She’s Going Early

SPRING HELLAMS
My brothers and I had talked about our roles and responsibilities when my parents got old and unable to take care of themselves. The three of us were 38, 40, and 42, and we had plenty of time to plan for such things. After all, our parents had had us young, and their own parents had lived well into their 80’s and 90’s, which surely meant that our parents would live at least that long. But it would all come upon us way too soon.

Several years before the earth-shattering day in May, 2015, I began to hear a whisper somewhere in the vicinity of my heart, telling me, “She’s going early.” I knew what it meant, but tried to ignore it.

In early 2014, my husband, Andre and I had been house-sitting for several months. The couple was coming to take over their house, and it was time for us to find a new home. We decided to pray about where God wanted us next, and soon after, I’d received a word from the Lord—a word that didn’t sound appealing to either of us.

“Why?” Andre had asked me when I had told him we should move in with my parents. Why indeed. We were too old to be moving in with mommy and daddy, weren’t we? We could have found a place of our own, closer to our church, where most of our friends lived. But how could we ignore what was clearly an opportunity, albeit a challenging one?

I had long since been praying for my parents. My mom struggled with depression since her father died in the late 90’s, and because depression can greatly affect a person physically, my dad eventually found himself taking care of her. Doctors prescribed numerous medications for diabetes, depression, and neuropathy. On most days my mom was emotionally paralyzed, and hardly got out of bed. My dad, who was retired, left the house only to run errands like to the bank and grocery store, as he, like my mother, didn’t have friends. The two of them weren’t living, but surviving. They lived like they were old, yet my dad was 67, my mom 60—not old by today’s standards.

It was important to Andre and me to follow where the Lord was leading—especially because we knew the state of my parents. Also, we had asked God, and He had lovingly answered. But we couldn’t simply move in—it’s not like we had an invitation. Was I really going to ask my parents if we could move in with them? It turns out I didn’t have to.
After Andre and I agreed (reluctantly) to do as God asked, I called my parents and told them our time house-sitting was almost up. Before I could say another word, my mother told me that we were welcome to come stay with them. I was completely stunned. My mom and I would often butt heads; it was a challenge keeping the fragile relationship we did have from crumbling. This was another reason for my disinclination to move under the same roof with my parents.

But move in we did, and after settling in, Andre and I immediately began witnessing to them. Feeling led by the Holy Spirit, we prayed with them, encouraged them, poured into them in every way we knew how. We did not want to squander the precious opportunity God had so clearly given.

Aside from having to trek to the other side of the house to take a shower, and listen to the incessant barking of my mom’s two excitable yorkies, it wasn’t horrible living with my parents. The only thing that truly bothered me was wondering if all the praying and encouragement was helping at all. On several occasions we had prayed healing over my mom and dad, and there had been clear results: The stomach issues that had been plaguing my dad had significantly lessened, and my mom’s blood sugar levels had decreased considerably. One morning my mom had even awoken to a vision. She said God had shown her all the beauty around her—beauty she’d never noticed before, and that it was like she could see with new eyes. The two of them had even started going to a nearby church for the first time in decades. But soon after these miracles, things seemed to go right back to the same sad state they were in before.

After months of no improvement, I began to cry out to the Lord in frustration. I asked God why my parents weren’t better. I didn’t hear an answer. I felt so discouraged. After nearly a year with my mom and dad, Andre and I moved into our own apartment. But I had little peace with it; something felt off in my spirit.

Just eight weeks after moving from my parents’ home, Andre and I were attending an event when we received a call from my younger brother, Brock. My husband intercepted the call and relayed to me the message, “Mom is unresponsive; paramedics are on the way.”

Unresponsive? What does that mean? On our way out the door of the event I asked some friends to pray, and they said they would. Several minutes later and halfway to my parents’ house, Brock called again. “She’s gone,” he said. “Okay,
I’m coming,” I responded. Andre was alarmed when I didn’t cry. I wouldn’t accept it as true—not yet. I had a plan.

Upon arriving to my parents’ home, firemen and paramedics poured in and out of the house. In the living room, my dad sat in a chair, weeping bitterly. I quickly made my way back to the bedroom my parents had shared. Andre had beaten me there, and was allowed to enter the room, while I was made to wait in the hallway while emergency crews finished their work. Never had it been so difficult for me to show restraint. Through the door I could see my mom on the floor, lifeless. Her shirt still lay partially open from when paramedics had tried to revive her moments before.

After what seemed like several long minutes, I was permitted to enter the room, and realized that Andre had the same idea I’d had. He was telling my mom, his mother-in-law, “Get up and walk in the name of Jesus!”

In God’s word it says to “Heal the sick, raise the dead…” and that’s what we intended to do. I figured there was not a more appropriate occasion to raise the dead, than when one’s parent lay dead on the floor.

With paramedics looking on curiously, the two of us kept trying to ‘wake’ my mom—I’m not sure how long we tried, but she never moved. Looking into her eyes that were slits was like looking through the window of an empty house…there was nothing there. But I suddenly felt compelled to hold onto faith, and wondered if I should still be hopeful that she might wake up. And then God spoke into my heart, “Can you still praise me?”

Understanding dawned. God wanted me to still have faith—not in my mom waking up, but in Him. There it was…The Lord had taken my mom, and was asking if I could still praise Him. This was it: The biggest opportunity I’d ever been presented with. I had professed to love the Lord my whole life, and had praised Him through good times and bad—but nothing had ever been this bad. Could I still love Him, and follow Him now? Could I praise Him even in the midst of the worst moment of my life?

I closed my eyes and answered God, “Yes,” and I praised Him. And then, the pain that came with the realization that I would continue my journey on this earth without my mom was acute; I thought that surely a huge chunk of my soul had gone with her. I stared down at the face that I’d once gazed into while being rocked to sleep, and I told her goodbye.
My brothers came in and paramedics left the room to let the three of us have some time with the woman who had given us life. My five nephews each came in to tell their grandma they loved her. And lastly, my dad came into the room one last time before paramedics took her body away. We all stepped back to honor him so he could have this last moment alone with his bride of over four decades.

Covering her body with his, he kissed her and said, “Goodbye Melinda.” Then he cried out in such despair, that it seemed to pierce my heart in a way that was permanent. Yet I still did not cry.

I learned later that my mom had been feeling worse than usual, and my dad had begged her all day to let him take her to the doctor. As usual she had refused and fought with him about it. He’d gone to make her some hot tea, and when he’d returned and tried to wake her, she wouldn’t respond. She had gone in her sleep.

I was so disheartened because we had spent an entire year speaking life into my mom, and it had been all for nothing. But on the third day, the Lord spoke into my heart yet again. He said, “It wasn’t for her…it was for you.” And then I realized that God had led us to my parents’ house, not so we could help them, but so God could help me—help me prepare for the loss of my mom. And I remembered His whispers to me, “She’s going early.”

It had not been all for nothing. As I comprehended, I finally began to cry. God loved me by giving me the gift of those last moments with my mom. Sometimes God’s plans seem so clear, but He may just have something else in mind. His incredible gift taught me to trust Him regardless of what the circumstances look like…and now I can praise Him through anything.