

## **Two, modern-day true stories illustrating how God provided guidance through angels**

### **Story 1**

The following story by Elizabeth Sherrill tells of a healing experience by Brother Andrew, a Dutchman who spent much of his life smuggling Bibles behind the Iron Curtain. Despite all the good he had done, Brother Andrew couldn't shake the shame he felt his part in having been among the Dutch soldiers sent to fight the people in Indonesia. It took an encounter with an angel to free him from that burden.

#### **'A Hand of Forgiveness'**

**By Elizabeth Sherrill about Brother Andrew**

When the Cold War ended, Brother Andrew decided to return to now-independent Indonesia to assist the people he had once fought. Nothing he did for them, however, served to ease his conscience. The place he most dreaded revisiting was the town of Ungaran, where his army unit had been headquartered.

"At last," he said, "I forced myself to go back there." He made himself walk up the single main road, past the mosque, to the big U-shaped school building the Dutch had used as a barracks. The building had been turned back into a school; on the former drill ground inside the U, some children in ragged clothing were playing.

As Andrew stood watching, a little girl, maybe eight years old, suddenly broke away from her playmates and ran toward me. The other children stopped their game and stared after her, clearly puzzled. The child ran straight up to Andrew, put her small hand in his, looked up into his eyes and smiled. Then she ran back to join her companions.

Andrew stood where he was, tears running down his face. "I knew Who it was Who'd come to me. It was Jesus through an angel. Jesus telling me, 'I forgive you, Andrew. Now forgive yourself and serve these beautiful people with joy.'"

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### **Story 2**

#### **'Only For Me' by Lindsay Thomas**

Like most high school juniors, I couldn't wait to be a senior. Early in the year I was already daydreaming about the big prom and our graduation. But it wasn't long before I had to wake up from my dream. In the spring of junior year I got pregnant.

My boyfriend and I were just too young to make our relationship work. We finally broke up. Problem was, I didn't have anyone else to talk to about this. I was afraid of what my parents might say. Even my friends. So I kept it to myself. Somehow I kept the pregnancy secret. I gained

weight, but I was athletic and I carried it well. I wore sweatpants and oversized T-shirts. Nobody noticed my growing belly. And nobody noticed that I was crumbling inside.

In September, before school started, Mom wanted to take me shopping at the mall. “You’re going to need some special outfits for senior year,” she said.

“Okay, Mom,” I muttered. “Whatever.” My total lack of excitement gave everything away. “Lindsey?” she said. “What’s wrong?”

My secret tumbled out. It was such a relief. “I’m six months pregnant,” I confessed.

“All this time,” Mom said, “and you’ve held it all in.”

I was so ashamed, I just wanted to hide. Even from God. “I want to go someplace where no one knows me,” I said.

Mom understood and found a home for single mothers in a city a couple of hours away. The facility was next to a hospital. I could stay there, have my baby and arrange for an adoption. I could continue my education.

The staff at the maternity home was nice enough, but being with so many other pregnant teens just made me feel worse. Each of us lived with another girl, and we shared a bath with our neighbors. The shower stall was so small you couldn’t turn without bumping your belly. We could sign out and go into town if we wanted—see a movie, get our nails done, that kind of stuff. But I threw myself into schoolwork. This was far from my dream of senior year. No prom. No dates. No graduation ceremony.

I was cordial to the other girls, but I didn’t really want to make friends. I couldn’t wait for weekends, when Mom came to get me and we returned to Burlington. “It’s so good to be home,” I said, hugging her every chance I got. But Sunday night always came, and all too soon I was back in my lonely room.

There were counseling sessions every couple of days, and we talked a lot about self – image. I knew what I thought of myself, and it wasn’t good. What must God think of me? I wondered.

One day I saw a notice on the bulletin board. “Bible Study,” it read. I’d loved Bible stories and church camp as a kid, but I kind of put my faith on the back burner once I hit high school. I worried what my friends would think if I acted too religious. Here, who cared? I wrote my name at the top of the sheet, the first one to sign up. The meetings would be held on Wednesdays at four o’clock in a conference room.

That first Wednesday, I opened the door, feeling kind of shy. Choir music played in the background. When I saw the teacher, I relaxed a little. She was a beautiful black woman, maybe in

her forties, and her face seemed to glow. "I'm Dorothy," she said, "and it looks like you have me all to yourself. Welcome."

Welcome was how I felt each Wednesday when I spent an hour with Dorothy. None of the other girls ever came to the class. It was always just Dorothy and me. She seemed to sense exactly what was on my mind on any given day. One afternoon she took my hand. "You're afraid, aren't you?" she said. I nodded. I was afraid of what I'd done, afraid of giving birth, afraid of what my friends would say if they ever found out. I didn't know how to face life anymore.

Dorothy opened her Bible, and started reading from Philippians 4. "Do not be anxious," she read. "The God of peace will be with you."

"I'd like to believe that," I said. Dorothy traced her finger down the page. "Remember this," she said, pointing to Philippians 4:13. "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."

In our sessions we talked and laughed and cried, and I learned why Dorothy had that glow about her. "I love the Lord," she said. Right before Thanksgiving she gave me a book of Scripture passages called *God's Promises*. "If you have questions and I'm not here," she said, "you can find answers in this book." Then she put her arms around me. "Your baby will be beautiful." That was the last time I saw her.

My November 27 due date came and went, and by December I wasn't doing well. God of peace, be with me, I prayed. The doctors induced labor when I was a good two weeks overdue. My newborn son was beautiful, just like Dorothy said. Saying good-bye to him seemed impossible, but I was thankful for the loving family who adopted him. Over and over I asked God to give me strength. I had to keep reminding myself that I'd done what was best for my baby.

I returned home a few days before Christmas. Somehow I got through the next several months. I read and reread *God's Promises*. It wasn't easy to think about the past, but I often thought about Dorothy. I told Mom how important she'd been to me.

Eventually I called the maternity home to get Dorothy's telephone number and address. I couldn't believe what I was told. The nurse who answered said that there was no Dorothy at the home. And no one had ever conducted a Bible study there. After I hung up the phone, I could barely speak. "Dorothy must have been there only for me," I said to Mom. We talked about it and decided God had sent an angel to show me that He loved me, no matter what.

My son is now seven, and with the blessings of his adoptive parents, we talk almost every day. I'm married now, and my husband and I have a child of our own. Glancing through a book of baby names, I decided to look up Dorothy. I guess I shouldn't be surprised. Her name means "Gift of God."

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