

Flip-Flop Miracles

by Maria Spencer



When you think of the word ‘miracle’ what comes to mind? Multiplying fish and bread? Turning water into wine? Most people think of the big miracles that Jesus performed that were awe-inspiring and continually increase our faith. While the majority of us witness many little miracles daily, most of us are unaware that they are occurring before our eyes. Because my daughter, Olivia, is a person with hemiplegic cerebral palsy, I have had the honor to witness miracles that are usually unnoticed.

When she was three months old, on the day she was traditionally baptized, she developed a fever, and we ended the day in the emergency room. We thought she would be diagnosed with some sort of infection, we would get an antibiotic and we would go home. As we waited in the emergency room, she stopped breathing. With an urgent call for the trauma team, and a sound I will never forget ringing out throughout the entire hospital, a nurse literally grabbed Olivia from my arms and ran her to the trauma room. During the minutes that followed, my husband and I felt like we were in the middle of a horrible nightmare. What was going on? We just came for an antibiotic—we wanted to go home! During those minutes, which felt like hours, I don’t even think I prayed. Up until that moment, I had no frame of reference to even try to call upon the Lord for help. Once they got her stabilized we could see her—the tiny, eleven pound baby girl that began her day in a beautiful, white, baptismal gown was now on a ventilator with multiple wires and many pieces of medical equipment connected to her.

She is eleven years old now, and wears a brace on her left leg to support her balance, and has some motor limitations in her left arm and hand. Even though her body restricts some of the things she would like to do, she keeps on keeping on.

For most of us, the task of walking in a pair of flip-flops is a subconscious, automatic ability. Well, for my Olivia, it was a learned skill that took a few weeks, and since she is used to always wearing tennis shoes with her brace, it was a huge accomplishment for her. So, for weeks last summer, I allowed her to wear them in the house only, just so she would take her time and not fall. Even though she was insistent on trying them, I was hesitant because her therapist voiced how awful they

are for her feet, and suggested it was not a good idea. But because she wants to be just like her friends, she wanted to learn. So how could I deny her the right to be like everyone else?

Shortly after she learned to keep them on her feet, we had to run to the grocery store for just a couple of items—and she proceeded to the door in her flip - flops—and for once, I did not object. When she realized I was going to allow her to wear them out of the house, she was elated and thanked me the entire way to the store! The simplest thing that we take for granted all summer long, brought her such joy.

We went to the store, and she took her time, proudly looking down at her feet often. And, in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the people in the store, a quiet miracle of our own was occurring. I started to cry a soft, grateful, joy-filled cry, right there in the middle of the store. My heart was full as I watched her accomplish this big task.

Parents of special needs children have the privilege of celebrating God's strength through each new skill our children accomplish; skills that are truly miracles. John 9:1 states it so eloquently: "His disciples asked, Jesus, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the power of God may be displayed in his life."

Each and every time a miracle takes place in Olivia's life, she shows everyone around her that God is alive and is displaying who He is through many moments we take for granted. I have learned to recognize each and every miracle He performs in her life, and I give Him all the glory!