



December 2009

Dear Friends and Family,

**Surprises have always been a part** of my family's Christmases. When we were kids, I remember my parents getting excited about surprises that they had for us, be it a special gift or a special outing. As the three of us kids grew up we began to plan our own surprises often in the form of special gifts for our parents. So it is no wonder that although we are now adults, we still enjoy the element of surprise.



**Thomas, Samantha and I are all in California** enjoying some time with my family for the holidays. We are enjoying eating Christmas treats, sitting by the fire, playing games and sleeping with blankets (instead of fans) at night. More than that though we are enjoying being with family, seeing friends and visiting my home church. However, this Christmas was going to be the first time that I would not be able to see my sister around the holidays. She and her husband were not going to be able to come to CA for a visit before spending Christmas back in VA. However, yesterday afternoon after my dad and Thomas had gone "shopping"; they returned home and soon after announced that a large box had been delivered on the front porch. Since my dad had been joking about large packages all week, I didn't believe him. After they continued insisting, I, along with my mom, finally went to see this large box on the front porch and whom it was for. As we opened the front door the box started moving and out popped my sister - surprise!! A moment later after thinking that it was only her that had come to visit, her husband walks in the back door of our house – another surprise!!

**So needless to say the element of surprise** still runs in our family. As we look to next year and the birth of our second child, Thomas and I decided that we so enjoyed the surprise of when Samantha was born, that again we will not find out whether we are having a boy or a girl. We will surprise you come March. Looking back on 2009 and the economic struggles that have been felt by all, we have been surprised by the continued generosity from our very faithful supporters as well as some special gifts that were given to help us make it through the year. A BIG thanks to all of you!

**When I think about Christmas I often wonder** about God's plan in bringing His Son into the world the way that He did. I know that we cannot fathom the mind of God, but I like to think that even though there was prophecy about Jesus coming, He was still excited about the surprise of bringing Jesus into the world. And I often wonder how much God enjoys surprising us – answering a prayer, providing the exact thing needed at just the right time, fulfilling little details that were not necessary but was what we hoped for or wanted, or just plain surprising us when we least expected it.

**May God surprise you this Christmas** as you celebrate the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ. And may this next year also be full of surprises!

Seeking Him for life,

*Amanda y Thomas Gutierrez*

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