

Fear Not

I love being outdoors. I take great pleasure in watering my plants, digging in the soil and pulling weeds. But I live in an area where rattlesnakes exist, even though in 40 years I have never encountered one.

Apparently, a nest had been stirred up in an empty lot recently, and my neighbors were suddenly finding them in their yards. One even appeared in a neighbor's garage.

After the snakes moved in, my pleasure was replaced with fear. Now when I ventured outside, I stood anxiously holding the hose as my eyes darted about, alert to any danger. Every time I went into my garage, it was with fear and trepidation, wondering if a snake was lurking in a dark corner.

Emeralds Find Their Way Home

My desire to have an emerald was birthed when my husband, Bob, and I saw a loose, bright green emerald while browsing the Los Angeles Jewelry Mart. It was an eye-catcher!

To my delight, Bob placed an emerald ring on my finger for our 25th wedding anniversary. Little did I know it would become a token of my faith and a test of what I believed.

My husband and I have a fun tradition we look forward to each year. On the Friday after Thanksgiving, we officially begin the Christmas shopping season at a nearby mall. One particular Friday proved to be momentous.

Shunned for Believing

After 11 years of serving and worshiping in a denominational church, I found myself an outcast among the congregation because I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Hurt and dejected, I felt as though a spear had been thrust into my heart. My whole world crumbled.

People I loved turned away and told me to go with my “own kind.” The baptism had made me different, and to the church I was unacceptable.

I could have wallowed endlessly in my pain, but the Holy Spirit lifted me and began a work in me that exceeded my understanding. I moved out from beneath the heavy shackles of the bondage I’d been too blind to recognize.

Miraculous Provision

From the time I became a Christian in December 1991, I was involved in various types of ministry—youth work, street evangelism, college ministry and worship. But I knew that it was also part of God’s plan for me to minister overseas, even if only temporarily.

I had a strong desire to minister in India. I knew it would be a faith-building experience for me. And in June 1999, I was preparing to go there on my first short-term missions trip.

For several months, I had been experiencing severe dental pain

because of four impacted wisdom teeth. Also, I had cavities, and I needed braces, which I knew would cost an exorbitant amount of money. I didn't have it, but I knew that my heavenly Father did.

Healed by Forgiveness

I was sexually molested by a family member when I was a young girl. At age 18, I was brutally raped and lived in fear of my attacker for years.

Following this last assault, I accepted Christ as my Savior. After having had a career in modeling and acting, I entered Bible college and fell more and more in love with God and ministry.

Today, I am an ordained minister and assistant pastor. Although I went to the family member who had abused me and told him I had forgiven him, bitterness still had a grip on my heart.

Thankful for Dad

My father loved telling the story about the day I was born, September 7, 1955. He named me Florence Rose, after his mother, who died when he was a boy.

During my childhood my parents did not get along well for a

very long time. Years later I asked my dad why he had stayed around, and he said, "Because no one was gonna get my kids."

Back in the 1960s fathers had few rights, but our dad took care of my siblings and me when our mother moved out. Although she returned after several months, our dad was always there for us.

A Living Witness

Health issues have plagued me all my life. Tests administered years ago showed that I was allergic to almost everything.

I've spent many days in and out of hospitals. In 1993, I was hospitalized for more than a month. A portion of that stay was spent in the cardiac care unit (CCU).

I was unable to breathe, so a tube was put in my throat that prevented me from talking. But I asked my husband to bring my Bible and anointing oil to me. When I couldn't talk, these were witnessing tools for God.

God Still Heals

I was taken to a hospital, where I spent two weeks in a coma with a multiple skull fracture and a fractured jaw. I spent six weeks in the intensive care unit and another six weeks in rehabilitation, undergoing occupational, physical and speech

therapy.

Finally, I was discharged and started putting the past behind me. I know the prayers of my parents, my friends, my teachers and my church helped me to recover.

Thankful Survivors

In 1944, I was in my early teens and spending the summer with my sister, Sissy, and her husband, Ted. Sissy, her four children and I were about to leave for a trip in her old station wagon, when Ted surprised her with a brand-new car he'd just bought for her.

This was in the days before seat belts, so I had the privilege of holding the new baby, Linda, on the road. It was Saturday, and there were lots of construction signs but no workers. For miles, the signs warned us of the deep ditch next to the shoulder of the extremely narrow road.

My sister was fumbling with the radio and ran off the highway. She pulled hard on the steering wheel but there was no controlling it. She screamed, "Hold on!"

God's Transforming Power

After her divorce, our daughter and her two children moved in with my husband and me. She did not get along with my husband,

and there was constant strife in our home. A while later, he told her to leave.

My daughter was angry and left, taking the kids with her. I cried out to God, asking Him to protect my grandchildren and place them where they should be.

Soon the children were back in our home, and my daughter moved in with friends. The children were 6 and 7 years old and very active. At first I was overwhelmed, and I wasn't sure how I was going to hold down a job, lead a women's Bible study and take care of them.