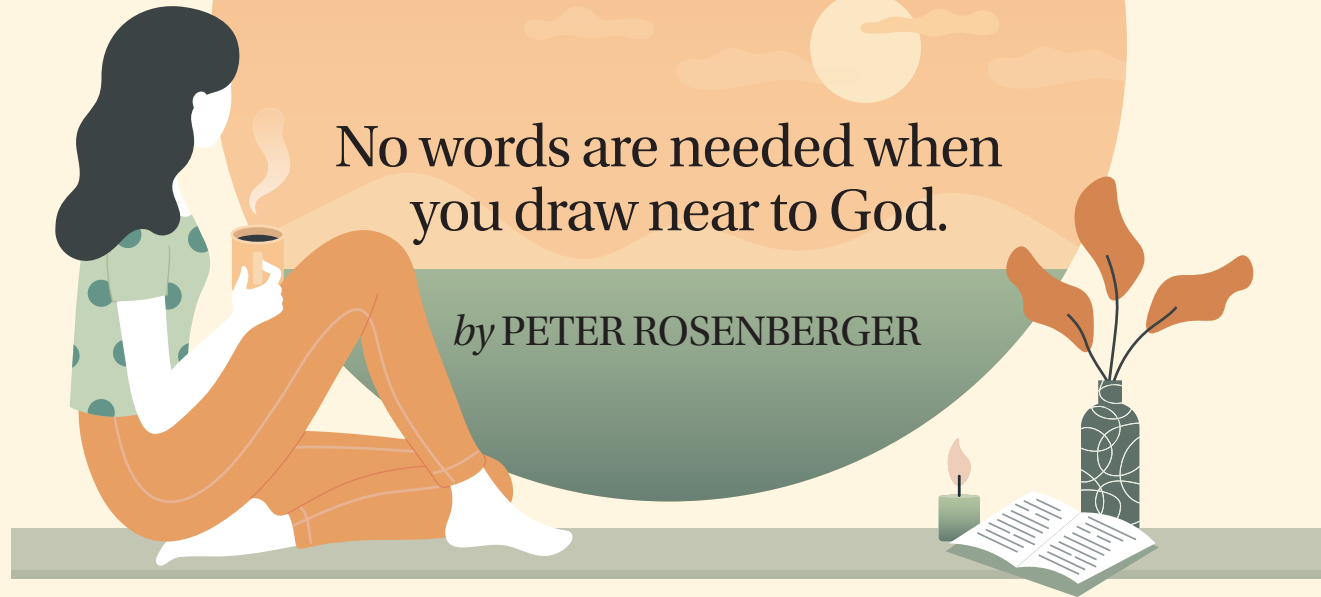


FEATURE

QUIET THE ROOM

No words are needed when you draw near to God.

by PETER ROSENBERGER



“WE’VE DONE EVERYTHING possible to save this leg; all that’s left is amputation. When you’re ready, we’ll have that conversation.”

Those words came from Gracie’s surgeon, following numerous operations to save her right leg — crushed and disfigured in her 1983 car accident. Everyone in my wife’s life, including me, had an opinion about this, and Gracie understandably struggled mightily during this time. Two women who barely knew us even brashly told her that she was in rebellion. Going further, they “prophesied” that God would heal her leg in June — this was in February.

At the time, I wasn’t adept at dealing with the “name it and claim it” crowd. Bad theology creates confusion and can often lead to shame, guilt, and no small amount of resentment. Responding appropriately to those who spiritually bully the suffering takes practice, time, and quite frankly, sound theology. My naivete and inexperience left Gracie and me to flounder a bit while we searched for solid footing, so to speak.

The clamor of opinions and self-proclaimed pronouncements combined with our own doubts and fears to create a “wall of noise” that felt like a stack of Marshall amps at a Van Halen concert.

Sadly, Gracie found herself amid a storm of speculation by family and friends. At 25, with a toddler, her young heart felt the awful dread of having to look her surgeon in the eye and instruct him to amputate her right leg.

Setting an appointment with our pastor, Bob, she limped into his office on her mangled right foot, while her damaged left leg bore the brunt. As she sat quietly in his study, he stated, “Gracie, this room is off-limits to every other voice telling you what to do. My job is to help quiet the noise so you can hear your heart — and God’s leading.”

Gracie pondered for more than an hour while Pastor Bob sat at his desk. No words passed between them. Finally, Gracie looked up with tear-filled eyes and whispered, “I’m terrified of doing this.” Gaining strength, she continued, “But I can’t live this way any longer. It’s got to come off.”

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Nodding somberly, he assured Gracie he’d be with her through the ordeal, and he kept his word.

Sometimes the greatest gift we can give to others struggling with heartbreaking decisions is to clear the room, quiet the noise, and sit with them. Scripture affirms that while God’s explanations are rare, His presence is constant. As Pastor Bob allowed Gracie the stillness and time to be alone with her thoughts, we learned God assures us that even in our lonely hearts, He is always with us.

It’s in those quiet places, near the heart of God, that we gain the strength and resolve to trust Him with the anguish, while praising Him in the unimaginable.

More than 100 years ago, Pastor Cleland McAfee felt rocked when both his nieces died in the same week from diphtheria. Pastor McAfee labored over how to address this terrible grief that washed over the entire community. Working on his sermon, he wrote what would become one of the most beloved hymns. On Saturday evening, the choir assembled and gathered outside his brother’s home and quietly sang the hymn to the distressed family:

“There is a place of quiet rest,
Near to the heart of God;
A place where sin cannot molest,
Near to the heart of God.”¹

Pastor Bob modeled what that hymn affirms. Fear, guilt, shame, and confusion all represent the molestation that sin wreaks upon us. Regardless of the poor theology on display by those two women, rebellion against God isn’t scheduling surgery to remove a limb beyond repair. Rebellion demands it play out according to my wishes and rejects God’s provision.

Gracie later stated, “I didn’t know what was on the other side of that operating room door, but I knew who waited for me there.”

That confidence came from her sitting quietly — near to the heart of God.

Gracie repeated the scenario four years later when she relinquished her remaining leg. I watched nurses push her from recovery to the ICU when she awoke. Lying on the gurney, she lifted her hands and sang the “Doxology.”

As believers, our responsibility — and privilege — is to help quiet the room for others who bear terrible challenges and heartache. It’s in those quiet places, near to the heart of God, that we gain the strength and resolve to trust Him with the anguish, while praising Him in the unimaginable. 🙏

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PETER ROSENBERGER hosts the nationally syndicated radio program *Hope for the Caregiver*. His new book is titled *A Minute for Caregivers: When Every Day Feels Like Monday*. Visit hopeforthecaregiver.com.

A MINUTE FOR CAREGIVERS

A Minute for Caregivers: When Every Day Feels Like Monday contains one-minute insights for family caregivers based on Peter Rosenberger’s nearly four decades as a caregiver for his wife, Gracie. With poignancy, humor, and clarity of God’s provisions in suffering, Peter draws upon his vast experience to help fellow caregivers stay strong and healthy while caring for those who are not. Available where books are sold.

