

Hawkins

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Applying lessons learned.

Growing up the 4th of 8 children, including brothers and sisters, you learned to get along by adjusting to the needs of others. Life was meant to be lived and to have fun, balanced with learning to work and assumption of responsibilities, to discover and learn. Some of the early lessons learned, the water from a garden hose may not fill up a window well, but it will most certainly flood a basement. Burning garbage in the burning barrel, can also burn the hair off your head if you get to close. While an iron may not seem hot, you don't test the temperature by putting the palm of your hand on the bottom. Kids need to learn; improper use of tools has consequences. You also learned how others love you, when you are admitted to a hospital under emergency conditions.

As I entered married life, I began the journey of expanding my world of experience as the two of us worked together to provide for and raise a family. My wife Paula came from a strong family having learned many of the same core traditions that I learned. Her perspectives, due to her religious upbringing and having attended St John Vianney through the 8th grade, ensured that her love of family was at the center of her life.

We knew we wanted children, hoping to have more than one child and knowing that we were starting onto the road of married life later than others. Eventually we had 8, and believed we were done. Slightly exhausted at times, we now felt we could move onto the next stage of our life. However, we weren't done, having a faith in God, we felt impressed that we were missing something. Somehow our family did not feel complete.

During what was to be one of our most challenging times of our life economically, we made the decision to follow our intuition and ended up adopting two beautiful girls. Everyone loved the new additions to the family, we were now complete as a unit. We also benefited from a change in events in business wherein we stepped into a time of prosperity, no debts, life was good. Then the recessionary clouds rolled in during the fall of 2008, compounded by government intervention. This was a storm for our family, like no other.

As 2009 came into focus, we continued to apply lessons learned and push forward. Over the course of the next few years we saw our business collapse and later ventures never attained the success we had planned. By 2010, we received news that our Healthcare cost was to increase dramatically, from about \$8,400/year to over \$38,000/year. This was on an income that was nonexistent and after having seen all other financial resources exhausted, including retirement funds.

The storm clouds that rolled into our life were real and would test the very core of each member of the family. How committed were we to the ideals we believed, how would we stand in the face of adversarial conditions, would we lose compassion and empathy for others, would we have reason to believe in ourselves? Was this perhaps a part of something greater, an opportunity for us to recognize what others are experiencing, and could we do something with the lessons we have learned? **(to be continued)**



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