



# Michelle's Musings

*On life, loss, health, homesteading, real estate and more*

## The Purpose of this Newsletter

*Why am I Sending this to You?*

For years, I have had the desire to write a regular newsletter to friends and family (and clients who have become friends 😊) I was always too busy, it seemed, but the thought has always been in the back of my mind.

Since we lost our son 3 months ago, what was just a thought in the background of my mind has leapt to the forefront. I've also realized that we make time for what is important to us – and this newsletter has become very important to me. So that is what I'm doing. 😊

## A Curse or a Blessing?

On July 4th, just three short months ago, I was researching a property for a client at our kitchen table when I heard an unfamiliar car on our driveway. Glancing out the kitchen window, I saw two official-looking black cars next to my husband's truck, and 3 strangers in black shirts emblazoned with "Victim Services" standing with my husband.

My first thought was, "Oh no, c.b. was speeding. He's going to get a ticket." I didn't comprehend the meaning of 'Victim Services' until a minute later, after I had walked out of the house and towards the group still standing on the driveway.

As I approached them, I took one look at the utter devastation on my husband's face, and I knew – we were the victims.

On that day, our lives were turned upside down. On that day, our newly turned 16 year old son drowned in Lake Georgetown. What was supposed to be a fun day with his friends ended up quite differently. One of the group challenged the others to swim to a certain location, and my son didn't make it. Divers found him 3 hours later at the very bottom, under 32 feet of water.

I don't have words for the weight of grief that we experienced in those first few days, and yet we immediately also had **a peace that our son was taken by the Lord according to His timing and His plan.**

We are still simultaneously peaceful and devastated. We know the Lord took Nathan; there are no accidents with Him. It's weird to even put this in writing, and I never even considered this beforehand, but after the first shock of the news, one of my first thoughts was, if the Lord was going to take one of our children, Nathan was the right one. He had such a sweet walk with the Lord, and was so mature in so many ways. (And so innocent in others). If anyone in our family was ready, it was been him.

Nathan was not your typical teen. He was my Amazon.com business partner – he had traveled to China with me last year to source products, we strategized

on which product lines to create, brainstormed brand names and logos, and wrote the Amazon listing sales copy together. He loved to organize and clean, and was constantly surprising me with a clean kitchen, organized pantry, etc.

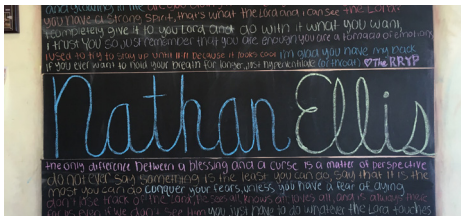


*At the Yiwu marketplace, negotiating*

He was also homeschooled, and for the last 2 years spent 3 days a week in a progressive co-op called Acton Imprimus that encourages self-starting and entrepreneurship. One of his favorite people was Elon Musk, and he told me his goal was to be a millionaire by age 20. But he wasn't materialistic – in fact, he owned nearly nothing except his clothes, phone, old laptop, and Bible. Oh, and a few thousand legos – which, yes, he still built with on occasion.

Nathan loved the Lord Jesus so much, and greatly desired that his friends love and pursue the Lord also. I didn't realize how much time he spent counseling them through their respective teen issues until after he left us – so many of his friends came to me and told me of his advice that made an impact on them.

A few days after his passing, some of his friends gathered and wrote down many of the quotes they remembered Nathan saying frequently. A few were goofy (he *\*was\** only 16), but many were very mature.



*A collage of Nathan quotes*

The quote of his that has stuck with me the most is this one: **“The difference between a blessing and a curse is a matter of perspective.”** (He was counseling a friend who was complaining about the restrictions her mother placed on her.)

We could feel we have been cursed to have our bright,

beautiful, beloved son taken from us, or we could feel blessed that we were able to have him with us for 16 precious years. We choose to feel blessed. We feel blessed that we have a wonderful community of brothers & sisters in the church, friends, and neighbors who enveloped us in love and care in the weeks following July 4.

We feel blessed that we have a walk with the Lord Jesus and that His riches have supplied us in this valley, far surpassing anything we could have imagined.

I don't wish anyone to have to go through suffering. But **now I see that there is a depth of Christ and His sweetness that one can only taste when they pass through a deep valley.** My hope and prayer, for the folks affected by the hurricanes recently and for others experiencing loss of all kinds, is that they are able to turn to the Lord in their times of suffering and taste His sweetness.

Also, to all of you who brought us meals, water (when the well pump gave out on the same day Nathan drowned), mowed our 2 acres of lawn and babysat our toddler – we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. 😊

## Update on Us

A few weeks ago, a well-meaning relative asked me, “So, are things getting back to normal now?” It was 6 weeks after we had buried our son. Unusually for me, I was momentarily speechless.

So I paused and took a quiet moment to wait on the Lord, and then responded, “Well, **the ‘normal’ we knew is gone. But we are establishing a ‘new normal.’**” (And for the record, I'm glad he asked that question – sometimes, even though you know, you need a question like that to fully realize that you will ever go back to the way things were.)

What is our new normal? Well, within two days of our son's passing, my husband, c.b., decided to shut down his business (Austin Plans for Permits). Neither he nor I had the physical, mental or emotional ability to work for several weeks, and we feel

so blessed for the outpouring of financial care that so many showered upon us. It allowed us time to grieve, to be with our children, to prepare for Nathan's memorial, and to not have to worry about our bills on top of everything else.

My husband has worked long hours since we first married and is now 57 years old and desirous of spending more time with our remaining 3 boys and toddler daughter. So he is transitioning to stay-at-home homeschooling dad. His style of homeschooling is very different than mine, and that's okay. The boys need their dad more than ever as they enter their teen years, and it feels right for him to take the reins.

So now it is my turn to work full-time, which I am more than willing to do. But what I was going to do was the pressing question for a little while.

I just didn't have the heart to continue the Amazon business without Nathan, who was involved in every aspect of it. Also, practically, there was no way we could pay our bills yet with e-commerce, since it is very capital-intensive. Not only this, I kept hearing my son's voice – what he had been telling me for weeks before he passed away, **"Mom, what is your ONE thing?"** You are going in too many directions. What is your ONE thing?"

## ***"What is your ONE Thing?"***

Ironically, it wasn't until after my son passed away that I discovered what my 'one thing' is – I want to minister to others who have suffered loss in their lives, whether it is a loved one, their health, finances, their job, or even a pet. And yet, I need to also

make a living somehow. And that's when a podcast that I had listened to intermittently for the last 1.5 years jumped to the forefront of my mind and a plan started formulating that I couldn't ignore. And that is how I found myself one morning at 3 a.m., 7 days after my son drowned, creating a plan that will allow me the opportunity **to share my message, minister to others on a larger scale than I could otherwise, and make a living at the same time.**

Although I had been doing real estate for almost 10 years, prior to doing ecommerce with my 4 sons for the last 1.5 years, I dreaded going back to doing salesperson type activities. I just wanted to do the part I love – which is educating, advising, and yes, even protecting my clients.

Both c.b. and I have a heart to serve people. We love to help people – that's the foundation of nearly everything we do.

Everyone processes grief differently. For c.b. and I, we feel best when we are helping people – that is our 'therapy'. We benefit as much as the folks we help.

So I must help people on a deeper level than just real estate service for my own sake, and I also need to earn a living. How could I do both without my life feeling segmented? Well, now I have a way – a way that I believe will have a meaningful impact on others.

**I am excited about the future in a way that I didn't think was possible a couple of months ago.** I finally feel that my way of making a living can be totally congruent with my life purpose.

I have some incredible plans that I will be sharing with you all in the next few months. Stay tuned.



**Thank you** for taking the time to read my newsletter! I hope you enjoy spending this time with me. Please, contact me with your ideas, feedback, questions, or just to say hi!

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