



How a heart far from God found a miracle.

Just Slow Down! Pursuing a Miracle

by M. L. Bushong

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First Edition

For

Larry, Thomas and David

Chapter 1

Where do you begin to tell the story of a life changing experience? Where do you count the beginning of that experience? First was a case of shingles that covered one side of my face which put me in the hospital overnight and the second, two years later was cataract surgery and the loss of a dearly loved pet at the same time. Almost two years after that, a third shoe dropped.

I had noticed a pattern developing but sometimes being slow to pick up on clues, it took me a little while to catch on. It started with a little bit of swelling on the top of my left foot right next to my toes and by the next day was engulfing my entire foot and slowly moved up my leg almost to my knee. The skin became red and inflamed, hurting to the touch and most of all unable to tolerate any breath of cool air.

Hind sight is a wonderful thing and I should have gotten it looked at, but not having insurance or even a family doctor at that time, I did what I could for it. It took some time, but I figured out that it was cellulitis, a kind of skin and tissue infection.

I've heard different takes on whether something like that comes from God, but I will say that I think He uses circumstances to achieve His goals in our lives, but He doesn't cause it. The odd thing about this was that there was no cut or scrape to give access to the infection. There were no marks at all, just a lot of pain.

Many nights I woke soaking wet in a fever and would not only have to change clothes but the sheets as well. Many times I

ended up getting up and sitting in the laz-y-boy chair in the living room with my leg wrapped in a towel to keep it warmer. Doing leg exercises helped ease how it felt, so I would alternate legs doing leg lifts as I sat. Finally, I would be tired enough to go back to bed. Sometimes I would just sleep in the chair.

I know that sometimes when things come, the tendency is to blame God. It would have been easy to do, but I am learning that when things happen, and I don't know what to do, figure out what the average person would do and do the opposite. I began to seek God's face. I wanted His healing touch on my body but I didn't know how to go about getting it.

A friend told me to look up healing scriptures. At one time, I would have gone to the concordance in the back of my Bible and searched on key words. This being the information age, I took a shortcut. I got online. I didn't expect to find a lot but I found a site (called saved-healed) where eighty-eight verses and passages of scripture were arranged in a specific order showing the progression of God's desire to heal His children. It was like a revelation. Many of the verses on the surface didn't at first appear to be about healing until you go back to the whole text and the original intent. Obviously, healing His people is very important to God.

I began reading through the list of verses claiming the scriptures for myself. The more I read the more I was convinced that I could get God's healing.

In the meantime, my left foot began to show some major problems. My ankle changed shape, and the arch completely fell. Walking was difficult, and it was hard to do what I needed to do around the house. My husband was getting really concerned, but

it seemed pointless to me to try to find a doctor when we couldn't afford it anyway.

Finally some good friends and neighbors asked if they could take me to their doctor, a Christian man. I agreed. The doctor declared that I had Charcot foot. That is where the ligaments and tendons more or less let go allowing the bones that support the bottom of my leg to rotate out of position to the sides of my foot, no longer supporting my lower leg bones. He took an x-ray to confirm, but could not say for sure why it had happened. He suggested that I see an orthopedic surgeon. That was not news I wanted to hear. The thought of surgery was upsetting. I doubled my efforts seeking God's face.

For the past few years I have been getting mentoring from a couple. I told them about the possible upcoming surgery. One of them made a cryptic remark about that being one way to deal with the situation. That piqued my curiosity. I had heard they had experience with getting God's healing but had never talked to them about it. I sent him an email and asked him about it. Instead of a specific answer, he sent me to watch a video on YouTube entitled, "What is reality?" It turned out to be the first of eight, half-hour videos.

At the end of two days I had watched them all once and was going through them again. The third time through, I began taking notes. I began to get glimpses of what he was talking about, but when I would try to explain it to myself, what I thought I understood, would evaporate like mist from my mind. I went through the series five times before branching out to other videos. It seemed so simple when he would do healing services. Why was it taking so long for me to understand?

I can't say that my husband approved of my search for God's healing. He'd been raised as I had, that God doesn't work like that in the church anymore, yet sometimes He did! It was a contradiction. It couldn't be all about merit, because that's how man thinks. Even so, I found myself slipping back into the thinking of trying to entreat God to help me, like there was some special favor I could do for Him, to make it worth His while. The thought was laughable.

One of the important things I learned was to build a connection with God, to get close enough I could hear His voice. The year before, I had lost my earthly father. He was in heaven so I decided to call my heavenly father, Dad, as well. After all, in the scriptures we are supposed to call him Abba (daddy) Father. One or two people were appalled that I would actually refer to the God and creator of the universe as Dad, like it was too familiar. Father is very formal and I wanted someone whose lap I could figuratively curl up in. Besides, I couldn't remember ever referring to my earthly father as anything but Dad. Dad was the name for the most loved senior male member of my family.

While it was easy to build a connection, keeping it was not easy. It required constant effort, just like any relationship. It still takes effort, but it means that I have counsel constantly. I'm never alone. I'm never left wondering if I am making the right choice on something. I don't hear an audible voice, not yet, but I hope to get there. I do hear words in my head, but sometimes it's just an impression. There are times when I get nothing at all. Then it's a time for using a Biblical principle.

You know how you learn things when you are young and then you relearn them again throughout life? One of the things

I've been relearning is that God never changes. He is absolute in a world that no longer believes in absolutes. When my Dad tells me to do something I know it's Him because it always lines up with scripture. That's just the end of the discussion.

There is a lot of comfort in having an absolute God. You know He's not capricious. He's not going to suddenly turn on you in a fit of spite or pique. His rules are unchanging. I've noticed that whenever I start to think of something as unfair, I have to think back and realize that I broke the rule whatever it might be. When I come to Him confessing my error, He never fails to forgive. That's also part of His absoluteness.

When this whole adventure began, I had already begun to search to establish a stronger relationship with God. For years, I had more or less drifted in my relationship with my Savior. Over the course of the summer I spent a lot of time talking to God and listening for his voice. I actively sought a more personal connection with Him and He found me where I was.

I began to have more private times with Him throughout the day and sometimes into the night. I started reading my Bible regularly again and passages that had once seemed ho hum became vibrantly alive because I read them with the one who was there. I started singing hymns for the joy of it because He would place a title in my heart and it was like I had never forgotten the words, even after many years.

Chapter 2

Throughout the fall, things didn't get better but they didn't seem worse either. I could still get around. Then a little hole appeared near the bottom of my foot and I realized that I must have an abscess starting to drain, which would account for the displacement of the bones and the rest of it. I just wasn't aware of the extent of the abscess. Near the end of February, I became extremely ill. I couldn't eat and barely drank anything and slept most of the time. The abscess had now involved the bone in my ankle instead of being encapsulated and quickly moved into sepsis which is a systemic infection which can easily lead to death.

My husband was understandably worried, because I was always so healthy and active up to this point and he worked security at our local hospital. He described what was going on to a senior staff member at the hospital, and was told that if I didn't get in for some intervention, I would soon be past any help. He could not leave work, but had my son, Tom, bring me to the emergency room. There he waited for me, and I was rushed in. It's hard to remember the exact order of events. I think they started the first of many rounds of very powerful antibiotics, and then took me for an MRI of my foot. Then I was admitted and taken up to a room. Fluids were started because of dehydration. By this point it was after midnight. I think it was the next day when the long parade of doctors began to come through to talk to me about the options I had for my foot, that, in addition to several other doctors for various other reasons. It was easy to get

confused with each one coming in to give their opinion from the MRI and seeing my foot.

I had already begun to suspect that there was a good chance that I could lose my foot. When I looked at it, it didn't look much at all like my other foot. Two orthopedic surgeons thought that they might be able to save the foot and do reconstruction on it but they weren't sure that the infection could be treated effectively, and that I would probably be on antibiotics for a year. Even then, it might still need to be removed. Though there was already improvement from my over night treatment there was no way I wanted to be on antibiotics for a year.

Perhaps they aren't used to pragmatic women, but they seemed surprised when I said, "Well, if it might have to come off in a year anyway, why would I waste that time? Let's take it off." My thought was that 1. God could still heal my foot and 2. gardening season was coming and I didn't want to be stuck in a hospital.

I actually expected to feel fear over what was going to happen, but it never came. Instead, I rested in the knowledge that no matter what happened, the end would be better than the beginning, that God would be able to take any circumstances and make it great.

The surgery was three days after I was admitted. All of my doctors knew that I would not be surprised if God transformed my leg before the surgery. One of them even commented that he was thinking of attending the surgery just in case it happened. I remember being taken down for the surgery, it was the last one of the day. The prep and recovery areas were busy. The whole time I was being taken down, it was like I was being held in

God's arms and He whispered in my ear, "I'm here. I'm holding onto you and I'm never letting go." What amazing words of love that offered such strength to me. Who can be afraid when God is holding onto you?

I woke sometime later, still no fear and a great black wrap around my lower leg holding it immobile. I wasn't sure what direction things would go when going into surgery but now I did. I did have another decision to make. I could become despondent and depressed, or I could face the changes and make the best of it. I have always disliked cowardice especially if I detected it in myself, so I was going to make the best of things. After all, I wasn't alone. God Himself had promised to never let me go.

My surgeon stopped by that next day, to see how I was doing. He left me with two instructions. The first that I was to keep the knee straight and the second, that no one was to unpack it until he did so in ten days. Unpacking it meant to open up the sterile wrappings that covered everything.

It seemed like every doctor who had given an opinion before the surgery was curious to see how things ended up, and one by one they "just happened" to stop by to take a look. It amused me to see their fingers twitching like they couldn't wait to undo the bandages. I just shook my head and said, "no one touches it for ten days until the surgeon looks at things."

I didn't like the pain those first two days, and began repeating my confessions about what I believed, to myself. It went like this. I am a spirit being attached to God and I have a physical body that desires to please me. In order to please me, my body must work normally. My immune system must work

optimally, my digestive system, and circulatory systems work properly. I do not accept pain. It must go. There is nothing broken, nothing missing, nothing lacking, because that is what is right. After those first two days, the pain disappeared and never returned. The morphine was effective but I didn't like having to use it.

That third day the nurse came in, and asked what my pain level was. I said, "There isn't any pain." She was so surprised, and I don't think she believed me. It seemed like every four hours they were checking back with me. It's not that the pain was reduced. It was just gone. Evidently that is unusual after an amputation involving a lot of muscle, and the two leg bones in my lower leg. I don't normally take pain killers though, so pain is unusual for me.

It was shortly after I was hospitalized that I contacted my "long-lost twin sister," Lori. We had met on an email list years before and slowly found that we had a lot of things in common. We not only shared a birthday that was the same day and year, I was only 15 min. older than she was so we really could have been twins if we had shared the same parents.

We texted frequently and she knew I was having troubles with my foot, though not the extent of it. We are on two dog email lists together and as soon as she knew what was going on, she wrote to both lists requesting prayer for me. The response was amazing. I'd already been a contributor to the one list for more than twenty years and though the other one was more recent, many were on both lists since they had related subjects. It's always surprising to find you have more friends than you thought. At the same time, as those two thousand or so members

were praying for me, my biological sisters had alerted the prayer chains at their churches so several hundred more added their voices. Then a good friend who was a list owner on another list, added me to a huge online prayer list, of about fifty-five thousand. Such an out pouring is truly humbling. To say that I was covered with prayers is an understatement. It was a tidal wave of prayers, and I was happy to drown in them.

I've heard it said many times, that the internet is an impersonal place with few real friends, and all I can say they must not be looking in the right places. I have found a large number of people who not only prayed for me, but sent private encouraging emails and some even snail mailed cards. Other friends, who lived closer to me, stopped by the hospital with cards and flowers.

The surgery hadn't been completely average. There had been significant blood loss and my white cell count stayed high longer than what was considered normal. There was talk of a transfusion which didn't exactly excite me. Since the part of me that had been generating the infection was gone, they weren't sure why it was taking so long to normalize the white cell count. My blood work was already starting to come back as clear of infection.

What is the point of having large number of people praying for you if they can't make very specific requests? I sent a message to my twin and told her about the white cell count concern and did the same with my family. When they did blood work early the next morning, the numbers had started to drop slightly, but not enough for them to consider me "out of the woods." By they next day they had dropped further and by the

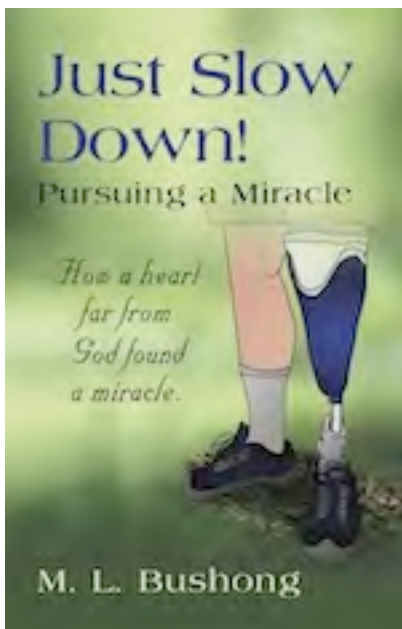
weekend, they were significantly improved. By the time they were ready to send me to rehab a week after the surgery, my blood work including the white cell out was normal, which for me, is usually very good.

Two days after the surgery, my mentoring friends came to see me. They drove in from out of town. I'd known they were coming and looked forward to the visit even though I'm sure I looked a sight. I'm not sure what they were expecting, but they seemed surprised. They remarked that I didn't look like I had just been through a major surgery and that I looked like I was lit up from the inside. I said that I couldn't claim to be the source for the light, but said when you put a light in a cracked pot; it was bound to shine through.

One problem that dogged my steps was eating. Food looked and smelled good and even tasted pretty good, but when I had the surgery I had already hardly eaten for more than a week and really wasn't interested in food. Then, when I was finally hungry, my body refused to deal with it. I would try to eat some breakfast (I even had a menu to order from) it would sit in my stomach like a lump of lead for the whole day until I finally threw it up at supper time. Not a great way to spend your day. The first couple of days the solution was to give me anti-nausea meds and they helped but it wasn't fixing the problem, merely putting off the solution another day.

I'm glad that I already had the practice of analyzing aspects of my own health, and figuring out what was needed. First, I discovered that I can't eat fake eggs. Any foods on the menu that I suspected were GMO based were dismissed out of hand. I didn't need carbs and most of the ones offered were breads,

pastas, potatoes and rice. None of which I normally ate if I could help it. Part of the problem was that I was hungry and ate too fast. As part of the effort to slow down, I started ordering things like broth and chicken noodle soup. Then, for solid food, I chose bacon for the protein and fat. By taking an extra long time to eat, I was able to keep food down comfortably. That got me over the hump. I know the nursing staff thought I was crazy in how I ate, but eating something once is great, but seeing it come back a second time, not so much.



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