

When God's Timing Doesn't Synch With You

"Therefore comfort one other with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18).

As I have meditated on the wondrous nativity story this Christmas, I have been struck by Elizabeth's response to her pregnancy after a lifetime of being barren. In Luke 1:25 she bears witness, "The Lord has done this for me. ... In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Through her words I glimpsed a lifetime of pain. Of humiliation. Of agonizing tears. A lifetime of heart-rending, unanswered prayers. Yet through it all she had been "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly" (Luke 1:6). She trusted the one whose will is always best, even when she didn't understand.

God's purpose for Elizabeth involved withholding children from her. Not because He didn't care or was mean or was deaf to her pleas, but because He had singled her out to be the mother of a man who would be the first prophet in Israel after 400 years of heaven's silence. Elizabeth's son was the cousin of Jesus and the forerunner to the Messiah. A man Jesus said was as great as any man who was ever born. Her son was John the Baptist. If we could ask Elizabeth today, I believe she would say the son God gave her was well worth the wait. Sometimes God withholds from us that for which we are desperate. Because He has some greater, unseen purpose.

☒ This week, He withheld life and breath from my dear friend and colleague Caryn Sadowski Lavin. Caryn was the co-producer of every one of our domestic Just Give Me Jesus Revivals,

beginning with Knoxville, Tennessee, in 2000, and ending with Indianapolis in 2012. When changes on our ministry team occurred leaving me with no director for our two last revivals, which were already in process, Caryn stepped in with her co-producer, Dan Brunelle, guaranteeing that all would be well. And it was. Tens of thousands of people have come to the cross and had a personal, fresh encounter with God because of Caryn's faithfulness to "do the work" with heartfelt excellence, as unto the Lord.

Caryn was a spectacularly beautiful child of God inside as well as out. When she was rushed to the hospital on Nov. 14 in a medical emergency, our prayers ascended to the gates of heaven in a spiritual tidal wave of desperate love and concern. We were specific. Earnest. Persistent as we pled for God's mercy. But our prayers for her healing went unanswered. Caryn's faith became sight on Dec. 22 when she opened her eyes to the face of Jesus. She has moved to our Father's House. And we are left trying to make sense of the senseless. Why? Which is one reason Elizabeth's words keep coming to my mind, along with those of Jesus to Martha: "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40) My response? I believe! I believe God has a greater purpose than that which I can see. This is a time to trust Him when I just don't understand. And it's a time to pray for God's presence, peace and comfort for her husband, Tom, and those she has left behind.

So with tears on my face, I am praising Elizabeth's God for the baby of Bethlehem who brings blessing from brokenness ... and hope from grief ... and life from death. In His time.

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