

## **In That Moment**

**O**n a warm Friday afternoon in the late summer of 1971, my doorbell rang, and my life changed again.

We had just moved to Laurelwood Academy, a Seventh-day Adventist Christian high school in the hills outside of Portland, Oregon. My husband was going to be teaching religion there as part of the curriculum. I thought the doorbell had probably been rung by one of the neighborhood children coming to play with our boys, who were four and five years old. Instead, I found myself facing a dark-eyed stranger.

I opened the screen door a polite distance and said, "Hello! What can I do for you?"

With a wistful smile, the man asked, "Don't you know who I am?"

I studied him for a moment. He was short, stocky, middle-aged, and wearing a worn tan shirt.

"No, I'm sorry," I said. "I don't. Is there something I can do for you?" But even as the words left my mouth, I felt the first flicker of recognition.

"You really don't know?" he queried with a small, sad smile.

Suddenly I did know, but from deep inside there came a refusal to admit the truth.

"I'm your father."

In that moment, I was four years old again. I was standing by the couch where my mother had fallen when my father—this man—had struck her. And I heard my small voice begging, "Please wake up, Mommy! Please, please, wake up!"

In that moment, I was a little girl fleeing from home late at night

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with my mother and my sister, a mere eighteen months older than I was. With us were the few possessions we could carry in our small suitcases, and we huddled alone on the dark, deserted platform, waiting for the train that would take us to safety, the train that would take us away from my father.

In that moment, I was a small eight-year-old girl cowering in a bedroom in the wee hours of the morning. Beyond the thin door, the house trembled with the force and sound of plates shattering on the kitchen walls as a deep voice screamed in drunkenness and a higher voice shouted in anger.

In that moment, I was a teenager and secretly glad that my father was not coming to my graduation because how could I ever explain him to my friends? I was a Christian now, graduating from a Christian high school, and felt certain that no one there would understand that my father was an alcoholic.

On that warm September afternoon, the stranger said, "I'm your father," and in that moment I wished, oh, how I wished, that he were not my father.

And that he would turn and go away.

*"I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb"*

(Jeremiah 1:5, NLT).

I am not alone.

There are too many similar moments in too many lives, moments that many women, like myself, would like to erase from their memories. But the good news is that God knows about those moments, and He promises that He still has a plan for your life. His Word says it plainly: "I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Someone has said, “Your past does not determine your future.” There is so much truth in that simple sentence. We do not have to let what has happened to us in the past determine what we will be in the future. The good news is that no matter what has happened in your life, no matter what your beginnings might have been, God sees you as His loved-beyond-words child.

I have two grandchildren, and I think they are the most beautiful girls in the entire world. When I say they are beautiful, I am not talking about how they look. Of course I think that Ashley with her red hair and green eyes and Kennedy with blond hair and similar green eyes are gorgeous, but that is not what makes them beautiful.

I thought they were beautiful the moment I first held them. Back when they were just moments old and had not yet smiled or said funny things or walked on wobbly legs to come to me, I declared each one beautiful. They were still a little wrinkly and red, with yet unfocused eyes when I whispered my love, “You are so beautiful!” Those few words bring together everything I feel about them—the joy, the wonder, the hope. The happiness that floods my heart at the mere thought of each of my girls is beyond my ability to express. They make my heart sing as no one else can do.

The wonder is that God feels the same way about you. He declared His love for you long before you smiled at Him or prayed to Him or took your first steps leading to Him. You make His heart sing. His words in Zephaniah 3:17 are meant for you.

“The LORD your God is with you; his power gives you victory. The LORD will take delight in you, and in his love he will give you new life. He will sing and be joyful over you” (TEV).

What a picture! God joyfully singing His love over each one of us! I remember the first time I read that verse. I quickly went to my prayer journal and turned to the list of questions I want to someday ask God. My questions are not deep, nor are they theological. Not one of them is big or heavy. They are just things I wonder about, things I want to know.

One of the questions is about birds. I wrote it down. “God, do all

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birds sound good when they sing? I don't mean the difference between a crow and a canary. But if you put two canaries side by side and let them sing, do the other canaries say, 'Wow, that one is really good, but this other one ought to keep its beak shut?'

Another question is about cats. "God, how do cats purr?"

Scientists understand very little about the purr mechanism in cats. They know approximately where it comes from and a little of how it operates, but purring is still somewhat of a scientific mystery. I love to feel their engines start at the first touch of my hand on soft kitty fur. God put the purr in the pussycat (and the lion and the tiger), so I know that someday He can explain it to me.

I had another question the first time I read Zephaniah 3:17.

I went straight to my list of questions and wrote, "Dear God, what is the song You are singing over me? Did You make it up just for me? Does it have my name in it? Is it the same song each time You sing for me, or sometimes is it different?

"I hope it's a happy song because I try so hard to bring You joy! I want to live so that You will 'rejoice over me with singing."

I continued, "God, someday when I am in heaven, can we go for a walk together and will You sing for me the song You sing over me now? And when You do, in some deep part of my soul, will I recognize my song because You are so much a part of my life?"

I think God has a song for each one of us. I don't think He has just one song that covers us all, but rather that He has a unique song for each one of us. Maybe we each have our own unique love songs from God. In my imagination, I picture God in heaven singing His song over me, and the angels hear it. I imagine them saying to each other, "God is singing again. Listen, He's singing Ginny's song!" Or He's singing your song. Maybe right now, at this moment, God is singing *your* song. Can you hear it deep in your heart?