

One Woman's Secret to Finding Hope and Joy in a Time of Unprecedented Trial

It's in the Bible at Mark 2:12. We've said that phrase for a long time: "We never saw anything like this." Each time major disasters and disruptions happen in our personal lives and in the world, the words come tumbling out of our mouths. God sent the flood, held back the Red Sea for the children of Israel, raised Lazarus from the dead and sent His Son, and the world had "never seen anything like it." These events were disruptive and life-changing, and we are going to see more of them.

The men lowering the paralyzed man through a hole in the roof were looking to assist him for his physical healing, but God wanted to heal the man from his sins and for eternity. The healing miracle that took place that day wasn't just for the man's physical health; it was for his spiritual health. Physical healing will last the length of our earthly lives, and God wants us to be healed from the sickness of sin for eternity.

Russell and Darlene Rose Deibler set sail as a newly married missionary couple in 1938 and landed in Batavia, Java, to minister deep in the jungles of New Guinea. The challenges began immediately. Their tireless courage and faith in God allowed them to reach the deepest inhabitants, the Kapaukus. They would be the first visitors the nationals would meet from the outside world and the first to share the story of Jesus. They had "never seen anything like it before." The Deiblers' challenge was the work God had called them to do, but they never dreamed what it would entail for them to accomplish His plan. Darlene said in her book *Evidence Not Seen: A Woman's Miraculous Faith in the Jungles of World War II*, "This was His

appointed place for us at the time.”

When World War II began and the war reached their tiny missionary station on the island, it wasn't long before they were both taken as prisoners to separate camps (Russell to Pare Pare and Darlene to Kampili) by the Japanese. On March 13, 1942, Japanese officers came and took Russell in the middle of the day with only a moment's notice, never to be seen again by Darlene. Russell's final words would carry her through what was yet to come, “Remember one thing, my dear: God said that He would never leave us nor forsake us.” The Japanese would come for her a year later, taking her to a converted tuberculosis sanitarium. There she endured months of backbreaking labor, with constant terror and multiple health challenges, but this would not be the worst of her incarceration. She would be wrongfully accused of spying, thrown into solitary confinement and would endure horrific torture by the Japanese.

Flies, worms, dysentery, malaria and beriberi (caused by a lack of vitamin B) along with beatings during multiple interrogation sessions filled her days and nights of torture. Her biggest terror, however, was keeping fear of the unknown away. Fear of what could come at any given moment. Darlene called it the “spiritually unprofitable game of ‘suppose.’” She knew her “supposes” would defeat her if she didn't cling to God's remedy: joy. God's joy was what the enemy wanted to destroy in her because joy dispels the unknown and vanquishes terror.

The Japanese secret police wanted to crush her ability to engage in the endless rejoicing of God's protection, provision and love—to break her soul. What others took to be a God-forsaken prison and place of death, she chose to see as God's place for her to be a soldier for Christ. So, she soldiered on. Darlene steeled herself to never giving in and to cling to God's promises because His promises bring hope. She would never succumb to abandoning her trust in her Lord and Savior

no matter how inhumane her torture. God had called her to battle the enemies of the world, both seen and unseen. She chose instead to take on the armor of God (Eph. 6:11-18) *fully*, day and night.

When the war began, God revealed to Darlene a promise in Deuteronomy 33:12 (NIV) that became the cornerstone of her faith: "Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for He shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders." The Scriptures told her that there was an unseen world that battles for us. And this spiritual world requires us to battle with our faith and trust in God in the seen world.

This faith would be ultimately tested as God prepared her for the biggest battle she might yet endure—the threat of decapitation by a sword. She clung to Hebrews 11:1 (TPT): "Now faith brings our hopes into reality and becomes the foundation needed to acquire the things we long for. It is all the evidence required to prove what is still unseen." Her faith could not rest on her feelings or moment-to-moment unseen issues; her faith had to be permanently cemented on the person of Jesus Christ, with whom she would have no shadow of turning. She, like Job, would say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (see Job. 13:15, MEV).

Darlene lived. She survived the horrors of the war in the Pacific to eventually return to serve in Papua, New Guinea, again—this time, beside a new husband, Jerry. Not looking back, she set about to continue the calling of her life: guiding many to an understanding of who Jesus is and God's redemptive gift, the forgiveness of sins. She would live to forgive. Darlene was called to her heavenly place of rest in 2004, and today, her story still compels us to grasp the most important key God wants us to know. Until we sink into the *fullness* of God's arms, until we *fully* trust Him to deliver us from *all* life's uncertainties, disruptions, disasters and from all things seen and unseen, we will have no rest—no

contentment in life. He does not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind (see 2 Tim. 1:7).

The men who lowered the paralyzed man down from the ceiling enabled the paralytic to receive his healing. We all need others to lift us, support us and guide us so that we can physically flourish in the world. However, they can't help us with our spiritual healing. They can't transform our thinking and life to "take up our bed and walk." To walk out our faith in Him in all situations. Jesus wants us to remember that our life is temporary, uncertain and will always be in peril as long as we live in this broken world. He alone has the authority to forgive our sins and save us from destruction. Death has no sting. Viruses, diseases, health or financial destruction, or even political upheavals and disruptions cannot separate us from the love of God.

Darlene had many friends who assisted her throughout the perils of her story, but it was her eternal friend, her Father and Savior, who was ever present. Darlene's passion was for all to know her closest friend, Jesus, the one who never left her side during the horrors of war and propelled her life. It drove her to tell others that we can triumph over anything, even death. The obliteration of sin and for us to know God as our Savior *intimately, fully and with unshakeable trust* is at the very core of what God wants us to grasp.

More than our happiness, wealth or health, God wants our heart, mind and soul. He is willing to allow us to walk in the shadow of death because He knows His road and staff (His authority) will protect us (see Ps. 23:4). It was Darlene's mission to trust God and choose joy, and it is our mission today, as our world faces more unseen dilemmas of diseases, wars and "We have never seen anything like this" adventures to come.

"Whom the Son sets free, oh is free indeed/ I'm a child of God—yes I am!" ("Who You Say I Am," Hillsong Worship). {eo}

Kathleen Cooke's *devotional Hope 4 Today: Stay Connected to God in a Distracted Culture encourages readers to engage with God. As co-founder of Cooke Media Group and The Influence Lab, she publishes a bimonthly journal. Find out more at or on Twitter @KathleenCookeLA.*