

Comfort, Hope, and Peace

in the midst of pregnancy loss



A
ThingsEternal
Publication

Dedicated to the Washington and Wood families,
and to our beloved daughter Gabriella Joy



in the midst of pregnancy loss

Comfort, Hope, and Peace

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 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. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

This booklet contains our personal story about our daughter and the immeasurable grace and comfort we received from God in the midst of great pain and sadness. We have also included material from other authors and the Bible itself. We pray that this booklet will provide you with comfort, hope, and peace concerning your pregnancy loss.

Mikael and Kimberly Davis

ThingsEternal Life Strategies

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A Mother's Journal

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Comfort, Hope, and Peace

by Kimberly Davis

Although my daughter will never read my letters, writing them was a great comfort to me. It allowed me to record my feelings at the time of her death. Years later, they still remind me of God's faithful care over us in the midst of our loss.



December 30, 2000

My beloved daughter Gabriella—

"I will bless the Lord at all times, His praises shall continually be in my mouth!"

Gabriella, you are the greatest blessing that your Daddy and I have ever known. We are so grateful for the 18 weeks that God gave us to share with you, and are comforted by the knowledge that your absence from the body means that you are in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have so many things to share: the excitement of

the days I carried you, the beautiful way God drew from your Mommy and Daddy to fearfully and wonderfully shape your features, and the awesome impact you have had on our lives in just a few days

since your birth and passing. The Lord has given us a powerful testimony, which we will record for our own comfort and growth and for the sake of those with whom we are called to share it.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

Psalm 116:15

Daddy and I wanted to be able to trust God FULLY, and to walk in the knowledge that my womb is already in His hands. So on August 27, 2000, we knelt in prayer and Daddy asked the Lord to open and close my womb as He saw fit, and told Him that we would

Is my baby in Heaven?

by Grace to You

Do babies and others incapable of professing faith in Christ automatically go to heaven?

People often wonder about the eternal destiny of the unborn, babies, and those unable to intellectually understand the gospel. That question is a difficult one. Unfortunately, the Bible offers us no explicit answer. However, based on several passages, as well as an understanding of God's character and His dealings with men, we can develop a good idea of how He works in such situations.



Second Samuel 12:23 is one of the passages often quoted to imply that babies go to heaven. Though the verse doesn't explicitly say that, David clearly does expect to one day be reunited with his departed child. Since we know David is a believer whose destiny was heaven, we can infer that his hope of reunion means he expected his child to be in heaven. Thus, 2 Samuel 12:23 suggests strong evidence for a heavenly destiny of the unborn and children who die young.

If this were all we had to support our position, it would be admittedly less than stalwart. However, there are

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surrender this aspect of our lives to Him.

On September 26, a few days after our church marriage retreat, we took a home test, which

immediately showed that we were pregnant. The test said one minute would be required: we saw your pink line in about 5 seconds! We were both excited and shocked, and we scheduled

an appointment to confirm our test. That night I met your grandmommy for dinner and told her. She was so excited to learn of her first grandchild!

Two days later, the nurse (Nory from Drs. Anderson & Bruchalski's office) gave us the wonderful news. Daddy and I were both at work, and after we ended the conference call with Nory

Is my baby in Heaven? *(Continued from page 7)*

other evidences that point us to the same conclusion. First, the Bible clearly teaches that God cares deeply for children. Passages like Matthew 18:1-6 and 19:13-15 affirm the Lord's love for them. Those verses don't state that children go to heaven, but they do show God's heart toward children. He created and cares for children, and beyond that, He always accomplishes His perfect will in every circumstance.

The psalmist reminds us that God is "full of compassion and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth" (Ps. 86:15). He is the God who became flesh that He might carry our sins away by His death on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21). He is the God who will comfort Christians in heaven, for "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death; nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain" (Rev. 21:4). We can be assured that God will do

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he prayed for us, thanking God for the blessing of our first child.

In the coming days, we began sharing the news with our family and closest friends, and we prayed for your health and well-being. Gabriella, we were all so excited about preparing for you and getting to know you!

The most exciting doctor visit was at 12 weeks when we heard your heartbeat for the first time. Afterwards, we went on a dinner date and looked at other children in the restaurant, growing more and more excited about our own precious child.

During this time, Psalm 139 became very special to me:

*For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You,
for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*

*Your eyes saw my substance,
being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them. (v13-16)*

The 16th week brought what I had awaited all along: I felt you move inside me! I can't explain the feeling: so intimate and comforting... I was able to bond with you even more. I wished I could share it with your father, but he would not have been able to feel you for another month or so.

On Christmas evening, you moved more than ever before. I held my tummy and enjoyed the feeling of my precious first child. I thank God for the blessing of your movements inside me: I hold those memories closest to my heart whenever I think of you.

How could I have known that just 12 hours after I felt you move inside me on Christmas Day, our world would begin to change? I'm certain I'll always remember the details of your last days: my night of discomfort and pain, finding evidence that something was

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very wrong, the paramedics and ambulance ride... I'd rather not write those right now. Instead, let me share with you the abundant blessings that the Lord has been giving us in these darkest hours of our life.

In the hospital, as you moved quick and strong in your sonogram appearances, and as we prayed fervently and tried everything medically possible to save your life, we began to call you our Miracle Baby. And Gabriella, you are indeed our Miracle Baby. Your entire life on this earth was within my womb, and you have already changed our lives in so many ways.

Daddy and I grew closer than ever during your last days. We were already so much in love, but praying and weeping and standing up for our child really cemented our marriage. The Lord used

you, Gabriella, to knit your parents' hearts together in a whole new way.

You know, the whole time we were in the hospital, I never really occurred to us that you wouldn't be here with us. Daddy and I considered you in every decision we made. We began even before we were pregnant, and once we learned that you were on the way, we did absolutely everything in anticipation of you: changing our budget, learning about your growth,

thinking about your education and family vacations, imagining your little toddler body walking thorough the house... everything.

Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed,

Because His compassions fail not.

They are new every morning;

Great is your faithfulness,

"The Lord is my portion," says my soul,

"Therefore I hope in Him!"

Lamentations 3: 22 - 24

Is my baby in Heaven? *(Continued from page 8)*

what is right and loving because He is the standard of rightness and love. These considerations alone seem to be evidence enough of God's particular, electing love shown to the unborn and those who die young.

However, another point may be helpful in answering this question. While infants and children have neither sensed their personal sin and need for salvation nor placed their faith in Christ, Scripture teaches that condemnation is based on the clear rejection of God's revelation-whether general or specific-not simple ignorance of it (Luke 10:16; John 12:48; 1 Thess. 4:8). Can we definitely say that the unborn and young children have comprehended the truth displayed by God's general revelation that renders them "without excuse" (Rom. 1:18-20)? They will be judged according to the light they received. Scripture is clear that children and the unborn have original sin-including both the propensity to sin as well as the inherent guilt of original sin. But could it be that somehow Christ's atonement did pay for the guilt for these helpless ones throughout all time? Yes, and therefore it is a credible assumption that a child who dies at an age too young to have made a conscious, willful rejection of Jesus Christ will be taken to be with the Lord.

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I sometimes wonder why God allowed this to happen. Did we not pray enough? Why could you not have lived a few more weeks within me so you could have a chance to live outside of

me? And though you've shown us how your brothers or sisters can be able to live, I wonder: can we really do this again? Could I bear 9 months of wondering whether our

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next child will live? I still have very emotional moments as I face the reality of my empty womb and the fact that we will never enjoy the life with you that we've anticipated for so long.

But in those moments, I remember the Lord: "I will never leave you nor forsake you." "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." "Cast your cares upon the Lord and he will sustain you, He will never let the righteous fall.." and as one of our favorite national pastors, Dr. Charles Stanley, preaches: we are not to ask *why* adversity has happened or *who* is responsible, but rather we are to ask, *how* should I react to this situation? So your father and I are trying to soak up whatever God wants to show us through your life.

January 4, 2001

Gabriella, there have been many blessings in the 18 weeks you were with us and in this first week thereafter. You inspire us to love and serve each other better, and to walk in total obedience to God.

In the hospital, Dr. Marie Anderson came on a moment's notice to help us save you, and most of all to ensure that God would be first to act and that we would not be pressured into moving ahead of Him. She understood that we would accept whatever God allowed to happen, but under no circumstances would we stop trying while there remained the slightest hope. She prayed with us and stayed until her partner arrived. Dr. Bruchalski spoke to you when you were born and prayed for you, for Daddy and I, and that God would help him finish the delivery without complication. I thank God for our doctors and nurses who He used to make our time with you as comfortable and peaceful as possible.

Though I had very little physical pain, the delivery was so hard for me. I had carried you for so long and then had to let you go. I am thankful though that in His sovereignty, God allowed your eternal spirit to enter into fellowship right at His side. There is some comfort in knowing that you will

never shed a tear of pain on this earth. Your Daddy and I would have loved you and with everything in us, and yet you are right now receiving the best care — far better than anything we could offer you here. Daughter, I look forward to meeting you when we enter eternity!

Love, Mommy

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned

for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Revelation 21:1-5✠

As we work on this booklet, there are many pregnancy situations around us. One of my closest friends has just given birth to a beautiful, healthy baby girl. Another is in the middle of a high-risk pregnancy following an previous miscarriage. Two others have just experienced pregnancy losses. I am planning a baby shower for one of several friends eagerly anticipating healthy births.

Undeniably, the Lord is at work in each of these situations. The husbands and wives that have relationships with Jesus Christ are able to experience the fullest joy in life and the greatest peace in death. Through it all, the Lord is in control, and each of these situations is very precious to Him. No matter how early or how late a pregnancy loss occurs, it brings sadness, and God loves those grieving parents.

Most of us will receive medical explanations, but few will receive an answer to the deeper question, "Why did this happen?" I encourage you instead to consider the question that can be answered: "How does the Lord want me to respond?" His Word tells us that He wants you to grow closer to Him, either by becoming a believer or by growing in your faith if you are already a believer. You may be tempted to reject Him or to blame Him for your loss. Instead, He wants you to experience the fullness of His love and the peace that only He can offer you.

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:6-7

May He keep you and sustain you during your time of grief.✠





A Message of Hope

in the midst of pregnancy loss

Comfort, Hope, and Peace

Testimonies from Mothers Who Miscarried

by Emily Smith

Nothing is worse for a mother than the pain of losing a child. If you've experienced a miscarriage, you know this is true even though you were never given the opportunity to get to know the precious life inside you. Yet, while your grief will never fully fade, God promises the pain you feel now is not the end of the story. He says in 1 Corinthians 13:12 that you see His plan only as a poor reflection in a mirror, but one day you will understand fully. And even without all the answers, God invites you to live in the hope of His love and faithfulness to you.

Following are testimonies from two women who have experienced miscarriages and have learned to rest in this hope clearly seen in I Thessalonians 4:16-18, which says that one day *"the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet*

the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words" (New International Version).

"We named our baby Joy..."

Wendy and Erik were excitedly expecting their first child. Then, just seven weeks into the pregnancy, Wendy miscarried. The couple relied on their long-standing faith in God to help them through the loss:

I knew what was happening. I experienced heavy blood flow for a week, but held out hope until the doctor said we had definitely lost the baby. It wasn't real until then. I cried a lot that day. Erik was quiet. He comforted me by saying, "Well, we'll just keep trying." But I was so sad and disappointed. I've been a committed Christian since I was 10 years old, and I knew God was in control, but I still couldn't understand why this child died.

I felt uncomfortable because I was completely out of

If God Is Good, Why Is There So Much Suffering in the World?

by Bob and Gretchen Passantino, ©Copyright 1997

Each of us has watched a loved one die, been the victim of a crime, lived among the poverty-stricken, or in some way been confronted with the reality of suffering. Human history sometimes seems like one long chronicle of suffering and despair. In the midst of suffering we cry out,

Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of the soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure. . . . For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like water. What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil. [Job 3:20-21, 24-26]

Why is there suffering? Why are the innocent victimized? Is there purpose in pain? Is there any escape? For the Christian, who believes that God is all-good and all-powerful, answers to these questions are especially important.

Skeptics frequently challenge Christians with the problem of a good God allowing suffering. Usually their argument says, "If God is all-powerful, he could prevent or eliminate suffering. If God is all-good, he would not want his creation to suffer. Since you say God is both, suffering should not exist. In fact, however, we see suffering all around us and experience it ourselves. Therefore, God doesn't exist, or he's not all-powerful, or he's not all-good."

First, we need to distinguish between philosophical and personal
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control of the situation. The doctor said the baby had probably died of a defective sperm or egg weeks before we knew something was wrong, which meant there was nothing I could have done to save my child. Only God could have done something, and He didn't.

This made me a little mad. But I had to remember that death is a consequence of sin. The evil, sad, hurtful things of this world happen because the sin of mankind opened a door. God wasn't punishing us for anything we did—we were just seeing the effects of sin,
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and the heartbreak God goes through every day as those effects hit his children.

We don't have a grave to remember our child by, but we did receive flowers from people, which helped validate our loss. I took pictures of the flowers and kept the precious cards people sent, and these things substantiate our experience, giving us something to look back on and remember. We also decided to name our child, so that down the road we wouldn't just say, "the baby." We named her as a girl, Joy. Erik said naming the baby is what finally made her life a reality for him.

Now I'm pregnant again, and am about 3 1/2 months along. But I have a new perspective on this baby. God has taught me a very important lesson: our children never really do belong to us. The child we lost was His. He creates and forms our children. He is forming this child inside of me, and my job is to help shape and mold this person to hunger and thirst after

God. That's it. That's my main job.

I know that through grief and sorrow, God turns bad into good. He turns sorrow into joy if we let Him. My whole goal in life is to hear His voice and to know Him. This experience has drawn me closer to Him. I've felt His comforting presence, and know He's there even when I sometimes don't feel him. I could have chosen to be mad and not listen to the Lord, but He is bigger than this loss. My ultimate trust in God—knowing He is truly in control—gives me comfort. And now I have a child waiting for me in heaven. I can't wait to meet her!

Finding Comfort

Cynthia and Devin are both medical professionals. Still, their understanding of the human body couldn't fully shield them from the pain of experiencing three miscarriages. Only a firm belief in God's goodness and loving control could provide the comfort they sought:

With each one, when it was happening I thought, "I'll

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Why Is There So Much Suffering (Continued from page 15)

engagement with suffering. When someone is in the midst of anguish, all the logic and truth in the world is incomplete without a demonstration of compassionate love. Answers are not merely conclusions of mental exercises, they should have consequences in our lives.

Second, we need to consider the consequences of accepting the skeptic's alternatives: Suffering proves that God does not exist, or He is not all-powerful, or He is not all-good. If God does not exist, then all of existence, including our suffering, has no enduring value, purpose, or goal. If God is not all-powerful, then we have no hope that suffering will ever be eliminated. If God is not all-good, then to pain and despair we must add the threat of immanent divine sadism. Each of these alternatives is at least as problematic as the Christian alternative, so the skeptic has merely exchanged one answer he doesn't like for others equally unpleasant. The skeptic has not solved the problem of suffering merely by refusing to solve it. We should judge answers by truth, not emotion.

Third, we need to understand that many problems with theology come from problems with personal world views and values. For example, the pleasure of helping someone who is needy has absolutely no value to the person to whom self-indulgence is the highest good. Many people struggle with the problem of God and suffering because they reject a Christian world view. Avoiding suffering has become preferable to learning patience; immediate gratification means more than self-discipline; self-gratification is more important than sharing; and physical pleasure is superior to spiritual joy.

Fourth, the skeptic assumes parts of the Christian world view in order to indict the Christian God, but he is unwilling to acknowledge the other parts of the Christian world view that answer his indictments. He assumes a standard of "good" that is absolute and eternal (and, therefore, cannot have its source in changing, finite humans), but denies the existence of the absolute and eternal.

In a non-theistic world where values are social conventions, survival mechanisms, majority opinions, or assertions of the

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always remember this date.” But while I don’t remember the exact dates, I do remember the emotions.

The first miscarriage happened in 1993, when Devin and I had been married two years and were ready to start a family. I got pregnant quickly. We were so excited we told everyone we were expecting. We didn’t know any better.

I lost the first baby after about seven weeks. I was more upset than Devin because it was so early the pregnancy didn’t seem as real to him. But he was very understanding and took me on a getaway trip. I was kind of embarrassed. When you’ve told people you’re pregnant, it’s hard to have to say later that you’re not anymore. I learned to wait much longer with my later pregnancies before making any announcements!

Soon after the miscarriage I got pregnant again, and we had a son. Then, in 1997, I

miscarried for a second time. My husband and I “flip-flopped” in our response. Devin took it much harder than I did because now he knew what he was missing, and he’d really been looking forward to having another child. But again, I got pregnant soon after the miscarriage, and God blessed us with another son.

We weren’t even trying to have a third child when I got pregnant in 1999. Since it was a surprise, I immediately thought, “This must be God’s plan. He must



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want us to have three children." But it wasn't to be. I went about 12 weeks before miscarrying and it was more difficult than the other two, both physically and emotionally. It was disturbing to me because we hadn't even planned to get pregnant, and then God allowed another miscarriage.

But as with my other losses, I tried to fall back on my experience as a nurse and remember that miscarriage is a natural biological response. It's easy to think, "Did I do something to cause this?" But usually there's nothing anyone can do. Most importantly, I had to remember that all things happen according to God's will. I often think when I hear couples talking about their family plans—how many kids

they want, how far apart they want to space them—they need to remember it's not our choice. We have to simply wait on God.

I love Jeremiah 1:5, which says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." It comforts me to know God has always known the children I lost. Even though the world didn't consider them "viable," God gave them souls from the very beginning. I look forward to the day when I get to heaven, because then I'll have five children, not two.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled" (John 14:27).

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Why Is There So Much Suffering (Continued from page 17)

most powerful, there can be no absolute, eternal values. "Good" as a social convention is merely what a society declares to be good; in one society it might be eating one's enemies, in another it may be loving one's enemies. "Good" as a survival mechanism could include killing off imperfect, non-productive members of the species, such as those with less than average intelligence or poor eyesight, or restricting reproduction to the physical and mental elite; etc. If the skeptic wants to borrow the Christian definition of values as absolute and eternal, then he can't reject the Christian explanation of suffering which is

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Our Story: Losing a child at 35 weeks in the womb

in the midst of pregnancy loss

by Lee Walti

2 Cor 12:7-10 reminds us that Paul when in his affliction was told by the Lord ...

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Brothers and sisters, as our suffering is for Christ's sake so is our contentment. I truly believe that no other attribute of a Christian so sings the Gospel than that of contentment. And, in like kind, I'm convinced that no other aspect of our lives so dampens the Gospel's fire like moaning and groaning and complaining about our plight.

Thomas Watson, the great puritan, once said, "It is our work to cast away care; and it is God's work to take care. By our immoderacy, we take His work out of His hand.

Care, when it is eccentric, either distrustful or distracting, is very dishonorable to God; it takes away His providence, as if He sat in heaven and minded not what became of things here below; like a man that makes a clock, and then leaves it to go for itself."

What are our trials and suffering for if not to help bring about the oil of His Spirit burning bright in our lives as we turn away from our flesh to the strength of His grace. God give us trials, I say ... give us suffering. Dennis Rainey once said to me, "One of the biggest problems with America is that we're not persecuted." I agree. We think we know what suffering is but most of us have yet to resist to the point of shedding blood.

Oswald Chambers says in his book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, "We know nothing about Gethsemane and Calvary in personal experience. Gethsemane and Calvary stand for something unique; they are the gateway into Life for us."

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Christ is the perfect model of suffering for He went to the cross and shed His blood for us that we might be reconciled to Him. In 1 Pet, chapter 2, verse 21-25 says ...

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no

threats, but kept entrusting {Himself} to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

My wife and I have just walked through the most difficult time of our lives to date.

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Dear Loved Ones,

June 20, 2001

Hope you all are doing well. We wanted to let you know the latest on our little Gabriella Joy. After our last letter, things went from bad to worse in human eyes. We are thanking the Lord though, that His eyes see fully all the future holds. We were expecting either Spina Bifida or Down's Syndrome. After a Level II ultrasound, Spina Bifida was confirmed but so was severe heart defects, fluid on the brain and what seems miniscule in comparison to these other things, club feet. We opted for an amniocentesis knowing that we would be able to take advantage of some exciting in-utero surgeries that are available if the baby was not damage chromosomally. However, 10 days later, we found out that little Gabriella has Trisomy 18 which is much worse than Downs and as the doctors put it, is not compatible with life. 95% of Trisomy 18 babies die before 1 year of life. Because of all the other problems, Gabriella is expected to die in a few short weeks in the womb. We tell you this to bring glory to God. He knows all things, sees all things and creates all things. We are sad and burdened and yet sense His peace as we wait to see how our great Lord will complete this life. We are so grateful for all your prayers and have never experienced such a presence of the Lord. Please know that we know that He is the giver and taker of life. We love you...and trust that our Lord is blessing you in His chosen way. In Him, Lee, Jeannette, Bethany, Hannah, Jacob & Elijah





Our Story (Continued from page 21)

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My wife said to me recently if you'd told her a year ago that she would give birth to a child that was dead, she'd have told you there was no way she could have done it. We know it's only by His Truth and His Spirit we have been sustained. What has given us our strength, our courage, our peace, our comfort, our contentment and yes, even joy through the death of our child, Gabriella Joy, is our Lord Jesus Christ. And we believe what we've been going through is

nothing compared to what Christ went through for us.

Our greatest prayer during this time is that God would be glorified in and through us. That He would be lifted up. John Piper once said, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." He also said, "Knowing God more than we know anything else and enjoying God more than we enjoy anything else is the path to displaying God's glory in the world."

For Jeannette, being a mom who had carried our Gabriella Joy for 36 weeks, it was very hard, and understandably so, to accept that this little baby that she had been carrying for all this time, giving life to and looking forward to was now being taken away. There is no doubt in my mind that it was much more challenging for her to accept that this was God's will *and* that it was not necessarily His punishment of her for some sin or wrongdoing or a result of neglect on her part (for not taking her vitamins, etc). However, a number of months after finding out about Gabriella's severe problems, Jeannette was still struggling and having trouble finding joy in the midst of this time. Jeannette says that the turning point for her came when I challenged her and said, "It's time sweetie. You've had several months to grieve... It's now time to begin trusting God and know that He's sovereign in this situation. Though I know it's hard for you to hear this, no amount of self-focus or self-pity is going to change your circumstances and make you feel better. It will only be as you decide to trust in God's sovereignty and His goodness...that He has a plan in mind for us and that that plan is for our good and His glory...that we will see what God will do and I'm expecting God to do something awesome that will blow us away!" Jeannette says I was compassionate during that time...that I was not unmerciful. But instead that it was God's perfect timing for me to show her a sort of tough love that called her to be obedient and to trust God for what He would do as we obeyed Him in faith.

We like to believe that Gabriella Joy is in heaven. But we, our family, are still here on this earth. We have had and still have an incredible opportunity ... to glorify God with all our hearts, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, through this difficult time. That others might see Him and be drawn to Him as a result of our response to His providential hand in our lives. We knew, from the very beginning, that this was the greatest way we would glorify God in this time.

Charles Spurgeon said, "Suppose that by some painful operation, you could have your right arm made a little longer, I do not suppose you would care to undergo the operation; but if you foresaw that, by undergoing the pain, you would be enabled to reach and save drowning men who else would sink before your eyes, I think you would willingly bear the agony, and pay a heavy fee to the surgeon to be thus qualified for the rescue of your fellows."

We hope, we pray, that our arms have been made a little longer and that by undergoing the pain of this operation, we have been enabled,

to a greater degree, to help reach and save drowning men and women who are sinking before our very eyes.

And if any of you wonder where we've been taught such things...where we've been given such perspective... where we've learned to trust in a sovereign God who causes and allows all things to happen and will not cause or allow anything to happen that is not for His glory and our good...it is in His wonderful and glorious Word. And it is through the love, grace and forgiveness loved ones like you have afforded us as you've seen us try and fail and repent, and then try again, but this time through faith and God's grace. It is through this grace, this love, this mercy, God has granted us through you that we've been able to have the strength, courage and faith to trust and obey God's great call to glorify Him through this time.

From all of our family to yours, thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you for being there for us. We love you dearly.✠

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From Mourning to Dancing

in the midst of pregnancy loss

By Mikael Davis

In late August 2000 Kim and I surrendered ourselves to the Lord's will regarding our family. We asked the Lord to give us children when he saw fit and that we would trust

him for however many children he chose for us. We became pregnant with our first child in September 2000. We thanked the Lord for his favor as we anticipated the birth of our child

Why Is There So Much Suffering (Continued from page 19)

consistent with such values.

If the Christian world view is considered, there are a variety of approaches to the question of God and suffering. Biblical convictions include (1) suffering does not originate with God and will be eliminated at some point; (2) God works good in the midst of suffering; (3) not all pain is suffering in the moral sense; (4) and physical, transient suffering and death are relatively inconsequential compared to spiritual, eternal suffering and death.

God is all-powerful, meaning He can accomplish anything that can be accomplished with power. He cannot use power to do "non-power" kinds of things, such as the logically impossible. He cannot make two plus two equal five, violate His unchangeable nature, make Himself go out of existence and come back into existence, and He cannot make morally responsible persons without allowing for the possibility of those persons making wrong choices. The Bible says that suffering is the consequence of the wrong choice (sin) of morally responsible persons. If God always prevented people from sinning, or always prevented the consequences of sin, then human goodness would be mere programming, not true goodness. We do not pat a computer on its head when it executes its program -- it is a determined function, not an exercise of moral responsibility. Suffering, the consequence of human sin, is not caused by God, but by the sin of persons with moral responsibility. Also, God has not abandoned the world to eternally suffer the consequences of sin. He sent His Son, Jesus

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Comfort, Hope, and Peace

with great joy.

On December 26th, Kim began to have contractions and we rushed to the hospital to try to salvage our pregnancy. On the evening of December 27th, 2000 we gave birth to Gabriella Joy Davis at 18 weeks gestation. Our baby girl took one breath and went on to be with the Lord. In the

following weeks we struggled to understand what had gone wrong and why the Lord had allowed this storm in our lives. We cried a lot, we prayed a lot, and we asked the Lord a lot of questions. It struck me that the Lord did not tell us that He would give us another child. Rather, through my study of His Word, the Lord impressed upon me to trust Him.

The Spirit of the Lord
GOD is upon Me...

To comfort all who
mourn,

To console those who
mourn in Zion,

To give them beauty for
ashes,

The oil of joy for
mourning,

The garment of praise
for the spirit of heaviness;

That they may be called
trees of righteousness,

The planting of the
LORD, that He may be
glorified." **Isaiah 61:1,2c,3**

Throughout the following year we hoped to conceive again and after several months we began to grow increasingly frustrated.

Finally, in November 2001, we decided that rather than being impatient, we would trust the Lord for whatever His will was for our lives, and we went before the Lord again and surrendered our desires to Him . If the Lord saw fit to give us a child, we would praise Him, but if He saw fit to never give us another child, we would praise Him anyway.

On December 26th 2001, we found out that Kim was expecting and we cried tears of joy because the Lord had heard our prayers and allowed us to conceive again.

I had already painted the

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From Mourning to Dancing

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baby's nursery and bought and assembled the baby's crib and dressers when twelve weeks into our second pregnancy we encountered several complications which tempered our excitement with concern. On our way home we both were totally silent and upon entering the house I went straight to the nursery to pray. I had praised the Lord in that room the entire time I was painting it and I planned to praise Him in that room when our child was born. I knelt on my knees and poured my heart out to the Lord. I confessed that I was afraid but that if the Lord willed for us to have this child, I would not doubt His power to bring us through the pregnancy. I read Hebrews 11 and meditated on the power of the faith of the patriarchs. I was hoping that the Lord would show me something mighty to confirm that we would have this baby, but rather

than answer the way I thought He would, the Lord continued to impress upon me that I could trust Him.

At our 20-week sonogram we were excited to find out that we were having a boy, but again concerned when told to contact our OB immediately. Dr. Bruchalski made room in his schedule for us to see him that day and ordered that Kim begin strict bed-rest. He informed us that the baby would have a decent chance if we could get to 30 weeks and that even at 28 weeks there was a lot that could be done for the baby. He told us to be thankful that we had gotten this far and then he prayed with us.

I took off from work for a month to attend to Kim and she followed the doctors orders to the letter. She remained in bed until we transported her to INOVA Fairfax Hospital where she

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." **Isaiah 64:4**

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God's Word for Your Season of Grief

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Psalm 23:4

"This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me." Psalm 119:50

"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you." Isaiah 43:2

". . . For the LORD has comforted His people And will have compassion on His afflicted." Isaiah 49:13

"So the ransomed of the LORD will return And come with joyful shouting to Zion, And everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away." Isaiah 51:11

"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

"We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5:8

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word."

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From Mourning to Dancing

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would be on bed-rest for the remainder of the pregnancy. We were half way to full term, but we knew that we could not look to 28 weeks, or 30 weeks, or 40 weeks. It would be too difficult. So we asked the Lord to give us the strength to get through the pregnancy one day at a time. And we praised Him every morning for the victory of having not gone into labor the previous day.

The Summer Cottage

On May 7th we transported Kim to INOVA. To keep her spirits up, I arranged for her to have as many visitors as possible . She had already been on bed-rest for a month at home, and by the first week of June we were both beginning to hit the wall. I was visiting her almost every day, but we couldn't really talk in the hospital because she had roommates and

there were days when I couldn't visit her in order to get the house ready for the baby. I busied myself painting the bathrooms, the hall and stairways and our living room, but the days apart began to wear on both of us. We thanked the Lord for his faithfulness to us thus far, but we also confessed to the Lord that we were getting tired. With tears in my eyes I told the Lord that I didn't

Through the Lord's mercies
we are not consumed,
Because His compassions
fail not.
They are new every
morning;
Great is your faithfulness,
"The Lord is my portion,"
says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"
Lamentations 3: 22 - 24

even know what we needed, but that we needed help. Two days later Kim got her own room and although uncomfortable, I could sleep on a little pullout chair so I could spend the night and have more time with her and Isaiah. We were so thankful for this gift from the Lord!

About this time we began to receive a tremendous amount of support from our family, friends, and church family. Meals were prepared for us each week. We received cards, visits, and

phone calls to encourage us. Family members began to fast for us, and countless prayers were offered on our behalf. The Men's Choir Director gave me a CD that I listened to for the next 8 weeks whenever I was driving and it was such a blessing. In particular there were two songs that reminded me that God was faithful, that no matter what was going on with the pregnancy, the Lord had not forgotten about

us, and most importantly that we could trust the Lord and rest upon His promises.

Mourning to Dancing

Looking back, the last two months at INOVA seemed to go by rather quickly. We celebrated each week, as our son grew closer to full-term. During the final weeks we received so much love and support and the Lord answered so many specific prayers that

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Why Is There So Much Suffering (Continued from page 24)

Christ, to provide ultimate freedom from the consequences of sin. It is wrong to indict God because suffering is not yet eliminated, just as it would be wrong to indict a doctor who treats a gunshot wound he didn't cause, simply because the wound is not healed instantly.

Our assurance that God will eliminate suffering is not the only comfort God gives us. While God did not cause suffering, he has given it purpose. It became the vehicle for our salvation when "Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Complete avoidance of suffering is not an option for any of us. Our option is to waste our experience or realize God's purposes in the midst of suffering. Through suffering we can learn patience, self-discipline, trust, and many other "virtues." When we suffer we can experience the love, compassion, and self-denial of those who help us. When we help someone who is suffering, we find significance in our own lives as well.

Not all pain is "bad" in the moral sense. God created us with nerve endings that use pain to protect us. Pain keeps us from burning our hands in a campfire, bending our legs back until

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we are just in awe of the mercy and grace that He extended towards us. On August 8th, 2002 at 2:50 pm our son was born healthy and strong. In the moment of his birth two years of expectation and complications gave way to incredible happiness. Jesus had walked with us through the tempest of our storm, carried us to safety and given us peace, all the while demonstrating His sovereignty and power.



All praises be unto God for His good and perfect gift!

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,
To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever. Psalm 30:11-12 ✠

God's Word for Your Season of Grief (Continued from page 27)

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:15-16

"Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

"And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." Revelation 21:4

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Why Is There So Much Suffering (Continued from page 29)

the joint breaks, neglecting nourishment until we starve, etc. Suffering can also be a direct, just consequence of our own actions. Our sense of justice says that it is "good" when an exploiter loses his friends, even though loneliness is "painful." It is good when a mugger is locked up, even though he "suffers" the loss of his freedom.

All humans have a moral conscience, even corrupted by sin and often ignored. Our conscience should not rejoice in sin, suffering, and death. When we see innocents suffering, we should experience moral outrage and seek to rescue the sufferer. When we see someone suffer death, we should experience loss and sorrow. Sin, suffering, and death are not the destinies for which God created us. He created us to enjoy perfect, good, loving fellowship with Him for eternity. Despite our moral betrayal, he continues to offer eternal life.

The skeptic has it partly right -- suffering should offend our sense of goodness and justice. Sadly, he misses the rest of the argument: Because suffering violates goodness and justice, there must be an all-good, all-powerful God whose remedy restores the perfection he created. This is the hope that the Christian offers in the midst of suffering:

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. [Romans 8:8]

Suffering and death in this sinful world are not without remedy. The only reasonable response to the existence of suffering is confidence in God's promises for eternity:

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. . . .
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. . . .
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [Matt. 5:3-10]

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In your time of mourning

in the midst of pregnancy loss

During our pregnancy loss, we discovered that the only source of true comfort, hope, and peace is found in Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible which contains His messages to us:

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

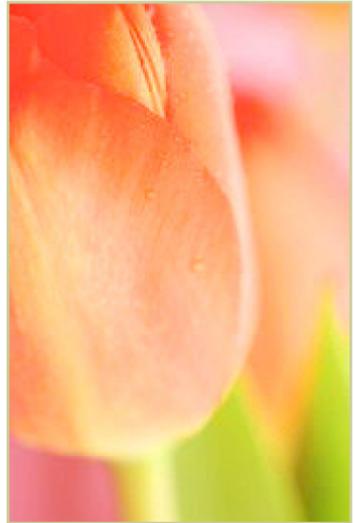
John 14:27

If you are already a follower of Jesus Christ, please rest assured that He will be your “ever present help in time of need.” God has promised to comfort you through His Holy Spirit, who lives within your heart. God is Love, and He is Truth, and therefore He will stand by His promise.

If you do not have a relationship with the Lord, we encourage you to learn about the plan of salvation found in the Bible:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died

for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Romans 5:8-11



Comfort, Hope, and Peace

The sins we commit have made us enemies of God. But God's love for you is so great, that He provided a way to satisfy His wrath against your sin.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21.

In a tremendous act of mercy, God came to earth in the form of a man. Jesus lived a perfect life, and died on the cross to pay for your sins. When you are covered with His righteousness, he makes you acceptable before God, having been adopted into His family.

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:9-10

Salvation requires sincerely acknowledging your sin before God and accepting

Jesus as the only remedy for your sinful condition. When you acknowledge Him as your Savior and as Lord over your life, you will be saved.

The joys of salvation are innumerable. Having a relationship with the Creator of the universe, and being able to call Him "Father"... the sure promise of eternal life in God's presence... deep, abiding peace in the midst of every storm of life...

We pray that the Lord will use this time of suffering to draw you closer to Himself, that He will reveal His infinite love for you, and that you will embrace the Bible as the sole source of Truth and discover all that the Lord wants to reveal to you through His Word.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20.

†



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ThingsEternal Life Strategies

www.thingseternal.com
Phone & Fax: 866.874.3829
lifestrategies@thingseternal.com

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