

*Whispers of the Spirit*  
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November, 2008

A pattern in my life is to occasionally enter into conversations, discussions, out-right one sided dares with God. It's almost as if my dares are uttered at the point at which I believe I can wait no more. After I've issued my challenge before the Living Lord, whom I most often believe wholeheartedly wishes that I might wait safely under the fold of Her hen like wings, I wait out in the heat of the wilderness, far away from the shade, on the margins of life, in a stonewalling-arms crossed posture – communicating “*Show me* you are God – make it abundantly clear to me.” The work of that kind of waiting is messy, difficult and uncomfortable.

Waiting is hard. We can't wait to grow up. We can't wait to get there. We can't wait until Christmas. Gertrude Stein said that one of the pleasantest things for those who write and paint is to have the “daily miracle.” Daily miracles pierce the loneliness and bind the moments of waiting with hope.

In an unusual fit of panic this fall, I went shopping and scheduled a hair cut the day before my twentieth Rhodes College reunion. As one who hates to shop, as one who was tired of waiting for the impending reunion – I was hoping for a daily miracle –for the writer, the miracle would be flowing poetic phrases; for the painter, the miracle would be the perfect light for brushstroke visions – for me that one panicked day, I believed that the miracle I had hoped for was the absolute outfit that would make me look young, thin and hip. Instead of encountering the hoped for daily miracle, I created an economic strain on our household budget because of the outfit I *had* to buy, and the haircut I *needed* to have. I didn't do the work of waiting well.

In late elementary school, I received the gift of my great grandmother's mahogany furniture. Off of the moving truck at 6490 Sulgrave Drive and up into my second floor bedroom came a tall dresser with six drawers, a wide dresser with a mercurial tin mirror, a rocking chair with stained upholstery and a heavy two poster bed. My memories of the pieces of furniture were of childhood vacations in Ben Avon, Pennsylvania, taking naps on the bed on top of a time softened chenille bedspread. As I entered into middle-school, I used to kneel on this bed and dare God through prayers. I disliked the antics of middle-school romance; I wanted to marry a man like my father was to my mother. I knew early of my desire to be both a wife and a mother. So I dared God from my knees – atop that bed, then covered with a pastel flowery spread, while gazing into the night sky – “Bring me love, bring me love.”

In college I was the cheerleader, the sorority girl, the choir member, the theatre major. I'd been in a long term relationship through high school and into college with a boy who could never love me for who I was. I'd been dishonest with myself, settling myself into thinking he would provide my self worth. I'd been dishonest with myself, thinking this was the love that God had delivered to answer my maybe delusional adolescent prayer.

The dishonesty made me weary. Weary, tired, alone – longing and left to binging my way through life while paralyzing self-doubt and fear met me at every potential growth opportunity. I

was not living like God had created me to be. One day I'd had enough and spiraled down to where I couldn't go any further. I lay down on my twin bed in East dorm and curled up in a fetal position.

I don't remember if I cried or if I just resigned myself to give up. I don't remember the incident that put me in that natal place but the neonatal intensive care was waiting there. I don't remember if I dared God in some non-cognitive, non-verbal way however, the brokenness I had lived with in my waiting for love saddled up against God's daily miracle of blessedness. God's daily miracle came in the form of three women who surrounded me that day. Their names were Evelyn, Joanna and Katie – one from Nashville, one from Dyersburg, and the other from Lexington. They represented a lawyer's sweet and innocent daughter, a doctor's steady and coiffed child and a red-headed Presbyterian clergywoman's daughter. Reflecting on this event, I know they were the presence of God, Immanuel with us, in that day. They were the figures in the 15th Century painter, Andrei Rublev's, icon of the Trinity. Evelyn, Joanna and Katie were the three angels gathering around a table depicting a visit to Abram at the oak of Mamre. I was Abram's Sarah who'd been waiting a lifetime, hiding behind a tent flap, for the blessing of life.

Evelyn, Joanna and Katie were also like Jesus to me. Like Jesus was with the rich man's little girl- who had waited while he healed the hemorrhaging woman, the little girl whom the crowds had assumed was dead, but Jesus eventually came and spoke directly to the grief and fear saying, "Talitha Cum." These three women, college sorority sisters, roommates, suitemates, daughters of God – loved me that day with a compassion that defied my reality. They gently patted me on the shoulder and curve of my hip, brushing my tears away, telling me, "Little girl, get up – you have life to live." Their presence was the daily miracle and an invitation into the pastoral life.

Slowly, often only moment by moment, and over the course of days which have passed since the mideighties, I'm learning about the freedom that comes when the Spirit whispers and you really hear and you dare to follow that whisper. I continue my pattern of daring God and cross-armed waiting, knowing in my core there is something holy about waiting.

Sometimes life is expensive when I forget the truth found through waiting and rush off to buy some phenomenal paisley boots with clothes and scarves to match that will only last a season. Sometimes life is messy as I throw all the books, papers and pretties off of my desk onto the floor of the study; screaming at God my why's about violence's ability to puncture the lives of the most innocent and precious. At other times life is outright holy as I sit down in a hospital room or on a bench at the river and wait for another's story to unfold to which I can listen, pray for and truly see God's transformative story through the lives of others, like I've known in my own life, – a gift of the life I'm living as God created me to be.

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