything under control.

My Leukemia is acute which means it is very fast moving. They don't think I started to develop it much sooner than Thanksgiving. And in a month or less, I could be dead. So all my tiredness and stuff in Virginia was due to this cancer. So that has an explanation now.

I haven't been able to really be alone yet to fully process this yet. I guess that the point of this is just to say that I am going to really need to give this all up to God. I mean even right now I don't know if I can't sleep because of something real or just cause I am getting scared to leave the hospital. I think it is probably the fear. And I know that fear will just make this worse.

Dear God, all I can do is give this all to you. God, I can't deal with this. You have to. I am totally trusting you. I want to come to you so bad. But it is really Hannah that I am worried about. Please, Lord, give her strength. And please, Lord, take this burden away from me. I am trusting you from now on.

2015

2015! 2015 is going to be my year to get through. If I make it to 2016, I will have conquered my ill health. So 2015 is somewhat of a hump year. Although I have no doubts that it is going to be a great learning and growing year, it still seems like a year that I just need to power through.

I think New Year's Day next year will be a very happy time for my family. If that is, I can carry out this year's New Year's resolution, which is to live. So we will see how that goes. All I can say is I am ready for 2016.

I want to write more, since I really do have the time. Although the only problem is that I will probably have absolutely nothing to write about. I'll just be hanging in this house, lying in this bed forever. I'll just be reading tons of books. Maybe I can write book reports. Maybe more will happen to me than I expect. Maybe I will become a philosopher and have a ton of deep thoughts to write down all the time. Whatever. Either way, I want to write more.

Once again today I was reminded that I could die really soon. And that has pushed me to begin this. My death notes. Or death files. I don't know which one sounds better. I also don't really know what I am going to write in here exactly, so I don't know which one applies better. I think the reader can take both names into consideration and choose for themselves which best works when it is all said and done. I don't know who, if anyone, will ever read this if I don't die. But I was thinking, better safe than sorry.

First off, I want to start by saying that this is not morbid, especially with the name it has. I don't really know why I chose that name/names. Maybe I thought it was funny. Yes, I did. But also I feel like it just works. Both names that is. So, point is that I want everyone to know that this is not my sad book where I talk about death. Well, maybe I talk about death, but this is not written in sadness or depression. It is just a safeguard that you guys will still have something from me if I do die. And if I don't die soon, when I do die, maybe in old age, you guys can still read this and it will be a fun throw-back book.

This is so that everyone can understand why I am okay with having ALL [Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia]: For about the last 10 or 11 months I was really struggling with my faith. Not so much the belief side of things. I never questioned if God is real, or the validity of the Bible. I struggled more with not feeling God and not knowing Him. And wondering how to relate to Him, how to feel about who He is. I wasn't happy with where I was, but as much as I tried, I couldn't pull myself out of the extreme apathy I had towards God.

I knew I was apathetic, and I would tell myself to care, to shake things up and make things happen. I kept telling myself that if I tried harder, I would be able to figure out who God was and what being a Christian meant. But no matter how many Christian books I read, how much Christian music I listened to, no matter that I read my Bible every night, I could not find what Christianity means, and I could not shake the apathy I had toward God and the disinterest I had in talking to Him.

Before I went to the hospital, my hemoglobin was really low and I was really sick. Once in the middle of the night I had just got back from getting a drink and I was lying in bed and I thought I was going to die. Not that I was in pain really, but I just couldn't stop thinking that I could die right then. But then I started thinking about God and how I still had no idea who He was. And I still had no idea what being a Christian meant. And I wondered if I died right then, not knowing and not understanding, would I even go to Heaven. I could not come up with an answer. I had no clue where I would find myself if I died. And that freaked me out like crazy. That got rid of the apathy, but it wasn't enough. I cared now greatly, but still I couldn't figure what it all meant.

When I got diagnosed, I wasn't sad or angry. I cried, but I think that is just because I was scared. I never felt any "why me?" emotions. It isn't hard for me to accept things without a reason. So I just did, once I could wrap my head around the fact that I am just sick, sicker than before; yes. But cancer is not something that should scare me. It is just something wrong with my body. I know how to be sick. I have done it before. This is not something to scare me.

We were driving to church from the doctor where I felt like I had been re-diagnosed. He had pretty much told me again that cancer was the devil and that I should be very afraid. I was so uncomfortable and unsettled walking out of his office. I was kind of just thinking about what it all means and how he just couldn't understand how we could throw my life to the dogs. I was thinking about how what he didn't understand really was that it isn't about my life, live or die. I'm good. In fact, I myself would be much happier in Heaven. He couldn't understand that nothing is being thrown to the dogs. Everything is being placed in God's hands.

And here comes the epiphany: God is good. And I, in relationship to Him, as a Christian, am here to glorify Him. That is what matters. The more glory I can give him, the better. Even if that means having cancer. And I don't know what God's plans in my life are, but whatever will bring Him more glory is what I want.

I guess none of this has said much about why I am okay with having cancer. What I have been trying to lead up to is that anything is worth it to know what I am here for. Anything is worth it to pull me out of a lackluster relationship with the only person that matters. Cancer is a small price to pay for eternity.

A couple of months ago I journaled that I couldn't live in the average much longer. That it wasn't good for me. That I needed highs or lows. That not feeling anything strong was going to destroy me. "Average=Nothing." And that was true. Never in the average could I pull myself out of my apathy. I needed something to shake me up. To make a change.

I am so thankful that God gave me this chance to wake up. I would rather die in a month to the glory of God than to live, two, three, who knows how many more years feeling guilty that I can't find enough love for God to shake the apathy off. Not knowing I was really saved or what saves me. I will thank God for my ALL every day. Because without it I could have been a hopeless wretch for the rest of my life, and then a whole long time after that too.

I want to talk right now a bit about the whole bitterness thing. Now I never went to the Bitterness Bible Study or anything, so I don't know all that much about that stuff. But I think there is something to be said for all that. I think it really kills your soul to be bitter. There are too many beautiful souls in this family and around me. I don't want them to become ugly.

I think that everyone is more sad when a young person dies. I guess we think that they are really missing out on the full life they could have had. This is, of course, crap when you are talking about a young person who is a Christian. But I think you are bound to feel some extra sadness if only for the fact that you did not get to spend as much time with that person as you had intended. That is perfectly okay, and I don't think it is selfish.

A little extra sadness is bound to happen, I think, but when that turns into something more, you have a problem. Mourning doesn't even have to be short. It is a process. But if that turns to questioning God's goodness or His will, you have a problem. If it turns into regretting your own actions, you are in trouble.

I don't know how to show you or tell you how to not become bitter. I don't know how the best way to accepting things is. I have no idea what the steps are for overcoming these things. I just know that being bitter will turn your soul ugly and spiteful. Your soul is too important for that. Keep your soul beautiful for me.

The more we begin to fear God, the more we begin to grow in faith and our confidence grows, but not in our faith, in the object of our faith. This is paraphrased from a sermon that me and Gid listened to. He said it way better than me, but I still love the concept.

I was just thinking today about how many friends I will have by my first day in Heaven. Like so many! There won't be any awkward small talk. No "so are we friends?" small talk. No weird silences that you don't know what to do with. My social awkwardness and introvertedness won't ever pose a problem for me again.

I have always wanted to know how to meet new people without nearly having a panic attack. jk But I really have always wanted to know what to say and how to act when I meet new people. Finally, for the first time ever, in Heaven, it will all come natural. I'll probably have, like, a million friends by, like, the after party. And I won't be annoyed at any of them, and none of them will be afraid of me! All I have to say is, my social situation is going to improve greatly.

THERE IS POWER IN THE NAME OF JESUS TO BREAK EVERY CHAIN!

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness...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." 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

The reason I haven't been writing in here as much is that I have been writing in another notebook directed to my loved ones and less just for myself. But the thing is that sometimes I don't think things are totally appropriate to write in that. Like I don't really want to so much write the way I feel and about my struggles. Even though if I did die, I think people would read all of my journals and not just the one I designate for them, this still feels like the more appropriate place to write things like this. With that said, I have some things to get off my chest/out of my head.

I have been kind of struggling with how to believe and what exactly faith should look like in my situation. I know that God can heal me. I think that He wants to. I trust Him either way. But there is a chance that it is not in God's will to heal me. We are all praying that He will heal me, but we are also praying for His will to be done fully.

Along with the transfusion we got blood tests and the results were not what we were looking for. We are not clear on all of the numbers but the white blood count is 65,000 which is doubled from two weeks ago. The news was hard to take for sure and it was an emotional day. We are being faced with the reality of how bad this can be. But we are trusting that God's power is just as strong in the face of a 65,000 blood count as a 30,000 white blood count. We are searching for God's peace through all of this as the trial is becoming harder and harder.

The trial however was made easier by the staff here at Bon Secours. Everyone has been so kind and gracious. We ask for your continued and fervent prayers as we look to the next step and as we remember that God knows what He is doing even though we are not sure we can see it.

It looks like we might have to stay in the hospital for one more night because the doctor thinks I have slight pneumonia and wants to give another dose of antibiotics this evening and monitor me before I leave. I would rather be home tonight, but if that is not possible, then prayers for a good night's rest in a loud hospital.

God is with us and we know it.

"He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many." 2 Corinthians 1:10-11

When I wake up after a snowy night and look outside, I can't help but smile. Snow is a beautiful thing...but it also has a way of getting doctor's appointments cancelled and rescheduled...and cancelled and rescheduled.

I had an appointment with the doctor who we found to order blood for me on Friday. We weren't planning on getting any blood taken then, just getting into the system so that pretty soon I could have blood done.

Then the snow came.

Well, we knew about the snowstorm that was supposed to happen on Monday, but we figured, "Hey, it might not happen." I guess we were wrong. We rescheduled for today and were met this morning by a good foot of snow on the ground. In fact it is still snowing now, so I guess it is good we didn't go for it anyway. Instead, we were (thankfully) able to reschedule for Tuesday. Now we are just hoping that the snow will let us out tomorrow.

Other than not going to the doctor, this week has been pretty uneventful. I have been having some trouble sleeping at night, which I haven't been able to really figure out yet. So prayer that I would be able to have good, deep rest at night would be much appreciated.

Sleep and good roads. We are praying for sleep and good roads.

At the request of several lovely people, I have decided to move the update from Monday to Friday. I think it is just better because it feels more summative on Friday whereas Monday is more of the start of the week.

Anyway, I have realized that most of these updates are really more of prayer requests. I am fine with that and I hope you all are too. I think that is good in that it makes for a bit less generic prayers. However, I also realized that maybe I could do a bit more updating, and kind of revisit some of those prayer requests that all of you are maybe still in the dark about. So, although these updates don't normally have titles, I have decided to entitle this one: Evidence of Prayers Answered.

I guess now I have written all that, I don't really know where to start. I guess first off I'll start with something that seems small but makes a huge difference for me: sleep. Last week I asked for prayer that I would be able to sleep well, as it had been a problem for me for the past two or so weeks. Every night since Monday, I have slept like an absolute rock. I cannot tell you how much more fun this makes my life! Sleep is a crazy thing and it really has the power to make me feel either terrible, or energetic and, I would go so far as to say, healthy.

The second thing is my pneumonia, or lack thereof. I am sure most if not all of you know that two weeks ago I got pneumonia. Not to be overly dramatic or anything, but that in itself could have killed a person in my state. And even if it didn't kill me, there is no way for a body so full of cancerous white blood cells to fight off even the mildest cases of illness. So of course we were worried. And you all prayed. And I have not had the slightest symptoms for over a week.

Now I come to my (sort of) final point. Clear roads. Yes we had them and yes we were able to go to the doctor as hoped and planned. Everything went wonderfully with her. There are so many things that we are thankful about our meeting with her, but I fear this is already going a bit too long. The biggest one is that she was able to order blood for us that same day. So we went straight to the blood lab and got the results that night.

Now here I need to put a bit of a disclaimer. Not all the news we got from the blood was good. But I like to think of it more as good and annoying news rather than good and bad news. I'll start with the good news though and leave the annoying news at the end as a prayer request.

The day I got out of the hospital two weeks ago, my white blood cell count was 95,000 (for those of you who know as little as I did before all this, that is an insane number. Totally off the charts. Way too high!) And the percent of those cells that were cancerous was 93%. Two weeks later, my white blood cells are at 44,000 and the percent of cancerous is 76%. So if you do the math, two weeks ago there were approximately 88,350 cancer cells in my body. Now there are around 33,440. Now maybe I am wrong, but I don't think that cancer cells just disappear like that on a whim. I don't think I am wrong to think that this is going to excite all of you as much as it excited, and still excites me.

Now we come to the annoying news. Along with the lovely news above, we got my platelet count. Unfortunately, until my cancer is a little more gone, my body will not be able to produce platelets. And platelets are something that is supposed to always be reproducing. Therefore they are also supposed to always be dying. So platelets only last from 7-10 days. And mine are very low. We are now looking at maybe having to go back to the hospital to get a platelet transfusion. We do need direction and wisdom to know what to do about this. Please pray that God will show us what He wants us to do. And pray that my body will soon be able to produce the cells that it needs for itself.

I know this was a bit lengthy, but truly, we are talking about what God is doing for us through you. Could you expect any less?

I hope that this will help anyone who needs to understand why I have chosen not to do chemotherapy. This is not exactly where I started out, but my reasons have evolved into this. First I would like to make it clear that although my upbringing in a natural/organic home did affect the decision, neither of my parents tried to tell me what to do or even hinted one way or the other in the decision to do chemo or natural. The decision was ALL mine (ha ha, get it). I guess I'll do this in list form. I know it's not pretty, so please bear with me.

1) In Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia [ALL] patients, my age and younger, the success rate is 80%, so that is a 20% chance of failure. Now those are pretty good odds as far as cancer is concerned, but then I factor in my health and immune system for the two to three years previous to this cancer and it doesn't look so promising. I have had Lyme Disease for two and a half years, and been on a steroid just to be able to make it through my everyday life for the last six months. Cancer, or no, I am not a well person. When I factor that into the success rate, I think that 80% gets a whole lot lower for me. And then there is the fact that I have waited a whole two months already. I was told very clearly at the beginning of all this that the longer I waited to do chemo, the smaller my chance of surviving would become. So you add that to my already diminishing chances of survival and, of course I have no real way of knowing, but it seems to me that the number is nowhere near 80% anymore. And so even if my chances weren't looking so good with this natural way, how I see it, the chances of going the chemo route aren't looking all that promising either.

2) Chemo is mean, and it takes things away that I am not ready to have taken away. It isn't like, if something goes wrong, things will be taken away. You have to go into chemotherapy knowing that these things will be taken away. I'm not ready to give up the chance to ever have my own child. I'm not ready to lose that and other things that I would no doubt lose by doing chemo.

3) I'm not interested in being sick for the rest of my life. Yes, maybe chemo doesn't always cause a problematic future, but I have heard and read of and seen so many problems caused by chemo; so many after-effects of chemotherapy that are making the lives of cancer survivors so hard. I have been sick enough in my life so far. I'm not complaining, but I am saying that I am not awfully interested in a future where sickness and pain are as prevalent as they have been in my past. I don't know exactly who I am talking to, but wouldn't you rather know that I'm in Heaven without a speck of pain, rather than watching me suffer through chemo, and then suffer through the rest of my "long" life?

These are not all the reasons that I have, but for the sake of space and time these are the three that I have chosen to share with you. I hope this helps. And, as always, I thank you for your continued prayers.

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. Selah. Our God is a God of salvation, and to God, the Lord, belongs escape from death." Psalm 68:19-20

First off, I have a very good excuse as to why this is late again. Two pretty good reasons actually. Number one would be that I am lazy, number two is that I am a procrastinator. So with that in mind, I am sure you all understand.

This week, like last, was pretty uneventful. It seems like we have sort of fallen into (or finally found) a routine that makes life a little uneventful, but a lot easier. We are still really busy most of the time. We are doing so many different treatments. Things for directly killing the cancer along with things for healing my spleen, healing my Lyme, preventing infection, and things just for general health and wellness. I don't know if I have said this yet in an update, but truly, if I didn't have Leukemia, I would be the healthiest I have been in years. You would not believe the amount of good nutrition I am getting every day. I would like to say that I will continue to eat like this and take care of myself in the same way when this is all over. I know that would be the smart thing to do. Unfortunately, I am not all that confident in my willpower.

This week (and I guess this whole time, I just noticed this week) God is really teaching me to accept the help of others and the fact that I can't do everything on my own. I have never been good at asking for help, and painfully, God is teaching me that it is my pride keeping me from it and not some holy desire not to bother others. So this week, as you pray for my continued healing, I ask that you also pray for my wounded pride as I learn this hard lesson.

We are all so thankful here at the Bontrager house that you all take the time to read this and to care, and most of all to pray.

We had another uneventful week; so don't expect any adventure or intrigue in this update. My spleen, though still enlarged, is getting smaller and smaller. I haven't had any pain in my spleen in weeks, and I am so thankful for that! But we still are working hard to get it to the size of a fist, as opposed to the size of my whole core. Right now we are in between those two. I guess if your spleen is healthy, you shouldn't be able to tell it is there at all by just feeling your stomach. So when that day comes, I will excitedly notify you all. Until then, please pray for my spleen as we continue to do all we know how to make it healthy again.

This week really was so uneventful; I am feeling bad about how short this update is going to be. But I mean it is an update, right, not a "Hadassah rambles for as long as people let her". And I think that in the interest of all parties concerned, we should keep it that way.

Pretty much, what we have been told is that once my platelets and hemoglobin stabilize and my bone marrow begins to produce them for itself, we will know that things are finally really turning around. So that is really what we are praying for and waiting for. Your prayers on that subject, as well as pretty much everything else about me, are so very, very greatly appreciated. Thank you all for all the encouragement and the love.

This week was one of the best for me in quite a long time. I got to go outside! Yesterday Mom and me took a walk up to camp and it was amazing! I realized that I hadn't been able to go outside or do any sort of activity since the beginning of December. And for me that is way too long! Although we had to walk slowly so I wouldn't get tired, taking in the spring air and getting my legs moving was so energizing.

For the past couple of days it had been nice but I had put off going out, always saying that I would go out tomorrow. Then finally, yesterday, even though I was tired and didn't feel like exerting myself, I made myself go. I decided that I would go, and when I got back, go into the hyperbaric chamber to take a nap. It was fifty degrees out and I didn't even need to wear a coat! By the time we got home from walking up to camp, I didn't even want to take a nap anymore. I was so energized I just wanted to go out and walk some more.

I am so happy that spring is finally here and I can look forward to more walks and finally get some sunshine! Even though it doesn't have much to do with my health, I couldn't help but think when I was out there, that it has got to be way easier to get well in the spring than in the winter. I have been inside and cooped up too long! It is good to know that the long winter is finally over!

So this week, though I still have concerns and issues, all I really can think of is how thankful I am for this beautiful weather.

This week, surprisingly, has been quite eventful. Not necessarily in a good way. This past week, there was a really bad sickness going around camp and, of course, Nemo brought it home. He was really sick for I think like five days. And when I say really sick, I mean *really* sick. You know there is a problem when Nemo takes a nap, and this boy was lying around all day for the first four days. The rest of us were scared of getting it, but I guess the fact that we had no interaction with him is what saved us for the time.

Unfortunately, the day or so after he started getting up and about, both Hannah and me started to get scratchy throats. Now with my compromised immune system, we have to be really careful with me getting sick. So right away, Mom started me on gargling some stuff and taking other stuff. And she called our natural guy. So thankfully, we got in with him two days later and he found out that I had strep. He gave us a homeopathic remedy for it and we started new and even grosser gargles.

Thankfully, as of now, six days since getting a scratch in my throat and four days since getting the remedy, I am feeling nothing but a tiny headache, a bit of congestion, and a little extra tiredness. I am so thankful that I never got very bad and we are all praying that I just continue to get better.

God has been so amazing in the way that he has taken care of so many sicknesses that have come my way. When your body has no way to fight a sickness, you know it must be God when it is all said and done and you are not sick anymore. (I think I said sick too many times there...redundancy.)

Anyway, though it is never fun to have sickness in the house, God has taken care of us just like he always does. Please continue to pray that this sickness will completely leave our house. And that flu season will end and spring will really come!

Thank you all so much for taking the time to care and to pray.

Dear God, I am giving you my nostrils. I don't know what is going to happen tonight, but you do and that is enough for me. Please help me to totally give everything up to you. I can't take trying to do things on my own any more. You know best, and I don't want to have to deal with it all anyway. You are so good that you are willing to take these things from us. I can't thank you enough. Now I pray for sleep. Lots of restful sleep while you watch over me.

Well, I think it must be time to journal. My handwriting is going to be terrible. So, I have been sick for the last three weeks and it has been a struggle to say the least. It has been super hard and every day just gets harder. I think God will see me through this, and if that happens, how much cooler is the story of God's victory. It really isn't all that bad, and I know that God will not hit me with more than I can handle. So, I am still of the persuasion that I am on a win/win path. But I guess I wasn't expecting anything this bad.

Hadassah Ruth Bontrager

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