

May 24, 1976: The evening of this day found me installing storm windows at our house in Huntington, WV and Marilyn experiencing abdominal discomfort which we assumed was indigestion. Marilyn was in the 6th month of our first pregnancy, and we had not yet begun to prepare for our baby's due date at the end of August.

May 25, 1976: The day began with a shock at 5:30 a.m. when Marilyn awakened to find that she was bleeding and that her "water" had broken. I rushed her to Cabell Huntington Hospital emergency room, and at 7:06 a.m. shortly after our arrival, our baby boy was born...a full three months early weighing 3.4 lbs. Marilyn had suffered "placenta abruption," a serious condition where the placenta had broken away from the wall of the uterus which can be a life-threatening event for the mother as well as child. This condition can decrease or block the baby's supply of oxygen and nutrients and cause heavy bleeding in the mother sometimes leading to toxemia. Because of this, the attending physician had told us it was likely our baby would not be born alive.

Defeating the odds, Ethan was born alive but with extreme respiratory distress. In the process of clearing his air passages at birth, he became apneic and had to be hand-bagged to resuscitate him. Because his veins were so small and fragile, an umbilical catheter was inserted to provide IV fluids, and he was supplied with oxygen levels that often reached 100% which we were

warned could lead to reduced vision or blindness. He struggled to breathe, and due to Respiratory Distress Syndrome (also called Hyaline Membrane Disease in premature infants), Ethan was placed on a Bournes Respirator to sustain his breathing, as he was able to breath on his own for only a short time before his weakened chest muscles gave out.

Marilyn was not allowed to see Ethan until that evening due to the intense efforts to sustain him, and our pediatrician told me privately that he did not expect Ethan to make it thru the night. Believe it or not, because of Ethan's emaciated "shrunken" appearance, one doctor even suggested to me that it might be best that Marilyn not see him in that condition. Transporting Marilyn in a wheelchair to say "good-bye" that night to Ethan was a traumatic event I will never forget, and my heart was breaking along with Marilyn. After leaving the hospital, I spent the night with Marilyn's mother and dad who lived nearby. Before retiring, I picked up the Bible by the bedside and when I opened it, my eyes were directed to the following Scriptural passage on the page I had turned to:

"For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth. By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You. I have become as a wonder to many, But You are my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all the day." (Psalm 71:5-8)

I felt God had led me directly to this passage and was His assurance to me that regardless of the challenges of that day and the days ahead, Ethan was going to make it! These verses were so meaningful to both Marilyn and me that we titled this passage "Ethan's Prayer," and we had it posted to Ethan's Isolette (Incubator) which stayed with him throughout his hospital stay.

May 26-29: While on the respirator, Ethan developed pneumonia and the attending pulmonary doctor was concerned that after 4 days on the respirator, Ethan's already weakened chest muscles would atrophy to the extent he would not be able to sustain continuous breathing. We were not told when they would try to take Ethan off the respirator, and on the afternoon of the 29th, I stopped by the intensive care neonatal nursery to spend a few minutes with Ethan. Thru the observation window I noticed a group of nurses and physicians surrounding Ethan, and I saw one of the nurses lift up something that I assumed was part of the endotracheal tube that had been inserted into Ethan's lungs. My heart "stopped," as I lifted up prayers on Ethan's behalf knowing then that they were taking him off the respirator. I literally started breathing again and broke down in tears when I saw one of the nurses smile....and I knew Ethan was OK....and breathing on his own.

May 27 – 6/22: Ethan experienced many periods of apnea where he would stop breathing, setting off

alarms, causing the attending nurses to pinch or shake him to get him "restarted" which was always a harrowing experience for us whether we were present or on the phone checking his status. On 6/22, a heart murmur was noted and diagnosed as Patent ductus arteriosus (PDA) indicating that a valve in his heart had not closed properly at birth. Within a few days, Ethan became dusky in appearance with congestive heart failure.



June 25: On his 1-month birthday, Ethan was transported to West Virginia University Hospital in Morgantown via a church friend's private airplane. There was no room for Marilyn and me on the plane, and my heart was broken for Marilyn who so desperately wanted to travel with Ethan. We followed by car arriving in Morgantown, WV late that night. We were taken to the neonatal intensive care nursery where the nurses asked Marilyn if she had ever held her son. Because of hospital policy and

his critical condition in Huntington, she had never previously been able to hold him, so she welcomed this opportunity. The nurses at Morgantown cut the bottom out of a small Dixie cup for placement of the oxygen hose and then wrapped Ethan in insulated foil such that he looked like a burrito and placed him in Marilyn's arms. Because the nursery lights were dimmed, Ethan opened his eyes and Marilyn was able to hold close, look him in the eyes, and cherish her son for the first time!

To correct the open-heart valve, surgery was scheduled, but one of the surgeons had researched a new procedure that had shown some positive results. This involved giving a blood transfusion boosting blood volume and pressure to cause the valve to start closing. Because I am an O-negative universal donor, I was Ethan's donor, and this procedure did, in fact, initiate the closing of the patent-ductus valve.

July 23: Ethan had achieved the critical 5-pound criteria for discharge, and we were able to take him home. Due to his prematurity and weakened immune system, we were unable to take Ethan out of the house for a full year, and our daily regimen included nightly feedings at 3:00 a.m.! What a joyous event it was when after a year, we were able to have Ethan publicly dedicated to the Lord at our church and introduce him to our friends.

At his first follow-up appointment one year later at WV University Hospital, he was declared to be fully

recovered and all other follow-up appointments were canceled....a true miracle of God's healing! Ethan's name is of Hebrew origin and means "firm, strong, and long-lived." We feel God gave us this name.... as it tells his story so well!

We could have questioned why this happened to us, as Marilyn was a Registered Nurse at the time with excellent prenatal care, but God was reminding us of Biblical truths that we had known but needed to internalize into not only our thinking but also the daily outliving of our lives.

God does not promise us a life without challenges (John 16:33), but He does promise to be with us and give us peace in our journey: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified....for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you or forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6)

"Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you." (1 Peter 5:7)

"You (God) will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You." (Isaiah 26:3)

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them." (Romans 8:28)

These promises are given to us when we become God's children by faith: "But to all who believed Him

(Jesus) and accepted Him, He gave the right to become the children of God." (John 1:12)

As God's child, we not only have a relationship with Him, but He forgives all our sins and gives us eternal life beyond death: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

If you have never made a decision to acknowledge and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, I invite you to do so by praying sincerely the following prayer:

"Dear Lord God, I believe you sent your Son Jesus Christ to die in my place to pay the penalty for my sins and that He rose from the dead to defeat death to bring me into a relationship with You as Your child. I confess that I am a sinner, and I now by faith receive Jesus Christ into my life as Lord and Savior. Help me by Your Holy Spirit to live for You every day. In Jesus' name I pray this prayer, Amen."



Larry invites you to visit his website for this and other life experiences: www.GodsTreasurePouch.com or www.larrymcquinn.com

Scriptural passages are from the New King James Version (NKJV), New International Version (NIV) & New Living Translation (NLT)



ETHAN'S Miracle STORY

