Hallelujah Any How!!

August 27, 2013 By Rae Lewis-Thornton

I don’t hate much but its safe to say I HATE it when people start their conversation with me, “The Lord told me to tell you.” Call it what you want: arrogance, Christian elitism, whatever! But this strong feeling of dislike became worse after I went public with AIDS. Everybody had the solution to my problem. Often they’d start the sentence with, “You know the Lord can heal you of AIDS.”

Many times they’d come rushing up to me after I finished speaking with their revelation. I’d stand there graciously, but what I really wanted to do was scream at the top of my lungs.

I know, I know. I sound like one ungrateful woman. I do understand that they are only trying to help ease my pain. But curing me? Gee, thanks. Don’t judge me first, just try living in my shoes and see how YOU WOULD FEEL. In the early days of my ministry, I became really frustrated with people telling me what God could do for me, like they knew this for sure. I read the same Bible. And now, having gone to seminary and earned a Master of Divinity Degree, I detest it even more. I mean, why do you think that I don’t already know about faith? My life is an example of faith, don’t you think?

But in those earlier days of my popularity, so many people approached me about being healed that I started to wonder, “Had I missed something in my Christian walk?” Just the thought of it bothered me. With all the experts I had encountered on my miracle, I thought that maybe I was doing something wrong. So like with most things, I took my concern straight to the source. I started to have long conversations with God about it all. It went something like this:

“Hello God, these people say that you can heal me of AIDS. So, what do I have to do to get this

particular miracle? I mean, they keep quoting the scripture, ”Ask and you shall receive.“ (Mat 7:7) I asked, but I still have AIDS. Do I need pray a certain way, or at a certain time, maybe like Hannah at the altar?” (1 Sam 1-20) No joke, sometimes you just have to lay it out to God, and I did.

It was all so maddening. I know that there are miracles in the Bible of both the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament. And that made matters worse. With my all Biblical knowledge and people pushing their faith onto me, I was frustrated. One day a person even told me, “You should stop taking your HIV medication so when the Lord heals you, people will really believe that the miracle was of God.” I stood there with a blank look on my face. “I don’t think so buddy!!!!” is what I wanted to scream at him. So, I kept talking to God, waiting on the answer. I even changed my prayer. “Lord, just give me something to say to these people about my healing.”

Then people started to cure me in my mail. I received 25 copies of this little booklet, “By His Strips We Are Healed”. I screamed, “Pleeeease GOD tell me what I’m missing.” And that wasn’t the half of it. I received long letters with Scripture I was instructed to repeat every day, tapes, oil and prayer clothes. People were determined to heal me anyway they could.

Then one day after what seemed like an eternity, God gave me the answer I had been seeking. I was in Washington, DC speaking at a church. That particular night, there was a lot of press covering me.

No sooner than I laid the mic down, a woman rushed up to me, “You know the Lord can heal you of AIDS.” I got that look on my face, “Here we go again.” I stood as she rambled and rambled on. “And it would be an awesome thing. With all these TV cameras and the press you get, you could go around the world and tell people how wonderful God is because He healed you of AIDS!” In an instant God spoke to my spirit, “I am a wonderful God, even if I never heal you of AIDS!” The testimony is: Hallelujah anyhow!

WOW! I was so overwhelmed tears starting streaming down my face. Of course the woman thought that her prophecy had moved me to tears. But it was nothing short of God sitting center stage in my spirit giving me with the answers that I had longed for. The easiest testimony on the planet is when God has done the thing you most wanted in your life. But can you love God in the midst of your pain? Can you love and praise Him when you are bearing your cross? I understood that day that my love for God was not predicated on my healing from AIDS. God is wonderful and

sovereign without the extra that He gives to us.

Back to the healing, I had missed it all along. The miracle wasn't the thing that people had been trying to force on me, but something even greater. In some ways, healing me of AIDS was an EASY testimony, almost expected of God. But living with AIDS was an INCREDIBLE testimony. God gave me the greatest gift of all: the ability to live and thrive with an illness that should've taken me out of here many a day. And believe me when I say I should've died 16 years ago.

When I made a transition to AIDS 19 years ago, the life expectancy was 3 years. And before advancement in treatment, I was staring death in the face. My t-cell count was 8, my viral load was 397,000, I was a size 0. You could see how frail I was in every picture that was taken of me back then. There is no doubt, my health was failing.

I had 3 bouts of PCP, the number one infection, at the time, that killed people with AIDS. You cannot tell me that I am not a walking miracle. I get it! I also get that we spend so much time expecting God to do what we want, we miss the wonderful things that He has done. I'm content with the miracle of my life. So what if it's a hard life, He continues to give me all the tools I need to maneuver through the wilderness.

PostScript: By the way, God didn't heal everyone. The Apostle Paul is one clear example. Paul had a thorn in his flesh. He asked God to heal him three times and each time God said, "No!" Christians are quick to quote from this text that the Lord told Paul, "My Grace is sufficient." But God also told Paul,"My strength is made perfect in your weakness." I know from this that when I am at my lowest point, God will do His best work. (2 Cor 7-10)

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