



# *From Kathy... to Katie*

**How God Helped One Man Find Love...Twice.**

*by Brenda Everman*

Once upon a time, there was a man named Mike, who had back slid from the Lord after being divorced from a misguided, arranged marriage. Mike then made a decision to come back to the Lord.

He became involved with a lady named Kathy who was not a Christian and had gone through a difficult marriage of her own. After Kathy's divorce, they fell in love, she gave her heart to the Lord, and the two were married.

Their joy was evident, as is evident in any marriage where Jesus is head of the household. Mike and Kathy were always looking for ways to express their love for one another. They noticed that the inn at Starved Rock was having a special, where they could go during the week for one night at a cost of around \$100, and get the room including dinner and breakfast, champagne and chocolate dipped strawberries. So they made reservations to celebrate Valentine's Day there. When they arrived, they saw that the room had a VCR, and were able to rent "Father of the Bride 2" from the front desk. Mike recalls, "We laughed and laughed at that movie! How ironic it would be to be pregnant at our age."

That week Kathy felt kind of sick. She later went to the doctor and found out she was indeed—you guessed it—pregnant. It was as though God had prophetically "told" them via the movie they had watched, what was to come! Nine months later, Mike and Kathy's precious gift, Sam, arrived. The beautiful baby boy was a joyful addition to their already happy family.

Kathy worked for a graphic arts company as an artist. Her creative skills were amazing. She was constantly drawing, painting, creating works of art filled with love, joy and God's excellence. Kathy believed she had heard from God that she needed to create a special wood carving for the Maranatha Church Choir Room based upon Psalm 40:3, "He has put a new song in my mouth-- praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD."

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Kathy was a blessing to everyone with whom she worked. During an especially difficult financial year for her boss, who is also a good Christian, her boss believed she was hearing clearly from God that she needed to lay Kathy off. It was a particularly difficult decision for Kathy's boss. Kathy was devastated, but as a Christian, knew that God had a good plan some how for her, Mike and Sam.

In the fall of 1998, Mike wanted to get Kathy something special for her birthday, which was October 30th. Kathy had a particular love for Red Apeldoorn Tulips. Mike found a place on the internet where he could order the tulips and placed an order for eighty bulbs. To Mike's great surprise, when the order arrived, it wasn't eighty, it was eight hundred. After a frantic phone call, the favor of God allowed Mike to purchase the entire eight hundred bulbs for thirty five dollars—an amazing price for so many beautiful top grade bulbs.

Mike recalls, "I went and bought a bulb planter. For several evenings we worked, and planted the bulbs six rows wide, like a hundred and fifty feet long. It took a few evenings to plant all eight hundred." Kathy could hardly wait to see them begin to poke up through the ground the following spring.

In January of 1999, Kathy took a photography class at Richland Community College. She was looking forward to personally photographing the emerging Apeldoorn Tulips later in the semester as part of her class project.

Spring of 1999 was an eventful time in Mike and Kathy's lives. Kathy's favorite performing artist was Doc Watson. That spring, he actually performed in Decatur, and she and Mike got to see him.

The tulips started to appear. "It reminded me of Arlington National Cemetery, the way the tulips looked when they first started to poke up through the ground," Mike proudly remembers. "They were all nice and neat, six rows wide. About the middle of April our yard was florescent red, it was gorgeous. Neighbors would stop by and comment how beautiful they were."

For her photography class, Kathy took black and white shots of the 800 tulip blooms. She actually took special paints and painted the tulips the proper shades of red, naturally causing them to stand out on the black and white photo.

In her "spare" time, Kathy had worked diligently on the Psalm 40:3 carving, pouring prayer and her personal best into the complicated work. Mike remembers, "She said she was getting tired of working on it. Kathy believed God had told her 'You get that done and I'll SHOW you your next project.'" That same spring she completed the complicated work and presented it to Maranatha. It hangs proudly on display to this day in the Maranatha Church Choir Room.

Kathy and Mike signed up for a Joyce and Dave Meyer marriage seminar at Maranatha Church. Kathy was not always able to be present, because when the classes were held conflicted with her photography class. One Monday evening, while Kathy was attending her photography class at Richland, Mike attended the marriage seminar alone. That was the night that Joyce Meyer was telling every man to tell his wife five things he really loves about her. When Mike picked Kathy up at RCC that evening after her class, he began to weep as he shared his five things. Kathy was deeply moved. When Kathy awoke the next morning, she wrote out five things she really loved about Mike and gave it to him.

Two days later, on May 13, Mike came home for lunch and describes the events of that time in his own words, "I came home for lunch, Sam was 18 months old. He was sleeping on the couch. Kathy and I went upstairs for lunch and we were laughing together as we talked about our weekend plans. After lunch was over, I went downstairs to get something. The last words I heard her say was 'I love you...I feel kind of tired.' When I came back upstairs to give her a goodbye kiss, she was unconscious. I dialed 911. Kathy literally died in my arms from a collapsed artery before the ambulance got there." The doctor who did the autopsy said it was a miracle she lived as long as she did. Her main artery was the size of that of a little girl.

"She was a miracle from the word go," Mike reflects. "The tulips had faded by the time she died. I didn't realize until after the fact that God had given me an amazing way to send her off to Heaven." They also had a lilac bush the couple had planted in their yard when they got married. The bush had been a source of frustration for Kathy in that it had never bloomed. Amazingly, it bloomed only once, that same spring, and then died after Kathy died. "I realize it all sounds made up," says Mike. "I mean all the things that happened, it sounds like a movie or something...but it really happened. God loves romance, he created it."

At the funeral, Mike thanked Kathy's former employer for clearly hearing from God. Because Kathy was laid off from her position, Kathy was able to spend her final months doting over her precious baby boy, and taking a class she truly enjoyed.

The following Monday, Mike showed up at the marriage class. Mike shared with the still-shocked class from the list Kathy had made for him, along with this bit of wisdom, "Don't ever take for granted that you have plenty of time to tell your mate how much you love them." That's a great lesson for all of us.

Thankfully Mike has managed to keep Jeremiah 29:11 solidly in the forefront of his mind, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." But He never thought God would be able to bring him

another person who would even compare to the woman he had just lost.

Many years later, Mike got to know Katie, a mother of three, because of an unusual common denominator: both had been in arranged marriages. Katie wanted to talk to Mike about his experience, and that's how they became friends. She had never known anyone else who had that same experience. Mike remembers, "It was really cool because God allowed us to be really good friends. There was nothing weird about it. To me, it was just really nice to have a sister in the Lord that I could talk to. When I met Kathy I felt an instant connection with her. I felt the same instant connection with Katie. I thought that was amazing to meet another person who had been in an arranged marriage." The similarities between the two situations were so striking; they soon found that they had much more in common.

"I wasn't just a 'player' out there trying to find someone. After 11 years God brought Katie to me. That's the way it should be. I was always worried about meeting a new woman and comparing her to Kathy. What's amazing is that I never think about Kathy when I'm with Katie. God is the One that is so cool about this whole thing. God's love, God's timing...God's amazing!" says Mike, "He truly did exceedingly and abundantly above all I thought was even possible in bringing Katie into my life."

Mike and Katie have mutual friends that they go to play

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cards with. Katie's kids always enjoyed playing with Sam. "I never thought someone my age could possibly be with someone her age," Mike marvels. "The fact that I'm physically older doesn't matter because my spirit is younger. There were concerns, but it's like God is just behind this whole thing. It's like God is pushing us. We feel pressed by the Lord that there's a ministry He's preparing for us. Marriage is the next step. It all sounds so unconventional, but we're both so ready to step into what God has for us. We're so hungry to do whatever the Lord has for us," says Mike.

Mike is truly in love. "When I look at Katie...I feel like I've been waiting for her all my life. She's my destiny. What God's really saying to me is, 'Mike, you're a young man... old age is an attitude.' I am NOT old, I will never be old."

From Mike's heart, "Katie is beautiful, wonderful and sweet. She's amazing in loving my son just like he's her own. She teaches at the women's prison each month. She's going to school. She sings really well, wants to write a book. She's just such an interesting lady. Who am I that I should be marrying this beautiful young woman? She epitomizes the term 'help mate.'"

About the same time that Mike met Katie, Sam was at

an age that he when he really needed a Mom. He really doesn't remember his Mom, as he was quite young when she passed away. He's never really had a Mom until now. That's another of the many miracles in Mike's life. Katie has done wonders with helping Sam be more secure and confident. Mike is amazed, "She's helped me realize that I can do things I never thought I could do. Men are strong yet really weak. Katie is my cheerleader, helping me realize that I can do things that I never thought I could do. She's like the missing link in my life. She's just beautiful. We're ready, we're absolutely ready...we're getting married and it's going to be absolutely perfect!"

Mind you, Mike realizes they are not perfect. They do have disagreements, but because they each love the Lord AND love each other, they realize He can do anything through the two of them—in unity. They want to get married to serve Him together. Love and romance are side benefits.

Mike's final thoughts on romance, "The best relationships are meant to be exciting and magical. I really believe that God wants to show the world what romantic love is. God created romantic love, God is romantic. I think today's world is so jaded, all they see is sex. God wants us to have romance, He wants us to enjoy it."

And thanks be to God, they are living happily ever after!



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