

# SMALL MIRACLE

*My baby brother didn't live long, but because of him, our family is now stronger.*

BY CATHERINE LOVELAND

***When we went to the temple together as a family to be sealed to Ronnie and Candace for time and all eternity, I knew Michael was there with us too.***

If you had told me I would be standing inside a temple sealing room at only 17 years old, I would have laughed. No, wedding bells didn't chime, but there I was, inside the sealing room of the house of the Lord. It's amazing how life has a way of turning out.

In January 1995 my second baby brother was born. We called him Michael Jon Loveland. He was beautiful with tiny hands, an adorable little nose, and eyes you couldn't stop smiling at. There was an instant connection between us.

As I looked around the hospital room at my mom, dad, older sister, and two younger brothers, I remember thinking nothing could ever change the serenity I then felt knowing that this was my family. This was the family I would be spending eternity with.

In the weeks that followed, however, it became clear that something wasn't right. My mother began noticing things about Michael Jon that only a mother could notice. Her concerns were soon justified only a few weeks later.

I can still clearly remember the night my

parents reluctantly told us the news. I'm still not sure how they managed to get it out, but somehow through tears and quiet sobs, we soon discovered what the problem had been. Michael Jon, my new infant brother, had been diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor.

The days that followed are now fairly hazy. I can't even begin to describe the countless emotions that ran through me. Fear, confusion, anger. How could this be? He was only six weeks old! How could something so vile and destructive be inside my baby brother, so beautiful and pure?

The doctors said he had weeks, maybe a month. After prayerful consideration, my parents decided that bringing Michael home would be the best decision. In order to do this, however, my parents would need to be trained and aided by a team of home doctors and nurses who provided hospice care.

Having Michael spend time at home, as opposed to the hospital, was a quiet blessing in more ways than one. I still have fond memories of silently going into his room at night and just holding him, holding and rocking the small miracle that God had



placed in our lives and would just as quickly be taking away. But aside from the fact that we all got to spend time with him, there was another small miracle that was slowly taking place.

The rest of my story, however, generally revolves around one of the hospice nurses in charge of taking care of Michael. As the weeks passed and Michael's health began taking a dramatic plunge, she was constantly at our house, doing everything she could to relieve the strain my parents were feeling.

In April 1995, on my mom's birthday, which was also Easter Sunday that year, Michael's last day came. It's one of the few times in my life that I have ever seen my father cry. It seemed so unreal! Yet this valiant spirit had

slipped in and out of our lives in only three months.

The impact his life had left, however, will never be forgotten.

At the time, though, it still seemed pointless. Why would Heavenly Father allow Michael to go

through such tremendous amounts of pain and suffering? It all seemed so unfair. I had lost my baby brother, and all for what? I would never get to tease him about his first-grade crush, never get to congratulate him on making the high school baseball team, and never write letters while he served a mission. But, oh, how shortsighted earth life can leave us. At the time, I could not even fathom the remarkable mission Michael had already been called to serve.

With Michael gone, it was time the team of hospice nurses moved on. For whatever reason, however, my mother and the head nurse remained in contact, frequently bumping into each other at the grocery store or other activities. Of course, it was viewed as merely coincidence.

Then it happened, one of those rare occasions when you can actually step back and see the pieces begin to fall into place. Two years after Michael's death, my mother received a call from the hospice nurse. Due to some unusual circumstances, two of her grandchildren were in need of a stable home.

I came home from Mutual to find a new baby girl, only 10 weeks old, lying on the sofa. "Where did she come from? How long will she be staying?" Within the next four weeks, we received her brother. Two children had suddenly been dropped into our lives without certainty as to how long they would be staying. Well, five years later, that question was answered. They'll be staying for eternity.

We ended up adopting both David and Candace in February 2002, and five months later I found myself stepping inside the sealing room of the Idaho Falls temple. The temple sealing was incredible. Words can hardly describe the spirit that was present. I couldn't stop crying as I witnessed David and Candace sealed to our family for all of time and eternity. I have no doubt that Michael was there as well. After all, had Michael not been born into our family, we never would have had these two children introduced into our lives.

It's amazing how life has a way of turning out. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Even the hardest trials are placed in our lives to serve as an anchor to strengthen us. We just need to have the faith and courage to endure to the end, trusting in the Lord. **NE**

