

From This Point On
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[On May 1, 2006 Leann Durden entered the hospital to deliver a new child into the world. A few hours later, she herself was fighting desperately for her life. The initial diagnosis was an amniotic fluid embolism—which caused Leann to bleed out. It would eventually take 44 units of blood to keep Leann alive. They went from the heights of joy with the expectation of bringing a newborn into the world to the darkness of death in just a matter of minutes. Here is their story.]

Powerless, I sat on the floor of the hospital room, where only a few moments earlier Leann and I had been reading from a devotional book. I cried, prayed, and thought about our eight wonderful years of marriage. She had taught me so much about devotion, faith, and love. I thought about our three-year-old daughter, Darcy Grace and I can't even begin to describe the flood of emotions I still experience when I considered telling her that her mommy was gone. It is still unbearable. I did not know yet what was to come. Our family huddled in prayer—Brian Wakefield led us—and he asked God, if it was His will, to allow Leann to live. He asked for Leann to have the chance to raise her children. At that point, we did not know what the outcome would be, but we knew God would help us through this trial, whatever the outcome.

During those four hours while my wife and our second child fought to stay alive, we did not realize the awesome power of prayer! We did not know that Christians all over the world were praying for Leann and my newborn son. I was in a pit of despair, an emotional place I have never been before, a place where I never want to return. In the midst of the turmoil, I had my faith, even surrounded by family and friends. I felt so alone, but the faith my Mother and Father had instilled in my heart at such a young age, held me back from total destruction.

Prayers work. The Bible says that the “Prayer of a righteous man avails much” James 5: 16. The Lord told us in Luke 11:5-10 that we should pray, and to be persistent in our requests. In that passage Jesus stated: "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

So as we persistently prayed for Leann, we were blessed by the news that my newborn son, Dalton was okay. He had suffered some hardship, but was now doing well, and would be in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for the rest of our hospital stay. Soon after that, the news came that Leann's condition was quickly improving. She was not able to breath on her own, nor was she conscious, but she was alive. The talented doctors had stopped her bleeding. They too gave the glory to God our Creator, and the Sustainer of life. Our excitement was tempered by the appearance of my love as she was rushed from the delivery room to the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital. She was in a serious condition; a scary, and volatile few moments were now passing in our lives. Although we did not know then if she would survive, I felt a calm peace and a hope that everything would be alright. I started to learn about the prayers of so many. My strong younger

brother, Caleb told me that his elders in Florida were on their knees and that “things happened when those men prayed”! I saw many of our friends in the lobby as we passed by, they too were praying for the good outcome that unknown to us, had already begun.

Prayers rang out from so many faithful Christians, and the Lord was hearing every one of them. In this instance, the desire we had was also in the great plan of God. Our will matched His infinite will. Our desire was in accordance with His desire. In other words, He answered our prayers with a resounding, “Yes!” It is not possible for me to tell of the emotions I felt as I held Leann’s hand for those few days in ICU. I did not worry anymore, I was way beyond that. I thought deliberately about the future of my family, I considered life with a handicapped spouse, I thought about teaching her the simple things we had taken for granted all our lives. While those thoughts passed in my mind, I knew she would live, and that gave me such immeasurable excitement, hope and vision for our future that I could not sleep, all I could do was think, and plan, and consider our lives from this point on. “From this point on”, over and over in my mind, it re-played like a broken record. I wanted to make every small thing into a big deal again, if only I would get the opportunity.

I love Leann, and I have been blessed by God through her in so many ways. She is strength, and beauty; she is a spiritual giant to me. “Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies” Proverbs 31:10. I praise our Blessed Redeemer for her life, her love, and her devotion to His way.

“A man’s heart plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps” Proverbs 16:9. And the Lord has directed our steps since those moments of insecurity and doubt to this time of celebration and praise! Leann has enjoyed a complete recovery, a recovery that was thought impossible by the medical team that ministered to her. Our son, Dalton Samuel, has also enjoyed great health since leaving the hospital two months ago. We have been blessed by God, and I want to shout it from the highest mountain! He is involved in our everyday lives, He is concerned about His children, and He answers our prayers.

The words that most accurately express how we feel about our trial and the love we feel toward those in our church family that mentioned us in their prayers are the words found in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, 9-11 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings, which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.” “Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.” God is indeed, **so good** and I thank Him daily for the

blessings He has placed in our lives. I've been blessed with an amazing Christian family, two beautiful children and a loving relationship between my wife and I that He saw fit to allow more years together to work side by side in His Kingdom.