

faithful

an unexpected
journey to motherhood

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Thank you to the man who walked this journey with me. Thank you for supporting me as I disrupted our lives in order to document God's faithfulness to us. Dave, there's no one else I'd rather walk a faith journey with than you!

To my son, this is the story of faith that brought you into our family. As you can see by this story, there's never been a

doubt that God has always had His hand on your life. He can be trusted when you take a leap of faith.

To the Author of this journey, *You* wrote a beautiful story. Thank you with for being so *faithful* to me

Introduction

THE DOCTOR STUDIED my chart for a long time. Finally, she looked up, her eyes avoiding mine. “I don’t know if you will ever be able to conceive a child.”

The room remained silent as her words soaked into my brain. “I don’t know if you *will ever be able to conceive a child.*”

Did I hear her correctly? Did she just say she didn’t think I could ever conceive? I must be dreaming. This can’t be true. I must be dreaming.

My breath caught in my throat. A bitter coldness, like icy dread, chilled me from the inside and I began to tremble. My chest heaved, taking in deep breaths of air as I tried to keep the tears welling up in my eyes from falling down my face. I desperately fought off the shock of her words and I tried to remain present in the moment.

“But I thought everything inside her was clean?” My husband, Dave, questioned the doctor.

Dave's words helped me fight my way back to reality. Yet, as the doctor continued to speak, everything we brought with us to this appointment—all our dreams, plans, and optimism—shattered into tiny pieces.

She answered Dave with a regretful nod, then began laying out the next steps to conceive, starting with hormone treatments. We soon realized our journey to parenthood would not be as we had planned. Instead, our journey would be much different. A journey planned by God.

“I know what I am doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I'll listen.” (Jeremiah 29:11-12 The Message)

But first, let's head back to the beginning of our story ...

Chapter 1

JANUARY 1992

“We need to get out and meet new people,” I said as I handed a flyer introducing a single’s group at a local church to my friends.

For the past three years, I had dedicated my life to an on-again/off-again relationship that had squashed my self-esteem, stifled my personality, and made my body physically sick. After the relationship finally ended for good, God restored my self-esteem and my confident, outgoing personality returned. Plus, all the medical issues my body had experienced during that three-year relationship evaporated. I loved being back in my own skin again.

But one thing was missing: *new* friends. Sure, I had my roommate, Angie, and two other single friends, Barbara and Alita, but I needed to get out more. I usually spent Friday and Saturday nights alone at home in my apartment watching television

or taking an exercise class. Work friends invited me to bars with them, but it wasn't really my thing. A coworker knew about my situation, gave me the flyer, and encouraged me to go.

"Okay, you go and scout it out," Angie said.

"I'll go with you," Alita said, with a laugh. "I want to find a man."

The four of us agreed. Alita and I would scout out the event and report back to the others.

Barb and Angie were waiting when Alita picked me up.

"We'll be here when you get back and we want full reports!" Angie said.

"Take good notes!" Barb teased as we left the apartment.

Nervously, Alita and I walked through the doors of the church and to the welcome desk, where we were greeted by several friendly faces. One asked what group we wanted to join.

"Just put us in the group with the cutest and most single guys because she's looking for a man," I said, pointing to Alita. We all busted up laughing.

They assigned us to the Agápe Street group. They pointed us towards the auditorium where the main program had already started. They told us to find the group and sit with them. After the program ended, we were to follow the group to a breakout room for a smaller gathering.

Or, one of them said, if we happened to see some cute guys, we could always follow them to whichever room they were headed. We all laughed again and the two of us set off to find our group.

We arrived at the room and sat at an empty table. Determined to give this a good try, I decided to make friends with

whoever sat at our table. Since Alita started talking with the girl who sat down next to her, I introduced myself to the guy who sat in the chair next to mine.

He smiled at me. “Hi, I’m Dave.”

Since I didn’t know what else to say, I started with the usual *How did you hear about this group?* and *Where do you live?* types of questions. Exhausting those, I asked, “What do you do?”

“I’m a pilot.”

Okay. I had never met a pilot and didn’t have a clue about a pilot’s life. In fact, I had only flown on a plane twice in my life.

“Um, how long have you been a pilot?”

“Two weeks,” he replied.

I straightened. *Wow, a new pilot.* I opened my mouth to ask another question, but before I could, Dave stopped me.

“I’m sorry. I have a confession to make.” He smiled, leaned in, and chuckled. “I’ve been a pilot for a very long time, not just two weeks. I could tell you believed me when I told you, and now I feel bad for joking with you.”

Okay, he has a sense of humor and a conscience. We laughed about it together, and he started asking me questions. Our conversation flowed so smoothly that we soon forgot about everyone else in the room.

During a break in our conversation, I looked over to check on Alita. She was alone. The other gal who had been sitting at our table had left, and except for a few guys standing around our table, most people were starting to leave. Dave looked up and began introducing us to the guys which put a huge smile on Alita’s face.

As Alita and I exited the room, the leader, McLain, handed us another flyer detailing the group's event the following Saturday night—a potluck dinner. “Feel free to bring friends,” he said.

I turned and looked at Dave, who grinned and said, “I’m going to be there.”

When we arrived back at the apartment, Angie and Barb were waiting to hear our scouting report, which we gave in detail. Alita teased me about Dave and how consumed we had been with each other.

I smiled, but shook my head. “I’m not interested in starting a relationship with a man, however nice he is.” My friends looked at me skeptically, but I assured them, “I just want to stick to my goals and make friends. There are plenty of people to make friends with there. Dave just happens to be one of them.”

The following Saturday, the four of us talked and giggled as we got ready for the potluck. We piled into Angie’s car, careful not to ruin our makeup, hair, or outfits, and drove to the clubhouse. As we stepped inside, McLain greeted us. I introduced Angie and Barb, and we put our sorry-looking potluck dishes on the table.

After drawing a slip of paper with a number two on it, I was directed to a table without my friends, who had each drawn ones. The only face I recognized at my table was Dave’s and he happened to be seated right across from me.

I could hear my friends laughing at the other table as they talked with McLain. Even though I tried making small talk with the people around me, the conversations fell flat.

I looked across the table and began to talk with Dave. Once again, our conversation flowed and we laughed together effortlessly. I felt so comfortable talking with him. He wasn't pretentious or arrogant like many of the guys I had dated in the past. He was laid-back, easygoing, confident, and he didn't make a big deal about being a pilot. He had a good but subtle sense of humor. In fact, I realized that for the first time in many years I hadn't resorted to giving a fake laugh when he made a joke. I truly enjoyed him and his sense of humor.

On the way home, we all talked at once about the people we had met, especially the guys. Of course, my friends teased me again about Dave.

"I'm not interested in anything romantic," I said as the girls giggled all around me. "He's just a friend."

I was unable to attend the next event, but Angie went and found out the scoop about Dave. Before I knew what she was doing, she called Dave and happened to mention that I was available to talk with him, then she handed me the phone with a mischievous smile. If looks could have killed, she would have dropped dead right there. I took the phone. A huge smile spread across my face as soon as I heard his voice, and my own voice rose with excitement as I started talking with him.

Dave and I made small talk about what was happening in our lives, and before saying goodbye, we made plans for him to pick me up for the next large group gathering that weekend. When I hung up the phone, Angie stepped inside my bedroom, her face beaming. And, as silly as she was acting, I couldn't help but join her in doing a squealing, happy dance.

After more phone conversations and group events, I had to admit, I was falling fast and hard for Dave. He told me how he had determined to sit at my table the night we met, and that when the gathering was over he looked up to find five guys standing next to the table, waiting to be introduced to me. "I couldn't help but smile realizing I beat all of them to the table," he said.

I had never dated anyone like Dave; he seemed too good to be true.

We kept our growing friendship low-key. I had goals, I had plans, I had dreams, and I didn't want another dead-end relationship to get in the way of achieving them. But, I had not anticipated how much I would enjoy his company, our conversations and our shared sense of humor. In fact, I enjoyed our relationship so much, fear crept into my mind. *I can't let my heart dictate my life again. I have plans and goals. Soon he'll break my heart and leave me shattered, just like all the other guys I've dated.* I refused to experience another heartache. I needed to be smart and put the brakes on our relationship before I fell harder.

I worked up the courage to have the I-just-want-to-be-friends conversation with Dave. As difficult as it would be, I thought, it needed to happen.

At the end of our date, we walked to the bottom of the stairs of my second-floor apartment. He faced me, ready to give me a goodnight kiss, when I stopped him and gave him my prepared speech.

By the look on his face, I could tell Dave wasn't expecting the conversation.

“Do you understand what I’m saying?” I asked. “I think we’d be better off as friends instead of dating.”

Dave looked at me with a stunned, hurt expression. “Not really, but I guess I don’t have a choice.” He reached for the doorknob behind him and mumbled goodnight as he turned and walked out the door.

I leaned back against the closed door and tears filled my eyes. I wanted to run after him, pull his arms around me, and tell him I had made a mistake. But I didn’t. Instead I spent the night tossing and turning, thinking how I pushed away the one guy who I thoroughly enjoyed from the first moment I’d met him.

Dave later told me that he drove home that night in disbelief. He thought I enjoyed the relationship as much as he did. Had he missed signals along the way? Had he not read my actions correctly?

The next day I called to see how he was doing. We were friends, after all, and had been talking on the phone a lot over the past month. I missed him and hadn’t meant to hurt him.

But I had. Dave, who could always make me laugh, said, “Girls go for guys who treat them like crap. They don’t like good guys like me. They always want to be my friend.”

I couldn’t help but laugh at the sarcasm in his voice. Had I done the right thing to push him away?

Angie learned what had happened and quickly got involved. Not only was she my roommate, but we were good friends. Angie had listened to me as I processed the end of a bad relationship and she had become my confidant as well as my cheerleader. Without telling me, she called Dave and told

him not to give up on our relationship. “She really likes you. Give her some space. Just take it slow instead of pursuing her like you were,” she told him. She explained my apprehension about starting another relationship and how hard I had worked to recover from my last one.

Dave gave me space. He did not initiate calls, and he took his sweet time to return mine. If I really wanted to have a relationship with him, I would have to pursue him. During this game of “cat and mouse” with Dave, we received startling news about Angie: the cancer that she thought she had conquered had returned.

As a college freshman in 1984, Angie began having difficulty writing. The doctors discovered a tumor in her upper arm that affected the nerves in her hand. She returned home from college to have the part of the tumor affecting those nerves removed. Months later, Angie was diagnosed with cancer. Unbeknownst to the doctors, the remaining portion of the tumor was cancerous and the cancer had spread to Angie’s chest cavity. Multiple surgeries and radiation had been part of her journey since she was 18 years old.

For the past two years, though, Angie’s cancer had been in remission. She moved out of her parents’ home and into my second-floor walkup apartment. We were two twenty-five-year-olds working and having fun together. The return of her cancer came as a shock to everyone who knew her, but we all held out hope, believing that Angie’s history of recoveries proved she could again beat the cancer.

She had surgery on Monday and called me on Wednesday night. Her breathing was labored and I could tell she was

in great pain. We talked about her surgery, joked about her cute doctor, and how quiet the apartment was without her. She teased me about Dave, making us both giggle, and then we ended our conversation by saying good night to each other, the same way we did each night at our apartment.

Thursday morning, I received a call from Angie's mom, who was at the Mayo Clinic. During the night, Angie had fallen into a coma and was not expected to recover.

"Can you come to Minnesota?" she asked. "We'll be saying goodbye to Angie." I quickly realized that my conversation with Angie the night before was her last.

Together, McLain, Dave, and I drove to the Mayo Clinic. On the way, I tried to mentally prepare myself to say goodbye to Angie, my cheerleader and friend for the past year. Before entering her hospital room, the nurses told us that she could hear what was being said to her. They told me to talk to her and to say my goodbyes, as they planned to shut off life support later in the day and let nature take its course.

The nurse led me into Angie's room. She lay there, hooked up to machines keeping her lungs filled with air, and tubes protruding from her body. I took a deep breath, swallowed back my tears, and went to her side. Knowing the humor we shared, I knelt beside her and said, "You'll be happy to know that Dave made the trip up here with me. I'm sure all this was part of your plan to get us together!" I laughed as I imagined Angie's mischievous smile and giddy giggle in response to my remark. The same smile she gave me the night she handed the phone to me to talk with Dave.

Part of me wanted to scream, *Wake up! You can't go! I need you! Who's going to help me with Dave! Who's going to listen to me, laugh with me, joke with me? Who's going to be silly with me?* But I didn't. Instead, I held back my tears and began to sing a sweet chorus that Angie and I loved to sing together at church. When I finished, I saw a tear stream down her cheek. I took her hand.

"Angie, thank you for being my friend," I whispered. "I couldn't have asked for a better one." I paused and wiped away the tear on her face. "Goodbye, Angie. I'll see you in heaven." I kissed her on the cheek and backed away from her bed and out of the room.

After she died, Dave drove me from the graveside ceremony to the dinner following the funeral. My tears washed all the makeup from my face and I looked a mess. Dave kept silent.

Suddenly, my bra loosened and I realized that the front clasp had broken open. I surreptitiously tried to re-hook it, but failed.

Dave must have noticed that I was preoccupied. He frowned and reached over for my hand. "How are you holding up?"

Holding up? I'm not! "Um, I'm very embarrassed," I said.

"Why?"

"Well, the front clasp on my bra just broke and with this dress, and it will be very noticeable that it is broken."

Dave covered his mouth with his hand.

"I don't think it's funny, because what am I going to do! It will be very embarrassing to walk into the dinner with all of Angie's family and friends looking at me and wondering why I'm not wearing a bra!"

He couldn't contain his snickers any longer and burst out laughing at my predicament. He looked at me and said, "Wouldn't it be just like Angie to do something like this to lighten the mood?"

He was right. Angie would find this whole situation hilarious. I could hear her laugh and I started laughing, too. "You think she's up there telling God to make my bra break right at this moment because she knew I needed to laugh?" I shook my head, looked up and rolled my eyes. "Thanks for the laugh, Angie!"

Before getting out of the car, Dave gave me his jacket to wear into the dinner until I could find a safety pin to fix my predicament.