



From Sorrow To Peace

one couple's experience in the loss of their child

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There comes a moment in life that makes you face the frailty of humankind. Mine came when our daughter was stillborn - and it changed me to the depth of my core. My relationship with God became deeper, more dependent, and ultimately more fulfilling than ever.

There isn't a single word that can describe what a parent feels in the loss of their child.

There isn't a single word to describe the sovereignty of God.

What then is the reason for my joy? For the hope within me? It's for this reason I share my story.

It was February 2003, shortly after Valentine's Day. Anticipation of spring just around the corner filled our home. Winter had been mild and the forecast foretold of warm days ahead, a sure bet the last few inches of snow would melt quickly. In our mind's eye we could see flowers blooming beside our house and a lush green lawn we were suddenly anxious to mow.

Similar to our thoughts of spring was the anticipation of our third child. We had been told it was a girl, and she was due in less than a week.

Her name would be Katie Marie.

My husband Travis and I had two boys already. Cody was four and Wyatt turned three a month earlier. I loved them dearly. As a stay-at-home-mom, my days were spent watching them grow and learn new things. But even so, I was looking forward to this new addition with unabashed eagerness.

A baby is so new to the world. Their dependency on adults seems to draw out the fierce protector in all of us. When their bright eyes smile up at you with total confidence, you might as well admit you are defeated, captured, and taken prisoner by their charms. Katie had yet to make her presence in the world, but I knew she already had me wrapped around every one of her dainty fingers.

I'd anticipated her arrival for months, watching other mothers in our small church family bask with a new mother's glow. I was eager to share with them the little bundle that was such a part of me already.

Cody and Wyatt were also eager, waiting for the day the doctor would 'help mommy have her baby'. We spent a good deal of time preparing them for the baby who would share their room, toys, and most importantly, their parents.

Every night as we tucked them into their beds they wanted to know when the baby would come. The answer was always the same, 'when God decides it's time.' I have to admit, as I'm sure every mother does, those last few weeks were hard. I had already waited a long eight and a half months and the last few weeks drug on, seemingly without end. The crib sat in the corner, the clothes waited in the dresser, and the suitcases were packed for that long awaited signal. Every little contraction was timed. And still we waited.



At my last two doctors appointments, they told me I was progressing slowly but normally. The heartbeat was in the 150's and everything was fine. It wasn't until Tuesday, five days before I was due, that I stopped to contemplate when I'd last felt the baby move. I had become so used to the little kicks and my lopsided

stomach that I hadn't really thought much about it. When was the last time she'd moved?

I began to pay attention, and by the time I went to bed that night I had resorted to wiggling, pushing, and pressing on my stomach, hoping to wake her and receive the slightest indication that she was still in there.

I fell asleep waiting. . .

Wednesday morning dawned bright and normal as I began my daily activities with the boys. I paused every so often to give my stomach a little nudge, sure that the baby would wake and give my bladder a nice swift punch at any moment. But still I felt nothing. I began to worry. Surely with all the prodding I should have been able to feel something.

I called my sister. "Don't worry," she assured me, "there's not much room in there for the little tyke."

I began to cry, I was certain now that I hadn't felt movement for quite a while. She encouraged me to not panic, but to call a nurse. When I called the hospital, the nurse's answer was not reassuring. Instead of telling me I was overreacting, she told me to come in for a non-stress test.

I made two calls after that: one to a friend to stay with the boys, and one to Travis. When I arrived at his workplace, the tears began again. Why wasn't I feeling anything?

Travis held my hand all the way to the hospital. He reminded me that God was taking care of everything and that He was in complete control. No matter what the doctors told us, no matter what we faced, He had already predetermined everything that was taking place. All we had to do was trust Him.

I tried to stay optimistic. After all, God had blessed us with this baby, and He'd always taken care of us before.

Unfortunately, my thoughts weren't on what God's plans might be. They weren't on the fact that He's the Creator and that His plans supersede our own, or how our lives might change and our faith deepen. Instead I tried to calm myself by telling myself how impossible it would be for something to go really wrong.

Those things happened to other people.



As the nurse ushered us into a small room, she asked me to lay down and proceeded to administer her high-tech equipment to every imaginable place on my stomach. I focused on a little spot on the wall as she spent the next few minutes searching.

My ears strained to hear that first beat of a tiny heart, assuring me little Katie was indeed fine and healthy.

Nothing.

When she stepped back, she squeezed my arm. She told us that sometimes babies get into a funny position towards the end of the pregnancy. "I'm going to call your doctor. A lot of times when the heartbeat is hard to find like this, we like to have an ultrasound."

She vanished from the room and Travis knelt beside the bed. He squeezed my hand. Neither of us could utter the words aloud. Was the baby dead? I looked at him and made one request, "If she's gone, I still want to hold her."



The nurse escorted us down the elevator where a dimly lit room and an ultrasound technician waited. Again I laid down on the bed and grasped tightly to Travis's hand as she moved the equipment around my stomach.

A gray form filled the screen.

It was still. Too still. No beating area to indicate a pulsating heart.

The silence was thick as the doctors studied the screen. They asked me when the last time I thought I felt movement. I wasn't sure - maybe Sunday. They looked at each other, at us, and finally voiced the words I dreaded, "I'm sorry."

They left the room to give us a moment of privacy. The door hadn't even shut before Travis and I were in each other's arms and sobbing. I'll never forget the disbelief that filled my heart and the questions that surfaced. Why God? Why my baby? Couldn't You have done something?

Our doctor came back in and explained what he knew. There was no fluid around Katie's body, indicating that she had died a few days ago. They couldn't tell if anything else was amiss, but after she was born we could make decisions about whether we wanted tests done or not. Then he explained our immediate options. We could go home and wait for the natural start of labor or he could induce me. The choice was ours.

I felt so numb. I didn't want to do either. I knew that once our baby was born, she would be gone. At least with her still in my womb I had her close to me. Suddenly, the impatience for those last weeks of pregnancy to be over was replaced with the wish to go back in time.

I knew I couldn't go home, not with the crib waiting for a tiny infant to hold, not with the baby swing and bouncer sitting in the corner and the car seat already in the van. But neither did I want to go through labor. How unfair for my body to spend agonizing hours bringing a lifeless baby into the world. She would never see the sunshine streaming through the windows or feel my arms cradling her close.

But those were my only choices and suddenly I wanted to be done. I wanted the inevitable to be over. We went back up to the OB department and I was given an IV and the medication to start my labor. As we waited, my earlier prayer and thoughts came back to me.

Travis had reminded me that God was in complete control, that the plans He had for our little Katie, before time began, were now unfolding. Deep in my heart I knew He had a perfect plan, one I could have never hoped to make better with my wish for Katie to be alive.

And who was I to question God's will? Am I the one who created the universe or calls the stars by name (Ps. 147:4)? God has already purposed every event to bring forth His will. How could I think my desires could be better than His?



The labor pains began quickly and a brief two and a half hours later my body was ready to give birth. For just a moment, as I gave that final cry and push, I thought perhaps they had been wrong. Maybe she was alive after all and I would hear that tiny mew my heart ached for. One tiny cry was all it would take to tell me I was dreaming. But it never came. Only the doctor's three small words, "it's a girl".

My little Katie Marie.

Oh, how my arms ached to hold her. I wanted to be handed my baby girl, wiggly and pink, but instead they gave me her little gray body, limp and still. Tears filled my eyes and rolled down my cheeks as I looked at her. She was so beautiful.

Dark hair covered her head and just the weight of her in my arms was a precious gift. Her skin was soft to the touch and her fingers were so tiny they didn't even fit around my thumb.

I'll never regret the decision to hold her. Even after her body began to turn cold I held her and memorize the features of her tiny face. Her eyes were closed but I wondered what color they would have been. Her mouth was still but I replayed the

vision of seeing it open in a faint cry that told me she needed me. Her hands were folded across her chest but I could see them waving in the air.

Once again questions assailed me. Why our little girl? What possible reason could God have for taking her only four days before she was due? But even as these questions tumbled around in my mind, I knew the answers. I had always known. God had decided it was best. It was for our good and His glory. (Rom. 8:28)

And as much as I knew this, I also knew that He would not leave me. Hebrews 13:5 reminds me that God says, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' God was not being hateful, and He was not punishing me. He was simply exercising control as only He can do. I may not understand why but I could rest assured that God was with me. He knew what I was feeling and He'd already given me everything I needed to get through it. His word held the promise that He has always been and will always be the One and Only God whose faithfulness and mercies are new every morning.



Our Pastor and his wife came to see us shortly after the delivery, giving words of comfort, encouragement, and a shoulder to cry on. It helped Travis and I to talk to someone and have help make funeral arrangements. We'd never had to make those decisions - and in light of all we'd been through in the last few hours, we were overwhelmed with the whole process.

The funeral director came a few hours later to ask a few questions about the burial and to take Katie's body a half hour away where they would perform the autopsy. I remember the nurse wheeling her in for the last chance we had to hold her before they took her away. How I cherished those few precious moments. I looked at her tiny toes once more, stroked her soft cheeks, and kissed her wrinkled brow. I memorized the feeling of her in my arms and the way her tiny body fit so perfectly against me.



The night was long.

Both Travis and I were exhausted by the physical and emotional stress we'd been through that day, yet sleep was slow in claiming us. It wasn't until about six o'clock the next morning that reality struck once again as a woman in the next room woke us with her cries during delivery.

The nurses had warned us that a couple in the next room was in labor. They'd offered to move us to another room, but a part of me wanted to stay. I lay awake in the dark listening to this mother go through the pains of labor I had recently experienced. I waited with baited breath for the first little cry. It wasn't long in coming.

The lusty wail of a healthy newborn filled the silence as my tears fell. Did this mother realize the precious gift she had just been given? Did she know how fragile life was and truly appreciate the fact that she had a baby to hold? Again the questions came. Why did she get a baby and ours was born lifeless? Why were my arms empty and hers full of a wiggling newborn?

I hugged my pillow and repeated the words in my head, 'His grace is sufficient for me'.



We decided to have a private burial with our immediate families before the memorial service. It gave us the privacy to mourn the loss of our daughter and to answer Cody and Wyatt's questions.

We looked at the incredibly small white casket covered in pink roses. Tears washed down my face as God washed comfort over my heart. It would be okay - God was in control.

It would be okay.



It's been just over nine months now as I write this. I don't think there's been a day I haven't thought of our sweet little girl and the pain of losing her. But along with that pain comes unbelievable joy.

I know our little girl is happier and safer than she could have ever been had my wish for her to live been realized. Now she is in heaven. By God's grace she will spend eternity with Him. A place where there is no sickness, no tears, and no sin.

She has been perfected through Christ and is happier than I can imagine.

For whatever reason God saw fit to have Katie leave this earthly life for an eternal paradise, I know that 'The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all his works.' (Psalm 145:17) I have given Him my grief and He has replaced it with the joy of knowing that He cares for Katie as the Father He is.

He is my strength and my refuge.



The following verses have comforted our family after the loss of Katie and have constantly reminded us that God is sufficient. I hope they'll comfort your heart as well as remind you of the sovereignty of God.

All verses NKJV

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Romans 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Psalms 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Psalms 86:15 But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

Psalms 94:19 In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

Psalms 18:30 As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

Proverbs 30:5 Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

Psalms 18:2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalms 46:1 . . . God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

Psalms 145:18 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

Psalm 18:28 For You will light my lamp; The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Psalm 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Romans 5:1-5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Psalm 62:7-8 In God is my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, And my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah

Isaiah 26:3-4 You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, For in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

Job 1:21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

1 Thessalonians 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Psalm 145:17 The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works.

1 Peter 5:7 . . .casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Psalms 32:10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him.

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Isaiah 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.

Job 42:2 I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.