

Cahill Family Newsletter - 2017

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope...

Romans 5:3-4

Last year we sent out a very real letter on the struggles that life was handing us. As the new year started we embraced the word hope, and although change doesn't

happen overnight, it is encouraging to see that the spiral downward has changed into a slow climb back up. A 13 week marriage class provided opportunity to work through some of the issues that had grown large. Not every conversation was enjoyable and some dates were less than romantic, but progress was made as trust began to be restored. If you are interested in the nitty-gritty of 10 years into married life, you can read our testimony on the blog. The upshot was that we liked each other enough to celebrate our 11th anniversary with a trip to Petit Jean State Park. The kids were parceled out to three different families while we spent five days wonderfully alone and free of responsibility.

Brian's big project of the year was a jump into home automation. Last winter he rigged the fireplace to replace the central heat. This spring and summer were spent experimenting with ventilation. Larger fans and ducts were installed in the bathrooms and kitchen, and a garage door opener was rigged to

bring in replacement air. He designed a custom program to monitor sensors and automate the ventilation. At work, Brian took IT classes in SCRUM and Amazon Web Services and added a certification to his resume.

When not playing technology nerd, Brian becomes yard man, carpenter and deal finder. He sold the mini van and took on car mechanics when the water pump on the big van went out. In his spare time, he put together a management plan for the private road we live on. This provided an opportunity for the whole family to walk up and down the road and meet all the neighbors.

Amy started out her year creatively integrating an infant into the household routines. Baby feedings became story time as Amy read a number of "Little House" books aloud to the kids. Nap times strategically coincided with school and every evening one lucky sibling could get out of dish duty to play with baby "G." Amy also took on a new learning challenge following Brian's desire to eliminate processed food. The work of re-creating menus and cooking from scratch was often daunting, but several tasty alternatives resulted. Summer break was spent organizing the house, filling up the new closet Brian built, and planning school. Memorization of the "lion's den" passage and participation in a cousin "Fiery Furnace" movie set the stage for a fall Daniel Bible study (both can be watched on the blog).



**Blue Bell Fun Run
Kids 1 mile / Parents 5K**



**Brian crafts dining table
from restaurant booths**



**Ice in January
and snow
in December!**





Breadmaking 101

and higher worm risk for the goats. Having lost an animal the last two years to this scourge, Brian strung up new fences to enable pasture rotation. Our efforts were rewarded with healthy animals and we expect all four does to kid next year! The next problem to tackle was a diminishing egg count due to aging flock and predators. Coons raided, snakes took eggs and Amy ran off stray dogs with a .22. A generous neighbor passed on two sets of chicks and our flock was set for recovery. Hope was rewarded and the kids hunt nearly 2 dozen eggs a day!



Garden chores are fun!



to handle several subjects. She and Brian headed to a home school conference for encouragement and curriculum ideas. Winning a \$300 shopping spree helped make some of those decisions! Summer shifted away from academic focus as Brian led an 8 week parenting class dealing with behavior on the heart level. We wrapped up with a minute-to-win-it family fun night. This Fall, Amy implemented assignment sheets to encourage independent work in the older kids. This freed her to run the preschool curriculum of 'Five in a Row' with the three little girls.

Depression has continued as an unwelcome visitor. Amy has supplemented, tracked symptoms and used tips from the book "Unglued" to ride some of the emotional waves, but there is no easy answer. The hormonal swings of a new pregnancy has increased this challenge but Amy is finding hope in the gentle way the Lord is caring for her. With another 6 months to go, Amy has chosen 'endurance' as her word for next year.

Life on a farm provides many opportunities to put hope into practice and work hard.

Spring came with wet weather



Monthly family fun night!

Trials in gardening force you to learn new things and this year Amy researched organic pest control and crop rotation. However, hope is also a key ingredient. Our theory is to plant a lot because you never know what will take. We had a fantastic corn crop, okra out our ears and three eggplants produced more than we could eat. The 30 tomato plants were a

wash due to stink bug infestation. More research on that for next year. When the power company trimmed trees on our road, the garden gained a foot of mulch to control weeds. Then the chickens ate our entire fall planting, prioritizing a fence project to protect our efforts. Currently production is winding down except for a few winter plants.

Homeschooling is becoming a larger undertaking. As the school year wrapped up, Amy had questions on how



Pioneer themed 'Camp Grammy'

Homeschooling takes a village; Amy's grandpa next door patiently listens to early readers, while her mom and sisters join her in planning and teaching co-op classes. The American Girl books were used to incorporate state study, religion, history, crafts, cooking, dance and public speaking. Indian and Mexican cultures were just finished with the Great Depression and WWII to come next semester.



Treasure hunter

Lance (9), had a year filled with new experiences. His biggest first was a plane ride with Grammy to Colorado, visiting cousins and observing the eclipse. He learned to swim over the summer and was proud to see his savings hit \$100. Having mastered his predictable chores of laundry and dishes, Lance was introduced to the unpredictable environment in the barn. He was taught to milk goats and has learned to handle them like a pro! During Bible study, God used an analogy of running the Christian race to work on his heart and prompt him to 'sign up.' Lance was baptized in August.



Field trip to see the Austin bat colony



Bug collection for co-op science

Ivy (8) is a girl of many interests & skills. She loves to swim, ride bikes, play "pet shop" with the barn animals, go on any kind of trip with Mom, and lead her younger cousins in all sorts of imaginary games. She tackled learning cursive (because it's sooo beautiful) and started piano lessons. She enjoyed summer garage sales with mom, finding all sorts of 'good deals.' She loves reading and can't wait for the next library trip. While bold and confident, she is sensitive to the Lord's work in her spirit, choosing to obey His promptings toward honesty or obedience, even when it's hard.



Goat whisperer



Lost first tooth!

Flora (7) has fully fledged as a "big kid," complete with skill and willingness in her chores, taking on a younger "buddy" sibling and earning a later bedtime. She celebrated her birthday with a Mexican Fandango inspired by our study of the American Girl, Josefina. Flora joined Lance in a desire to follow Christ, and Brian baptized the two of them at our home while family gathered around to witness. Her most prominent trait is a profound faith to ask God about anything and rejoice in His answers, whether positive or not.



Loves to draw

Eden (5) is making the transition from the 'little' to 'big' status. She dropped the afternoon nap, gained an upper bunk, and has made big strides in reading. Eden is learning to make a timely start and stick with a task until it's done. She joined our daily Bible study, picked up handwriting on her own, and leaves notes with invented spelling around the house. She is still daddy's buddy, and sometimes joins him on a project or a trip into town.

Iris (4) has big eyes, a big heart, and big feelings. She often says "Mom, you're beautiful, am I beautiful?" When we trained for the Fun Run, we would encourage her to jog 'a little further' to which she would pant "my legs are falling off!" She loves to wear skirts and dress up in princess clothes, yet it never hinders her ability to get dirty or play hard. Iris enjoys the projects of preschool and particularly the vocabulary words from our books. She will ask to "embrace" or make a face and proclaim "I'm being comical!"



Studies 'Madeline' and France



Enjoying life



Flying bag kite

sleeping. Working him into a routine made a dramatic change in his attitude. As Garrison gained mobility, he showed a marked preference for physical challenge. He quickly navigated the steps and surprised us by climbing several rungs up a ladder at 10 months old. He loves to wrestle, roll balls, stand as he rides his rocking horse and push toy cars as he crawls along. He's taken his first steps and walking should follow shortly.



Baby Godzilla

Parenting the clan requires much endurance, which in turn produces a whole lot of character. Living together as one flesh and walking in the challenges of relationship also requires endurance. But the change in our own hearts and lives produces hope that our children and those who know us will encounter the same God and find Him to be enough.

"And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Romans 5:5



Blessings from our family to yours

**Brian, Amy, Lance, Ivy
Flora, Eden, Iris, Skye, Garrison**