

A Heavenly Gift

by

Gail Cawley Showalter

A True Story

“Oh, no!” my soul screamed. “After all Treva’s been through, not there, not now.” A golden hue streamed into the drab room through the thin yellow sheers that hung loosely over the dilapidated window. The room could have been a closet or storage room in ages past. Now six crudely constructed plywood bins crammed the confined space in this Russian orphanage. She stood transfixed with this teeny fragile bundle in her gentle grip. The tiny thing was encased like a chrysalis wrapped from the neck down as they do the young babies there. Treva’s gaze was locked on the baby’s face. I could almost visualize the maternal tie being woven with the strands of her intense look in that moment. A tiny head lay in the palm of Treva’s hand motionless with hollow globes for eyes that seemed to register nothing. I could see right away this child was at great risk of never having a normal healthy life. *Couldn’t my daughter see it too?*

Flashbacks of images crossed my mind like an album of sad photos. I had worked with children who had severe and multiple disabilities. All the memories of those children came

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flooding back. Facilities and equipment needed to care for high-risk babies in this part of the world were almost nonexistent.

I knew that my daughter was influenced greatly by my opinions, and often asked for my advice. Not this time. She was resolute. Perhaps she saw the concern etched into my face and dared not request a response that would sway her.

“Why? Why now? Why here?” I groaned silently. Our Russian friend, Dr. Sergey, spoke in broken English, “This baby was born very too early, week of thirty and has failure to thrive and muscle atrophy. She spits, like throwing up. She has hernia, maybe three.”

And, the determining factor, as far as I was concerned was when he said, “She is deaf.”

When I saw the four-pound person in Treva’s arms, my concern bordered on horror. She was extremely frail.

“God,” I pleaded. “No, not this baby.” *Surely God would listen to me. Why wouldn’t he? I loved the Lord. I had trusted him with my life and my children. Still it was difficult. I didn’t expect the answer I longed for.*

Then the voice of the Friend who lives within, the one I seldom hear, spoke. And I heard it. It was crystal clear with no wavering. It penetrated my doubt, despair, and defiance. It came like a quick reply on an Instant Message on my computer and just as clear.

The message was, “I have my hand in this. You keep your hands off.” It was a sharp and simple directive. The restraint that it took for me to remain silent required more self-discipline than I had on my own.

Treva naively said, “Mother, she probably has ear infections.” *You dreamy-eyed girl. You are just thinking wishfully.* I brooded.

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But in the depths of the ancient town of Vladimir, the medieval capital of Russia, my daughter was oblivious to the real world. She stood now as steadfastly as she had knelt in past months in her sterile baby nursery in Alabama, where she had emptied her soul pleading with God for a baby.

Treva's longing for a child had been dashed time after time over several years. As an act of faith she and her husband had a completely furnished nursery waiting in their home but no child to fill it.

After several years when no baby came, the infertility doctor's appointments and medical tests followed. Final word came after Treva had exploratory surgery, the lethal blow when the doctor said, "Don't expect to get pregnant." This devastating news destroyed hope. My heart ached, too, and nothing I could say eased their pain.

Treva had considered adoption. My son-in-law didn't want to give up. She yearned for a baby and had started to research adoption. Kyle, however, was not quite ready to consider it.

Now, four months after hearing the dreadful news from the fertility specialists, Treva was with us in Russia with the *Treasures of the Heart* ministry providing dental care to orphans. My husband is a dentist and we brought Treva as a much needed dental assistant. We thought it might shift her personal perspective. We had not come there to find a grandchild.

Our team was visiting an old orphanage. Treva had slipped from the room full of toddlers, attempting to hide her tears of despair. She had wandered down one of numerous hallways in the archaic building, saw a partially open door, and walked in.

When I found her, I stood silently beside my only daughter. She held the cocoon-like creature in her arms. My heart sank. This baby couldn't be the one she had been waiting for. This

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one looked fragile, frail, and frightened. My resistance welled up to a simmer and my eyes brimmed with tears.

That night Treva called her husband and told him, “There is this baby here. She is a little red-headed girl named Anastasia. She is very tiny. She was premature.”

“Too bad you can’t bring her home now.” Kyle expressed a complete change of heart - and without seeing or touching the baby just as it would have been if they had their own, in complete faith. This birth of hope in her husband was the only green light Treva needed. Now her mind was set.

I knew nothing of their conversation.

On our flight home I sensed more had transpired in Vladimir than I could grasp. Even as we flew away little Anastasia was having her second hernia surgery.

I cried, worried, and remained silent.

Treva learned during the next several weeks that it is not customary procedure to “find” a baby in another country, decide you want her, and come home to make the adoption arrangements.

She spent hour after hour, day after day making calls. There was not a moment of wavering. The experience she had in that cramped room in one of the oldest cities in the world, a world away, was for her a birthing. Once the process begins there is no turning back. She knew what she had to do.

And I remained silent.

Treva and Kyle were required to make another trip to Russia. I couldn’t imagine how they would be able to manage the additional expenses, expenses that were not in a budget already hit with the medical bills of the previous years.

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They went. They made the Russian arrangements and Kyle held Anastasia. Intuitively the orphanage director sensed their genuine desires, saw their commitment, and then cut their adoption fees in half. This was unheard of.

Several weeks passed before I absorbed that this adoption was going to happen. On the phone I heard the anticipation in Treva's voice, "The social worker is coming for our home visit tonight. And we have chosen a name. Her name will be Kaylin Elizabeth."

After I said goodbye, I thought, *my first grandchild has a name. A name is forever. My daughter was finally going to have the baby she had wanted for so long. What was my problem?* I knew the real obstacle was my own uneasiness, my own lack of faith in the God I said I trusted. I confessed my desire to control the circumstances. As I opened my own clenched fists, the message got through. "I have my hand in this." It dawned. The light finally broke and I realized I had been opposing one of the most significant spiritual messages of my life. With God's hand in this, I should know she was a special gift He was holding just for us.

"I have my hand in this," became "You need not worry because, I have my hand in this."

I remained silent.

Just four months after that day in Vladimir, we welcomed the new family of three at the airport. Kaylin was a beautiful baby, much healthier than I had last seen her. Still she didn't hear well, if at all.

The following week Treva took Kaylin to the ear specialist, and I sat home waiting for the news that had gripped me with fear and dread for four months.

Treva called. Her voice just as it had been in Russia, confident and clear, when she said, "Mom, she has ear infections. She's had them a long time. That's why she isn't hearing." Relief

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washed over me like a shower, and I was spiritually embarrassed. In a few weeks, after strong antibiotics, she could hear everything clearly.

It dawned on me like a beautiful sunrise. I heard the words that came now with relief rather than fear, “I had my hand on this. Aren’t you glad you kept your hands off?”

In the years that followed when my hands held Kaylin’s, when she went through eye surgery, extensive sinus surgery, and urinary tract infections I knew that my love for her was as my Father’s love for me—unconditional in every way. When she grabs my attention with her, “Hey, Nana!” the catch in my chest reminds me of what I might have missed. Any physical flaw that she could have will never alter the love I feel with every beat of my heart for her.