

A Phenomenon of the Third Kind

By Sheila Johnson

In the summer of 2016, I experienced a phenomenon of the third kind. Occasionally, my friends and I will have light-hearted conversations about the aging process. We know we are not entering into the early stages of Alzheimer's simply because we placed our keys in the refrigerator or looked for eyeglasses that were already on our face. Besides, our children are guilty of randomly doing the same things in their increasingly hectic world.

This phenomenon was like none other that had occurred in my life; it was heavy and it was frightening. I had been exhausted from two weeks of: Grandma time, preaching outside of Denver, establishing a personal bike riding routine, rearranging my closet, sewing into the wee hours of the morning, and anything else I could do to keep myself from going to bed at a normal time—I'm a natural night owl.

On Friday, at the end of that draining, fourteen-day marathon, I decided to take a quick after-dinner nap so that I could watch at least one Netflix movie later that evening. Fully dressed, jewelry intact, I fell on top of my bed and it was 'lights out.' I fell into a deep, intoxicating slumber. My dream was long and vivid. It allowed me to touch, feel, smell, taste, see, and hear. I remember discussing x-rays with the neurologists, counting the brightly colored wires attached to Michael's head, waking in the middle of the night to the slightest hospital sounds, arranging the many cards and flowers, delightfully replacing cafeteria food with homemade dinners brought by loving friends and family, and sleeping almost three months on the narrow, yet comfortable roll-a-way bed. In my slumber I could feel every one of those seventy-seven days spent in the ICU. My travel back in time was so real!

The great Dream Master led me to the rehab center where kindred spirits hung out with the family for many weeks. I relived the community celebration of life sponsored by leaders, pastors, and friends of the village. It was during Christmas week – the last time that Michael could finish a complete sentence. I was there for the second time around. I had no drugs or alcohol in my blood, yet my mind allowed me to sleep through and recreate a period of almost two years in one dream.

I awakened to a bright, beautiful sun. Noticing that I was fully dressed, I assumed that I had slept through the night and joyful that my bladder had behaved so well! I was refreshed and satisfied, and ready to meet the new day with renewed energy for Saturday's tasks. But my cell phone read: Sunday, 9:02am. Sunday. 9:02am. How could I have missed an entire day? I anxiously called my daughter to confirm. "Yep, Mom it's Sunday. You probably just needed the rest." My dream was much more than a dream; it was an awakening. It was a healing phenomenon of the third kind. I am grateful.