

# THE JOURNEY TO THE MISSION



**December 15th 2001**, Sam and I were married. **2002** was a year of new beginnings. As a blended family, there was much to learn about each other. **2003** was a year of blending. Chayla was born, and with her birth our family blended together. **2004** was the year of rumbling. God called our family to help out with an inner city church plant. But we struggled to balance ministry, work and family. The magma beneath us began to simmer. **2005** was the year of shaking. Sam and I declared that we would stay together no matter what, but our marriage and family were put to the test. Sam changed jobs working more hours for less pay. Family conflicts were bubbling. **2006** was the year of cracking. A long waited pregnancy ended in loss. Josiah was born at 20wks in March with no heartbeat. October brought yet another miscarriage. However, God showed His immense love during that time. Sam and I grew closer, but the cracks in our family unity widened. **2007** was the year of eruption. Sam and I were co-leaders of a young couple's class. In the midst of serving in this ministry we had two more miscarriages, Sam was misdiagnosed with a deadly disease and I had gallbladder surgery. We were blessed with great friends who poured out their love and support to us. However, the conflicts within our family erupted with a new fury. **2008** started as a year of peace. Together, as a family we began to mend and heal the broken relationships. But the year ended with another devastating miscarriage. **2009** was the year of storms. Though our family unit grew stronger, all other areas of our lives were shattered. At the end of June, we miscarried yet again. The very same week Sam lost his job due to his business shutting down. We lost our home and moved in with my mother. We didn't know it then, but God was stripping away to prepare us for the ministry ahead, introducing us to The Lewis House and Compelled Church through old friends.

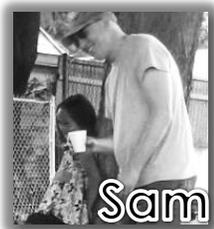
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**2010** was a year of personal struggle for me. I thank God that our family was strong enough to help me through this time. Sam spent many hours in God's Word and becoming closer to our children. That strength is what I needed because many parts of my childhood started haunt me. As God placed us in more areas of leadership, I wrestled with the voices from my past telling me I was not good enough. In June I became pregnant again. It was pure shock! We had declared that we would never try again. We were filled with hope that maybe this time would be different. We began a 30 day family mission trip at The Lewis House, during which the roots of our hearts grew deep into the Toledo area. However, as the summer came to

a close we miscarried again. Sam grew closer and closer to God, but I questioned God's love. I knew the Bible was true, I heard God speak to me that He loved me, but how? How could I believe it when I felt was so hated by Him? At a worship conference in October, I literally spent the entire 3 days sobbing. I poured out my hurt and anger towards God and laid it at His feet. I recommitted that I would serve Him no matter what. "Though, the journey is hard, I still believe"... these are words from a song by Kathryn Scott which was the theme of our worship conference. I declared I wasn't going to give up, I was gonna keep going and through that declaration my heart began to truly feel the love God had been pouring on me. **2011**

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started with a little bit of sunshine. Our relationship with The Lewis House and the neighborhood there continued to grow. In April we moved to Toledo, OH as urban missionaries. Now, here I stand at end of in the spring of **2012**, I am amazed at what God has done. I can smell the sweetness of rebirth. I can feel the sunshine. I can hear the birds singing. I see the spring that God has brought to us. No more dark clouds, which haunted my mind. No more continual rain, that I was sure would drown me. No more heavy blackness, that was sure to snuff me out. Now everywhere I turn holds life. Oh sure, there are still storm clouds that roll in and bees that still sting. I mean, it is still life after all. But I stand in awe of God's greatness and faithfulness. Yes, very hard years fill our past, but that's what makes the springtime of our lives so much more beautiful. He has unified the 6 of us in ways I never thought were possible.



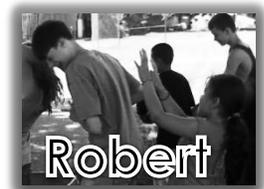
So maybe you are saying "What is The Lewis House"? The Lewis House is a ministry in Toledo. We serve here as missionaries. We live among the people we are ministering to and we raise financial support to do so full time. The Lewis House has many parts to it. We do big neighborhood outreaches, like our Back2School Block Party where we gave out 50 backpacks and 150 bags of school supplies. We do Sidewalk Sunday School through the summer every

Saturday... we teach about Jesus, have lunch for the kids, do a craft and a game. We typically have about 20 kids attend. Through the summer we host a program called "Feed Lucas County Children" where kids can come to The Lewis House to eat a hot meal. For some of these kids, it is their only healthy meal of the day. We hold Community Dinners every week on Thursdays. In late winter and spring we are blessed with favor to teach about Jesus inside the school in our neighborhood with a program we call Kids Club! We hold holiday parties and get-togethers and anything else that helps make a connection with our neighbors.



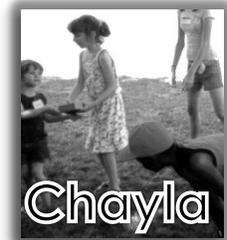
But it isn't just about our events. It's about being available. It's the impromptu dinner guests. Like, when Michael, a 16 year old, was walking past the house, I asked him if he wanted to come in for dinner. He said he needed to run home to tell his mom. He showed up 20 minutes later on our doorstep with 4 other friends

with him. Sure the children were half clothed (it was summer), no shoes on, dirty from playing in the mud... but I opened the door anyway and invited them to eat with our family. I remember standing amazed at the sight before me. I was filled with such indescribable joy as I watched Sam and our 4 children be family to



these 5 kids. This is why we are here! It's about Bret, the young homeless guy, who often comes to our door asking for a snack. Sam sometimes will chat with him while he eats. Much to our surprise, one day, Bret came to our door with a to-go box in his hands, holding it out for Sam, "I just brought you a snack", he said. This was proof of the relationship building. That's why we are here! It's about Marshea, an 8 year old, who comes over

after school to work on tutoring while our kids work on school. That's why we are here! It's about Suave, a very energetic 6 year old, asking for some fruit, and one of our children reading to him while he eats. That's why we are here! It's the day in and day out, it's the relationships that are deepening and it's the ability to share with each one "Jesus loves you". I cannot imagine doing anything else in this world, than where God has placed us right now. Reaching out to this community has become our heartbeat.



We are in the midst of raising support. I know there are financial struggles of many. Sam and I always hate getting to the point in our newsletters where we need to ask for supporters. We know that God has placed us here with his gracious loving hand. But it will take the support of others to keep the Guidry's a part of The Lewis House. I told Sam the other day, if just everyone who received this letter gave \$5.00 a month, we would be able to serve this area more freely. We would be able to give more generously. But so often, others see \$5.00 as not being a worthy gift, so they don't give at all. Please pray for financial supporters. No gift is too little. Every little bit helps.

For those of you, who have stood by us through the very painful times, thank you! If it wasn't for the prayers and support of God's people, I can honestly tell you, this Family Letter would look very different this year! I pray you find encouragement in this letter. No matter what season you may be in, trust in Jesus because He really has a plan! He will turn all circumstances for the good of His Kingdom. Please don't give up! He will not leave you or forsake you, no matter what things looks like right now! Trust in Him. He is for you not against you! Thank you for taking the time to read this! We appreciate YOU!

Blessings!

Sam, Allana and GuidKids



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