

*"You are the God who sees me, the God whom I see."* Genesis 16:13

Hagar the Egyptian spoke these words in the desert after she had been exiled by Sarah. God saw her and she saw him. Her words continue to strike a chord with me. In fact, I have the words engraved on a necklace I wear.

For me, Hagar's words summarize my own interaction with God. He sees me, whether I know it or not. He hears me, even when I think no one is listening. He has let me know this in little ways that I can look back on and identify. In the last five years or so, I have been paying more attention to his taps on my shoulder.

At one time I thought my life was "perfect" with a wonderful husband, beautiful children, a lovely home, interesting work, etc. While I was happy—what more could a girl want—I had an unfulfilled feeling that disrupted my sense of God's grace. I was so blessed, but I wasn't living with a thankful heart. While I recognized God's grace, I didn't feel it, didn't know it deep inside. I wanted more, but more of what? The question made me realize how soul-sick and shallow I was. I knew it, but I didn't know what to do about it.

And then God tapped me on the shoulder. Sitting in church one Sunday and thinking about a handbag I wanted to buy, I heard the Rev. Bill Dickson's sermon about spiritual complacency. I felt like God was talking directly to me. I started crying and didn't stop for several days. The tears ran down my face at church Sunday after Sunday. It was embarrassing, but I couldn't help it. I started carrying handkerchiefs and wearing waterproof mascara!

Like Hagar, I have always rebelled against confinement. I have been self-reliant, thinking I could figure it out on my own. That Sunday I realized God saw me—saw my petty meanness, saw my rebellion, and saw my thinking about myself only. And yet, he still loved me and tapped me on my shoulder.

Like Hagar, I went back. I needed to start over. So I started reading the Bible, started volunteering, started attending the Women's Retreat, started practicing centering prayer, and started becoming much more involved at St. John the Divine. Albert and I started tithing.

Faith is something I have to practice every day, because faith doesn't come naturally to me. I started praying for faith. And God noticed, and I felt His grace! God in his mercy reminds me that despite who he is and despite who I am, he sees me, hears me, and loves me.