

Jesus' Favorite Coffee

After I started Junior High School, God began breaking my heart for the poor and put the idea of becoming a missionary in my head. Years later, I attended a small Christian college, and less than a month after I graduated in 2000, I boarded a plane headed for the African nation of Mozambique.

God allowed me to minister to the poor and to teenage prostitutes there for six months. I fell in love with the people and the land, and it was difficult to leave. I seriously considered living there as a full-time missionary—until the Lord redirected my life and gave me a passion to instill a missionary heart in the people of Orange County, California, where I live.

I found a way to incorporate God's heart for missions with my work at a popular coffee store. Our location became a venue for live music, much of it played by Christian musicians, who have been given the opportunity to minister in a different way to people outside the four walls of the church.

A Simple 'God Bless You!'

Three years ago, before the summer break, our Bible study leader gave the class a challenge: "Do something weird for Jesus this summer, something you've never done before." As I drove home, I accepted the challenge, but I wondered what "weird" thing I could do.

I recalled a minister I knew once who made a regular practice of standing at our sanctuary door and blessing everyone when

he shook their hands. I remembered how this filled me with warm feelings, and I started to wonder if I could make others feel that way. Could I be a witness for God in the marketplace? I thought.

One day, after I finished shopping for groceries, when a young man was putting my bags in the back seat of my car, I said to him, "The Lord bless you."

Are You a Christian?

I was a young college student, studying music and looking to supplement my income, when I was made aware of a job opening at a local church. I gained an interview, and my meeting with the committee went well.

The choir members were excited about the possibility of hiring a college student. But among their questions for me, one was glaringly absent: Are you a Christian?

I wasn't. To me, this was just a conducting job. I didn't notice it then, but now I can see the absence of this question as a direct intervention by God.

I am a Survivor

In 2001, I had a marriage made in heaven, three wonderful little boys, great friends and a house with a white picket

fence. I worked as a university instructor and at one of the nation's top hospitals. All of my hard work had paid off, and I was on my way.

But in a matter of months, my picture-perfect world was shattered. After the birth of my youngest son, I began to experience unusual physical symptoms such as extreme fatigue, numbness and tingling in my limbs, and loss of balance.

After undergoing months of testing and losing my vision in one eye, I heard the dreaded words: "You have multiple sclerosis." Life as I knew it changed forever.

The Beauty of the Storm

In my ideal world, God would sit me down with paper and pen and ask me to write out exactly how I would like my life to go. Much to my shock and chagrin, however, that is not the way God handles His business.

It was June 24, 2005 when I first received the news that I had cancer. Being the naïve 23-year-old, 6-month newlywed that I was, I reacted out of anger, fear, shock and disbelief. Finding the beauty and purpose in my situation was the last thing on my mind as my doctor began to tell me that the lump I had found on my leg was actually non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and that I would have to undergo eight rounds of aggressive chemotherapy.

Fingering my long locks of hair, I listened as the doctor said that I would lose all of my glorious mane, which I had just spent \$65 to have highlighted!

Healed of Graves' Disease

In July 2005 my husband called me at home. Although I had been resting, I was so breathless he assumed I was doing intense housework. Two days later, my hands shook so badly that I could hardly write.

That Sunday I couldn't sing more than two words without losing my breath. Soon after, short walks left me breathless. My hair began to fall out and my weight decreased.

Immediately I agreed to undergo medical tests. Both my resting heart rate and active heart rate were abnormally high. My thyroid was producing hormones at a toxic level three times above the average.

His Perfect Peace

"I didn't die. I lived! And now I'm telling the world what God did" (Ps. 118:17, The Message).

I started having post-menopausal problems in 2002. An initial biopsy returned negative, and at first the problems were sporadic, but in 2006, they worsened. I prayed and asked the Lord to heal me as He had healed the woman with an issue of blood (see Mark 5:25-34).

Because I work at an OB/GYN practice, I knew I should have additional tests done. This time the results were positive for endometrial cancer. In my state of stunned denial, the Holy

Spirit overpowered me with Isaiah 26:3, " You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you" (NIV).

Don't Argue, Obey

We should never underestimate the power of the Lord's timing and the importance of doing His will. In 1980, my unsaved, alcoholic uncle was diagnosed with terminal cancer and given six months to live.

Throughout his life, my grandmother tried unsuccessfully to speak to Uncle Tim about godly matters. Unfortunately, even news of his impending death did not change his ways.

Miraculously, Uncle Tim lived 18 years after his diagnosis, all the while staying away from the Lord. During that time I grew close to him, looking beyond his intoxication to see a man for whom Jesus died.

Trapped!

Arriving home from work one day, I thought I was alone. God knew that I wasn't. Making my way to the back of the house to take a relaxing shower, I turned on the light in the hallway. I also turned up the volume on the radio to hear it over the running water and the exhaust fan.

As I stepped out of the shower, something in the hall caught my eye. I walked from the bathroom to the bedroom and flipped on the light.

To my utter horror a stranger was standing by my bed, a stocking over his head and a knife in his hand. Terror constricted my throat, but inside I heard, "Call upon Me and I will deliver you."

"Jesus!" burst from my lips, followed by "I bind you in the name of Jesus!" Immediately I ran down the hall. I knew my screams would not be heard over the radio, and I realized that I must get out of the house.

I reached the front door, but I knew I'd never get the security chain off in time. When I whirled around to face the masked intruder, he was standing two feet away. He raised his knife and bellowed: "I'll cut you in pieces. Go lie down!"

The calming voice of God told me to obey the authority of that knife for the moment. I whispered, "In Jesus' name I will lie down" over and over as I headed back toward my bedroom, assuming that the intruder was right behind me.

As I re-entered the hallway, I prayed, "Lord, I know it is not Your will that I die like this, and I don't know how, but I know You are going to save me." Entering my bedroom, I noticed the intruder was no longer behind me.

The Spirit of God told me he had left the house. After a few minutes I called 9-1-1. The police found the intruder's tracks under the window, where he had apparently broken in, and by the back door where he'd probably exited. The deputy was surprised I escaped unharmed.

All I could reply was, "Jesus did it!"

I've learned that prayer can carry us through not only daily needs but through deadly crises as well. Even if we find

ourselves trapped in a corner, we have a prayer weapon to use in our defense—the name of Jesus.

Love Conquered My Grief

Both my mother and father passed away within a span of four weeks, and my heart was broken. I was totally stricken with grief.

After they were gone, I embarked on a journey through a dark, lonely place. But it was there I learned to cry out to God from the very deepest part of my heart.

So deep was the pain that my tears could have been blood. I needed to get past it, but grief was taking over my life.