

(Background: Jeff had just lost his business of 20+ years that he built from the ground up. He was spiritually, physically, emotionally and mentally exhausted. He had come to the end of himself. Feelings of despair from losing his business, worry for the future and how to support his family, as well as an inability to focus in the midst of all the anxiety simply overwhelmed him.

A friend invited him to one of our men's bible discussion groups. With his mind beginning to focus on Jesus and through the encouragement of family and friends the Lord began bringing him out of the darkness. The following email he wrote to his family, the friend who invited him to the discussion group and Pastor Moe after just a few weeks of being in the group. Since then he has remained faithful to the bible discussion group, was offered an incredible job out of the blue, and the power, love and joy evident in Jeff is beyond beautiful. The Father is so very good!!

Enjoy Jeff's incredible testimony, written at a time where he said he was unable even to write a resume because of anxiety!)

His Grace...

Our heavenly Father is working in my life and heaping gifts of peace and joy on me so fast that I can hardly keep up. My prayer time this morning was filled entirely with expression of thankfulness... for the fire doing its work in me over the past weeks and for the blessings He has provided so generously and so soon in this journey. That this could be my spirit less than 8 weeks from my darkest days marks a miracle so striking to me. As I prayed this morning I did not have an impulse to ask for anything. How could I have so far to go yet be so satisfied in this moment? God has shown up for me in such a big way and the answer to those prayers today was that I ought to share...

On September 10 a paragraph from my devotion read, "There is a divine mystery in suffering, one that has a strange and supernatural power and has never been completely understood by human reason. No one has ever developed a deep level of spirituality or holiness without experiencing a great deal of suffering. When a person who suffers reaches a point where he can be calm and carefree, inwardly smiling at his own suffering, and \*\*no longer asking God to be delivered from it\*\*, then the suffering has accomplished its blessed ministry, perseverance has finished its work, and the Crucifixion has begun to weave itself into a crown." Sep 10 would have been a few days before executing the final agreement that gave me closure for the future of my company and the beginning of the end of my relationship with it, and ushered in a new personal, professional, and family struggle of life change and unknown. This was a crowded time, filled with the busy work of completing and negotiating a sound agreement in a very short time. My mind, body, and spirit were depleted to the point of brokenness. By this time, I had begun to take steps in faith, knowing from memory of the Spirit's past work in me that hearing Him again was my only way forward. While I could understand this logically, my mind and heart were noisy places where His voice had been drowned out. His work had begun, but it was too soon for me to believe I could have the spirit described in this devotion, expect it, look forward to it. It was not too soon, though, for me to be challenged to pray for it, to work to believe it.

Day by day, bit by bit, through the good and bad days since. He has rewarded my steps with faith to take new steps. New steps have been rewarded with measures of grace and peace. Gradual healing of body and mind have given me a stronger, longer stride to these steps which in turn have been rewarded with more grace, more peace. Particularly in the last couple of weeks, more so in the last

week, and especially today I am realizing that the measures of grace and peace have outnumbered the measures of fear and worry. In fact, on this day the fear and worry are nowhere to be found... they'll be back, and there is much healing and uncertainty to be dealt with, but I know now that these spiritual gifts have grown despite the bad days... and there have been some of our most difficult moments in the past week. Praise God! His ways are resilient to our greatest trials. It appears our knowledge of His strength is proportional to the greatest trial we have yet faced... would be easier if it weren't this way, but I am thankful for the rewards however they come.

Your prayers and encouragement have instructed me and anticipated this specifically. I am so thankful for those prayers and encouragement and for God's work in your lives that you could believe this when I couldn't.

Chris and I look forward to your continued prayers and encouragement. Our family also faces its greatest trial and hungers for the same gifts. Our Lord will provide.

Jeff