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A STRETCH OF FAITH



Has God ever spoken something very strong in your heart? He did to me in November of 1998. While sitting in my closet praying, the Lord spoke to my heart and said, “I am moving you and your family to St. Louis to work for Joyce Meyer. Your gift will be a blessing to her, and you and your family will be blessed greatly.”

Wow! Was that really God? He had never spoken to me that way before. Repeatedly, His words rang in my ears for weeks. The strange thing was, I had yet to fill out an application or send in my resume. But by January of 1999, I did. Within weeks my references were being called. I was in awe. *Could God have really spoken to me?* I thought. *Is He really moving us to St. Louis?* A new journey of faith began to unfold.

March came and I was contacted by the ministry. After two interviews by phone, I was sent a sample writing assignment. After sweating it out for three weeks, I received word that they liked it. The next step was a face-to-face interview, which was eventually set to take

place in June. I couldn't believe it! What God had said in my heart was *actually* happening, and rather quickly. Excitement, hope and joy filled my soul. My faith had risen to an all-time high. Then...the bottom dropped out.

Shattered Dreams. On May 12, 1999, I received one of the most discouraging phone calls of my life. "Vincent, I am sorry to inform you that the interview has been cancelled. The writing position you



"I've come to think of closed doors as divine detours. And while our failed plans can be incredibly discouraging and disorienting, God often uses the things that seem to be taking us off our course to keep us on His course."

—Mark Batterson¹⁵

applied for has been put on hold for six months to a year."

My heart sank within me. All hope, happiness and faith were gone. *What happened? I don't understand. Things were moving along, and then suddenly it's over.* Allison, my wife, stood faithfully beside me, encouraging me not to give up

hope. "If God spoke to you, it's going to happen," she said. "It's just a matter of time."

After three days I mustered enough faith to listen to a teaching tape by Charles Stanley, fittingly titled *Unshakable Faith*. Slowly but surely, God encouraged me as I drove and listened. A ray of hope began breaking forth on the horizon of my heart. Then, all of a sudden, WHAM! I

found myself in one of the worst accidents ever. My car was totaled, and I was further humiliated to find that the accident was my fault. Feeling totally discouraged, I returned home and discovered that both of our computers broke earlier that day. This meant that the magazine we were getting ready to publish couldn't be finished. Its theme, ironically, was "Encouragement in the Face of Hopelessness."



No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees.

—Hebrews 12:11,12 NLT

Seething anger was now surging. "Where are You, God? What are You doing? I don't understand? Why are You allowing this in my life?" For days on end, disappointment, discouragement and despair became very close friends. Question after question filled my mind. The biggest one that would haunt me was: *Did I really hear from God about moving to St. Louis?* I tried with everything in me to forget about St. Louis and working for Joyce Meyer, but it NEVER went away. It seemed like everywhere I looked, I saw St. Louis, Missouri—license plates, garbage can lids, household cleaners—you name it.

Picking Up the Pieces. God made a way for us to finish that issue of the magazine and taught me a tremendous lesson in patience, endur-

ance and trusting Him. My faith had been put to the test. Each day I had a choice to believe God had spoken to my heart or reject it. I cried many tears and experienced a wide range of emotions, including anger and depression. But deep inside, I wanted to believe, and my willingness to trust in God's track record kept me going.

Over a year had passed; it was now July of 2000. Allison and I had published the last issue of our magazine, and I was looking for new employment. *One more time*, I thought. *I'll send Joyce Meyer Ministries some updated sample work and call them one more time.* Shortly after that call, I was hired and given the awesome privilege of writing for Dave and Joyce Meyer for seven years, overseeing her monthly magazine, which impacts millions every month.

My point: If God has put something in your heart that won't seem to go away, keep on believing. He will bring it to pass. Cry if you have to...work through anger, frustration and doubt...but don't give up. God is in the process of *s t r e t c h i n g* your faith. He is doing something powerful IN you so that He can do something powerful THROUGH you!



EXAMINE YOUR COURSE

3 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Has God spoken something very strong in your heart? What is it?
2. How has God confirmed this special “word” to you through people, circumstances, His Word, etc.?
3. Has your dream been put on hold? Are you angry with God? Get alone with Him now and pour your heart out in prayer. Repent of any anger and ask Him for the grace to believe and move forward in faith.