

Something's Wrong with Your Child

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.
Psalm 34:18 (NASB)

“Do you want a girl or a boy?”

I heard that question often when we were expecting our first child. My pat answer was, “I don’t care, so long as the baby is healthy.”

I was convinced God would honor my desire since my husband, Hiram, and I were model parents-to-be. We’d planned for this child. We attended every pre-natal appointment and practiced Lamaze. I ate right, exercised, and dreamed about the birth of our perfect new baby.

The first clue that my dream was not God’s plan came the morning after our son, Allen, was born, when the doctor sat down in a chair near the foot of my bed. (Over the next few years, I learned it’s not a good sign when a doctor sits beside a hospital bed.)

“Something’s wrong,” he told me, and with those words, my dreams evaporated. Love for the child who had grown inside me pressed heavy against my heart until it broke. Fear of what lay ahead crushed my spirit.

When the doctor told you something was wrong with your child, your life changed, too. The world you dreamed about before your baby’s birth—of diapers and breast feeding, sleep deprivation and exhausted joy—turned into a nightmare of Life Flight transport and neonatal intensive care.

Or perhaps the days you once spent chasing a healthy toddler were replaced with hours beside a hospital bed holding a still, small hand.

Or your busy soccer mom afternoons spent driving from school to lessons to practice became a dizzying blur of technicians and lab tests and painful procedures.

This new world of hospitals and doctors and medical abnormalities breaks your heart and crushes your spirit. You can’t bear to see your child because the hurt on that small face pierces your heart. But you can’t stay away because you want to comfort your child. So you stumble along, desperate for a God who will strengthen you so you can support your child. But you wonder if the God who allowed your child’s suffering cares enough to meet your needs.

Those thoughts shook my faith the day the doctor sat beside my bed. Would a loving God allow this? Does He care about our child? Are you there, God? I wondered.

Then my husband arrived, heard the news, and sensed my despair. He asked a few questions before the doctor left. When we were alone, he said, “Jolene, let’s pray.” I nodded, and he took my hand. “Thank you, Father, for giving Allen to us. He’s yours, God, not ours. You loved him before we knew him, and he belongs to you. Be with him when we can’t. Amen.”

Hiram has always been a man of few words. He struggles to speak his thoughts and often doesn’t try, knowing that I have enough words to fill any silence. But on a day when my heart was broken, my spirit crushed, and my faith gone, God gave Hiram strength to speak the words I couldn’t say. And clinging to my husband’s hand, in deep silence and through many tears, I sensed that God was very near.

Dear God, my heart is breaking for my child today.
My spirit is crushed by fear of what lies ahead. I
can't find words to pray, Father, so please pray for
me. Be near to my child and be near to me today
as your word promises.

Take Time to Reflect

How has God used people to strengthen you when your spirit was crushed? How can the Bible help you pray when you can't find words? Who could you ask to pray for you when you can't?

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