Highs and Lows

Laura Tom 4 June 2019



If I could go back in time to the day we were asked to plant a new [Joshua Generation Church](https://four12global.com/partners/joshua-generation-church/) congregation in Khayelitsha (a partially informal township in Western Cape, South Africa), my response now would be the same...and yet very different.

Before my husband, Lovemore, and I even started courting, before I even knew that this wonderful man existed, in the first year after I got saved (14 October 2012, which is my born-again birthday), I knew God was calling me into ministry in Africa. At that point, I hadn't travelled further than Johannesburg (I was living in Cape Town), but the cry of my heart was, "Here I am, Lord, send me."God gave me such a love for African people, specifically those with a skin colour different to my own fair complexion. So much so that I ended up marrying an African man, my dear Lovemore.

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Fast forward to two weeks before our wedding day (1 September 2018), the day Lovemore and I were asked to plant this new congregation. We had known we would eventually plant a congregation, and we were thinking it would be 2 or 3 years after getting married. However, God had even given Lovemore a dream a week before, telling him that we would be asked this question. And yet even with this prompting, it still seemed too soon to us. My first thought was,

“Are our leaders crazy? How do they know if we will even be able to vaguely navigate married life well, never mind a new church plant at the same time?” Bigger than those questions was the knowledge that we were ultimately in safe hands and I knew I trusted the leadership wholeheartedly. I knew that they would not have spoken to us before they had spent time seeking God’s face, and I had peace that God had orchestrated everything. So how did planting end up affecting our young marriage? Our marriage now is strong and healthy – planting has only made us more united and eternally focused. God knew what He was doing all along (no surprises there!).

So how would my response be different ‘then’, if I knew then what I know now? My response would have been a quicker and more enthusiastic, “Yes!”

The journey has been an incredible adventure. I expected to grow and work hard, to have the people on my mind and heart 24/7. I expected there to be hardships and fun times, and to be challenged through it all. I expected to have God come through in remarkable ways and to see the hand of God on His people. I expected salvations, healing and deliverance, and to see people grow in their love for God. Yet God still exceeded all of my expectations in such wonderful ways.

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There are also some things that I didn’t expect. I never expected to have our health, finances and marriage come under attack all at once. I started getting sick in November of 2018, and Lovemore started getting sick in February 2019, and it was only in April 2019 that we saw a breakthrough in our health. We spent thousands on tests, doctor’s visits and medication, and to this day, we still don’t know what the real issue was. All the tests came back negative or inconclusive, and our savings were completely wiped out. Through it all, God’s grace was sufficient for us, and we were able to keep running the race He had (and has) set before us. Through all our health challenges, I only had to miss out one Wednesday meeting. We also always had food on our table and our marriage only got stronger. What the enemy thought would wreck us, actually caused us to have more faith in God.

It’s really exciting to be a part of the precious people in our Khayelitsha congregation’s lives. We have seen miracles, seen people set free and many people grow in their faith. We truly are a family, and we are so honoured to be called to live among them. There are even now plans for us to relocate into Khayelitsha (where the congregation is based), which we are very excited about!

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Through all the highs and lows, God has been so good. I am living out my heart's desire – to serve God with my whole life, and in Africa. He has shown Himself to be faithful, and while the price for planting a church can be a high one, Jesus is worth it all. So very, very worth it all.