

NEWS THAT TURNS THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

The news jolted me into another world--a world of long-forgotten uncertainty and anxiety. Dormant memories emerged as ghastly specters.

The news that two sets of friends have discovered life-threatening health problems with their children rewound my mind 28 years to our daughter Jenny's birth. Suspecting nothing, we hardly raised an eyebrow when the doctor reported "complications" during delivery. Even Jenny's first seizure the next morning didn't fully alert us.

But we were soon unexpectedly plunged us into deep, uncharted waters. We weren't prepared, either for the immediate crises, or their countless companions that would arise over the ensuing 22 years. Many parents had surely faced such troubles, but they were nameless and faceless, the "someone else" to whom bad things always seem to happen.

I had shunned United Way presentations at work because they featured children with "handicaps." Someone else's problems, I thought. Those kinds of things always happen to others. For me, out of sight was out of mind.

But Jenny's' birth changed all of that. We unwillingly found ourselves thrust into an elite group, a group which expectant parents fervently pray to never join. Our child would forever be "profoundly retarded."

We empathize with anxious parents who await the outcome of medical tests and face momentous turns with every report. Power-packed words like "cancer," "leukemia" and "brain damage" explode in their minds, leaving them shell-shocked. They scabble for tiny rays of hope to guide them through the gathering darkness. Their worlds are quickly turned upside down. How, they wonder, will we ever survive?

Oftentimes, the situation may even be infinitely more difficult than they could ever image. But there is news that rights an upside-down world. The grace of God is sufficient for every trial. We can identify. We have been there. Life does go on.

Our friends in crisis have a marvelous benefit: an army of other friends and family. They are surrounded by those who will rejoice when they rejoice--and will weep when they must weep.

Hurting people don't need sermons. They need encouragement, support and hope. Still, I'm reminded that Charles Spurgeon said, "The Lord gets His best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction." And though He equips His soldiers for the battles they face, having someone stand along side is immeasurably beneficial.

Though we bore many of our burdens alone, I gratefully recall some fellow warriors from those early days when life was so hard. Seventy-year-old Mary Taylor. Neighbor Martha Rodgers. Margaret and Don Moseley. Dot and Harold Walden. Linda, Kelly, and Kim Hammett. These saints reinforced us when we were battle-weary. They are enshrined in our hall of fame.

If you would like to leave a lasting influence, draw along side those who are struggling. Babysit. Go to the store. Run errands. Write a note. Cook a meal. It's often easier to endure the thunderclaps of crisis than the day-by-day grind that slowly saps emotions and strength.

God blesses those who care enough to join the fight.