

Bring Back Your Joy by Remembering the Best

I visited St. Louis last week, the city where we landed when my family emigrated from Bolivia.

Some have asked us why we chose this city.

Here's the answer: While birds sang and a warm breeze blew, my mom sat in the courtyard in her Bolivia home. She spent hours and hours reading. Her favorite books were classics translated into Spanish. At the top of the list was Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*. The stories fascinated her. And she vowed someday she would visit the Mississippi River where those delicious adventures took place.

That dream came true when she turned 35. Now married and the mother of two children, she and my father chose St. Louis, located on the shores of this mighty river, to become our new home.

Everything was new ... and also intimidating. Wearing the same clothes we wore in Bolivia, my brother, 11, and I at 12 went to school only two days after our arrival. We learned English quickly because back in 1964, there were no ESL classes or "press 1 for Spanish." We would either learn the language or drown in a foreign culture.

God had a plan. I had mine, too. Mine included a happy life in America, shining with health and with a complete family to surround me with joy.

God's plan was different. I lost my sight, but He gave me insight to see His grace. My family suffered the loss of my youngest son. God gave us comfort so we could, in turn, comfort others.

As we swam across the river of adversity, gratitude filled our life. And when discouragement tries to come in, reminders of the best put joy right back.

Here Are a Few of Those Reminders:

- My blindness reminds me to fuel my vision every day.
- The lessons I learn remind me God is still at work.
- The tragedies that touched my life remind me of the triumph God brought.
- The mistakes I see others make remind me I'm flawed too.
- Obstacles remind me they must never become excuses.
- Harsh words from others remind me to guard my own lips.
- Disappointments remind me to keep dancing to the melody of God's Word.
- Failures remind me they remain failures unless I fail to learn.
- Victories remind me God smiles at every stage.
- Rejections remind me God is redirecting my steps.
- The love I receive is God's reminder of His presence
- The setbacks remind me that my heart is set on hope.
- The struggles remind me that through Christ, my weaknesses turn to strength.
- The Bible reminds me God's Word was meant for me too.
- The care I give reminds me I'll need the same one day.

Thanksgiving could be only one day—or a lifetime of gratitude. Your choice. But when you make it a lifetime, joy blooms and

expectation of a new horizon grows. {eoa}

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