



Breaking News

*For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.*

Psalm 139:13

“ I DON'T FEEL LIKE COMING to work tomorrow.”

Those words had little significance to me when I spoke them, other than expressing the thought that it would be nice to have a day off from work. Little did I know I would remember them forever.

It was late Thursday afternoon at work when those words were spoken. The receptionist and I were chatting, waiting out the last few minutes before the official closing time. As I walked out after the office closed and made my way to my car, I had no idea how truthful those words were going to be. The truth was, I wasn't going back to work the next day, and life as I had known it was about to drastically change.

I've always lived a pretty good life. I'm a PK, short for preacher's kid. I was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. My parents adopted me when I was only one day old. They said I was an answer to one of their prayers, and they have always told me I was "chosen." These words carried something powerful. They made me feel good about who I am and how I was placed in this home. "I was chosen."

At the time of my birth, my parents were preparing to go to the mission field. Within a couple of years of preparation, they were sent to Africa. We lived in the Congo for two years while they taught school. I lived there with my parents and also my brother Eric, whom they adopted from Brussels, Belgium. They said he was another answer to prayer. Like me, he was “chosen.” We lived in the Congo until we were evacuated due to unrest in that country.

When we came back to the States, we arrived in Texas. Over a period of years, my parents adopted two more children in Texas: my brother Teri and my sister Christi. Two more blessings and answers to prayer. We were now a family of six, each one of us “chosen.” My childhood was quite normal. I attended elementary, middle, and high school all in the same area. My life was stable. I went onto college and received my degree in social work. I never had the desire to try drugs. In college I tried smoking and drinking, but neither “stuck.” After college I went on to work for the Community Supervisions and Corrections Department as a probation officer, and I loved my job. This is where I was working when I spoke the words about not feeling like coming to work the next day.

I was twenty-nine years old and expecting my first baby. I was having what I thought was a normal pregnancy, just like the rest of my life. After I arrived home that evening, I went into the kitchen and made dinner. Then my husband and I pulled out the TV trays to eat dinner in the den and watch a favorite TV show. I was sitting on the couch enjoying the show when out of nowhere I felt a sudden burst of water start to flow from my body. *Oh no!* I thought. *What’s going on here?* I knew something wasn’t right. It wasn’t time for me to give birth. I was only thirty-one weeks pregnant.

Jumping up from the couch, I headed toward the bathroom while my husband called my doctor. As I ran, water continued to flow from my body. *There’s no stopping this!* It being my first pregnancy, I

wasn't quite sure what to expect. It was obvious that my water had broken, but I had no idea it would be like this. *What I'm experiencing appears to be excessive. I'm not sure this is considered normal.* I assumed at some point the water would stop flowing, but it didn't.

I knew I needed medical attention for what was happening, but I just stayed in the bathroom until we received instructions from the doctor. I could hear my husband speaking with the person on call—it sounded like they were going to contact my doctor. Within minutes, the telephone rang. I listened and could hear from the conversation that my doctor was going to meet us at the hospital.

With my purse and a couple of towels in hand, I made a mad dash toward the car. Although I moved quickly, I wasn't experiencing any fear or concern. Instead, I felt perplexed and surprised by it all.

As I climbed into the car, I placed a towel on the passenger seat. It didn't take long for the water to soak through the towel. *Where's all of this water coming from?* It was as if there were an endless, reproducing supply of water. I couldn't get this off of my mind, and then I realized, *I probably need to let some people know what's going on!* I'd never gone through this before, so I didn't know the drill, but it seemed like everyone needed to share in the "good news"! Using a portable telephone (there were no cell phones yet), I began calling family members and informing them about the current state of my body and where we were headed. There was an element of surprise that quickly turned to excitement from everyone. No one was experiencing fear throughout any of this.

It took us less than thirty minutes to reach the hospital. When my husband and I arrived, a couple of nurses came out to the car to meet us. I was eager to see them, but I wasn't as calm as they were. By now, water had been coming out of my body for almost an hour, and it seemed like I was more concerned about this flow of water than anyone else. They asked me to get into a wheelchair

and calmly took me to a birthing room, where they began running a series of tests. I knew there was something not right inside of me, but I never thought there was anything wrong with my baby.

“Your baby’s in distress!”

I barely processed these words before I heard, “You’re going to surgery. We need to do a C-section.”

What? Surgery? What’s going on? I don’t understand any of this. I’ve had a normal pregnancy. My sonogram didn’t reveal any problems. Why is this all happening? There has to be a mistake.

It seemed as if words were flying through the air—“Your baby’s in distress. The baby’s heart rate is dropping. There’s a fifty-fifty chance your baby will survive.”

I heard the words, but I was speechless.

The birthing room quickly turned into an emergency room. Everyone was moving quickly, talking among themselves and telling me what was going to happen. Acutely aware that the atmosphere had changed, I couldn’t do anything. Everything was out of my control. I didn’t have a choice. An X-ray machine arrived, and someone gave me a shot in my back, causing a chill in my spine.

At 10:33 p.m. I heard a baby’s cry, followed by a doctor’s voice saying, “It’s a girl!” My husband and I had chosen not to know the sex ahead of time. We wanted to be surprised.

When I heard these words, I knew: *I have a daughter, and she’s alive! I hear her crying, so she must be okay. The doctor’s said fifty-fifty, so this must be the fifty that made it!*

The nurses called out her birth weight: “She weighs three pounds, two point five ounces.”

A little small, but this seems like a pretty good birth weight given how early she is.

I assumed that everything was going to be okay. Why wouldn't it be? This was how my life had always been. I've always had a good life. The nurses continued talking—about my baby.

“Can I see her?” I asked. “I want to see what she looks like.”

“Of course you can” was the reply. The nurse brought her to the side of my bed, all wrapped up in a blanket. I leaned over and glanced at her, but I didn't get to hold or even touch her. They took her away from me quickly, and we were no longer in the same room. I still wasn't afraid or disturbed; I had peace. I heard her cry. I heard her voice—and her voice was strong!

In an instant, the room began to fill with medical staff. One of the doctors spoke up. “Your daughter was having difficulty breathing, so we took her to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit [NICU]. We wanted to do further testing.”

Further testing? What do they mean by this? There's nothing wrong with her.

“We've discovered she has some ribs that are fused together,” he continued, “and she has TE Fistula.”

My husband and I turned to look at each other. *Fused ribs? This doesn't make sense. I've never heard of this, but I can handle fused ribs—she's alive. But I'm not quite sure what he means by TE Fistula. I don't know what that is. I'm sure it's going to be an easy thing to fix though.*

The next words answered my question.

“Your daughter's esophagus didn't attach to her stomach. Surgery is the only way to repair this, and we have to do it immediately so that she's able to receive nourishment. We've scheduled this surgery for tomorrow.”

Surgery? How can this be? Should I be concerned? Once again, I didn't have a choice. My daughter didn't have a choice either.

I might not have had a choice about the surgery, but I chose not to be concerned or worried, thinking, *The surgeon's going to do this surgery, fix the problem, and everything's going to be fine.* What I didn't know was that this surgery would not fix the problem; instead, it would create additional problems for our daughter.

By this time, some of our immediate family had arrived, and they were getting updates. My parents didn't live in the area, so after making the two-hour drive into town, my mom arrived at 1:30 a.m. When she arrived, she found me in a room where I was by myself.

After I received all of the updates from the doctors, they moved me away from the maternity unit. "It's insensitive to keep you in a unit where other moms have their babies in the same room with them," they had said.

I wasn't sure if this made me feel better or not. Where they moved me felt sterile and isolated. As I laid there in silence, I had more time to think. *I don't understand any of this. This isn't how I dreamed having a baby was going to be. Why am I having to go through this? Why is my story not looking like everyone else's? How can I possibly comprehend what just happened?* When my mom walked through the door, I was feeling very alone.

I knew I had just given birth by C-section to a baby girl. I knew I'd dreamed about this baby for months, maybe all of my life. I'd spent time imagining what life would be like being a new mom and often wondering what kind of mom I'd be. *Am I going to be a good mom? Am I going to be the best mom for my child? Is it going to be easy? Am I going to know what to do?* I'd dreamed about what our family would look like having a new addition. *How are our lives going to change? I can only imagine the joy and happiness this baby's going to bring!* Although we chose not to know the sex, we did have a name for her—Paige!

I woke up the next morning and casually thought, *Today's Friday*. And then it registered. *Friday! I'm supposed to go to work today!* I suddenly remembered the words I'd spoken just yesterday: "I don't feel like coming to work tomorrow." Those words had now become a reality. A reality that was in its early stages of unfolding. A reality I could never have anticipated. A reality that would change my life forever.