**Starting-Over Guidesheet #13**

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**The All-of-a-Sudden Principle**

***Judith Couchman***

After I wake up in the morning, I usually linger in bed and pray a little. To God it’s probably more like complaining from “me of little faith.” For a long time I haven’t spotted perceptible evidence that God has actually heard me, and I’ve let him know.

I followed my usual routine this morning. Pray. Go to the bathroom. Check my email and Facebook pages. (I stay up late, so by the time I rise people are waiting to hear from me.) Then I edge into the day. But this morning my Facebook Inbox messages shocked and stopped me. They contained three answers to prayer.

The first message arrived as encouragement. Yesterday I worked on a new book proposal, but rather than my usual anticipation, I felt the weight of researching and writing a manuscript. Will anybody be interested in the topic? How many long hours will it require? This morning a Facebook friend that I don’t know personally wrote this:

*In the rush of my busy day, I just wanted to stop and offer you some encouragement for no other reason than...just to encourage.*

*I don’t know what God is doing in your life and I don’t know where you are at in your journey. I simply want to encourage you to keep doing what you are doing and moving forward in your journey.*

*Keep making an impact in the lives of others and keep following your heart. You are a blessing and I look forward to being a witness of the things that God will do through you.*

The second message addressed marketing my new book. Because I’ve started over in my writing career after an intentional sabbatical, I’ve needed to recreate my “presence” in the publishing world. But I’ve also wanted to share the book with my own community. With so many authors living in Colorado Springs, that’s harder than imagined. (Ho-hum. Another Christian author published a book. Next!) I’ve prayed about this. *The Facebook message invited me to speak and sign books at a local bookstore.*

**The Real Zinger**
These messages would have been enough, but the third message really zinged me. I’ve been asking God to help me with an introduction to a specific publishing house. (I need two publishing homes for the different types of books I write.) By choice I don’t have an agent and this publishing house doesn’t read unagented material. I don’t know any editors there, so I’ve been stumped. The third message, from another Facebook friend I don’t know personally, said this:

*I was standing in line next to my old friend [name] at our neighborhood coffeeshop yesterday, and we were talking books. Can’t remember the precise context, but I asked if he knew you, and told him a bit of what I knew about your books. He asked if I would mind introducing him to you, and if you would mind dropping him a line—he’s an editor at [the publishing house I’m interested in].*

I fell back into bed and whispered, “I’m sorry, God. Sometimes I’m such a faithless jerk.” There’s no guarantee the introduction will leverage a book deal. But God answered my prayer. I’d asked for a contact.

This morning I stumbled into the All-of-a-Sudden principle. We sweat, fret, and cry about prayers that remain unanswered. We might even abandon them, thinking God doesn’t care. Then suddenly, life shifts. The mountain moves, and we’re gazing at answered prayer. This has happened to me before. I’ve watched it happen to others. It will probably happen to you.

I’ve no clue why God employs the All-of-a-Sudden principle. I just know when it hits, we’re to fearlessly walk the new footpath, soak in the scenery, express gratitude. And try not to complain the next time we’re left waiting.

**You and Your Prayers**

1. What are your unanswered prayers?
2. Do you still hope they’ll be answered? Why, or why not?
3. How can you prepare for the All-of-a-Sudden principle?
4. How could you respond to this principle?
5. When your prayers are answered, could this uncover any fears or challenges? If so, how can you overcome them and walk in a new path?
6. How can you respond if these prayers aren’t answered?

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