

Beauty from Ashes

Love Born in the Face of Poor Pre-Natal Diagnosis

When Jessica and Corey Barnes found out that she was pregnant with their third child, Elias, they knew that the little one growing inside her would transform their hearts and lives forever. Fourteen weeks later, they learned just how big that transformation would be. At their eighteen-week ultrasound, Jessica and Corey received the news that Elias had a rare fatal abnormality known as anencephaly.

Upon receiving this diagnosis, doctors recommended that they terminate the pregnancy that very day. Advising them that, legally, they had up until 23 weeks to end the pregnancy in Indiana, they were told that it would be much easier for them to walk this road now.

Looking back, Jessica remarked, “We knew immediately that this is not what we wanted. It all felt so horrible.” Telling the doctor that they needed time to pray and process, they left the office, scheduling a consultation with a high risk doctor the following day. “As soon as we left, Corey and I looked at each other and agreed that this was God’s child, not ours, and we would go to Him, the great physician, to look for healing, comfort, and peace.”

Once they knew their time with him would be short, they desired all the more to know Elias and for Elias to know them. Throughout the pregnancy, the Barnes family bonded with their baby boy over many extra 4-D ultrasounds, and they sang and prayed over him every night.

When Elias’ due date came, labor was induced and went quickly. As Jessica recounts, when her little one took his first breath, “The room was filled with so much love and peace.” In the presence of Elias, they found themselves in the presence of the Lord.

Though the Barnes family and countless loved ones were given just one day with baby Elias, it was a day in which they would experience love and unity in a way that surpassed everything they had ever known. All the while, Elias’ heart beat strong.

When night came, they could see that life was slipping from him as his heartbeat slowed and he began having seizures. They held him close, singing and praying songs of worship, thanksgiving, and peace. Though his eyes had been closed all day, just before he passed he opened one eye, meeting the gaze of a mother and father who deeply loved him in the image of the Heavenly Father whom he was preparing to meet. “The Lord gave us that small gesture to show us that Elias’ life was real and mattered.” Looking upon their sweet baby boy as he breathed his last, Jessica and Corey saw not imperfection, but love.

Six years later, not a day goes by when the Barnes family does not think about little Elias. Looking back, Jessica reflects, “He has changed my life in every aspect, and I am honored to be his mom.” Though Elias’ life was short, the love that he invoked in transforming and unifying a community will be forever life-giving. “He made our marriage stronger. He unified a body of believers in our church and in our families. Even in the midst of such a heart-wrenching situation of holding your baby as he slips to experience God’s sovereignty and grace, there is so much beauty. Truly, beauty from ashes...”