



A COVENANT TEEN  
SURVIVED BEING  
TRAPPED IN HER CAR  
FOR EIGHT DAYS.

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Rick Lund

# Laura's MIRACLE

**D**o you believe in miracles? Even the staunchest of skeptics had to do a double take over the story of Laura Hatch, which grabbed newspaper headlines and made national television news.

On Sunday, October 10, the seventeen year old was found alive a few

miles from her home in Redmond, Washington, after being trapped for eight days in her wrecked car without food or water.

Laura had been missing since October 2, when she was seen leaving a party at a friend's house. Over the next week, her family, neighbors, friends, and church family at Creekside Covenant Church in Redmond organized

search parties and held prayer vigils.

Amy Hatch, twenty-five, the eldest of the the family's five children, helped organize the search effort, and got up at 3:30 each morning to go out and post missing person flyers about Laura. She says there was "a lot of crying and not much sleep" at home.

"It was eight days of hell," she says. "Not knowing was the worst. It was

worse than having an answer. I just wanted to know where she was. I couldn't grieve."

Still, Amy says, she and Laura's twin sister, Karen, refused to believe Laura was dead.

"It was my survival mechanism, I think," she says. "But I had absolutely nothing to go on—eight days with no word of any kind."

The Hatches, Todd and Jean, along with Amy, Daniel (twenty-two), Kathleen (nineteen), and Karen, kept going with the help of family and friends, along with a chaplain from the city of Redmond. Creekside pastors Randy Phillips and Kim Hjelm spent a lot of time at the house as well.

"Mom was losing hope, but the one thing she had was her faith," Amy says. "Her only consolation was, 'If Laura is gone, at least I know where she is.' She really appreciated her friends from church who cared for her and prayed with her."

Laura was found by a family friend, Sha Nohr, who discovered her car crashed in a ravine, obscured by vegetation. Nohr, whose daughter is a close friend of Laura's, says that a God-given vision led her to the crash site. On Saturday, October 9, Nohr's daughter had come to her, distraught over her missing friend, and wondering what they could do to help find Laura. Nohr told her daughter that all they could do was pray.

That night, Nohr said she had several dreams of a wooded area. She said she heard the message, "Keep going. Keep going."

She woke the next morning feeling a sense of urgency to go look for Laura. She and her daughter drove to a spot by a steep embankment. Nohr got out of her car and inched her way more than 200 feet down through thick vegetation. At the bottom, she didn't see anything at first and was about to leave. Then she saw something that



Laura Hatch (right) and her twin sister Karen on a church mission trip to the Dominican Republic

looked like a car. It was Laura's 1996 Toyota Camry.

With help from a passing motorist who had stopped and joined in the search, Nohr reached the car. They paused for a moment, fearing what they would see. One of them accidentally bumped against the car and they heard a moan from inside. It was Laura.

"I told her that people were looking for her and they loved her," Nohr told *The Seattle Times*. "And she said, 'I think I might be late for curfew.'"

While Nohr was climbing into the ravine, the congregation at Creekside was gathering at Redmond Junior High for the first of two Sunday services.

In the days after Laura's disappearance, the church family at Creekside had been gathering to pray for her safe return. The day before Laura was found, hundreds of people met at Redmond High School and searched a five-mile area for signs of her.

The next morning, people were surprised to see Todd and Jean in church for worship.

"They just wanted to be there," says Randy Phillips. "They wanted to worship, see their friends. At the end of that first service, we knelt and prayed for Laura."

The Hatches had just arrived home from church when the phone rang.

Todd Hatch answered—it was Sha Nohr. "I have your daughter," she said. He could hear an ambulance in the background.

When Nohr told him that Laura was alive, Todd began to cry. Nohr handed the cell phone to Laura, and Todd told her, "Hi Sweetie, I love you."

"I love you, too, Dad," she said. "Don't worry. I'll be O.K."

Amy walked into the house during this phone conversation. (She had been at Starbucks after church.) She drove her parents to the crash site off of Union Hill Road in Redmond.

When they arrived, rescue workers were trying to get Amy out. She was in rough shape. "I touched her hand and told her I loved her," Amy says. "She said, 'I love you, too.'"

It took about forty minutes to get Laura out of the car, and she was rushed to Harborview Hospital.

The second Sunday service had just ended when Randy got a call from Todd. He was at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. Laura was alive.

"I couldn't quite believe it," Phillips says. "I turned to the folks in our church, and said, 'They've found her.' We knelt down and prayed, and then I rushed to the hospital."

As news spread that afternoon that Laura had been found alive, a prayer vigil for Laura that evening became a service of praise and thanksgiving.

Over the next several days, Phillips was deluged by calls from media outlets—*Dateline NBC*, *The Today Show*, *CBS Morning Show*, *Fox News*—as well as local television and newspaper reporters.

Phillips told reporters that Hatch's rescue was the result of prayer, the

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## Laura's Miracle

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show of strength by her family, the support of the Creekside congregation and other friends. "It's obvious that prayer affected the quality of relationships here—and it also affected the outcome," Phillips says.

Laura, who has no recollection how she wound up at the bottom of the ravine, was in rough shape when she was rushed to the hospital. Her right eye socket, cheekbone, and nose had been crushed. She had a blood clot in her brain, and she was severely dehydrated. Doctors said that dehydration probably saved her life, because the lack of water kept the blood clot from expanding.

Laura had surgery on November 2 to remove the blood clot and reset facial fractures. She faces a long recovery, and will likely miss the rest of the school year. She tires early and there are days when Laura has a lot of pain because of injuries to her head and neck.

"Her life won't be normal for a while," says Amy.

The Hatches have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of love they have received, and are grateful for the love and prayers of friends and strangers. So are those who were able to help.

"Those of us who caught a glimpse of the anguish that the Hatch family experienced, and then shared in the amazing joy of Laura being found, cannot be left unchanged," says Kim Hjelm, associate pastor at Creekside, who helped organize congregational support during the eight-day ordeal. "Our lives should be impacted deeply and noticeably."

Do you believe in miracles?

Randy Phillips does. He has for quite sometime. He sees them every day.

"A reporter asked me if this was the biggest answer to prayer I had ever seen," he said. "I said, 'No way.' Was this one dramatic? Yes. Exciting? Yes. But I get to see answers to prayer every day. . . . From a human perspective, this is a big deal. But from God's point of view, he's doing this kind of thing all the time." □