



Bob Leshner

NEWSLETTER

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Hello everyone. Thanks for the time you take to connect with us by the newsletter. We appreciate your prayers and financial support! This month's letter I wanted to introduce you to my friend Anthony. The Lord has been doing a lot in his life lately. So, I thought should hear his story.

My family

So, let me see where I start... I think I'll start by talking about my parents. My father and my mother got married in 1997. When my father met my mother, she already had three children, but only one of them lived with her. The other lived with my grandmother in another state, in this case Maranhão, which is where both my mother and my father also come from. Note that's why I really like couscous. My mother had my sister in 1998 and had me in 2000. In other words, I was born in the year 2000. At home it was always me, my sister — Amanda —, mom, whose name was Raquel, dad, whose name is Plácido, and my older brother, who was my mother's son from before she met my father. His name was Hydekazu. We were always very close because we were three siblings, but my sister was much closer to my brother than to me. As time went by, however, my brother ended up becoming the person who took care of me the most, especially when my father no longer had the strength to carry me, because I was growing up. This was around 2012 or 2013. From that time on, my father already let my brother take care of me practically full-time. The one who gave me a bath in the morning was him, the one who gave me a bath at night was also him. The one who took me to the bathroom to urinate or do any other need was him. So my closeness with him came a lot from that place of care, of necessity. We weren't really the type to talk much. I think that's even normal, especially between two men. Men usually don't talk that much about things. Even so, he gave me a lot of advice, even in situations where I didn't ask for it. Sometimes he noticed something about me and would say that I should do this or stop doing that. Typical older brother things.

My disease (Spine Muscular Atrophy.)

When I was a child and my first symptoms began to appear, my parents weren't very surprised. In fact, they already expected what it could be, because my sister also had the same disability.

Amanda showed the first signs of the disability when she was two years old. When I started to show the first symptoms of the disease, I was four years old. That means that when this happened to me, my sister was already six. So, in a way, my parents already knew exactly what it was and had an idea of what was happening with my health.

It was around the age of four that I began to show the first clearer signs. Sometimes, while I was running or playing, I would suddenly trip for no reason. This kind of thing is relatively common with this disease because it affects the nerves and the muscles. When I made a lot of physical effort or used my body a lot, there would come a moment when the muscles simply wouldn't respond the way they should.

Since I was still a child, and children are usually very naive, I never really stopped to think about what was happening to me. I didn't have much awareness of the situation or what it actually meant.

But when I stopped walking at seven years old, I ended up feeling very happy when I found out that I was going to get a wheelchair. That's because I always saw my sister using hers. So, in my child's mind, it seemed like something good, because I would also have a wheelchair, just like her.

What I felt at that time wasn't something very deep or firm. It was more the simple and innocent way a child sees things. It was only when I started growing up, already in my teenage years, that I began to understand better what had really happened to me.

Even so, maybe because of the way my mother raised me, I always saw all of this as something I needed to overcome, no matter how difficult it might seem. This mindset became so strong inside me that, for a long time, I really couldn't see it as something bad. I didn't see it as something that made me inferior or very different from other people.

In fact, I remember very well something my mother used to say when I did something wrong and she was about to hit me. She would say: "Do you think that just because you're different you're not going to get spanked?" And then she would hit me. Hahaha. In a way, that also showed a lot about how she raised me: without treating me like someone incapable or someone who needed to be spared from everything.

I think the moments when I noticed this difference the most were in more specific situations in life, like when I started feeling interested in someone at school. At those times I noticed some limitations, like not being able to simply go up to the person as easily as others could. Little things like that made me realize that there were some difficulties.

Even so, it was never something that I felt stopped me from moving forward. I saw it as a challenge or a difficulty, but something that, in some way, I always managed to overcome.

The loss of my brother

In 2018, my brother had already been facing depression for some time. But at that time we had very little information about depression. I was also very young, around 18 years old, and today looking back I realize that I really was very young to understand all of that.

He was a youth leader at the Vineyard church, but at the same time he carried a very deep depression. As time went by, the situation got worse.

Until one day came... Actually, the story begins the night before. I had just watched a game between Cleveland and the Toronto Raptors, which was an NBA playoff game. I watched it together with my brother and Rian. After that, I went to sleep. It was my brother who put me to bed.

The next morning, I woke up to my father kicking the bathroom door and shouting my brother's name.

My father is not a man who shouts or goes around calling people through the house. So that was already something completely out of the ordinary. It must have been around eight-thirty or nine in the morning.

I only remember the sound of the blows on the door and my father shouting. Until he managed to break the door open.

And when he managed to break it open, he started crying a lot.

I had never seen my father cry like that. In fact, it was the first time. After that, I did see my father cry a few other times in life, but never in that way.

He screamed in a very agonizing way. It was the scream of a person completely broken inside, not knowing what to do in the face of something so shocking.

Meanwhile, I still didn't understand what was happening.

Shortly after, my sister's husband appeared — that same sister I mentioned before, who lived in Maranhão. She was already living in Macapá at that time, but she didn't live in the same house as us.

He came in, took me out of bed, and took me to take a shower. Meanwhile I was still trying to understand what was happening. My father kept shouting and crying a lot.

In the middle of the despair, he repeated several times something like: "My God... what will Raquel think of me?"

I was completely terrified.

After that Pastor Felipe arrived. He went straight to the bedroom and started to pray. He was also crying a lot.

As time went by, some of my brother's friends started to arrive. His best friend also came.

At a certain moment, we were all gathered in the kitchen, even sitting on the floor, trying to understand what had happened.

And it was on that day that I lost my brother to suicide.

I don't think there is much to say about what comes after a day like that. But that's how everything happened.



the loss of my mother

After that event, my mother fell into a very deep depression. She stopped taking care of herself and began losing much of the strength she had before.

My parents hadn't been getting along for quite a long time. At a certain point, they even spoke openly about it with each other. My father told her that he didn't love her. My mother, on the other hand, said that she stayed with him because of a covenant before God. Even so, the relationship between them was very difficult, and many times my father treated her badly.

As time passed, my mother began to feel some physical pain. At first it was minor pain, but it kept increasing day after day. Even with all of this happening, her routine was still very heavy. My mother was a teacher, so besides taking care of the house, she also had her job.

She had a degree in Pedagogy, a specialization in Special Education, and also a postgraduate degree in Psychopedagogy. She was a woman very dedicated to her profession and to the people around her.

But in the middle of all of this, her health kept getting worse and worse. When my father finally took her to the hospital, the situation was already very complicated.

Hospital São Camilo did not want to receive her or accept her hospitalization. So she ended up staying for a while at the General Hospital. My father paid someone to stay there with her, because he himself couldn't be present — and also didn't seem to care very much.

The person who stayed there with her was Yuri, who was also a friend of mine.

Then, on the day she passed away, it was Yuri who tried to notify us. Since my father wasn't answering the phone, he called Rian. Rian came here to the house and started clapping at the gate until we woke up.

It was already around two in the morning. That's how I received the news.

Right after that, another friend of mine, JJ, arrived. They stayed there with me at that moment.

I was very lost, not knowing exactly what to do or how to react. So I simply got up, went to my wheelchair, turned on the computer, and started playing a little, just to pass the time until dawn and until my father came back from the hospital.

That was more or less how the day happened when I lost my mother

the loss of my sister

in 2021

After some time, my sister also ended up getting sick. At first it seemed like just the flu, but the situation kept getting worse. She had to be hospitalized, then she was discharged, but some time later she had to be hospitalized again.

The last time she was admitted, she ended up being taken to the ICU. And shortly after that, she passed away.

Of all the losses I've had in my life, this was the one I felt the most.

I considered her a very close person, especially because of everything we had already lost together. Because of those experiences, we ended up becoming much more attached to each other. I cared very deeply about her and also felt as if I had a responsibility to take care of her.

So when I lost my sister, I felt as if I had failed in that task. I think that's why, of all the losses I've experienced, this was the one that hurt me the most.

I went to the hospital a few times to visit her. I even talked quite a bit with the people who came to see her, advising them not to show pity or sadness in front of her, so that those feelings wouldn't pass on to her as well.

But on the day I went to visit her at the hospital for the first time, I felt very, very bad. When I saw her like that, I felt something very strong in my chest, a very deep pain.

Science even talks about this: that sadness can be so intense that it can cause real physical pain in the body. And that day I truly understood what it means

Ok my friends, Please keep Anthony in your prayers. The Lord has hold of him now! There is great momentum in his life and I sense the work of the Lord in him. The construction project is moving forward. The rain and Holiday has delayed it a bit. But, expecting more to be done and concluding soon. Next month I will give more details. God bless you all Bob Leshner

Our trip to Bolivia

Our trip to Bolivia was very good, but before it happened we went through many problems and a lot of rushing around.

Many things ended up being resolved literally at the last minute. One example was the yellow fever vaccination certificate. We only managed to get that certificate on the last day, practically one day before the trip.

Besides that, the whole wheelchair process took a long time. It was more than a year of waiting until it arrived in Bolivia. And that time was not only because of the transport of the chair from the United States to there, but also because of all the necessary adjustments. We had to send several pieces of information, such as my height, the length of my arm, and other important measurements so that the chair could be made properly for me.

All of this process was done with the organization responsible for providing the wheelchair.

At the beginning, we weren't even sure if we would really be able to make the trip or if the chair would arrive in Bolivia in time. But when it finally arrived, the person in charge of the organization, called Judy, said that we would need to go pick it up within a few days. If I'm not mistaken, it was a deadline of two or three days.

So we had to race against time. We bought the tickets with only two or three days left before the trip. We got the yellow fever certificate on Sunday, and we already traveled in the early hours of Monday.

First we went to São Paulo, where we spent a day, and then we took another flight that finally took us to Bolivia.

When we got there, we met many people.

coming back to Jesus

I only really came to have a close relationship with God in these last few weeks. The last time I had been this close was back in 2018 when my brother had the group here at home. I think the main thing God has been doing in my life today is that He has been changing me... I think for a long time I was a person that I'm not... I mistreated many people, so... Today I'm not proud of that.

But God came close to me in a way that I can no longer plan my life without Him. In fact, in my last prayers, after I had completely exhausted myself, I prayed to God handing my life over entirely to Him. "I'm only here because of You, because if it were up to my will, I wouldn't be here anymore."

Since then I haven't been able to stop thinking about God... And about how kind and merciful He has been to me."

So this is what God has been doing in my life... He has been showing me that day after day He has a purpose in my life.

