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PART VI

EXTRAS

Sequentially, June 16th happened first, but doesn't really reflect the main point of the book. Resting in the Holy Spirit is a controversial topic among different denominations. I didn't want anyone reading this to discount the whole book because it is not what they have personally experienced. Roman's birth was an extreme experience. Once again, I was concerned that telling that story too early would be too much for anyone to believe who didn't personally know me. The ice cream story took place after I asked God for the ones needing love but before our arrests. It seemed like a distraction for me to tell you about it in sequence. Finally, Psalms 40:10 relays my response to God saying, "Write it down."

JUNE 16TH

On June 16th in the early 1970's, a little baby girl was born. In her childhood and early teen years she became close friends with Brent. For years, they attended the same church and were in classes together at school. She was known for having many seizures. Brent instinctively knew when she was about to have one or was quietly seizing. He was able to help minimize the severity and was allowed to walk her out of some. In time, Brent's family moved away and the two slowly drifted apart.

On June 16th of 1973, another little baby girl was born. This time it was me. At some point, Brent asked me my birthday. He was surprised when I said June 16th. He had always struggled to remember dates and times. In this case, he said that he would not forget. He already had many years of trying to remember that day.

There is a 1 in 365 chance that a best friend and wife would have the same birthday. Some things are just strange.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

I was about 14-15 years old when these events unfolded. Brent was an acquaintance I had seen at school. He used to invite me to youth group at his church. He intrigued me, but I was certainly not going somewhere with a boy that I barely knew. The church he attended was known for being a bit more expressive in their services. He went to an Assembly of God. I attended a Church of Christ.

We were both Christians but differed in how we worshiped Jesus. My narrow perspective and interpretation of the Bible got in the way of recognizing that we were all members of His church. There are many buildings and congregations of people showing their love in a variety of methods. The collective group of people believing in Jesus is the ONE church.... past, present, and future! God intervened.

Trish, a nice girl I knew from Spanish class, invited me to go to youth group with her. I agreed. She and her brother arranged to pick me up and drop me off at my house. Wouldn't you know it? It was the same youth group! It became a pattern for Trish and her brother to transport me each week.

Brent and I started spending more time together. I liked him very much... enough that for a long time I resisted calling him my boyfriend. In high school, everyone knows that boyfriends and girlfriends often break up after just a short period of time. Friends were safer. Friends could remain friends for a very long time. I wanted him to be around for a long time. After about six months of slowly becoming best friends, I was willing to risk the girlfriend label. He started to go with my family on Sunday mornings because I wasn't allowed to miss services with my mom and dad.

Brent thought that these services were boring. Compared to my past experiences in other congregations, they were rather exciting. We had a quartet that would lead our voices in songs from the hymn books. There certainly were not any musical instruments. Music might overshadow the meaning of the words and disrespect God. That would be sinful!

Brent was used to several instruments that would accompany the singing congregation to modern lyrics being projected on a screen. I thought that modern songs weren't serious enough to sing in a church service. Singing to God was a serious matter... not a joyful one. People would lift their hands in praise or clap... that would be complicated if holding a song book.

As Brent and I progressed in our relationship together, we found ourselves praying together almost every day. One day, we were praying and talking about God. Brent asked me if I wanted to feel the Holy Spirit. I wasn't exactly sure what he meant or what might happen by

my answer, but I loved and trusted both God and Brent. I didn't think either of them would want to hurt me.

We were sitting down. I'm not sure if Brent said anything else or not but remember that he just reached over and gently tapped my forehead. I immediately fell back. I absolutely did not that! When I realized what had happened, I had a mixture of emotions. I was confused, surprised, and completely at peace. Why did I fall over?!?!

It seemed a physical impossibility that I would lose my balance like that. It was not logical at all, and my brain could not make sense of it. I had no knowledge of this type of experience. I knew it was some sort of religious experience, but I thought that religious experiences only happened in church buildings. We were in a personal home. If you think about the definition of the Christian church, it involves PEOPLE seeking God through Jesus, not places. God sent the Holy Spirit through Brent.

Shortly thereafter, I was alone in my bedroom praying. Outside it was dark and raining very hard. Continually praying, I went over to my window as tears streamed down my face. I knew I was sad but didn't understand the uncontrolled crying. The weather mirrored my face. I unloaded all my stress on God.

I spoke words that I had never learned. I didn't know where these words came from or if they were even words. In my heart, they felt like words. All I knew was that I had something to say, even though I didn't know what is meant. As these unknown words rushed from my mouth, I had an incredible sense of peace. Gradually, the crying stopped. Nothing in my life had changed. The same circumstances that had originally left me feeling so sad and overwhelmed still existed. The only difference was that God had taken away my heartache.

For decades, I told no one. I'd never heard of it happening to anyone else and was afraid that people would think that I was crazy. For all I knew, I was a hormonal, blubbering teen going through some sort of melt down. Can someone be peaceful and crazy at the same time? What was that?!?

Approximately 30 years later, I am finally understanding and being given words to articulate what happened so many years earlier. I was slain, resting, or consumed by the Holy Spirit. I was talking in tongues. You can think I'm crazy if you want. It's OK. I would merely suggest that you hold back your judgement.

Some may read or hear this and completely understand. Others will think I was influenced by the power of suggestion. There was no suggesting. I had never seen, heard, or read about these things in the modern world. I had read and heard about apostles speaking in tongues, but thought it was a one-time exclusive event that happened only when the original Christians

met right after Jesus went back to heaven. I did not physically see a flame of fire resting over my head. I thought that to have the Holy Spirit or to speak in tongues, you had to physically see fire. Praise God that He doesn't rely on our understanding!

About two and a half years ago, God said, "Write it down."

I mentioned this to someone at church who, without batting an eye, said, "Oh, your testimony." That is word I've been looking for. In any case, I don't know who I am writing my testimony for... myself, my family, or an audience not yet found. It is OK. I will, with the Holy Spirit's help, write and let God figure out the rest.

I pray that each one reading will one day fully understand.

ROMAN'S BIRTH

If I ever had doubted the existence of God, Jesus, or heaven, this experience sealed the deal. There is no doubt in my mind. I am 100% sure that heaven and angels exist. Since I am 100% confident of this, I must also believe in the existence of the devil, demons, and evil spirits. Why would Jesus talk about these beings and places if they weren't real? There's so much going on in this world that we as humans can't see because of our limited eyesight.

When Brent and I were young, newly married, financially poor, and uninformed of our rights, we found ourselves expecting a baby. We were both very modest people. We faced the hard reality of obtaining medical care in an area of our lives that we were both extremely private. We went to the first appointment where a nurse confirmed that we were going to have a baby. Then we went to a different doctor for my first exam. It was horrible. The doctor kept saying that I needed to relax. How could I relax in a completely sterile, impersonal, and imposing environment? My next appointment was to have an ultrasound to see the age of the developing baby.

We went to our appointment, but Brent was told that he was not allowed in the room for the ultrasound. The nurses said that it was hospital policy. They said there wasn't enough space in the room for him to stand, to uphold doctor / patient confidentiality, and to ensure safety if the age of the developing baby would upset my husband. With the last remark, they implied that the developing baby might not be Brent's! They reasoned that he might get angry and possibly cause harm to the equipment, staff, or myself. The nurses gave me a choice. Go in by yourself or leave.

They obviously didn't know us. We left feeling hurt and outraged at the same time. It seemed unfair. Looking back, the staff either lied or hospital policies have changed. Much later in life, I learned about the Patient Bill of Rights.

Because we were so upset at the exclusion of the father in the development of his baby, we sought other options. We studied as much as possible and planned on a homebirth. This was in the days before the internet. At that time, we were unaware of how to contact a midwife and had very limited funds. We prepared our apartment the best that we could for our bundle of joy. We had everything we needed and more. We found lots of good things at yard sales from neighboring communities.

Brent asked me what I really wanted for the baby. I didn't want to tell him because it was so expensive. He persisted and I finally confessed that I really wanted a video recorder so that we would always have our first moments captured. The cost was huge for us but somehow, the video recorder was purchased and ready for our new baby to join us.

The day approached and I was having severe backpain...duh... contractions. We timed them and they were still far apart. Because my back hurt and I had not taken any medication at all since learning of my pregnancy, I asked Brent to massage and push on my back. He kept asking, "Are you sure?" I kept wanting him to push harder because it still hurt. I was used to his massages working and taking away my discomfort. Now it wasn't working. I suppose that's why women say labor is painful. A massage won't make the pain disappear... trust me.

This pain went on for about a day. At least the contractions were closer together at about 5 minutes apart. This painful process progress seemed never ending. I was already tired, and my water had not broken. We started to second guess our decision to have the baby at home and drove to the hospital.

At the hospital, the staff was outraged that I only had one visit with the doctor. They were also upset that I refused to sign a paper that permitted extra people in the room to observe my child's birth. That's right. They wanted me, a very private person, to demonstrate the birthing process to complete strangers. No thanks! Staff told me that everyone says the same thing but changes their minds when the time for delivery comes. Well, I'm not everybody!

I went to a delivery room and was hooked to all sorts of machines to monitor both the baby and me. Pitocin was given to increase the speed and intensity of contractions. At some point I noticed what I thought were toolboxes in the delivery room. They appeared to have been hidden behind pictures in the room. I realized they were cases for medical supplies.

I asked a nurse what time the staff had a shift change. In my research, I had read that the number of cesarean births dramatically increases before a shift change. Speculation may lead some to conclude that it is for the staff's convenience. I did not want this to happen to me. I looked at the clock approaching a new hour and again asked my simple question. Nobody would answer me.

Someone came in and notified the doctor that I had not signed a paper. The doctor became very upset and asked Brent if he was going to watch me die. Brent signed about five papers in about as many seconds. Immediately, approximately ten people came into the delivery room. My heart dropped. Why would about ten people come into the room the second that Brent signed papers and I was at my most vulnerable?

I felt so violated and my heart sank. The feeling wasn't just my imagination. My heart monitor relayed my instant distress. The doctor yelled for them to all leave. The heart monitor relayed my instant distress at the arrival of the people. If they all entered the room to save me, why did they all leave when my vitals got worse? I suspect they were there to observe now that the proper paperwork had been signed. I was devastated.

Without warning, the lights and all other electronic monitors went out in the delivery room. Staff scurried everywhere. The doctor demanded to know why the backup generators weren't kicking on. Nobody knew. They were upset because my unborn baby's heart rate had been dropping before the room lost power. Now all machines had stopped working. Nobody knew when the next contraction would be... except for me.

Amid the confusion, I said, "There's Roman."

Everyone froze. Time stood still. "Where?" the nurse beside me asked.

"Right there." I pointed in front of me, but slightly to the left. Roman Hershberger was standing right beside the doctor on the left side. I was not upset by his presence. In fact, I was greatly comforted and forgot about the intrusion of people or that I was in the middle of giving birth.

I recognized his face even though there was a white shining brightness, such that the doctor's headlamp was very dim in comparison, all around him. When I saw Roman, it never occurred to me that he had fallen off a ladder several months earlier and had died. All I knew was that I was so happy to see him. He never said a word but just appeared and stood by the doctor smiling.

The staff looked at one another. The nurse beside me said, "You are going to have this baby on this contraction. You are going to push with everything you have."

I nodded in agreement. The contraction came. I pushed with all I had. The nurse pushed on my womb at the same time. The doctor yelled that she had the head. With another contraction and another push, my son came into this world.

I felt such a sense of peace, but suddenly everyone else went crazy again. The nurse yelled that she had lost my pulse. The doctor yelled that they were losing me. I thought to myself, how could they be losing me... I was right there. That is all I remember before losing consciousness.

The next thing I remember was that all the electricity and lights were back on. Roman was gone. My heart monitor showed a flat line, and I was zip tied to the hospital bed. I heard the nurse say that she still couldn't get my pulse. Then, she said, "Wait, I have it..." I watched my heart monitor as it changed from a flat line to a line that indicated a heartbeat.

I asked why I was zip tied to the bed. They said it was for my own good. I asked where my baby went. They said he was being taken care of. Someone asked if I had a name for the baby. Brent and I had discussed James, Roman and a few other names, but we had not decided for certain. I looked at Brent and asked, "Roman?"

Everyone looked at Brent to see how he would react. They had no idea of who Roman was to me. To them, Roman had been a hallucination caused by a lack of oxygen in my brain. Brent shook his head in agreement. Everyone seemed relieved that Brent was satisfied. With an exasperated and agitated tone, the doctor looked at Brent and said, "You are lucky to have your wife and son. You almost lost them both." Then she left.

Later I was told that the electricity in the whole hospital went out for a second. Backup generators kicked on for the hospital, but the electricity on the floor where I was at stayed off for about a minute. In my delivery room, all electricity stayed off until after my son Roman had been delivered. I firmly believe that the electrical interference came from Roman, our friend from church who had recently passed away.

Roman Hershberger was raised in an Amish family. He fell in love with a Mennonite woman named Carol. Despite their devotion to God, both were excommunicated from their congregations for marrying someone of a different religion. They found a new place to worship in the same building as my family. We tend to classify ourselves as members of different denominations. Let's put differences aside, unite, and show love towards one another. There is just ONE CHURCH!

My dad, Roman, and Brent had worked on some construction jobs together. Brent and I agree that Roman Hershberger was one of the kindest people that we have ever met. I firmly believe that Roman is now fully alive in a new way that none of us can quite understand. He was sent to help my family in a time of great need. Praise God!

You might think that I would have immediately gone and proclaimed this experience to everyone I knew, but you would be wrong. Instead, I was told that I had hallucinated. I was crushed and didn't believe it, but fear took root. I feared that if I told my story that people might think that I was a liar, mistaken, or just crazy. The longer I let this fear rule me, the more ashamed I became that I had been quiet about such a wonderful gift. Now, I had acquired fear and shame.

A little over three years ago, I was talking to God. Four simple words came to me. I have thought about them almost every day since. Sometimes, they come to me many times in a day... depending upon my circumstances. "No fear, just love." It is very close to the verse in I John 4:18 that says, "Perfect love casts out all fear."

You can think I'm crazy if you want. I will not fear that label. I will love you regardless.

A SWEET TREAT

I love ice cream even though it has too much sugar. It's a weakness. Don't even get me started on mint chocolate chip or strawberry with chocolate chips added. I try not to buy it because then I eat it. I rationalize with myself that it isn't all evil. God won't get upset for my indulging. If I eat more than I should, I'm the one suffering with reduced flexibility and pain in my joints. Finally, after several weeks of wrestling in my mind, I broke down and bought some.

The same day, Roman went free diving. He found about twenty cartons of good quality ice cream in a variety of flavors. We had salvaged the occasional container in past winters, but this was by far the most ice cream ever found at one time. Our freezers were packed. I could have kicked myself. I wasn't patient enough.

What a lesson! I thought I'd resisted long enough. Not even on sale, I had paid full retail when an enormous blessing was around the corner. I don't really think that God was concerned about the ice cream. I think He tried to get me to understand that He will provide for me and wants to bless me. Remembering this instance helped me to be more patient when I wanted a different chair. If God provided for my frivolous wants such as ice cream and a different chair, I'd be mistaken to think He's deserted me and won't meet my needs. I must be patient and wait for God to work in His time.

Psalms 40:10

I did not hide Your righteousness in my heart;
I spoke about Your faithfulness and salvation;
I did not conceal Your constant love and truth from the great
assembly.