

## *☞ Mother's love*

*As a mom - have you ever felt stretched beyond what you thought you could give?*

*I had one of those times recently. Our 24 yr old son was very adventurous as a kid - mountain climbing, bungee jumping, roller coasters...always up for the risk. He has had an illness the past few years that has reduced him to : constant pain, being on morphine, muscle relaxers; weakness and neurological issues forcing him to take a leave from his job and college and bring on depression. After years of doctors, tests and no solid answers, he was recently diagnosed with Lymes disease. *Finally* someone understood his pain and symptoms; we had some hope and light at the end of this dark tunnel!*

*It has taken many months of being on medications and natural products, but he is starting to make some progress and feel better. We recently took him to Missouri for his 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to his Lymes specialist there. Missouri is known for its caves so after his visit we decided to be tourists. Scott really wanted to visit a cave. Not just the common, touristy, well lit, well traveled cave...but the real deal. With much reluctance, this closter phobic mom agreed because we needed at least 4 people to hire the guide and we were the only 4 interested in the cave tour that day. In the car I was quietly *begging* God to mercifully provide another person who would magically appear and want to take my place when we got there...God had other ideas.*

*We each paid our \$30 and began the 15 minute hike to the cave. I was practically holding on to every bush and tree ...praying "if this cup could pass from me, oh God..." We arrived at the cave and before we climbed in, a huge turkey vulture flew out. "Maybe I could just stay outside and see the cave from out here!" There was a war going on inside me, but the desire to be a part of this experience with our son and his wife, won out. With only a small light on each of our hard hats, we stepped into this hole -1/2 the size of a small car. Once inside, we then followed the guide's instructions to descend one at a time down a 15 foot ladder through a narrow opening. I was shaking and whispering..."I can't believe I paid to do this" I touched the cold, damp, walls of clay that were within 12" of me on all sides to steady myself. My hand felt strange and I realized I was touching a sleeping bat! Everything in me wanted to bolt, but I was stuck between two people on a ladder in this slimy tunnel. I opened my eyes and there were little sleeping bats all over the walls. *Did I mention I was closterphobic!!* My prayer life had suddenly improved leaps and bounds...When we reached the bottom of the ladder; we were in a much larger part of the cave and I sighed a little relief.*

*I stayed with my husband and our guide in the larger part while our son and his wife ventured into a 30 ft. tunnel, crawling on their bellies, through the wet clay. We could hear them laughing and squealing with delight as they came upon salamanders of all different colors. I hadn't heard our son laugh in such a long time...They reached a place where they could sit up, trade places and crawl back to us. I was doing the "mom thing" and praying they wouldn't get stuck! After they ventured into a few more tunnels we were at last ready to climb back out. Going up the*

*15 foot ladder was a little easier - the bats were still slumbering and I couldn't wait to see day light! When we emerged, we stood together and the guide took our picture. Our son and his wife were covered in mud and smiling from ear to ear.*

*On the hike back I was deeply impacted with so many emotions. I realized what a precious thing it was to have our son on the journey back to being his old self again. We were coming out the other side of this dark tunnel of his life.*

*I was also amazed at how my love for him would bring me to do something I absolutely loathed...suddenly my love paled in comparison as I had a fresh revelation of the greatest love there has ever been...the love of Jesus who, after 30 pieces of silver were paid, in exchange for His life, allowed Himself to be beaten, mocked and crucified. Who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross for all of us, scorning its shame...so we who believe in Him can be free from sin and its consequences of pain, destruction and death and can have eternal life forever with God. May we bask in that love today... be filled, healed, forgiven and strengthened by it so we can bring His light and love to people who are still trapped in this cold, dark, lost world.*

In the Love of Jesus....Carolann