

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

KAREN
KINGSBURY

*Christmas
Miracles*



True Stories from the Most
Wonderful Time of the Year



Christmas Miracles

True Stories from the Most
Wonderful Time of the Year

KAREN
KINGSBURY

WORTHY
PUBLISHING

New York • Nashville

Copyright © 2001 by Karen Kingsbury

Cover design by Gabriella Wikidal. Cover copyright © 2023 by Hachette Book Group, Inc.

Hachette Book Group supports the right to free expression and the value of copyright. The purpose of copyright is to encourage writers and artists to produce the creative works that enrich our culture.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this book without permission is a theft of the author's intellectual property. If you would like permission to use material from the book (other than for review purposes), please contact permissions@hbgusa.com. Thank you for your support of the author's rights.

Worthy
Hachette Book Group
1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104
worthypublishing.com
twitter.com/worthypub

Originally published in hardcover as *A Treasury of Christmas Miracles* by Faith Words, a division of Hachette Book Group

First Worthy Edition: October 2023

Worthy is a division of Hachette Book Group, Inc. The Worthy name and logo are trademarks of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

The publisher is not responsible for websites (or their content) that are not owned by the publisher.

The Hachette Speakers Bureau provides a wide range of authors for speaking events. To find out more, go to hachettespeakersbureau.com or email HachetteSpeakers@hbgusa.com.

Worthy Books may be purchased in bulk for business, educational, or promotional use. For information, please contact your local bookseller or the Hachette Book Group Special Markets Department at special.markets@hbgusa.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kingsbury, Karen
A treasury of Christmas miracles : true stories of God's presence today /
Karen Kingsbury
p. cm.
ISBN 0-446-52959-1
Miracles. 2. Christmas—Miscellanea. I title.
BT97.3 K56 2001
242'.335—dc21

Interior design: Charles Sutherland

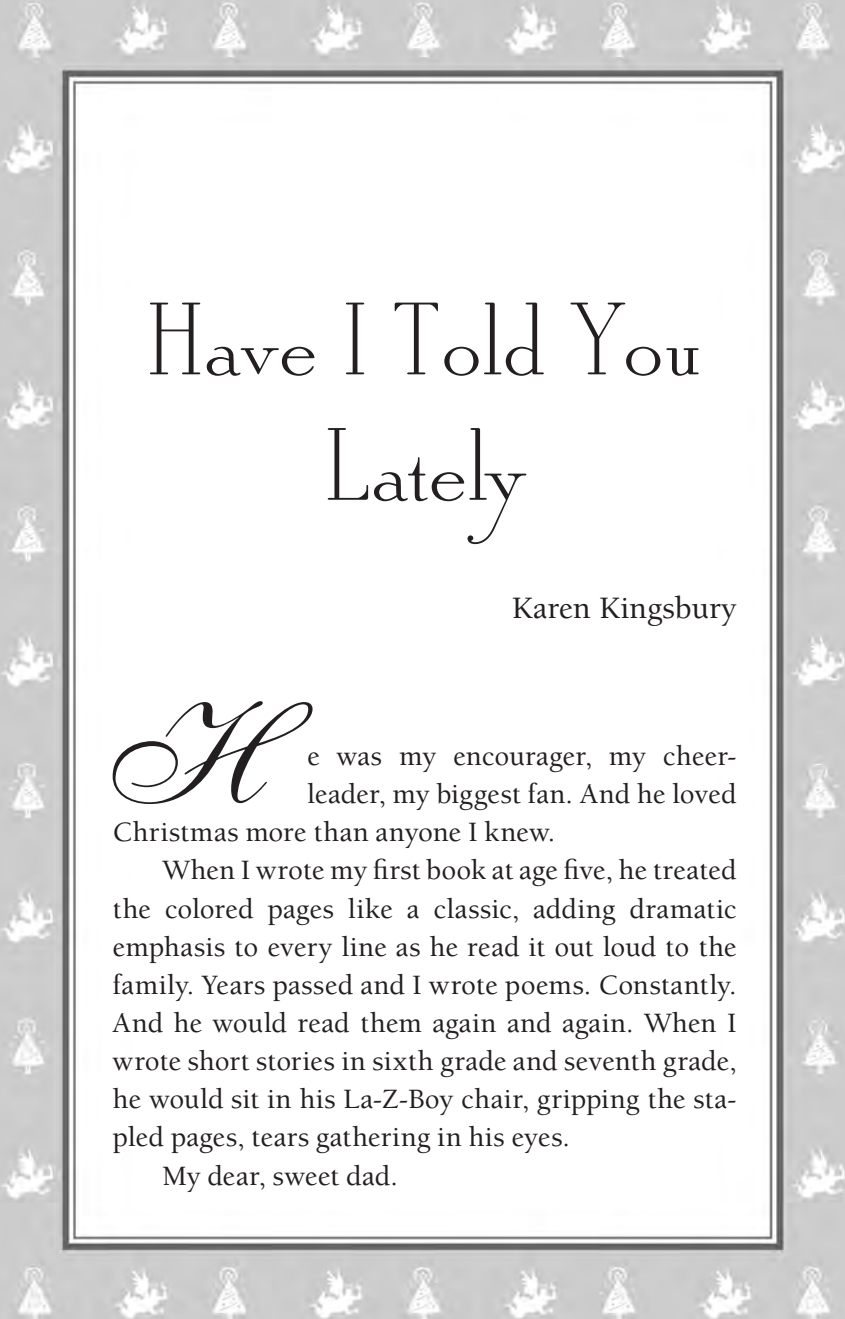
LCCN: 2007928517

ISBNs: 978-1-5460-0552-0 (paper over board); 978-1-5460-0641-1 (ebook)

Printed in the United States of America

LSC-C

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Have I Told You Lately

Karen Kingsbury

*H*e was my encourager, my cheerleader, my biggest fan. And he loved Christmas more than anyone I knew.

When I wrote my first book at age five, he treated the colored pages like a classic, adding dramatic emphasis to every line as he read it out loud to the family. Years passed and I wrote poems. Constantly. And he would read them again and again. When I wrote short stories in sixth grade and seventh grade, he would sit in his La-Z-Boy chair, gripping the stapled pages, tears gathering in his eyes.

My dear, sweet dad.

KAREN KINGSBURY

I would sit on the sofa across from him, holding my breath.

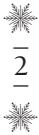
As he read the last words, he would lower the pages, and his eyes would meet mine. “Karen, one day the whole world will know your writing.” His eyes shone brighter than the California sun. “Someone has to be the next bestselling author. I think it’s going to be you.”

When I wrote my first Baxter family book, my dad read the manuscript at our backyard table while my little ones swam in our pool. My dad rarely looked up, so taken by the story, and when he finished it, he took off his sunglasses and wiped his eyes. “This will be a best-seller.” He said it like it was a done deal. “And one day it will be on television. I can see it.”

Time took its toll on my dad. He had type 2 diabetes, and as the seasons flew by it became apparent that he didn’t have long. I hated that. I used to plead with God at night. *Please, heal him. I don’t think I can live without my dad.*

The day came when his nephrologist gave Dad an ultimatum. Do nothing, and you have six weeks. Start dialysis and live another year. Dialysis would be arduous, three times a week hooked to a machine for hours, but my dad didn’t hesitate. “Another year with my family,” he used to tell us. “There’s no decision to make.”

We made Dad a blanket adorned with the faces of all thirteen of his grandchildren. Dialysis made Dad freezing cold, the effect of stripping ten pounds of liquid from his body each time. My dad loved watching my older kids sing and perform theatrically, and he loved watching our younger boys play baseball and soccer.



HAVE I TOLD YOU LATELY

That year my dad cried easily, but he never stopped smiling. Often, at the kids' events, he would lock eyes with me and say, "God is so good to let me live long enough to see this."

Summer came, and it was clear that dialysis was taking its toll. One afternoon my dad called me from the clinic. "Karen." His voice was brimming with emotion. "I found a song for you and the family. All of you." He paused. "Listen to this."

Then, over the phone, he played a cassette tape of Rod Stewart's famous version of a Van Morrison song. The music began, and the song began to play.

"Have I told you lately... that I love you."

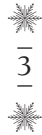
The song kept on and the words filled my heart. *You fill my heart with gladness... take away all my sadness...*

I pictured my dad lying in a recliner at the dialysis clinic. The pain and sorrow of that place, and the way my dad had chosen that life for us. And suddenly the lyrics took on new meaning.

As the music ended, I could barely speak. "I'll remember this song forever," I told him. As the day played out, he called my mom and each of my siblings and played the song again, telling them the same thing he had told me.

Dialysis is hard on the heart. That's the reason the doctor knew the process would only buy my dad a limited amount of time. So it was no surprise when my dad suffered a massive heart attack in the fall of 2007.

The answered prayer didn't come in a healing, the way I had hoped. But God gave us eight long weeks in



KAREN KINGSBURY

the ICU. Time when we played “Old Rugged Cross” and “How Great Thou Art” and hours to rehash all our family’s favorite stories. Nothing was left unsaid.

And of course, we played his favorite song: Rod Stewart’s “Have I Told You Lately That I Love You.” Those days and hours were rich with love and faith and the presence of God. When my dad took his last breath here, it was only to take his next one in the presence of Jesus. We will see him again!

On his tombstone, we had these words engraved:
Have I told you lately that I love you!

Then the strangest thing began to happen. It started as we left the theater opening night for our kids’ musical. This was the first time my dad wasn’t there because all their lives, Papa never missed an audition or rehearsal or show. The way he was for me, he was their greatest fan.

We had to clean up after the show and wound up in a conversation or two, celebrating the success of the first show of the run. My husband and the younger boys left for home in a different car. When Kelsey and Tyler and I finally reached the car to head home that night, we were filled with emotion.

“I believe Papa had a window in heaven tonight,” I told the kids.

The three of us climbed into the car and headed out of the parking lot. But we didn’t get that far when Rod Stewart’s song “Have I Told You Lately That I Love You” began to play. I took my foot off the gas, and for a moment we just sat there, the three of us, taking it in.

How was this possible? On a night when we were





Have I Told You Lately

missing my dad so much, how could this song just happen to come on? We sat there through the entire thing, wiped our tears, and headed home. It was a miracle, I told them. It had to be. Weeks after Papa's death, to hear that song at that moment.

But a week later we were leaving Austin's baseball game. Austin, our youngest son, was a home run hitter. In Little League circles, his hitting was legendary. My dad had grown weaker because of his treatments, so he would park his white van in the lot just off first base and cheer from his car.

On this day, though, Papa wasn't there to cheer when Austin hit his home run. He took the ball and a Sharpie and wrote across the middle: "For Papa." We have that ball still.

Again, we kicked the engine into gear and headed toward the edge of the parking lot, and again the haunting notes of Rod Stewart's melody filled the car. We pulled over and let the song play through. Austin wiped his tears. "Papa sees us. I know it."

Finally, it was Christmastime, a season I knew would be the hardest of all without my dad. Every tradition I'd come to love during my childhood was from him, caroling and Christmas movies, advent calendars and all of us spending a day on gingerbread houses. I had no idea how I would get through Christmas without him.

One of my dad's favorite things was to take the whole family to a Christmas show. All the kids and grand-kids would pick a Christmas musical or concert, and we would celebrate by attending it together. We didn't want



KAREN KINGSBURY

that year to be any different, so we found a Christmas play near our house, and one Sunday night in December, we all attended it together.

In honor of my dad.

The show was sweet and tender and full of Christmas spirit. But I dabbed at tears throughout the performance because he wasn't there. My dad would never join us for a Christmas show again. When it was over, we headed home. My husband and kids and I were all in one car.

Of course, we weren't going to hear Rod Stewart. Obviously. This was December, and all the radio stations played Christmas, Christmas, and more Christmas. But somehow, halfway home, driving along the dark interstate, the first notes of Rod Stewart's song began to play.

The music became words, and from the back, our oldest son, Tyler, said, "Mom, it's too sad. I think you should turn it off."

At that same moment a rush of joy filled my heart. "Actually, Tyler." I grinned at him in the rearview mirror. "I'm going to turn it up." I looked back at the kids and at my husband, who was driving. "I don't get what God is doing with this song . . . but I'll take it."

As the next several years played out, we heard Rod Stewart's song again and again, when special moments took place or on a birthday. One spring we took the whole family to the Bahamas, to the Atlantis Resort. We had several rooms together, and one with a balcony large enough for everyone.

After we were checked in and everyone had put their

HAVE I TOLD YOU LATELY

suitcases away, we went out onto the large balcony. The ocean view was breathtaking, and the same with the expansive view of the grounds. We stood there, amazed, and then suddenly we heard a song.

From down on the pool deck, the Bahamian band began to play Rod Stewart's song "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You." None of us knew what to say or do. We couldn't move. Finally, I looked at my mom on one side of me and my daughter, Kelsey, on the other. "This is really happening, right?" I hesitated. "Because I make things up for a living."

We laughed and cried and hugged each other. And together, as the sun set over the Caribbean Sea, we sang along. *Have I told you lately that I love you?*

Years passed, and Kelsey fell in love with a young man named Kyle Kupecky. In October 2011, Kyle and Kelsey got engaged. During their beautiful dating days, I celebrated my daughter's happiness, but I ached at a single thought. Kelsey was going to marry this great guy, and my dad would never know him. My father, who would've loved Kyle, would never have the chance to welcome him into the family.

Never have the chance to share a Christmas dinner with Kyle.

December came and I was invited to a major meeting at my publisher's New York City office. "Your book is doing very well," one of the team told me. "We want to celebrate you!"

Headquarters for my publisher was in Rockefeller Center amidst the chaos and cacophony of life along



KAREN KINGSBURY

the Avenue of the Americas. Kyle was a recording artist, but he worked part time for me. So did Kelsey, so I took the two of them with me for the trip. We made a plan to connect at the publisher's office when my time there was over.

The meeting went very well. One department head after another talked about the success they were having with my books. Gradually throughout the day I thought about my dad. *Karen, one day the whole world will know your writing.* When the sessions wrapped up, the CEO of the publisher thanked me for coming.

"Do you have plans for the rest of the day?" she asked me.

I told her that Kyle and Kelsey and I had hoped to shop in Times Square before seeing a show that night.

"I have a better idea." She grinned. "It's Christmas-time in New York. You should go down to High Line Park. It's decorated so beautifully! It's also quiet and lit up and unforgettable. You'll love it."

On my way down in the elevator that day, my heart was full. I stepped into the Christmassy lobby, all decked in red and green, and I realized that my book was on display everywhere. Glass cases circled the area, and in each were copies of my book. The cover, then my face on the back of the book, alternated around the entire space. It was a lot of my face.

A friendly security guard in his sixties looked at me, then at the books, then at me again. He pointed my way. "Hey"—his eyes lit up—"that's you!"

"Yes." I smiled. "Yes. It is."

HAVE I TOLD YOU LATELY

He crossed his arms and nodded a few times, his eyes still holding mine. “Well, look at that.” He grinned big. “You made it!”

I thanked him and kept my smile. But my eyes flooded with tears as I stepped out onto the busy sidewalk. Because all I wanted to do at that moment was something none of us can ever do.

I wanted to call heaven.

“Dad,” I would tell him. “You were right! It happened! I made it.” He would care about my success so much more than I cared. I was thankful, definitely. But I cared more about the readers, the way the stories touched their hearts. Things an author can’t measure.

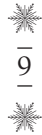
My dad? He would’ve been bursting at the seams.

Outside on the busy street, a cab pulled up with Kyle and Kelsey. I got in the back with them and told them that the meeting had gone well. “But I’m really missing Papa,” I told them.

Kelsey reached out and squeezed my hand. “I miss him, too.” She looked outside at the decorated street. “Especially at Christmastime.”

I told them about the CEO and how she had suggested a trip down to the decorated High Line Park. Both Kelsey and Kyle agreed, so we asked the cabdriver to take us to the southern part of Manhattan.

There we walked up the iron stairs, and in the waning sunlight we stood and took in the sight. The CEO had been right. The High Line was an old railway, landscaped with red and yellow roses and white hydrangea bushes. A paved Christmassy path meandered where the



train tracks used to be, giving the people of lower Manhattan a place to walk and enjoy the city from a different vantage point.

From that spot, we had an expansive view of the Hudson River, so we decided to take a few pictures. Kyle took a snapshot of Kelsey and me, and I took one of Kyle and Kelsey. We were trying to take a photo of the three of us, but with a camera there was no way to see what we were capturing.

About that time, a man and woman walked up. They stopped, and the man offered to take our photo.

Good Christmas cheer, we figured. Kelsey showed the kind man how to use our camera, and the gentleman took our picture. Next, he looked at the photo for a few beats. "That's lovely." He nodded. "Really lovely."

Then he and the woman continued on their way.

When he was out of earshot, Kelsey turned to me and grabbed my arm. "Mom!" Her voice was a whispered sort of scream. She pointed at the man walking away with the woman. "Do you know who that is?"

I stared at the couple and took a guess. "An older hipster sort of guy and his wife?" I shrugged.

"Mom!" Kelsey could barely contain herself. "That's *Rod Stewart!*"

Now, I didn't want to look like a wild fan, but I had to catch up to the man. I hurried his way and called out, "Sir! Sir, you took our picture! Sir!"

He turned around and stopped. He looked a little startled. As I approached him, he gave a quick nod. "Yes, your picture was lovely," he told me. "Like I said."

Have I Told You Lately

At this point I caught up to the man. He must have thought I was having an episode of some kind because he took gentle hold of my arm, and I did the same with him. “Sir,” I asked, “are you Rod Stewart?”

He hesitated, but just for a moment. “Yes. I’m in town doing my book tour.”

I blinked a few times. It never once occurred to me to tell him I was an author. “Sir...” My voice was shaky. I looked him straight in the eyes. “Can I tell you about my dad?”

And so I did. I told Rod Stewart how my dad had believed in me and how his favorite song was Rod’s very own—“Have I Told You Lately That I Love You” and how those words were engraved on my dad’s tombstone.

When I finished, Rod blinked back tears. He folded his hands and raised them toward heaven. “You will never know”—he looked at me—“how much I needed to hear that today.” Then he lowered his hands and held out his arms. “Can I give you a hug?”

So, there on the High Line in lower Manhattan—on the December day when I was most missing my dad, the day I had officially “made it” as an author—Rod Stewart was giving me a hug. When he and the woman had moved on, I turned to Kelsey and Kyle. None of us could believe it.

We sat on a bench anchored by Christmas trees and pondered the possibility. “You could take two friends to different parts of New York City, and they could spend all their lives hoping to run into each other and still it would probably never happen.” I stared at Kelsey and Kyle. “What are the odds?”



KAREN KINGSBURY

Of course, we quickly realized the truth. There are no odds. No way that Rod Stewart gives me a hug on a day like that. Only God could've orchestrated our meeting.

A Christmas miracle meeting.

Later, the *Today Show* wanted to feature the story, but they told me they would have to call Rod Stewart and make sure that the man who took our picture really was him. Turns out it was. Rod came on the show via video and told his version of the story. He remembered it well. "Still to this day, I'll say the same thing," Rod told the viewing audience. "She could never have known how much I needed to hear that about her dad and my song."

There's something about Christmas, something about the way the name of Jesus lights everyone's way and keeps hearts happier and more expectant for the good just ahead. That was certainly true for us that Christmassy December day on the High Line. But I am glad the *Today Show* found Rod. Glad for his side of the story. Because it's true what I said earlier. I make things up for a living!

But not this. This Christmas miracle is as true as Christmas itself!

The way all Christmas miracles are.

