

Voices: How cataract surgery was my spiritual formation

April 23, 2025

As you read, I encourage you to pause and read the Scripture passages cited in each subheading below.

Initial consult: Waiting (Philippians 4:6-7)

It all started gradually—the blurriness creeping in, turning my daily life into a blur.

My eyeglasses became unreliable after two long years. So, I finally decided it was time to see a new ophthalmologist.

“Cataract surgery is necessary,” he said, confirming what I expected.

Hearing those words felt like a stark realization I was indeed aging.

With the doctor’s instructions in hand, I braced myself for a prolonged wait. Insurance hurdles, paperwork, appointments and unexpected heart tests dragged the process out much longer than I anticipated.

As I waited for the final OK for surgery, it struck me how waiting on God felt similar.

“His timing is perfect,” even when the delays stir up anxiety.

Surgery readiness: Time to prep (Proverbs 24:27a)

Two days before my surgery, the home prep began. It included eye drops, eyelid wipes and pages of instructions.

The real challenge hit me on those two days before surgery when I had to give up coffee. Two days without my beloved caffeine felt like pure torture. I scraped by with sheer willpower. Well—perhaps to sound more biblical—maybe it was a bit of self-control.

When I thought it couldn't get any tougher, "the doctor's rules" added salt to the wound: No eye makeup for two days before surgery. Seriously! No lipstick was an even tougher pill to swallow. Lipstick is practically part of my identity.

But finally, one day, I found myself walking into the surgery center totally exposed—sweats on, makeup-free and no lipstick in sight. I dreamed about sneaking in with a touch of foundation, but nope, the surgery rules demanded a complete surrender.

Here's the lesson I had to learn: Sometimes you have to give up what you desire, even if it's just temporary.

God asks us to come to him "just as we are," not in perfection, but wrapped in humility. It's uncomfortable, yet that's when we understand our true identity isn't in our appearances but in who we are in Christ.

Pre-op consult: Yield to the process (1

Peter 2:13)

What we value says a lot about us. I truly value my eyesight.

At the surgical center, a medical bracelet was slapped on my wrist, but only after my husband handled our financial commitments. Makes perfect sense.

During the doctor's consult before my surgery, I told my surgeon: "I love to read. So, do a good job."

I could hear a man in the next cubicle being prayed over before his surgery, and I had a longing for the same.

I asked my nurse and doctor who was praying for that gentleman. The nurse said it wasn't her. The doctor said it wasn't him.

So, I told them, "I guess that means I need to pray for myself."

So, I did. Though my husband already had lifted my surgery up in prayer, I still wanted more prayers. I wasn't afraid of the surgery itself. I just worried about the changes awaiting me if the outcome wasn't what I envisioned for myself. Oh, me of little faith.

After my chat with God, I made up my mind to release control, putting my trust in my nurse, doctor and anesthesiologist to do the right thing.

It took me back to the moment I accepted Christ—when I stopped trying to fix everything myself and I learned to trust in the grace he freely gave to me. What a special day it was—when the Holy Spirit first led me to believe in Christ with my whole heart.

During surgery (Philippians 3:13)

No recollection, which was a good thing.

Post-op instructions (Hebrews 5:8)

“Keep the eye patch on.”

Easy.

“Use the drops four times a day.”

Feasible.

“Don’t lift anything heavy.”

No problem.

“Don’t bend over.”

A struggle.

Every step mattered for healing. Ignoring the doctor’s instructions could jeopardize, not just my eyesight, but also the ministry the Lord graciously has given me. Staying faithful to the end means continuous obedience. God’s word is our map, and his commands protect and keep us on track.

Post surgery: Persevere to the very end (James 1:17)

On the drive home, my woozy post-anesthesia chatter and nonsensical thoughts entertained my husband, but all I could think about was coffee.

I already had told him our first stop after my surgery would be McDonald’s

for some coffee. Oh, what pure joy I encountered as we drove away from the drive-thru. I truly felt God's favor was upon me at that moment.

Recovery (Psalm 62:1)

Upon arriving home, I sat by our large glass window overlooking our backyard. I began to reflect on everything I had learned. I glanced at the peaceful view—the trees swaying in the wind, the water rippling at their banks and the breeze whispered through the air. The world was moving, yet I was forced to be still.

How often does God ask us to slow down, look ahead and truly see his creation, his presence, his gentle leading frequently unnoticed in our rush. Probably more than we would like to admit.

Concluding reflections (Jeremiah 29:11)

Just like that first post-surgery cup of coffee, God provides what we need at the perfect time.

When I finally can wear lipstick again, I will be in “hog heaven”—a state of utter bliss and contentment. Still, even then, I know genuine renewal isn't in the color of my lips, but in the clarity of my vision, both physically and spiritually.

It is always good to follow Christ and to remind ourselves not to boast about tomorrow, for we do not know what it will bring. We must trust and obey and “fix our eyes on him.” When we do that, our spiritual vision becomes unclouded and clearer.

After we have encountered something once, we are better equipped for the

next go around, and that thought makes me less anxious about my second cataract surgery next week.

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