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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 U.S. *As 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 people 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 discount that the Seminary offers. Back in Ghana, I taught English in a secondary school and would have liked to further my studies in the field of English. I had no intention of becoming a pastor but, instead of remaining idle because I could not afford to study English, I could afford to take a program in the Seminary. So I applied to study for a M.A. in Religion and was accepted. We took this as a sign to move on ahead in faith and prayed for God's guidance.

However, we soon found that the spouse discount was only possible as long as my spouse was a student. I started my studies during the last semester of my husband's program which meant that I was going to



▲ Priscilla with her husband, George, and children, Gerymyn and Benjamin

Jonathan Logan

bear the full cost of tuition for the remaining semesters when my spouse was no longer a student. I was willing to continue with the Religion program in faith at the Seminary, but God had another plan — *that* plan was for me to continue my education in the English Department. The core of the whole issue was that the tuition at the English Department was expensive (way more expensive than that of the Seminary). But my husband encouraged me to move on in faith. God blessed our faith with scholarships and the strength to learn. At last, I could study English.

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 our hearts are made to bleed for each thoughtless word or deed 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 reminder of 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 Pathfinders on the biblical topic of "Be 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 I was then comforted by the words, *I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord* (Psalm 77:1, 2a 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. ■

Priscilla Obeng-Akrofi comes from Ghana and now lives in Berrien Springs with her husband and two children.