

Rebel to Reverence

Jesse's Story

By Jennifer Marshall



Difficulties help us to understand that the unexpected is not unknown to God. In that moment of understanding, peace comes. Not with piety or fanfare but like a close friend at midnight, sitting quietly, waiting for the outcome of uncertain circumstances.

My oldest son Jesse, at 15 had become hell on wheels. He listened to the most hardcore metal music, got around town on a skateboard and rebellion replaced the sweet boy I had known. Since his father and I had divorced a few years earlier, an awkward distance had come between us. I counted it to him becoming a teenager and the struggles he must be facing with alliances to me and his father. We had different ideas about parenting that left us at odds and often Jesse in the middle, choosing.

Then, on a bright, cool February afternoon, a tiny malformed blood vessel in Jesse's brain gave way and exploded. He began to vomit uncontrollably. As I rushed him to the emergency room, I made calls to family and friends who were prayer warriors. Jesse told me, when he could speak that his head was killing him. Neither of us knew the accuracy of that statement and neither of us would ever be the same again.

As Jesse's life hung in the balance, I remembered that I gave my son back to god when he was only two months old at a dedication service in our church. I knew his life was not mine to hold onto. My decision to trust God in uncertain circumstances changed my perspective. Fear gave way to certainty that God new best for Jesse. I did not bargain or make promises as I had done in the past.

Throughout the first 72 hours of Jesse's induced coma, life stopped and we waited and prayed. His progress, marked in the tiny increments that monitered the pressure in his brain, continued. As we moved from

one hospital to another during the next 30 days, my dependency on God grew in new and unexpected ways. He carried me in the arms of family, friends and even strangers. When I didn't know where my next meal would come from, a card with money would arrive. When I was alone and could bear it no longer, a friend would come and sit with me.

Jesse had brain surgery two months later, on the eve of his 16th birthday. The life threatening blood vessel removed, an ugly hairless scar to show for it. During his recovery, we discovered how his short term memory had been affected. I had to tell him the story of what happened over and over again. I told him how few people survived his kind of brain injury. When I showed him the pile of cards and letters from his classmates and told him about the prayer chains for his healing, he was moved to tears each time. Every time the story was new to him and his amazement at what God had done for him began to change him.

He started to go to church with me. Those who had prayed for him, approached him with bright smiles. They were aware of the miracle he was just beginning to understand. During this time Jesse became someone different than who he had been. A polite young man, always eager to help others and diligent in his work, his energy level and recovery left me exhausted but grateful and full of wonder.

Despite his struggles with his short term memory he finished high school. Through intense retraining of the vision centers in his brain, he overcame the lack of peripheral vision to the right and achieved his drivers license. More significantly, his rebellion disappeared, replaced by a reverence for God and a thankful heart for a second chance at life.

God's grace is given to us fully, the moment we surrender to His will. Even today this lesson leads me to live and give of myself fearlessly for my Savior's sake. Now days I look for the positive in every person I meet and every event "good" or "bad" that I encounter. There is always God working a miracle in the midst of us. As I watch my young son turn into a man of God, I see that miracle shine most brightly as I watch Jesse praise God, singing, with hands held high!