

*Are You
Listening?*

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KELLY
WICKENS

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I dedicate this book especially to my Kloey Grace,
also to the earthly angels who walked
through the valley with me.

Love, to Jim and Kasey
and
A special thanks to Kerby,
who allowed me to breathe again.

Introduction:
Are You Listening?



Are you listening? That is the question. God is speaking to us. He is trying to reach us. Sometimes His ways are subtle, nudging ways. But sometimes He has to get out the big megaphone to get our attention. I have imagined what that figurative megaphone must look like. I know it exists because He has used it on me. Yes, God is speaking to you and He will get your attention one way or another. Maybe He is revealing part of His plan to you. Maybe He is channeling your talents and gifts to use them as He intended.

We will be delivered to heaven on the wings of His grace with effortless surrendering and humbling of ourselves before Him. We can be blessed by His sovereignty and the glory of His grace.

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Yet, don't miss out on what He has to show you. He really wants your attention one way or another. Beth Moore, one of my favorite women's Bible study authors declared, "You don't want to take a field trip to learn this lesson." Do we often hear but not listen, or listen and ignore? Enjoy the security that only a personal relationship with our Lord can offer. I feel the earthly value of our salvation is increased by the amount of Christian maturation that takes place while we are alive on earth.

I would like to share my story about how God spoke to me and prepared me for a defining moment in my life. God took me from a place of casual Christianity to a place of joy that can only come from Him. A good story has a beginning, middle, and end but with me it rarely comes in that order. I consider you prepared. So away we go!

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Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

—Matthew 19:14

I will not say that 2000 was a bad year. It was actually very nice until November 12. Actually, November 12 was a very fine day until 5:30 that Sunday evening. But if I were to be asked what the worst day of my life was, it would be Monday, November 13, 2000.

The first task I was faced with that day was to tell my four-year-old daughter that her little sister was so badly hurt that the doctors could not help her. Kloe Grace would be living in heaven now. We would not see her again until we get to heaven ourselves.

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The previous evening Kasey, Kloey (21 months and 2 days), their daddy, and a friend, Brian, were playing Twister in the living room. I was in the kitchen, checking an item for a Christmas gift in the JC Penney catalog, while my King Ranch Chicken baked in the oven. I could hear wonderful sounds of laughter from the living room as Jim spun out commands that were twisting everyone into knots: “Right foot red, left hand yellow!” Yahoo! Everyone was having a blast and acting goofy. Kloey excitedly ran out of the living room and headed to the front entry area of our home. The moment to follow changed my life forever. Kloey must have pulled down or hung on the glass table top of a concrete-base pedestal table that was in the center of that room. Time had apparently weakened the integrity of the cement glue that was holding the two parts of the base together. The Base was a birdbath with a bowl and a stand topped with a thick piece of round beveled glass, all connected by cement glue. In description, it sounds like a hazard, but we had become complacent with it being in our home as it had been there since before we even thought of having children. Like sin, the more you are exposed to it the less you see wrong with it and we just get used to it in our lives. Anyway, with the weight of Kloey unbalancing the piece, it toppled.

Responding to the noise, I was in the room in a second to find Kloey pinned under the heavy bowl part of the pedestal that was the birdbath. With my adrenalin

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flowing, I was easily able to toss the concrete bowl off her. When Jim came into the room, he thought she had just gotten the air knocked out of her; he didn't realize the heavy bowl had been on top of her. Kloey had no visible injuries. I looked hard into her eyes, which turned out to be last time I did so. Her silence and her eyes told me something only a mother can know.

"I'm calling 911. She's not right." Jim was holding her. I ran from house to house to seek immediate help from neighbors. I am not sure what I thought anyone else would be able to do, but at that moment, while waiting for the professionals, the "Martha" in me made me feel the need to do something. I was running between neighbors' houses and redialing my call to 911, as it seemed like more time had passed than what actually had.

Jim was out on the front porch when he yelled, "I'm losing her, Kel. I'm losing her!"

His words were repeated over and over. Our neighbor Barry escorted me back across the street as I told him the situation. He and Jim attempted mouth-to-mouth resuscitation as I relayed instructions from the 911 operator.

I was later told that all the mouth-to-mouth and any other medical attention—even if EMS had been standing on our front porch at the time of the accident—could not have prevented the outcome. Knowing this today, I so wish I would have been like busy Martha's sister, Mary, and just held Kloey in my arms and told her how

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much we all loved her, how we prayed for her to be a part of our family even before her conception. I would have told her bye-bye just for now, but that we would see her again when Jesus called us to heaven. As it was, though, God puts in a mother's heart to try to fix her children's hurts. As I see it now He was also protecting me from the visions of which Kloey's daddy has ownership.

Having your child's life slip from her while in your arms...I have no words for that, but among other things it provides great ammunition for the Devil. It is a struggle not to allow Satan to replay the video in your mind. Satan loves to take horrible images of life and play them over again in those quiet times. This is one of his oldest tricks to rob Christians of their joy.

As the event played out, Brian's mom was notified to come get him, and the ambulance arrived and called for air life. Our neighbors, the Pattersons, ushered Kasey, who had been with her friend Brain in the car waiting further instructions, down to their house, where she ended up spending the night. Barry, Jim, and the EMS crew were inside with Kloey. I was "out of the way" at the bottom of the front porch stairs. Brian's mom, Denise, had stayed to pray over me. I had heard about the power of prayer so much that it had become cliché. But at this moment of unparalleled urgency for answered prayer, my desperate plea seemed as if it was reaching the heavens with the intensity that it was leaving my lips. The weather was suddenly and strangely changing.

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The storm that had just hit my life was shooting up to the skies. I was in a crisis and I knew the heavens knew it too. When I get to heaven I am going to ask what was going on in the heavens at that moment. The skies darkened, the wind dramatically kicked up, and the temperature dropped. I thought of the accounts I had seen and heard of the storm that arose when Jesus took His last breath on the cross.

The air-life helicopter crew had planned to land in front of our house, but because of the very recent change in the winds, they were not able to drop down safely in a tight space. They landed at the nearby golf driving range, and when they thought they had Kloe stable enough, the ambulance took her to the helicopter and then on to University Hospital.

I still hear the sound of the helicopter hovering in hopes of landing. I still hear the sound of the helicopter making an alternate plan. When I hear a helicopter now, it brings me back. I pray, “Lord, if that is an air-life I hear, please allow the medics to do your will, Lord, and be with the family as they do.”

The emergency crew did not allow Jim to ride in the chopper with Kloe. The ambulance took him to the hospital. I think now I know why they didn’t allow him to go. I think they realized the seriousness of her injury. She had never been conscious since Jim lost her, although they said she let out a cry when I was at the

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bottom of the porch. My neighbors took me in a car. We converged on the hospital not long after Kloey did.

The emergency room gave us a small private room for us and a caravan of friends that miraculously appeared. We waited for the news of the doctors' assessment, but the wait was short. The news was beyond comprehension. Most or maybe all of my world became a blur as all the friends left the room to let us have privacy. My body went limp and I slid down in the seat. I don't believe I had a sound to give at that moment, but I could hear clearly no other sound but my husband weeping from a place inside him that produced a cry of loss and sadness that I never want to hear again—the sob of death.

“I want to see her. I want to be with her,” I whispered to the nurse who had her arms around me. I began to move out of the room as if I knew right where to go in a hall of many closed doors.

“We'll move her to a room were you can go be with her, but right now she's not in a place you can go,” she explained.

My eyes were sealed shut in an escape mode. I heard Jim from behind his tears ask, “Is she here or is she gone?” Literally, the news had been incomprehensible. He was still trying to wrap his mind around what we had been told. I guess we all were, and I had to see for myself.

The nurse was ready to walk us to see Kloey. When I cracked open my eyes for the first time, I saw the face of the nurse who had been sitting with her arm around

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me. I expected to see a professional that dealt with like situations on a daily basis. University Hospital is a unit that receives the worst of all accidents. Instead the nurse had a sweet face with a steady stream of tears flowing from her eyes. She was trying to control them with a tissue. I was in such shock, I suppose. Somehow this struck my heart that she, the professional, was not hardened, but deeply affected. Her face was my visual of the reality I would see shortly.

We moved to the room the staff had prepared for us. This is where we spent the rest of the evening with our pastor, close friends and Kloey's body. I embraced her body for hours, until her smell was gone. The warmth had left her skin, and her body, still supporting her baby fat, had grown stiff.

We had made the decision to donate her organs, but given the unknown circumstances of her internal injuries and her young age, only her beautiful cornea were taken. "The eyes are the windows to the soul." The surgical teams were assembled, as the operation had to be done in a timely manner. Shortly after 1:00 A.M., they covered my baby's head with a sheet and wheeled her down the hall and beyond two swinging sterile double doors, beyond which I was not allowed to pass. Even though those double doors had no lock on them—they did not even have a latch—yet they exuded the finality and impassability of prison walls. The doors were daunting, and I was not able to pass through those swinging

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gates at that time, but there will be a time when I will be able to pass through some beautiful gates to reunite with my Bitsy Boo, my Kloey.

Our family has a policy to keep Kloey's sweet memories ever present. Friends are made welcome to help us recall any little ditties about Kloey. She is present in our conversations, our home, and above all our spiritual life, as we owe the relationship we have with our Lord today to what He had to take from us that day in November 2000. It is obvious to all that Satan has no victory here. We have a faith stronger than before. The Devil is not allowed, in the name of Jesus, to rob us of the short time we had with our precious daughter Kloey Grace Wickens.

This is the beginning of my story. As far as the rest of my story, I will refer to these hours surrounding the accident as my defining moment.