

Real Life Real Impact
North Carolina
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Certain Hope during times of uncertainty:
a testimony of surviving suffering

I. My Vet school testimony

I was not raised in a Christian home and first heard of Jesus in high school. My seed was planted at that time but then I went to college and lived a life in the world. The year I was accepted into vet school I had visited a college ministry with friends a few times. Around Christmas I was at a low point in my life and made a resolution to try church. I was baptized March 2007, the year I started vet school. It took me a few years to grasp what it meant to be a Christian and CVF was a huge part of that in my life.

My junior year I decided I wanted to apply to the match for a private internship. My parents and I spent Thanksgiving and Christmas break traveling for my interviews. I took boards, applied for the match and waited with anticipation. Then I found out I failed boards. It was devastating and I was so embarrassed I told nobody. Then I got matched to a practice in NC and they said no worries, I could take boards again in April and would be fine. I then had 2 externships away from UGA, one near my parents house and one in NYC. I buckled down and decided I would figure my way through this, putting God on the back burner. I was far from my church, my bible study, my CVF family and had no real support. On my last week of externships I was so stressed out that I developed a stomach ulcer and couldn't eat for most of the week. I knew my next board exam was coming up during my last rotation in the clinic and nobody in my rotation knew. I had tried doing it all in my own strength and finally couldn't go on anymore. I was in my hotel room one night and had a vision – what my life would be like if I continued down this path and all my plans worked out with my internship, it was cold, lonely, and felt very desperate. In that moment I had nothing left, my legs gave out and I fell to the floor on my knees sobbing. I hadn't truly prayed in a long time and I laid my heart out to God. I prayed the most earnest prayer I had ever prayed, "God, I feel so far away from you, like I'm in the bottom of a pit, but I don't even know how to come back to you. I'm so afraid but I don't want to do this alone anymore. I don't want to be far from you. I give you permission to do whatever you need to do to bring me back to you....and I think it needs to be drastic." As I finished my eyes opened and then widened – oh no, what had I just done? I just told the Almighty Creator of the Universe He could take drastic measures in my life!!!

Well I got back to UGA, did my last rotation, took my boards again (the night before I called my rotation mate and confessed I was going to take my exam again and asked if they could cover for me the next day, and they were super supportive). I graduated, got my DVM and then a couple weeks later found out I failed boards – again. Except this time there was a sigh of relief. I knew in that

instant that was God answering my prayer. I didn't really know how things would go from there but I knew in that moment He was by my side and He was bringing me closer. The comfort and hope in knowing that outweighed any fear of uncertainty about my future career.

Because I failed boards twice, I stayed in Athens, got connected in ministry in my church, took boards a third time and passed, went on another mission trip with CVF as a vet, felt God's calling to missions, met my husband and am today a mom. There was purpose in all of it and I wouldn't change a thing.

II. *Hope through miscarriage*

I know without any doubt that I am meant to be here to share my story of hope. I know this because I really wasn't supposed to be here. At this time I was supposed to be roughly nine months pregnant and not traveling anywhere far from home. But back in August I experienced a miscarriage and lived out one of my biggest fears. I was supposed to go in for my 12 week ultrasound and was told our baby had stopped growing at nine weeks and there was no longer a heartbeat. After the initial shock we had to decide how to proceed and I wanted to avoid surgery so we opted for "nature's course." We found out on a Wednesday and my husband was flying out of town Sunday for a conference he couldn't miss. They give you two weeks for the natural path before they interfere. The waiting was horrific. I had no idea what to expect but I knew I couldn't do it alone so every moment of the day between endless tears I prayed, "Lord please, please, don't let me be all alone for this." And He was kind enough to answer this prayer. So that Saturday night, I essentially delivered the remains of our baby in our bathroom. It was a nightmare that I never wish on anyone. In the hours that followed, my husband and I were reminded that our baby was in heaven, and that he or she never had to know brokenness of sin or the pains of this world and this comforted us.

My husband went on his trip and I spent the next days honestly just functioning. There were so many questions, so much to process, and my toddler to care for. Our community was incredible and I've never felt how much the church really acts as the hands and feet of God until this dire time of need in my life. This truly became a time where I experienced God's word come to life – it became palpable, it became physical feelings and actions I sensed for the first time. 1 Corinthians 12:12, 20 and 26 became alive as our church family literally jumped up and took care of all our needs and mourned with us – we had people take care of Thomas, people showed up to share their own story and pray over us, people brought us food and we had countless messages of encouragement and hope from so many people that has passed through our situation (2 Cor 1:4). A verse I had prayed over people so many times, Philippians 4:7, became my very breath. There was no sense to it all but in my very core I knew with full certainty that God had me, God had our baby and one day we'd be reunited and this gave me unexplainable peace. It actually made me feel free to grieve (1 Thess 4:13), because I had hope, so my grief didn't define me. I was opened up to process, to ask, to be frustrated and to be really deeply sad – but none of those became my identity. As I grieved and cried and cried there were moments I felt no strength in my body, and I had a few instances when I literally felt supported by divine

light around me and I knew I was being held (Psalms 91:11). And through all of it, what marked my whole experience was certainty in the pit of my core. I can't explain it any other way than as an anchor, because even though my feelings were running in many directions and there were so many questions and fears, at my center there was something like a rock, something unmovable that kept me from being completely unraveled. And this is where Hebrews 6:19 and Psalms 46 became living and tangible to me.

I don't know where everyone is in their lives here, but I know we all will face trials and times of despair. That comes with living in this world. But like I said, I know I'm here to share my story because someone needs to hear it. Somebody needs to hear that no matter what unimaginable pain you are going through, you don't have to go through it without hope. Whatever your circumstance is, or whatever may be on the horizon, it doesn't have to define you. But in order to be unmovable, in order to not be shaken during the storm of your life, you have to know Jesus intimately and personally. He needs to be your one and only, your center of attention, the thing you can't live without. You will only develop this relationship by being intentional, by talking to Him in prayer, by studying what He says is true, by getting to know what is important to Him. You will only learn to hear His voice when you've spent so much time with Him that you catch on to things He would or wouldn't be saying. This isn't about routines or rituals, this is about what you do behind closed doors and maybe even in your closet – this is about your personal private time with the Lord. Develop this, pray to want more of this, start praying until you really pray. Sing praise to God, open your heart to worship Him, see how long you can go just stating how incredible He is! Learn how you've been spiritually gifted and dive into these areas. As you grow in your faith you become more deeply rooted in your true identity. This will carry you through anything.