

Abba's Answers

30 Stories of God's Answers to Prayer

compiled and edited by
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ST JOSEPH, MISSOURI USA

ABBA'S ANSWERS

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ISBN: 978-1-936501-52-6

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Cover Design: Tamara Clymer

Cover Art: ID 74913457 © Severija | Dreamstime.com

Printed in the United States of America.

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DAY ONE

My Heart's Desires

Linda Highman

“Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.” Psalm 37:4–5 ESV

Promise by promise, experience by experience we learn God’s provident and surprising love. As a young college co-ed who had never had a date, I did not expect to see God’s love expressed in my first romance. I sang in a college radio choir; lunch came right after rehearsal, and many of us choir girls ate together. Often, we were joined by a comical, non-threatening fellow with a sweet, tenor voice. Over time, by ones and twos, the girls dropped away from the lunch bunch until there was just the tenor and me. After a year or two, I surprised myself by confessing to my best roommate, “I love him!” It was the first time I had ever said that about a man! Startled, I stopped for a few seconds of serious consideration, and then I confirmed the fact: “I love him!”

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Immediately, questions began, and they persisted for the next two and a half years. How does he feel about me? What kind of a relationship do we really have? Is this what God *really* wants for me? Is this His best for me, His plan for me? The tension built by these questions distracted me from my studies and drove me to play the dating games that had always disgusted me. Yet through this time, I was grounded by my daily devotional time, a habit I began when I was eleven years old. The Christian university I attended reserved one room on each dormitory floor as the prayer room. It was available at all hours for any who needed a quiet place to pray and meditate.

I was there in that prayer room every morning on my knees, asking God for guidance. One day while reading Psalms, I was struck by Psalm 37:4: “Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart” (ESV). In a moment I memorized it. However, at first, I thought it meant God would give me what I wanted. But what did I really want? Did I really want the boy? Was he really *the one*? I found myself praying, “Lord, I want to want what you want me to want.” Gradually, I realized the true meaning of the verse. By putting God first in my life, making Him the center of my heart, He would put *His* desires there. God doesn’t *fulfill* our desires just because we read His Word every day or attend a Bible study or go to church. Rather, He gives us the desires themselves, the ones He wants us to have so that we can accomplish the big plans He has for each of us.

So, as I learned to ask for God’s desires to be mine and for His perfect will to be accomplished, the events of my romance played out on two tracks. On one hand, I gained confidence that the sweet tenor was the man meant for me. On the other, I found myself deeper in love with my Jesus. When I vowed love, loyalty, and honor to Ed, I was also promising commitment to the concept of covenant, my intention to follow the

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next verse in Psalm 37: “Commit your way to the LORD.”

In Genesis 15 and 17, God made covenant with Abraham. He promised him myriad descendants. Certainly, through millennia God has kept that commitment because He truly is *the* Promise Keeper. As a reflection of that godly attribute, wedding vows are meant to be permanent. Sadly, they seldom are kept because mere humans make them. When my marriage was hit by serious storms and I felt my wedding vows weaken and my once warm love grow cool, I refused to entertain thoughts of divorce even though the culture encouraged it and Christian friends would have supported it. I refused the idea because I was committed to the unpopular principle of commitment. The desire for that commitment did not originate in my human heart. It was one of the desires put there by the One who is totally committed to keeping His promise of placing His desires into my heart.

Ed and I have shared careers, life's disappointments, and God's abundant joys. The years and their many experiences have echoed with Psalm 37:4 and 5, truly the only way to want what *He* wants and to discover the warm wealth of His divine love.

Suggested Prayer Topics

Pray about wanting to want what God wants.

DAY TWO

My Messes and God's Greatness

Barbara Gordon

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10 NIV

My forehead rested on my gloved hands that clutched the steering wheel. The only sound was the thump, thump, thump of my heartbeat. What now, heavenly Father? I’ve really made a mess of things! A million stars illuminated the cloudless sky. When the sun went down, it took the wind with it, leaving behind an eerie silence.

Only a mere two hours earlier, I had dismissed my class of third graders. “Zip up your coats and put on your gloves. No snowballs on your way to the busses either.” Squealing, hooting, and yelling children had warmed my heart, though the thermometer screamed a temperature that was far below warm.

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When the last child climbed the steps to the bus, I hurried up the stairs in the old brick building, rubbing my hands together. Cold crept in around the windows of the poorly insulated classroom. I glanced at the clock and crammed an assortment of ungraded papers into a bag. The university was only forty-five minutes away, but with snowy conditions and the shortened days of winter, I needed to allow plenty of time to drive to my night class.

As I headed for my car, a freezing blast of wind whipped the heavy front door from my gloved hands. I shook my head as I briefly considered calling my new husband for advice. He's at work and would tell me to do what I think is best. After stomping as much snow as I could from my shoes, I jerked on the car door handle. Several attempts later, ice cracked and splintered onto the gravel as the car door flew open. "Thank you, Jesus," I whispered as I flopped onto the driver's seat.

The determination to make the trip was the first of several bad decisions that night. Snow and ice covered the roads and the temperatures plummeted. Poor route choices in the era before cell phones and modern means of clearing pavement, culminated in my being stranded on a narrow, deserted road.

After berating myself to God, I lifted my head and tried to estimate how far to the hazy glow of a light in the distance. Half mile, a mile? My shoes made a squeaky sound on the thin ice before sinking into the softer snow beneath. Chiding myself for the absence of snow boots, I was at least thankful for the warm coat, gloves, and scarf I'd donned that morning.

Thoughts tumbled through my mind. Should I try to follow the road? The shortest way would be through that pasture. Lord, if You are listening, help me scale that fence.

Snow crept up past my knees as I descended into the ditch. Please God, let that light beam belong to an occupied house. I took a deep breath and mentally encouraged myself. Ignoring

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the pain, stress, and elements of nature, I separated the ice-covered strands of barbed wire and stepped through the fence.

I was oblivious to time, trekking across the frozen earth. My eyes were glued to the far-off surreal glow of light, but my thoughts bounced from one notion to another. A deep yawn swallowed my face. I wonder if you really do become overwhelmed with sleepiness before freezing to death.

After what seemed like hours, my watch said twenty minutes had passed. I leaned in, placed a hand on one knee and breathed heavily. My gloved hand raked across my numb face and a shudder of chills raced down my spine. Pushing my shoulders back, I resumed my pace on the heavy wooden blocks that had been my feet.

A dance of light and shadows appeared. I placed my hands on the flutters in my belly and gazed up at the nearby yard light. The pungent smell of wood smoke directed my glance to the illuminated farmhouse. A jolt of hope coursed through my weary body.

“Come in, come in! Mama, come here, this lady needs help.”

The farm couple scooted their chairs close to hear my trembling voice. The farmer offered a telephone, while his wife fetched a minty smelling cup of hot tea. I rocked back and forth under the heavy quilt my new friends provided. Wrapped around the warm teacup, my hands began to thaw and my eyes grew heavy.

The farmer gave good directions and a couple of hours later the doorbell aroused me from my near sleep state. Relief and my husband's strong arms engulfed my tired body.

God used a patient husband, a borrowed four-wheel-drive pickup, and a kind farmer's dependable tractor to demonstrate His unconditional love. My notion that God's provision depends on my actions was challenged on that cold night. I discovered His faithfulness is not contingent on me doing the

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right thing but is a result of His infinite love. Even when my predicament is the result of my own hasty and negligent behavior, He still loves. This realization opened the door to an intimate relationship with God I had not imagined possible. God's greatness is bigger than all my messes.

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

Suggested Prayer Topics

Thank God for those He places in our path to teach us of His greatness. Pray for opportunities to tell others about His greatness.

DAY THREE

Because We Love You

Barbara Villarreal

“The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.” Zephaniah 3:17 NKJV

The end of March rocked back and forth from sunshine to rain. My family battled allergies and sinus infections. Most of us were on the mend in time to enjoy the first long day of the season. A family gathering would be in order and soon.

Post-operative issues brought me to stay with my oldest daughter, Christina.

My other two daughters and my daughter-in-law decided to visit Christina's house as well. Out of my ten grandchildren, seven are under the age of three. They filled the house with laughter, play, and running in and out of the backyard throughout the day and evening. Family gatherings are a regular occurrence since Christina bought a big house that is centrally located between all of us. My son-in-law grilled several

different meats and sides while the women wrangled children and talked about life.

Three-year-old Penelope delighted in testing her parents with a new-found freedom of going to play in the front yard. The backyard, complete with privacy fence and locked gate, was filled with slides, riding toys, and balls. It was a huge space by anyone's standards. The front yard consisted of a few flowers, a bit of grass, and a patch of dirt. It also, even though in the middle of a cul-de-sac, was the best view of Penny's expanding world. Anyone who knows how three-year-olds think would know the front would be her preferred play space.

Time with small children had taken its toll on my postoperative body. Cries filled the house, announcing the day needed to come to an end. All the children, and possibly the mothers, were well past the point of exhaustion. Three-year-old Penny, with her two-year-old cousin in tow, put in a request to go to the front yard.

The parents tried to explain many times that the front yard was off limits unless an adult was free to keep an eye on them. Penny continued to push. The last time she asked she was told no. Her next question, of course, was why. She is three. The answer was delivered in almost perfect unison at top volume. It was the patented parent answer from both her parents. "BECAUSE I SAID SO!"

Ouch. I think we all felt the pain the crushing statement delivered. Before a rebuttal could be made, as if on the air itself, a soft voice drifted amongst the chaos that announced the truth. "Because we love you."

My daughter-in-law Kaya did not give a thought to her own loving words as she walked Penny to the back door, lightly touched the child and gave her a Disney worthy smile that left the poor child with no defense. Penelope smiled back at her aunt

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and walked into the backyard without another moment of fuss.

From that moment on, the phrase “because we love you” stuck with me as if there were a nugget of meaning I was missing.

There was.

As parents, we can become tired and frustrated with our children and their daily conversations that normally have a multitude of whys located throughout. While they are repeating the same word over, we change our answer to go with each question asked. They hear a variance in our answers, even though all our answers have the same meaning: I love you enough to take the anger you are directing toward me and remain firm in saying no.

The love we try to show our children is as lost on them as God's love is on us at times. The trick is to remember amid chaos and complaints that our main goal as parents is to keep our children safe while letting them know how much we love them. A child's constant barrage of questions hides the real question: “Do you love me?” A parent's reply always seems to hide the answer: “Yes, I will always love you.”

God faces the same issues with His children when we ask why. Abba's answer is always, “Yes, I will always love you.”

God confirms this in several passages but one of my favorites is Zephaniah 3:17: “The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”

Suggested Prayer Topics

Pray for parents to have the patience needed as they raise their children. Pray to be more aware and open to how God displays His love for you.