

Dolly Parton Shares the Prophecy That Triggered Her Faith

Dolly Parton is on another roll, and she's giving all the credit to God. The music and entertainment superstar has been riding a new pop culture wave, celebrating her 50 years as a member of the Grand Ole Opry with an upcoming NBC concert special, a sit-down primetime interview with Robin Roberts on ABC. She'll be co-hosting with Carrie Underwood and Reba McEntire and performing on the CMA Awards, and she's had recent collaborations with Swedish dance group Galantis and Christian singers For King & Country and Zach Williams. Along with her business partner Sam Haskell (*Coat of Many Colors, Christmas of Many Colors: Circle of Love*), she's also releasing an imaginative new series on Netflix called *Dolly Parton's Heartstrings* centering on eight of her songs such as "Jolene," "Two Doors Down" and "These Old Bones," the latter of which features an old woman who spoke a prophecy over Parton when she was a young girl.

The singer, songwriter, producer, actress, author, businesswoman and humanitarian has come a long way from her humble beginnings in Sevier County, Tennessee. It was there as a young girl when she began developing her talent, but more importantly, her faith. Along with a few other outlets, I recently had the chance to sit down with Parton in her suite at the Dream More Resort at Dollywood, where she discussed her calling as an entertainer and how that early prophecy impacted her faith in God and her incredible career.

I loved how you talked about how you were told that you were going to be anointed. Looking back on your career where you've inspired so many people and done so many amazing things, what do you think that meant?

When I was a kid, we grew up in the church. My grandpa was a Pentecostal preacher. So, healing and praying and being anointed and all that stuff was nothing new to us because we survived because of our faith in God to get us through. But I remember when people used to pray, in our church, they'd anoint with oil, pray for the sick or whatever. I had been hearing people say, "Anoint someone with oil." But when that old lady told me I was anointed, I didn't know what that meant, I was just thinking that was like with olive oil. But Mama said, "No, that means that God has his hand on you, and you may do something special." That triggered a faith in me, because I believed that I was supposed to do something good, especially after she told me. I thought "Well, then this is my responsibility. I'm going to do something good." So, I kind of held that also in the back of my mind, whether that was predestined or not or whether I just took that little grain of faith and made that so for myself. Either way it worked. And I never let go of that because I always felt responsible to God that I was supposed to be doing something for God. I still feel like that and I'm still doing it trying to do ... sinning all the way (laughs), but trying my best, though. Asking for forgiveness, 70 times seven.

You run circles around about anybody else I know as far as what you're producing, putting out music, doing duets, movies and now *Heartstrings*. What drives you to do that? You could actually sit back and just take it easy. I know that faith content was a big deal because I was in a press conference with you a few years ago when you said you wanted to put more of that out.

I do. I actually live on spiritual energy, creative and spiritual energy, because I do go a lot. I work hard. I work really, really hard. But I love my work. When you go through family problems or heartaches, personal things, it's always hard. But that's when you actually have to lean on God for even more. But I really feel like I have a calling. I always

felt I had a mission. I don't know what all it is. But I feel like God told me early on, that feeling that I was supposed to go until He told me to stop, and He ain't said nothing yet about quitting. So I ain't said nothing about retiring yet. But I just know that I will go until I can't go anymore. Because I do believe that I can give something to this world. I want to. I tried to. And even when I'm physically not strong enough to actually be doing it, I still depend on that spirit. I can still rely on that and God. Even when I think I can't go out on that stage, because I feel so bad physically, as soon as I get there, I just get lifted up in spirit and just feel like I'm on that spiritual plane. And that's what I rely on. I always have and I always will. And until God says stop, I'll keep going.

As you're putting together something like *Heartstrings*, how does your faith play into that? You know, what are you praying for people to take away?

Well, every day, I pray that, whether it's praying for God to lead me and to take out all the wrong things, wrong people in my life, or bring all the right things, right people in and to let me glorify Him and uplift mankind, that I will do something in this world to make it a little better than it was and let me be a light and a vessel to be used. It all comes from our spiritual background, but I just want to do what I can do in this world to make things better if I can, and I'm in a position to do it. If you get in a position to help, you should help. And at my age, and with everything going on, I just think this is a good time, with all the darkness going on in the world right now, and all the bad stuff going on. It's always been going on, but now we see it all, because of social media. Anything happens today, and you see it in a second. Before, lots of bad things have been going on forever, of course. But right here in our own world and our own times, I just think there's enough of that; they're going to all be doing that. So, somebody like me, if you write, and if you can

say something, make a little change, even if it's subtle, it's better than doing nothing. So, I'm just going to continue to do that. And I just feel like that's a good place for me to be right now. Well, I'm no angel, no doubt about. But I still feel like I'm in a good position to do stuff I can write. And I can express myself in the ways that I do.

When my daughters saw *Christmas of Many Colors*, I thought they were not going to sit through the whole thing. They got to the end of it and one of my girls, the first time I've ever seen this, she was laughing and then just started crying, boo-hoo crying. I told two different people and they said that that's the Holy Spirit. So I just wanted to tell you that because you're talking about being anointed and being used, and I feel like you were.

Well, those two movies, *Coat of Many Colors* and *Circle of Love* Christmas movie, those are very personal to me. I'm sure you all know Sam Haskell, my partner, and my executive producer. We worked really, really hard on those movies. And we both put a lot into it. And he's very faith-based as well, and has a lot of faith. We both felt really, really moved, that this movie had done what we had hoped that it would do, that it would bring people to, not to us, but a spiritual connection for faith-based based people, and for what Christmas is about to us. I never tried to shove my religion down anybody's throat, I'm not even that religious, but I'm very spiritual and I grew up in a religious background. But I just think it's important that people, there is a God light in all of us. There's a God core or whatever, if you're a scientist, you may just call it something, it doesn't matter. There's something bigger and better than us. And we need to connect to that to make us better people. And you know, the more you can draw from that, the better off you are not just for yourself, but for all the things and people that you can touch by believing that ... I just do and I just try to live an example and like I say, write an example. I'm able to write and express myself in

so many ways. If I've touched somebody, then that's great. Then I feel like I've done something good and it makes me feel better about myself. And it's makes me feel like I'm hopefully doing something right and makes me want to continue and that's why I probably won't ever retire. I'd have to be knocked off my feet or be sick. I would. I've often said the only way I would not be working—I would never say I'm retired—was that if I had to pull back some if my husband was not well or if I was not well. But as soon as I could I would want to work again, but I would still be writing, I'd still, no matter what, wherever I'm at—I'd still be creating something.

So you talk about your spirituality, your connection to God and being anointed. Is there a time in your life where you can look back and say, "Wow, God's hand was so clearly on this point in time"? Where's the time in your life where you've tangibly seen God's hand over you?

I feel that all the time, even when I'm going through really hard times. I have to kind of try to see what God is trying to teach me, whether it be illness in the family or personal things that I go through. I try to look at it like this—there's something I'm supposed to be learning about this, because I know God is not trying to be cruel to me. I keep thinking I'm supposed to be knowing something, I'm supposed to be learning something. I'm supposed to be becoming a bigger person, being taught responsibility or patience and stuff. For me, my whole life, I've just kind of run free and had the freedom to do whatever I wanted to do. I've always just done that. But then there comes a time when you have to be responsible for other things or other people. And you think, "Well, this is going to teach me about what kind of person I am." I just know that everything I go through, I like to feel like I'll come out of it better if I make it through it; I'll be a better person because of it. I just kind of look at even the bad times as something I just have to go through and it's just like that story about the footprints in the sand. He

didn't leave me, or He was carrying me. I either left Him or He was carrying me. So that's kind of how I look at that. I try to remember all those sayings and things that, you know, when I think, "Well, where are You, God?" He says, "Well I'm down here with the people."

Dreaming is a big theme and something you talk a lot about; what are you dreaming up now?

Well, I'm dreaming of a good night's sleep. I'm dreaming of a big 'ole pan of mashed potatoes. And there's some truth in that, too. I've been working so hard I've about lost my voice doing all this 50th anniversary and all the stuff we've been working on. It's like I said, I have to dream myself into a corner. I have to be responsible. My dreams have all come true and now I've got to work on a new dream, bring on new dreams. Every day I wake up with new dreams. With my brand, we're going to do some clothes, cosmetics, wigs and get into more of that mailbox money, they call it, where I can just kind of let my brand (work). But I still have to be working with that too on the creative end of that and development. I'm going to try to get more into doing more uplifting songs, just like the "God Only Knows" and "Faith in Me" and the "There Was Jesus." Not all religious songs, but just songs that are kinder, more fun, more uplifting, make you feel good about yourself, make you feel good about other people, about life and so I'm hoping to, you know, to try to spread a little light.

You are.

Trying to. {eoa}

DeWayne Hamby is a communications specialist and longtime journalist covering faith-based music, entertainment, books and the retail industry. He is the author of the book *Gratitude Adjustment*. Connect with him at or on Twitter at @dewaynehamby.

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