

Counting my Blessings...

This December has definitely been one of the most difficult times in my adult life. It's one of those times where one is tempted to feel "I just can't get a break. Why am I being picked on?"

However, that makes it extra important for me to count some of my many blessings.

1. My Amazing Family

I can't say enough about my family. I have a loving and supportive wife who is always there to share in my joy and accomplishments and lift me up when my chin is down. She also keeps me grounded and focused when I start to feel sorry for myself or am tempted to make a decision that is poorly thought out or based on selfish ambition. And a wife who has also helped raise with me 4 delightful kids. Kids who are every bit the troublemakers they need to be to keep me from getting complacent and to keep our family from over-swelling with pride. But who are also very loving, affectionate, caring, generous, thoughtful, and adorable. God has placed the perfect family in my life to help round me out as a person and to fill my life with joy.

2. My Supportive Friends

I have friends who don't just fill my life with empty flattery and mindless conversation. They also don't only show their faces when I have something to offer. They are there when I need someone to listen, when we (our family) needs assistance, when I need a kick in the pants, and when I need to laugh and forget about the stress in life... God has gifted me with friendships that warm my heart and keep me moving forward. Between my family and friends alone I have been given so much to be thankful for – no matter what my circumstances.

3. Our Success and Opportunity

Even though I hit a rough patch every now and then, my life has been filled with nothing but opportunity and reward. Lisa and I often marvel at how much we have been **given** in terms of success. The ability to work from home for so many years and to rarely hunger. To be born into a country where we are free to peruse our desires, dreams, and passions. To be able to have an influence in our community and to be able to use the creative gifts God has entrusted in us... The list goes on and on.

I have counted three blessings which I just feel I need to share. However, the list of blessings only start there... It is mind blowing to me how much I have been given especially compared to how much I have given back. One Bible passage that always sticks in my head is from Luke 12:48:

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

I have been given so, so much. So when times are tough, like they are this December, it is not time for me to get down and demand more out of my Creator. It is time to **give praise** and ask the Almighty God *what more I can do? What more can I give? What more is to be demanded of me? How can I submit and offer my body up as a living sacrifice?*

Because there can be no doubt; I have been given much. Much will be demanded. And, I welcome it... Just as any loving son would welcome the demands of his loving, supporting, and life-giving Father.

December Blues...

Well, it is December and the Bears are 9-3... However, I am not feeling particularly joyful.

For one – one of my major clients has vanished with a large unpaid bill. A payment we were really relying on and our budgeting included. I sure hope she is ok. I am worried that something has happened; though hopefully it is just that she doesn't want / cannot pay her bill and is avoiding me. That has happened several times before with clients.

For two – my (other) server is under a **major [DDoS attack](#)**. And, while I am not going to post the site name here (don't want this server to get attacked) it is my site that outs online scammers that got threatened and then attacked. It has already cost me one client and will undoubtedly cost me tons in terms of losing visitors. The two major sites on that server get a LOT of visitors through Google. But, since it is now basically offline, it is only a matter of time before Google de-lists my sites costing me potentially tens of thousands in revenue. I have worked so hard to get those two sites to be major forces; I am SO BUMMED.

For three – my health has been icky-poo. Nothing serious, but with all the other stress it is just something else I don't need. I have had headaches on most days, back pain which sometimes mounts to a sharp-pain-attack, I have some weird cracking noise and pain in my knee, and my eyesight has gotten blurry, and my stomach is often aching. I guess I am just THAT old.

For four – my investor has bailed. I had a partner/investor on a project and he wants out. This means \$7500 must be paid (back to him). \$7500 that is long ago invested. Now, legally, I do not have to give him a thing back but ethically/morally I have to return his money. After all, I am

delayed more than FIVE MONTHS on the project. This just comes at a really bad time for that.

Last December I suffered a catastrophic HD failure when my HD crashed, was low-level-formatted and then when I went to restore from the backup – it was damaged. It cost me several clients, lots of money, and a very big headache.

Last December Charity, the dog we loved as a member of the family, died.

December has always been one of my favorite times – Christmas! And, now that we celebrate for the real reason (Jesus), Christmas has become even more special. However, after these past two Decembers I don't know. I just don't know. In every way other than Charity dying (which is a HUGE one), this December is much worse than last one. I cannot remember a time I felt so un-optimistic in my adult life.

I have no choice but to work hard to try and salvage and fix what I can and to lay the rest at the foot of the Cross. I have trust in God's plan for me and know that He will keep His promise not to give me more than I can handle; just as He has kept it all my life.

After all, I am still **very** blessed. I have been given much; so much is to be expected of me. I have an amazing wife, loving children, dear friends, I live in a free country, I have a roof over my head, plenty to eat, and much more. Too many blessings to even list...

And, the trials I face are nothing compared to the issues some of my friends and family have had to face or are facing. Some have lost loved ones, some have friends moving away, some have serious medical issues, some have stress and pressure well beyond mine. And some have not come to know Christ yet and to accept His sacrifice.

So, even though I am feeling sorry for myself, I won't

complain. I have TONS of reasons to give worship and praise to our Creator! Especially at Christmas time where we celebrate the greatest gift ever given.

Derek, do you see who that is in the video!? Christ Saves!!

3-0 and the Return of Devin Hester!

Well, the Bears are 3-0 and it is very hard to believe... Every win this season has been BEARly. This week was no exception and we began to see flashes of "Bad Jay" – the interception machine (Jay Cutler) from last year.

But, in the end, all that matters is the score: BEARS 20, PACKERS 17.

I will take a sloppy, undeserved win over a well played undeserved loss any day.

One thing did happen in the win over the Packers that should really make Bears fans giddy though... THIS:

<https://youtube.com/embed/XsBYWRt9qGU>

With Devin Hester once again returning punts for TDs (one was returned for a TD and another was close) this becomes a HUGE advantage for the Bears. You see, it is not just about the touchdowns. Football is a game of field position... The closer your offense is to the endzone when they get the ball, the better their chance of scoring... PERIOD. And, if you have a return-man (Hester) whom opposing teams are afraid to kick the ball to, you start to get consistent good field position. In my opinion, the FEAR of Hester was the #1 contributing factor to the Bears' 2006 Super Bowl run. Teams were willing to give the ball to the Bears with great field position just so they wouldn't have to deal with a Hester return.

Now the Bears head to the Meadowlands to play the Giants who are hungry for a win. This will be a dangerous game for the Bears – but, IF they win and go 4-0 it seems impossible to believe they will not be in the playoffs this winter. ☐

GO BEARS!

2-0 Bears? Proof I Have Died.

With a strong relationship with God through Jesus Christ, perfect family, beautiful and loving wife, and the best possible friends... My life is so close to pure bliss I had to wonder at times if I wasn't experiencing the **after life**.

However, the Bears always were able to keep me grounded (pun, pun)...

I mean, a stinky-poo-poo Bears team is no fun at all. Sure, it doesn't even put a small dent in the other great stuff... But, it certainly makes the air smell a little foul.

Now the Bears are 2-0 for the first time since 2006, you know the year they went to the Super Bowl, and they just beat the famed Dallas Cowboys... WHAT?!? This Bears team? The Bears team that went 0-4 during the preseason and looked like they would be better off playing in a poker tournament? The Bears team that BEARly squeaked by a Lions team that has one 2 games in their last 34?

Yep. Those Bears.

So, there are now only one of three conclusions I can come to:

1. The Bears are Much Better than Expected
2. The Bears are Getting Lucky and are About to Start a

Downward Spiral

3. I Have Died and am in Heaven which is Perfect, but Nothing Like Described in Scripture

For now, I will go with #2 but another win (next week against GB on Monday night!!!) and I may have to start considering #1... Another few wins and I better start checking my Bible!

GO BEARS!

The Bears and a Full-Time Acting Gig

Well, another Bears season is upon us... And this one looks much like last one; minus the high hopes from Bears fans.

Even though we opened the season with a divisional win (the opposite of last year) it was against the 2-33 Lions. Yes, 2 wins in the last 35 games for the poor cats in Detroit.

Also, it was a game we could have easily lost. And, in fact, we probably would have if it weren't for a very questionable/controversial new rule. In the final minute of the game Lion's backup QB (Hill) threw what looked like a perfect TD pass/catch to the WR (Johnson). However, as Johnson fell to the ground with the ball in one hand – it popped loose as it hit the turf.

To fans, this looked like a TD. He was clearly in the end zone with possession of the ball. HOWEVER, the rule says he has to complete the "process" of the catch. In other words, he needs to hang on to that ball until motion stops.

The refs at the game got the call RIGHT. Under the rule it is

NOT a catch. However, as a fan I say they should change that rule – it really should be a catch.

BUT, I will happily take the WIN and a 1-0 start to the season. After all, the football season is only 16 games. So, for you baseball fans, that is equivalent to a 10-0 record. ☐

This week the Bears play the hailed Dallas Cowboys – a team expected to have a serious Super Bowl shot this year. It's gonna be tough for these Bears to squeak out a win there. However, if we do 2-0 will be very sweet indeed and the Bears may have new life in a division expected to be dominated by the Rodgers-lead Packers followed by the Farve-lead Vikings.

Now this next part of my post is completely unrelated. But I am not about to make TWO posts and set a dangerous precedent.

Our Church has about the BEST (NON-PAID) ACTING GIG ever. You actor folks, read this... Here are the bullet points:

- **New Starring Role Each Week**
- **“Full-Time” Only Takes a TOTAL of 1 Hour and 30 Minutes from your WEEK!**
- **No Auditions, No Blocking (it is up to the ACTOR)**
- **Zero Rehearsal (The actor is in charge of his/her performance!)**
- **Great Character Roles**
- **Super Engaged and Energetic Audience Every Time**
- **Sold Out House Every Performance**
- **Costumes, Set, Props All Setup and Ready for You Every Week**
- **Complete Line Memorization is Not Required**
- **Professional Stage with Top-of-the-Line Sound & Lighting Equipment**
- **Professional Award-Winning Scripts**
- **Improvisation and Audience Participation**
- **Working with Kids 1st – 5th Grade who Adore the Characters**

- **Never an Audition – Cast from Within. *Do this Gig and You will be Offered Opportunities to Perform for Full-House (Adult) Audiences on Other Occasions in a Huge “Auditorium”***
- **Rewarding in Praise, Adoration (from Kids), and Sharing God’s Word**
- **Get to Work with Two Cool People Named Chris & Lisa**

Yes, this is the **DREAM** acting gig. It is also challenging as it is completely up to the actor to develop and prepare his character (which changes each week). Not only all this above, but you are also teaching kids about the Truth which can only be found from the Source. But for you, there is no preaching/teaching involved.

So, if you know anyone who has the following attributes:

1. Christian
2. Creative
3. Good With / Enjoys Kids
4. Great Character Actor
5. Able to Accept the Challenge of Developing a (scripted) Role
6. Energetic and Charismatic
7. Can Handle a New Starring Role Each Week
8. Experience with Audience Participation
9. Experience with Character Improvisation
10. Can Command a Stage (Roles often include being only on on stage – “Host”)
11. Able to Memorize / Familiarize Themselves with Lines Quickly

So if you know anyone who has these characteristics and is ready to be the **starring** actor at a **very professional**, always **full-house**, theatre that shares the **Word of God**... Let me know.

The performances are every Sunday from 9:30AM – 10:00AM in Bryan. 11AM – 11:30AM performances may also be available!

There is no doubt here... **This is the best acting gig ever.** So perhaps, if you have been wondering what all your acting efforts have been leading to – if there is a higher purpose for which you were GIVEN your talents – maybe this is it. ☐

“...From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” – Luke 12:48 NIV

I Miss Taylhis! I looooooove her!

My wife had an amazing opportunity to do something uber-fun with our two oldest daughters this evening... I'm not going to spoil her chance to share it with you, so you will have to wait on the details. But, the point is that she is not home tonight. It is just me and “the littles” (Beeber and Disney). And, boy, do I miss her!

I miss the kids too, but it is different. The late-nights are our exclusive time together where we get to wind down from the day and just enjoy being together. It is my favorite part of the day! Does that make me a bad daddy?

Anyhow, her not being here tonight just leaves me feeling so empty and lonely. I've tried a bunch of things to fill the void – playing football, doing chores, watching TV, working – and, finally... BLOGGING! And, you know if I am BLOGGING something must really be up!!

“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone’ ”
Genesis 2:18

I have so much respect and admiration for my friend [John](#) (who must just find this post pathetic). His strength continues to be an inspiration for me throughout much of my life. I did get to share dinner with him which was just awesome! But still, I miss Lisa dearly!

I find myself doodling little hearts with "Lisa" in them and "I love Lisa" everywhere... You know, like a 8th grade girl with a crush would do – eech! Is this normal? What is wrong with me!?

Ok... I am going to try and get to bed before I further embarrass myself.

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Chris' Old Internet (PIYB) – My WayBack!

As I have said before, although I do not comment, I tend to read most of your blogs. I just don't comment because, well, once I comment on one I have to comment on all and suddenly my work will take a big hit...

Speaking of my work, I thought it would be fun to take a look back and some of my first websites. (Thanks to Derek's Way Back for getting my mind going)

Here is the link:

<https://christopheravell.com/2010/04/07/a-blast-from-the-past-my-beginnings/>

It is on my personal blog because, well, that is work – this is play! So, any comments please leave there.

The Bears are Going to the

Playoffs!

Not the Chicago Bears... No, they stink. Sure they beat a miserable Cleveland Browns team this weekend, but so could the team of [Taylhis](#), [Sublife](#), and [Morat](#).

It is actually our local highschool football team, the Bryan Golden Bears. This is the FIRST TIME IN SCHOOL HISTORY the football team is in the playoffs. How's that for some big local news!?

No, I won't be attending the game, in Cleveland of all places (see above) but it is exciting for our small community. So, next weekend I will have two sets of Bears to root for football-wise. Cool.

Great Weekend, Even if the Bears Didn't Play this Sunday.

I would usually write about the Bears today but since they didn't play Sunday I can enjoy writing about the rest of the weekend.

I had a GREAT weekend. I am a huge haunted-house fan... To me, a haunted house is **theatre-in-motion** – scene after scene of live (and interactive) entertainment. As with any theatrical productions, some of the actors were better than others and some of the “sets” were better than others, but all had their charms. *I cannot wait until our friends and ourselves can put on a haunted house in our area!*

But, by far, the best part was spending time with family and friends. My friends are just amazing. I can do anything with them and have a good time. It really didn't matter in the end if we were driving in the car eating Italian Beef (YUM!!), or wandering through a haunted house, or just waiting in an insanely long line – I was enjoying myself fully! As much as I HATE LINES (man, I HATE lines) I kept thinking to myself – how unbearable would this be without these guys! Standing there wasn't much fun in a conventional sense, but it was another experience we had together... And thinking about us standing in that line – now makes me smile. **I love my friends** (which makes living with my best friend awesome!).

After a night of haunted house action we got to spend Saturday seeing all of our family. Everyone! It was just one of the best days I can recall. It started with us being very late, getting stuck in traffic – ugh! Although stressful at the time, it actually is perfect – the in-your-face reminder of why we're so lucky to live where we do. Anyhow...

After the delay we got to see my (side of the) family. We had a delicious breakfast (that poor Lisa couldn't enjoy) and then visited at my Sister's/Mom's house. Spending this time with my family was just delightful. I had such a feeling of peace being with them and was just ecstatic to see my mother so happy and healthy.

From there we went to visit Lisa's grandparents. Her grandfather lives in a nursing home so we went there for the visit. The home was nice and they were both in good spirits, enjoying their situation as best they could. How wonderful is that! They're still appreciating the wonders of life – nursing home and all! They just glowed when they saw the great-grand-kids.

At Lisa's sister's house we celebrated her mom-and-dad's 40th wedding anniversary. It was a low key event that was very enjoyable. Kim & Tim are always great hosts and Lisa's family

just eats-up our little ones. I just had a blast running and chasing the “big kids” (Taylor, Austin, Sammie, and Disney) and was completely exhausted afterwards. We then enjoyed a meal (yummy lasagna) together and played a bit more. After the meal we went to another haunted house. This time with Kim & Tim – Derek too. It was a very good haunted house; probably the best one all weekend. But I thought that by far the coolest part was seeing Kim & Tim out on a “date” together. They’ve had some rough times lately and it was just awesome to see them connecting and just enjoying one-another. Lisa and I both felt really great that we got to enjoy this experience together as two couples. It was a nice double date + Derek! And, Derek being along just made it better. He’s no third wheel, he really made everything more fun! Like all of my friends, he always enhances every experience.

So – even though the Bears didn’t play this weekend it was still the best! It was awesome. All the ingredients – Lisa (LISA!!), Taylor, Sammie, Disney, Christopher, Derek, Jamy, Megan, Mary, Mom, Caroline, Wilson, Ben, Gwyn, Lilly, Great Grandma, Great Poppa, Uncle Bud, Mother-in-Law, Father-in-Law, Kim, Tim, Austin, and Ryan + Italian Beef + Haunted Houses.

A recipe for a great weekend indeed!

Paranormal Activity w/ a Chance of Meatballs

I am S00000000000 excited to be traveling this weekend to see some family and friends! I will get to see my awesome mom, and my (Best-Man, 1999) [Derek](#). I will also be celebrating my in-laws 40th anniversary. So, what a great weekend!

I have to admit though, one of the most exciting parts for me is going with [my wife](#) and friends to some Illinois haunted houses!! I love being scared (*when it isn't REAL) and I love spending time with my friends. So I am just totally psyched! I wish my friend [John](#) could make it, but I will **make him come** NEXT TIME!!

Anyway, this post is not about my trip. It is about being scared. And I saw a movie on Tuesday that totally freaked me out!

My wife and I went to see [Paranormal Activity](#), the SUPER-HYPED low budget horror film that has been causing people to lose sleep at night. We also saw [Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs](#); the kid's flick.

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs FREAKED ME OUT!

Paranormal Activity was umm... Baby-Diapie-Smell-Like-Poopy! It stunk bad. I have never been so disappointed in a movie in my life. I was really hoping to get a good scare but ended up being something I rarely ever am in a movie – BORED! This movie is all hype, no bite. I think some teens convinced each-other this was real or something (ala Blair Witch) but... The hour and a half running time of this movie felt like 3 hours! I was never once held in much suspense nor was I worried for the main characters. I was just bored. I give this an IMDB rating of 2.3 – AWFUL!

Now... I have weird food phobia. I freak out at the thought of food on skin. Yes, I know – weird. But when gobs of eggs, meatballs, and nacho sauce (yes, a guy was BATHING IN IT!) fall from the sky – YAAAHHH!!! This was a scary, scary, scary and disturbing movie. I do NOT want to go to the ketchup-and-mustard haunted house!!!!!!

So Cloudy = Cute for Kids – Scary for Food Phobics

Activity = You be Better Off Playing Monopoly VS. Yourself