

How Do You Hear God?

“Speak, for your servant is listening.”

1 Samuel 3:10

The Miracle of Addy Rose—THE BIRTH of a MINISTRY

An unexpected visitor appeared when the baby twins turned 12 weeks old. It was Saturday August 31, 2013. Clink, clink, clink. Was it raining on the skylight?

A pure white dove was walking on the skylight. “Miller! Come see this!” “Have you ever seen a bird land on a skylight?” “Look,” he said, pointing to a red band on the dove’s leg. “That’s a message band.” That white dove wanted to make sure we noticed that band before he flew to our deck where he stared at us, eye to eye through the sliding glass door. Locked in a “bird stare down,” I finally said, “What the heck was that all about???”

On Sunday, Papa Miller wanted to include grandbaby Addy on the list for church prayers, but I was reluctant because few knew of baby Addy in Texas. I knew Addy had a cold but Papa Miller has always had “radar” when things aren’t right and things weren’t right with Addy. On a call later that day we heard Addy’s raspy breathing and murmuring groans. Addy had visited the Emergency Room twice already, to be turned back home. Nothing serious.

Monday was Labor Day. Addy was urgently admitted directly into Children’s Hospital in ICU, intensive care unit. By the end of Monday night, the doctors had the initial diagnosis of Tracheomalacia. Usually outgrown if congenital and fairly prevalent with preemies, which Addy was. Again the doctors were fairly unalarmed. But she wasn’t born having this, so what was causing this? Before going to sleep, I beseeched God, “Talk to me!”

Tuesday, Miller called from Nashville at 4:45AM. “It’s really bad, so pack up—we are driving to Texas.” Addy couldn’t breathe. Now the diagnosis was Neuroblastoma, a tumor around her spine, heart, lungs and trachea. Oncologists, heart and lung surgical team being summoned. Was it malignant? Could this 10 pound baby survive such an invasive surgery so close to all her vital organs?

Papa Miller urged prayer for Addy. I sent out a massive email and Facebook blitz for prayer. Then I walked around the quiet house in a daze. Numb. Quiet. All Quiet. Crying. Heart hurting. In the quiet I recalled the dove with the messenger band. Maybe there is a message, so I looked up “Dove” in my Bible Concordance. Genesis 8:8—The dove that Noah sent out brought a message of HOPE. Matthew 3:16—The dove lighting on Jesus like the dove descending from heaven and lighting on our home. It was Jesus’s baptism...you know the story. We had taken water from the Jordan River a few months ago with every intention of having the twins baptized with that precious water from the very river where Jesus was baptized. Could we baptize Addy before it was too late? Jesus began his mission, dedicating the remainder of his life to the Glory of God. If we could baptize her, perhaps Addy would give her life to God if she survived.

What else did the Concordance reference? Isaiah 38. Miller and I had just read Isaiah 38 three days prior, as our daily devotion! Verse 14—“I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove.” This sounded like Addy’s breathing we had heard that very day we read this passage. Coincidence? Verse 16b—“You restored me to health and let me live.” Verse 18a—“For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise.” Verse 19—“The living, the living—they praise you, as I am doing today.” It is the ancient story of Hezekiah’s illness, God’s promise and God’s miraculous healing.

I pattered and straightened, a nervous habit, in a quiet house. As my cell phone remained quiet, I put away my Bible study guide “Forgotten God,” by Francis Chan, which was my current study on the Holy Spirit. Of course, it had a picture of a dove on the cover. Coincidence?

Quiet. Why so? Miller’s frantic attempts to reach me uncovered that my cell phone refused to hold a charge. When God wants to talk to you, He stops the busy noise! My only link to the outside world, I checked email and Facebook and the flood of prayers were coming in from coast to coast. And I mean they weren’t just saying they would pray, we were getting their heartfelt written prayers. This was at a time when Addy’s left lung had collapsed; her ribs had been partially eroded due to the aggressive tumor that was wrapped around her spine, her heart (threatening her artery), her lungs, her trachea...literally strangling her.

Wednesday morning, September 4, was Addy’s darkest hour. The surgical team was preparing. Biopsy results were 99% in and it was cancer and aggressively strangling her. No time to wait. The surgical staff was mentally preparing our son and daughter-in-law for the worst. Addy may not make it through surgery. Her parents never left Addy’s side the entire hospital stay. They stood united, loving each other and loving, protecting and caring advocates for her night and day. Her mother went to the hospital chapel that terrible Wednesday morning praying “Lord, take me instead.” She loves Addy enough to sacrifice herself instead. That goes to the depth of knowing what Christ Jesus did for each of us, sacrificing knowingly and willingly to save a beloved child of God.

That same morning, packed with holy water from the Jordan, we started the arduous drive. Driving and praying, driving and praying. Something came over me mid-morning and I prayed open eyed, full of strength...in the power of the Holy Spirit, I said: “NO!! I declare a HOLY WAR on this tumor, in the name of the Great Physician, Christ Jesus. You, God, did not create Addy with this tumor. This was not YOUR Plan for Addy. Holy Father, in Your Love and in Your mighty way, heal her and may You restore and perfect and strengthen her backbone, her heart, her lungs, her windpipe and her vocal cords, so that she can dedicate her life to you and SING YOUR PRAISES. LET HER SING, LORD! AMEN!!!

The tire blew out with an explosive sound. About 5 miles south of Amarillo about 4:00 p.m. Nothing but 18 wheelers zooming down an old two-lane highway. AAA said it would be at least an hour. Hot! No water left. Wheel on its rim, completely flat.

Then an “Angel” appears. Making a U-turn, a clean white pick-up truck stopped. A young man with a white cap, white T-shirt and white sunglasses approached us calmly and slowly. “You need some help?” It was both a question and a statement. “I change tires all the time on this road. Where are you folks headed?” he asked politely. We talked about Addy and wanting to get there with the water from the Jordan to baptize Addy.” He nodded and said gently “I died twice, once for an hour. It is documented. You can find it on Google.” As “Angel,” Deven was changing the tire, I asked, “What did you learn when you died?” He said promptly, matter of factly and sincerely, “God is truly our Father and when He says it is time to come home, we go.”

Spare tire on, we followed Deven in to the nearest town. There and then at 5:00 p.m., we get “The Miracle Call” from our son. Ecstatically he exclaims “It’s better than the best case scenario.” It’s not cancer. No surgery. It’s like a birthmark on the inside of the body. It is so rare, discovered in 1944 and only two cases in the last 10 years.” Every doctor was shocked at the outcome! Infantile Hymangioma. 99.9% go away on its own, but because this was internal and massive enough to be threatening vital organs, the tumor must shrink fast, so propranolol (not surgery or chemotherapy, as earlier considered) was prescribed. Thank you God! It is a miracle.

While on the phone with our son, I told him that many people had been praying for Addy. He said he knew it because their Pastor had come to see Addy that morning and prayed for her when she was really bad and when our son asked him how he had learned about Addy, the pastor said “St. John’s Lutheran in Denver!”

On Thursday, we arrived in Texas and dashed to the hospital to find Addy bottle feeding and breathing on her own...she even smiled at Nana. Holding her with all the wires and tubes attached was quite a feat, but you could tell already that she had been touched by the Great Physician, Christ Jesus!

Saturday, the 7th, Addy was 13 weeks old and all vitals in normal range. She was smiling and reaching out.

Sunday, September 8, 2013 was GRANDPARENTS’ DAY, so we decided to attend church and talked briefly to the pastor who prayed at Addy’s critical hour and again when she was recovering miraculously. He shared that while driving home when Addy was so bad, he prayed really hard for her with tears in his eyes. That he felt a strong connection to her. He said sometimes we pray and it’s like swinging a bat, sometimes it just connects and you hit it out of the ball park. But you’ve got to swing the bat. This time it was a home run! During the service, I was fascinated by the huge stained glass window above the altar covered with White Doves! The altar covering had all white doves. Coincidence? The sermon was solely on Philemon. Then the pastor gave his testimony of the Miracle of Addy Rose.

On Monday, 7 days after being admitted into ICU, Addy was put under sedation for a 3 hour MRI. The doctors wanted to check a lot of things in Addy. They were still dumbfounded. Addy was cleared to return home that evening.

We returned home, September 12, 2013, the National Day of Encouragement, to find an anonymous package with blank prayer cards with ribbons and the inside “I remember you in my prayers”—Philemon 1:4....the sermon on Grandparents Day. Coincidence?

*“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong.
They are weak, but He is strong!”*

And there is more.....

EPILOGUE, THE BIRTH OF A MINISTRY

Apostle Paul wrote often about the power of prayer 2,000 years ago. God is the same then as now, ever faithful, ever listening and reaching out to the cry of His children who call out to Him. “The prayer of the righteous is powerful,” from James 5:16. Psalm 18 tells how God comes in full power to a cry for help. Ephesians 2: 8-10—and, if I might interject Addy’s name into it—“For it is by Grace you [Addy Rose], have been saved...and this is not from yourself —IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD—not by works so that no one can boast (not by medical team, not by the quality nor quantity of prayers, not by efforts of parents, grandparents, or doctors). For [Addy] is God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for [Addy] to do.”

How are you reaching out? What has this got to do with prison ministry? This story has two references to Philemon. I didn’t get it. I just thought it was a coincidence. I didn’t know anything about that book of the Bible, but it was preached that morning when the pastor had—from the pulpit—proclaimed that Addy was a miracle that he had witnessed. Then when we returned home and found note cards with Philemon 1:4. Again, I thought that was a coincidence.

What you do not yet know was that a group of prison ladies were praying for Addy. I had written letters for 9 months to a woman in prison, who began praying for Addy, and I tell you the truth when I say she is a mighty prayer warrior who taught me the power of prayer! Then I sent her the miracle story and it went around the prison and Addy’s story gave such encouragement to those prisoners!!!

It was a month later when I had time to spend alone with God. I said, “Well God, what is it you want to show me today?” It came, “You need to understand Philemon.” I spent the next five hours reading and researching commentaries until I completed “my understanding.” Literally in tears, with an understanding that God was saying to me, “This is what I want you to do,” write letters, encourage others like Paul did. Apostle Paul had an active prison ministry, changing lives of those inside and outside prison.

Philemon is all about prison ministry through letters. Apostle Paul wrote from prison to Philemon, a fellow Christian, on a very intimate one-to-one level. Paul asked that Onesimus, a man who was guilty and in prison, but was “transformed” and became like a son to Paul, to be forgiven and be accepted back into normal life. It was a test for Christians. A test whether the new convert could remain righteous on the “outside” and for the “outsider” to accept and forgive this once wayward man. It was aged Paul going out on a limb for a prisoner, a newly transformed being. It is a test of Grace. We, as Christians, receive God’s Grace, can we pay it forward?

Trust me, I have absolutely no experience with prison, with professional counseling, with heavy ministry, but I must OBEY. God was asking me to do something way beyond myself, and it wasn’t about me—it was about what He wanted to do, what He was doing. He just needed hands and hearts to bring His message of Hope, His saving Grace, a message of encouragement, to be a dove of hope to prisoners and to transform lives.

Thus “An Encouraging Word Ministry” was launched Nov 15, 2013, two months after the miracle of Addy Rose and the National Day of Encouragement. NO COINCIDENCE!

THIS IS GOD REACHING OUT AND IT ALL STARTED WITH A VISIT FROM A DOVE!

