

FICTION

TEN FINGERS, TEN TOES

GETTY IMAGES

Three days before she saw the film *Lifemark*, Linda wrote a simple prayer in her journal. It was part lament, part entreaty, and filled with a measure of regret — and to be honest, a bit of attitude.

by CHRIS FABRY



“

T WOULD BE NICE, LORD, if You would let me do something that matters. Instead of everything I do feeling like a failure, would You help me do something that makes a difference?”

She stared at the words and frowned and then crossed them out. *Even my prayers are failures*, she thought.

The next day, her friend Margie called and said she had bought a ticket for a showing of a film. “Linda, you have to see this.”

“I can’t watch another Christian movie,” Linda said. “Everything gets wrapped up in the end with a bow tied around it.”

“I’ve known you a long time,” Margie said, her voice full of compassion. “We’ve stood side by side at clinics, haven’t we?”

“What’s that got to do with anything?”

“I know you better than anyone. You need to see this, Linda. If you won’t do it for yourself, do it for me.”

With ticket in hand, Linda sat in the theater parking lot for 30 minutes, watching people stream inside, unable to muster the courage to follow. She carried the weight of the past others couldn’t see.

Don’t go in there; it will only add to the failure, a voice whispered inside.

She almost listened to it. She almost drove away. But it was Margie’s voice she chose to hear in that moment. She walked inside and gave thanks when she found her seat was at the end of the top row. Blessed anonymity.

Linda had become a Christian as a young teenager and believed God would use her to make a difference in the world. She had abandoned her own plan and surrendered, praying sincerely, “Not my will, but Yours.”

But instead of doing “great things for God,” Linda discovered failure and disappointment. Her heart shattered when her dream of marriage crashed with a broken engagement. She threw herself into her studies, believing God wanted her to serve as an international missionary, but she

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struggled in school and barely graduated and then found a job to pay off her student loans. Finally ready to begin her spiritual pursuit, the door slammed. A health problem disqualified her.

What was God up to in her life? Did He hear her cry? Was she unusable?

Her missions career over, she got involved in pro-life work and another thought sparked. Perhaps she could be a missionary to the unborn by helping to save their lives.

She volunteered at a local crisis pregnancy center, and in the summer of 1991, she drove from her home in Indiana to Kansas where she was arrested in front of an infamous Wichita clinic. In jail, she composed a poem she titled “Ten Fingers, Ten Toes.” She read it to a woman in her cell who suggested she get it to a singer/songwriter performing at rallies in Wichita. Believing God was moving, she found the man in his hotel lobby and handed the page to him.

“God gave me this,” she said. “I think He wants you to have it.”

He took the page, studied it, and then folded it and stuffed it into his back pocket. “Thank you.”

She believed her poem would become a pro-life anthem. That would make sense of all her struggles. However, she didn’t hear the poem sung or recited, and it became another of life’s unexplained disappointments.

Linda stood to let a woman and a teenage girl pass by her. When they sat next to her, she rummaged through her purse to avoid conversation. It didn’t work.

“I’m so excited for this,” the woman said.

“Why is that?”

“I’ve heard so much about this story. Did you know it happened only a few miles from here?”

Linda glanced at her. “What do you mean? I thought ...”

“The movie’s based on a true story. You didn’t know that?”

“I had no idea.”

The woman grew animated as she gave the address of the abortion clinic central to the film.

“I think I’ve been to that clinic,” Linda said.

The woman stared at her. “Really?”

“Not as a patient. I went as a counselor. To protest and pray on the sidewalk.”

A look of relief came over the woman’s face.

“Well, thank you for doing that.” She lowered her voice. “It’s part of why I brought my daughter. She gets so much propaganda from school and her friends. I’m hoping this film will open her eyes.”

“Doesn’t that clinic have an iron gate around the parking lot?” Linda said.

“Yes. Tall, black, iron bars. It looked kind of creepy, to be honest.” The woman extended a hand. “I’m Sue Ann.”

“Linda. Nice to meet you.”

“So how did you hear about the movie?”

“A friend gave me a ticket. She thought ... it might encourage me. I’ve been a little down lately.”

“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that. Anything you want to share? I’d be glad to add you to my prayer list.”

Linda leaned forward and looked at the woman’s daughter who was on her phone, chewing gum and blowing bubbles. Disinterested.

“I appreciate your caring. But no.”

“Well, God knows what you need, doesn’t He?”

“I suppose He does,” Linda said without conviction. She looked through her purse again.

The trailers began, and the woman sat back.

Linda relaxed a little and tried to remember the clinic, but there had been so many through the years. So much hoping and praying for women to change their minds. Other protesters she knew shared dramatic stories of lives changed and babies saved. Linda had none of those “success” stories.

So much swirled inside that she couldn’t concentrate on the film. She decided to leave just as the main character in the film arrived at the abortion clinic. Linda put her purse down. Two workers from the facility draped a blanket over the

girl's head and put radios up to drown out the shouting, and Linda was transported.

Above the din of the music coming through the speakers, Linda heard a muffled voice that carried across the parking lot. The girl on the screen turned her head slightly, and Linda sat forward, struggling to hear.

"Are you OK?" Sue Ann whispered.

Linda glanced at her — then nodded. The woman's teenage daughter sat so transfixed.

What had Linda heard? Why had Margie insisted she see this film?



Late in the film, the birth mother described what had happened that day at the clinic.

The questions lingered as the story unfolded on the screen. Late in the film, the birth mother described what had happened that day at the clinic. She revealed what she had heard in the parking lot.

"When I got out, they put a blanket over my head and a radio beside each ear to drown out all the noise. But as I was walking in, I could still hear their voices. I heard this woman say, 'Your baby has 10 fingers and 10 toes. Please don't kill it!'"

Chills raced through Linda's body. She couldn't breathe. That was the phrase she cried out to anyone walking into a clinic. She felt God had given her those words years earlier, but she never thought they connected with anyone.

As she watched the film progress, she realized why Margie wanted her to see it. As the credits rolled, she moved to the exit without speaking to anyone and hurried to her car, closed the door, and then fell apart.

"Lord, I'm sorry for not trusting that You were at work. You've been at work in ways I can't see or understand. Thank You for hearing my cry. Thank You for answering my prayer."

When she made it home, she called Margie, and they wept together. 🌀

CHRIS FABRY is an award-winning author of more than 80 books, including his new novel, *Lifemark*, available at lifeway.com. Chris is also the host of Chris Fabry Live on Moody Radio. Find out more at his website, ChrisFabry.com.



LIFEMARK

Lifemark celebrates the courage and sacrifice of a young woman facing an unplanned pregnancy. It also shows the ripple effects when you choose love. We hope the film and novel, based on actual events, will change hearts and lives in the days to come. Is there someone you know who needs to hear the redemptive message of *Lifemark*?

