

*S*pecks of blood smeared my yellow undies. My heart raced in fear. *Could it be... Oh no! Am I going to have another miscarriage? Did I work myself to exhaustion again?*

HOPE

for My Womb

Anyone who is among the living has hope – even a live dog is better than a dead lion!

(Ecclesiastes 9:4)

I Can't Be Good Without God


MARLENE LEGASPI MUNAR

Read Ephesians 2:8-10.

When my daughter was nine, she turned to me with misty eyes. She told me how she and her friends had been teasing a new classmate from another region in the country because of her unusual accent. The constant teasing led this poor girl to seek to transfer from their school. My daughter suddenly felt guilty.

"Why can't I be good, Mom? I want to be a good girl but I can't." In a hurry to console her, I answered, "You can't be good without God. Only God is good, but if you trust Him, He will change you. He will help you to be good and to do good." I think somehow she was relieved by that thought.





After that, it was my turn to examine myself. Only recently, I felt bad about not giving enough time in raising my kids. Instead, I was busy writing, teaching, and serving in church. And during some of the times I was with my children, I was either nagging or half-listening to them.

It was my turn to find comfort in God for my failures. The verse that I memorized in the past came alive again in this situation: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

Years ago, I asked God to forgive all my sins when I welcomed Jesus to become Lord and Savior of my life. Now as a mother years later, I am still experiencing God's purifying process. I am convinced that I cannot be a good Mom without God. I can only be good by God's grace.

*If we confess our sins,
he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

1 JOHN 1:9

intently. He then asked, "From what has Jesus set you free?"

Here my drowsiness disappeared, as I tried to recall the relevance of the memory verse. "I was brought up as an intensely religious person, but I lacked knowledge about the Bible. Due to stress, I became excessively hypertensive for five years. I went to specialists and was given all sorts of medicine to no avail. A Christian prayed over me and claimed a promise of Jesus on healing. Soon, I was set free from hypertension and nervousness."

After hearing me, he finally asked a most perplexing question, "Since Jesus has set you free, how many do you bring to Christ a day?"

I had no ready answer for that question. I felt relieved that I had reached my

destination. I looked at the taxi meter which registered P13.50 (The flagdown rate was low back in 1987). I handed a twenty-peso bill to him saying, "Keep the change."

Only God knows how I used to think ill of drivers who most often pretend they don't have change. This time, I'd rather give him the small change rather than be deceived. To my surprise, the driver got P6.50 from his consulbox. He gave it to me and said, "Thank you, Ma'am, but here is your change. As a true Christian I only get what is due me. Please remember what I told you. Now that Jesus has set you free, how many souls will you bring to Christ a day?"

Three Calls

1. **A Call to Salvation** - Are you born again?
2. **A Call to Sanctification** - Are you living a life pleasing to God?
3. **A Call to Serve** - Now that Jesus has set you free, how many do you bring to Christ a day?

That sounded more to me like an assignment with a quota. Assuredly, he gave me two tracts. One on prayer; the other, on God's call to salvation, sanctification and service.

This unexpected gesture of the driver erased my bad impression towards taxi drivers entirely. I realized that not all take advantage of others. I should, therefore, not be critical and judgmental. As soon as I alighted, I turned around to inquire about the operator that I may commend this taxi driver. But, the taxi was gone. I did not hear the door of the taxi close behind me. I couldn't figure out how, all of a sudden, it was gone. It plainly disappeared!

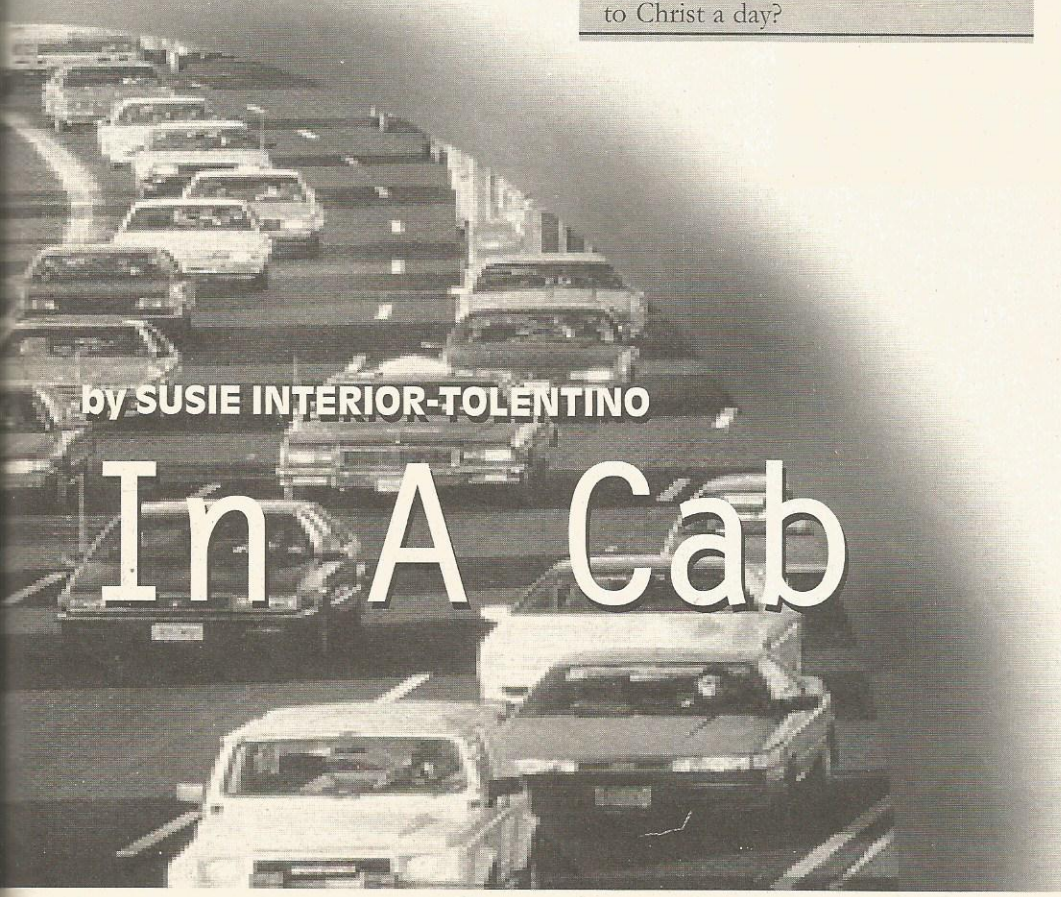
I composed myself as I looked at the loose change and the tracts that he gave me. His last question kept ringing in my ears. Totally amazed, I darted to the office of my boss who was my Bible teacher. I couldn't hold back my tears as I related to him what had happened. I gave him a blank look when he asked me about the driver's face, the make of taxi. I was too dazed to even recall his appearance.

Could He be an angel sent by God in my unguarded moment of earthly drowsiness? Yes, knowing Christ is more than memorizing verses. It is sharing how Jesus set me free to those who need to be set free. That precious incident led me to see God's daily goodness whenever I declare His great commission, "Go and share." ★

Susie Tolentino is a regular contributor of Light Touch Magazine.

by SUSIE INTERIOR-TOLENTINO

In A Cab



It was an altogether very busy day.

The tight morning schedule was followed by a client call during lunch. The happy meal made me sleepy though I wanted to blame it on the siesta syndrome. I had to rush back to the office to finish some computer proposals. As I sluggishly hailed a cab, I prayed its aircon was working well because the air was humid. When the cab pulled over, I told the driver, my destination and he kindly obliged despite the short distance. Others would have set certain conditions. He did not. I was glad!

The cab was neat and cool! When I got settled on my seat, the driver politely turned to me and asked, "Ma'am are you a born again (renewed) Christian?"

My quick reply was, "yes". His next question was as courteous and precise as the first: "If you are truly born again, what verse in the Bible is most meaningful to you?"

At this point, I mused "Who gave this guy the authority to test me orally on the road right now?". Nevertheless, I complied, "John chapter 8 verses 31 to 32."

He was decidedly careful not to sound intrusive. He phrased his third question, with, "I hope you won't mind Ma'am, what is written in John 8:31 to 32?"

Slowly but surely I recited to him the verse: "To the Jews who believed Him, Jesus said, 'If you hold on to my teachings, you are really my disciples; then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.'"

The driver seemed delighted as he listened to my
a n s w e r



Lessons Learned

Freedom from...

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quite a spell left as soon as the pastors concluded the prayer with a resounding *Amen*. But the enemy was not to give-up without putting up a good fight. The prayer for deliverance took half a year until my family decided to take me to the psychiatric ward. After three weeks of confinement, I claimed freedom from my deranged mind in the name of Jesus Christ!

Many of my acquaintances would ask me how I managed to pass through all these adversities and live to tell about it. During the ordeal, I accepted Jesus in my heart and asked Him not only to be my Healer but to be my Savior as well. It was hard to understand though but I remember clinging onto His faithfulness as the Bible promised. I sang His praises in worship services with fervor and enthusiasm even when there were no significant indications that He's already working His miracles in me. I never blamed Him for the painful experiences that came my way. I remained steadfast in my desire to experience His grace and mercy. The miracle of it all was how I found Him in the midst of my emotional darkness, how I heard His voice in an atmosphere where the tormenting voice of hopelessness afloat.

As Christians, we will all have just one event where we are allowed to gamble. Imelda, for her part laid all her remaining chips on the line for Jesus Christ. Then again, gambling is not really gambling when there is not a chance of losing. Still, not everyone seems to have the guts to place a bet on a "sure win" stake—JESUS CHRIST. ✪

Hope for my...

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least, I didn't go under the knife.

During this difficult time, I kept on seeking God for guidance and comfort. I know nothing is impossible with God. Everyday I would pray and seek His will regarding my pregnancy. Each time, I would be led to verses in the Bible that revealed God's character and power. God's presence and promises kept my hopes high.

But two weeks before my second ultrasound, I had another spotting. The doctor gave a straightforward verdict. "I don't think we can expect a significant change anymore. The normal procedure for cases such as yours is to have delivery by caesarian operation." To avoid further complications, I was advised to take complete bed rest.

In spite of what the doctor said, my husband and I, and our families, were still hoping for the best. We came to a point when we learned to depend on God and trust Him to do whatever He wills. We held on to what the Bible says: God's will is good, pleasing and perfect. We did not doubt His power to heal and do miracles. On the other hand, we also believed that He could provide as much money as necessary for any operation. Our intense desire was for God to intervene in such a way that He alone would be credited for any good that would come out of the situation. With this conviction, we were at peace. I knew my baby was in God's hands.

When the time came for the ultrasound test, I requested the sonologist, "Please let me know how much of the placenta is still encroaching." The nurse-midwife from the new clinic, to which I had recently been going for check-up, instructed me to ask this important question. According to her, if the case was just very marginal, I could proceed with a natural childbirth by Lamaze method.

The examination was quite long. I was beginning to wonder what the sonologist was seeing on the screen, yet all the time I was at peace. I was thanking the Lord. I kept reminding myself that God is good; that everything will work out for our good and for His glory.

The silence in the room was broken by the sonologist's puzzled report. "Who says you have placenta previa? Your placenta is very far... it's far above the top of your womb."

When I heard that, I almost jumped off the examination table because of joy! My placenta has finally moved to its proper position!

So towards the end of that year, I gave birth by Lamaze method to a healthy baby boy. God proved that He is the Maker of the beautiful baby that was in my womb by placing him and the placenta in their proper position. He also confirmed that He is the Great Provider. We were spared the large amount that would have been spent for the caesarian operation. God also fulfilled my desire to experience natural childbirth. My husband panted and pushed with me as I brought our baby out into this world. Finally giving birth to my son after those trials was a beautiful, triumphant experience I will always remember. But I will not also forget the lesson it brought me about hope. Dean Merrill said it well in his article "*Why Be Optimistic*": *Hope is not silliness. Hope is the quiet whisper inside the Christian's heart that says, Well... it's possible. Where there is hope, there is optimism. There is assurance that God has not run out of options yet, and neither have we.*" ✪

Marlene Legaspi-Munar would gladly share words of inspiration to you and your group if you would invite her. For comments or invitation, e-mail her at

I had a similar spotting two years before this incident. The spotting was a sign that I had a miscarriage. I lost what would have been my first baby. That was a sad experience for me and I am thankful that I have recovered from that. God's grace sustained me and prudence enabled me to have a safe pregnancy the second time around. So my firstborn was a girl. She was only nine months old when my husband and I got a surprise: another tiny embryo quickening in my womb for the third time.

And now these foreboding red spots. I immediately consulted my doctor and she recommended an ultrasound test. I tried to calm my body from shaking as the sonologist slithered his gelled instrument over my slightly bulging stomach. Fortunately, the ultrasound test showed that the three month-old fetus in my womb was still alive. But my placenta was encroaching my internal os, or cervix, and the spots of blood were coming from the sensitive blood vessels touching the os. I was diagnosed to have a case of placenta previa.

My obstetrician-gynecologist told me however, that the placenta could still change its position and move towards the dome of my womb where it should be. I was advised to refrain from doing heavy tasks. I was scheduled to undergo another ultrasound test

after three months to see if any change had taken place regarding the position of the placenta. With hope springing within me, my husband and I solicited the prayer support of our families, relatives, friends and members of our local church. In the evening before going to bed, my husband and I would lay hands on my womb and ask God to do something about my delicate situation. We believed that God has the power to correct any deficiency in my pregnancy.

After three months, the situation hadn't changed. The placenta was still low-lying and part of it was also still encroaching the internal os. The fetus was also smaller than expected. I was scheduled to undergo a second ultrasound. If my condition remained the same, my doctor told me that I would have to give birth by caesarian operation. Otherwise, I might lose a large amount of blood through normal delivery, and that would complicate my condition as well as the baby's. Add to this, my blood type is AB, which will make finding blood donors difficult should I need a transfusion.

Since a caesarian operation costs three to five times more than a normal operation, I naturally didn't want to have one. Besides, I wanted to try giving birth the natural way. Although I was induced with medication to hasten the birth of my daughter Phoebe, at

Wishing has to do with what I want in things or people or God; hope has to do with what God wants in me and the world of things and people beyond me. Wishing is a line that comes out of me, with an arrow pointing into the future. Hoping is a line that comes out of God from the future, with an arrow pointing toward me. - Eugene Patterson

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About Placenta Previa

Placenta previa is the implantation of the placenta "inunan" partially covering the cervix. It occurs in about one in 200 pregnancies.

There are 3 types of placenta previa:

1. complete previa - cervical os is completely covered
2. partial previa - just a portion of the cervix is covered by the placenta
3. marginal - extends just to the edge of the cervix

Diagnosing a previa:

1. painless bleeding
2. premature contractions
3. abnormal lie (breech, transverse, etc.)
4. uterus measuring larger than it should according to dates

Complications for the baby at true placenta previa term:

1. problems for the baby, secondary to acute blood loss
2. intrauterine growth retardation due to poor placental perfusion

3. increased incidence of congenital anomalies

Risks for mother:

1. life-threatening hemorrhage
2. caesarean delivery
3. increased risk of postpartum hemorrhage
4. increased risk of placenta accreta (placenta accreta is where the placenta is attached directly to the uterine muscle)

Some previas are resolved by term, where some previas are no longer seen. ✪

Source: www.pregnancy.about.com

Someone Beautiful

by Carey Posey

Point of crisis

Tears ran down my face as I stared into the mirror, studying each imperfection with critical eyes: my short, misshapen legs, stubby fingers and knobby wrists. I was disgusted with my 12-year-old body, several inches under four feet. Because I was born with achondroplasia—the most common form of dwarfism—even getting a drink of water was a chore for me.

Drag a chair (*scrape!*) across the kitchen floor. Climb up to open the cabinet. Grab a glass and climb down. Another horrendous scrape to the freezer for ice. Climb up. Balance to reach for ice. Climb down. Drag the chair back. The rest of my family could have drained their glasses before I had moistened my lips. This task—and so many others like it—frustrated and discouraged me.

I had watched with envy as my seven-year-old sister grew perfect long legs and shot past me, while a huge, heavy brick seemed to press on my head, refusing to let me grow like everyone else. I felt almost claustrophobic in my body. Friends carried on conversations above my head. In the first grade kids began calling me names like “midget.” I quickly got tired of being asked “How’s the weather down there?” and struggled to give cute, funny answers.

“Look, Mommy, look at her!” I heard at the mall, and eyes like laser beams followed me wherever I went. At times like that I felt self-conscious and struggled to maintain steady control over every movement of my body. I smiled, but inside I fumed as a tempest formed in my heart.

Sometimes when people stared I pretended it was because I was beautiful. Yet now, as I looked in the mirror, I gave up my pretending and cried bitter tears, frustrated that I was born ugly. Pretending I was beautiful was just a game I had been playing.

This was how my entire life was going to be. I would always need a stool to reach things. I would always have to look up at my friends’ faces instead of straight at them. I would always be stared at...and the only one who could have prevented or changed this was God.

My stomach boiled in anger at him for allowing this to happen. Spitting words like fiery nails, I angrily demanded, “Why me? God, why am I so small? Why didn’t you allow me to look like everyone else?” I was furious with him. It was so unjust! I heard other girls complain about their bodies. Yet they had bodies I would have loved to have. I knew I needed something to believe in, something to encourage me, but each day that image in the mirror stayed the same.

The summer of my thirteenth birthday came, bringing with it our church youth group’s yearly trip to camp at Forest Home. Tall, green pine trees greeted us as we drove up the moun-

tain. Away from the city, immersed in the beauty of God’s creation, my spirits began to lighten. We walked roads dappled in golden sunlight, and as the light sneaked past the branches of the trees, God’s love began to make its way back into my heart.

It was Thursday, nearing the end of a wonderful week, when I joined other girls at a morning discussion session. We sat together and listened as Julie, one of the counselors, began speaking. As the breeze braided her hair, she told of a time when she was saddened by the fact that her younger sister was prettier than she was, and guys Julie liked noticed her sister more. “Our bodies are a gift, like jewelry handmade just for us by a best friend,” I heard Julie say. “If we reject the way God has made us, it is as if we had said to our best friend, ‘Take it back! I don’t like it! Why didn’t you paint it blue instead of pink?’”

Julie stressed that God has a purpose in allowing us to look the way we do. With fingers still curled around my pen, I stopped taking notes. I sat spellbound. Could something that seemed to be a curse actually be a gift from God? I was saddened as I realized how I had treated his gift. The warmth of the sun embraced me, and I began praying silently, *Lord I’m so sorry for being angry at you. It hurt me knowing I’ll have to go through life this way. I didn’t understand that you have a reason and that my body is a gift from you.*

Today I can actually thank God for allowing me to be a little person. He has promised that for those who love the Lord, hardships can be used by him for good. I understand what it’s like to be faced with the problems that come with being different. Rejection, surgeries, and other difficulties related to my dwarfism have taught me to be more understanding and encouraging, able to lend a sympathetic ear. My body, though different from the world’s view of a gift, is truly a special gift from God because it has made me become a loving person. When others stare, I still smile at them, but this smile comes from my heart. I don’t need to pretend that they stare because I’m beautiful. I know I am. Now when I look in the mirror, I know God the creator is looking at me too, and together we both see the same thing. Someone beautiful.

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Resolution

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Background