

The Gift of a Child

The tendency, for all of us, is to get so caught up in our job responsibilities – filling out paperwork, going to meetings, preparing for surveys, monitoring statistical information – that we can become “too busy,” and miss the important part, the interaction with people.

Candice “CeeCee” Hale, the executive director at Alderwood Manor in Spokane, Wash., shared a very personal story that reminds us why we are here. She has allowed me to share it with you:

I was visiting a resident named Arlene, a resident whom I visit often because she is very anxious and gets very lonely. She was holding my hand and talking about her daughter; going on and on about how wonderful and beautiful she is. So I commented to her on how much she must love her.

She said, “Oh you have no idea! Have I got a story for you.” So without letting go of her hand, I pulled up a chair and told her I was ready for a good story.

When she was first married, to her first husband, she wanted to have a baby so bad. Her heart ached “every moment of every day” to just hold a baby in her arms. She told me about how she was at a store called “Gemco,” by herself, pushing a cart down an aisle, when she saw another shopping cart with a baby in it. She looked around; looked back at the baby. There was no one around.

“That tiny little baby was just wrapped up in its blanket and just lying all alone in that cart and it was all I could do not to grab up that baby and run out of that store with it,” she said. Right about that time, the baby’s mother stepped out from around the corner. So Arlene, feeling so remorseful for even having the thoughts she was having, grabbed her purse and keys and headed straight to her car.

All the way home, she was just sobbing. She almost had to pull over because “grief was overwhelming” her. When she got home, she dropped to her knees and started to pray and begged God to give her a baby.

A few days later, a friend from her neighborhood stopped by for coffee. This friend was nine months pregnant. This friend, whom Arlene had known for a few years, proceeded to tell her that the baby she was carrying did not belong to her husband and that she had just told her husband of the affair the night before. This friend and her husband had decided to give the baby up for adoption. She asked Arlene if she knew anyone who would possibly want her baby. Arlene was ecstatic! She knew right then and there the answer to all of her prayers. Two weeks later, Arlene was in the delivery room watching the birth of her daughter. Arlene then went on and on about what a beautiful gift from God her daughter was and still is to this day.

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As Arlene was telling me this story, the tears were just streaming down my face. She kept handing me tissues, but never asked why I was crying, just kept talking.

I, too, longed for a child of my own for so long. My story is much like Arlene's and is filled with many, many prayers and tears of grief over a missing piece of my life. When the time was right, God also gave me the most beautiful gift of a child – a little boy who needed a Mommy for a Mommy with no child.

When I first met Caleb, he was three months old, and had a Mom. But as I held him in my arms, something just seemed right. His eyes were fixed on mine and mine on his. A soft calm swept over both of us. It was as if God had revealed His plan for us at that very moment. I held him close and whispered in his ear, "I believe God made you for me and me for you; I'm gonna be your Mommy soon, don't worry." Then I kissed him on his little three-month-old-cheek, and just about that time his birth mother came back into the room.

Seven months later, I got the call that Caleb was taken from his birth-mother's home in the state of Connecticut and Social Services was looking for placement for him. Soon after, I was on a plane to Connecticut to go get my son.

I believe God puts people right where they need to be. Here is the very sick, very troubled elderly woman who might otherwise be a job to most folks, bonding with me in mutual understanding of grief, loss, love, prayer, and happiness – reminding me of what a gift being a mother is.

I am so blessed to be a part of the lives of those we serve. And those who serve should hold their heads up high and be proud. No, we're not finding cures for cancer here or inventing any gadgets that are going to revolutionize the way we do anything, but we are tending to God's children ... we are tending His flock, and we are right where we need to be because He put us here.

Thank you, CeeCee, for a wonderful story. As you have pointed out, our mission is to care for God's frail and infirm elderly. But what a gift they are to us.

– Beecher Hunter