



## **A GUY NAMED JOE**

“If we are going to live as disciples of Jesus, we have to remember that all efforts of worth and excellence are difficult.” Oswald Chambers. We must never forget that the Christian life is not going to be easy, but it is one worth living.

You don't always know when God is going to show up and what He is going to teach you along the way. Several years ago, God brought a friend back into our lives. Little did we know what an impact that would have on our lives? While working in Ukraine alongside Ross and Kasey God brought back in our lives a friend from the past. His name was Joe. We met him through his sister who was a member of our church while we were in Texas. We had been there when God called him to the mission field but had lost touch through the years and the moves to different churches.

Even though it has only been a few years God has taught me a lot through Joe's life and his commitment to God and his new home, Ukraine. Joe's passion for the people was incredible. Several years ago, Joe found out he had cancer. It was at an advance stage and not the kind that had a good success rate. His prayer (and ours) was to be cured so he could return to the people and the country he called home. God answered this prayer. God also opened so many doors for work to touch and change lives.

One thing you need to know about Joe's life is the heart break that haunted him the past several years. Joe lived in Donetsk, the city where the war in Ukraine started. He watched the first protest from his apartment window. As things escalated, he was forced to leave the city and people he had spent years serving. His heart broke as the conflict turned into war. People fled the city in droves, leaving everything behind. A region that once housed close to a million people soon lost in some estimates of two thirds of its population. Like Joe they

scattered across the country. The world as he knew it was gone. Joe would spend these next years connecting with people he would meet that were from the region. He also started making trips back into the region and brought supplies and encouragement to the churches who stayed so that they could continue to share the Gospel with the people. Many times the journey was difficult and dangerous but the message and help was more important. He was even able to help provide temporary grocery stores to villages which had none now due to the war. The people were so appreciative that they even named one of the stores after him.

Joe's cancer returned this year and he had to come back to the states for treatment. This past weekend he met his Savior face to face.

I learned that no matter what circumstances we go through God still has a plan. We may not like what we are going through, and we may not like the outcome of the circumstances but that doesn't matter. Even through terrible situations God can still work and draw people to Himself. God opened so many doors and so many lives were changed because of the war. It didn't mean that it didn't hurt but we should continue to seek Him and what He is doing. If not, not only do we miss the blessing but so do others.

Our lives have been turned upside down and we have no idea when it will end or what it will look like on the other side. The one thing I do know is serving God and following Him is worth so much more than my wants and wishes. The best thing I can do is allow His desires to become my desires.

*Randall*

## **SHOE BOXES**

We have some good news! At a time when we're struggling with all the crazy things happening around us and wondering what the future will look like, Franklin Graham has an encouraging message to us

about our mission to share Jesus with the world through Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes. Packing boxes is still ON! We WILL be packing shoeboxes this year, regardless of covid-19. Things may well look different with socially distanced packing of the boxes and there is no promise that the boxes will indeed be taken to the warehouses in November/December for sorting like normal but the mission of sharing Jesus is, indeed, still on. In fact, as Mr. Graham stated in a video this week, the time may well be short, and we need to use the time God gives us to be about the mission of sharing Jesus. We'll need help from all; from those who donate money to purchase items, those who donate the items themselves and, especially this year, we'll need those who are already going into stores to shop who are willing to pick up things that are needed (like school supplies) as they go on sale! You can let the office or us know if you are willing to go shopping as we get donations in and we'll send you a list of what is on sale or what you can look for to get on sale! I LOVE Operation Christmas time of the year!

*Patricia*

## **OPPORTUNITY TO BLESS**

Our goal to provide gift cards for our police officers was \$20 a piece at a minimum. \$25 would have been great but as always, our church doesn't settle for great, the standard is "incredible". You all raised enough for \$50 per officer. You are amazing. The cards will be delivered today (Tuesday) and your encouragements and blessings will be shared!

### **BRO. TOMMY'S NEW SERMON SERIES**

#### **From Breakdown to Breakthru**

July 12: **Breaking Thru in My Fitness**

July 19: **Breaking Thru in My Field**

July 26: **Breaking Thru in My Fruitfulness**

August 2: **Breaking Thru in My Future**