



BLESSED TO BE
Sammy's Mother

By Jeanette Green

Life couldn't have been better. I was happily married, teaching high school, and now pregnant. I felt on top of the world. Halfway through my pregnancy, though, my life took a drastic turn. I was told that my baby's head wasn't growing properly—she had microcephaly, which literally means “small head.” What would this mean for my daughter's future? my family's future?

Our doctor sent us to a prenatal specialist, and I dreaded the coming appointment. My plans for an abundant life had always involved a houseful of healthy children. Before our daughter's diagnosis, I had found peace as I tried to align my plans with the Lord's, but now my plan wasn't turning out quite how I had imagined. During my pregnancy I had been excited when we heard our daughter's heartbeat, when I felt her move, when we saw her face through an ultrasound. Now we were told she might not live longer than a few minutes after birth.

Waves of Divine Strength

I was uncertain and fearful—as if the Lord had thrown me a curveball that was impossible to hit.

I prayed. I cried. I prayed and cried some more. Day after day I poured my heart out to the Lord. My problem didn't go away, but in waves I felt divine strength soften my heart and replace my sorrow with hope and optimism.

Whatever trial we were given, I somehow knew we could handle it. We would be taught and we would learn how to hit that curveball.

The Light of God's Grace

After a quick labor, on the morning of June 23, 2006, our sweet Samantha was born. Ready to sweep her away for emergency care, a team from the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) was present during the birth. Despite her small head—about half the size it should have been—our doctor said she looked healthy and beautiful. The NICU team was baffled—our doctor couldn't have been more right.

When my daughter was born with disabilities, I had to learn to rely on the Lord's strength and to trust in His plan for me.

The doctors and nurses left, and I was able to hold her close, stroke her small face, feel her long, dark hair, touch her tiny fingers, and allow myself to experience those precious first moments of her life. I didn't know how long we would have her, but for the moment she was here with us and she seemed perfect, despite her imperfection. I fell in love with our little angel.

About five hours later, a different specialist came into our room. He told us that Samantha's head was small because her brain wasn't growing. She would have a significant intellectual disability. She would never roll over, walk, or talk.





THE PEACE THAT PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING

“Trust and confidence in Christ and a ready reliance on His merits, mercy, and grace lead to hope, through His Atonement, in the Resurrection and eternal life (see Moroni 7:41). Such faith and hope invite into our lives the sweet peace of conscience for which we all yearn. The power of the Atonement . . . strengthens us to see, do, and become good in ways that we could never recognize or accomplish with our limited mortal capacity. Truly, one of the great blessings of devoted discipleship is ‘the peace of God, which passeth all understanding’ (Philippians 4:7).”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Therefore They Hushed Their Fears,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 47.



Eight-month-old Samantha with her grateful mother, and a happy Samantha at age five.

I tried to be optimistic, to ignore his professional opinion—though he stated it as fact—and to tap into the transcendent strength I had felt earlier on. But the tears poured down my face onto Samantha, her little cap absorbing each drop of my pain.

Then I felt it—the saving strength that foretold peace, the same tender touch I had felt months before. The dark cloud that hung over me was replaced by a refreshing light, and I felt a sincere desire to be the best mother I could be for Samantha, even if I would have only a few days, weeks, or—God willing—years with her. I felt blessed, and sincerely joyful, that I was her mother. *This* was the plan that Heavenly Father had for me. *This* became my new plan.

A Life of Abundant Blessings

Samantha is now nine years old, and her life continues to be one of abundant blessings. True, she is developmentally delayed. She is different from her peers in many ways. She has had and will have trials simply due to her condition. But there is no doubt that Samantha is an amazing little girl on a special errand from the Lord. Perhaps that errand is only to change the hearts of her mother and father, though I believe she has more work to do than just that.

Sammy continues to progress physically and cognitively, and her seizures are under control. She now has a brother and a sister whom we adopted some years ago, and she will hopefully be a big sister for a third time as we wait to be matched for adoption again. Among the greatest blessings Samantha has brought into our lives, however, is her energetic and loving spirit.

Hearts Knit as One

The joy that Samantha has brought to my life has surpassed any expectations I ever had. Because of her, my family members and I have been molded into better people. Our faith has been solidified and our hope made secure. We have learned greater patience, humility, and charity. Most important, we have grown closer to our Savior as we have pleaded for understanding and guidance. I have repeatedly felt the Lord’s hand giving me strength and support to do the things that are required of me and His grace supplying additional patience when I felt I could go on no more.

Though we still have a long way to go, I’m convinced that Samantha’s daily influence has knit our family’s hearts as one on a path toward eternal joy (see Mosiah 18:21). We are far better people because she is in our lives. ■

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