

The Anguish of Evening Brings Praise in the Morning

by Kevin Haislip



My chest aches tonight.

My daughter Amy is wheelchair bound. She was born with Spina Bifida and has no feeling or muscle control from her waist down. For the first twelve years of her life, she was badly deformed. A couple years ago, she underwent a major surgery that straightened her spine, and made her posture properly erect. She is fifteen now. This past year, she had some more surgeries, one that was successful and one that was not. She is doing better, but her reality remains. She must live in that wheelchair all her life.

Any parent who has a handicapped child knows the heartbreak of watching their child watch the world run past them. We pray for them, and wish we could trade places. We hope and continually ask the Lord to heal them. But nothing happens, except that as they grow older, it begins to dawn on them their own fate. They will always be handicapped. The world will always pass them by.

Because of my daughter's major surgeries, she is beginning to 'get it'. Tonight, she cried, and my heart ached.

Amy is one of my greatest joys. My wife and I adopted her as an infant from El Salvador. A couple missionaries found her in a corner of a hospital ward where the nurses and doctors had abandoned her to die. They didn't have the resources to care for an orphaned girl. But the missionaries saw something in her eyes that beckoned them to her. Her eyes sparkle when she smiles, and her voice has a lilt to it, kind of sing songy, that when she speaks, her words sound almost angelic. She wins friends quickly, and people are naturally attracted to her because she cares, though she cannot do much for them.

Last summer, she attended a church camp and one of the leaders spoke about his anger at God and how some of his prayers go unanswered. He prays and nothing happens on some things he really needs the Lord's help on. Week after week, month after month go by. Nothing! Something in this message spoke powerfully to Amy,

and she too confessed to her friend of her anger toward God for making her the way she is. She so often gets left out of things that are natural for a child to want to do and all she can do is sit and watch the world pass her by.

Our Lord spoke powerfully to her that weekend. He showed her how suffering draws us closer to Him and how she is able to speak into people's lives because of her situation. His love and compassion turned her life around and gave her wings instead of legs. She is giddy and joyous. Amy still has a broken body, but she is fully whole in the Lord.

Amy has always been a girl who stays close to the Lord. She often goes off by herself and reads the Bible and sings or listens to music. She has a rich worship life and loves her Lord.

There are a lot of people who are whole in body, but completely broken in spirit, even many who read this right now. True wholeness comes in our lives when we believe Jesus, and receive His finished work on the cross. We may be strong and pretty or handsome, intelligent, talented. Or we may be handicapped, deformed, or even slow. But without the whole working of God in our lives, we are broken and handicapped.

Today, one of the pretty teens in her youth group made a very unkind remark to her and Amy found herself again faced with her handicaps and heart break. The world passes her by, oblivious to what treasure they have missed.

God gave my wife and me a tremendous gift in her. There is just something about her that lightens the room when she wheels into it.

A man came up to us years ago and asked us why our God does not heal her. There are no answers in the Bible that fully satisfy.

Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. James 5:13 NASB

I include the passage from James because it has often directed our attentions to the Lord when we face sorrow. Tonight, my daughter cried. And all I can do is cry with her and pray.

And trust Him to put a new song of praise to HIM in our mouths tomorrow!