

I Knew You Before You Were Born

My father had many different sayings that he loved to say. One was, "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." So he would march us off to bed long before it was dark and say, "It is bed time." Then he would quote his famous little saying. And I wondered, "How could this be? We certainly weren't wealthy. Healthy and wise were questionable. It was obvious that I was destined to be going to bed early every night. I certainly couldn't see any wisdom in that.

In the state of Washington, it was so far north that it doesn't get dark there in the summer. It doesn't get dark until 10 p.m. and then, it is just a little dark and fuzzy. It's twilight time where things turn magical. That's why I love the red letters in the Bible so much that my grandmother gave me. She said those red letters were the words of Jesus. It was Jesus Who helped me fall asleep every night.

Some of the parables that I read, I did not understand. How could God know what I was thinking and saying before I said it or did it? Because it wasn't all clear to me, on those nights that I was reading the red letters... how come He healed some people and He didn't heal others? Why do some have plenty to eat and others starve? My father used to say, "Clean up your plate. There are many children in this world who are starving."

Were we really monkeys, and then turned into people? Could the old lady down the street really tell your future by looking at tea leaves? Is that how God knew something was going to happen?

I am very thankful to God that I'm older and wiser. Maybe those early to bed times worked because I have the answers to those questions now.

My mother and her very good friend who lived down the block would spend time together visiting when their work was done. She was older and gave my mother some very good advice. She said, "Alice, you are married to a man who is not going to live very long. And you will have to care and feed and clothe your two children until they are able to take care of themselves. You're going to have to learn how to work outside of the home, drive a car and how to take care of a checking account. Even though your father lives with you, he's in his late 70's and doesn't have many years left either." So mother and Amy would take her car and go driving. Amy started giving my mother lessons when my father was away.

As I look back on these events, it was the summer of 1946. School had just let out and we were on summer vacation. My father had been to the doctor the day before because he had dangerously high blood pressure which caused a nose bleed that would not stop. The doctors had to cauterize and pack his nasal passage which was very painful. He had stayed in bed that day.

My mother was prone to migraines and with the stress of my father being sick, us home for the summer and news that the war wasn't going well, made the migraine even worse. Grandpa, who we called Johndaddy, was gone working at the water department.

My brother who was 17 months younger than I was a Cub Scout and had made a bow and arrow for himself. He made a target on a dirt pile and was practicing just in case any Indians should appear. We did live in the woods. So I was left in charge to do the chores and make lunch, which I took very seriously. I made peanut butter sandwiches, fruit and milk and set the table. Then I went to call my brother for lunch. When I found him playing with his bow and arrow, I told him he needed to come in for lunch. He said, "I'm not hungry and you can't make me." I said, "Oh, yes I can because I'm in charge." I was about 10 feet from him, trying to make up my mind whether I'd drag him in to eat or let him go without lunch. Before I could make up my mind, he said, "I'm going to shoot you." And he did. The arrow landed right in my left eye.

The world went black; a blackness that you could only relate to if you've been on a tour through an underground cave that had no light. I'd never seen that before and I screamed.

My mother ran from the house and my father followed shortly behind her. The arrow fell to the ground and my eyeball fell out onto my cheek. There wasn't any blood or pain. The scooped me up and took me in the house. Mother got on the phone and called the doctor but he was on vacation. We had another doctor in town so she called him, but he was on vacation too. While mother was on the phone, my father went across the street to the neighbors to borrow their car. Fortunately, he and some of his salesmen were there also for lunch. Mr. DeFord said father was welcome to take his car. He said that a few months before, a piece of steel flew in his eye when he was cutting a pipe and a doctor in Tacoma took it out. He felt that he was a very good surgeon and we should try to go to him. As it turned out, he seemed to be our only hope. My folks bandaged me as best they could loaded me in the back seat.

We lived on a hill. Down the hill was one and a half lanes because we'd have to hit the ditch when someone else was coming up. It was at a 45 degree angle so it was pretty steep. One side of the road was straight up and the other side was straight down. My father passed out and slumped over the steering wheel. Since my mother had been sneaking driving lessons, she pushed him aside, got his foot off the pedal and managed to steer us off the mountain. At the bottom, my father came to.

Now today I realize that God did know what was going to happen. It is not coincidence that Mother learned how to drive and that the two doctors were out of town. Also, it wasn't coincidence that the neighbor knew of the eye specialist, Dr. Cameron, in Tacoma, and let us borrow his car since my Dad's car was at the dealership in Tacoma for a check up, leaving us no car.

They decided to go to the State Patrol office and have them help us. They re-banded me and got on their two way radio to the Patrol Office in Tacoma for instructions on how to get to Dr. Cameron's office. We were on our way, top speed, at 50 miles per hour with the sirens going. The speed limit at that time was 35 miles per hour on state highways.

Mother and I were in the back seat praying, asking Jesus to help us. My parents were not religious, church going people. I'd hear Mother say a prayer occasionally before a meal or at bedtime, but to go to Jesus in prayer was not like either one of them.

Communicating via two-way radio, a patrolman in Tacoma said that Dr. Cameron had joined the army and maybe Dr. Hillis could help. Dr. Hillis was retired but had returned to the office until Dr. Cameron could come back when the war was over.

Dr. Hillis met us at the car. My folks and the patrolman brought me in and sat me on the operating table. The doctor examined me. My parents were seated against the wall in the operating room. When the doctor finished the examination, he turned to them and said, "I will have to remove the eye and put in a glass eye. It looks as though the right eye has not been injured and we can pray that eventually the sight will come back in that eye. Blindness in the good eye often happens. It's called a sympathetic injury because the eyes work as a pair."

My father said, "There will be no glass eye. I will not have a daughter with a glass eye." The doctor said, "Let me tell you a story. Three weeks ago I had a little boy in here with the same kind of injury with a homemade arrow that hit him in the eye. He was playing with his bow and arrow shooting it in the air and watching it fall back down when it fell and it hit him in the eye. His parents wanted me to put the eye back in the socket, but the little boy died in three days because the optic nerve leads right to the brain, infection set in and there was nothing I could do. (In 1946 they had just invented sulfa for infections, but it took 10 days. They hadn't invented penicillin yet.) **RESEARCH [It was invented in 1928 but not in common use.]

The lens had collapsed in the eyeball and had torn out part of the muscle. All of the fluid behind the lens had drained out. The eyeball was dirty because the arrow had been shot in the dirt several times prior to hitting my eye.

So, my father said, "Then I'd rather have her dead." At that moment, I passed out and didn't wake up until the next day, still blind. That was on a Wednesday.

I couldn't move. My mother was next to me holding my hands. She told me that the doctor sewed up the eye and replaced it and that my head had been shaved. The top of my head all the way to my nose was in bandages. The reason I couldn't move was because each leg had been tied to the foot of the bed. My arms were tied down and sandbags were placed on both sides of my body and my head because I was not to move at all. I had no pain. At that point I had a lot to think about but I just went to sleep since they had me heavily sedated.

I woke up occasionally hearing a little boy screaming with pain. I asked my mother to go down and take care of him since I certainly wasn't going to go anywhere anytime soon. She said that he had just had a mastoid surgery which is very painful. I really begged mother to go and just love him and let him know that someone was there. I told her I was really fine. I don't remember much other than that until Friday. It looked as though, after the doctor had done his rounds, that I could possibly have escaped having

any kind of infection. My folks could leave my bedside, get something to eat and a change of clothes. The nurses promised to watch me closely and see that I didn't move.

I woke up and realized that I was alone but the little boy was screaming with pain so I decided to go and help him. There I was, my head bandaged, my arms and legs tied to the bed and then a beam of light came through the window and a voice with no sound said, "Where are you going?" Within an instant the room filled with the most wonderful light I'd ever seen or experienced. It surrounded me. It was love if you could feel it, inside and out of your being. It was knowledge. The answer was there. If you could think it, it had an answer. That love was so beautiful. That light was so wonderful. And Hope. The light was reality. Not just hoping for something.

Hebrews 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

And that figure, that shadowed figure. It was cloaked. It was dark and said, "Do not look at me." It said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going down to help that little boy." I was on my way but I thought, "How could I walk through this wall? How can I be out of my body that is lying in that bed?" And the voice with no sound said, "You must return to your body. That little boy will be fine." I asked the voice, "How come I can see with all these bandages on me?"

The voice said, "You will see on Sunday," Then the shadow and the light faded away. I kept calling out, "God, don't leave me. Stay here with me. Don't leave me God." Shortly after that, the nurses ran in wondering what I was yelling about. They said, "What are you yelling about." I said, "Well, God was here and said I would see on Sunday. I didn't want Him to go."

I could tell the nurses were frightened. They said, "We've got to get the doctor here right now. She is hallucinating." The nurses took my vital signs. My temperature was normal, color was good and blood pressure was normal. They both commented, "Well, the doctor does need to be here. Something is happening."

My parents came back and the doctor came. They wanted to hear what happened. So then I told them, "God was here and He said the little boy down the hall would be fine. I didn't want Him to leave."

The nurses updated my parents and then updated the doctor when he arrived. They said, "Her vital signs are all good. But she thought God was here with her."

I could overhear them talking. I said, "God was here. He was really, really here. He said I'd see on Sunday. I'm not going to be blind. I going to see on Sunday."

The doctor pulled up a chair beside my bed and he held my hand that was tied to the bed and said, "There is no way that you will be able to see on Sunday."

I said, "Oh, yes. That's what the voice said. He said the little boy would be fine. The little boy down the hall that had a mastoid removed would be fine."

The doctor said, "You're going to have to understand about what it is like to be blind." The room fell silent. It was as though no one wanted me to hear the reality of my situation. The doctor turned to my parents and said, "She's old enough to understand reality and this is the way it's going to be." He turned back to me as I lay there in bed. He said, "The mind is a wonderful thing and you're going to think that your sight has come back when it really hasn't. You will see out in front of you a beautiful field filled with flowers. You run towards them to be closer to them, smell and feel them. In actuality, it could be a street full of cars that would hit you and kill you. That is reality. This often happens to people who lose their sight and become blind for the first time. In other words, they weren't born blind, So the mind is telling them they are really not blind and that they are going to see."

The mind knows that you never lose hope. That is our only communication with God. It's true hope that brings us into relationship with God. It's kind of like verifying what the doctor was trying to say to my parents. The doctor explained that we must never trust 100% what's going on around us. At that point, I interrupted the doctor and said, "Well, if I can't see, how can you explain that I saw this room? I'll describe it to you. The window is to the left and behind me. On the right side of the bed is the wall. At the foot of the bed on the right side is a closet with a door. The foot of the bed is facing the entrance to this room. On the left side under the window is a cabinet with cards sitting on top and a box of chocolates." (CHANGE TO HOW A 12 YEAR OLD WOULD TALK)

The doctor said back to me, "All this is easy to explain. Even though you have been in this bed, your other senses have become more acute. Your hearing. Your feeling. It's easy to tell where the window is because the sun is shining and you feel the warmth of it on your bed. You know that cabinet sitting next to you has chocolates on it because you've been told that and your mother has read the cards. You know the bed is next to the wall because you heard it thump when they pushed the bed back. You know where the sound was coming from when they opened the closet door. Your mind has put together an accurate picture of this room through sound. That is the logical explanation."

(DESCRIBE THE WAR...& THE LACK OF CHOCOLATES)

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The doctor said, "As long as I'm here, I need to change the bandages and check both eyes." My mother asked the doctor why my good eye looked so bloody with no white showing, pupil or anything. That is called a sympathetic blindness. "Maybe to better explain it," he said, "Think of it like amnesia. Your memory is still there but you can't find it."

At that point I told the doctor that God told me I would see on Sunday. I told them not to worry because I would be seeing on Sunday.

I was kept sedated most of the time I was at this emergency clinic. I don't remember much of what happened on Saturday. But when the doctor came in to change the

bandages on Sunday, he did search for the way to tell me not to be disappointed about not being able to see. There would be no way. He removed the bandages and said that things were looking very good. It looked like infection wouldn't set in. At that moment I started to see some light.

The doctor said, "Well, if you can see, how many fingers am I holding up?"

I said, "Four"

Then he asked what color tie was he wearing?

And I said, "Red with white polka dots."

At that moment the room went silent. My mother started to cry. The nurses cried. My father and the doctor got the sniffles.

The doctor re-banded me and had nothing more to say. I was released a few days later.

Mother explained to me later that with the bandages off, she saw where my eyes were supposed to be. It looked as though two pieces of liver were sitting there. She told me that the eyeball had collapsed and all of the fluid drained out. The lens was torn from the pupil.

I was bedridden for the rest of June. I was not to get up except to go to the bathroom until the end of July. My mother was to change the bandages daily and put medication in the eye that was shot. During that time the family would not allow my cat in my bedroom. My bedroom was on the second floor, far away from all the daily activities. So I spent most of my time napping or alone.

My grandfather worked at the water department. After dinner every night, he would come up, read to me and tell me stories. I so looked forward to his visits every night. All that time I was living in darkness. I really learned about being blind. That's when I really understood what being blind was as both eyes were totally bandaged. So I basically had three full months of blindness that summer. A lot of it flat on my back. The doctor was afraid that I might disturb the stitches where he had placed the lens back behind the pupil. The arrow had damaged the muscle that holds the lens in place. He was able to reattach the lens to the muscle and get it to stand up again.

Those months that I was blind, my folks were making plans for me to be able to live a life of blindness. The two besides my brother who were able to visit me were a totally deaf child that was home from a special school down the block in Vancouver, called The Deaf and Blind School, supported by the state of Washington and my cousin, Maxine who was blind, also going to the same school.

Each had to be sanitized before entering the room. All were there to help me learn how to live in a world as a blind person. I learned it was important to memorize everything in the room and let my other senses take over. I was going to have to learn Braille. I

kept telling them, "I'm not going to be blind." My Mom would say, "That's nice dear, but lie still while I'm trying to change this bandage."

My right eye had healed and wasn't bloodshot. I was able to be out of bed and wear a bandage over the left eye that had been injured. There could be no sight in the left eye because all the fluid had drained. As far as the doctor knew, that fluid could never be reproduced or replace by the body.

Today we know it can be because fluid did return to the eyeball when the last bandage came off the left eye. I have a picture of me in August, still wearing a bandage.

The second surgery was to sand off the scar tissue made by the first surgery so that I could open and shut my eye without scraping the incision. They couldn't remove the bandage until that second surgery was done.

Sight came back as God promised!

Fast forward to 1984 or 83?? CHECK

My sight was dimming and I couldn't understand why. I thanked God for all those years of sight so I could see my two children, who I should say were miracles too. I supposed that I'd be losing my sight again. I really had no idea if miracles only lasted so long, or if they had any warranties or guarantees. The only thing that I could remember was some of the things that happened to Jesus' disciples. A few had some very scary endings.

A young lady in a nurse's outfit came into our dry cleaning shop to leave some cleaning. I asked her what doctor she worked for. She said, Dr. Howerton at the eye clinic. I asked if he took new patients. I explained to her that when I was young, I was shot with an arrow and the doctor reattached the lens to the pupil. All of the fluid had returned and God had restored my sight as He had promised.

She said, "Oh, yes he does and he'd be glad to see you."

I thought. Maybe I needed to do something like the three men who Jesus healed their blindness and told them to go to the priest and tell him what Jesus did. After all, God only told me that I'd see on Sunday. He didn't say I'd see forever! I knew I needed to see that Dr. Howerton and ask him what I needed to be doing.

I made an appointment that day and I was so glad I did. He not only examined my eyes but was very interested in my story. He said that the left eye was dimming because of a cataract forming on the lens. But he wasn't sure that he could do cataract surgery because there may not be enough muscle left to attach the lens to the pupil. He paused for a minute or so then explained to me that there may be another problem too, because the retina was diseased or damaged, I'd still have no sight in the left eye.

However, he said there was a new ophthalmologist who moved to town with the latest invention called a laser machine. Maybe she could see through the cataract, check out the retina and see if it had developed a disease since the accident. Because I was seeing

up until my sight began getting dim. He said he'd call me when he was able to get an appointment for me.

The doctor did call later saying he made the appointment and she could see me the following month. I arrived at the appointed time but she was busy with a pharmaceutical rep discussing dinner plans. She told her receptionist to do the exam. The receptionist was acquainted with the machine but I could tell I was her first patient. She explained to me that she would be shining a light in my left eye trying to find a crack in the cataract so that she could look at the optic nerve to see if it had any kind of disease.

I said, "Stop! Stop! I can see something! Oh my goodness! I can see the whole eye chart." She said, "In that beam of light is the eye chart. Can you read it to me?" I was able to read from top to bottom, every letter perfectly. And we laughed with joy! It was unbelievable! The whole image was so sharp and distinguishable that I could hardly believe what I was seeing. The results of that afternoon were reported back to Dr. Howerton. His nurse called me for an appointment to see him the following week. He said I am going to prepare you for surgery next month because I do not plan to do this surgery without another doctor's help. He will be a man that I greatly admire.

That day came and the surgery was a success. I checked in early. The staff prepared me for surgery. They said I'd be able to go home at noon and go to bed for the rest of the day and the next morning, I could go about my day as usual. The doctor gave me a KFC lunch and said, "Have a restful afternoon."

I thought, "How could this be? The last surgery I was in bed the whole summer encased in sandbags and tied to the bed. And I could take the bandage off tomorrow like nothing had ever happened?" Well, things had changed since the 1940's! WOW Isn't modern science great!?

I woke up from my nap with my face hurting like it had never hurt before. It was pain so bad. It was a good thing that my mother was staying over so she could tell the doctor. The pain that I was having was a mystery to Dr. Howerton and he couldn't understand what could have caused the pain. Then he realized that maybe one of the shots that he put in around the eye must have hit a nerve and broke the shaft around the nerve causing it to be exposed. He sent out pain medicine which worked. But as he promised, the next morning, I was back on the job.

I was to see Dr. Howerton on a follow up visit two weeks later to see how I was doing. He wanted to see if the stitches were healing correctly. He told me to look in the drawer and I did. He said, "I want you to look what I have in the drawer." I said, "What in the world is this contraption?" He said, "It's one of those laser machines. Now I can use it for my patients," It would be useful for him to have one of these new inventions to use in his practice.

After Dr. Howerton got the machine, this dear man and his wife and staff kept their office open Christmas Eve and gave free examinations to all that come to his office, men,

women and children. The line outside sometimes was a block long before they were able to go home and have their Christmas. What a blessing this man was to the people of Austin! God is good!

Since that time I have learned that God's promise has kept on giving. In the 1990's (FILL IN DATE LATER) vision in the left eye was growing dim because the artificial lens was fogging up and needed to be replaced. There again, there was the problem of having enough muscle in the iris to attach another artificial lens. The eye doctor decided they could go ahead with the surgery and wrote a prescription for the lens that was to be implanted. I was sent to Oxford where they were going to do the surgery. The doctors there decided to recheck all the information given to them by my doctor in South Haven. They found that the prescription had changed which created a problem. They weren't sure that they had a lens to match the lens that would correct the vision. They searched the clinic and found one prescription that matched then went ahead with the surgery. It was successful.

Now, in the turn of the century I have developed glaucoma in the left eye. The only thing I can tell you is that the pressure is in the high 20's, but there is no pain and I'm so excited to see what God has planned next!

THE END

Jesus loves you too and wants to be your friend too. Just ask Him to come into your heart. Just love Him back and ask Him to come into your heart.

Anita J.