

Anne Graham Lotz: The Surprising Gift God Gave After My Father's Death

"He makes me lie down ..." (Ps. 23:2a).

Following the death of John the Baptist, Jesus knew His disciples needed quiet time to process what had taken place. He knew how difficult it was to minister to others while their own hearts were breaking. So He invited them to come away by themselves and get some rest (Mark 6:31).

I, too, have heard the Lord whisper that same invitation to me in a unique way following my father's move to heaven and the swirl of events that were triggered by it. I received the call about my father at 7:40 a.m. ET on Feb. 21. On Friday, Feb. 23, my son drove me four hours to The Cove in western North Carolina, where some of my family was gathering. My two daughters, their spouses and my three granddaughters followed.

Early the next morning, we rode in a motorcade escorting Daddy from The Cove to the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte. Then my son drove me three hours back to my home. Tuesday, I drove back to Charlotte in order to be on the plane early the next morning as family members accompanied Daddy to Washington, D.C. We traveled by motorcade to the nation's Capitol, where Daddy was laid in honor in the Rotunda. Following a brief, meaningful ceremony, I stood for over 90 minutes greeting Cabinet officials, senators and congressmen who came to show their respect and offer their condolences.

That afternoon, I stood for three hours to speak to anyone who came into the Rotunda, from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Gorsuch and Justice Alito to people whose identities I'll never know but whose tears flowed freely with mine. That night, I went to the White House as the guest of the president and first lady

for a private family dinner. The next morning, I traveled once again by motorcade to the Capitol as Daddy was removed by an honor guard. Next, we escorted him to the plane for what would be his last flight and the return trip to Charlotte. He was taken once again by motorcade back to the library.

That night, I attended a dinner for about 200 extended family members and also sat in on a program briefing for the funeral service. Early the next morning, I found myself once again in a motorcade that took me to the library to await the beginning of the noon-time service. Following the service, I stood in line to speak to people until no one else was left to greet in the tent. At 3:30 p.m., a processional was formed, and we walked with Daddy to the gravesite where, after a brief service, he was finally laid to rest. I returned to the hotel, and the next morning, drove the three hours back home.

To say I was beyond exhaustion physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually would not come close to describing my state of being. But the Lord knew I was poised to plunge into frantic activity in order to catch up on two weeks of work that had been paused. He knew that while I needed rest, quiet and isolation, I wouldn't take it unless I was forced to do so. So Sunday afternoon, I became ill. I assumed it was just total exhaustion or the effects of the icy wind under the funeral tent, but later in the week, I was diagnosed with the worst strain of the flu. For the past eight days, I have been forced to lie down. To do nothing but rest. By myself. I know the Lord who is my Shepherd is the One who has made me lie down.

In my fevered state, I have only been able to process a small portion of what I've experienced. Yet some things are clear. I do know that my father's life—and death—promoted the gospel, exalted Jesus Christ and glorified God. I do know that in the three weeks since word of my father's homegoing was made public, the gospel has been proclaimed worldwide over and over in every conceivable way by individuals, news media,

ministries, entertainers, talk shows, churches ... and then the end will come. (Matt. 24:14)

On a personal level, I also know I couldn't have made it through all of the above without your prayers! You, God's people, have carried me through, not just somehow, but triumphantly. Thank you with all my heart!

I also know, after I have rested a while and recuperated from this illness, that there is one thing I will do: "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).
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