

English- Mrs. Hogan (9:00 a.m.)

1 September, 2005

### Trusting God Through Adversity

Has one ever experienced that gut-wrenching fear when one is afraid that he is going to lose a loved one? Unfortunately, my answer to this question is yes. My sister, Tara, went to heaven three years ago at the age of ten. Although the past three years have been the hardest ones of my life, my sister's homegoing has taught me to trust God through all adversity.

On August 9, 2002, I found myself walking up the front steps of Cook Childrens Hospital not quite knowing what to expect. My ten year old sister was in the hospital and my parents had me, and my two younger brothers, brought up to visit her for the first time. As far as we knew, Tara just had a bad virus and would soon be going home. My parents met us downstairs to inform us of the latest news. They explained that Tara was in a coma and had not woken up for a couple of days. They went on to say that she was hooked up to a number of machines and that she had a metal bolt attached to her head to monitor brain pressure. However, when I went into her hospital room, not even my parent's words of warning could have prepared me for what I saw. There were nurses everywhere! Like my parents had said, she was hooked up to all kinds of machines and had something that looked like an upside down bowl on top of her head. Despite the unseemly circumstances, there in the middle of all the machines, lay my precious sister, sleeping peacefully, just like I had always known her.

Tara had first shown signs of sickness four days earlier when we were at our Cedar Creek lake house. It was Monday morning and Tara woke up with a pounding head and stomachache.

The day progressed and she did not get any better, so my mother decided to take us home and get Tara to the doctor. The next morning, I awoke to find mom carrying Tara out the door to our pediatrician, who in turn sent her to Cook Childrens Hospital.

Back at the hospital, after seeing Tara, my mother took me aside and explained the gravity of the situation.

She said, “Preston, two days ago we came very close to losing her. The doctors still do not know what is wrong and we didn’t want to bring you up here until she was stabilized.”

I could not believe it! I asked my mom how she was doing now.

Mom answered, “ It is a miracle, but she is perfectly stable. However, she is still very sick.”

I responded, “ Mom, if God has performed these miracles and brought her along this far, He would not abandon her now!”

My mom hugged me and said, “I know He won’t!”

Later that afternoon, I went home with my neighbor to spend the night. The evening seemed to last forever and I called my parents every hour to check on my sister. Just after dark, my parents sent some of their friends, that had been at the hospital, to come and get us. Upon arrival, we found that things had taken a turn for the worst. The doctors had diagnosed her with the deadly water amoeba called nowgleria. I found this out late Friday night, and Saturday morning at eight o’clock my beautiful sister, and very best friend, went to be with the Lord.

Right after Tara went to heaven, I did not know what to do. All I wanted was to go home. Suddenly, I began to feel the anxiety and fear of not knowing what was going to happen, leave me, and the peace of the Lord tell me that somehow He was going to help me to heal.

In a matter of weeks, this promise began to come to pass in the form of a baseball tournament.

My family, along with the help of numerous friends, put on the First Annual Tara Sawyer Memorial Classic. One may think that putting on a memorial baseball tournament for a young girl is a little strange; however, one did not know Tara. With three brothers, Tara grew up playing on an all boys baseball team. Earlier that summer, she had played second base for the Mansfield Stingrays and received fifth place in the U.S.S.S.A. World Series in Southaven, Mississippi. She was the only girl out of eighty-four teams competing. Therefore, a baseball tournament seemed like the right way to honor someone who loved the game as much as Tara. It was incredible to walk around that baseball complex and see all the teams who had come out to play in honor of my sister. In addition, there was a silent auction of donated items. The money raised that weekend went to the Tara Sawyer Memorial Foundation. This is a fund my parents set up to allow under privileged children to play sports. The first year the tournament raised 8,000 dollars, second year 15,000 dollars, and this past year proceeds exceeded 20,000 dollars! Through this ever-growing event, God has brought me a great deal of comfort and healing.

Another way that God has shown Himself to me is through the homegoing celebration that we have each year on August 10. That first year, over one hundred and fifty people gathered in our backyard to honor God through celebrating Tara's life. God's Spirit really moved that evening as eight people gave their lives to Christ and were baptized in our pool. I was among those eight as I rededicated my life to my Savior. I then realized that what I had told my mom a year ago in the hospital had come true. God had not abandoned Tara! On the contrary, He had taken what the devil meant for evil and used it to further His kingdom.

Today, even though it is still incredibly hard to live without Tara, and sometimes it does not seem real, I know that God is real and He alone "binds up the brokenhearted."(Isaiah 61:1).

I have clung to the promise of Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” God has shown me time and again that He does have plans to prosper me and not to harm me. In the future, no matter how hard the road becomes, I will carry this promise with me through the challenges of each new day.