

The Legacy of a Miracle

Six doctors at the Mayo Clinic diagnosed my grandmother with an enlarged heart and confirmed that she had six months to live. She was 51. In spite of the doctors' prognostication, **God** had a **miraculous** plan for her life that would grant her almost 50 more years.

My grandfather was opposed to everything religious. He had enough money that he and my grandmother could live anywhere they wanted. When she was diagnosed, he tried to buy my grandmother good health. Instead, the doctors told him to move to a locale with a mild climate and make her last days as comfortable as possible.

So they moved to Los Angeles, just a taxi ride away from **Angelus Temple**.

Although they had never heard of **Aimee Semple McPherson** or Angelus Temple, that was all about to change when they heard "Sister" preach on KFSG, the radio station she established in 1924.

Sister McPherson had garnered quite a reputation as a miracle worker. Crowds would gather by the thousands, multiple times each week, just to experience the spectacular services and the miracles that took place there.

My grandmother decided to take a cab to Angelus Temple and see firsthand what it was all about. When she arrived, the service had already started, and an usher told her the only seat left in the auditorium was in the center section, main floor, directly in the middle.

Angelus Temple had theater seats, and everyone seated in her row had to stand to allow her to pass by and get to her seat. It was indeed directly in the middle of Angelus Temple.

But she made the effort and climbed over all the other people to find her place.

A Life-Changing Miracle

My grandmother was completely surprised when she realized Sister McPherson had stopped the service and was looking her way. Naturally, all 5,000 people in the place strained to see what had caught Sister's attention.

From the pulpit, she spoke in a kind and sincere voice. She said, simply, "Honey, the Lord has just healed you."

My grandmother's recollection is that the enlarged heart began to immediately change. She said the feeling was as though someone had punctured it with a pin, and the pressure was gone.

She lived to be 99 years and 9 months old—and lived out her days in vigorous health.

She always remembered how God had touched her, and she became a staunch prayer warrior. She prayed for me, that I would accept Christ, go to Bible college and become a minister of the Foursquare Gospel.

Ripples of Transformation

I can't say her prayers were answered quickly. But like ripples of water that surround a rock thrown into a pond, my grandmother's miracle eventually brought personal transformation to my life, as well.

Though it took a number of years before I accepted Christ, my grandmother made the most of every opportunity when I was small to take me to Angelus Temple. One day, Sister McPherson noticed me waiting for my grandmother. I'll never forget it. She looked at me and reached down to pick me up.

She looked me square in the eye and asked, "Are you Mrs. Cox's grandson?"

I nodded my head.

She said sweetly, "I just love you!"

And with my noticeable 6-year-old lisp, I responded, "I love you too, 'Thithter'!"

I have been told that she remembered that moment years later. Her kindness certainly made an impression on me. She was gracious to everyone, but it seemed to me she was especially kind to us children. She sure had my heart.

Years would go by; to my grandmother's disappointment, I strayed from attending services with her at the Temple. I served in the military during World War II and after that had plans to attend USC and go into a career in radio.

Through a series of circumstances that were miraculous in their own right, once again I found my way back to Angelus Temple and gave my heart to Christ. I followed God's call and attended Life Pacific College (also known as LIFE Bible College, as it was called then) from 1950 to 1954.

I worked in downtown Los Angeles at the Farmers and Merchants Bank for a supervisor named Sepulveda. (Anyone who knows the history of Los Angeles will recognize the name *Sepulveda* as near royalty in the Greater Los Angeles area.)

One day at work, Mr. Sepulveda pulled me aside and asked, "Son, do you go to the school at Angelus Temple?"

When I told him that I did, he talked to me for over 30 minutes about how much he respected and admired the work of Aimee Semple McPherson and what she had done to help people in Los Angeles during the Great Depression. Mr. Sepulveda acknowledged that the ministries she started through Angelus Temple touched more lives than any other church, agency or government entity.

More Than Just a Tour Stop

To others, Angelus Temple was just another stop along the tourist route between other local attractions, such as Grauman's Chinese Theater. Most of these tourists only wanted to experience the "show of extremists and fanatics" that had captured media attention. But there were some on those buses whose lives would take a different turn.

Dr. Nathaniel Van Cleave, a patriarch of the Foursquare Church, and his wife, Lois, were tourists on one of those buses. They stopped at Angelus Temple, and as they sat in the service that day, the genuine move of the Holy Spirit touched their hearts. Both Dr. and Mrs. Van Cleave received Christ that day and were called to a life of ministry.

I never planned to spend my life as a preacher, but God certainly had it planned. I entered Bible college because a woman preacher named Sister Aimee Semple McPherson answered the call of God to open a training center in Los Angeles.

And I have served God my entire life and influenced my children and grandchildren to serve Him because of a praying grandmother who never stopped believing that the grace of God is powerful and reaches to the greatest and least of humanity.

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Coleman Phillips (1925-2013) was an ordained Foursquare minister who retired in the Southwest District. This article is adapted from a video interview recorded in February 2005.

