

December 2009, January 2010 ~ Greetings from the Bentham Family

The Christmas decorations have long since been put away and the calendars have all been changed to reflect a new year in our *cozy little cottage*. Obviously our “Christmas Letter” is a bit late and we were tempted to put the cards back in the box until next season. However, we really wanted to spend a few minutes with your family, even if we are just now sending this to you.

As some of you may know, 2009 was indeed a year of challenges for our family. In February, John was laid off from his work and we are now approaching the one-year mark of looking for a job (along with millions of other people). We would have preferred not to have gone through this again, at least so quickly, but the lessons we have learned and the peace the Lord has given us are priceless.

Knowing the dire straights that the economy was in, John applied for pretty much anything and everything, and interviewed here in Texas and many other places out of state. From beekeeper, to stable hand, to IT Technician, to Marketing – you name it and he’s applied for it! John gets the award for the faithful and fearless leader. He continues his search with a good attitude and the willingness to go where God wants him to be. In the latter part of the year, he had the opportunity to do some consulting work, but he is sooo ready for a permanent job. Aside from what John has learned from another job search, there is one more very important lesson that he would like you all to know... NEVER try to impress your girls by ripping a soda can in half with your bare hands (think “Mr. Incredible”). Mere mortals, like John, will end up in the ER getting stitches in their hand!

Valerie spends a lot of time homeschooling, coordinating work schedules *and* everyone's job search activities in addition to driving, driving, driving! Never forgetting the privilege it is to care for her family, she strives to savor every moment with them. She also continues to volunteer each week with the girls at Hill Country Community Ministries and took on a few side jobs this year as the Lord provided the opportunities. What's the best lesson Valerie has learned this year? How very flexible and creative one can be with her time and resources. When she thinks she has run out of ideas, God always brings another burst of creativity. (*Editor's note: she has done some amazing things in the kitchen with very little!*)

Rachel is finishing up her senior year and will graduate at the end of March, after senior projects and finals are complete. Due to the intense work and school schedule she's had, we chose to take our time and not rush her final year of high school. Last March, she became another casualty of the unemployed and lost her job. She went back to work for the same mortgage company in May, but then in September took a job at the local Family Christian Store. She truly thrives in her new work, loving sales and enjoys helping people find the resources they need. She does NOT miss the mortgage industry at all! She has also been busy building up her business, “Uniquely Yours by Rachel”. She still loves music, crafts, photography, knitting and everything else. Rachel's biggest lesson learned... stop starting new things, without finishing the old ones. Rachel loves life and soaks up every bit of it!

Alyssa, our seventeen year old still makes us laugh constantly! She was also a victim of a layoff, losing her job the same time as Rachel. And like Rachel, she's had the opportunity to work during the holidays at the same store, albeit with limited hours now that the holidays are over. Alyssa's biggest lesson is that she *can* do sales! At first, she wasn't sure if she was up to the challenge, but she has surprised us *and* herself. Alyssa, as with her sisters, continues to be faithful in practicing her piano and has played some fairly complex pieces. She has started her last year of school and is in the beginning stages of creating her home-based business. Her passion for history and writing will serve as an excellent foundation for developing her cottage industry. She was in her glory this past year as we've been going through our U.S. History course for school. She is also learning to sew and is still adding to her Coca-Cola collection. Where will it end???

Autumn has had some jobs in childcare, home care and yard work this year, but is looking forward to turning sixteen in a few months, so she'll have even more opportunities for employment. She started playing volleyball this fall with John, and has learned a lot. A very important lesson she learned is that it isn't any fun to turn an ATV upside down, throwing yourself and your uncle from it! We've heard it said however, that *is* how you change the oil in an ATV, at least in Mississippi – upside down.

Autumn's BEST memories of the year were when we went to Mississippi to see our new nephew/cousin Nathanael, and going to Homeschool Day at Six Flags. Going to Six Flags was a huge surprise for the girls; we already had it planned before John lost his job and the girls thought that we weren't going due to the change in our circumstances. It's so awesome when we can surprise our children with something so unexpected. The way we felt, must be in some small way how the Heavenly Father feels every time He surprises us with provision over the last twelve months.

To sum up what we think of our girls would be too difficult in such a short space. They have been awesome during our year of unemployment. They have been incredibly generous, have had super attitudes, and are very supportive team members! We could not be more blessed with our three treasures.

Finally, we would like to say a HUGE thanks TO ALL OF YOU that have walked this journey with us throughout the year. Your prayers and encouragement have been a lighthouse of hope, as we continue to face uncertain days. God has used you to remind us that He knows what is best and we rest in His promise to take care of us. Over and over in 2009, heavenly provision and protection has been showered upon us. We are hoping to share more of our amazing adventures in the coming months on our family's website. It is a definite work in progress, but we'll try our best to keep it up-to-date. Here's how to connect with us:

Our family's web site: <http://www.ourlegacymatters.com>

Our email addresses: john@ourlegacymatters.com
jbentham@yahoo.com (business address)
valerie@ourlegacymatters.com
rachel.bentham@yahoo.com
alyssa.bentham@yahoo.com
petlover.amb94@yahoo.com

Rachel's business web sites: <http://uniquelyyours.blogspot.org>
<http://rachelbenthamphotography.blogspot.com>

From our hearts to yours,
John, Valerie, Rachel, Alyssa & Autumn
(and the furry members of our family... Gracie, Trixie, Dollie, Calvin, Joey and most recently, Lucie)

"The choices we make today, write the pages of tomorrow."™

What will your legacy be?