

Confessions of a Clumsy Christian

Excerpt

It was April 1995, and the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City had just been bombed. The shock of it all was too much by itself. A bombing on American soil of a federal building by an American. Sitting in my well-furnished home, with my six month old son in my arms, I, like many Americans, took it in with disbelief. A fire blazed warmly in my fireplace, and I watched the details unfold on our brand new large screen TV.

One hundred and sixty eight people had died and four hundred and fifty were injured. A business, an FBI office and deli were in the building. And a daycare. A daycare that moms and dads had securely dropped their children at just hours before. A daycare that was housed just floors below where these parents worked. A daycare that was bombed by an American with a grudge. Nineteen children died that day, babies, toddlers and preschoolers. I could barely believe it. I looked at my first-born, unable to imagine the horror of it all. For days I was glued to the news. It was the first tragedy of its kind that I had experienced in my lifetime.

In the days that followed, pictures and stories were splashed all over the newspapers. There were articles on the bomber himself, his family and acquaintances. There were interviews of survivors, pictures of their smoke stained faces accompanied the articles. And there was one picture I will never forget. It was a picture of a firefighter carrying a baby out of the wreckage. Her name was Baylee Almon. She was just under one year old. And she was alive. And that was it.

I had never written more than goofy poems for special occasions for my friends and family. Never typed more than a resume for a job opening. And somehow, somehow, I was drawn to my typewriter. From a place I never knew existed in me, words came pouring out. Words of emotion, shock, awe and pity. Words of hate and love. I wrote with the vengeance of someone who had been personally affected by this tragedy, and yet I hadn't. I wrote with tears



for the parents who lost children, the children who lost parents, and the country who had lost her innocence. I wrote for Baylee, who lost her life shortly after the picture was taken.

I quickly finished the letter and sent it directly to the newspaper in Oklahoma City. I didn't sign it. I just wanted them to know, I had to have someone know, how this had affected me. I wanted them to know that they were being thought of, they were in my prayers.

When it was mailed, I reread my copy. The intensity of my words scared me. Where had this come from? Had I had this inside me all of this time and never realized it? Why had I been moved so uncontrollably to do something I had never done, or even thought to do, before?

My husband and close friends were aware of the article. They read it and prompted me to write more. More what? I thought. I couldn't even explain what I had done. They urged me to write from my feelings, and submit work to my local paper. I agreed. Not knowing what I was doing, or why, I began writing original articles from my gut. Some were poignant, some were humorous; all got published. I felt great when I wrote. Each time I wrote, the words flowed effortlessly. I never reached a block, and enjoyed writing and rewriting my work. Eventually I was asked to write on assignment, and that's when everything came crashing to a halt. The block developed, frustration ensued, and I was more concerned about meeting a deadline than the content. My focus had shifted. I wasn't writing because I had to say what was inside me, I was writing because an editor told me I had to. I was writing to fulfill someone else's wishes.

Fast forward ten years, two homes, and two children later. As a stay-at home mother of three, my writing had taken a back seat to diapers, carpools and homework. But the feeling, the gnawing desire was always there. I had continued, in my very spare time, to write. Several story lines had developed, and many manuscripts were partially written. But nothing had come to fruition. Every time I would stop writing a certain story, my feelings of inadequacies would return. I'll never finish, I can't finish anything. I'll never get published. My stories are stupid, no one will read them. I failed to trust my gift. And so I failed.



Many of you may be sitting back going, wow, that happened to me too. I've always had a flair for _____, and people tell me I'm good at it, but I just don't think I can do it. Are



you scared? Are you worried that your work won't be appreciated? Are you afraid of what others will think? Welcome to my world, friends.

God has a way of nudging us in the direction of our natural talents. He guides us, gives us signs; sometimes he even compels us, as he did with me. Occasionally, when we stop trusting him and begin to hide our gift, he forces it on us again.

God is not always subtle my friends. He gave us gifts to use. And he will reward us if we do. As long as we use them for his Glory.

No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. – Matthew 5:15-16, NLT

