

The Story of the “God’s Promises Footprints”

By Shannon Wiley

When the time came for my husband to be deployed to Iraq, I was overwhelmed with fear as I am sure we all are when that dreaded news comes. We had just moved and were still living in a hotel. My husband, being in personnel, wasn’t even supposed to go to war. He didn’t even have the war training the rest of his unit got because we were brand new to the unit. None of that mattered – he left and I was scared.

One night as I slept I heard God’s voice. He instructed me to get up and write down multiple verses. Though I was very tired, and tried to go back to bed, He would not allow me to do so. The famous footprints picture then came to mind (the one with the footprints in the sand) and I decided that our soldiers needed “footprints” so they could stand on God’s promises. I made a set for my husband and laminated them and sent them to him along with a note that instructed him to put them in his boots so that he would always be standing on the promises of God.

Later, this project turned into a huge bonding experience for the ladies at my church. We got together and made a whole bunch of these prints and decorated them. The most important step of the process was the prayer. Every set we sent out was intensely prayed over (most of the time wept over). They were then sent off to soldiers in both Iraq and Afghanistan. We continued to pray for the men and women that would receive them.

I really had no idea the impact that this project would have on my life. I have received thank you notes and letters from several men and women who received them, but none have impacted me as much as the letter I would like to share with you now. The letter I am going to read you came from a young soldier named John.

“When I first got the footprints you sent, I have to admit I didn’t put much stock in them. I thought it was a cool idea but come on; they were just pieces of paper. Oh how little did I know. I put them in my boots for 3 weeks as an afterthought. They became a comfort piece for me, like many other guys around me. I had given up on God a long time ago. I was mad that I was in this [place] at 19, I was mad [at my girlfriend]. Anyway, you get my point...I wanted nothing to do with God. But with the footprints, better safe than sorry, right? Then the day came that changed everything. April 14th we were on patrol in downtown Baghdad. It was quiet-eerie quiet. We turned around a corner and saw three kids run past and then an ear shattering boom echoed in every fiber of my being. That was followed by waves and waves of fire (what I imagine a volcano to feel like). All I could feel was flesh searing fire from my flack vest down. I remember looking to where my buddy Roberts had been sitting minutes earlier and all I saw was his Kevlar [helmet] with his daughter’s picture in it. I passed out then and woke up a few days later. My ISG was sitting in the chair beside me and told me of our fate. We had hit one of the infamous IED’s . Two of the 4 men that were in our HUMVEE didn’t make it. My

other buddy had third degree burns on 80% of his body and lost both of his legs. I left the bottom half of my left leg there in Iraq. [My ISG] gave me my stuff that was recovered, and lying on the top of the pile were my pair of blood soaked God's promises footprints. I cannot even begin to tell you the emotions that overwhelmed me at that very moment. I felt waves again for the 2nd time in 3 days. Only this time they were waves of warm, comforting, protective peace. I picked them up and read the verses through tears the size of marbles. I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior in that hospital room right then and there. I have absolutely no doubt that the only, I say again the only reason I did not lose my other leg or worse yet my life is because I was standing on God's promises. On the promises you and the other ladies prayed over. I committed to Him then and now I will not ever take one step without being grounded on his promises. You see, he just had to force me to kneel before him to get my attention. I am now in recovery and am working with a new prosthetic leg. More importantly, my [wife and I named our] beautiful daughter "Grace". We named her Grace because God should have taken my life that day but he saved me in more ways than one. Thank you for being the tool of my saving grace!"

And even after receiving that letter, the saga continues...

At a recent retreat, I told this story and then went to the back of the room to collect myself. A very precious sister in Christ came to me and told me a story that literally brought me to my knees. She told me that her cousin was currently going through his second deployment in three years and that he was a young newly married soldier with marital problems. He found himself like so many other young men and women in combat: at the end of his rope. He had received a pair of footprints that reminded him of the constant presence of his everlasting Father and had been his lifesaver.

I do not think it is a coincidence that I found myself in a room 3000 miles from "home" with someone whose life had been affected by this project. Some would call that fate- I called it a divine assignment. I cannot begin to put into words what God is doing in my life now because of this simple concept but I will say that my God and your God is up to something big. Never underestimate the God of this universe. He can use something that you may feel is very insignificant to bring about enormous life changing growth for His kingdom.