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Appendix A....

In Memory of Mark Christopher Wills

Feb. 14, 1964 – Jan. 4, 1984

By John K. Wills

Mark was born February 14, 1964, a true valentine. His full name was Mark Christopher Wills. He always said he knew he was in trouble if we called him “Mark Christopher” instead of just Mark.

Mark was very much into bodybuilding and did his exercises every night regardless of what time he came home. He became very strong. The summer after he graduated from high school in 1982, he entered a weight lifting contest in Mt. Sterling, and although weighing about 160 lbs., he won the contest by lifting 495 lbs., more even than the heavyweights in the contest. He said he could have lifted more if it would have been necessary.

About the first of November of 1982, Mark became ill with what was diagnosed as a cold or virus. It continued to hang on, and we took him to our family doctor. Mark also went to the student clinic at Morehead State University, where he was a freshman. He seemed to get better at times, but we noticed he was paler than usual. This went on for some time, and the doctors and staff at the MSU clinic told him he was just a hypochondriac and to quit wasting their time.

It was March 2, 1983 when he called from college and said the right side of his face was kind of numb, and he could not see out of one eye. Pat (his mother) took

him to our eye specialist in Mt. Sterling, and he immediately said to take him on to the Lexington Clinic. Pat called me at work, and I met them in Mt. Sterling. We went together to Lexington. They did several tests and told Mark he looked as healthy as a horse and sent us home. Mark went back to Morehead for college. Pat and I were so exhausted; we took the phone off the hook and laid down to rest. (This has haunted us ever since, as the doctor said he had been trying to reach us for a couple of hours.)

Diagnosis

About 10:00 p.m., the doctor from Lexington called and said to get Mark to the St. Joseph Hospital in Lexington as soon as possible. We called Mark and early the next morning we took him to the hospital. After a night in the hospital, the doctor turned us over to Dr. Cronin, a Hematologist I had been seeing since 1976.

Dr. Cronin greeted us and then said, "I'm not going to sugar-coat this. Mark has leukemia." At that time they were not sure what kind, but it was evident he would be needing treatment. I think it was the next day that he told us the kind of leukemia Mark had was "myelogenous" – one of the worst kinds. It was generally fatal within a few months or, at the most, two years. Mark was not told this, and he preferred not to read any of the pamphlets on leukemia. He was in the hospital for (I think) 63 days, and then the leukemia went into remission. He came home the Saturday before Mother's Day. He was upset that he did not have a present to give to his mother.

He started back to school in the fall, but it became evident in September that he was no longer in remission. He had been undergoing chemotherapy

once a week while he was at home and at school. He took five pills each time, which made him so sick that he began to vomit whenever we got close to the lab where it was administered.

Mark went back into the hospital on October 12, 1983. He went into a slight remission and came home about the middle of December. The remission did not last long, and he was very ill when we took him back to the hospital on Christmas Day.

Loved Ones

In spite of his illness, Mark had been thinking of his loved ones. He had bought a waterbed for us, and he wanted to come home the day after Christmas to see it. (His uncle had put it up in our bedroom.) Pat told the doctor we were going to take Mark home and would be back the next day. He gave permission for us to bring Mark home for a visit.

Mark was so happy to be able to see the new bed. However, during this visit his temperature rose to 104 degrees. Pat and I were terribly worried all night long and kept ice packs on him. We took him back to the hospital the next day, and he was there until he left his earthly body on January 4, 1984.

Salvation

Mark had asked to be baptized when he was eight, but we felt he was too young and asked him to wait. When he was nine, he again said he wanted to be baptized and wanted my brother Charles to baptize him. We did not feel we could refuse again, and he was baptized. The summer of 1983, Mark came home one night and said that the preacher had re-baptized him, as he was concerned that he was too young the first

time. We felt he knew what he was doing when he was nine, but only the individual can really know for sure.

The fact that Mark was a Christian and a good young man gave us great comfort throughout his illness and death. Even while he was in the hospital, he would go talk to the other patients and encourage them to do whatever their doctors were telling them. He wanted his mother near when he was suffering or in pain, and she stayed with him at the hospital almost every night when he was there. I stayed in a motel across the street and did some of the work I needed to do for my job. My supervisor in the State Office told me to do whatever I needed and not to worry about my job. I was able to relieve Pat some during the day, and she occasionally would go over to the motel and sleep a little. But generally she stayed with him day and night.

Mark's Courage

Mark always liked to play the theme from the movie *Rocky*, especially while he was doing his exercises. The song took on a completely different meaning to him after he became ill, because he wanted to have the same kind of courage to “go the distance” as Rocky did while he was being beat up in the movie. It was as if he were saying, “I know I am going to lose, but **I will** go the distance.” He also liked to play a tape from *The Eye of the Tiger*, because he was going to prove he had courage to look the tiger (enemy) in the eye. He was not going to give up. The last gift he gave his mother was a set of “Eye of the Tiger” earrings.

He never let anyone except Pat and me see him suffering. When he was so sick in the hospital and visitors came, he would perk up and joke with them as

though he were fine. As soon as they left the room, he slumped back into the bed exhausted.

It is still a great comfort to know Mark is a child of God and that someday we will see him again. Perhaps he will still call his mother “Pooh Bear” and me “Pappy Joe,” his nicknames for us. Later it became just “Pooh and Joe.”

Barbara’s Comments

John K. Wills had been writing Bible lessons for grades five through eight to be added to my Old Testament series for grades one through four long before Angie’s death. I didn’t know a lot about Mark’s death until Angie died. Then it helped me to realize that John and Pat survived and I would, too.

John had told me how proud Mark had been of his writing. Later I found a letter from Angie, written to me when I was publishing a monthly newsletter, *The Virtuous Woman*. She told me how her friends knew about the newsletter, and she chided me for not putting her on my mailing list, which I promptly did. She encouraged me to **never quit writing**.

I would like to express my thanks to John and Pat for sharing their experience with my readers. It isn’t easy to open the old wounds, but I do feel that you will be blessed by learning about Mark and how John and Pat are living faithful Christian lives through all of their suffering and recovery. I hope their lives will be an inspiration to you as you undergo trials and strive to remain faithful to God.

Appendix B....

In Memory of Robert Kyle Wood Jan. 3, 1980 – Nov. 3, 1999 By Barbara Hanna As Told By Cindy Wood

November 3, 1999 was like any other typical Wednesday night at the Wood's home – rushing around, getting supper ready, eating and then off to Bible class. Don is the preacher for the 12th Street Church of Christ here in Shallowater, Texas.

Our son, Kyle, was a member of the Sunset Church of Christ in Lubbock. As he left to go into Lubbock, I followed him out into the garage to be his automatic garage door opener. It was raining, so I thought I would be nice and do this for him. As he backed out of the garage, I waved to him, and he waved back with a smile. This is the last time I saw my handsome, dark haired 6' 7" son's smiling face. I am thankful for this memory, which is embedded in my mind.

Waking around 1:00 a.m. that night, I sat up and had a horrible feeling come over me as I realized Kyle was not home. His curfew was 11:30 p.m. After missing his curfew a couple of weeks earlier, we had a talk and he promised it wouldn't happen again. I went out to the living room, thinking about how I was going to ground my 19-year-old son!

Later a car drove slowly past our house, turned and stopped. I looked out and saw a Lubbock Police car. When I saw the officer get out of the car, I feared the

worst, but prayed that it would only be a little trouble, and not something worse.

The Shocking Reality

The doorbell rang, and the officer asked if my husband was at home. I went to wake him, and told him that there was a police officer in our living room wanting to talk to both of us, and Kyle was not at home. The officer asked if we were the parents of Robert Kyle Wood, 19 years of age, who drove a 1991 white Honda Accord. After our confirmation, he informed us that there had been an accident in which one person was hospitalized, but unfortunately Kyle had been killed instantly.

We both fell back into our chairs from a standing position, as if the carpet had been jerked from underneath us. The officer told us we would be hearing from the medical examiner, because he would need information as to how to identify our son's body. There had been a fire when the semi-truck hit his car, so they would need dental records and other information. We would not be able to see our son – ever – to say good-bye to him. He offered his sympathy and left.

Strangely, I remember thinking how I would not have wanted that officer's job for any amount of money. Don and I sat there in unbelief and started shaking from shock. We later learned that Kyle had been coming home from dropping off his girlfriend at her house around 11:00 so he would be home without missing his curfew, as he had promised.

We called one of the elders from the church. He and his wife came quickly to our home to offer their

sympathy and care. Then we began the task of calling all of our relatives and friends.

It seemed like this was a horrible nightmare, and I would wake up, but that was not to be. I remember feeling like I wanted to go outside and run forever, and just run away so none of this would be true. I did walk outside in the crisp November air around 3:00 a.m., shaking now as much from the cold as from the shock. I looked up toward heaven and thought there must be a million visible stars in the sky, but one in particular stood out. To me, this star represented Kyle, for he was our bright and shining star. I knew he was far beyond the stars, but for now, this would have to do.

In no time at all, our home was full of dear brothers and sisters in Christ from the local church, as well as Kyle's girlfriend and her parents. From there on, it was a blur of activity – going to get our daughter and her family from the airport – going and making funeral arrangements – talking and crying.

The funeral was on a Saturday. The following morning we went to worship God. The only other time in my life when I felt so close to God was the two times I gave birth to our beautiful, normal, healthy children. God had blessed us richly. On this day of worship, I felt like I worshiped God in a way that I have never worshiped Him before as I pondered how God's Son died for me, and God watched Him suffer.

Self-Imposed Burdens

In the days and months ahead, I put a lot of pressure on myself to be what I thought a preacher's wife should be – strong and able to handle nearly any situation. How wrong I was to be so unable to let

down the shell I had built around myself. I now realize that even strong Christians struggle with extreme sorrow when a child dies. Yet at the time, I was afraid to let this side of myself be seen by the church and the community.

The burdens I placed upon myself may be at least partly to blame for the major panic attacks I began having when I was with a large group. Even though people tried to let us see their love and concern for both Don and me, I thought I had to be a tower of strength. Finally I realized that these people were watching **out** for me, not **watching me** to see if I would crumple.

Because I wasn't handling things well, I finally went to seek help from my doctor. Yes, medication! Then I tried to get busy and not think about my loss all of the time. Doing things for others took my mind off of my situation for a brief moment.

I had to stop sitting around waiting for Kyle to walk through the door and say, "Hi, Mom, did ya buy any Ding Dongs and milk?" Strangely enough, I went to work at the high school where I was constantly around teenagers.

Teenage Drivers

Many of these teenagers were just getting their driving permits, and couldn't wait to drive without Mom and Dad in the car to observe. How excited they were! One day a student asked me if I had any kids in the school here. A lump came into my throat, and I said, "No, my daughter is married and has two wonderful little boys. We had a son, but he was killed a few months ago in a horrible car accident." I told a group of teens, "I know you will get so tired of hearing your

parents say to you, 'Be careful!' but try to understand. They **have** to say this."

I cautioned the teens that just because a signal light is red, it does not mean that the other person is going to stop! People don't always stop. They run red lights, but please don't be the one who goes through the red light or the stop sign and act like it is no big deal. It was a sobering moment for them, I think.

How Are You?

When people would ask me how I was doing, I smiled and said I was doing fine, when inside I was hurting. Those who knew and loved me realized that I was not "fine." The wonderful people in our congregation would tell us repeatedly that they were praying for us. As I told them, their prayers were what was holding us together. At that time I didn't really want their sympathy; I just wanted my son back.

Now after six years I can honestly say, "I'm doing good." God is my comfort. Time, prayers, friends, and knowing that we will one day spend eternity with Kyle have all been a part of my healing.

One scripture that Kyle's close friend's dear mother wrote to me in a card that I will cherish forever is Isaiah 57:1,2, which tells how "the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Another passage of great comfort is Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God." Because God has helped us through our trials, we are now able to reach out to others.

Mountains to Climb

By Lisa Smith

Throughout my childhood, growing up years and early years of marriage, I would describe my life as moving along on a level path. Of course there were a few bumps in the path I trod, and an occasional pothole. There were even a couple of small hills along the way. But it was not until the last two years that I faced some very steep mountains to climb with trials to endure.

The Smooth Path

Growing up, I was sheltered from much of the pain and suffering of the world. I was raised in the church by hard-working parents. I went to a Christian university and married a fine Christian man. I had been living my dream, often wondering why I had it so good while many others had so little.

My husband, Shawn, wanted a stay-at-home wife and mother for his children, and that is all I had ever wanted to be. I was given the opportunity to do all the “fun stuff” with our children while he worked so hard to provide us a living.

We had some setbacks occasionally during the first 18 years. While they caused some pain, we had never experienced suffering and grief like we have these past two years. It seems we have had to deal with one trial after another. The path became rocky with huge mountains to climb.

The Surprise Journey

In November of 2003 I found, much to my surprise, that I was going to be the mother of a seventh child. Life was very hectic. We were parenting six children and my husband had started his own business two years earlier. I was his secretary, receptionist, and dispatcher from an office in our home. I did bookwork with kids running in and out of the room. It was hard but I was managing to get it all done. We had decided not to add to the family after our sixth baby was born. So with baby number seven on the way, I had to grow accustomed to the idea of being pregnant again.

It was especially hard to tell a few of my relatives, because I was afraid some were of the opinion that we had already overdone it. I was very worried about their reaction and my ability to handle all of my responsibilities.

I was wearing a lot of hats. Besides helping with my husband's business, I was a wife, mother to six children ages two to 15, Bible class teacher and a daughter to aging parents – to name just a few of my roles. Among the most difficult things I had dealt with, prior to the pregnancy, were the terrible twos and the even more terrible teens. None of these things were truly a hardship, just the day-to-day duties of my busy and full life.

For this unexpected pregnancy, I had three normal visits to my obstetrician. We heard a strong and healthy heartbeat at the appropriate time. At sixteen weeks we did the normal blood work to rule out several diseases or abnormalities. The test results came back indicating that the baby had a one in ten chance of having Down's syndrome.

My doctor was very concerned and urged me to get an amniocentesis. One in ten did not sound like unbeatable odds to me until I talked to a doctor friend of mine and did some reading. The results normally come back as one in several thousands. My friend told me that test results like mine meant that I should prepare myself for being the parent of a Down's syndrome child.

I prayed that my baby would be healthy, but I also prayed that I would miscarry if my baby had Down's. Of course I requested that God's will might be done, and not my own. I prayed that prayer many times over the next few days. I asked God to help me to bear the trauma of a miscarriage, if that were to be His will. I asked Shawn and my friends to pray the same prayer.

Lest anyone misunderstand, I want to make it clear that had I given birth to a baby with Down's syndrome, Shawn and I would have loved that child as much as we do our other children. We would have sought any assistance necessary. Our children would have learned to love and help care for that sibling, as they have for the others born into our home.

I already loved my baby. It was not a question of whether or not I would love a handicapped child, but I did not know if I would be able to meet the needs of a Down's syndrome child, while also giving sufficient attention to the rest of my family. So I also prayed that if my baby were to be born with Down's syndrome, I would have the strength to properly care for my entire family. I tried to leave it all in God's hands and not worry, but it wasn't easy.

In the middle of February, I went to have a level two sonogram. This was to take some very detailed measurements and give us a more accurate picture of

the baby. The doctors especially wanted to look at the heart closely.

My husband and I left the appointment greatly relieved. The measurements looked very normal, and the heart looked healthy. We also got to see that we were having a girl.

We had hoped for a girl. I was longing for a girl. We already had a name picked out and immediately began using it. Our other two daughters were thrilled. We began making lots of plans revolving around baby Chaney.

The Mountain of Sorrow

Less than two weeks later, everything fell apart. I went in for a regular OB check-up and we heard no heartbeat. The doctor took me down the hall to get a sonogram, and our fears were confirmed. There was no heartbeat. Baby Chaney was dead. I couldn't bear to look at the screen showing the shape of Chaney's tiny body. I had seen her less than two weeks before – in a more detailed picture – and saw her heart beating and her body moving.

I went home to break the news to my family. The forty-minute drive home seemed like hours.

The next morning I checked into the hospital to have labor induced. Less than twenty-four hours before, I had been so happy. I was halfway through my pregnancy and very excited about our new daughter. This tragedy struck hard and fast, as tragedies often do. Since I had not looked at the sonogram screen the day before, I had a difficult time allowing the nurse to begin inducing labor. I kept wondering, "What if we were wrong?"

All of the nurses were very patient and kind. At my insistence, they brought in a Doppler monitor and we listened for a heartbeat to reassure me that none existed. They explained that since the baby was so tiny she would come fast. She did. In a few hours I delivered a tiny baby girl. Chaney was perfectly formed. I could hold her in one hand – and I did.

Touching and holding Chaney was the beginning of healing for me. I told her physical body “goodbye.” I had sobbed off and on for hours before she was delivered, but once she was in my hands, all my tears were gone.

The staff wanted Shawn and me to keep Chaney with us as long as we desired. They cleaned her delicate skin so we could see her more clearly. They took footprints for us, and offered to take pictures. We declined to have the pictures taken, because Chaney did indeed look very dead.

She weighed less than four ounces and was a little over seven inches long. She was dehydrated. She had weighed more when we saw her on the sonogram. The doctor estimated that Chaney had been dead for several days.

We chose not to have any kind of funeral service for Chaney. I have not regretted that decision, but I realize it would not be the right choice for every family in the same situation.

I came home from the hospital on the first day of March. Our fifteen-year-old son was away at a state wrestling competition. When he left, as far as we all knew, everything was fine. He returned to a grief-stricken home. He was a great comfort to me. The teen years are sometimes very difficult to get through, but in this instance he was compassionate and kind.

Some of our other children were filled with grief, but none took it as hard as our thirteen-year-old daughter. She mourned deeply for days.

I used our copy machine to duplicate the tiny footprints. Our daughter kept a copy in her room, and it seemed to ease her pain. I cherish those footprints and occasionally get the tiny prints out so I can feel close to my precious baby Chaney. I still love her so strongly.

Overcoming the Roadblock of Grief

Grief does different things to different people. There are stages and various intensities of grief. There are people who are stronger than others, and perhaps they handle it better. I was sad for a long time after Chaney died. The sadness still overwhelms me occasionally. My head tells me that she is in a much better place than I could ever provide, but my heart longs to see her and hold her.

Some people become angry when they grieve and feel a need to blame someone. I did not. I felt some guilt from time to time. Did I deserve to be Chaney's mother? I prayed that she would die so I would not have to bear the burden of raising a mentally handicapped child. Did God answer my prayer? Yes, I believe God answered my prayer. Was Chaney's short life meaningless? No! I am a better person – and a stronger Christian – because of her. I think my children are more caring and compassionate because of what we have been through.

Chaney was not my first miscarriage. When our oldest child was twelve months old, I discovered that I was pregnant. Shortly thereafter, I began spotting blood. A sonogram showed a blighted ovum. The doctor

explained that it meant I was pregnant without a baby forming. An empty sac of amniotic fluid was all he could see. An egg had been fertilized but had not continued growing. The following week I miscarried.

Although it was painful physically, and I was saddened, I did not experience the level of grief that I did at losing Chaney. I lost another pregnancy a few years later. That pregnancy was also a blighted ovum. It affected me much more dramatically than the first miscarriage had, but not nearly as much as losing Chaney.

What were the differences? Why did I cry harder when I lost Chaney and mourn so much longer? Some of the differences for me were the amount of time invested, the way the miscarriage occurred and the time in my life that the loss occurred. Each of the three souls is in the same place now, and I hope to see them all someday.

Many sympathetic people came to call and sent cards and food after Chaney died. Some said all the right things, but some said hurtful things without ever knowing it. One Christian friend commented, "God must have thought you didn't need any more." This person did not mean to hurt me and probably believed the comment to be true. I never have believed that God thought I "didn't need any more."

Sharing Mountainous Trials

Two older women from the congregation where we worshiped called and told me that they had also lost baby girls in similar situations. They each told me their stories, and we were able to share our pain with each other. Their expressions of love helped me understand that I was not alone. There were other

people who had survived a broken heart from losing a baby. Both of these women had other children when they lost their little girls, but they both had all boys and never had the opportunity to raise a daughter. I realized how blessed I was in comparison to those women. I had two little girls at home.

Some people assumed that because I was the mother of six living children, losing Chaney would not hurt as badly. I could not understand that mentality. Each child is an individual, and each is loved for his or her own uniqueness.

Having the other children around me was comforting, but my loss was the same as any other mother's loss. There isn't a truism saying that a mother who loses one of her seven children will only grieve with one-seventh of the intensity of a mother who loses an only child. That is as foolish to me as it would be to say that because I am a mother seven times over, I have seven times the capacity to love as compared to the mother of an only child.

Faith on the Mountain Top

Chaney's short life and death have brought about much good. My faith is stronger and I am closer to God – but that is not all. On the drive home from the hospital, my husband told me that he would consider adoption. I had been talking about adoption for years.

Several times over the years I had seen footage of international orphanages. I wanted to give one of those children a Christian home and a mother's love. My husband had never shared my strong desire to adopt a baby. When Chaney died he felt we had already made room for one more in our hearts and our home, and that space needed to be filled.

We knew life-altering decisions should not be made when we were grieving, so we tried to wait. It was difficult. The thought of adoption consumed me. Over the next two months I did a lot of research and talked to four adoption agencies.

Shawn and I met with two of the agencies, and at the end of May we signed a contract. I would not recommend making a big decision like this immediately after the loss of a child, but for us it has worked out well. We were not trying to replace Chaney, but we did hope that another baby girl would help fill the awful hole in our hearts.

Continuing the Journey

Our adoption paperwork took a lot of my time and energy and did help keep my mind off the pain part of the time, but did not erase it. I cried more tears that spring and summer than I ever had in my adult life. My heart ached. I needed to talk about my suffering and the loss I felt, but I found very few people willing to listen. I learned that it made others uncomfortable, and they did not know how to respond.

I had one good friend, Barbara Hanna, who was always willing to listen and talk. She never made me feel as if I were making her uncomfortable. I eventually stopped talking to people about Chaney and my grief, and just relied on prayer for the most part. God always listens.

The paperwork surrounding the adoption was very intimidating. We had to obtain over thirty documents. Some of those documents included several papers in themselves. Each page had to be notarized and then sent through the state for official stamps that

guaranteed the authenticity of the notary stamp. Everything had to be done in triplicate, but nothing could be copied. It took most of the summer to gather all that was required.

Another Giant Mountain to Traverse

It was in the middle of the summer that we received a second shock, in some ways harder to handle than the miscarriage. Our two-and-a-half-year-old son, the youngest of our six, had stopped talking. It happened very gradually. The changes were subtle at first. By the time we noticed how much language he had lost, the changes were significant.

The first of June, he started doing a lot of strange things. He began flapping his hands up and down, he whispered and jabbered in some strange language that only he could understand, and he was acting terrified of other children when we saw them in public places. He avoided some of our family members and seemed to withdraw into a world of his own. I got on the Internet and typed some of the symptoms into a search engine.

At midnight on a night early in June, I woke my husband. I had found the diagnosis: autism. I stayed up all night reading and looking for answers. I called our pediatrician the next morning around 9:00 and was sitting next to him before noon. The doctor watched my little boy play as we talked. Most of his “play” consisted of repetitive motion. The doctor agreed – it looked like autism.

I felt as if my little boy’s future had been stolen from us. My hopes and dreams for him were dashed. This time the tragedy had crept up on us, like a sneaking thief. I was at the bottom of a steep mountain, looking

straight up. How could I begin to climb? It looked overwhelmingly high.

We made an appointment with a developmental pediatrician but could not get an appointment with him before the end of August (even though I had begged the nurse to give us any cancellation spot, and she had promised to do so). In the meantime, I read every book and article I could get my hands on. It appeared that early intervention would be the key. Who should I call for help? Where could I turn?

Mapping Out the Journey

I found answers through our county's infants and toddlers program. We began therapy immediately. Our son would turn three in October. Then the help would end and we would be on our own. I employed a behavior consultant who specialized in autism and early intervention. She trained me to do the therapy as well. I tried to make every waking minute an educational one for our son.

The price tag for the therapy was extremely high. Could we afford to go ahead with the adoption and also give our little boy his therapy without going so deeply into debt that we would never climb out? We owned a rental house, which we were able to mortgage. The money would finish paying for the adoption and begin paying for the therapy. God had always provided for us, and we prayed that He would help us to manage both the adoption and special education.

At the beginning of August we received pictures of a seven-month-old baby girl who had been born in Russia. The day we got the pictures, my husband was sick in bed with an unidentified virus. He is almost

never sick, but this time he became so ill that he was soon in the hospital. It was such a stressful time.

We had five days to decide whether or not this was the baby we wanted. We were told that the baby might have some heart disease, and there were other suspected physical problems. The picture showed a baby with a terrible rash and a scalp covered in thick cradle cap. I wanted so badly to mother that baby – clean her up and hold her. We decided she was the one for us. We had to quickly finish the last of the adoption paperwork and wait for an invitation from the Russian government to come and visit the baby.

Once again I encountered encouragers and discouragers. I heard stories of people who had nearly ruined their lives when they adopted children. I got the unsolicited advice of some who had not adopted children – and some wonderful encouragement from those who had. People I greatly admired were telling me that the decision to adopt had been a bad one.

This taught me a much-needed lesson. I had often offered my advice to people in the past, and I wondered how many times I had unintentionally hurt someone. My younger brother and my friend Barbara Hanna were truly helpful to me during this time. They both told me that I was strong enough to continue giving my other six children all they needed, while adding one more. I knew they were right, but the reassurance was very comforting and strengthening.

At the end of August we made the trip to take our son to the developmental pediatrician, and he confirmed our fears. The diagnosis was PDD-NOS. This is a form of autism. The doctor told us that our son was high functioning. I held onto those words like a drowning woman would hold on to a life preserver. I now understand that the label doesn't make the

difference. How the child with autism responds to the provided therapy makes all the difference in the outcome. However, at the time, the words “high functioning” gave me the hope I so desperately needed.

The therapy we used with our son was needed forty hours a week. Additionally, I had to find or create the materials, which were necessary for the lesson goals. I was spending much of the night reading and creating – and much of the day teaching. This left me exhausted and unable to adequately attend to the other children’s needs. Our home-based business also suffered.

A Ride Up the Mountain

At the beginning of September, I was able to find some help to take us part of the way up the mountain path! Two college students were willing to work several hours each week in the mornings. My other children were all in school, so I was able to spend the mornings in the office catching up. Afternoons were spent doing the therapy myself. It worked well. Each time we have met an obstacle it has been overcome with hard work and the help of God.

Our trip to Russia was scheduled by the adoption agency for October 11, 2004. This was also our son’s third birthday. We had a big birthday party a day early so we could celebrate before we made the trip. My husband’s parents came and stayed with the children.

Between flights, as we were ready to leave the country, I called home for one last check on the family. Our six-year-old son was having ear pain. I called his doctor from the airport in New York City to get some antibiotics for him. As our plane left the ground and we began our trip, I felt like we were abandoning our

children. I kept thinking about all the miles we were putting between ourselves and our children at home.

The flight and train travel to get our baby girl were difficult. We were exhausted and nervous in Russia. We had to deal with flight delays, lost luggage, a language barrier, and an eleven-hour train ride – each way – which we thought would never end.

The interpreter assigned to us by our adoption agency was very helpful and considerate. The first time we saw our baby was midmorning. She was listless and seemingly without any personality.

Later it was explained to us that the nurses had kept her up so she would not be asleep when we arrived, but we were one hour later than they expected. She had fallen asleep just minutes before we arrived. This explained her lack of energy and emotion. That afternoon she did seem to have a little more energy.

The next morning, though, she was again without any sparkle. I worried that she might have mental problems. We decided, after much anguish, that we would commit to taking her.

Once again I felt guilt. Why had I prayed for one baby to die if she were to be mentally handicapped and then gone to great lengths and expense to get another baby, who was possibly handicapped as well? I tried to turn it all over to God. I prayed that I would be able to handle any problems we encountered. I also realized that this baby was already born before Chaney had died. Our adopted baby might or might not have mental difficulties. In some respects, her future was in our hands.

The Russian doctor offered to provide massage therapy for the baby. He would make sure she received thirty

minutes a day of physical touch if we left \$100.00 to cover the cost. We knew from the few hours we had spent at the orphanage that the babies were not getting much care beyond feeding and changing, so we were glad to leave the money. The \$100.00 did a lot for our baby and was worth every penny and more.

The Uncertain Path

We flew home and were to return in eight weeks for a court date, which was set for December ninth. Less than a week before the court date, our eleven-year-old son came down with pneumonia. He had to be hospitalized. Should we go? How could I leave a sick child for another with whom I had little connection? If we postponed the court date, we were told that it would take at least another eight weeks to reschedule. Our baby was lying in a crib with almost no attention. How could I leave her there for an extra two months?

Our son was well enough to come home before we were to leave, but he was to see the doctor every day for the first few days. His grandparents would take him. He was in good hands. We did not cancel our appointments in Russia and, once again, flew across the ocean. This time the travel was not quite as stressful. However, each time we checked the e-mail or made a call home, it seemed another child had come down with the cough and pneumonia (or near pneumonia).

In a matter of days my husband and I were both coughing as well. The travel was hard enough when we were well, but it was doubly hard trying to manage it when we were feeling ill.

When we visited our baby before the court appearance, we were able to see the huge difference our \$100.00

had made. Right before court, my nervousness caused me to become physically ill. What if the judge thought we had too many children already? What if she said we couldn't have this baby?

All my worry was for naught. We left the courthouse and went to pick up our newly adopted daughter, Sydney. She was ten and a half months old, weighed only sixteen pounds and seemed to be hungry all the time.

From the very beginning of our time together, I saw issues that needed to be addressed. Sydney did not like to be held. She was in constant motion. She slept far too much, rocked, picked at her fingers and had a terrible rash that seemed to itch constantly. These were just a few of the physical problems.

As we addressed each issue, another took its place. I worked diligently at "taming" Sydney. I held her even though she hated it. I sang to her even though she didn't want to listen. I made her sit still when she just wanted to throw herself around and spin in circles. I put her on a schedule and kept her busy so she would stay awake for longer periods.

With constant reminding, the rocking stopped. The rash was scabies and took months to completely eradicate. These problems were almost easy to fix compared to some of the others we encountered over the next year.

Sydney was affectionate – but the affection did not seem genuine. She kissed us – but she also kissed the floor and chairs. She liked us – but she often preferred the laps of strangers. Her attention span was very short, she threw terrible temper tantrums and she had almost no impulse control.

I continued her training for a year before we began seeking outside help. I was so sure that all Sydney needed was love and security. I thought we could “fix” all the problem behaviors ourselves.

More Help Along the Path

When it became evident to us that love and security were not going to be the only things necessary to change Sydney’s behaviors, we took her to a child psychologist. We wondered if she might have an attachment disorder. The doctor was very kind and told us that we were doing all the right things to get her to develop proper attachments.

Weeks later an eye doctor referred us to a genetics counselor. This specialist did a lot of measurements and asked many questions about behaviors. She gently told us that Sydney had the signs of fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). The most obvious indication was her very small head size.

I felt like a deflated balloon. How could this happen? We had asked the adoption agency if the baby had any signs of FAS. We had asked the doctor and social worker in Russia more than once if our baby’s mother had consumed alcohol. They assured us that she had not. Had they lied? Had they not known? Does it matter in the end? It has been a bitter pill to swallow, but we will deal with the FAS symptoms as best we can and learn to live with the ones we cannot change and improve.

This last blow, in some ways, was a little easier for me to handle because we had already been through so much in the two years leading up to this discovery, and I was a stronger person.

Growing Stronger As I Journeyed

The other trials had taught me a few things. I knew there would be light at the end of this tunnel, too. I have tried hard after each difficult time to consider the good that came from the trial we faced.

After my first miscarriage I became pregnant again within three months. Had I not lost that pregnancy, I would not have my oldest daughter, who is such a blessing to our family. I have always treasured her and remembered that without the loss of the other baby, she would not exist today.

Had Chaney lived, Sydney would not be in our home. Did Sydney replace Chaney in my heart? No. I wish I could have them both. There is room for them both in our hearts and in our home.

Sydney was born and lying in that crib waiting for me before Chaney had even died. God did not cause my baby to die. He did not reach down and make anything happen, but He did allow me to be a part of bringing something good from a sorrowful experience.

God did not “zap” our son with autism, but in His providence He has helped me find the tools to assist our little boy in the learning process. God did not plague Sydney with FAS, but He will strengthen me as I search for additional ways to help Sydney.

Each time I was the recipient of bad news, it felt devastating: a ten on a pain scale of one to ten. Looking back, I realize it could have been much worse. The pain of losing my husband would have been much more severe than the pain of losing my unborn baby. The pain of having a child diagnosed with incurable cancer would have been much greater than the pain of

having a child diagnosed with autism or FAS. The pain of losing an unsaved, grown child would be so much worse than the pain of losing one that was safe, as our baby had been. The pain felt like a ten because I have never experienced a true ten. I pray that I never will, but if I do, God will be my strength and shield.

Taking time to grieve was important for my healing, but too much time spent feeling sorry for myself was not productive. I learned to roll up my sleeves and get busy. I can't help my special needs children if I am not properly educated. I must research the problems we face and find ways to solve them.

Mapping Out a New Path

Much of the material needed to teach our son has either been too expensive to purchase or hard to find, so I create some of it myself. I often use computer graphics to develop flashcards, which will teach a specific lesson. As I develop materials to teach our son, I save the material. I hope to organize these by categories to produce and sell this material on the Internet in the future.

Reaching out to others will be one more way of turning a tragedy around and bringing good from a difficult situation. Undoubtedly there are other parents in a similar situation looking for affordable teaching tools for their children.

I have plans to eventually publish a book chronicling our journey to assist our precious son. I have read several biographical-type books about autism. These were helpful to me and gave me hope for a near normal future for my son. I would like to do the same for other parents of children with autism.

Our youngest son is now four years old and in a preschool at Kansas University. This preschool is for normally developing children, but there are four slots reserved for children with autism. We were very fortunate to have such an opportunity. Our son is in the classroom half of the time and getting his therapy, one-on-one, the other half.

God opened this door for us, even though I was trying hard to hold it closed. I had prayed for help, but then did not want to accept the help that was provided. I had always kept my children at home with me until kindergarten, and even then it was very difficult for me to let them go.

Sending my child to preschool went against my maternal instincts. I knew preschool was a fine thing for a normally developing child, even though I had never sent one of my own children. But how could I send my special needs child? He was still very nervous around other children at that point. He could not communicate his needs to anyone very well.

Shawn and the behavior consultant, whom I had hired, urged me to enroll our son in this program. I asked God to give me the strength I would need to walk away from my little boy each morning, and I prayed that I was doing the right thing before I enrolled him. God did give me the strength, and it was the right thing. This is now evident.

It was important to enroll him in a preschool program so he could learn how to deal with peers. He lacked so many social skills, but they are coming quickly now. The highlight of my day is when I pick him up in the afternoon, and he can tell me a little bit about his day. When he started the therapy, he could not converse at all, but now he is able to tell me some of what he did and with whom he played.

One day recently, I knew they had done the “Hokey Pokey” during circle time. I asked him if he had done the “Hokey Pokey.” He laughed and said, “Yes, and Billy’s shoe came off.” (The child’s name was changed.) This may not seem like such a huge feat to other mothers, but it was memorable for me. All this came from a little boy who – two years earlier – had lost most of his ability to communicate and did not have any developing sense of humor or interest in his surroundings. He had been terrified of other children. Now he eagerly looks forward to seeing his friends at school, while I eagerly look forward to hearing about it!

Looking back over my life, I realize how God has consistently answered my prayers. He knew what I needed before I even asked. When I was praying that I would not have a special needs child, I already had one and did not realize it.

God has brought about a change of heart on my part. Whereas I at one time did not want to have a special needs child, God prepared me for the future. Two short years ago, I thought I was the mother of six children without any special needs, and that I might have a baby on the way with special needs. At that time, I didn’t feel ready to meet the challenge. Since then God has helped me find the courage and peace of mind to care for two special needs children.

If there is one thing I have consistently learned from all these difficulties, it is this: The mountains look so much steeper on the way up, until we reach the top. If we live long enough on this earth, we all discover mountains to climb along our journey. As I look back on my mountains, they don’t seem as high as they did from the other side, and I am stronger, knowing that the mountains I will encounter in the future won’t seem as gigantic, either, once I reach the top.

Appendix D....

Victory Over Grief

By Bob Spurlin

June 15, 2006 E-Newsletter

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The common denominator for all that live upon earth is to witness the passing of loved ones from this life to the immortal shore. Isaiah penned the following: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass" (Isaiah 40:7). Life is an endless cycle with birth and growth, and culminating with death. The span of years allotted to us is uncertain, but the omnipotent God above is the author of "every good and every perfect gift" (James 1:17). The readers in receipt of James' letter were told, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). Life is a vapor or mist . . . existing temporarily, and disappearing just as fast.

Bethany Ann Spurlin, 16, sustained a fatal injury on August 16, 1995. Our daughter was on the threshold of womanhood with life ahead of her, but suddenly it was taken away. Many who read these lines have experienced a similar loss; therefore we are not alone in coming to grips with this difficult challenge. The emptiness we felt was not because she was unprepared for the eternal world, but for the physical separation resulting in such emptiness in our lives.

As grief survivors, we have learned that none are immune from adversity and grief that comes from the human predicament. Let us never think we are protected from the woes punctuated by the pain and

illnesses that curse our world. Many feel justified in placing all culpability upon God. Bear in mind that the Creator is not the author of disaster and confusion, but of peace (I Cor. 14:33). God often becomes an easy target when some unexpected tragedy, which we cannot control, strikes a loved one.

Prayer Will Not Prevent Grief

Petitioning the Father in heaven to protect our family and children from harm is something we do regularly. We would advise all our readers to put such into daily practice. However, let us not think God will put a wall around our loved ones, protecting them from harm.

Job, a faithful patriarch of the Old Testament, suffered the loss of lands, livestock, and the death of all his children. The faithful servant did not abandon God. Instead he realized that evil takes place in life, and even to the righteous (Job 2:9-10).

Jesus prayed three times to the Father that his “cup” would be removed from Him and that His suffering would end (Mt. 26:39-44). The operative phrase, “according to thy will” was the cornerstone of a fruitful prayer life. Our prayers must be in harmony with God’s will. As children, we frequently heard gospel preachers comment on prayer by saying, “God answers our prayers sometimes by saying no.” Our daily petitions must go to the heavenly Father in accordance with God’s will.

Laws Stamped Upon the Earth

The presence of the earth – its location and position – did not happen by chance. Genesis chapter one indicates perfect design and order by an infinite

architect, God (Gen. 1:1). God has created our earth so that nature follows certain patterns.

Laws of electricity, gravity, time and chance, and other immutable factors contribute to unforeseen things that happen to us. God is active in His world, but He does not exert direct influence bringing instant happiness.

Weather patterns with precision instruments allow meteorologists to map out their forecast of weather conditions around the world. Paul stated, "He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17).

God has arranged for the seasons found in nature. Those who live in tornado alley or hurricane territory can expect tornadoes or hurricanes. God cannot be blamed for individual tragedies brought about by nature. Rain and sunlight are available for good and evil people alike (Matt. 5:45).

The certainty and compassion of our Creator shows unceasing care for man with needful and refreshing showers of rain. The sun and stars move by fixed laws, whose operation we can see and anticipate. God has regulated by laws those things we cannot describe.

Sin Causes Suffering

We see daily on local and national news outlets about young women abducted and atrociously murdered. Children on a daily basis are kidnapped, sexually molested and brutally killed. These are senseless acts that provoke us to moral outrage. These events and countless others do not seem just. Also, seeing the judicial system fall short in its responsibility compounds the frustration.

Let us come to terms with the fact that all the books will not be balanced in this world, which accurately represents the horrors and crimes taking place in society. Solomon pointed out, "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 8:14).

It is also true that God does not turn away all evil things that happen to the righteous. The September 11, 2001 suicide mission will go down in history as one of the most tragic events in American history. Countless Arab zealots followed the leadership of Osama Bin Laden and other committed terrorists by flying planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. More than 3,000 Americans died. Blaming God for such an act is foolish. Therefore, culpability should more accurately be placed on the evil one, Satan.

God's Formula for Overcoming Grief

As a minister of the gospel for thirty years, it was my responsibility to provide comfort to the bereaved. I would often use words like "time is the best healer" and "the passing of time will lessen the hurt." Words such as these may seem empty, but time has the power to heal the broken heart. We must not be so naïve as to think in six weeks, six months, or more that we will be fully adjusted to the grief we suffer. We all have different timetables in making this cruel adjustment. Peter said, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:7). Christians must never lose heart, and remember that we have a friend in Jesus (John 15:14-15).

Regardless of what happens in our lives, we must remain faithful to God. Job is our example of perseverance as he faced the death of his children and came to grips with his physical agony (James 5:11). He may not have known why he had to suffer. But he knew he must remain faithful to God, regardless of the tragedy that befell him.

In all his adversity Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). This is the attitude we should have. Instead of questioning the grief we suffer and the trials that occur in life, we must remain faithful to God (Revelation 2:10).

Editor's Note: Many thanks to Bob Spurlin for giving permission to use this article. Bob and Beverly are an inspiration to thousands of Christians who are likewise undergoing trying times. As we observe this Christian couple and their continuing faith in God, we realize that we, too, can persevere.

Bob has authored three books, which are uplifting to those who are facing trials in life. These are: *Dial 911*, *Tackling Life's Troubles* and *Don't Ever Give Up*. To place an order, go to:

www.bobspurlin.com

You may also order by calling: 256-773-0295.

Appendix E....

Recovering From the Death of a Child

By Barbara Hanna

Whether a child dies from a sudden tragedy or a long illness, parents are generally unprepared. As this book is close to completion, I have realized that there will be some who need quick and simple suggestions regarding how to handle the death of a child. Hence this Appendix is being added.

Some of these thoughts will appear throughout the book. Other reflections may be found only here, since they deal specifically with the death of a child (regardless of the child's age), and how parents can cope and heal. Please keep in mind that I am not a professional, and my advice comes only through personal experience and listening to others who have also lost a child. Please do not hesitate to seek the advice and help of a trained professional.

My daughter, Angie, was 33 when she died and left behind a baby. Sophie was not yet 11 months old. Appendix F gives attention to the special needs of a baby or young child when one parent dies. Both of these contain much of what I wish I could have found, written by a faithful Christian, after Angie's death.

Be Patient

My first bit of advice is to be patient with yourself and your spouse. Don't expect the healing to happen overnight. If you have faced the death of other relatives, but find yourself going through the loss of a

child, don't think the healing to be accomplished as quickly.

When Angie died, many people told us, "We go through life believing our parents will die before we do, and our children will outlive us." They said that losing a child is the most difficult death to survive. While I realize that losing a spouse can also be traumatic, often times the remaining spouse finds another Christian partner – not to replace the first spouse, but to fill a void. Although your other children may help you get through the difficult time, no matter how many children you have, you will always miss the one who is gone.

Conversely, please do not feel that you can't heal and find joy. You **can!** If you are a Christian, you will find much comfort in your love for God and His love for you. Your church family, the brothers and sisters in Christ, will be a strong support system. Reach out to them and let them know your needs.

If you discover that you are less able to accomplish tasks quickly, do not despair. Your whole body has been affected by your grief. For several days after Angie died, I could barely read anything. My mind would not focus. Even when I did begin reading novels after three or four weeks, I discovered that it took me about a month to read what I previously had been able to read in a week. Not because I had less time to read, but because my mind was not up to par.

You may need to cut back on some of your responsibilities. For example, I did not teach Bible class for four months. I did not take any new day care children into my home day care, and had the smallest group of children that I had for many years. About six months later, I was able to increase the size of my day care.

Patience is one of the Christian virtues we should all strive to incorporate into our lives (2 Peter 1:6). If your spouse snaps at you over some little thing, give a loving and patient answer, remembering that “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Prov. 15:1).

Communicate

Communicate with your spouse about your sorrow, past experiences with your child, hurt feelings you may have over anything that took place in your child’s life, the happy memories which comfort you and anything else you want to share. Don’t hold your feelings inside thinking that if you don’t talk about it, things will be better. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Communication may bring tears. If so, cry together. The frequency and duration of the tears will slowly diminish over time. After a few months, perhaps you will only cry once a day or less, and it does not always need to be when you are with your spouse. But even then, you should not avoid letting your spouse share in your grief.

We are not all going to respond to the loss of a child in the same manner. When my brother died in a car accident, my mother says she did not cry at all for several days. After the funeral was over and Joe and I had gone back to Kansas with our children, Mom finally cried. Even then, she cried because of something my Dad said, totally unrelated to Carl’s death. Later he told her, “I’m sorry I upset you, but I’m glad you cried. You have needed to cry since Carl died.” Mom says that she could not cry at first because she was so shocked by what had happened. When she was finally able to cry, it was like releasing the pressure from a pressure cooker before opening it.

When Angie died, I think Joe and I cried several times a day the first couple of weeks. After that, we may have shed tears at different times of the day, and not always when we were together. But there would still be times when we would talk and the tears would flow. One man told me that after his adult daughter died, he cried every single day for a year. Now I understand.

However, if a couple of weeks have gone by and you are unable to work because you are crying all day, you need to seek medical and/or psychiatric care. Talk it over with your family physician and see what he or she may suggest. If you are not sleeping at night, the same advice applies. Seek help! You may need to talk to someone who is skilled in assisting you as you deal with the trauma you have undergone.

Don't just talk to your spouse and doctor, either. When friends come to visit, if you want to talk about the departed one, go right ahead. People who have never gone through a similar experience may not know if you feel comfortable talking about your child. They don't want to cause you further pain. Yet they may welcome sharing special moments they had with your child. It will comfort them to know how much they meant to your child. It will comfort you to learn about special times your child shared with friends.

Never stop hugging your spouse. Kissing and touching are comforting. If you are not ready to resume a sexual relationship immediately, wait a week or two, but do not allow a wall to be built between the two of you. Keep talking, hugging and loving each other, because this is a primary part of the healing process.

Christian family physician James Boring and Thomas B. Warren point out, "Even if one or the other of the partners does not really desire sexual relations at some time when such is desired by the spouse, the

lack of desire does not warrant the withholding of himself (herself) from the other. Let every husband and wife study carefully the teaching of God's word on this point (1 Cor. 7:5) and be guided thereby."

Knowing that God has decreed that both mutual obligation and mutual satisfaction are involved in Biblical marriage, Satan is ever hopeful of using grief to drive a wedge between you and your spouse. Surprisingly, we are told that many couples break up after the death of a child – which should be a time of growing closer to God and one another. We must not let adversity, even the loss of a daughter or son, affect our marital relationship as did Mrs. Job, who told her husband to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9)! Instead of helping, she allowed Satan to use her as his agent for evil.

The apostle Paul said, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency" (1 Cor. 7:5). "This means, quite simply, that neither husband nor wife should refuse sexual intercourse to the other unless, upon the basis of mutual agreement – for a limited time – they do so, so that they may give themselves more fully to prayer. Neither the husband alone nor the wife alone has the right to make this decision (not to have sexual relations); it must be "by consent" (mutual agreement – "symphony") for a limited period of time. This is the case so that neither one will be unduly tempted."

"At the same time, both partners must also be guided and motivated by the desire to do the loving and kind thing. When each partner can trust the other to act lovingly, great happiness can (and almost certainly will) result. Certainly the general health and the specific feeling of those involved at the particular time

will be taken into consideration. On the other hand, one must have a good reason for declining sexual relations, and, on the other hand, one must not violate the principle of love and kindness in insisting on his (her) own way."

Perhaps especially during times of sorrow, every human being can be faced with the frightening prospect of loneliness whereby we really need someone else "with us." "The sexual act between a devoted husband and wife can dispel the sense of being alone. Their coming together in physical union – with its accompanying emotional and spiritual union – manifests their oneness in a unique and compelling way. The sexual union provides each with an 'added language,' a way of saying 'I love you,' which cannot be expressed in any other way... Marriage is a sort of 'added language' which only those who are married to one another can use as a means of expressing the deepest feelings and assurances of love and commitment of the whole life to another and this is done in a medium which is more flexible, more expressive and more profound than ordinary human speech." [The quotations above are from *Your Marriage Can Be Great*, edited by Thomas B. Warren, pp. 308-313.]

In addition to having a loving physical relationship, as you communicate with your spouse and observe reactions, you need to be aware of the signs of a panic attack. My panic attacks did not begin when Angie died, but nearly a year later when we moved to Texas. (See Appendix G.) They were triggered by thoughts of how Angie should be here to help care for Sophie (before Eric remarried) and also times when our son, Mike, came to visit and I thought about how Angie would never come to see us again – ever – as long as we live on this earth. At times I did not even realize how I was affected until an attack began.

Panic Attacks

The signs of a panic attack were printed in a local newspaper, and taken from the web site www.anxietypanic.com.

Common panic attack symptoms are:

- ⇒ Racing heartbeat.
- ⇒ Difficulty breathing, feeling like you can't get enough air.
- ⇒ Terror that is almost paralyzing.
- ⇒ Nervous shaking.
- ⇒ Stress.
- ⇒ Heart palpitations.
- ⇒ Dizziness.
- ⇒ Light-headedness.
- ⇒ Nausea.
- ⇒ Trembling.
- ⇒ Sweating.
- ⇒ Choking.
- ⇒ Chest pains.
- ⇒ Extreme fright.
- ⇒ Feelings of doom.
- ⇒ Hot flashes.
- ⇒ Sudden chills.
- ⇒ Tingling in fingers and toes.
- ⇒ Fearful feelings that you are going to die or go crazy.

I experienced only about half of these symptoms. Every time my attacks began with a racing heartbeat and usually nausea. They lasted anywhere from two to twelve hours, but I have heard of them lasting longer, as well as only a few minutes. If you believe you are having panic attacks, you need to talk to a doctor to be sure your symptoms are not heart problems or other medical conditions. Your doctor can

recommend medication to take when the attack begins, or you may need to be on some type of medication around the clock for a period of time.

Other web sites mentioned in the newspaper were:

- ⇒ www.conqueranxiety.com
- ⇒ www.panicportal.com
- ⇒ www.anxieties.com
- ⇒ www.apa.com

The listing of these web sites should in no way be taken as an endorsement of anything you find on the sites. I have not checked them out, but I did some research on the web when I first began having symptoms. (See Appendix G, page 265.)

If you receive proper medical care, your panic attacks should eventually subside. With time, you will be able to find comfort in the loved ones you have now, the blessings in your life, and new goals and activities.

Special Mementos

In the past I have heard of people who could not stand to be in the same house where a deceased relative had lived. However, when Angie died, I immediately felt comforted by finding special memories and keepsakes. If you are one who tries to avoid all reminders of the child who has died, please do not throw things away in haste. Save them until you have time to recover from the deepest sorrow. Box them up and put them out of sight if you must, but store them nearby.

I'm not saying you should keep all of the clothing and every single thing the child ever owned. But do save the pictures, knick-knacks, letters, gifts to you from your child, etc. One of my most treasured items is a

poem book Angie gave me, with many things underlined and comments written all over the place. You might say she “personalized” that poem book for me! And now it is like she is still communicating to me through the pages of that book. I can’t talk to her, but she speaks through the words she wrote. I also cherish the many letters she wrote to me.

For some, the treasures may be school papers you saved or art projects. Angie made many flower arrangements for the walls, and other types of decorations. I will probably cry when they become too old to be attractive any longer, but it will be a short cry and I will go back to living my joyful life again.

Photos are one thing most people will value. After returning from Arizona, one of the first things I did was to make copies of pictures of Angie. Those with Sophie and/or Eric were especially cherished. When I sent out thank-you notes, I included a photo for each person or family. Many told me that they put the photo where they could see it often and be reminded to pray for us!

There is a word of caution I would like to add to this section, however. When I was a child I remember going to visit in the home of a peer. When I walked into the living room the first thing I noticed was a **huge** picture of a beautiful young girl. I asked who it was, and the explanation offered was that her sister died at a very young age. To my knowledge there was no comparable picture of my friend. Perhaps she understood, but we need to consider the feelings of those who are alive, and value them at least as much as the deceased child.

In our homes we should include, as much as possible, equal numbers of photos of siblings and other

relatives. The photos of the deceased child should never become a “shrine” to that person.

Recovery Time

It has been nearly three years since Angie died. If your child died recently, please do not despair or feel you won't have happiness at all for a long time. Don't think you will be sad for three years and then suddenly find joy in your life. The happiness and joy come gradually. The joy is there all of the time if you are a Christian, but the sorrow may still be overwhelming at first. As time goes by, you will find longer periods of happiness and shorter periods of extreme sorrow. Just take one day at a time.

For some, recovery comes more quickly than for others. I believe some of it depends on how close you were to the one who died – emotionally, spiritually and even physically. If you saw each other often, talked on the phone a lot, or if the child was young and still living in your home, recovery will be harder in some ways. Yet you will have the comfort of the happy times you spent together.

I think that when my brother and my father died, I probably felt that I had recovered within six months. I would still get tears now and then when it was a birthday or when I realized I could no longer send my dad a Father's Day card. It was not agony, though, like it has been for Angie's birthdays and other holidays without her. There is nothing wrong with you if it is harder to adjust to the loss of a child than it is to adjust to other deaths.

Even through the rough times, I was able to still enjoy the other family members and being together with them, all the while knowing Angie was absent. I could

have an enjoyable day, but at night when I was alone I could no longer focus on others, and I would finally let the tears flow. After this release I could face another day without her, and try to enjoy the family and friends I still have.

One lady told me about an acquaintance who was unable to go to work on her child's birthday for many years. While this is extreme, I can relate.

I usually have a difficult time the week before Angie's birthday, and by the time the day gets here, I am nearly over it. That may be because when I am so focused on the event, I realize that I need to get out some of her old letters or the poem book, read them, and cry. Once I am through crying for an hour or so, I feel a great relief and I can return to my normal life activities. I know each year will get a little easier, but I also know I will always miss her.

However, if you discover that you have to stay home and cry all day every year on your child's birthday, you need to seek a professional's advice. After the first birthday, you should be able to go to work like usual or take care of your other responsibilities. Even if you become distressed and cry a few times before the birthday, or that very day, you should not have to stop your normal routine to grieve all day.

Remaining Family Members

While working on your recovery, don't overlook the remaining family members (in addition to your spouse). If you have children and grandchildren who are still with you, don't be so caught up in your grief that you neglect to give them the love and attention they need – now more than ever!

Remember the consequences of Jacob's favoritism toward Joseph (Gen. 37:3-4) and be aware of a possible perception (real or imagined) by your other children of partiality toward the deceased. Assure your remaining children of your love for them and thankfulness that they are still with you. Make them feel a part of your "joy in the morning" because they truly are! Recognize that they, too, have suffered great emotional distress and encourage them to talk about what has happened.

The first birthday we were without Angie, I was so busy feeling sorry for myself that I didn't stop to think about how our son, Mike, must have been feeling. Later when we talked about it, I discovered that he was having a hard time, too. I should have called him on Angie's birthday or a day or two before her birthday and told him how I was feeling so we could have comforted one another.

To the Dads

While working on the final proof of this book before sending it to the printer, I realized I needed to add a special message to all of the fathers out there who have lost a child. While this book does relate to you in a general way, I feel the need to speak to you more directly. I have mentioned Joe's loss throughout the book, because it is certainly not mine alone. Even so, there is a special relationship between father and son or father and daughter. Perhaps sharing this with you will give you more hope for the future.

Joe was always close to both of our children. He loved being involved in their lives as a teacher and coach, as well as the personal relationship they shared. But I feel that many fathers may look at the bond between mother and child, wondering if they did enough.

God's Word teaches us that the father is to earn an income for the family (1 Tim. 5:8). Even if the wife works away from home, the father feels the burden of making ends meet and hopefully providing more than just food on the table.

Although Joe could have probably made more money at another job, he always loved teaching and coaching. He gave us more than the necessities financially. Even before he became a Christian, Joe was a good moral person and set high standards for our children. He never pressured them to an unreasonable degree, but always let them know what was expected.

Joe tried to do special things for our children, to let them know how much he cared about them. He was at all of the school events partly because he was a teacher and coach, but they knew he would have been there anyway. He taught them to respect the laws, and to respect people who are in authority. For one Father's Day Angie gave Joe a card with a poem "To My Hero," telling him how special he was to her.

Of our two children, Angie was more rebellious as a teenager. Joe had a curfew for her, and she was very putout when she came home from college for the summer and found that Dad still had rules. She rebelled against the curfew, and Dad relented somewhat. Nevertheless, one time when she was out very late (maybe 2:00 a.m.), Angie came home to find her Dad awake on the couch waiting for her return. He said something like, "Angie, you can stay out as late as you want, but just remember that I will be waiting up for you, and I have to go to work the next day." She was far more thoughtful thereafter.

When Angie first went to college, Joe gave her a special ring, which was silver with a blue stone. She wore it so much that after she died, we saw it had become

bent and battered. She had treasured her dad's gift from the heart.

Perhaps the following story will show you better than anything what a close bond they shared. When Angie married Eric Lee, the rehearsal dinner was held in the home of his parents, Judi and Steve, in Olton, TX. Both Angie and Eric gave gifts to their parents. Part Joe's gift was a tape of the song, "Butterfly Kisses." It tells of a man raising a little girl, and how thankful he always was for those "butterfly kisses." Then it comes to the wedding day, and the father feels so much pride. He knows he must have done something right to get "butterfly kisses" through all those years.

Along with the tape, Angie gave her dad a framed photo of herself in her wedding dress, sitting on a bench with the skirt all spread out on the ground to the side. Her long hair was pulled over her right shoulder, and the bridal bouquet was in her left hand. The other frame holds the words to the "Butterfly Kisses" song, ending with a personal note saying, "I'll always be your little girl. – Angie, June 14, 1997"

Before presenting Dad with the photo and framed song, Angie played the song, "Butterfly Kisses," and told him it was especially for him. She knew it would make him cry!

Angie had a hard time getting pregnant. She was so eager to call her Dad when the day came and ask him, "Well, do you want to be called Grandpa, Papa, Gramps, or" You should have heard him shout!

Grandpa Joe and I were able to make several trips to Arizona the first few months of Sophie's life, in spite of his teaching job and summer work. What a proud grandpa! For his first Father's Day as a grandpa, Angie cut and made a butterfly to send with the gift.

In August we were already planning for my flight to Arizona to be at Sophie's first birthday party in October. Joe couldn't go because of school obligations, but he was unselfish and pleased that I could go. He wanted to buy a very special and personal gift for Sophie. He found a gorgeous bracelet with butterflies on it. He told me, "When Angie sees this, it will make her cry like she made me cry when she got married." Of course I knew he was referring to the meal where he was given "Butterfly Kisses."

When Angie died, it was as if the sparkle went out of Joe's eyes – and heart. His little girl was gone.

About four years earlier, Joe had lost a very close friend, Don Laws, who died of cancer. Don had been the head football coach when Joe began teaching in Eudora, and Joe was his assistant. Joe went through a mild depression when Don died, and he realized he could not "hide out" from people after Angie died, which is what he had done after Don was gone. So he fought the depression and tried to talk more. Because of it, we grew closer and were able to grow stronger, both as individuals and as a couple. Joe had also become a Christian a few months after Don's death, so I'm sure that helped him tremendously when he was faced with the tragedy of losing his precious daughter.

As I mentioned earlier, Joe had a big adjustment when we moved to Texas close to a year after Angie died. His job was more difficult, the school was larger and he left his school friends and coaching buddies back in Eudora. But he always said it was worth it to be here close to Sophie. He sacrificed so I could spend much of my time helping raise Sophie the first few months we lived here. Joe has always been completely convinced that we made the right decision to move here. He knew it is what Angie would have wanted, as well as what Joe and I both needed.

So, Dads, why am I telling you all of this? Just to make you feel worse? NO! To help you know that you can and will heal.

For a couple of years, Joe did not joke around like he used to – before Angie died. He did get excited about seeing Sophie, and always enjoyed talking to and being with our son, as well as the rest of the family – but a lot of the thrill of living was gone.

This fall Joe started a new job here in Shallowater, which I know is an answer to many prayers going to God on our behalf (as well as those we have offered). He is presently teaching Algebra 2 and Pre-Calc, his two favorite subjects. He is helping as an unpaid assistant football coach, starting to do something he truly loves again! He even jokes with people and tells many stories about teaching, the family, school, etc. – like he used to do!

Yesterday he told me something that helps me know he is truly healing. He showed me a never-been-worn pair of sports shoes. They are mostly black, with a little red. He bought them, he said, when we lived in Eudora (where the school colors were red and blue). He had planned to wear them that football season, when Angie died just as the season was beginning. (Joe's friend Dave had gone to the football field during one of the first few practices to tell Joe that Angie had been in a serious accident, and was in critical condition. We didn't know she had died instantly.)

Joe further revealed to me that after Angie's death he could not bear to get out the football shoes and wear them, even though he did work as an assistant coach in Eudora for the remainder of the season. Joe loves the sport, but he often commented to me, "My heart just was not in it that fall." Now that he has made so much progress in his recovery, he can wear the shoes

while coaching in Shallowater, where the school colors are actually black and red!

Men, I hope you can see how significant it is that Joe was able to get out those shoes and wear them now. He will always miss his “little girl,” but he is again finding joy in living and doing the things he formerly enjoyed. It is my hope and prayer that you, too, will find “joy in the morning.”

God’s Word

For a Christian, one of the greatest comforts in this life is God’s Word. If you have not yet begun reading the main body of this book, do so with an open Bible. Or, if you need to read it through quickly, do so the first time and then go back and study it with a Bible on the table.

Lean on Christian friends and family members. If you have been a Christian for a number of years, you have undoubtedly been on the giving end when loved ones were grieving. Now it is your turn to accept from others.

Years ago Angie told a beloved Christian friend who needed some financial assistance, “If you don’t let me help you, I can’t do what God wants me to do.” She explained that we all have times when we are in need. Then it is up to us to be accepting. In 1 Cor. 1:3 we learn that God comforts us so “that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” If you are a Christian, let other Christians fulfill their duty to do what they can to comfort you. As you read this book, and realize that you can recover from your loss, you are allowing me to fulfill my responsibility to comfort you as God has comforted me.

Appendix F....

When a Young Child

Loses a Parent

By Barbara Hanna

When Angie died, one of my first thoughts for Sophie was the painful realization that she would never really know Angie. How could I think of all of the special memories to share with her? Actually, I didn't even know many of the things I would want her to learn about, because even a parent does not hear about all of the good things a child has done.

Before 24 hours had gone by, I decided to ask friends and relatives to write letters to Sophie about their memories of Angie. Many of her friends in Arizona gave me letters before I even returned to Kansas! In the end, there were letters from people in various states: (1) those who knew Angie as a child in Eudora; (2) college friends who knew her in Arkansas when she attended Harding University; (3) friends and colleagues who knew Angie as a teacher in Texas; and (4) those who knew Angie when she lived in Arizona. The friends in Arizona related stories of her as a teacher and as a Christian woman. They were the people who saw Angie often while she was pregnant and after she gave birth to Sophie.

Even before I received all of the letters, I realized that I wanted to share them with people who knew Angie. Her light as a Christian must not be diminished, but should continue to shine forth and glorify the Father as others read of her good deeds! There were also friends who lived in Kansas who were very saddened by the fact that they could not come to her funeral, and we were not going to have a memorial service in

Eudora. So I made the decision to let it be known that books would be made available for anyone who wanted to have one as a tribute to Angie's life.

In the end we distributed close to 200 books. I put photos of Angie's life in the back of the book, and my dearly beloved friend, Janet Taylor, saw the need for the photos to be printed in color rather than black and white. She and her husband gave the money to the printer without my knowledge, and they surprised me when the books were completed. When I saw how much the colored photos added to the book, I realized why Janet thought it was so necessary. I saved some of the books for Sophie to give to her future husband's family, so they will have an opportunity to "know" Sophie's first mother.

Later I put all of the original letters into an album for Sophie, along with the private letters and those I received after the book had been printed. Making the book was a comfort to me, and I hope it will be for Sophie when she is old enough to really understand what happened. Even if you choose not to share the letters with anyone else, if your young child or grandchild has lost a parent, consider asking people to write letters about the departed one. Those letters will be a bond between the child and the parent he or she may not remember well (or not at all).

When I was at Angie's funeral, a lady told me of a personal experience. Her mother died when she was only two years old. She said her dad remarried and would never talk to his young daughter about her mother. He cut off his first wife's side of the family, probably thinking it would be easier to recover. The lady told me how there was an empty place in her heart as she grew up. She never felt whole until she searched for her first mother's family, and got to know them and learn about the mother she could not

remember. She urged me to never let this happen to Sophie, and told me that the gift of the letters would be invaluable to Sophie when she is grown.

Memories for a Young Child's Heart

While the letters would fill a void when Sophie grew older, I pondered how I could share her mother with her when she was so young. Of course there was nothing I could do about it while she was still a baby, but I knew that before long she would begin understanding the books we would read to her and the things we would teach her.

As I went through old photos of Angie, I selected some to use in a picture book for Sophie. I made copies of the ones I wanted to keep, and then put the ones for Sophie into categories, such as: baby and toddler, birthdays, sports, plays, acting silly, graduation from high school, moving to college and then graduating, teaching, finding Eric, getting married, and finally the special joy of giving birth to a baby – Sophie.

After we moved to Texas, Eric asked me to go with him to Sophie's two-year doctor check-up. We spoke some about how she would adjust as she grew older and realized what had happened. Eric told him about the picture book I made, and the doctor said it was an excellent idea! He mentioned that she would appreciate it more when she turned three, and thereafter, which has been the case.

The photos had been lovingly arranged in an album with butterflies on the cover. After asking Eric what he preferred, and letting him read it to Sophie, he said he thought I should keep it at my house because when Sophie has questions about Angie's childhood, I will be able to answer them better than he could. So the book

sits on the bottom shelf of my bookcase in the living room. Any time Sophie wants to look at it, she can.

One of the results of going through the book together is the way Sophie has learned to appreciate the funny side of Angie through the silly photos I used in one section. Every time she sees “clown Rene” with a huge flyswatter “spanking clown Angie,” Sophie wants me to tell her all about it! Sophie loves to tease, and she has that ornery look in her eyes like Angie had! After explaining it to her the first few times, and then hearing a song on a VCR tape, “Ain’t it Great to be Crazy,” we talked about how we like to be silly just like Mommie Angie. Often when the song comes on the tape or she hears it somewhere else, Sophie says to me, “Grandma, there’s **our** song!”

The last section of the book about Angie really doesn’t even have Angie’s pictures. It is photos of Sophie’s second birthday party, and shows that she continues to be a very happy child, even though she no longer has Mommie Angie here on earth.

The very last page was added after Eric and Connie married, and it is a picture of the three of them together. In my heart I know this would greatly please Angie. She would want nothing more than for Eric and Sophie to have a happy Christian home with a devoted wife for Eric and a very loving mother for Sophie.

A Treasure Chest

Other special memories I have saved for Sophie are in a Treasure Chest. I bought two of them, actually. The smaller one holds the little items I want to share with Sophie now and throughout the next few years. The larger chest is for when she is a little older.

One item in the small Treasure Chest is a child's book, *Butterfly Kisses*. It was written around the song with the same title. In Appendix E, I mentioned that when Angie was getting married, she played that song for her dad at the rehearsal dinner.

When I found this book, I bought it and where it says who the book belongs to, I wrote, "Angie & Eric's little girl – some day. From Grandpa Joe & Grandma Barb." I dated it 8-6-98 and sent it to Angie. She was thrilled, and I want to share this special memory with Sophie. I've already read the book to her, although it was hard to keep from crying as I read it.

Another treasure I saved is an activity I used in a class with Sophie. Now I have used it in a preschool book I published, too. It was on the topic of baby Jesus being born in Bethlehem. Sophie glued a graphic of Mary and Jesus and another one of Joseph, as well as the frame for the stable. On the page at the top when you open it like a booklet, there is a song Angie had written to use in the cradle roll class she had wanted to teach with Sophie as one of the students. It says:

MARY HAD A LITTLE BABE

**By Mommie Angie
Especially for Sophie**

Mary had a little babe,
Little babe, little babe.
Mary had a little babe,
Born in Bethlehem.

Jesus was the baby's name.
Baby's name, baby's name.
Jesus was the baby's name.
Born the King of kings.

Of course I don't say it was "Especially for Sophie" in the version I published, but I feel this Bible lesson activity will mean a lot to Sophie when she is older. The song and the class Angie would have taught will be a precious memory for Sophie.

Another item in the Treasure Chest is a videotape. I have included a note saying, "Mommie Angie helped with this VBS between her Junior and Senior years of High School in Eudora."

There are many other memories I have saved for Sophie in the small Treasure Chest, but this will give you some ideas if you want to do something similar. In the larger chest I have placed items such as: a quilt with embroidered Bible pictures, made by my grandmother, Sophie's great-great-grandmother; pictures; extra copies of the book I made for Sophie with letters from Angie's friends; and other large items or keepsakes she will appreciate more when she is older.

Not Forgotten

Eric promised Joe and me from the very start that Angie would never be forgotten. Over the months, he has continued to reassure us that he would make sure Sophie knows about her first mother. What a blessing it has been to us for Eric to love and marry a woman who understands our loss. Connie's first husband died of cancer. (Not that we would ever be happy that she lost Guy, but only that we are thankful that she is the one Eric chose to marry.)

When Connie was pregnant with Barrett, she and Eric showed Sophie a video of Angie's baby shower right before Sophie was born. They talked with Sophie about her own birth. Connie's mother related a very special story to me. She said that one day Sophie

asked Connie if she (Sophie) grew inside her (Connie). Connie told her that, no, she didn't, but she grew inside Mommie Angie and she loved her **very much**. Then Connie added, "And I love you **very much**, too!"

Eric told me that he planned to be very honest with Sophie right from the start about what had happened. He related his own experience of being an adopted child. He said that it never bothered him at all, because his parents told him – from the time he was even too little to fully understand – that he was chosen by them to be their son. He said that Sophie will have fewer problems adjusting if she knows the truth from the start. He is right, and I believe that any book you read by a professional will verify this truth.

Marry in Haste, Repent in Leisure

While we are blessed in the fact that Eric found a Christian to marry, many young parents who lose a spouse are not as wise as Eric and Connie. A man told Eric about a young widower who remarried quickly to have a mother for his children. He did not take time to carefully select a Christian woman, and spent many years regretting his hasty decision. Rather than lightening his load, the marriage caused the burden to become even heavier.

When Angie died, Eric had to have help with Sophie, so he moved in with his parents. While there is good advice being given about not moving immediately following a death, Eric had no choice, really. Sophie needed someone she knew and the security of a regular routine. Eric and Angie had decided not to put her in day care, so she was not used to being around a lot of children. Eric's parents are wonderful Christian people, and we were comforted to know that Sophie

would be in this fine home. As I mentioned in the book, we later moved to Texas to help with her care.

It would be a temptation to some to remarry quickly, especially if they don't have good Christian parents to assist them. But remember that God has provided a church family for times such as this. Do not hesitate to call on them in your time of need. There may be a Christian woman in the congregation who provides home day care and who would give your child much love and a good environment in which to grow.

After a year, or whenever you are recovered and ready to begin the search for a Christian mate, remember to pray that you will make a wise choice. Write down the characteristics you want in a parent for your child and in a spouse for yourself. Set high standards. With God's help, you will one day find a Christian spouse. You can have a happy home for your child now, and later you can be blessed with a Christian spouse to help you raise your child.

Grandparents and a Child's New Parent

Grandparents face trying times when an adult child dies leaving the child with their son-in-law or daughter-in-law. Not every situation works out as well as ours has. In some situations, a professional is needed to resolve extreme difficulties such as a child being left with an abusive parent. However, these few suggestions will be beneficial in most circumstances.

- ⇒ Never blame your child's spouse for your child's death (unless he or she actually pulled the trigger).
- ⇒ Always compliment every good action and every good decision, although it is best not to give

false words of appreciation. Don't gush or the compliment will seem to be insincere, even if it is genuine.

- ⇒ Never bring up the faults of your son-in-law or daughter-in-law. Remember, your child had faults, too.
- ⇒ "Be there" when you are needed, but do not impose your presence when it is not wanted. You don't want to become a leech or to create a situation where your visits are dreaded.
- ⇒ Think ahead to the time when a new spouse will become your grandchild's parent. Pray for the right decisions to be made regarding the selection of a good parent and spouse, as well as the best time for the change to take place. For as long as I can remember – following Angie's death – Joe has prayed at meal time that Eric will make wise decisions, and now that Eric and Connie will make wise decisions.
- ⇒ When your child's spouse is ready to remarry, be positive. When Eric told Joe he had found the one he wanted to marry, Joe said, "Well, you did such a good job the first time, I'm sure you will this time, too."
- ⇒ Welcome the new spouse with loving arms and hearts. Show appreciation to the one who will be raising your grandchild.
- ⇒ If your child's spouse does not seem ready to search for a mate after a year or more, plant a seed when the time is right. Let it be known that you feel he or she has waited long enough.

- ⇒ If you live a long distance from your grandchild, plan to make calls and send videos, tapes, letters, etc. to continue communicating.
- ⇒ If your grandchild is old enough, you may be able to use the Internet to communicate through messages and maybe even with a video link.
- ⇒ Always remember your grandchild and both parents with birthday and Christmas gifts. Let them know you love them all. When new children are born to the family, treat them with as much love as you do the child born to your child. Give your grandchild's siblings the same type of gifts and treat them equally.
- ⇒ Invite your grandchild into your home as you always have. But do not be negative when the time comes that you don't see him or her as often because there is a new mother or father in the home. Thank God for them all.
- ⇒ Be friendly with other family members. We have developed a very close relationship with Eric's parents. We enjoy eating out with them, visiting, and sometimes going to a movie. Now we are growing a relationship with Connie's parents, too.
- ⇒ Never say anything negative to either set of grandparents about their children or the spouses. Be thankful for the new grandparents, and remember that you are also a "third" set of grandparents.
- ⇒ Be patient as the newly married couple adjusts to finding time for three sets of grandparents. If you are left out sometimes, remember the times when you are included and be thankful!

The New Parent

It is only human to wish your child could be raising your grandchild. That can never be, so work at being thankful for what you have. Give the new parent time to adjust. Think about how you might feel if you were in his or her position. When Connie married Eric, she inherited the responsibility of helping raise Sophie. Since she had never been a parent before, it must have been a big adjustment on her part, but one she handled admirably. Even if you don't feel the new parent is making all of the best decisions, bite your tongue and give him or her time to grow into the new role.

Be careful not to say anything that would cause divisiveness between you and the new parent. You don't want your relationship to cause you to see less of your grandchild.

Don't expect the new parent to be just like your child! Your child had strengths and weaknesses. The new parent has strengths and weaknesses. Remember that there would be things your child would have done as a parent (or maybe already had done) with which you would not agree!

Make Adjustments

Probably one of my biggest adjustments has been related to holidays and special occasions. In our home, we made a "big deal" out of these times. I taught my children to give us gifts and call us when they lived away from home, as a way to show their love and respect. Many parents who are good Christians and great parents do not expect their children to give them gifts. Some may not even feel it is necessary for their children to remember their birthday at all,

Lisa Smith has helped me tremendously when it comes to understanding a different perspective. When she was being raised, this emphasis was absent. She said she sometimes even forgets that it is close to her own birthday until someone reminds her.

Another adjustment for me has been the absence of phone calls from Angie. She called me three or four times a week to tell me something cute Sophie had done or to ask my advice. We usually talked longer on Friday evenings. I might be cleaning house, and then stop to visit with her. After Angie's death, I often cried when I was alone in the house on Friday nights.

How can we adjust to these changes in our lives? In addition to prayer and the comfort of Christian friends, it is essential to create new traditions and habits.

Now I clean house on Thursdays, and I am very thankful that I can do it during the day, and not in the evening after a full day of caring for children. Often I play music while I clean.

Instead of waiting for someone to send me cards or give me gifts, I have worked at doing things for others. It is still hard to know that Angie won't be calling on my birthday, anniversary or other special occasions. But Joe and I spend a lot of time together, and do things we enjoy. We probably eat out more often than we did – mostly so we can be together and talk without the need to cook and clean up afterwards.

Joe and I always look forward to times when we can keep Sophie for a day or for all night. We have found some parks we all appreciate. Joe has his "turn" to play with Sophie when she visits. They love playing in the pool (a very inexpensive blow-up pool) in the back

yard, making bubbles outside, building with Duplos®, setting up the Dora playhouse, etc.

Sophie and I have special times when I teach her the Bible lessons I prepared for my preschool class. She loves doing puzzles, and I have helped her learn how to sort out the ones with the straight edges and first build the frame. I saved many of the games from my day care, and now Sophie and I enjoy playing them with each other.

Moving to Texas has been a huge adjustment for Joe and me, but one we are glad we have made. When Christians move, they have a built-in family immediately when they find a congregation that loves God and each other. This has been a major factor in accepting Shallowater as our new home (after living more than 35 years in Eudora, KS). We continue to get better acquainted with people in the church and community.

Your grandchild must not be the center of your world. It is vital to his or her wellbeing that you adjust by finding happiness in all areas of your life, and not only the times when you can be with your grandchild. Your strength will be a fortress for this precious child in the years ahead.

Appendix G....

No Panic Attacks

By Barbara Hanna

Because I mentioned panic attacks twice in this book, I feel it is essential to caution those who have undergone difficult trials to not merely “assume” they are having panic attacks. Go to your physician for a diagnosis and ask if you should see a heart specialist. Be sure there is no other reason for a rapid pulse!

After two events of Tachycardia that sent me to the ER, I was diagnosed with a heart problem, which I had from birth. The heart specialist said the blood would swirl in one chamber, not allowing enough blood to go to the other chamber. It caused my heartbeat to speed up, trying to push more blood into the other chamber. The swirling even caused me to feel stressed, he further enlightened me. I was told that I never had any panic attacks. (However, I want to make it clear that I do believe many who have undergone trials such as mine do experience panic attacks, and need proper treatment.) A successful cardiac ablation was performed on April 13, 2007, which killed the “bad” places in my heart. It is my own opinion that the trauma of Angie’s death caused my heart problem to worsen more quickly than it might have otherwise.

Trials in life can contribute to various physical illnesses. Losing a close loved one can be especially difficult to bear. We all need to be aware of the need for a yearly physical exam. Any signs of stress or illness should be examined immediately. Our health is a precious gift from God. It is our obligation to take the best possible care of this earthly body, so we can spend more time serving Him.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barbara Hanna is the owner of Hanna Publications. She has been writing, publishing and selling Bible lesson books for children since 1994. You may find a listing of the books she sells at:
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Mrs. Hanna has been a faithful member of the churches of Christ since 1972. She has taught all ages of children from two years of age through seventh grade, as well as Ladies' Bible Classes.

From 1974 to 1984, Mrs. Hanna served as the Kansas State Coordinator for Pro-Family Forum. She published and edited the newsletter for this organization, and later published a newsletter called *The Virtuous Woman* for 18 months. Several of her articles were published in the national Pro-Family Forum Newsletter.

At the time of the third printing of this book, she has written and published three Bible lesson books for fifth and sixth graders and 20 Reproducible Work Sheet (RWS) books for grades 1-4 (19 of these are also available in the CD version). Eight of the RWS books/CDs include lessons for grades 5-8 by John K. Wills. She has also published nine preschool books/CDs, three being books she wrote, and six were written by Lisa Smith and Keri Hobgood. She has published *Bible Boot Camp 1: Basic Training* and *Bible Boot Camp 2: A Few Good Men*, by Bonnie L. Gary.

Prior to moving to Texas in 2004, Mrs. Hanna worked for 35 years as a home day care provider. Since retiring, she has had more time to devote to writing. She lives in Shallowater, TX with her husband, Joe. They worship with the 12th St. church of Christ.