



God Met Me

As I write I am on a plane flying back to Guatemala. I just had the most incredible experience of being flown up to Northern California to speak at a weekend high school retreat. I was so excited to go to California, return to Calvary Bible Church, where I went to high school, and spend the weekend with youth from my own culture who speak my language!

"How easy this will be," I thought as I prepared. "Heck, it's in English; that alone makes it easier than most things I do in Guatemala."

Boy was I wrong! First, I lost my voice two days before the retreat, and didn't find it again until three days after the retreat ended. Next, the night before the retreat I took some medicine to help with my cold, which kept me awake all night. On top of all that, my mind was plagued with doubts. Thoughts like, "You don't know what you are doing." "You don't remember how to speak to youth." "You are not prepared enough." "You are a dorky missionary, why would these young people listen to anything you have to say?" haunted me.

And that is where God met me. In the midst of my doubt, exhaustion, and cold God said, "Nell, I've brought you here, trust me."

No, I couldn't make the doubts go away. No, I didn't drink caffeine to keep me awake. No, my voice didn't miraculously come back. Instead God met me.



Visiting with Gramsy

So I said, "OK God, I trust that you have brought me here and have a message for this group. I trust that you are going to give me the energy to survive this weekend. And I trust that you will give me enough of a voice so that your message can be heard."

Saturday night I had made it through my first three talks. All I needed to do was hammer out Sunday morning's time. I had spent hours studying the Scripture and had my points I wanted to make. But I still didn't have the vehicle to deliver the message. I didn't have an introduction, conclusion, interesting stories, or fun illustrations. I had the points of the message but not the fluff that captures the interest of high school students.

It was 10:30 and I was exhausted, my mind couldn't focus. There was no way I could sit and hammer out the details for my last talk. So, I went to bed, and as I lay there I said, "Lord, I trust you. I am so tired and I need to rest, so I trust that tomorrow morning you will give me the time to prepare this talk." I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow.

Sunday morning I had an hour before I was to give my talk, so I sat and went over the passages again, and waited for God to show me how to deliver His message. And, nothing. Nothing came to my mind. Not a single story, illustration, opening comment. Nothing.



Visiting with my friend Laurie

My friend Kendra came into the room and offered to help. And although she had many good ideas, nothing was connecting. Nothing sparked. Nothing stuck. And it was time to go to the meeting. The first half hour was worship, and I thought, "Well, maybe I should just go sit outside and try to think of how to begin my talk." But God said to me, "Nell, come meet with me," so I entered into worship. As I did I said to God, "Lord, I am trusting you to speak through me. Give me what you would have me share with this group."

Finally it was time for me to walk up on the platform. And I had NOTHING. But as I stood there, facing 65 youth, God gave me words. He brought to mind stories and illustrations that connected with the points of the message. I had no idea if my words were making sense, all I knew is that He gave me something to say. So I did, and then I dug into the passages, and He gave me examples and illustrations along the way. Eventually I finished my points and stood there. I had made it through the message, but had no idea how to conclude.

So, there I was standing, silent, gazing out at a sea of faces, thinking, "What now, Lord?" And after a few moments of awkward silence He brought to my mind how He called me to surrender my life to Him. So, even though it didn't exactly tie in to that morning's message, I shared. I not only shared, I got passionate about our need to surrender our lives to Christ. To say, "Lord, I will go where You say go, do what You want me to do, whenever, however, with whoever."

And then I was done. Or maybe God was done. And we prayed. And I left.

More young people came up to me that morning than ever before in my life thanking me for being with them that weekend. But that is not the point. The point is I had nothing to give. I was exhausted, sick, full of doubt, and unprepared. But God had a plan. And in the midst of my weakness, He gave me something to say. Not my message, but His. Not my well-thought-out stories and illustrations, but what He brought to my mind at the moment.

I left the weekend changed. I thought God was bringing me to California for the young people of Calvary Bible Church. But really he took me to California that weekend for me. He wanted to interact with me in a new way. He wanted me to trust Him, and that is all I could do. He wanted to take a spiritually dry missionary and rock her world to spur her on to a real faith that is one that lives in the little steps we take to trust Him.

I have no idea how God may or may not have used my time in the lives of young people of Calvary Bible Church. But I recognize that He used it in my life. And I pray that I will be able to live out what He has taught me: to trust Him in all of life's circumstances.

Struggling to live authentic faith,

Nell