

There are times when we are not totally or even partially aware of how God has intervened in our lives. Conversely, there is a moment, an incident, an experience where we know, beyond any doubt, that a prayer has been answered. This story is one such moment.

A Soldier's Story, A Mother's Prayer

Lieutenant!" The Captain barked.

"Yes, Sir."

"Report immediately to the Colonel's office."

My Captain was now glaring at me, he and I both knowing that Lieutenants never, or almost never, are called to the Colonel's office.

Despite the reference to immediacy, I detoured quickly to the men's room to check hair and uniform. The Colonel was a tickler for neatness and regulations. Are my shoulder emblems on correctly? Too late now, I would find out soon enough. I swallowed hard.

The Colonel's office was one floor down and an eternity's march to the other end of our building.

What was I guilty of doing? I didn't allow the thought of something positive to cross my mind. I was on temporary duty as a Communications Instructor having already received orders for Nam. Fort Sill would cease being my address within two rapidly disappearing weeks.

Arriving at the first of adjoining offices, I stood directly in front of the Sergeant major.

"Lieutenant Gible reporting to Colonel Anderson as ordered." Enlisted grades were notorious for keeping Junior Officers waiting whenever possible and I expected nothing less.

"Go straight in Lieutenant, the Colonel is waiting for you."

What on Earth could I have done? I struggled to remember the protocol for reporting to a Senior Officer. I marched in at attention, doing as smart a 90-degree left as I could muster.

"Lieutenant Gible reporting as ordered, Sir." My salute was returned minus the typical eye contact. Normal procedure would have been to direct me to 'at ease.'

"Who do you know in Washington?" my commanding officer demanded, still looking at the papers on his desk. Within my racing mind I searched for both the source of the question and an answer.

"I don't know what you mean, Sir," still at attention.

"You must know someone," he repeated as he tossed papers across his oversized desk.

"Permission to at ease so I can read the papers, Sir."

"At ease," the voice still hard, accusatory.

I read 'Orders Rescinded' at the top of the first page and immediately surmised the source of his question. My mother's words echoed in my head: "Neither of my sons will go to Viet Nam." Her edict was not founded on a Washington Who's-Who list. She had a direct line to the King of Kings, the Eternal Commander-in-Chief. Still, I had received my Nam orders and my brother, a Marine, was currently serving in San Diego with over a year remaining.

I assumed what I believed to be the true answer to the Colonel's question would quite possibly earn me a stiff reprimand or worse. I did manage to add conviction to the tone of my next reply.

"Sir, I tell you with total sincerity I know not a soul in Washington."

The Colonel, his face slightly less rigid, said, "Well, I have had hundreds of orders for Nam come through this office and not one has been changed..... at least not until now." Another pause. "Don't get me wrong, Lieutenant, I understand you're doing a solid job as an Instructor and I need you here. But....." he trailed off, clearly as confused as me. "Take these orders with you. You're dismissed."

I came to attention, saluted, "Thank you, Sir," and marched out of his office harboring ambivalent feelings of relief and surprise.

God intervened causing the rescinding of my Viet Nam orders. My life was significantly altered and possibly even extended. I was

grateful for the answer to a mother's prayer but also anguished by not completing my tour even though the objectives of this war were being openly questioned.

It would be many years before I would address what is now an obvious question. What **Plan did** God have for this fortunate son of a mother who knew and trusted the power of prayer?

Thank you Lord for your patience and faithfulness.

John Gibble