

Have you heard the terms, “when the going gets tough the tough get going;” or “quitters never win, and winners never quit?” Popular quotes or cliché’s that both describe Zachary Wathen. Life at times has dealt him a tough road; other times his challenges would cause most to quit or stop trying, but Zach has maintained the attitude that God will make him better. His motto is “all things work together for good with Christ as my center.” Somehow, some way Zach keeps going, keeps building, keeps believing that no matter what comes there is something to be learned today for a better day, tomorrow.

Zach has always been inquisitive, creative, and energetic. These attributes are what make him unique and positive. At a young age, on a walk with his mother, just after the dew had fallen, Zach looked to the ground and yelled with excitement, “Mommy look at the rainbow!” His mother, being her positive encouraging self, whispered, “Zach, the sun is shining and there’s no clouds or rain in sight, where do you see a rainbow?” Zach leaned down to the ground and pointed to the dew drop that had formed on a blade of grass and said, “there it is, see it, isn’t it awesome?!” His expression of excitement over such a find typifies his zeal for life and the desire to see the details of God’s creation where no one else looks. His inquisitive nature is what brings gusto and zest to his photography and art today. He sees beauty where no one else looks; it isn’t learned but a part of his make-up. It is just one of the many qualities he has that brings a refreshing discovery of beauty where no one else ventures to look.

Two of Zach’s earliest words were, “why,” and “how come”. Why and how come filled the moment no matter what the subject or who was present; everyone was subject to his questioning. Part of the frustration for Zach was that he wanted to know but found it difficult to process the information fast enough. What he learned was he was dyslexic, and potentially ADHD. The doctors wanted him to take Ritalin, a drug for hyperactive children. His mom said, “we will rely on prayer; Zach’s disposition is God’s creativity and in His creativity will come good.” This was a difficult time as Zach struggled even to know his ABC’s. In fact, some times he would take hours to learn his spelling words only to forget them the next day. Over time, with patience and prayer, Zach began to learn skills to better process information. Through kind teachers and a patient mom he learned to his ABC’s by writing them in the carpet. He found that he best retained information through kinesthetic learning; learning that was best taught through using all senses not just listening, not just repeating, but touching, smelling, and seeing. At the age of 7 he attended a special training course provided by research at Butler University for dyslexia. Over the course of the summer Zach attended sessions that lasted 8 hours a day 5 days a week for 4 weeks. Not the way most 7 year olds choose to spend a summer but because he wanted to learn he was willing, and because he was willing he learned skills that he uses today to excel. The Lord used his inquisitive, creative, energetic persona to develop a phenomenally gifted young man who still asks why and how come, but rather than those being frustrating repetition, today those questions drive improvement and the answers he seeks provide ingenious, creative results.

With Zach there is an excitement that creates a positive, energetic environment in all he does. He is infectious with his love for life. His energy and positive, overcoming attitude affects and encourages others. As a child his energy was at times a challenge to harness; so much so that when he would visit the zoo with his mom she would often times worry he would run off on his own because he found it to be so fascinating; in his mind the world was his playground. As he became less stroller bound and more free of foot mom discovered she needed help. Many times, when energy was high, you would find Zach’s arm attached to a cord that looked like a stretched accordion wire. To corral him and keep him in manageable distance without complete exhaustion his mom implored what he called, “the leash”. Zach wasn’t bothered by the leash, but also didn’t always understand the restriction it placed on his mobility. One afternoon, rather than go to the

zoo, Zach went with his mother to the mall. Again, in a moment of accelerated energy mom implored, “the leash”. As mom began to look at clothing, Zach took off. This time he dashed off at such a speed the cord whipped-lashed him backwards with a good amount of force that he flew back to the feet of his mommy. No harm came from the event but mom and Zach both learned a valuable lesson; Zach learned there are limits, mom learned there are better ways to harness energy. From that day forward, the leash was put away, but the lesson was valuable for Zach’s development. He learned that energy and enthusiasm are a positive but when they are out of control unfortunate things can happen. Today, he continues to push the limit, that’s what makes Zach, Zach; but he has learned to pay attention to when he is at the limit. It is in the pushing to the limit that he gets the most from himself and his clients. He goes to what appears extreme to capture what others won’t attempt to try. He doesn’t flirt with danger, but he isn’t afraid of new and different.

As a result of his childhood development and the encouragement to be what God gifted him to be Zach’s accomplishments, involvement, and activities are varied. Here are a few of highlights from high school: Academy 86 National Soccer Team, Show Choir, FCA, Student Council, Church Youth Group. Mission Work in Quito, Ecuador, Camp Youth Counselor, Honor Roll Student, Who’s Who Among Students, Spirit Honor Award, Student of the Week, Athlete of the Week, Sportsmanship Award, Mental Attitude, Most Valuable Long Distance Runner, Athletic Leadership Selection, 4 Time Regional Track Qualifier, Cross Country All Conference, Sectional Champion and Regional Champion, 3200 M Relay, IHSAA State 3200M Relay, 3 Sport Letterman Award, School Record Holder 3200 M Relay, Tri Kappa Art Show, First Place, Student Body-Secretary & Vice-President, Soccer Team Co-Captain, Track Team Co-Captain, 11 Varsity Letters won in 4 years just to name a few.

Zach continued to develop in college, playing soccer his freshman year for CCU. There he worked his way into a starting position, helping the team compete for the National championship. The championship eluded the team but their efforts resulted in a runner-up finish. At the end of his freshman year Zach decided he had played enough soccer and the time had come to pursue other interest. Realizing creativity was in him he chose to leave CCU and change course that eventually led him to 5 other colleges, over the next 3 years. One of the schools he attended was The Indianapolis Art Institute where he was selected as leadership liaison, representing the school at a national conference in Chicago. Although there was a lot of moving around he secured his degree in Graphic Design. With that accomplishment his younger brother wanted to buy him a shirt that read: 4 years, 6 schools, 1 degree, WOW!

When he wasn’t in school he worked in a glue factory, earning money to buy his first camera. One summer he went to Maui, Hawaii with the family. While on the beach taking pictures he was asked to join a business that needed a photographer who would also teach surfing. Looking like a surfer, being athletic, naturally gifted in photography, and loving Maui, Zach decided to stay in Maui while the rest of the family went home. For 12 weeks he lived on his own, ran a surf school, and contracted with a small boutique on Front St. in Lahaina, Hawaii to take landscape photos. From this experience Zach knew photography and art was what he wanted and needed to pursue. The question now was what area of photography and art did he enjoy most; and where could he make a living doing what he loved?

Maui was a great place to experience but it certainly presented some lifestyle challenges; like how do I start a life in a place where the expense to live is so high? With that revelation Zach made the trek back to Indiana to finish school with the determination to follow his dream of being a great artist and photographer. With the money he had saved from his Maui excursion Zach bought more studio equipment. Friends began to see his postings on-line. Requests were made to

do senior photos and weddings. With each new request Zach's confidence grew, his passion increased and he began to realize his photography could become a real business opportunity. As this idea formed in his mind he began to dream of the possibilities. On a weekend visit to meet up with some friends at Anderson University Zach ran into Stefanie Vinsel. As Zach puts it, "the super mellow vibes, and creative overflow were heavy on her face." Her super awesome charisma for life made them quick friends. Zach learned that not only did Stef enjoy to long-board like him but she too had an interest in and talent for photography. What they found, as their friendship grew, was that photography was more than an interest, it was their passion. And they too learned that a greater passion, more so than even the photography, was that they both had a passion for Christ, and wanted their photography to have an impact not just an existence. From these discoveries a business match was formed; two capable vessels with similar drive, similar interest, equal passion, and complimentary personalities. A partnership made from heaven!

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