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GWU Alumnus Shares How God Brought Him Through Life-Threatening Stroke

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Office of University
Communications

January 29, 2020

Felix Bautista Will Tell His Miraculous Story at Dimensions on Feb. 18

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—On the night of his 28th birthday in 2017, Felix Bautista, of Salisbury, N.C., suffered a stroke that usually occurs in patients who are 65 or older with a history of hypertension. Because of the damage to his brain, doctors gave the 2011 alumnus of Gardner-Webb University less than a 20 percent chance of survival. They told his wife, Holly Hamm Bautista, also a 2011 GWU alumna, that if he did survive, he would be brain dead.

Through Holly's prayers and the prayers of thousands of people around the world, Felix survived, and he is walking, talking, driving a car and working full time. Bautista will share his miraculous story with Gardner-Webb students and the community during Dimensions on Feb. 18 at 9:25 a.m. in Tucker Student Center.



Felix and Holly Bautista received their Bachelor of Science degrees in business administration in May 2011 from Gardner-Webb.



Felix Bautista spent a month in the neuro intensive care unit at Novant Health.

Before the stroke, Felix was considered healthy and played travel league baseball. He was a shy person, who never spoke in his business classes at GWU. Now, he tells his survival story to everyone he meets—Uber drivers, delivery drivers, people in line at the store—anyone, anywhere, anytime. “Years ago, I would be terrified to speak in front of people,” Felix admitted. “I’m nervous, but I want to share my story, because people have to hear it. These are students, who haven’t gone through life yet and they are going to go through battles like mine, so they need to hear this, too. I want them to see how God has worked in my life and in Holly’s life, my parents’ lives and my little girl’s.”



Felix and Holly Bautista and their 3-year-old daughter, Bailey, in November 2019



Felix and Holly Bautista pose at Gardner-Webb in February
2010

He spent a month in neuro intensive care and another month in rehabilitation. When he came home, he was in a wheelchair and needed help with daily tasks. While he was recuperating and learning to walk again, Holly was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease and lost her job because she missed so much work. Despite everything the couple went through, they can look back and see how God was with them, even on the night he ended up in the emergency room within hours of celebrating his birthday. "He had invited his grandparents to come and celebrate, and they spent the night," Holly explained. "If they hadn't been at our house, we wouldn't have had anyone to take care of our 9-month-old daughter."

While he was learning to walk again, people helped them financially and emotionally. A church in their community held a fundraiser, and because of his love for baseball, someone gave them tickets to see the Red Sox. On the way to Fenway Park, he shared his story with the Uber driver. It rained at the ballgame, but Felix said, "I'm not moving. I'm not even supposed to be here."

They are both working again and enjoying their daughter, Bailey, who is now 3. Sometimes he gets depressed and frustrated at the things he can't do, but he trusts God, and his little girl provides motivation. "I have to step back and say, but I can do this," he shared. "It's training my brain to stop worrying about things that I can't control. Every day I'm blessed, because that night on my birthday could have been my last."

Auxiliary aids will be made available to persons with disabilities upon request 48 hours prior to the event. Please call 704-406-2155 or email disabilityservices@gardner-webb.edu with your request.

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.



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