



THE
GIFT
FROM
HEAVEN

Mauricio A. Rodriguez
as told to
Robert Hunt

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my mom Lucila. You are and have always been an example to us all of God's unconditional love. Your faith taught me to believe that with God nothing is impossible. Thank you for always believing in me when I didn't believe in myself. You've taught me to fight and to never give up. And, no matter how high the mountain was, you always made it easy to climb. Thank you for leading me to the only ONE who could heal all the broken pieces of my life. I would not have a story to tell if it wasn't for your love and encouragement. You are and will always be my hero. Mom, you're my gift from heaven and I love you with all my heart.

*“Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all.”*

Proverbs 31:29

Mauricio A. Rodriguez

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By Mauricio A. Rodriguez as told to Robert Hunt
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FOREWARD

Mauricio is a miracle. And truth is better than fiction! This graphically riveting account of my friend's life journey has it all. Not even the most creative of imaginations could have crafted the collision of tragedy and human failure found in the pages of this story with the amazing and hope-filled outcome which unfolds.

The stark realities of humanity's worst moments found in this true narrative are shocking. But they're contrasted dramatically with the breakthrough of love and miraculous divine intervention.

Having served as a pastor in numerous countries and having traveled thousands of miles to speak at conferences, I've been privileged to meet a broad cross-section of people. Without exception, the people I've known have always wondered about their life's value and purpose. This story offers tangible proof that every person's life has a good and godly design to it, no matter the circumstance. Mauricio's life proves it.

With enthusiasm, I recommend you read the following pages. In them you'll find yourself, like I found myself, not only engrossed in this first-person account, but interacting with numerous personal experiences which could have redemptive outcomes much like Mauricio's.

*Jim Tolle, Pastor
The Church On The Way
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Los Angeles, CA*

THE GIFT FROM HEAVEN

The huge tree stood alone like a monument to time. Its visitor sat comfortably between the immense roots that grew out from the tree's trunk. He understood how someone might come here to seek its refuge in a time of need.

Few can visit the exact spot where they are brought into this world. Even less, to a place where their birth intersected with death.

After a time of thanksgiving, the visitor rose from the very place of his beginning to declare to the enemy who nearly took his life, "I'm here twenty-five years later! You didn't get away with it. I'm stronger than ever!" His firm voice trailed off into the still forest.



Everyone knew my secret but me.

I didn't notice the whispers until I got older. In the town of Estelí, Nicaragua all were friends, or so I thought. They affectionately called me "mi Niño," my child, taking a

communal pride in my protection. I could walk anywhere and feel safe.

Hazy images of dusty streets and windowless houses were my earliest memories. Small rooms always seemed filled with extended family, my over-protective mother and three older sisters. We had the basics. I learned later we were poor, but I never wanted for anything.

A civil war raged in Nicaragua. Sandinistas killing Contras; Contras killing Sandinistas. People dying for living on the wrong side of the road, or knowing the wrong people. My mother feared for the lives of my three sisters. Young girls were constantly taken by force, raped, or worse.

So my mom pleaded with the American embassy to allow us to come to America. They denied her request. However, the Mexican embassy agreed to our entry. Our journey led us to the city of Tijuana and eventually to Los Angeles. It was probably an adventure worth recounting, but I have no memories of it.



“Why don’t you feed that baby?” The elderly neighbor shouted in Spanish at the teenage mother who lived in a shack across the field. Days of listening to the infant’s screaming wore on the old woman.

“I don’t want to!” was the absurd reply. The baby’s cries became less frequent. In time, the village became quiet. No one recalled ever seeing the baby from that point on.

A year or so later she was pregnant again.



My first memories in America are of church. I loved to worship God. It felt as natural as breathing. The experience was only heightened by the sun streaming through the stained glass windows framing the sanctuary. Angelus Temple, built in the 1920s, reflected a certain architectural reverence, warmed both by the people and presence of God.

God was my Father, and not in some theological way. I felt Him. I saw Him in the sky, as most children do. I later learned the Bible described Him affectionately as “Abba” or

“Daddy” in the original language. He could be called upon anytime, and I called often.

The only unnatural part of my young life revolved around a short, squat man my sisters called “uncle.” Years of working in the fields helped to harden his frame and darken his skin. He seemed to lurk, never really part of my world. Yet, I was told to call him dad. The term dad, in an earthly way, had no meaning for me, so I obediently complied. I knew he was the son of my grandmother, the brother to my mother. He would come and go, rarely acknowledging my existence. At first, it didn’t bother me, but then I started to go to school and learned from my friends that dads were more than shadows.

Other kids bragged about their dads taking them to the park, playing baseball, and eating ice cream. I’d feel a surge of envy when I saw their dads picking them up from school while I waited for my mother.

One day, I wanted to be able to tell my friends something they sometimes said to me. “I can’t play with you today. . . my dad is taking me to the park.”

So I waited for the man I called “dad” to come by. When he did arrive, I asked him to take me to the park and buy me

ice cream. After all, dads do those kinds of things. Much to my naïve delight, he agreed.



The young woman, feeling the pain stirring in her womb, walked slowly to the field. A huge tree stood alone, inviting the woman to lean against its ample trunk. Two enormous roots provided a place to sit between, rest her arms, and grip with her hands.

No one remembers hearing the young woman cry out from under the tree. She probably gave birth like she endured her life, with a stoic indifference.



Although time with my dad at the park was scheduled for noon, I awoke at 7:00 a.m., ready to go. I stuffed my Superman backpack with favorite toys, imagining what fun this magical day would be. My mom, still in bed called out,

“Hijo go back to bed – it’s early!” But I waited in the narrow stairway of our apartment. The anticipation distorted time.

Noon came and went. I barely noticed my mom’s attempts to coax me back into the apartment. “He’s going to come,” I repeated with less certainty every hour.

By 7:00 p.m., with my backpack still on my back, I gave up. To this day, I remember everything, from the pattern of the cracked paint on the hallway walls, to the seizures of different emotions. I’d love to forget it all.



What happened next, no one knows for sure. The woman, with her newborn baby in her arms and umbilical cord still attached, walked towards the outhouse that two families shared. What she did next horrified even a village of people well-acquainted with tragedy.



“Something happened. He’ll apologize.” Her words bounced off me like bullets on the Superman that adorned the pack I still held close to my chest.

Mom only desired to protect my heart, not wanting the hate to seep in. She was unsuccessful. I cried myself to sleep.

Dad never called, and he never apologized. However, the most tragic thing that happened that day was the death of a child’s faith. In my young mind, my dad’s betrayal became God’s rejection. It didn’t happen all in one day, but it began as my tears stopped, and my heart slowly hardened.

I continued to believe in God, but He became increasingly a distant object that I couldn’t feel. His warmth no longer felt from the sun, His face not seen in the sky, or His presence hovering in the wind.



The young woman, bloodied by the birth, stood inside the outhouse holding her baby. Her mother had finally joined her. What goes on in the mind and heart of someone about to do the

unthinkable? Maybe a dull mindless motion takes over. A detachment from feelings or fears.

She let her tiny baby leave her hands and fall into the foul, fetid hole.

Instead of the expected silence, screams of an injured baby must have rose deep from the bowels of the hole causing mother and daughter to search for rocks to throw and cover their crime. When quiet came they turned their backs and walked away.



I hated my “dad.” Despite my mom and grandmother’s insistences, I quit calling him that. He’d come to their birthdays, but never mine. When I’d see him coming, I’d find the nearest exit.

As a teenager, I rebelled. Yet, I did my best to keep all the feelings locked up inside so I wouldn’t hurt my mom. I’d drink, but the thought of turning out like my father sobered me. My grandmother always said to me, “Guard your heart, and respect him.” But, I’d reply under my breath, “My dad’s dead.”

At school, during Father’s Day, I’d make my fantasy a temporary reality when asked about my father.

“He’s dead,” usually ended the paternal questioning.



The young boys of the village picked up rocks and dead tree branches, making their way to the field. In Nicaragua, baseball is a passion. Too poor to buy baseballs, bats, and gloves, they used rocks, branches, and bare hands. Between shouts and the sounds of the game, a faint cry was heard. They all went to explore.

What filled their ears didn’t make sense. Why the sounds from the bottom of the outhouse? One of the boys ran to get his parents, reaching his mother, Rachael, known by everyone as Roque. She immediately thought her own 3-year-old had fallen in. “Oh my God, my baby.” Not until she found her little boy secure in his bed did she run to the field.



As a teenager, we made the pilgrimage to Nicaragua. Though America was home, this small Central American country still held a warm place in my mom and sister's hearts. I just came along for the adventure.

When walking down a dusty road or entering a small store, I'd catch people looking at me and whispering amongst themselves. "That's the baby," they would say. It didn't make sense. But, for some reason, I didn't ask why.

While staying in Estelí, I overheard an argument between my mom and one of her brothers. "Don't tell him. It will destroy him." I didn't want to ask, but I knew something wasn't right.

When we got back to the States, I asked my oldest sister, "What are you all hiding from me?" Instead of answering, she yelled out what seemed to be some predetermined phrase, "Mom, it's time." Like an intervention, I was immediately surrounded by family members with faces full of the kind of looks that you see in a hospital emergency room.

There we all sat, no one talking, in our tiny living room. My mom broke the awkward silence with a saying she repeated often to me. "You are a gift from Heaven." She proceeded to tell me the truth about my life.

Soon, her words began to numb my mind like a bad fever. Hearing that everything was a lie. My mom wasn't my real mother. My sisters aren't really my sisters. Learning that my birth mother tried to kill me.

I breathed slowly and deeply trying to keep it inside. It didn't work. We all just cried.



They all converged at the outhouse. A man immediately tied a rope around his waist and climbed down the hole. Roque got on her bare knees holding onto the rope with every ounce of strength her diminutive frame could muster. The man discovered a newborn baby facing upward, stranded on a piece of wood, saved from the liquid that would have inevitably filled his tiny lungs. One of the boys cried out that he had thrown a piece of wood in the hole yesterday, simultaneously claiming some credit and relaying his confession. Roque struggled to pull the man up

from the hole as he carefully held the baby in one hand secure against his chest and held the rope in the other. Emerging, he gasped for clean air and handed the newborn to her.

The baby, dazed, cut, and covered in drying blood, struggled to breathe. The man wondered out loud what had just happened and why so many large rocks were thrown inside the pit. Was this an accident? How long had the baby been there?

Roque tenderly wrapped the infant with a towel, not noticing her own blood streaming from her knees. "This baby is starving," she said to no one in particular. He must eat, she thought.



Why, God? Why did you let this happen? You should have let me die in that outhouse! With every unanswered plea to God, depression mixed deeper with rage. But it wasn't the revelations that brought on all the self pity. It was the other "parent" in my life.

Even after he knew I had found out the truth, "Dad" continued to deny that he was my father. I naively thought that this horrible truth exposed would force him to drop the

machismo and embrace me as his son. It was an unfulfilled fantasy.

Slipping into a deep depression, I thought I could hide from everyone. But my family became increasingly worried. Every time someone suggested that I see a counselor or psychologist, my mom would emphatically say, "No. God will be his counselor!" It wasn't that she distrusted counseling, but more that she believed all of this as God's plan.

One day, my running conversations with God took a different tone. I chose to lay down my hurt to listen. And God talked.

I understand how some people must look at those who claim that God speaks to them. But, if God is our Father, why would He not speak to His children?



Since there were only two families that shared the outhouse, Roque knew who had just given birth. Motivated, both by a desire to see the baby fed and the question of how this could have happened, she walked to the shack, baby in her arms. A young,

but gaunt, woman slowly emerged after a flurry of knocking and shouting only to stare at the still bloodied, bundled baby. “Why did you do this?” Roque asked, holding the baby up for the young woman to see. She didn’t wait for the answer. “You need to feed him!”

“Why did you take him out? You should have left him down there.” The young woman’s confession left Roque cold, still not wanting to believe this was intentional. Looking at the baby with contempt, the young woman declared, “I don’t want him.”

Roque recovered to implore, “He’s your son. He’s starving. You need to take care of him.” Reluctantly, the young woman took him into her arms. Roque left worrying that she had done a terrible thing. “She wouldn’t try to kill him again, would she?” The very thought caused her heart to race.



With everything I know to be real, God asked me to do what I believed to be the impossible. He might as well have asked me to raise the dead.

Instead, He clearly said deep to my soul, “I need you to go seek her.”

I knew instantly he was referring to my birth mother, the person I only referred to as “that woman.” God wasn’t finished.

“Tell her that I forgive her, and that I love her.”

For the next six months, I said “no” to God. But, the voice in my heart kept calling me to go. So one ordinary day, I finally relented; mom, sisters, aunts, and uncles – we all would go to that place to see that woman.

In some strange way, forgiving my birth mother came easier than forgiving my “Dad.” I rationalized that she must have been mentally ill or experienced post-partum syndrome. I didn’t know. But, “Dad?” He just didn’t want anything to do with me. Rejection by a parent, in any form, shakes that deep part of you.

Maybe this trip would close at least one chapter. I daydreamed of a thousand scenarios of how it would all work out.



The young woman, baby in her arms, walked slowly to her agitated mother. Immediately, the old woman acted to eliminate the problem. She took the child to a relative of the baby's father.

When she arrived with the crying baby she sarcastically exclaimed, "I have a gift for you." Her next words were less disingenuous. "We don't want him. His father is your nephew and you decide what to do with him."

Mercifully, the baby's aunt took the still-starving and dehydrated infant into her arms. After a two-hour bus journey to the nearest hospital, the woman finally got the baby help. While doctors attended to the infant's injuries, she called her sister, the mother of the baby's father.

Her sister responded as quickly as she could, taking her daughter, Lucila, along for the long trek. They both knew this child, having escaped death, could tragically end up in the clutches of the government. As they walked on the dirt road toward the bus stop Lucila proclaimed to her mother, "If they ask, 'Do you want him?' say 'yes' and I will raise him." Hopefully, she added, "We will let my brother know about this baby and I'm sure he will help us."



Down a winding dirt road we drove. Dust covered the rows of tiny homes with no doors or windows. I brought my birth mother a Bible and held it tight. I rehearsed in my mind what I wanted to say, but all the emotion distracted my thinking.

When we came to the house, the family spilled out. Uncles and aunts first, followed by my mom and sisters. One aunt called into the house asking if anyone was home.

My heart was pounding. Sweat rolled down my forehead toward the pit in my stomach.

An old lady emerged from the dark of the room. She insisted we enter the house and wait; her daughter would be there any minute.

I scanned the walls. Everything in the home was old, either covered in a thick film of dust, or grease from the cooking. A few photos of family hung alongside the requisite painting of the Virgin Mary. A smell, I still can't properly describe, joined us in the room. We all just sat quiet, looking

down, around, but not at each other. A few minutes seemed as hours.

The sounds from the doorway caused all our eyes to shift. She walked in. Emaciated and slightly stooped over with black hair falling straight to the sides of her gaunt face, she stopped in the middle of the room. We locked eyes. Instinctively, we all rose. I held my Bible like a life jacket on a sinking ship. “Mi hijo, my son” she exclaimed, while manufacturing a smile. She came towards me.



Back in the village, word spread quickly of the horrific crime. Families were literally dirt poor, but loving their children held the highest value.

The government officials, alerted by the hospital, refused to relinquish control. The newborn faced a life of foster care in the teeming city of Managua.

Both the grandmother and her determined daughter fought. After seventeen days in the hospital, authorities granted

temporary custody to Lucila under close supervision. A year later, they were granted full custody.

When Lucila held the baby in her arms for the first time, she prayed many prayers, but one she would never forget. “Lord, when he finds out what happened, have him turn to You. So the devil won’t destroy the plans You have for his life.” She knew that God had great purpose for this emaciated bundle she named Mauricio.



The many scenarios I had rehearsed in my mind failed me. I thought her words “mi hijo” were what I longed to hear. But they fell empty. I suppose I wanted something more. A tear or head bowed in shame.

Instead, she just smiled, looking at me. My face flushed with adrenaline. In shock, I managed to say something. It was one of my rehearsal statements, awkward, but all that I could muster in the moment.

“The reason I’m here is to tell you that I forgive you.” Her smile now seemed inappropriate, but it continued as I

did. "And that God loves you, and He has a plan not only for my life, but for yours." I gave her the Bible. "What's in there is the reason I'm here," I said pointing to my gift for her.

Her smile was gone. The silence enveloped the room like the dust. I was waiting for something, anything resembling an apology. Mercifully, my mom ended the awkwardness. "Let's go."

Before we left, I hugged her. It seemed like the right thing to do. My aunts, like secret service agents, escorted me to the car. They knew the moment fell short of what we all expected, probably because we hadn't known what to expect.

They told me that they had never seen a better example of God's love. Years later, when they became believers, they would confess, "We didn't understand then why you did what you did. Why would a 15-year-old do this? Now we do."



Days of unrelenting rain had kept Lucila and her 2-year-old boy Mauricio on the opposite side of a swollen river away from home and her three daughters.

With her son in her arms, she slogged down the muddy road until coming to the bridge. Rising river water spilled onto the bridge. Only the bigger trucks dared to cross.

She stood wondering if she would need to turn back, when a truck pulled alongside her to offer them a ride. With the truck cab already full of people Lucila and Mauricio would have to ride in back. She carefully lifted her son onto the open bed still holding tightly to his arm.

As she stepped up on the bumper, the jerk from the truck's clutch knocked Lucila from the bed and into the rushing water. The little boy was immediately swallowed into the black water. She held on, pulling him up by his tiny wrist. But the heavy current pushed them both toward the raging river. Holding Mauricio in her arms, being dragged to their death, Lucila screamed a plea for help.

As if the angels had been summoned, seemingly from nowhere, people descended upon the stranded mother and son, pulling them from their watery grave. They eventually arrived at home to find it filled with family and people attending a Bible

study taught by her grandmother's sister. Lucila felt safe and grateful. Her God had intervened once again in the life of her son. With the sound of heavy rain, and the words from scripture filling the room, Lucila decided to follow Christ forever. She would never be the same.



If only life could be edited like a feel-good Hollywood movie. We could all be Rocky running up the stairs of the Philadelphia Museum of Art with arms raised. As the author of the best selling-book "The Road Less Traveled" stated in his initial two sentences, "Life is difficult. This is a great truth, one of the greatest truths." He goes on to qualify, "Life is a series of problems. Do we want to moan about them, or solve them?"

His question is profound. I think that our prayers are often just moans disguised as spiritual petitions. I moan too often to God. He patiently listens, just like most earthly fathers, but sometimes He'll ask me, "Do you want to solve the problems?" I hate it when He asks that. Especially

when it has to do with a deep pain that has taken up residence in my heart.

"Talk to him." I knew that voice, and I knew who He was referring to – unfortunately.

I initially began the bargaining process after a terse "no." I reminded Him that I'd done this before with my birth mother. But, He persisted and expounded, "He needs to come to me." I dug in my proverbial heels protesting with a moan. "Look at it through my eyes God." As if God would temporarily suspended His omniscience just for me.

So deep is the bond between Father and Son that it originates in that mystery called the Godhead. It is at the core of everything that matters in this universe. No mathematical equation can comprehend it, yet a child knows in his guts when it is missing.

It is our fathers who mirror for us the wonder of grace, the need for discipline, the touch of love. They point us to God.

I never got that, and I'm surely not the only one. Statistics betray the ugly truth of millions like me.

Fortunately, many have a mother, like I do, who stood in the breach.

But every child needs a dad.



At age twenty-five, Mauricio felt the need to return again to Nicaragua. He wasn't sure why. He only knew that he wanted to visit an orphanage. Upon arrival in Managua, he drove immediately to his destination. Barely out of his rental car, Mauricio watched a little girl come running up to him. "Are you my daddy?"

Lupita was the cutest little girl he had ever seen, calling him "daddy" throughout his stay. Not knowing what to say, do, or even feel, he simply hugged her, and held her hand during the tour of the orphanage. Conflicted emotions aside, he desperately wanted to take her home. He knew, however, it wasn't possible.

The Foursquare orphanage excelled in loving its children, most of whom had been abused in some horrific way, many even sold for drugs, like young Hector. Hector's jet black hair framed a face that betrayed too much pain for a 12-year old. Quiet,

reserved, he immediately caught Mauricio's attention. They sat down to talk. Because Hector could relate to Mauricio's story, he listened intently to his new American friend.

"Hector, your parents abandoned you, and I don't know why." Mauricio said in response to Hector's simple question, "Why?" Actually, Mauricio knew Hector had been sold three times by his parents for drugs. "You may never know why," he continued. Hector soaked in every word. "But this I know. God has never abandoned you."

Then finally coming from his own personal pain, "If anything, we abandoned Him."

Tough words to deliver to a 12-year-old orphan, but Mauricio knew that even 12-year-old hearts can grow cold. "He is always there for you. Hector, you have a future. God has plans for you."

He does for us all.



People have told me that he looks a lot like me. I've never seen it, maybe I didn't want to. But, as he stood across from me, I couldn't escape the resemblance.

“Dad, can I talk to you?” I hadn’t called him Dad for years. We walked outside, while I mentally rehearsed my “opening statement.”

I began with words that in retrospect probably just put him on the immediate defensive. “I don’t want to have this conversation when you are ninety and dying in a hospital bed.” I thought this would get his attention. If not, maybe my next statement would.

“I want to start by asking you to forgive me for hating you.” He looked down, quiet, as I spoke. What I would say next sounds strangely disconnected from the heart, because it was. I spoke from sheer obedience to my Father’s request. “I want you to know the doors to my heart and my house will always be open when you are ready to come in.” I couldn’t see any change of expression on his lowered face.

Finally, he lifted his head, slightly raising and pushing back his slumped shoulders. “I love all my children.” Nothing more was said.



Every Christmas, the workers of the Foursquare orphanage in Managua ask the children in Managua what they want for Christmas. This could be risky to ask, because they know the children’s options for gifts are limited. Maybe a pair of socks, a shirt, or candy. Yet, they ask already knowing the answer. It’s the same response every year, from nearly every child. “I want a mom and a dad.” It’s the hope held tight in the hearts of Lupita and Hector. It still is.



After speaking to my dad, I experienced what the Bible describes as a “peace that passes all understanding,” come over me. It was my Abba again. He smiled at me. I sensed His favor. The little boy, and the young man in me, all at once filled with holy presence.

Like the great mathematician Pascal, who wrote in his journal after an encounter with the Holy Spirit, “Joy, joy, joy, joy unspeakable joy,” God’s joy fell on me. Only to be reinforced by the words that came next from my Abba. “I’m proud of you, son.”

My conversation with Abba wasn't finished. I still desperately wanted those words, to hear "I'm sorry." Why? That empty spot in my soul cried out for it, demanding justice, unwilling to compromise.

"Father, they both abandoned me. They both rejected me." At least one of them could have apologized. The firm hand of Abba reached across my shoulders. "Let it go." He repeated Himself. "Let it go." "Because I am your Father. I've never left you or abandoned you. I was with you from your first day."

The Father's words took root in my soul. "...your first day." It was my Abba who followed the young woman walking with her newborn to the outhouse. He knew her pain, inside and out. He grieved over her choice. He pleaded with her, but her heart was too wounded to listen. So He sent His angels to hover over the baby, to keep watch, to protect it from the rocks, from falling into the pit.

"For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."



"This is such a beautiful place," Mauricio said to Roque, failing to grasp the irony. She didn't. "Do you know what you are saying?" She began to cry.

The enormous tree still stood alone. Giant branches offered shade from the relentless sun. Its roots rose up from the ground presenting a footstool for its visitors.

Twenty-five years had not been kind to Roque's body, but her mind remained sharp. She remembered, in detail, the day she heard the faint cry of a baby, and how she held on to the rope. She pointed to the scars she bore on both knees.

As they walked from the tree to the outhouse, she told Mauricio that God had answered her prayers. With only six months to live, according to her doctors, she asked one last thing of Him – to meet the baby she helped to save.

Together they wept.



I believe God chooses us. He spends all our lives choosing us. Somewhere in between, we need to learn to choose Him.

The day after Abba spoke to me, I had to choose. I chose to believe that Jesus died for my birth mother, and for my dad. Abba loves that woman. He adores my "Dad."

Accepting that freed me. It's liberation from hate, self-hate, and rejection. But I can only live in that knowledge when I throw myself into the arms of a Christ who loves beyond my comprehension. It's in this place that I can choose to let go of the kind of hurt that destroys destinies.

Brennan Manning, a former Franciscan priest, recovering alcoholic, and best-selling author, wrote this from the depths of his experience:

"Until the love of God that knows no boundary, limit, or breaking point is internalized through personal decision; until the furious longing of God seizes the imagination; until the heart is conjoined to the mind through sheer grace, nothing happens."

It's so much easier to remain numb through life. Coming to grips with God's deep love for us and for those we despise, well, that's much harder. We all find it easier to believe in

God than to choose to allow that same God to consume us with His love. It begins and ends with knowing, experiencing God as Abba. That is His gift to us, sending His Son Jesus, so that we might know Him deeper, more than some absentee father sitting in the clouds.

May His will, which is to love us all, be done on earth, as it is above. He is our gift from heaven. He is my Abba.



THE GIFT FROM HEAVEN:

A Personal Message to You

You may not know your father or mother, or both. You may be young and yearning for the words, “I love you” from a parent that has abandoned you, literally or emotionally. You may even be a grandparent who never knew the embrace of a father or mother. Even in your old age, you catch yourself still yearning for that missing love and acceptance. You fear that you have passed down to your children the hurt you knew as a child. You see it in the eyes of your grandchildren. So much of our pain, even as adults, stems from our broken hearts caused by parents with broken hearts. This curse of generations plagues every town, city, and nation.

It is a curse that can be broken. Its effect can be reversed. Healing is possible. God has given us the power to choose to love again, even when the love of a parent is taken from us.

How? God has first chosen us, adopted us as His own. You and I. He is the Father to the fatherless. Our Abba. “...*He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good*

pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:4-6)

Let me share again the verse from the Bible that has sustained me in my darkest time:

“For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

God chose us, adopted us as His sons and daughters. He accepts us, thinking thoughts of peace towards us, wanting us to have a blessed future full of hope.

So, why do so many fail to live that life of peace and hope? Why is there such despair and hopelessness?

Though God has chosen us, we fail to acknowledge such great mercy. We never open the free, amazing gift of grace He is offering humanity every second of every hour since the Resurrection.

Further on in the letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul writes:

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in

trespasses, made us alive together in Christ (by grace you have been saved).” (Ephesians 2:4,5)

Paul goes on to unlock the mystery of the ages. Jesus Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection opened the door to all to receive eternal life (and love) by faith (a choice) through God’s grace not our attempts to be, or do, good.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8,9)

Can you imagine a beautifully wrapped gift given to you by your dad or mom at Christmas? They present it to you, letting you know it is given at great cost. They wait for you to open it, anticipating your joy. But, something distracts you. You walk away and you never actually open the gift. Though it has been given to you freely, out of love, you never really receive it.

We must all open this gift of grace, which is the forgiveness of our sin and the restoration of relationship with our Heavenly Father, by faith. Faith in what Jesus did on the cross, faith in the fact that Jesus is the only “way, the truth, and the life” and that “no one comes to the Father, but by Me (Jesus).” Faith in the forgiveness of our sins.

Opening the gift of grace is only the beginning. For those of us who decide to follow Christ as not only our Savior, but as our Lord, we must continually walk in the same grace we received at the beginning of our “rebirth.”

Later on in the Ephesians’ letter, Paul gives us a Spirit-inspired insight as to how we might walk in faith and not fear.

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:16-19)

“To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.” That kind of love is known in the heart, it’s not merely acknowledged in the mind as a fact or belief.

It is receiving by faith this great gift of love that fills the gaping void left by the lack of parental love. It is the only thing that will heal the wound of abandonment and rejection.

I choose to open this gift daily. Even when I feel like walking toward other things that might temporarily fill the void, I know that nothing sustains me like Abba's love.

No other relationship, no drug or alcohol, no money or power can replace that which we yearn for from the depths of our being. I am free from self-hatred, pride or fear, and can simply talk to my Father:

Dear Lord,

I receive daily your free gift of grace in my life. More than anything the world can give, I desire to know the love of Christ which passes all human understanding.

I choose to follow you, my Abba. Fill my heart and mind with your great love, so that I might live in a way that pleases you.

Thank you for breaking the curse of sin, rejection, and abandonment in my life. Help me to be a reflection of your grace to those who need to know the truth that will set them free.

I pray this in Jesus' name,

Amen

*May we open
this gift from heaven
every day for the rest
of our lives.*



**Mauricio at the place
of his birth**



The outhouse



Mauricio with Roque
(above)
and his family (right)



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This small book is meant to be a gift; first to yourself, and then to be passed on to another. Because every one of us needs to be reminded that our life is a journey with purpose.

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