Angels in the Outfield

Priscilla Obeng-Akrofi
Angels in the Outfield

By Priscilla Obeng-Akrofi

MY LIFE, AS WELL AS THAT OF MY FAMILY, has much to do with a direction from Scripture, especially with regards to our status as foreigners in the United States of America. For the foreigner who does not belong to Your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm — when they come and pray toward this temple, then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears Your Name (2 Chronicles 6:32, 33 NIV).

My family and I have found in God’s Word the assurance that God is with us and listens to our prayers. This verse in Scripture helps us realize the privileges that foreigners have when they pray to God. Solomon, himself, petitioned on behalf of the foreigner, when he was dedicating the newly-built temple so that all the peoples of the earth may know and fear Him.

A NEW BEGINNING

In 2012 and 2013, we moved from Ghana to the United States of America for my husband to pursue the Master of Divinity program at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. The challenges and stress associated with transitioning from one continent to another were numerous. We arrived early February and were relieved to survive the brutal Michigan winter!

Our second child was born in the United States, but his birth came with some complications which led to a Cesarean section for a pre-term birth. Because of his low birth weight, we did not get to bring our baby home right after delivery — he was kept in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for close to a month. By the grace of God, he was discharged a healthy baby who is now six years old. As new arrivals, we were overwhelmed by the situation. God showed Himself merciful and provided for all our needs.

After my son’s discharge from the hospital, I was attacked by deep vein thrombosis (DVT) for which I had to be admitted to the hospital. My admission to the hospital meant that the care of the children, especially our baby who needed more attention, was going to be borne by my husband who was a student and also a worker, but, by the grace of God, he was able to pull through as I recovered.

What gave me strength and hope during this time was my experience at a Seminary Spouse Retreat. While there, I prayed to God in prayer for strength to keep on trusting Him for His care and guidance. Another important source of strength was the story of George Müller in one of the books assigned to my husband to read for his coursework. I was inspired by Müller’s trust in God as he depended on prayer to help him build and maintain an orphanage. I, too, decided to depend wholly on God for the fulfillment of my dreams.

I was interested in studying at Andrews University, but I did not have what it takes (especially the financial strength) to study. My husband and I found the hurdles on the way to achieve that dream were more than we could surmount, so we left it at the level of dreams and wishes, never knowing when it would turn into reality.

In 2015, my husband completed the MDiv program. However, just around that time, we heard of the spousal tuition at the Seminary. I was interested in studying at Andrews University, but God had another plan — another person's prayer. In my story, I appreciate all the prayers when my spouse was no longer a student. I was reminded of what Paul wrote in Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

We all have times of struggle, and we may ask ourselves, “Why this challenge?” Would it be that God has a bigger plan for us? Trusting God is not easy, as much as we want it to be. And when we trust in Him, it’s not that we will get a smooth journey, but we will navigate the journey knowing that He is at the helm of affairs. In my story, I was taught that God listens and answers my prayers, but His answers may not come as we desire. So it is important to remain calm and trust God for His providence.

FAMILY CRISIS

On January 6, 2018, just as I was about to complete my studies at Andrews, an argument ensued between me and my husband that became intense. The way we dealt with it got us into trouble, especially as foreigners. We almost got deported, and he was taken into immigration custody.

One evening, as I was asking myself, “Why this challenge?”; the Holy Spirit prompted me to listen to some of Bill Gaither’s music. The song that caught my attention was a song by Charles Albert Tindley, “We’ll Understand It Better By and By.” The second verse fit my situation: “Temptations, hidden snares, often take us unaware and deal with it got us into trouble, especially as foreigners. We almost got deported, and he was taken into immigration custody.

One evening, as I was asking myself, “Why this challenge?”, the Holy Spirit prompted me to listen to some of Bill Gaither’s music. The song caught my attention: “We’ll Understand It Better By and By.” The second verse fit my situation: “Temptations, hidden snares, often take us unaware and we wonder why the test when we try to do our best. We will understand it better by and by.”

Another way God communicated with me during this crisis was through a sermon preached the previous week at Pioneer Memorial Church. It was about forgiveness. And that was exactly what I needed to do. Another sermon that spoke to my heart at that time was a sermon by the Pathfinder’s on the biblical topic of “Re Still and Know That I Am God.” This, too, was an important message because I had to stay calm and trust God for His providence.

One day, during my Bible study time, I came across the biblical quotation cited at the beginning of my testimony: “And when I was in distress, I sought the Lord (Psalm 77:21, 22 NIV).”

God answered my prayers by providing the amount of money I needed for my husband to be released through the generosity of a good family friend of ours. God listens and answers my prayers, but His answers have to be worked out or revealed through human agencies. It is interesting to note how our daily acts, which we may take for granted, may be an answer to another person’s prayer. In my story, I appreciate all the people who availed themselves for God’s answers to my prayers to be realized. They were angels in the outfield.

Finally, to the glory of God, I have completed Andrews University with a Master of Arts degree in the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (M.A. in TESOL). On my graduation day, I was beaming with smiles. Of all the graduates receiving their diplomas, I think I was the happiest because I knew I had come that far only by the providence of God.