

Stay close to the stories

By [Laura Kelly Fanucci](#)

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Another morning is blueing into being over the thin horizon behind the dark trees. It is icy cold, fresh frost ringing the windows and slow snowflakes drifting down behind the glass.

I am trying to convince myself to get out of bed.

Already the toddler is singing from his crib, and his brothers are gobbling eggs and pancakes downstairs. The clock tells me another school day is beginning, and there are the usual hundred things to do. All the regular reasons that pull me from warm sleep.

Today I am not sure it is worth it.

My head is still aching from yesterday, hours at the hospital and a dizzying blur of specialists with concerned faces and scary scenarios. Something seems to be wrong with [the twin babies](#) I am carrying. No one seems to know exactly what; all the options they offer are alarming.

I cannot let myself enter into the sorrow and worry and grief behind every one of the questions whirling through my mind. **I do not want any of this.**

I know I have to do the small things that must be done. Push back the covers and put my right foot on the floor first. A silly superstition when the day must be started right. Turn on the shower to hot. Light candles against the winter darkness while the water warms.

I step inside the steam. Try to remember myself as beloved by the One who knit me together in a mother's womb, too.

And then I slam both angry fists against the wet tile wall because I am helpless and scared.

You cannot do this to us. You cannot have brought us this far for this. Not now. I went through all these months of sickness and throwing up and anxiety and worry, and you cannot take these babies from us now. You cannot do this. All I want is to go back to before, when life was simpler and worries were smaller and I could just have one ordinary day. You cannot do this to us. Promise me this is going to be OK. Promise me.

Which is exactly when [the story](#) comes back to me.

Grumbling and anger and bitter mumbling among the murmurs—all this way for this? To wander hungry and hopeless? To die in the wilderness? When at least we had bread and fleshpots back there in Egypt, back where we knew our suffering at least, where the familiar was all around us and not this awful unknown? Why did you do this to us now? To kill us and our children with thirst?

There it is: quiet and simple and true. The deepest memory, the *of-course* of the ancient story, the same anger and despair, the fearful frustration of the wild unknown. (And I cannot help but laugh to think my body's current state could best be described as "flesh-pot.")

I stay under the water's steady stream, and the quiet *of-course* keeps prodding me to remember, to listen, to live into what I know to be true.

Because how does that well-worn story end? God tells terrified Moses to take his trembling staff and slam it hard against the rock—the huge, heavy, daunting boulder in front of him and all those angry Israelites. And when he strikes the stone, water gushes forth. Fresh hope, new life, clear truth.

The shock of exactly what they needed.

This is always the way the story ends. We wander and forget and despair, and then God says, see? I make all things new. I bring forth life and love and hope where there seems to be none.

Stay close to the stories. I have been hearing these words in my head for weeks, scribbled them down on a note next to my latest project because I thought it was a reminder about the work.

No, I realize then. It was the reminder about everything.

Because if I am going to claim this Christian way as mine, if I am going to dare to live into what this life and love and identity mean, if I am going to survive in this dark and daunting world, then I have to stay as close as I can to the stories. **The stories are what make hope.**

Anthropologists and sociologists and writers and preachers—they will all tell you how much stories matter. How they make us and break us, how we know each other and ourselves within them, how they hold the only power for transformation.

And I know this, I believe it on my best days, but in the doubting moments, the fists slammed on the wall moments, the threats to life itself moments, it is so tempting to feel alone. To despair at the present troubles. To wander far from the stories.

To stare at the looming rock and forget that water can spring forth from its cold crags.

I stay in the shower for a few more moments, standing under the rushing flow and staring out the foggy glass door, that frigid winter morning still dark behind the steamy bathroom windows. Without thinking I trace my finger through the water drops clinging to the glass. One large heart. Two small hearts inside. What seems hard is softened with hope.

The question is always the same: [Is God here or not?](#)

The stories give me answers when I have none.

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