

Hope from Dark Moments

By Marney McNall

Written from an interview with Josefina Calle

SUMMERVILLE CAMPUS

God sees our potential—even when we don't. Sometimes it takes a step of faith and serving others before God reveals a new path. Is your life going along the path you expected?

At 5 1/2 months pregnant, Josefina could hardly walk. The pain was excruciating, but the doctor assured her it was nothing. Yet Josefina's son was born January 31—his due date, May 11.

For months, Josefina endured watching her tiny son's fragile chest rise and fall with the help of a respirator in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). At first his heart calmed when she or her husband touched him. But then, he began to flinch. Something was wrong.

The doctors suggested a spinal tap. "But Moises was so small," Josefina said. "And they could only give him Tylenol. Knowing the pain he'd be in tore me apart."

Prayer was the only thing left, though God had always seemed more a drill sergeant with rules rather than a loving father. "I cried out to God, 'If you're doing this to keep me sane, please take Moises home. Don't keep him here in pain.' And I felt this strange warmth—this peace."

Treated for a curable infection, Moises came home from the hospital. But within a few months, Josefina discovered she was pregnant again. "It gave Moises so little time with just me! It was so unfair to him." Depression, a

condition she'd struggled with for most of her life, resettled within her.

"I didn't know how to reach out and tell anyone," she said. "I'm introverted, and for years I was picked on at school for being one of the few Hispanics in a town very racist toward my family and me."

Her depression deepened after Athena was born and Josefina couldn't connect with her. "I started thinking my family would be better off without me. Then my husband and I had an argument over something stupid, and I lost it. I went into my closet with a kitchen knife. I wanted to end my life."

Just as she touched the sharp edge to her wrist, images of her husband and children raced through her mind...and something more. She paused, "Is that you God?" and blacked out.

"But it wasn't like that at all. I don't see God and people through a negative filter anymore. I see it's about relationships, not religion."

She knew she needed help. She went to a psychologist and things improved, but it wasn't enough. Something was missing.

"I used to feel guilty whenever I considered trying a church that wasn't the traditional type I'd grown up in, even though I wasn't going to a church of any kind. I started going to Seacoast."



and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand," Isaiah 41:10.

"I want to go into women's ministry...become a pastor. Before, I couldn't have ever imagined wanting to do that! I received a partial scholarship to attend SEU Seacoast Campus' School of Ministry program, but I would need more than a partial scholarship to go. So I'm trusting God's will and his timing. Whatever way I can, I want others

to know the inexplicable peace and hope that only Jesus can offer."

To learn more about the Inside Track or small groups, visit seacoast.org/insidetrack.

Visit seuseacoast.org for more information on SEU Seacoast Campus.

Josefina attended the **INSIDE TRACK**—the newcomers course—even though she imagined everyone judging her for not being holy enough, or churchy enough. "But it wasn't like that at all. I don't see God and people through a negative filter anymore. I see it's about relationships, not religion."

Josefina now leads a small group for moms. "I was actually shaking when I asked the pastor about forming it, but he told me he'd been praying about

this for months!" She also runs a ministry called TLC (Tender Loving Compassion) to support parents with infants in the NICU. Through Sisterhood Serves events, she fills gift baskets with toothbrushes, snacks, Bibles, journals, restaurant gift cards, and handwritten notes with Bible verses like:

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you

SO DO NOT FEAR, FOR I AM WITH YOU; DO NOT BE DISMAYED, FOR I AM YOUR GOD. I WILL STRENGTHEN YOU AND HELP YOU; I WILL UPHOLD YOU WITH MY RIGHTEOUS RIGHT HAND.

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)