

GRATEFUL FOR TEMPLE COVENANTS

By Cari Florence

How could anything alleviate my sorrow when my unborn son was dying?

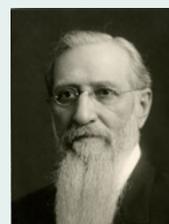
When I was just 14 weeks pregnant with our third child, doctors informed us that the baby would miscarry due to complications with his lungs. That news was devastating: I felt heartbroken, terrified, and uncertain of the future. That evening, my husband and I went to the temple with heavy hearts and eyes full of tears. We needed answers, guidance, and strength, and we knew that in the serenity of the temple we could draw close to the Lord. We were astonished at the peace we felt in the celestial room. I knew that even if this baby was not supposed to stay on earth, all would be made right.

Later, on my knees I poured out my soul to Heavenly Father. I told Him I understood that our son wasn't supposed to linger but that I desired some specific blessings, if possible. I also promised that if my desires weren't granted, I would not lose faith. I asked that this child might stay with me longer—that he might live, even just a short while, until all our family could hold him. The doctors

had said that if by some miracle our baby went full term, he would be born purple, but I prayed that he would be born pink so that our other little boys wouldn't be afraid to hold their brother. I asked the Lord to let us remember our eternal bond after the baby, whom we decided to name Brycen, was gone.

As the weeks went on, doctors professed shock at baby Brycen's progression but warned of his certain passing after birth. I felt indescribable heartache, knowing that we would lose him, yet I was also ecstatic that he was still growing. Carrying this son who would not live was a continuous burden; I felt pain whenever others asked about our baby's gender or due date and I had to pretend that everything was normal. We bought a monitor so we could check his heartbeat daily, always anxious to hear that precious sound. My grief was severe. The Savior's Atonement gained new meaning for me: I finally understood from experience that Jesus Christ not only suffered for my sins but also felt every

sadness, every pain. As my Savior, He truly carried the weight with me so I would never be alone.



COMFORT FOR PARENTS

“Joseph Smith taught the doctrine that the infant child that was laid

away in death would come up in the resurrection as a child; and, pointing to the mother of a lifeless child, he said to her: ‘You will have the joy, the pleasure, and satisfaction of nurturing this child, after its resurrection, until it reaches the full stature of its spirit.’ There is restitution, there is growth, there is development, after the resurrection from death. I love this truth. It speaks volumes of happiness, of joy and gratitude to my soul.”

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918),
*Teachings of Presidents of the Church:
Joseph F. Smith (1998)*, 132.



Brycen lived only 72 minutes, just long enough for each of us to hold and love him. It was the only time we were all together as a family on this earth, but it was everything we had dreamed.

At 37 weeks I checked into the hospital, knowing I was officially starting the time clock on Brycen’s life. It was both terrifying and beautiful. The doctors reported that he might live anywhere from 10 minutes to several days. Despite my fears, I felt the Lord’s reassurance. Brycen Cade Florence was born on January 27, 2012. I sobbed the moment he was born—pink, so handsome, so perfect.

Our boys rushed into the room to see and hold their brother; we brought a photographer to capture the moment. Brycen lived only 72 minutes, literally just long enough for each of us to hold and love him. It was the only time we were all together as a family on this earth, but it was everything we had dreamed.

The boys couldn’t get enough of their brother, kissing him, singing him songs, and begging to hold him. He even remained long enough to receive a blessing from his father, something my husband had hoped and prayed for.

As a family we have a testimony that “the divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave” and that temple ordinances and covenants allow “families to be united eternally” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129). To us, having an eternal family is *everything*. The most beautiful part of the gospel is that death will never separate us; we will continue our journeys together.

Through this trial, I have come to know that God is in the details. He cares about us individually. While trials and difficulties will come, God can make them easier to bear. I am now more grateful than ever for my temple sealing to my husband and that our children were born in the covenant. Because of God’s beautiful plan for our families, including the Savior’s infinite sacrifice, we can be together again. I often wonder how I would have withstood this difficult trial without knowing that eternal truth. I am beyond grateful for the testimony I have gained because of Brycen’s short life—God has opened my eyes and heart more fully to His blessings. ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.