



THE FAITH JOURNEY OF LYDIA GONZALES

For the past 3 years I've been forced into a journey of faith. I didn't ask for it nor would I have chosen this path. At times this journey has produced more questions than answers. It has invaded "my space", and "my comfort zone". It has also been a blessing.

I've suffered from Crohn's disease since I was 14. At the age of 57, in order to diagnose a flare-up it necessitated a "routine" colonoscopy. Because of earlier surgeries it was anything but "routine". On April 3, 2012 without warning the colonoscopy turned into a life-saving surgery to correct a perforated colon. I could not understand why my colon was perforated. I knew God could have stopped it, but for whatever reason unknown to me, He didn't. Is God punishing me? I just couldn't figure out the reason until my third hospitalization from bleeding from the second colonoscopy and high ammonia levels putting me into a coma and in the ICU. The doctors told my family that I was close to dying. But God said otherwise and God snatched me out of the shadow of death. So many things happened in the hospital. I wanted to get out but God overruled. Then I started to understand why all the sickness and hospitalizations happened.

To help me to depend on God, every moment that I am alive. To see suffering as something God can use to grow us to maturity to glorify His Son all through the pain and suffering. Sometimes it may be an attack from Satan, but even if it was, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. God can turn what is meant for evil and turn it into good. Before I was asking for God to remove my illness and concentrating on myself, my pain, my suffering and not seeing it from God's perspective. All through the years, I finally got it. The Holy Spirit opened my eyes, my heart, and soul.

Everything touching our lives as Christians is ordered in such a way that it is good for us. This is true whether we face cancer, broken relationship, job loss, bankruptcy. The strong hope of the believer is not that we will escape "bad things" in the course of our lives but that God will transform every hardship into an instrument of mercy to do us good. Stop and consider how God has transformed needed change in your life. Don't allow today's trials and worries, large and intimidating as they might appear to be now, to overwhelm the reality of God's care. His ability to transform your situation and His unshakable plan for good in your life.

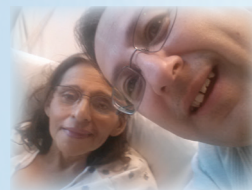
This is a heartfelt plea of anyone who suffers. We want assurance that somehow, someday things will work out in the end though we can't see it. We want to know that our world is orderly and stable, not spinning off into nightmarish chaos. We want to know that God is at the center of our suffering, not only holding our lives together but also holding us.

One night in the darkness of my hospital bed I cried "Oh God I can't live this way! Please if I'm not going to die you're going to have to show me how to live. That was my first plea for help, a cry in the darkness for God's peace and sense of His purpose for my life. The truth is God had heard my cry that night and He began a supernatural process that would be so very much deeper than physical



healing drawing me closer to Him in a way that would never have been possible otherwise. He might not always say yes to specific

times, but He will always say yes to the cry of a hungry heart that needs Him more than anything less. He longs to show us how to live at greater and greater levels of dependence on Him.



Be still, cease striving, stop the inner churning and realize you belong to a powerful, loving, a wise God who ultimately controls all things... When you are in a frustrating situation that lies beyond your ability to change or solve, let go of the anger, confess the wrong attitudes your temper has revealed, and simply rest in him.

So if you ask yourself, why won't you remove my problem? Why won't you change my situation? Why won't you heal me from this pain, this sickness, this trouble, this struggle, this disability The fact is he might. He might remove that "thorn in your flesh" and sooner than you think. He can also use that suffering to draw you closer to His heart. So let him have His way in your life.

Whatever your circumstances today, whatever the specific needs and concerns of your heart, pour them out before the Lord. He will answer, and in the depth of wisdom, love, and timing, He will accomplish in you much more than you could ever have ever designed for yourself.

Lydia Gonzalez



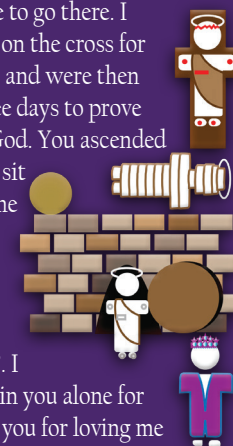
"But I will sing of your strength In the morning I will sing of your love For you are my fortress My refuge in times of trouble." Ps 59:16

"You have turned for me my mourning into dancing, You have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness."

Ps 30:11 English Standard Version(ESV)

We seem to live in a world surrounded by suffering. While the question as to why we suffer is important, the ultimate question has to be "If I were to die right now, where would I go?" It is referred to as the Eternal Question. The answer to that question depends solely on your relationship with God the Father through His Son Jesus. It starts with a simple prayer...

"Dear Jesus, I realize now that as a sinner I would be forever separated from you for eternity in a place called The Lake of Fire. But now I understand that you paid for my sins so that through Your sacrifice on the cross I no longer have to go there. I believe that you died on the cross for my sins, were buried, and were then resurrected after three days to prove that you indeed are God. You ascended into heaven and now sit at the right hand of the Father. You said "I am the way the truth and the life and no man can come to the Father except by me". I now put all my trust in you alone for my salvation. Thank you for loving me enough to die for me.



This testimony was written in 2015. On January 8th, 2016 Lydia De Santiago Gonzales went to be with the Lord. This is the short version of the original booklet she published. She came to receive Jesus as her Savior in 1973 and faithfully served Him for 43 years. Well done good and faithful servant.



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