

THE FATHER SINGS OVER ME



A STORY OF RESURRECTION POWER,
THE FATHER'S LOVE, AND A SPECIAL BOY

RICHARD & DAWN MULL

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Operation
Light Force
Building Eternal Legacies™

OPERATION LIGHT FORCE



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Disclaimer: All messages from friends and family are from a website called CarePages, where a page was specifically devoted to Nathanael. That page has since been deleted. All messages are used with the permission of the writer.

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DEDICATION

God is the actual hero of this story. He is the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus said those words about Himself, and He said that disciples could raise the dead. Thank you, Jesus, for giving us the power and authority to heal the sick and to raise the dead.

Nathanael is one of my heroes. He battled for life, went through a radical detox from some of the worst drugs, died due to medication, but lives today. God chose a boy with Down syndrome to display one amazing miracle. He's also a gifted writer.

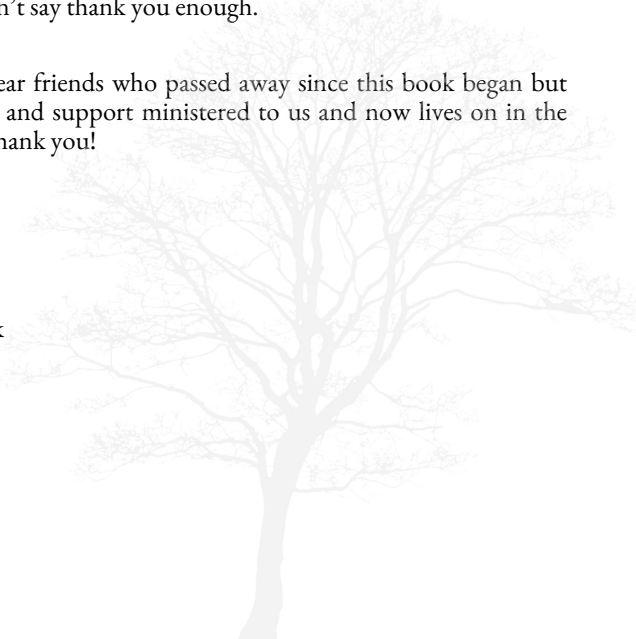
Our other children were amazing. They took care of themselves and each other for an entire summer. We tried to cover all the bases, but they went without Mom and Dad during their formative years for about ten weeks. Thank you, Andrew, Philip, and Rachel, for being so strong and patient.

Dawn was the momma bear, praying, researching, challenging the doctors, and in so many ways, doing their job for them. I don't go into the details of that in this book, but if you knew the story, you would agree. Nathanael survived the hospital stay because of her interventions. Doctors even told us that. Maybe we can save that for another book one day.

There are too many friends all around the world to mention, and entire churches and networks of people who we heard were praying from local churches in Tampa to remote parts of the globe. We have posted all the CarePages posts we managed to keep online. Those prayers and the encouraging posts were our lifeline. We thank you so many times throughout the book, but we can't say thank you enough.

I felt led to highlight four dear friends who passed away since this book began but whose prayers, encouragement, and support ministered to us and now lives on in the pages of the book and online. Thank you!

Linda Guthrie
Dan Graves
Dr. Neal Mack
Peter and Mary Ellen Ciganek
Gordon Wadsworth





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FOREWORD

"The Father Sings Over Me" is the dramatic true story of Nathanael and his miraculous journey to Heaven for forty minutes and how it changed his parents' life forever. Yes, it impacted him too in ways that no one will ever understand.

Richard and Dawn Mull are two extraordinary parents who love God, love life, and love people. They share the love of Jesus in ways that most will never experience. "The Father Sings Over Me" is the story of how Richard and Dawn prayed without ceasing and for hours fought for the life of their youngest child. Nathanael is very special. He knows how to make you smile even when you don't want to. This book brings to life the trauma of losing a child to death and seeing him literally rise from the grave!

Richard and Dawn have combined their stories and thoughts together of the hours of desperation, the testing of their faith and victory of a miracle! The detail of their thoughts and emotions are felt with every turn of the page.

I have known Richard and Dawn for many years and even traveled overseas with Richard to share in ministry. The God story of this mighty couple will touch your heart in a way that you will truly feel the love of a father.

When you start this book, just sit back, and be blessed!

I am honored to recommend this book to everyone for inspiration and encouragement.

Paul Pickern
Founder
All Pro Pastors International
<https://allpropastors.org/>



PREFACE

Dawn and I wrote the majority of what you will read in this book. This book is different from any books that I have written; in fact, it may be different from anything I have ever read. We never set out to write a book about our experience. We would not have chosen to go on the wild ride that this book details. I, Richard, have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand many miracles in my life. I can easily say that my favorite and one of the greatest miracles, if there is a scale of greatness to miracles, is the resurrection of my son, Nathanael.

This is the most personal journey we could ever share. We invite you into an up-close and personal look into one of the most tragic and one of the most amazing seasons of our lives. Hundreds of friends all around the country followed us, encouraged us, prayed with us, and were vital in sustaining us during this time. We chose to include as much of that content as possible to honor all of them and their important contribution. This is also such a key aspect of the story. Sometimes you may be tempted not to bother someone who is facing a trial. I can only speak on our behalf. Even though a hospital room can feel alone and secluded from the rest of the world, we felt very joined, encouraged, and loved throughout this journey.

We have chosen to add a lot of interesting information to make the story even more personal. I recorded the song that I sang over Nathanael with the help of Covington Melton and his amazing talents. We got Nathanael's medical records from one of the hospitals and shared some of the most pertinent details. This includes written proof that he coded, though their length of time differs from what any of us remember and no one knows exactly when he died. The official time started well after I pulled him from my chest and knew that he was dead. We have included links to songs that ministered to us and pictures and videos of Nathanael to show him then and now.

We hope that you will be profoundly impacted by the love of Father God. Most of that message comes through closer to the end of the book. Trust me, it is worth reading all the way through to the end.

Dawn did not want to be included as the co-author even though she wrote a significant portion of the book (her posts). Nathanael did want to be included as an author even though he had a ghostwriter who preferred to go unnamed.



CHAPTER ONE



YOU CAN'T TAKE MY SON

DEATH, GO AWAY!



I rode in the backseat, holding his hands while his mother drove to the hospital. Grandma followed us in her car. The rash covered nearly every square inch of Nathanael's body. None of the doctors seemed to know what it was, and everything they did was making it noticeably worse. He looked miserable, was lethargic, and could only grind his teeth in distress. He didn't speak but looked at me, pleading, as if to say, "Can you help me?"

We had been praying, seeing doctors, and trying everything we knew. He was taking steroids and antiviral medicines, but that had to stop. Little did we know how right we were. One hospital threatened to take our son away from us if we did not comply. (I cover that in more detail later.) Right now, we needed help.

We arrived at St. Joseph's in Tampa and headed to a room they were preparing for Nathanael. He melted to my chest as I pulled him from his car seat. We went to the elevator, and he seemed to fall asleep on me, which he definitely needed. As we exited the elevator and the staff guided us to our room, I pulled him from my shoulder. I was not ready for the words that came out of my mouth—no one can ever be ready for those words. "He's gone. He's dead." I knew it. This beloved, wonderful boy of mine was no longer in his body. He was dead.

Thank God, the Story Didn't End There

I love a good cliffhanger, but let me assure you, this was in 2009, and today, as I write this, Nathanael is alive and well and full of love and life.

This is a story of a little boy's resilience and his will to live. It is the story of God's resurrection power. It is the story of two parents fighting with everything possible for the

life of their son. But above all, it is the story of Father God’s love for Nathanael—and for you.

Meet Miracle Boy; his real name is Nathanael. Even though he was born with an extra chromosome, which some would call a defect or a handicap, you will meet few people who are more full of life and love. He loves people, music, and food, especially Chick-fil-A. As the lyrics of Tim Hawkins’s parody song, “Chick-fil-A,” say, he could eat there seven times a day. You will soon fall in love with this amazing kid and learn how he got (and earned) the nickname Miracle Boy.

Next, meet Nathanael’s amazing, beautiful, and loving mother, Dawn. The tragedies of life either make or break a person, but even more, they expose their true character. This woman has a double-mothering capacity. Trust me, all her many friends will attest to the fact that she has mothered them, our kids, and other kids. She cares so deeply for people. When Nathanael experienced his tragedy and season of desperate need, she was there while overseeing our other children as well. You will also fall in love with her as I did more years ago than she would allow me to say.

We will travel to Kenya and back and visit hospitals. Much of what you will read takes place in a few different hospitals, one we hope to forget and never visit again and two that hold a mixture of memories of life’s worst nightmare, greatest miracle, and the testing of our character like never before. A myriad of doctors and nurses in this story were amazing while others were rather annoying or even downright scary. What happened in those hospitals and in our lives has profoundly affected people all around the world, but Kenya was the first place that experienced the story of this miracle in a way that brought their own miracles.

Then there’s me, Dad, the guy who hated English class but now writes all the time. This book differs from any that I have written before. I want you to experience what we experienced as if you were there. You will read a lot of real-time drama and be inspired by the words of our friends who surrounded us with love, prayers, and support. Everything you read in this book actually happened in real life. The only part of the book that is not real will hopefully break up some of the drama with a few laughs. During our tragedy, I had fun imagining what was going on in Nathanael’s mind and took a lot of liberties with that. I have little doubt that many readers will like the comic relief best of all.

A lot of content for this book comes from posting on an amazing social media site designed for families who had sick loved ones. The purpose of the site was to update their friends regarding the day-to-day events and give people a place to respond. We have kept just a small percentage of the vast number of responses from our family, friends, and new friends from all around the world. These responses encouraged us throughout the fight and let us know we were not alone. For all the ills of social media, it would have been difficult to persevere without the love and support we experienced.

The start of this drama seemed rather mundane. Dawn, being the amazing, observant, and diligent mother that she is, brought Nathanael to me and showed me his skin. “Do you see this rash?”

I have begged God for wisdom in various circumstances and wanted to answer this question well. “Honey, you are so much more observant than I am, and since you are with

the kids so much, you would probably notice things that I have trouble distinguishing.” That was not the right answer!

She responded, “You think I’m crazy!” I did not say that but somehow communicated it. Some of us guys know how to do that all too well.

We both agreed to monitor it and see if it progressed. It became apparent enough to confirm Dawn’s observations and my inability to see things only mothers can distinguish. Dawn took Nathanael to our pediatrician, Dr. Thole, who prescribed one thing and then, as the rash continued to worsen, she referred us to a dermatologist. With every doctor and every treatment, we seemed to get no answers, and Nathanael seemed to get worse by the day.

One day, Dr. Thole called us and said that she woke up in the middle of the night and thought of Nathanael and felt led to research a zinc deficiency. In hindsight, it seems apparent that God was speaking to her to give us the answer we needed. She wanted to confirm this with some bloodwork and a biopsy before prescribing another treatment.

We had tried steroids and antiviral medications, and both had made his rash noticeably worse. We did research zinc deficiency like our primary physician had suggested and found that it can cause the layers of skin to separate and create red blotches. Children with Down syndrome have a harder time processing their foods and getting all the nutrients out of those foods. This can cause deficiencies that are easy to remedy with supplements. Steroids and antiviral meds not only irritate this condition, but they can also cause horrible consequences in infants as we were about to find out.

Dr. Thole scheduled us to have the bloodwork and biopsy at a local children’s hospital. Nathanael has always been a real trooper when it comes to getting bloodwork. I have no memory of the bloodwork, but I will never forget the biopsy. Just a few days before we took Nathanael for his biopsy, a young man in my office shared with me the trauma he felt as a two-year-old in a hospital, left naked and hearing doctors discussing how serious his condition was. Wow! I didn’t want that for Nathanael, who was also two at the time. So I made a commitment to be there for him all the way.

To take a biopsy from several places means they will gouge out a few layers of your skin. I did not know that. Nathanael, if he had a choice, would not have voted for that. He has always been a fighter, and when they went to take a biopsy from him, the fight was on. I wanted to be there for him and help with the procedure. Here I was, holding down my two-year-old on the table, singing “Jesus Loves Me.” His eyes were boring holes into me, pleading as he screamed at the top of his very strong lungs.

I later imagined his thoughts: *What in the world are you doing, Dad? Let me hit someone. This is not a time for singing. You should beat up all these mean people. No one has ever hurt me like this before, and all you can do is sing and hold me down. Really?*

Dawn and the nurses congratulated me on a job well done. Nathanael gave me that look that said “I thought I could trust you.”

We did not want to do anything else to Nathanael until we had results, which could take a day or two. We tried to make that clear and stand our ground. They wanted to start

Nathanael on antiviral medicine and steroids. We did our best to explain we had tried those medicines, but they made everything worse. In our interaction with a renowned dermatologist, we made sure not to disrespect her. Our intention was simply to wait and rule out a zinc deficiency. She was adamant that we were wrong. Before long, she had returned with about five colleagues and spoke to us in a very forceful, demeaning manner. She threatened to write us up for non-compliance if we did not let them proceed. I wanted to stand up right then and take Nathanael out of there. Dawn did too, but we've had friends who've had their kids taken away. Sadly, we allowed them to give him steroids and antiviral medications and wrap him head to toe in an antiviral-coated gauze.

By the next morning, his appearance transformed from a boy with a rash to a child who looked as if he had been dipped into a pot of boiling oil. It covered every inch of his body. Rather than become combative or play the blame game, we just wanted to leave. Since our primary doctor had gotten us in, she worked to get us out and we could not leave fast enough. Later, multiple doctors told us those medicines and the trauma probably caused the ulcer in his pylorus that would rupture in just a few days.

CHAPTER TWO



NOT YOUR TIME TO DIE, SON!

YOU COME BACK HERE!

Not sleeping had become routine. This amazing child the Lord blessed us with just didn't like to sleep. I can go a long time on little sleep, but Nathanael was like a Navy Seal instructor during Hell Week. During Hell Week, Navy Seals in training endure the bare minimum of sleep and are pushed to their mental, physical, and psychological limits. Part of the reason Nathanael was sleeping so little was that his rash had worsened with each of the wrong treatments and diagnoses that we had endured.

This night was better than any the week before. We had gotten out of our horrible experience at the one hospital, but now he was even worse. In hindsight, I should have been more concerned, but when you are sleep-deprived, you can miss things you might otherwise notice. During the night before the dreadfully glorious day (sounds a little like an oxymoron), Nathanael didn't even cry. He was grinding his teeth, which was new. It was more hideous than a cry but not nearly as loud. He was mildly fussy, to be expected with the type of rash that covered him from head to toe.

I could never lay him down while his eyes were open and just walk away from him without his severe disapproval as he cried. But Nathanael was different. When you have a baby after a ten-year gap, sometimes you act more like the proverbial grandparent than a parent. You let things slide, pamper the child a little more, and give in to their demands. Believe me, I'm not proud of it. I'm just being honest.

This night when I laid him down, he turned to me with eyes wide open and minimal protest. I was so glad I could walk away and figured he was just more relaxed after his ordeal the last few days at the hospital. But all the signs I am now describing were signs of great distress.

We found out later that day Nathanael had an ulcer in his pylorus that had breached the wall, and poisons were leaking into his abdomen. The poisons were entering his bloodstream and slowly killing him. The medicines and trauma he had endured from his brief hospital stay were now causing deep anguish, pain, and worse. How much worse was unimaginable!

Through the night when Nathanael would awaken, I gave him a bottle to increase his nutrition intake. Then I would goop him all over. (Gooping is a scientific medical term that means you put goop all over his rash.) Since the rash was all over his body, the gooping was a total body gooping. I hope I'm not getting too technical for you. Are you with me? Good.

Each time I did this, Nathanael protested mildly and then was very cooperative. He understood that this was supposed to be making him better and while the process was very uncomfortable, he trusted us to do the gooping. It was so much easier for me to put him back to bed than normal.

The next morning, my wife, Dawn, and her mother, Marge, awoke after a good night's sleep. They came in to see Nathanael and noticed that his stomach was hard and protruding a little. However, we expected his stomach to protrude from being on so many medications and from going through so much trauma. Marge, a trained ER nurse, listened to him and was very concerned but calm and collected. She encouraged us to take Nathanael to our primary care doctor. Dawn took Nathanael to our pediatrician just to make sure he wasn't reacting to any of the medications and that he was all right.

Dr. Thole was concerned and thought it would be best to admit Nathanael to the hospital again as a precautionary measure so he could be checked out. There was nothing to be alarmed about. I was a little frustrated when I got the call because the previous visit to the hospital was just to get blood tests and a biopsy, and it was one of the most stressful days in the poor boy's life. Not again!

I prayed for miraculous healing all the way to the hospital. What were we doing going to the hospital for a rash that was far better than before and now an upset stomach? When we arrived, Nathanael wasn't feeling well. He was still grinding his teeth. On the drive through Tampa to get to St. Joseph's Hospital, Nathanael was playing with my fingers. He was lifting his head and looking around.

As we arrived, I came around the car and picked up Nathanael. He hugged me. I carried him to the elevator, ascended the eight floors, and walked to the room prepared for us. As Dawn went to get the nurses, I pulled Nathanael away from my shoulder to look into his wonderful face and what I saw shook me to my core.

Nathanael was gone. My little boy was not there. I was holding the body of my baby boy, but the Nathanael I knew and loved was gone. He had left that body seconds or minutes before. I started to hand the body to the technician, thinking she was a nurse who must have been freaked out. She wasn't even a nurse, and here was a stranger handing her a lifeless body. Instead, I laid him on the bed.

I only knew one thing to do. Now was the time for prayer. Apart from a miracle of God, my son's life was over. God had been preparing me for this day for thirteen years. I had studied healing in Scripture and had seen God heal many through our ministry. God's Word teaches that we have power and authority. In Ephesians 1, we learn the power we receive as our inheritance is like the power that raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus sent young disciples out with the command to raise the dead. His disciples had raised the dead, and I believed one day, I would pray for a dead person, and they would raise to life again. I have read testimonies and heard stories but had never seen such with my eyes. Never in my wildest nightmares had I ever considered that the resurrection might be one of my own children.

Here was my son, lifeless on the bed with no heartbeat, no breath, and no blood pressure. What can you do in a moment like that? It depends on what you believe. If life is just about fate, you believe that what will happen is what will happen. All you can do is stand back and observe what fate brings you. Will he live or will he die?

If you are humanistic and believe life is only what we make of it, all your hope rests squarely in the hands of the doctors. Do they know what they are doing? Your hope lies completely in the medicines, the training, and the skills of the people who are working on your child, and all you can do is watch. Maybe you yell encouragement over the din or bark orders and demands to spur them on. What else can you do?

Most people who call themselves Christians will pray. But what will they pray? Does prayer make a difference? The standard prayer for every believer is to pray for the doctors to know what to do. Or else they will pray, "Heal them if it is God's will." The flowery prayers can go on for a long time and sound exquisite, but the expectation is the same. God is going to do what He is going to do. We can plead with Him, but we cannot take part with Him in changing reality. This seems identical to the fatalistic and humanistic approach but brings God into the picture.

Is there is another way to pray? What if the Bible teaches us a lot about what to do in a situation like this? Would you want to be prepared?

I am so thankful for all His Word has to say about our authority as believers, the power of God that is available to us today, how to pray effectively, and more. I am so thankful for the many stories in the Bible in both the Old and New Testament about people being raised from the dead. I thank God that we can take part with Him because He has empowered us to do what Jesus did.

At the moment, my son's life hung in the balance. I thanked God He had given me an understanding of His Word and how we can effectively participate in shaping history through prayer and fasting.

I had begun a forty-day fast for Nathanael and the desperation in prayer had been increasing over the weeks leading up to this day. It was day eight of my fast, and he was going downhill. Remember, Daniel prayed for twenty-one days before Gabriel arrived and told him that God had heard his prayer at the beginning but that it had taken twenty-one days to get the message to Daniel because of the war in the heavenlies. The prince of Persia had been hindering the messenger. Michael the archangel needed to intervene, and Daniel needed to pray persistently before the answer came. What if Daniel

had stopped praying after one week? What if he hadn't been fasting? Daniel was playing a role in this celestial warfare.

Just a week before, I had been calling intercessors to request prayer for myself, Operation Light Force (our ministry), Nathanael, and our family. It seemed like an intense warfare was being waged in the heavens over our family, the ministry, our finances, and Nathanael's health. We had allowed the Holy Spirit to search our hearts, repented of any and every sin that might have opened a doorway for the enemy, and had been engaging the enemy in warfare for victory and breakthrough.

Little did I know how much that warfare would intensify. I'm not sure I would ever have signed on for duty if I had known it would cost the life of my son. Where were the answers to prayer? Where was God? Had the devil won this one? Was God not the healer?

In that moment, when the greatest trial I have ever faced lay before me, all I knew to do was stand. Death had come to rob me of my son. I would not let the thief win this one. It was time to take my position as the spiritual head of my house and apply everything I knew about healing.

Though my wife and I had been searching our hearts for weeks, repenting of anything and everything in our lives that wasn't pleasing to Him, I started by asking the Lord to cover me with His blood and righteousness, recognizing His blood cleanses me, makes me righteous and restores my authority on earth. Someone had taken away the enemy's rights two thousand years ago.

Next, I took the authority that the Lord had given me and told death to leave my son alone. In the Gospels, when Jesus healed the sick, half of the time, He cast out an evil spirit. We have found this to be integral in ministering healing, and the enemy wanted to destroy the life of my son, my faith, and our ministry. This was not God's time for Nathanael to go. The Lord had given me authority over the enemy and his plans. Nathanael's spirit has left his body. So I asked the Lord for a miracle of healing for Nathanael and spoke to him and told him to come back in Jesus's name. I said, "Nathanael, you listen to your dad right now. You come back here. It is not your time to die." I was not talking to the body. I was looking around the room and even had a sense of where his spirit was.

Doctors and nurses were all around. They told me later that they thought I was part of the medical team because I was so calm. This went on for forty minutes. I won't tell you I didn't have questions about what was happening to Nathanael. "Is his brain going to function normally after this? Am I about to lose my son?" But I knew how important faith was in this circumstance.

I had been quoting Scripture and praying through every miracle in the Bible that I could think of. When I got to the story of the parents who brought their epileptic son to Jesus, I remembered the question Jesus asked those parents. He said, "Do you believe?"

They answered, "Lord, we believe, help our unbelief." I told the Lord with all the faith I could, "I believe. But like that father, help my unbelief." In that instant, my faith became so strong and unshakeable. I saw a vision, in the middle of the room, of Jesus in a boat. I felt like I was in the boat with Jesus, watching the wind and the waves but knowing Jesus was there and the wind and waves were about to subside.

At first, the nurse got a heartbeat. It was ever so faint at first, and then they would lose it. They were continually trying to get a blood pressure reading and couldn't get one. We continued to pray, and continued to call Nathanael back. Finally, they could find his blood pressure. Nathanael had been Code Blue for forty minutes. He survived those forty minutes, but what lay ahead has forever changed our lives.

CHAPTER THREE



THE DAY I QUIT

AFTER THE MIRACLE

Speechless, Dawn and I followed closely as they whisked Nathanael off to the ICU. Dawn waited in the hallway, processing events differently than I was. I looked at her but couldn't even speak. The doctor pulled us aside and told us they thought his stomach or intestines had burst and leaked poison into his body. They had to run a CT scan to be sure, and then they would have to do surgery if their suspicions were correct. We asked a few questions, and then a staff member escorted us into a consult room.

One friend called to find out what was happening, and all I could say through tears was, "I can't talk now." He asked where I was. I barely managed to answer, "St. Joseph" and tell him "floor two" in between sobs.

Once I entered the room, I melted. I wept uncontrollably. All the emotions I had not expressed came rushing in like a flood. Thoughts ran like a tornado through my mind. Why did this happen? Why didn't God heal Nathanael before he died? Does God really love me? Had I done something for which God wouldn't forgive me?

Then other thoughts bombarded me from every side. "It is time to quit the ministry." "How can I have a healing ministry if my prayers for my son are so ineffective that he would die?" "The doctors who prescribed the medicines that damaged Nathanael killed my son." Tears flowed as my heart was crushed. The world seemed to collapse, and I couldn't stand up.

Part of me was standing there watching myself, knowing this pain wouldn't last long. I wanted to be strong for Dawn, but she was the one holding me. I said a few things like, "I know nothing about prayer," and, "I think I'm going to quit the ministry." My mom and sister came back, and I could hardly talk to them. I just wept on their shoulders. One of them said something about how strong I was, and I just sobbed harder.

Then my sister described how they had gotten lost on their way to the hospital. They said my dad had given them directions, but they couldn't understand what he was saying. Soon, we were all laughing hysterically. Wow! This was way too much emotion all at once for my masculine soul. Rejoicing that my son was alive, lamenting his current state and what I had just witnessed, and now laughing hysterically. I had to admit I needed the laugh.

By this time, friends and loved ones were gathering, and I needed to greet them. So far, I hadn't been capable of holding a coherent conversation at all since Nathanael had come through the first emergency. Something compelled me not to wait. The corridor between the consult room and the waiting room was not long, maybe all of a hundred feet. As I walked down that short hallway, the Lord spoke so clearly to me it was almost audible. "Fear not! I am with you. I am your God." And "Do not be afraid of anything." By the time I walked into the room to greet the first wave of friends who would join us for prayer, I was composed, reinvigorated, and ready to share what Dawn, I, and our little warrior, Nathanael, had just been through in Phase 1.

I described what it was like to see my child dead in my arms and how outstanding it was to see God bring him back to us. I said he was going for a CT scan and that doctors suspected he had a breach in his stomach or intestines that was poisoning him. We did not want people to pray faithless, soulless prayers filled with fear and unbelief. I had thought about this day every time I walked into a hospital waiting room in the past and found believers praying in ways that have little to no bearing on God's Word. People seem to only believe what the doctors tell them. Yes!

It didn't seem appropriate to tell anyone that the doctors said the chances were very high that Nathanael would not live through the operation. There was no way I'd repeat the doctors words. "If he made it, he would have brain damage and likely not come out of the coma or worse." It was a very serious operation for someone who had just died. It was as if I didn't hear the doctors. I was hearing the Lord say, "He will not die, but he will live." That is what I told everyone to pray. We believed in a God who heals. We believed it was God's will to heal Nathanael, and anyone was welcome to pray if they prayed believing.

God loves it when His children believe. It pleases Him. Hebrews 11:6 NKJV tells us, "But, without faith, it is impossible to please Him." Romans 10:17 NKJV says, "...Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." As we read the Word of God, we come to know the God of the Word. We come to know His will, His character, His names and His heart.

The Word of God doesn't teach us to pray "if it is your will" regarding healing. Yet this is what most people pray. Jesus didn't tell the disciples to go out and pray for the sick and ask if it was God's will to heal them. He told them to heal the sick. Somehow, we play a part in the process of healing. Our faith plays a part. What we believe God for has an enormous impact upon what we see God do.

I loved hearing God's people praying and believing. I started by asking God to forgive us if there was any unbelief. We testified, "Lord, we believe, help our unbelief" and kept praying. At least outwardly, everyone in the room believed with us. Thank the Lord for

such great friends of faith. Their prayers and support were so encouraging in such a time of crisis.

The feeling and knowing that people care about you is so vital in times like this. Other families who came to the waiting room had no one to stand with them. I cannot imagine facing tragedy with no support. While I was sitting there writing and praying for my Nathanael in his room, a Code Blue went off somewhere in the hospital. In other words, someone's heart stopped beating. We had just come through that, so I prayed for the family and the patient. I wanted to run and go be with them in case they had no one else.

Here we were with friends and family, waiting for the doctors to finish the surgery, intermittently praying and waiting. We greeted each new friend as they arrived and updated them. The surgery would take one-to-three hours, depending on what they found when they opened up Nathanael.

The Bible teaches us to wait. The word wait (Kawvav in Hebrew) in the KJV version of the Bible is the same as the word translated hope in the NIV. It means both wait and hope. Isn't that interesting? It reads so differently. For example, one famous passage, Isaiah 40:31(KJV) says, "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Now, change the word wait to hope and read it again in the NIV. "They that hope upon the Lord, shall renew their strength."

To wait in a godly, biblical sense is to wait with an expectation and trust in God. Our hope is to be anchored in God and in His Word. These are infallible and unshakeable. We were not trusting the doctors. We were trusting in Jehovah. Sure, we had allowed our child to go with a doctor and had signed a consent form. We had given over a measure of trust to that man, but our hope was in the Lord. The Lord can keep a doctor from making a mistake. The Lord could use the hand of a doctor or heal without doctors.

CHAPTER FOUR



THE FIRST WEEK

IS THIS HEAVEN OR HELL?

WEEK 1, DAY 1: DEATH AND RESURRECTION DAY!

I don't know what to call this part of the book. I want you to get a real taste of what we all experienced in real-time. I cannot include every post or every person's message to us; it would be too monotonous. Every short "we want you to know that we are praying for you" meant the world to us. We have included them all on our website. To make the book flow more smoothly, we are keeping enough of them for you to get you a real feel of what we went through during the next ten weeks and beyond.

I am leaving day one just as it is. What you don't see are each of the involved doctors or nurses coming to where we were all gathered, waiting, praying, and talking. Resting would have to wait for another day. The doctors would share in much more detail what had taken place. These were our summaries for those who would join us in prayer. Most of our friends had gone home by the later hours. Only a few family members and close friends stayed with us at the hospital. Others waited by their phones through that night.

ICU: June 2, 2009, 5:09 p.m.

Welcome to Nathanael's CarePage. He is in ICU at St. Joseph's Children's Hospital in Tampa on a ventilator. He stopped breathing when the Mulls brought him to the ER today, and as they rushed into the ER, he coded completely in Richard's arms. The team worked on him for forty minutes. He was without a heartbeat for twenty minutes. It took another 20 minutes to get a sustained heartbeat and his blood pressure up. He just had a cat scan, and Richard came in to tell us Nathanael's abdomen was filled with fluids, which shows he had a leakage, so they are taking him into surgery right now. Please be praying

against infection and for wisdom for the doctors. The older kids are being taken care of at the Mull's house. If you want to sign up for a spot to help take care of the older kids, please call.

Out of surgery: June 2, 6:21 p.m.

Nathanael is out of surgery, and the Mulls are waiting for the doctor to come and talk to them. Will update more when we have more information.

Thanks so much for all your prayers!

It was a tear in the pylorus: June 2, 6:43 p.m.

The surgeon repaired the tear, which was in the pylorus. An ulcer had perforated. Nathanael came through the surgery well, and we are waiting for further healing to remove the ventilator.

June 2, 8:17 p.m.

Please pray for non-reaction to all the meds. The dermatologist (one of the best in the area) talked to them and said the second rash is a reaction to the meds from the first rash. Pray for his infection from the leakage.

June 2, 10:10 p.m.

Nathanael is still resting well. Still on meds, taking them well. He is getting plasma. His blood pressure is steady. They keep putting goop in his eyes to keep them well-moisturized so they won't dry out since he cannot close them at this time.

WEEK 1, DAY 2

June 3, 12:27 a.m.

The ventilator is down to 12, and his oxygen is down to 25 percent. He continues to improve. He is taking antibiotics. They continue to suction him, and they have rolled him a little over to a new position. He seems calm now that they have left the room.

June 3, 3:38 a.m.

Nathanael has started to breathe independently from the respirator. Apparently, there is a purple line, normally green, on the middle respirator line. This is an excellent sign. He showed a response to light in his eyes, and when he was moved and the nurse handled him, he resisted. He is moving his hands and his legs, getting her to stop. The nurse was thrilled to see this.

June 3, 5:22 a.m.

Nathanael's kidneys aren't putting out enough, so they are giving him a new med to help, Lasix. The gasses in the blood look excellent, which means the ventilator is working great and doing the best for him. He has been moving his head a little and chomping at his mouth. They are taking more blood for tests; all numbers are good when they get the results back.

MESSAGES

Barry Sullivan: All of us over in Oldsmar are praying for you guys! We've also activated the global prayer chain with the ministry we're plugged into in Arkansas. We'll keep updated through this site and continue to pass the word along.

Chandra Christie: I want you to know that my heartfelt prayers have been uttered ever since I got the news. God woke me up at 1:11 a.m. this morning to pray for you all, and what a relief to hear the news. My heart aches for you, relieved for you, worried for you, and I also know that God is standing there with you, watching over little Nathanael as He has so faithfully stood beside us. God is as close as He will ever get, right now, here on earth. I am more than willing to come and sit and just talk or visit. Just let me know. Otherwise, know that my knees are getting rug burns on them!

June 3, 6:47 a.m.

They put the steroid cream on, and he threw such a fit (go, Nathanael!) that they stopped, sedated him more and are giving him an anxiety med. They will try again in a few minutes. He is still a strong boy!

MESSAGES

Helene Trueheart: We pray for you both to receive wisdom and peace on behalf of your little fighter and to have it during this trial.

Renee Blackmon: We are praying for a complete healing. With God, all things are possible. Please do not hesitate to call if you need anything.

Scott and Nicole Smylie: Lord, I pray that you would wrap your arms around Nathanael and the entire Mull family. May your Holy Spirit provide the comfort and wisdom they need. May you do a healing miracle today in Jesus's name.

Dad's first post, a day of victory, a father rejoices: June 3, 9:01 a.m.

Wow! Yesterday was a day of incredible victory and tragedy.

I never expected for my son to die in my arms. I've never had to battle anything in prayer like that before. The roller coaster of emotions was unlike anything I have experienced before. Death was right there. Resurrection power was also there.

I felt the sting of loss and the triumph of faith and the miraculous. We heard the pronouncements that he probably wouldn't make it and we stood fast believing that Nathanael would not only make it but would live a full life. Hearing God speak to me so clearly, "Fear not! I am with you, I am your God" stabilized us. Having so many great friends come to pray for and encourage us strengthened and encouraged us even more.

Nathanael came through the surgery. His vitals are well. He is moving, fighting the nurses when they work on him, and his heart is beating on his own. We are so proud of him and in awe of our God.

The dermatologist has told us that the rash is likely not the original rash but a reaction to medicines given to treat the original rash. They also suspect that the breach in his stomach resulted from medicines and/or the stress from his time in the hospital.

We do not harbor any animosity toward the doctors for trying to do their job. We pray for God's protection from any other medicines. Medicines can heal, and they can wound. Our God is Jehovah Rapha. He is our Healer.

Thank you all for coming, praying, offering help, bringing food, and giving financial blessings. The Lord's goodness and the love of all our great friends is overwhelming.

MESSAGES

Randy Rabon: Psalm 103:13-14 (NIV) "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust." Praise Him for His compassion, mercy, and faithfulness. I pray for continued strength, confidence, courage, and hope for you and your family and complete healing for Nathanael!

Tim Stutsman: God, we praise you for the mighty things you have done in Nathanael's life! You alone are our strength; in you we trust for complete recovery! He who began a good work in Nathanael will be faithful to complete it for His glory! Thanks for this testimony of faith and God's faithfulness. I will be praying for you all and asking our Father for His blessings on this situation. Peace to you and your wife, In Jesus's name! We love you from Indiana.

Catherine Hope Rupp: Awesome report, brother! Tim and I were at a prayer meeting last night, and we prayed for Nathanael. It was a powerful time of prayer!

Prayer Requests: June 3 11:20 a.m.

As expected, there are bacteria in his bloodstream and in his abdomen. They're treating him with antibiotics. Amazingly, he has had no fever. They're keeping him ventilated and sedated so he can rest, the incisions can heal, and the body can fight the infections. Please pray that there is no effect from the time he coded and every cell in his body would be healed.

Praise God for the miracle of resurrection power and giving Nathanael back to us again.

MESSAGES

Joyce Romack: We are praying for Nathanael at Ellet US every day and also for the family. We love you.

Renee Blackmon: Healing is one of God's benefits and He will heal your son. Kevin and I are standing in faith for him. Praying for rest for your wife (and you). Please let us know if there is anything we can do.

Dad again, the day after: June 3, 1:29 p.m.

It feels surreal sitting here today with Nathanael. He is responding so well that yesterday and its tragedy seems so far away.

Today is full of so much joy. Despite being hooked up to all kinds of machines, Nathanael is alive. I would not have this much joy seeing him in a hospital bed, fighting an infection, and recovering from surgery if he hadn't died yesterday. That changes your perspective.

The Lord's resurrection power is so real to me today. Read Ephesians 1:15–20. The Lord has given us an inheritance and power that is like the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

I am also aware of how outstanding it is to have great friends. The love, compassion, and prayers have meant so much. Don't stop praying. We have had the first of many miracles. Pray that Nathanael gets much needed rest, heals quickly, and overcomes all the challenges that lie ahead. Don't be afraid. Pray believing God with us for total healing. This is God's will.

Dawn's Wednesday update: June 3, 3:18 p.m.

Nathanael is trying to breathe more frequently on his own. He is lathered with ointments for his rash. His extremities are cold, so they gave him a new med to help his blood get to his hands and feet more. He is on TPN—total peripheral nutrition (his iv food). They repositioned him onto his right side, and he is now resting comfortably. His condition is stable. Please continue to pray for his kidneys and brain function to operate normally.

Around-the-clock prayer warriors: June 3, 3:29 p.m.

Leslie Conway wants to coordinate around-the-clock intercession for the Mulls. She is looking for faith-filled prayer warriors to pray for complete restoration and healing. The person praying would call the next person signed up to pray to pass the torch of prayer.

Dad again, forty minutes with Jesus: June 3, 5:25 p.m.

Nathanael got to spend forty minutes with Jesus yesterday. I would love to know what he experienced while we were all praying, the doctors were working frantically, and some were stressing.

I'll never forget looking into his face and knowing instantly that Nathanael wasn't here. I thought, I'm holding a shell that used to house my son, but the boy I know is not here.

Where was he? What was Nathanael doing? There wasn't any stress in him at this point. I believe Nathanael was with the Lord, seeing Him face to face, walking with Him, playing with Him, and hearing the song that the Lord sings over Him. Many people have described their experience in heaven. Most are adults. What does an infant experience? I hope and pray that Nathanael can remember and share his experience one day.

I wasn't ready to let him go. I knew it was not God's will for my son to die, and I told death, "You cannot have Nathanael now." With doctors calling out all kinds of orders, I stood by Nathanael and told him to come back. Thank God that he did. God has given us our son back.

MESSAGE

Alicia Masci: Our family is lifting up little Nathanael and the entire Mull family in prayer. Take comfort in knowing that the Lord Almighty works miracles during trials. It is our prayer that God will make every part of Nathanael's colon function the way He has designed it to work. "O Lord my God, I cried out to You, and you healed me" (Psalms 30:2 NKJV).

What a fighter: June 3, 9:38 p.m.

The nurses came in a few minutes ago, and all of Nathanael's stats are doing well. They were gooping him, and he was moving around, reaching up and moving his head some. The rash is improving but still covers him.

Several times this evening, I touched his hand, and he would grip my finger. We believed in God for all of this, but it still amazes me. God is outstanding. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. You know it before you see it, but seeing what you believe and hope for is so exciting.

MESSAGES

Teresa Mack: Praise God for godly praying parents. Thank you, Jesus, for the miracles you are showing through this lovely child of yours. To God be the glory.

Amanda Bodie: I have followed your story of Nathaniel all day, and I have wept for you, I have smiled for you, and I have prayed for you. Soon I know I will dance with you in the joy of the healing of your precious child. I have not met you, but I am sending you a hug of support.

The Father's love: June 3, 10:12 p.m.

Last week was one of the most traumatic weeks in little Nathanael's life. Nathanael underwent blood tests and a biopsy at the hospital because he had a rash that had lasted eight weeks. When you are almost two, being in a hospital can be more than a little unsettling. As they struggled to take blood from Nathanael, he was frantic. This wasn't fun. It hurt.

I was with Nathanael but knew that I couldn't take away the pain. I at least wanted to comfort him and minister to his spirit while his body was feeling the pain. I held him

there on the table, prayed into his ear, and sang to him. I spoke of my love for him and the Lord's love for him.

Seeing the trauma on his face and the pleading in his eyes, I knew he did not know these people were trying to help him.

The picture hit me so powerfully. The storms have been raging around my life and ministry. It wouldn't be surprising if you have also encountered it. I am used to seeing God do miracles. Now, where was God? My son was sick, our ministry couldn't make payroll, and a war seemed to be raging in the heavenlies like nothing I'd seen before. I was like Nathanael, crying out for God, wondering where He was. Where is the answer?

He was there holding me, singing into my ear, telling me He loved me. Are you crying out? Where are you, God? Where is my relief? He is holding you now, singing a song over you, telling you He loves you. I'm not as good of a father as He is. His love is greater by far than anything I could show Nathanael. Good night!

WEEK 1, DAY 3

What just hit us?

None of us had any idea what lay ahead. We watched a major miracle and had a day of rejoicing. We were expecting a week or two to recover and that we would play with Nathanael and talk and read to him. I'd had surgery in my twenties and had two weeks of recovery. Surely a child is more resilient than a twenty-three-year-old. Right?

Little did we know the effects that a forty-minute code would have on his body. No one knows exactly how long he was gone. Forty minutes is the official time, but when did he leave? Was it when he buried himself on my shoulder as I got him from the car? Was it when we entered the room, and I pulled him from my chest? For some minutes, no medical staff were in the room, and only my mother-in-law and I watched over him. Either way, when a person passes, the vital organs shut down.

We were all so excited that we were watching him move around, grab people, push people away, and more. The effects of that time away were more serious than we had realized. None of us could have imagined what lay ahead for us. God prepares you all the time if you seek Him, draw near to Him, trust Him, listen, and obey. But there is no way to prepare for it at the same time. I don't know if that makes sense to all of you, but it will to some, and it surely does to me.

Dad checking in. Last night was a good night: June 4, 6:31 a.m.

Nathanael had a good night last night. The nurse said he didn't like to be messed with and he was moving around when they checked him.

I, Dad, had a dream as I managed to sleep on and off again through the night.

In my dream, I saw Nathanael sit up and look at me as if saying, "Okay, Dad, pick me up and take me home." I knew it wouldn't be long. As early as today, they could

remove the breathing tube. I wonder how he will react to the IV, heart monitor, and other equipment all around. I've been telling him he has some cool new toys that make great beeping sounds.

It is amazing how much your perspective changes when you go through something like this. First, nothing in the world is more important than life. Thank God for your children, spouse, loved ones, and friends. Give them a special hug. Let it last a little longer. If money is tight, don't let the fear overshadow your thankfulness for those God has blessed you with.

Pray today that none of the shock and trauma that Nathanael has been through over the last week will affect his spirit. Pray that he will be at peace and full of the joy of the Lord like he always has been.

MESSAGES

Chandra Christie: Will pray for all those things and more. You have got it right—a new and fresh, heavenly perspective comes about when God gives us these rare and special children. Although the way is dim and sometimes bewildering, the miracles along the way are fully sufficient for us to move forward in the grace God intends. So blessed to hear that you are seeing things through the Father's eyes.

Tonya Nichols: I have been praying for you and the staff, and members at the Crossing have been banding together to lift little Nathanael up to the Lord. Praise God for the miracle of life, and we will hold true that Nathanael's spirits will not be brought down by all that has happened.

Daddy, don't sleep: June 4, 7:29 a.m.+

Jason Upton has a powerful song, *When it Thunders*, that tells the story of his son. When Jason travels, he and his son have a star that they look up at from wherever they are. If they are a thousand miles apart, the star connects them. When Jason is home and there are storms outside, he runs to Daddy for protection. Late one night during a storm, Jason was holding his son and telling him stories. He was exhausted and falling asleep in the middle of the story. His son said, "Daddy, don't sleep." How could the boy understand his father's humanity and need for sleep? Jason sang over his son and the double meaning of those three words hit him as he sang.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all

evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. (Psalm 121:1–8 KJV)

MESSAGE

Lynn Swords: God is just pouring into all of you (especially Nathanael) right now everything that you need, moment by moment. What an amazing refreshing thing it is for our family to witness your response to such a crisis. We are blessed by your stance on healing and your admonition to others to not be afraid to ask for complete healing. I get so weary of the opposite extreme of just accepting everything that comes as God's will and not going after His absolute best. There is so much power in your testimony already, and we are believing with you and all your friends for complete healing and restoration. All glory to Him and what He did to purchase Nathanael's healing.

Dad's morning update: June 4, 9:38 a.m.

Nathanael is moving and looking about. It is so encouraging when he grips our hands. People who are praying for him are getting visions of him as a six-year-old, an adult preaching, and even with white hair. One friend lamented that this would mean it is still a while before the Lord returns.

MESSAGES

Paul Loftin: Praise the Lord! Our God is a God of answered prayer. Now take this teaching and kick the blazes out of satan. Whatever it is that the devil is trying to stop, may you now, through the power and the wisdom of God, see your task through to completion.

Mary Ellen Ciganek: We thank God that you have His promise that He is with you. Thank you for being "you" currently. In Psalms 81:10 (NKJV), God says, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." We support you, love you, and are in prayer for you.

Excited about pee, Richard: June 4, 3:26 p.m.

It is crazy the things that you get excited about in times like this. Nathanael's kidneys are producing at a normal rate right now. They still need to produce more so his system can flush. He looks swollen all over.

It is also exciting to see him turn toward us when we are talking or singing. It feels so great when he grabs your hand. Despite being heavily sedated, he appears to be constantly moving, attempting to do something.

God is Jehovah Rapha, which is translated as “I am the God who Heals” in Exodus 15:26 (NKJV) Jesus always did the will of His Father and healed those who came to Him. He told no one that it wasn’t the Father’s will to heal them. The only time He couldn’t heal many was in two cities where there was a lot of unbelief. Usually, Jesus healed everyone who came to Him.

We expect total healing because that is who our God is, that is His will. He loves it when we, His children, know and trust His character and ask boldly, believing for those things that He wants to give us. Prayers of faith are prayers He is worthy of. Unbelief doesn’t honor who He is. Lord, we believe in you.

A thankful father: June 4, 9:23 p.m.

I was just laying my head on Nathanael, praying over him. I am so thankful to the Lord for giving me back my son. To have the opportunity to watch the miracle of life given again is inexpressible. Have I bored you saying again and again how grateful I am? I can’t stop saying it.

Lazarus had been dead for three days, and the Lord brought him back whole. Nathanael was dead for forty minutes, and I know the Lord will bring him back whole as well. Just a few minutes ago, he defied expectations by reaching up, rubbing his eyes, and opening them even though he was fully sedated.

Years ago, when the Lord healed me of cancer, I was coming out of surgery. They hadn’t found cancer that three doctors said was there. I heard the doctor say, “He’ll be ready to leave in an hour.” I thought, Oh, no, I’ll jump out of bed right now. I tried to get those wires out of my arm before I remembered where I was, and the next thing, I was back in la-la land.

Nathanael will spend the night in la-la land recovering. I hope to join him in la-la land in a little. Not before I write more of the amazing story of what the Lord has done, is currently doing, and teaching what He wants His people to understand.

The Greek word sozo, (strong’s Greek 4982) which is translated salvation, many times in the bible, means “to be made whole or healed.” If you read every passage that contains that word and replace saved with made whole, it would rock your world.¹

MESSAGES

Steve Batson: Richard, your words are full of faith and power. We love you and your family and are standing with you for complete healing for your beautiful son. I'm reminded of these verses: Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him'" (John 9:1-3).

We are believing the same for Nathanael. Also, remember that your words during these times have a weight that expresses God's love and grace in ways that nothing else could. It is a testimony to everyone who hears them in heaven and on earth. I see the angels looking at you in this time and overflowing with thanksgiving and wonder for your courage and steadfastness. Though it may be hard to see, it is a blessing that you get to feel the heart of God for those in need as you do now. Your reward is great in heaven. Stay strong, my friend. We serve a mighty God.

Anne Cristie White: What a great God we serve! It is a blessing to watch your faith and believe with you for a full complete recovery. "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I that full well...all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:14, 16-17 NIV) God is aware of all you are going through and is thinking of you. Isn't that awesome? Nathanael is a wonderful creation of God, and great things are in store for him!

Lisa Westcott: Richard, the posts you are writing are incredible and touching. This most certainly is a book-worthy story that everyone needs to read and catch hold of. There is biblical truth in this story that we all can experience if we remain in Him and just believe!

Rachelle Castellana: Sweet baby Nathanael, We felt so blessed to be able to stand in the room with you and just pray over you! You are God's

precious child, and He, God, has a plan for you, little guy. You are such a young man, and you already have the precious blessing of spending time with Jesus. You have a special blessing from God, Nathanael! My little son, Guyatano, prays for you every day and every night when he goes to bed. “If you remain in me and My Word remains in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you” (John 15:7, emphasis added). Nathanael, your momma and daddy do just that.

Barry Sullivan: Hey, Rich! Don’t know if you remember that our fourteen-year-old son Josiah drowned when he was three. We pulled him from a pool, lifeless and blue. I know the feeling you described looking down and knowing you are holding a shell and that there is no life there. We started to do what you did—prayed and called the life back into him. The paramedics came rushing in as he took that first, water-filled breath. They life-flighted him down to All Children’s. For three days, it was touch and go—he was in ICU, the tubes running into him, docs and nurses not giving us any hope.

On that third day (April 28, 1994—Tracy’s birthday), Josiah walked out of ICU completely healed. That is what his name means, too—“Jehovah heals.” We are believing the same God, who never changes and whose covenant for healing still stands, is going to completely raise Nathanael up!

WEEK 1, DAY 4

Return to your rest, oh my soul: June 5, 5:01 a.m.

Last night was good, uneventful, and for one of us, fairly restful. They changed Nathanael’s sedative because he was trying so hard to wake up and get up. Right now, it doesn’t matter what they do to him, he is out. As you can see, Dad isn’t.

I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he has inclined his ear to me, therefore will I call on him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold on me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I on the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech you, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful. The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return to your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. (Psalm 116:1–7)

The Lord hears us when we pray, loves to hear faith from His children. It pleases Him, in fact. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him. Faith comes by hearing God's Word.

Before Nathanael's surgery, the doctors told us he would not make it through the operation. Dawn and I both looked at each other and knew that was not our expectation and gave the man a courtesy nod. Our hope wasn't in the skill or wisdom of their hands. Even now, our hope is in a mighty God who has already defied the odds in Nathanael's case.

Praying amid a life-or-death battle can traumatize your soul through all of your emotions. In this psalm, David speaks to his own soul. "Return to your rest, Oh my soul." David is speaking to his own emotions, mind, heart, and will. He is testifying to himself.

Let me do that right now. Richard's soul, wake up. Can't you see what God has done for you? Be at peace because God has dealt bountifully with you. He has given you such a wonderful blessing. There is nothing to worry about. Go back to your rest. Rest in me, my bountiful provision. Don't worry about tomorrow. Selah.

MESSAGES

Toñi Peña: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort....On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many" (2 Corinthians 1:3-7, 10-11).

Praise Father for upholding this little one and his family. For bringing comfort to their spirit, soul, and body. Keep them through this trial. Bless you, Mull family. All love and prayers are with you also from England.

Thristene Edwards: You are such a testimony of God's goodness amid something that seems so traumatizing. Wow! You epitomize David to me in so many ways. As you are being blessed and receiving the Father's love and the comfort of the Holy Spirit by speaking to your own soul to be

at rest, I am following your example. I read this and told my own soul to relax and rest in God's love, and instantly, I got release about some issues. I am in tears right now because I feel the presence of God's peace right now. I pray that your spirit would continue to be uplifted as well as the spirit of the rest of your family. Peace be with you and your family.

Nilda Mayo: Our prayers are with you, Nathanael, and all your family, here from Christ Ministry of All Nations in Long Island. To be sure, for all of us who are parents and who are called to the deep things of God, the Lord needs to know that we have given all to Him, yes, especially the precious gifts we have—our children. You are on the right track of trusting Him. Continue the race set before you, allowing our Lord Christ Jesus to be the author and finisher of your faith.

Mary Ellen Ciganek: Richard, I am so proud of you. You do not know it, but you are writing history. Many that do not have your faith will be able to hold on as one day they read your transparency through this. God spoke to my heart as I read this and said Richard and Dawn will use this test for an international testimony to cause people to know that I am the mighty I AM. Thank you for your openness to your prayer warriors while we hold your arms high so that all will see the victory and Nathanael will soon be set free.

Dawn's first post, good morning: June 5, 7:19 a.m.

This is Dawn, and it is my first post to all of you. I want to say thank you to all of you who are standing with us and praying for our precious Nathanael. Thank you for all the prayers, visits, food, and help with the other children and for walking with us through this. We know God is going to bring Nathanael through this, and He will use Nathanael. We are waiting for the doctors to come in with the plan for this day, but the one big prayer request is that we really need his kidneys to work more so he can get rid of this fluid all over his body. Jesus just needs to speak the word from heaven, and his kidneys will work just fine. Thanks again for your prayers. We love you all.

MESSAGE

Lisa Westcott: I got the same verses in two of my daily devotions today! Coincidence? I think not! Look at Psalm 33:18–19 (NIV) “But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.” Praying now for kidney function to accelerate in Nathanael and flush out all the extra fluid, in Jesus's mighty name!”

Dawn's update: June 5, 9:12 a.m.

The doctors were just in to see Nathanael. The big need for today is his kidneys. They are working some, which is good, but not enough to keep up with all the fluids he is getting. So, his body has become very swollen, and fluid is now building up in his lungs. Please continue to pray that his kidneys would kick into gear and work great. If there was damage, pray that it would be healed. If it was just slow to work, pray that they would work better. We know this is a simple thing for the Lord to do. Today would be a great time for an answer. If it continues, they will have to put a chest tube in his lungs, and that will hinder us from taking him off the breathing machine. Still pray for the infection as well.

One more thing. I just wanted to thank everyone for their posts. It is such an encouragement to hear from you, and we are praying right along with the prayers that you are sending.

MESSAGES

Roberta Pliscott: "Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life" (Psalm 119:49–50 NIV).

Becky Green: Andrew, Phillip, and Rachel, we are praying for you too. I know it must be hard. Just as God is working in Nathaniel's life, He is working in your lives as well. Take your hearts to the Lord who brings comfort, peace, love, healing, strength, courage, and completion. He who began a good work will continue. We love you.

Richard: Brother and sister come for a visit: June 5, 4:35 p.m.

Today, Philip and Rachel came for their first visit. When Nathanael was home before all this began, his rash was bothering him and looked terrible. It was hard for his brothers and sister to see him like that. They would play in the other room to avoid seeing him in discomfort.

When Nathanael was first in the ICU, we weren't sure what to tell them or when. In an hour, they went from having a brother who had a rash to a brother who was dead to a brother who was facing critical surgery. Though everything quickly turned to joy, and he has been doing so well, they have never been to a hospital and seen anyone with breathing tubes, sedated and bloated as Nathanael is.

From what we hear, it is not usually as bad as the kids imagine it will be. Rachel came with Grandmother earlier and ended up hanging out in the room for over an hour. Philip

came with me, Dad, an hour later. I had gone home for a quick nap and a shower. Ah, clean clothes.

The first glance was all Nathanael got at first. After hanging out in the room and talking about the week, they got more comfortable and could stand and look at him for a bit before leaving. You can imagine how hard it was for them to witness this.

All the doctors and nurses are so positive about his condition. They fully expect the kidneys to kick in soon, which will allow them to wean him off one thing at a time. We are not in a sprint, they remind us, but in a marathon. His body is healing from incisions, infection, and the trauma. May his spirit and soul heal totally as well.

MESSAGES

Peter Buczynsky: Lord, you formed Nathanael's kidneys per your perfect design, and we pray you restore them to their original function, cleansing them of any impurities and healing any damage that may have occurred and ask for complete restoration....In the mighty name of Jesus, we speak healing over Nathanael.

Shirley Cook: Thank you for posting specific prayer requests. We started praying when we first heard and will continue praying for sweet little Nathanael. Rich shared that Christ never refused to heal someone who asked Him. Whether they asked Jesus in person, sent someone else to ask for them, or simply reached out quietly in faith, Jesus always answered yes. What a mighty Lord we serve, and what a wonderfully loving and merciful heavenly Father we have! We will continue asking for Nathanael's complete healing, for your strength to minister to him and witness to the hospital staff, and for the docs to receive God's wisdom. Your continued faith and trust in Christ are such a blessing to more than you know! 2 Corinthians. 2:14-15.

WEEK 1, DAY 5

Yay, some reprieve. Granddad keeps watch: June 6, 6:21 a.m.

Nathanael is doing so well that Granddad insisted he keep watch for the night. After a day of praying for pee, we were seeing an improvement in output. I've never prayed so much for pee before. Dawn and I got some rest at home. Dawn is going back to the hospital while I keep a fishing date with the other boys.

We've spent so little time with them all week. It will be nice to do something normal. Dawn has family coming from Orlando and Bradenton to hang out with her for the day. I look forward to being normal again real soon.

MESSAGE

Charles Asbridge: Hey, brother, pee it is! I must admit I've never been asked to pray for pee, but with you, this seems a little on the normal side for ministry! Love you, man! Enjoy your day!

Dawn's update: June 6, 9:05 a.m.

Good morning! Nathanael had a stable night. As of today, he does not need dialysis, but we are going to continue to monitor him on a day-to-day basis. Thank you for all the prayers. It is such an encouragement, and it is making a difference. So please keep praying.

Update: June 6, 10:01 a.m.

No rounds today, so I don't have as much info. Nathanael's chest x-ray is a little better today, and he is not getting his chest percussion anymore. That's a praise! The fluid in his lungs is a little less today. He is more active, moving his arms, trying to get at his tube, and opening his eyes. They are giving him a little more meds to keep him more asleep.

Yesterday, I was a little discouraged. Sometimes it's hard when you want to see more progress and minor setbacks seem so huge. Karen and others reminded me to keep my eyes on Jesus and not my circumstances. And it is so true. In fact, when I was a senior in college, we had to do a senior message (sermon) to graduate, and here is the passage I picked. "Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful man so that you do not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:1-3 NIV). Pray that I keep my eyes on Jesus and do not let the minor setbacks and circumstances discourage me. I know God will bring Nathanael through this. Thank you.

MESSAGES

Diane Westcott: Father, your baby needs your help. As I look at his picture and my heart cries out with compassion, yours does much more. Remove the rash, let the fluids drain, bring all his functions up to normal, and release him from the enemy's clutches. Thank you, Father, for the love you show to these children for Jesus's name's sake. Amen.

Mike Stanco: I just want you both to know that I am praying for Nathanael's healing and for you both to feel God's presence and peace during this storm. Your openness and faith in action have been a very encouraging example to me of relying on God, the true healer, to work in these situations. My brother (Andrew) was diagnosed with colon cancer earlier this year, and this past week, we were notified that it had spread to his liver. As I heard this new development, I started to take my eyes off God and look at the situation. Then I was reminded by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by your actions and communications here that I need to look to Jesus for my brother's healing and ignore the distractions of the world and the evil one. Thanks so much to both of you for being an example to me, even in this difficult time in your lives. God is using you to minister to others. I will continue to pray for Nathanael and you both.

Can you say God is awesome? June 6, 6:09 p.m.

There are no words to describe how grateful I am to the Lord. He is so loving, faithful, powerful, kind, and just plain wonderful. My heart is so full of gratitude and praise.

Today was a little more normal than the other days this week. I took the boys fishing. We caught a bunch of catfish and one keeper trout. Philip caught a small amberjack with a cast net. That's never happened before. I enjoyed my time with them.

Then we all went by the hospital and saw Nathanael and the cousins. Andrew finally got to see Nathanael. Then I took them home, cleaned the fish, and mowed the lawn.

Nathanael is doing well. His kidneys appear to be kicking in but need to do a little better. When he wakes up from sedatives, he opens his eyes, tries to pull out the tubes, tries to sit up, rub his eyes, and even looks like he's waving. They don't like him to move, but we love to see it.

He's our little miracle boy. Thank you, Lord. Words cannot express our gratitude.

WEEK 1, DAY 6

Update: June 7, 8:44 a.m.

Still resting comfortably. He is a little more swollen today, but his output is consistently increasing—outstanding. His upper lobe lung is all clear, and all his breathing is good. Continue to pray for pee since he has so much fluid he needs flushed out of there. We have a new plan to get his pee going much, much, much more. That's the way to get the fluids out. While his steady increase in encouraging, the doctors want about four times as much coming out to see faster progress in reducing his swelling. I think they said his kidneys are at 20 percent. Continue to pray for pee! Dawn

The Lord asks, “Will you sacrifice your son?”: June 7, 4:27 p.m.

There has been a war in the heavenly realm over our ministry, our finances, our family, and over Nathanael in particular. Just last week, I had been asking intercessors to pray because of the battle. When everything began with Nathanael. I said the cost was too much. I wouldn't pay the price.

Today, the Lord took me to Hebrews 11:17–19 (NIV). “By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son. Even though God had said to him, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’ Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.”

Oh, to have faith like Abraham. Obey the Lord, no matter what it costs. I don't know that I would have signed up for what we have been through. I might have said, “Great idea, but I'm not willing to pay that high of a price.”

Abraham believed God could raise the dead, even before the stories of Elijah, Jesus, or the apostles who raised the dead. He believed God could raise the dead even before the promises Jesus gave in Matthew 10 to disciples that they could raise the dead.

Lord, give us all that kind of faith. I know in the moments that Nathanael had left us, I prayed, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.” I felt the faith and knew God would answer.

Now we pray for kidney functions to increase. Every shift has seen improvements, and we reached the first milestone. He still needs to flush out all the fluids that built up during the first twenty-four hours. Let's join with resurrection faith and believe for this next miracle.

Thank you for-faith filled prayers and encouragement.

Dawn: June 7, 4:55 p.m.

Well, they gave Nathanael medication to help his kidneys work better, and it has had the opposite effect. Now he is having little to no output of urine. So now we need to pray against the effects of the medication and ask the Lord to heal his kidneys despite the medications. Thanks so much for standing with us and with Nathanael. We love you, Dawn.

June 7, 4:57 p.m.

There is a beautiful rainbow outside my window. A sign of hope. Take this sign with you as you go get something to eat. Love ya, Dawn.

Dad duty: “Be still, little one”: June 7, 10:11 p.m.

As I prayed over Nathanael tonight, I prayed not for his body but for his soul and spirit. I spoke to his body to come into God's intended order but spoke more to his spirit and soul. I was wondering if he felt the pressure for his kidneys to produce. I was aware of the anxiety we were experiencing and how it might affect him.

The Lord brought me to Psalm 46. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the middle of the sea....Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah” (Psalm 46:1–2, 10–11).

The psalmist begins by declaring that the Lord is his place of refuge and where he finds strength. The Lord is a very present help in trouble. When we know that in our spirit, then verse 2 is our experience. We will not fear. We fear when we forget the Lord’s very present help and His strength and refuge.

Even if the mountains move and are thrown into the sea. Wow. We watch the news, and we tremble. I’ve seen some monumental disasters but never an entire mountain fall into the sea.

“Be still and know that I am God.” God speaks to us like I spoke to Nathanael. Don’t worry, my child, what you are going through won’t last forever. What you are going through is necessary for you to get better.

Even a bath to him now can seem traumatic. I tell him, don’t worry. What we are doing is for your good. You will feel better. Pray we can all relax and experience God’s peace.

MESSAGES

The Altmans: Nathaniel is in our prayers for healing and peace and your entire family as well for a special closeness to the Holy Spirit during this challenging time. God bless.

Maureen Bravo: Just got this and am lifting you and your precious little one up to the Father in prayer! I speak open, free-flowing vessels in his little body—toxins go—healings flow! God is good, and He is close—rest!

WEEK 1, DAY 7

Dad here: Fear not, I am with you: June 8, 7:12 a.m.

Nathanael and Dad had a good slumber party last night. He seemed to be so much more peaceful throughout the night. The 4:00 a.m. x-ray is just routine.

His urine output decreased during both last shifts. We need a significant increase. Though the news is not encouraging, our hope is in the Lord. We do not want them to

have to move Nathanael to Tampa General and do dialysis. The doctors are giving him one or two more days to step up the output.

The Lord keeps repeating the same phrase to me: Fear not, do not be discouraged. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Isaiah 41:10 KJV).

I have studied this before, but it is amazing how many times the Lord says, “Fear not!” The word dismayed means “to be discouraged.” This morning He is saying to me, “Dawn, and all of you who intercede. Don’t be discouraged. Don’t be afraid. I am here, I will be with you, and strengthen you, I will help and uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Pray for momma, it is harder for her. We want faith to permeate the room all day. Pray that discouragement, fear, and unbelief will not have any place here.

MESSAGE

Wes Spruill: We are praying for you, Nathaniel, and your entire family. We have been studying prayer in our life group at church, and James 5:15 (NIV) came to me. “And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.” The Lord will always provide and comfort.

Dawn’s update: June 8, 10:55 a.m.

Nathanael is still gaining weight from the fluid, and his kidneys are putting out less today. If his kidneys do not improve a lot today, they will transfer him tomorrow to Tampa General for dialysis. They say it is going to be hard to find a place to put the lines in to do dialysis. Basically, we really need a miracle today. Nathanael has been through so much. Today would be a great day for all those incredible prayers to be answered and his kidneys to be healed. Thanks for your continued prayers. Love you, Dawn.

Update: June 8, 12:51 p.m.

They decided Nathanael needs to be transferred to Tampa General for dialysis. They are working out the details, and at this point, they are saying it will probably happen tomorrow. Keep praying. Thanks, Dawn.

MESSAGES

April Kliesch: We have shared your needs with the New Life church family, and we are all praying for your family and especially for complete healing of Nathanael’s kidneys. Our four-year-old Elizabeth was playing

outside church the week before Easter. She ran into her brother, and they hit heads. She passed out and had a seizure. My husband felt her forehead and found a depression fracture. We rushed to the hospital, praying all the way. By the time the doctor examined her, there was no fracture. The Lord heard our prayers and healed her. We would have never had the faith to pray for healing without your ministry. May God bless you as you have blessed us.

Paige Brown: Father, thank you for the miracles you've shown us through Nathanael. We come before you right now, petitioning you to fully restore his kidneys. We ask in faith, believing you have already done it. Thank you! We love you and pray this in the name of Jesus.

Lauren Horton: We, as well as our family in NY, have been lifting sweet, little Nathanael up in prayer as well as all of you. Praying big things for him today!

Kath Domacina: I am praying for you from the UK. Was in tears last night as I read of your faith in our Healer God. Isaiah 7:9 (NIV) tells us, "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all." Thank you, Lord, for your gift of faith to Richard. Thank you, Almighty God, for your powerful hand at work in Nathanael's life and what's to come.

Karen Tierney: We're praying for that miracle with you, Dawn. I believe the Lord will do that work that needs to be done today (or at least before tomorrow). Will be there tonight to see and pray together. I've just been thinking about praising Him as Paul and Silas did when the Lord moved and removed their shackles. O Lord, we praise you for our Nathaniel and that he is in your hands, and you have everything worked out. You are our loving, heavenly Father who is full of compassion, merciful, rich in loving-kindness, and righteous in all your ways.

Fareed Shehadeh: Many of my brothers and sisters in the land of Israel are praying for Nathanael. We are with you. God can cause a miracle even now. We love you.

Shift change: Dad's back: June 8, 7:27 p.m.

The kidneys are again on the trend of improved output but must kick into gear over the next twelve hours. Nathanael and I will have another slumber party.

I'll be in the Word and in prayer shortly, and I look forward to what the Lord will speak to me. I'm sure I'll let you know. The Lord is awesome. I don't know why we don't have an answer yet. I don't understand the delay, but I believe He has done a miracle, is doing more healing, and will complete what He has begun.

Prayer of faith: June 8, 9:27 p.m.

Please pray this prayer with me in faith, believing. "Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth, you are our father. We are your children. We do not come before you because we are righteous or deserving. We come before you because your righteousness and your sacrifice were enough to cleanse us and give us the privilege of coming before you. You have given us many promises that are listed below in your Word. Tonight, we agree, believing that you keep your promises better than any earthly father. We, as your children, ask you specifically for a miracle of healing to take place in the body of Nathanael David Mull. We ask you to completely heal his kidneys and strengthen them. Cleanse his body of all excess fluids. Heal his skin completely and heal every wound miraculously. You are our refuge and strength. We put our trust in you completely. Thank you for listening, for hearing us, and for keeping your promises. In Jesus's name. Amen."

"And the prayer of faith shall save [sozo: heal] the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:15, Greek word and definition added, NIV).

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases" (Psalm 103:2-3 NKJV).

"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: Or what man is there of you, whom if his son asks bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:7, 9-11 NKJV).

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:19 NKJV).

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22 NKJV).

"But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (John 11:22 NKJV).

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16 NKJV).

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24 NKJV).

“Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20 NKJV).

“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22 NKJV).

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us .And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14–15 NKJV).

MESSAGES

Jennie Shumway: Sarah is standing here with me, and she wanted to let Nathanael know that she hopes he’s feeling better. We’re all thinking of you and him and are looking forward to seeing Nathanael’s smile again! In constant prayer.

Carol Abbott: My heart and prayers are with you and your family! I don’t have any words of my own to share that can bring any comfort or encouragement, but I want you to know that I am one of the thousands who are standing in prayer and believing our mighty God for a miracle! I fully expect that God will deliver Nathanael. God has a mighty plan for your precious son. I will pray continually, and I continue to share this request. If I was with you, I would sing over this baby. The liar, deceiver, the defeated foe cannot stand in the presence of praise. I will be praising God in advance for the victory over this attack. And by His stripes, Nathanael is healed. God bless you so much!

Cynthia Ackerman: Thank You, Father, for Richard and Dawn’s faith in Christ Jesus and for the love they have for all the saints, the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for them in heaven. I ask You to fill them with the knowledge of your will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Strengthen them with all power, according to Your glorious might so that they will have great endurance and patience.

CHAPTER FIVE



SECOND WEEK

DON'T YOU KNOW THE FATHER LOVES YOU.

WEEK 2: DAY 8

Dad's morning post: Don't give up easy: June 9, 5:56 a.m.

I fell asleep praying last night and ended up sleeping well. At ten o'clock at night, they turned off the lights and gave Nathanael enough pain relievers and sedatives to put a grown man to sleep. He would not give up easily but was opening his eyes and trying to move about. He wants those tubes out. We do too. They were all amazed at how long he could hold out. Finally, he began to calm down and drift off to sleep. The room was quiet, and I had gotten comfortable and set the laptop down to pray for a little before working on some other things.

I had planned to pray late into the night; instead, I've been praying this morning. I don't want to give up. As of 6:00 a.m., his kidneys haven't kicked into overdrive, and unless there's a miracle, they could transfer him to Tampa General where he will undergo dialysis.

I just know that no machine can heal like our God can. He can perform the best dialysis, and it doesn't hurt. I'll keep you up to date. It's now morning bath time instead of the night baths he's been having.

Richard's mulling it over, only four hundred people: June 9, 6:56 a.m.

I have had the privilege of seeing most of the miracles in the Bible in only the last ten years of my life. Most have come in the last five. I have felt defeated because of those who are not healed or, as in Nathanael's case, the healing has taken time. We don't have all the answers.

It encouraged me this morning as I read about the faith and ministry of David Hogan. What is your perspective on raising four hundred people from the dead? They have prayed for many who were not raised back to life. Is his faith and ministry failing because of only four hundred people, or would you be excited to have that track record?

Here is an excerpt from his testimony.

David went after God for His power to see the miraculous, to see "signs following" instead of only religious hypocrisy. He sought God to raise the dead. After four years of intense prayer and fasting he saw the first person to receive life after having died, this miracle by the power of prayer to God. God has since allowed him to be present on 28 different occasions to date where people of all backgrounds have been raised from the dead. In the work now there have been over four hundred people who have received this life after dying. This is one miracle of God among many that has affected the work.

These types of testimonies keep me pressing in for more of God. In Matthew 10, Jesus gave the disciples authority and power to raise the dead. Today, I rejoice God has given me my son back from the dead, and I press in for even greater signs and wonders. The apostles prayed for greater signs and wonders in Acts 4 after they had been threatened and told to stop. If that prayer was good enough for them, let it be our prayer today.

MESSAGE

Carol Abbott: Richard, Jesus is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. He raised people from the dead and said that even greater works we would do because He went to the Father on our behalf. Since He said that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him and now to us, it means that He has entrusted us with that authority. If He is the Word and the Word never fails, then Jesus the Word has the final word, and we can stand on His promise. Not because of our understanding but because of the faith that He has given us to believe. If we only have faith as small as a mustard seed and can speak to mountains and tell them to be thrown into the ocean, how much more will your great faith see? I agree with you and the many thousands that are praying for your Nathanael. He is healed!

My Song today: June 9, 8:57 a.m.

I've sung this song a hundred times: "Don't You Know the Father Loves You" by Helen Burgess and I follow that with a chorus from a Jason Upton song called, When it Thunders. Last night, the nurses told me I should try out for American Idol, then they told me I was too old. Ouch! I said, "I'm twenty-six," but they didn't buy that. I normally wait until everyone is out of the room. Sometimes I stop when someone enters, but some encourage me to keep singing. Here is what I sing over my boy, almost every night when I am on duty.

**DON'T YOU KNOW THE FATHER LOVES YOU**BY HELLEN BURGESS²

Don't you know the Father loves you
 Don't you know how much He cares
 Don't you know He's thinking of you
 Don't you know He sees you there
 He sees right into every part of you.
 He sees right in the very heart of you.
 He loves you like no other could
 He loves you like no other would
 He sees the hurt, the pain that you've been through
 He sees right in the very heart of you
 He loves you like no other could
 He loves you like no other would
[Mash up with Daddy Don't Sleep]
 Daddy don't sleep, daddy don't slumber.
 I don't wonder when it thunders cause
 I'm safe, in Daddy's arms.
 Daddy don't sleep, daddy don't slumber.
 I don't wonder when it thunders cause
 I'm safe, in Daddy's arms.

2. "Dead Raisers Event," *Destiny Encounters International*, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.destinyencounters.com/events/2020/11/20/dead-raisers-event>.

I sometimes change the words to say, “He’s come to comfort and to rescue you” and sometimes to “Don’t you know your father loves you? Don’t you know how much I care? Don’t you know we’re thinking of you?”

He has two daddies who love him. We trust the Lord to minister to him in ways that we can’t. He uses us to minister to him in ways that we are privileged to take part with Him in. I can sense the Father’s presence strongly. Did you know Father sings over you too?

MESSAGES

Norris Brown: From the moment we heard about Nathanael’s situation, we have been in prayer for him and the family. I am thankful that there is improvement and blessed by your messages and the ongoing testimony. I continue to be in prayer. Love you guys.

Neal Mack: Sometimes our strongest testimonies arise from our pain. Keep strong, for all the words you are singing to Nathanael, the angels of heaven are singing to you.

Dawn’s morning update: June 9, 9:51 a.m.

The process has started to transfer Nathanael to Tampa General. There is not a room available yet, so we are just waiting. The doc that we had all last week here is at Tampa General this week, so he knows Nathanael, and it is a comfort to us to know that he will care for him again. We’ll let you know when we move over there and what the situation will be like as far as the room and visitors. The delay gives us a little more time for his kidneys to kick into action, so please keep praying.

MESSAGES

Devon Gokmen: Come on, kidneys! Still praying for you all. What a witness you are.

Sally Steiner: We are all praying for those kidneys to kick in.

Dad's updates: Platinum status: June 9, 10:55 a.m.

We wanted to upgrade to Platinum status, so we had to get one more hospital checked off. To Tampa General it is. With Platinum status, we can have added benefits, like the little toothpaste tubes, better cream for the coffee, and an upgraded chair to sleep in.

We will be in room 502. We're leaving in a few minutes. His kidneys may even kick in before we get there. That would be outstanding—Platinum status without the pain. Nathanael is alert and they call it agitated, but to me, he seems peaceful but moving about. They want him to sleep, but that has never been something that he does on command.

We are laughing in the face of disappointment. Weeping is appropriate but finding something to laugh about is okay too. This is not what we wanted or asked for, but the breakthrough has not happened yet.

What a crazy day: June 9, 1:41 p.m.

The river is starting to flow. Nathanael has been holding on so he could set a record. The nurse flushed the line, and in the last twenty minutes, he released 75 ccs. We have not stopped praying; you have hung in there, and at the eleventh hour and fifty-ninth minute, things have kicked in. We are likely still going to be transferred.

This is one big step for Nathanael. Thanks for praying. I've never been as excited to see pee.

MESSAGE

Linda Gagg: What a blessing. I keep going on your page every hour to see the updates and must say this was the best update yet. We will all keep praying that he gets better each day and that soon he can go home. You are all in my thoughts every day. Will be waiting for the next wonderful update to see what God is doing in his life.

Richard again, tough decisions: June 9, 6:42 p.m.

The doctor could not put in a catheter, so Nathanael had to go to surgery to have it installed. Though we have been blessed with some gracious people along the way, everyone knows that most of Nathanael's issues result from medicines and medical procedures.

We have approached none of this with fear, but it is hard to keep watching the medical community make decisions that have huge side effects. Though the urine output has increased, they have twice found blocks in his Foley, the line for urine. They still feel certain that he needs dialysis. The fluids that have built up cannot come off at the rate he is urinating. The fluids are coming from all the lines that are running into him.

We trust in the Lord. We sometimes lack confidence in the wisdom of man and the methods employed by those who have been trusted with his care. I believe they all mean

well. What we are seeking to do is balance our trust that the Lord can oversee and protect Nathanael through the maze of medical decisions with being caring, protective, and discerning parents who can advocate through the maze.

Pray we consistently hear from the Lord minute by minute. Pray that the Lord protects Nathanael from harmful medicines or procedures. Pray that the Lord gives the doctor's divine wisdom, not the wisdom of man. Praise the Lord for hearing our prayers for increased urine output. Pray for peace in Nathanael, Mom, Dad, and Grandma as we walk this journey.

MESSAGE

Rebecca Pulido: The earth and everything in it belong to the Lord. The doctors attending to Nathanael are just tools in the Master's hands. Don't look at the storm; keep your eyes on Jesus!

Lou Fioritto: I must tell you I am almost in tears for Nathanael. We will be praying, and I will call some people right now to be praying. We love you guys. Jesus, touch and heal Nathanael.

Dad's update, Success!: June 9, 9:53 p.m.

The doctor just came and placed the catheter. They will now set Nathanael up on the dialysis. Although this is not our first choice, we are thrilled to see progress happening. Pray for a successful dialysis, the removal of fluids, and his kidneys to function well.

The Lord shed His blood for Nathanael, and He took the stripes for Nathanael's healing. Christ has done His part. We look for the complete realization of what the Lord has already purchased at such a great price.

Thank you for all the encouragement and prayers. Today was the first time that I felt a level of frustration and a loss of patience. May tonight be a night of peaceful rest for all of us. We will not fear. We will not be discouraged. We will put our hope in the unshakeable kingdom, in His Word and in the King whose reign has never even been tested. Amen.

MESSAGES

Megan Shumway: Hope the pee comes. Love you. Feel better.

Linda Morrison: We are standing with you in prayer. I feel the Lord just spoke to my heart. This is your breakthrough time, spiritually and physically in every area of your lives.

Richard signing off, good night: June 10, 12:02 a.m.

The dialysis is underway. The room is almost ready, and Dad is looking forward to another slumber party with Nathanael. I believe I will sleep through anything tonight. May you all rest well in the Father's arms tonight. He doesn't sleep. He doesn't slumber. I don't wonder when it thunders cause I'm safe in Daddy's arms. He's watching over you, no matter how dark the storm gets.

So much for sleep, the smell of rain: June 10, 1:06 a.m.

A friend sent this. It's called "The Smell of Rain."

A cold March wind danced around the dead of night in Dallas as the doctor walked into the small hospital room of Diana Blessing. She was still groggy from surgery. Her husband, David, held her hand as they braced themselves for the latest news. That afternoon of March 10, 1991, complications had forced Diana, only twenty-four-weeks pregnant, to undergo an emergency Cesarean to deliver the couple's new daughter, Dana Lu Blessing.

At twelve inches long and weighing only one pound nine ounces, they already knew she was perilously premature.

Still, the doctor's soft words dropped like bombs. "I don't think she's going to make it," he said, as kindly as he could. "There's only a 10 percent chance she will live through the night, and even then, if by some slim chance she makes it, her future could be a very cruel one."

Numb with disbelief, David and Diana listened as the doctor described the devastating problems Dana would likely face if she survived. She would never walk, she would never talk, she would probably be blind, and she would certainly be prone to other catastrophic conditions, from cerebral palsy to complete mental retardation, and on and on.

"No! No!" was all Diana could say. She and David, with their five-year-old son Dustin, had long dreamed of the day they would have a daughter to become a family of four. Now, within a matter of hours, that dream was slipping away. But as those first days passed, a new agony set in for David and Diana. Because Dana's underdeveloped nervous system was essentially raw, the lightest kiss or caress only intensified her discomfort. So they couldn't even cradle their tiny baby girl against their chests to offer the strength of their love.

All they could do, as Dana struggled alone beneath the ultraviolet light in the tangle of tubes and wires, was to pray that God would stay close to their precious little girl. There was never a moment when Dana suddenly grew stronger. But as the weeks went by, she did slowly gain an ounce of weight here and an ounce of strength there.

At last, when Dana turned two months old, her parents could hold her in their arms for the very first time. And two months later, though doctors continued to gently but grimly warn that her chances of surviving, much less living any kind of normal life, were next to zero, Dana went home from the hospital, just as her mother had predicted.

Five years later, when Dana was a petite but feisty young girl with glittering gray eyes and an unquenchable zest for life. She showed no signs whatsoever of any mental or physical impairment. She was everything a little girl can be and more. But that happy ending is far from the end of her story.

One blistering afternoon in the summer of 1996 near her home in Irving, Texas, Dana was sitting in her mother's lap in the bleachers of a local ball park where her brother Dustin's baseball team was practicing. As always, Dana was chattering nonstop with her mother and several other adults sitting nearby when she suddenly fell silent. Hugging her arms across her chest, little Dana asked, "Do you smell that?"

Smelling the air and detecting the approach of a thunderstorm, Diana replied, "Yes, it smells like rain." Dana closed her eyes and again asked, "Do you smell that?" Once again, her mother replied, "Yes, I think we're about to get wet. It smells like rain." Still caught in the moment, Dana shook her head, patted her thin shoulders with her small hands and loudly announced, "No, it smells like Him. It smells like God when you lay your head on His chest."

Tears blurred Diana's eyes as Dana happily hopped down to play with the other children. Before the rains came, her daughter's words confirmed what Diana and all the members of the extended Blessing family had known, at least in their hearts, all along. During those long days and nights of her first two months of her life, when her nerves were too sensitive for them to touch her, God was holding Dana on His chest, and it is His loving scent that she remembers so well.³

WEEK 2, DAY 9

Richard's morning update: This is the day the Lord has made: June 10, 7:35 a.m.

"This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24 KJV).

Nathanael spent the night on dialysis. He has lost 1.2 kilos of fluid weight already. It causes his temperature to drop, so he has a lot of blankets on him, what looks like a pool float raft, and more blankets with a blow dryer-type heater pumping air underneath. The heater is called a bear hug.

3. *Richard L. Scott, Miracles in Our Midst (Brentwood, Tennessee: Wessex House Publishing, 1997), n/a.*

They gave Nathanael enough sedative and painkiller to take out more than one adult, and he is still awake. He doesn't seem comfortable. That is hard to watch. Yes, sometimes that progress comes through pain. I spent hours last night singing over him, praying over him, and speaking words of comfort and assurance to his spirit.

Pray for Momma. It is hard for her. She hasn't seen Nathanael this morning yet. She needs a bear hug from the Lord today. Nathanael needs one from the Lord as well.

I'm rejoicing in the Lord, glad that He is working all things together for good, glad to have my son, three other wonderful children, a beautiful, godly wife, and my health. The sun came up today. God is still on His throne, and He has not changed. He is still faithful, powerful, holy, and loving. He is still close to me, still speaks to me and still answers prayer.

I don't have all the answers. It hurts a lot to see my little one discomforted and to not be able to hold him or help in tangible ways. I'm encouraged, though, that the Lord is a better comforter than I am, and I know He was here last night touching Nathanael in ways we cannot.

Thank you all for the prayers.

MESSAGES

Dana Perrotto: As we prayed for Nathanael, we saw that his spirit is in communion with God, consistent with Jesus's own words about children. There was calm assurance that in his spirit, Nathanael is not a child, so he has full fellowship with God during this. His spirit is eternal, just like yours and mine.

Doris Haynie: The Lord bless you and watch, guard, and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon and enlighten you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless His Name! We are continuing to bless the Lord with you and keep prayers lifting to the throne room of God for you all. Much love.

Dad's grumbling, more effective than waterboarding: June 10, 9:48 a.m.

I found an answer for the best torture device that is worse than waterboarding. Just replace the waterboards with the hospital chair/bed that I laid on last night and confine the chair/bed to five feet of space, and you have something better than waterboarding, bamboo under the fingernails, or other forms of torture that I have heard of.

I had to give them more than my name, rank, and serial number this morning. And Nathanael gets the heated blanket under him, a bair hugger (correct spelling) on top of

him, and every comfort you can imagine on a Craftmatic adjustable bed. Not fair! Well, I guess considering what he has been through, that's right. It's not fair. He deserves much better still.

MESSAGE

Sue Catlett: We are praying for Nathanael and all of you that he will be completely healed spirit, soul, and body!

Dawn's update: June 10, 2:33 p.m.

Hi everyone, Richard went home to get some much-needed sleep and I am standing guard today. I say "standing guard" because that is how I feel here. I pray that the spiritual dynamic in this place would not enter Nathanael's room and that there would be a peace in his room even with the chaos outside it. I would appreciate your prayers for that as well. The dialysis is going well, and they expect to remove about two pounds per day. They will evaluate each day if they need to continue and won't go past three days. He is going through so much. Please continue to pray that he can sleep because they are giving him so many meds at top levels for him to sleep. We are standing on God's promises and believe that He will see Nathanael through to the end and bring complete healing. Love you all so much.

MESSAGE

Grand mommy Mull: As a grandmother, I want to thank all of Dawn and Richard's friends. You are such a blessing in our lives. The outpouring of love, prayers, messages, and meals is much appreciated. Tom and I have never seen anything like it after having moved eighteen times and lived in seven states. Thank you for letting the Lord use you in a mighty way. We love you, and God loves you more.

Dad horrible night, on the edge of a cliff: June 10, 6:32 p.m.

Time to be honest.

I want to give you an allegory to describe last night. This story is like one I have heard before. Details are purely allegorical.

A mountain climber was high on one of his adventurous mountain passes. He knew the descent would be treacherous. He had a narrow pathway down the side of the mountain. One wrong step and he would surely plummet hundreds of feet below to his death. It was nighttime, but he pressed on without fear.

At one point, the passage was very narrow, and he stumbled on a rock. He fell off the side of the mountain. Fortunately, a narrow ledge just eight feet down caught him and saved him from certain death.

As he stood, he found the face of the mountainside so smooth that there was nowhere for a foothold or a handhold to pull himself back up to the pathway. Few people traveled the path, and he wasn't certain anyone would come or how long he could survive. He was a man of faith, so he prayed, sang songs of worship, and believed in God for a miracle.

In the morning, as the sun rose, he awoke after only a brief respite. The miracle was before him. The cliff he had landed on was only eighteen inches from the ground at the foot of the mountain.

My edge of the cliff: No one told me last night that his temperature would drop so much, his heart rate would slow below the normally safe range or that his blood pressure would fall so drastically. The nurses on hand seemed to work frantically to help him sleep, which he didn't, and tried to warm him up, but couldn't. I know the dangerous zones for all the vitals, and he was hitting most of these danger zones. The vitals let us know if he is okay or dying.

I was praying, crying out to God, standing over him through most of the night. Where are you, God? Do I call someone? Is he dying? Pray harder!

In the morning, I learned that all those stats are normal during dialysis. I prayed in faith throughout the night but, in my heart, faced the possibility that I could lose my boy. I believed for God's protection, singing and worshipping. The level of danger wasn't as intense as what I experienced.

How often are we more worried and concerned than our circumstances merit? It doesn't matter. When we face the trials of life, we have a choice as to where we put our hope. How much will we trust?

Lord, give each of us strength to face the trials before us with confident hope and faith in you.

MESSAGES

Patty Batson: I read your posting about the hair hugger heater and the drop in Nathanael's temperature, blood pressure, and heart rate. My sister reminded me she had the same experience when she had dialysis. It was so hard to watch all of that unfold as it is now for Nathanael. We were told that she probably won't remember any of it because she was so heavily sedated. I wanted to be convinced of that as I watched her suffer, but I wasn't. One day, she looked up at me with eyes of fear and mouthed the words, "Help me." Of course, I was helpless. I tell you this now because she, in fact, does not remember any of that. During those worst times before and after her transplant, she does not remember feeling the pain and does not know all that she went through. Maybe it

was because of all the medication, maybe it was God's unending love and mercy for His child, maybe both. But it is comforting to know that she was protected from the pain and fear that I thought she was feeling.

Shawna McWilliams: I saw a post on Facebook and immediately registered on this site to find out what was going on. I just wanted to let you know that I am so sorry your baby is going through so much, but God is the Healer. Richard, you and I both have witnessed and experienced it, and He is going to heal little Nathanael. In fact, it's already begun. Have faith like a child. I am praying and believing for you.

Debbie Bradley: Wow, what a word from the Lord. Thank you, Richard, for sharing this raw revelation. My heart is touched and beating wildly as I read this and relate it to the storms and their intensity and my response. He has my hope and trust, and I will remember these words as I continue to encourage myself to walk out my own faith. Your faith and encouraging words are a blessing.

Anne Cristie White: Thank you for sharing this message. It brought me a lot of hope. I am amazed at how God is using you to speak into my life during this time of tragedy. I tell everyone about "my brother" and what a difference you are making in so many lives. I want you to know that I appreciate your faith, honesty and willingness to let God speak to you through this time. I could take away your pain and make this situation disappear. But this is just going to be part of the story of the miracle that God is going to do. I am believing God for great things. My prayer for you tonight is Psalm 62. Find rest, O my soul, in God alone. My hope comes from Him. I love you, brother!

Joyce Recenello: I have been praying for your precious sweet baby. This afternoon, I came to this website and viewed the pictures and began to cry not because I doubted for a minute that God was able and willing to completely heal his little body but because my heart was so touched with his suffering. We've had many conversations about God's healing power and know how awesome and faithful He is. I have complete faith in the God who loves us and gave Himself for us. Your little Nathanael is in His hands, thank God!

Paige Brown: Thank you so much for continuing to encourage others even during your own storm.

WEEK 2, DAY 10

Grateful. Grandad to the rescue: June 11, 8:17 a.m.

Granddads are wonderful. Dawn and I felt blessed as my dad spent the night with Nathanael last night, allowing Dawn and I to be with our kids and spend a night in our own bed. Thanks, Granddad.

Nathanael is doing great. He lost a lot of the fluids in the last thirty-six hours, and the doctors are evaluating the next step. Yesterday, they found a heater that could take the blood after it passed through dialysis and heat it to the same temperature as his body. Since connecting the heater, Nathanael has maintained normal temperature.

They are evaluating whether they can take Nathanael off the ventilator and how soon they can take him off dialysis. His incisions are healing well, and his skin seems to be better as well. There is still dead skin that is peeling off. He looks so much better with the new skin and the excess fluids off his body.

We look forward with great anticipation to the day Nathanael comes home. We organized a grand celebration party and invited all our friends.

Dawn's update: June 11, 8:51 a.m.

I am waiting for rounds but wanted to send a message saying thanks again for all your prayers both here and from where you are. They encourage us, and God is answering your prayers. Thank you for the meals and help with the kids. There is a peace in Nathanael's room that does not match the atmosphere outside it. It is the supernatural peace of God, and I continue to pray it will be a testimony to all who enter, and that peace will fill Nathanael 24/7. God has brought us to Tampa General for a reason, and I finally gave up my plans of only wanting to be at St Joseph's and released my desires to the Lord. I asked Him to show me the purposing He has for us to be here. Continue to pray for Andrew, Philip, and Rachel as well. It is beginning to affect them. I told them that God has a purpose for them in this as well. Love you all. Blessings.

MESSAGES

Carol Abbott: Last night, I read this in my devotional, Pursuit of his Presence, and I felt it was for you! The following are some passages from this reading: "The Lord is looking for people who will allow Him to

demonstrate His power on their behalf. People whose supernaturally, abundant lives would make them a walking advertisement of the mercy and power of God.(speaking of the Israelites the passage continues), if they, (the Israelites), would have believed God, it wouldn't have mattered how big the giants were, they would have marched right in there expecting those giants to scatter in every direction. But they didn't believe God because they were scared! God is looking for you! Don't allow giants to scare you or defeat you. Stand up and let God see you! Let Him know you'll be faithful and obedient. Let Him know you'll trust Him and His Word, no matter what the circumstances say or look like. Then worship Him, knowing you'll see Him demonstrate His power and faithfulness on your behalf!"

“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9 KJV).

I pray this encourages you today! God sees you as you wait on Him and believe Him for Nathanael's healing. Stand still and see the deliverance of your God!

Christine Reidy: Pat had been keeping us updated on Nathanael's status. This is the first chance I have had to get on a computer. I had e-mailed my family in Texas, letting them know about your family and little Nathanael's condition. I received an e-mail from my brother, and Nathanael and you are all on the prayer list/chain at First Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, and he wanted to be able to update them. I am so glad to hear that he is doing better as we have been praying for you all. May God continue to answer your prayers and shower you with His continue blessings.

Lisa Westcott: Dawn, Praise the Lord! I specifically prayed just a little while ago that the Lord would station mighty warring angels outside of Nathanael's room that would only let those staff in who would speak life and blessing and emit a peace from them that would bless him!

I too, believe that God is already using this move that at first seemed to be unwelcome, cold, and harsh, to set His plan in motion! He is going to use Nathanael's miracle as well as your and Richard's presence and your bold demonstration of faith to rock some people's worlds! We can only thank God for allowing you to be the vessel that transforms their hearts!

Dawn's update: June 11, 12:51 p.m.

By the end of today, they think Nathanael will be 2.5 pounds lighter. His upper body already looks normal. He does not have any swelling on his face, arms, and hands. He still experiences swelling in his lower body. The doc wants to wait a day or two before trying to wean Nathanael from the breathing machine. He wants to be sure any extra fluid won't be an issue. They may try to give him a small feeding in his OG tube to see if his stomach is ready for food. So today is going to be much the same as yesterday. Wait, wait, wait. They have found a drug that works to help Nathanael sleep, so that is terrific for him. As far as the rash goes, they are still leaning toward some kind of nutritional deficiency. The question is whether he hasn't been getting enough nutrition or if his body has a problem absorbing nutrients. But that subject is for another day. The priorities right now are his kidneys and for getting off the breathing machine. Thanks so much for your prayers and keep praying.

Dad's back on duty: June 11, 7:31 p.m.

"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad" (Proverbs 12:25 NKJV).

I feel great since Granddad held the post last night, and I got to sleep in my bed. Nathanael is doing well. What a day. The morning started with getting gas at the gas station. A friend was there, and he said, "You're looking old." Then when I got to the office, one of the first comments was, "You look tired." One of the staff poked her head in the door and told me she knew a place I could take a nap. Then when I got up here to the hospital after an hour at home with the kids, Dawn said, "Are you okay? You look tired."

I haven't thought I was as tired or old-looking as today might have reflected on me, but then the doctor just came in and gave me a good word, and my heart is glad. The surgeon said that he and the doctors are very pleased with Nathanael's progress. His stomach has healed up, and the leak has been repaired, which is clear from the absence of drainage for days. The nurses were all excited that he looks so good. The bloating has gone down so much, they were saying, "He's half the man he used to be." His skin looks better as well.

It is amazing how an excellent report can lift your spirit. In the same way, a bad report can crush your spirit. I often even see that in the responses to CarePages. When the news is especially good, everyone rejoices, and you can almost see the faces. When the news is not as good or terrible, you sense the discouragement trying to get a hold of people.

Hope is that anchor that stands firm amidst negative reports. Faith also will hold you up when the battle rages all around and there seem to be only bad reports. When faith hears a negative report, it says, "That may be the present circumstance, but I put my hope in the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. The report I hear is not the final say."

Keep believing, no matter what report you got today. Keep hoping in the Lord. If you didn't get an excellent report today, let our good report encourage you.

MESSAGES

Rachelle Castellana: Guyatano has not missed one night of praying for Nathanael. The love and concern in his four-year-old heart is astounding. He wants me to check online for new pictures to see how he is doing. I want you both to know that the faith you are exemplifying is reflecting in my son's heart. Thank you for taking the time to keep us informed. We check it very often! We are praying for you—and Guyatano still can't wait to meet Nathanael. Read Psalm 91 slowly, line by line, and hear what the Lord is saying to your heart, and know! "As you dwell in the shelter of the Most High, rest in the shadow of the Almighty." Goodnight!

Judy Johnis: Wow! You have been walking an amazing walk. Are you feeling that supernatural faith inside, like you are walking on water? Is God speaking to you constantly in such a clear voice that you can almost smell His breath? Embrace it, Richard. You can't easily explain this to others until it happens to them.

WEEK 2, DAY 11

Sunrise with Dad: June 12, 7:13 a.m.

The sun has captured my attention. At first, a sliver broke above the distant building, then it inched its beautiful way up till it was in full view. Oh, the beauty the Lord has made because that is who He is. Beautiful.

Nathanael slept through the night. This morning, he was very alert. I removed his hands from the restraints and held them as I allowed his hands to move all around. He is such a trooper. He seems at peace.

I was looking at the pictures on the wall of his room. Pictures like the ones in the photo gallery where he is full of life. I long so earnestly to have that boy back. To go for our daily walk. I usually let him lead the way for interesting journeys. We are always going somewhere, like around the block or down the street. Walking with Nathanael, you are going nowhere but on a walk.

“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord” (Psalm 27:14 KJV).

Wait in this passage could also be translated as hope.⁴ I did a serious study of the word hope last year. I had watched someone on the verge of a miraculous breakthrough lose hope in their trial and ruin their chance for the imminent miracle. People put their hope in many things and people, but even the strong, wealthy, powerful, and beautiful will let us down. Our hope must be in the Lord and in His Word.

Hope isn't what I am experiencing. If I was experiencing what I hoped for, there would be no need for hope. Hope is the eager anticipation (waiting) for what we long for, believe for, and trust God to bring about with the faith that God is not only able but truly loves us and wills our good.

I look at Nathanael, in a hospital bed, strapped down for his own good, with a huge incision down his abdomen. He still seems strong and alert, but I don't get to see the smiles, laughter, joy, mischief, and love in his eyes. He doesn't reach out to hold others or to be held.

Without hope, I would despair. Without faith, I might expect that this is what we will deal with the rest of Nathanael's life. But we are not without hope or faith.

Psalm 27 and Psalm 91 helped me this morning to hope in the Lord. My face is alight with hope. I will not be discouraged. Whom shall I fear? What shall I fear?

Good morning, Dawn again: June 12, 8:36 a.m.

We have made a change of shift, and I'm here today. They say that Nathanael weighs eleven kg (twenty-two pounds) today. He is only one or two pounds above his admission weight. I look forward to the doc's report to see if they will hold off on the dialysis. But his skin looks better every day. I am still praying for supernatural peace to fill Nathanael's room spirit. Thanks for praying with us.

MESSAGES

Alison Lynn: We have been praying for you all every day and will continue to do so! Please know how much we love your family!

Tim Stutsman: Our family has all been very encouraged by your posts. You are in our prayers. Our kids care for Nathanael's journey. May the

4. “*Lexicon :: Strong's H6960 – qāvâ,*” *Blue Letter Bible*, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h6960/esv/wlc/0-1/>.

worship of your heart and the glory you are giving to God continue to usher in God's peace into Nathanael's place.

Dad's thoughts, hope realized: June 12, 2:01 p.m.

We are very close to realizing a breakthrough in our hope. The doctors are decreasing the number of breaths the machines are taking for him by one-fourth and the amount of sedation by one-fourth as the first step toward taking him off the ventilator. The next step will be to remove his tubes. They plan to stop dialysis at midnight.

We embrace hope. Some will warn you to not get your hopes up because if you get your hopes up, they may be crushed and then what? I believe as children of the King, we should embrace hope and faith. Think of the Samaritan woman whom Jesus seemed to put off when she brought her child to Jesus. She had such hope for her daughter and faith in Jesus that even when He told her that He had only come for the Jews, she humbled herself, kept her faith and hope alive and called herself a slave worthy of the crumbs from the master's table.

I relish in the hope. Today, I believe in faith and have hope that I will hold my son in my arms and see him alert, and that within a day, I will see the child of the pictures.

Pull up some of his pictures. Pick your favorite and pray that we see that little boy today. Embrace hope with us. Let's believe together.

MESSAGES

Nancy Knight: Father, I come into agreement that Nathanael will soon be in his parent's arms, breathing on his own, smiling up at them, and getting stronger and healthier every minute.

Lou Fioritto: Hope is one of the foundational truths of the good news. I always believe in hoping for the best outcome. It doesn't make much sense to not have hope because we usually get what we hope for. Love all of you.

Mark Webster: We haven't met yet, but through Pastor John at New Life, I read your books, and they changed my life. Thank you. My prayers are with you and your family, and the prayers of my family and friends are with your son. God has placed a special touch upon you.

Dawn's update: June 12, 2:58 p.m.

They had to increase some of Nathanael's ventilator settings. The doctors are coming down on his sedation, but now he is getting very upset. They will try to continue to wean him off the breathing machine, but it looks like he will not be able to get off before tomorrow. Please pray for Nathanael's spirit and that he would be calm and at peace in this process. As usual, we are in a waiting process. Thanks for the prayers.

WEEK 2, DAY 12**Dawn's morning report: June 13, 11:19 a.m.**

Nathanael still has had no urine output since coming off dialysis. We need to pray for pee. They will probably do two hours of dialysis today. He's running a fever, so please pray for any infection. His incision from the abdominal surgery is not looking as good as it was. They will check on that today. They will still try to wean him from the ventilator, but it will be a slow process. This is such a long process. Please pray for endurance for us. We look forward to the day we bring Nathanael home healed. Thanks for all your prayers. We depend on those prayers. We appreciate you all very much.

MESSAGE

Carol Abbott: Lord Jesus, I pray the prayer of agreement for your child, Nathanael, that the healing that you have already purchased for him with your own blood would be manifested in his body. And now we address you, liar: "Sickness, you must bow in Jesus's name. We speak to you, sickness, and we tell you in the authority of the name of Jesus to go! You are a defeated foe, and we will not give into fear or listen to your lies. We believe the truth. Jesus is King, He is Lord, He is the Victor, and He is the Son of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings.

Nathanael's first post: June 13, 5:06 p.m.

Hey, this is Nathanael. I just posted a recent picture of myself to show the predicament I find myself in. Please help! They've tied me to this bed. I promise I did nothing wrong. I think they drugged me and have kept me here for days. They aren't feeding me anything, but while I sleep, they do all kinds of things to me. I have tubes coming out of my stomach, my side, and my mouth.

My parents are here, but for some reason, all they do is pray for me, sing to me, clean me up some, and talk really sweet to me. I don't understand why they aren't breaking me out of here. I look at them with all the pleading in my eyes I can, but they just don't get it. This tube sticking in my mouth makes it impossible to talk, but I keep mouthing the words, "Help me."

Everyone left the room for a minute, so I reached over to type this email. I'm sure they'll strap me down and drug me again as soon as they find me. Call the authorities and tell them about this place. Oh no. I don't know where I am. I think I heard someone say Tampa General Hospital. I'm not sure.

Oh, before I go, I've got to tell you that last week was incredible. I got to spend some time in the most beautiful place I've ever dreamed of. This wonderful man took me and showed me all kinds of great places. My dad kept calling me to come back, but I didn't want to. I finally told the wonderful man that I'd better go back to find out what my dad wanted. He told me He loved me and wanted me to stay but that there was a good reason for me to come back. He told me I would get to come back one day and spend forever with Him. I can't wait.

That makes this bearable. I just know that I will get out of here. Someone, please help me. If you can't do anything else, at least pray for me. I know prayer works. I could hear all kinds of prayers when I went to that place last week. Oh, yeah, the Man also comes to visit me every day and tells me I'm going to be okay and I will get out of here. His name is Jesus. I'll tell you about Him one day.

MESSAGE

Joyce Recenello: I am faithfully continuing to pray for your precious little one. What an amazing encouragement to the whole body of Christ, as well as a powerful testimony to the unsaved world! You have both proven to be faithful as you have believed God's Word without wavering! Richard, this writing today from Nathanael was so awesome and so anointed! The other day, my daughter and I both agreed that you have the makings of your new book. And now this passage confirms it!

Nathanael's second plea: June 13, 7:40 p.m.

Hey, this is Nathanael again. Doesn't anyone read these things? I could get back in place, so no one suspects anything. I'm developing a tolerance for the drugs they are giving me and getting a little more alert. I still pretend to be asleep and groggy.

I think I've figured something out. I keep hearing them talk about my pee. For some reason, it must be very important to them and may be valuable. If I understand things right, all I have to do is pee enough to get out of here. If you can't come and break me out, will you at least pray that I pee enough? I don't know how much that is, but it must be a lot.

Oh, yeah, I forgot to tell you. When my dad was telling me to come back in Jesus's name, Jesus looked at me and said, "I Am Jesus." It was so cool when He said that. Well, He also told me I am healed by what He did for me two thousand years ago. He said that I'll learn more about that soon and will get to tell many people about what He did. I can't wait.

By the way, Nathanael's posts always get the biggest response.

MESSAGES

Andrew Mull: Hey, Nathanael, this is your big brother Andrew. If you are able to type with socks on your hands and get in and out of all that equipment, why don't you just pee and get out of there? Miss you.

Tom Shumway: Nathanael, we're coming to break you out tomorrow. Pack your bags.

Paul Loftin: They probably haven't told you, but it's okay to wet the bed. You pee till you soak the bed, and we will all be happy. And yes, I have read everything that has been written about you since I found out about your condition. Jesus shall see you through.

Joanne Towles: He will always be with you. He will never leave you. He will never forsake you. Look to Him!

Brandy Whitten: This is your buddy, Isaac. We have never met but I and my mommy and daddy are praying for you to get out so we can play. I can't drive yet, or I would be there to get you out now.

WEEK 2, DAY 13

MESSAGE

Carol Abbott: A word of encouragement to you this morning: "May Jesus himself and God who loves us, by His grace, eternal comfort and wonderful hope (and hope does not disappoint for the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts), comfort you and strengthen you in every

good thing that you do and say today” (2 Thessalonians 2:16, author’s paraphrase). God is so pleased with you, Dawn! You are a strong woman of faith, and God will reward you for your faith and trust in Him for the total healing and deliverance of your son! Blessings over you today!

Dawn’s update: June 14, 12:36 p.m.

The docs are going to try to get his breathing machine to a rate of eight breaths per minute and, Lord willing, get him off the breathing machine Monday. His temp is still at 100.4 or 100.6. He peed a little. Still praying for his kidneys and to get off the breathing machine. Blessings.

Dad on duty again: June 14, 6:47 p.m.

Nathanael tried to make an escape today. It seems his cousins had worked out a plan with him to break him out of the hospital. We aren’t sure how he did it, but he either had someone write posts for him or figured out himself how to write a post on CarePages yesterday. You can imagine our shock as we arrived, and he was coming out the doors. He was groggy, but shock and disappointment filled his eyes.

We explained to him that all this was being done to help him get better and that he had died last week and gone to be with Jesus. He is much more relaxed now that he understands his reason for being here and that we are just waiting for his kidneys to kick into gear. At first, he seemed to feel a lot of pressure, but we told him to just relax.

I hated having to tell him that his two posts seem to have been the most popular. He plans to write more posts in the days ahead. Right now, he is too drowsy. He had a busy day with the failed escape, all the news, the cousins, his brothers, and sister. He loves attention, but this is overwhelming. The nurses just won’t leave him alone.

Almost all the dead skin is gone, his rash is gone, and he is getting more alert. They are cutting back on everything slowly and monitoring everything that can be monitored.

Yeah! We have pee: June 14, 9:48 p.m.

Nathanael seems quite motivated. He is moving a lot, looking around, and yes, peeing. All the other stats are good. He’s breathing more on his own all the time. He is moving arms and legs despite having restraints and has been doing so for hours. He doesn’t seem agitated at all. He seems peaceful but motivated.

A friend coordinated twenty-four-hour intercession, and she just sent me a private post saying a few time slots were still available. Here is the pertinent portion of her email and how to get in touch with her.

Hi, it’s me, Leslie Conway. I wanted to give an update for the twenty-four-hour intercession for Nathanael. A few time slots are currently open. What I would like is for the intercessor to commit to the time that they have chosen for the duration.

WEEK 2, DAY 14

Dad here, your kingdom come: June 15, 7:05 a.m.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10 NIV).

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33 KJV).

What does His kingdom look like here on earth? The word for kingdom means “to reign.”⁵ When He is reigning, His will is being done. The Lord had originally given dominion, authority, and rulership of this planet to us, His children. Adam and Eve gave it to Satan by listening to him and obeying him. Christ has bought back our dominion through His blood.

He gave authority to His disciples to do what Jesus did in Matthew 10, Mark 6, Luke 9, and my favorite, Luke 10. Everywhere Jesus went, He brought heaven to earth. He carried out the will of the King and brought His will to the world.

The prayer of faith is one way to bring heaven to earth. In heaven, there is no sickness, no pain, and no sorrow. Just as Jesus brought healing and freedom to people everywhere He went, we can bring His reign and kingdom here to this dark world because we have been given dominion, authority, and power.

Thank you for praying for our son, believing, and joining us in calling for the will of God to manifest in little Nathanael’s body. I like immediate miracles. Many of Jesus’s miracles were immediate. Nathanael’s has been slow. I relish what the Lord is doing in our family and in my life through this journey. I still would take immediate relief for my son over this process and all the medical stuff, surgery, drugs, and pain, but I don’t know if God would have gotten my attention as completely.

All that to say, Nathanael peed consistently through the night. He is very alert, moving a lot, and seems ready to go.

5. *Lexicon :: Strong's G932 – basileia*, Blue Letter Bible, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g932/net/tr/0-1/>.

CHAPTER SIX



WEEK THREE

DON'T BE AFRAID BABY, DON'T YOU CRY

Dawn's report, morning rounds: June 15, 10:28 a.m.

Good morning! I was discouraged when I came in to see that Nathanael's breathing machine was back up to eighteen breaths per minute. Again, I am reminded that we really need patience because this is taking a lot longer than we would like. The plan for today is to do dialysis for two hours. We will try again to turn down his settings on the ventilator so we pray he can get off the breathing machine soon. The surgeon is supposed to come in, and we are hoping they can do a scan of his abdomen and give the okay for us to feed him. He has no fever today. PTL! Today, I noticed he has several new teeth in his mouth. He is more awake and aggravated with the tubes in his mouth. Again, please continue to pray. Thank you so much.

Tired Dad here. Just a plain post, no whipped cream: June 15, 7:08 p.m.

Nathanael's abdominal scan came back, and they found that the surgery was successful. There are no leaks, and they are going to feed him through a tube tonight. The doctor wants to take out his breathing tube tomorrow and replace it with a smaller tube that comes through his nose instead of his mouth.

Sorry, I have no creativity in this brain tonight to make this post interesting. It usually comes naturally. I've had some discouraging things happen, and sometimes the wind gets taken out of your sails. Pray for our ministry. We are on the verge of breakthroughs, but we went from our best year to our worst first half this year. The message I preached yesterday was from Isaiah 7, and today, I need to listen to my own message. Too bad we didn't record it. I know where my help comes from. Today, I need His help.

MESSAGES

Lori Storms: A few minutes before I read your article, I was journaling about a situation I went through in my life where I knew, if the strength of the Lord did not show up in a mighty way, I might have been crushed under the weight of my situation. I also knew that at the time, I personally did not have the strength to pray that for myself, so everyone else did it for me. And the glory of God and power of His might came over me and the peace that passes understanding was manifest in my life. This is what I pray for you and your family. It's okay to just fall into His arms and be completely vulnerable. He will come in, scoop you up like a child, hold you on His chest, and let you know He is in control and that everything is going to be okay! You guys have encouraged our family so much as we have read these daily posts and prayed for you. You are a very bright light! We praise God for you.

Tom Benigas: We continue to pray for Nathanael and your family. This has been an unexpected trial, but no doubt, God's hand is on you. He always works through trials to build us. More so when it is our children. I am expecting a great victory for you as a result.

Stephanie Higgins: God is faithful, and He is still on the throne. He knows our strengths and weaknesses. Rest in His unfailing comfort, and He will lift you up like nothing else can. I know you know all this but even the most faithful needs encouragement, which is what your brothers and sisters in Christ do for one another. You and your family are loved, and many are praying for you.

Erika Catlin: We pray for Nathanael's healing and your entire family to be strengthened. I love Joshua 1:9; it has been a blessing of encouragement when I've really needed it: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (NKJV).

WEEK 3, DAY 15

Dawn's update: June 16, 4:42 p.m.

Good morning, everyone! Nathanael's doctor summarized what is happening well, saying, "You guys are really having to learn patience." We need patience as this process is going far slower than we would like.

Nathanael finished his dialysis for the day and did just fine. He seems to process his food in his OG tube much better, which is good news. Still no changes in his breathing machine, which is frustrating to me. Please pray that his body will not react negatively to any of these meds. That's all the updates for today. Continue to pray for his kidneys and his ability to come off this breathing machine. My sister gave me a book to read called 90 Minutes in Heaven. It is especially interesting to me because Nathanael spent some time there as well. We appreciate you all very much. God bless you all.

MESSAGES

Andrea Rohm: Oh, what a roller coaster! We'll keep you in our prayers.

Leslie Simpson: Please don't be discouraged! Richard, don't think for one moment that the incredible year you had in ministry last year isn't multiplied over and over each year. I'm blessed to be part of last year's incredible year and claim that victory regularly as I'm sure everyone else does. It's happening this year. Imagine the Lord storing up all these great victories, and in His perfect timing, He will pour down His glory! What a great moment that will be! I'd never heard of Jason Upton until you played "Faith" at the conference. I'm now one of his biggest fans. This song has been my theme song for some time. Keep fighting the good fight! We're claiming the victory with you! *Let these words minister to you:*



FAITH BY JASON UPTON

Let faith arise, oh Lord, let faith arise
In the deepest parts of my being, oh Lord
In the most broken parts of me, oh Lord
Friends have failed me Lord, let my faith arise
Loved ones have failed me Lord, let my faith arise
Heroes have failed me Lord, let my faith arise
Let my faith arise 3x
I say no to the discouragement that keeps me down
I say no to the things that keep me back from You
And this broken heart inside of me
Broken in so many pieces
By so many circumstances
I say no to just letting it stay that way
Because I'm learning to trust that it's not You that hurt me
I'm learning to believe that it's not You that deserted me
I'm believing that You still love me
Brokenness and all
I'm believing that You've got a plan for me
I'm believing that You will restore me
I believe that You will awaken my soul

And let, let faith arise again, I believe
I believe like a little child again
I'm gonna dance in my trust in You, oh Lord
I'm gonna dance in my love for You, oh Lord
I'm gonna laugh again
I'm gonna cry again
I'm gonna have joy, joy on the inside
Circumstances around me try to pull me down
I'm going to believe in that faith again

'Cause You're my Creator
You're my Comfort
You're the One that will never desert me
So Daddy, I raise my hands up to You, Lord
I raise my hands up to You, oh Lord
And I dance with my feet, I dance with my feet

And I say, come and, come and hold me Lord

'Cause I'm learning to trust You with the faith of a child
 Trust You with the faith of a child
 I can have joy again like a child
 I'm not going to let it come down
 I'm not going to let those bullets come down
 Come down and hurt me no more
 'Cause I'm raising up the Shield of Faith
 And the Sword of the Lord
 I'm believing on your Word Lord
 I'm trusting in the Word that You said
 And I'm waiting on You
 Waiting on You

And I'm rejoicing in the fact that the Bible says
 That You are my Victorious Warrior
 You're the one that fights for me
 I don't have to fight anymore
 You're the one that fights for me, oh Lord
 My faith is rising, my faith is rising, my faith is rising
 I can see You again Lord.
 I can see You on the horizon of my life, oh Lord
 I can see Your Son, it's rising up, it's rising up, it's rising up
 And I don't have to be discouraged anymore
 And I don't have to fight this loneliness anymore
 'Cause You're in my life, You're in my life more than anyone can ever be
 Father we're building a relationship again, just me and You
 We're building a relationship again, just me and You
 It's not about the job I have
 It's not about the friends I have
 It's not about the house I have or the social status I have
 It's about me and You
 We're building a relationship again, just me and You
 You're building my faith up again
 Let faith arise, oh Lord!

Dawn's update: June 16, 6:11 p.m.

The surgeon was just in. He said when we get the breathing tube out, we can pull the OG tube as well and feed Nathanael by mouth. That was such a relief. So we are going to wean Nathanael off his sedation and pain meds and wean him from the ventilator. Thanks so much for all your encouragement and prayers. We know Nathanael will be fine. It's just taking patience in the process. Please pray for his kidneys and getting off this breathing machine. Love you all.

MESSAGE FROM DAWN'S BROTHER

Tom Shumway: Door (inside family joke). We're still praying for Nathanael's kidneys and big, deep breaths. We love you. We can't wait to see Nathanael back at your house. It's just a matter of time. It's going to be awesome!

Dad's back: you're not alone: June 16, 8:28 p.m.

Tonight is a Jason Upton night. Someone posted my favorite song. This one ministered to me tonight. I've included a link to it on YouTube.

I hate to admit it, but circumstances today were better, and I had a great day. Some days, you can feel undaunted by life and like there is nothing you can't overcome. Other days, you may still be a victor but don't feel it. I try to be honest. Sometimes, you get a curveball and go down swinging and lose perspective. As I abide with Christ here in Nathanael's room, I hear him sing over me. He's singing over you as well. *Take a minute to check out the link to Jason Upton's song "Emma (Not Alone)."*



Don't be afraid, baby, don't you cry
Daddy's here, it will be all right
You're not alone, you're not alone
Don't be afraid when you're cold at night
I will keep you warm, I will hold you tight
You're not alone, you're not alone
Look beyond the window there
To the sky above to the open air
Look beyond what you can see
Close your eyes and just believe
The lion roars and the lamb lays down
They live together in a whole new town
They're calling me, and they're calling you
From the cold hard facts that we're on our own
To the age old truth that we're not alone

Don't be afraid when you scrape your knee
I've got a Band-Aid waiting and a kiss for free
You're not alone, you're not alone
Don't be afraid of your blind belief
Because the more you fly, the more you'll see

You're not alone, you're not alone
 Look beyond the window there
 To the sky above to the open air
 Look beyond what you can see
 Close your eyes and just believe

The lion roars and the lamb lays down
 They live together in a whole new town
 They're calling me, and they're calling you
 From the cold hard facts that we're on our own
 To the age-old truth that we're not alone
 Don't be afraid little warrior bride
 Your victory's on the other side
 You're not alone, you're not alone

WEEK 3: DAY 16

Good news! June 17, 2:39 p.m.

They just extubated Nathanael. That means they took the breathing tube out, and he is breathing on his own! He has a little upper airway strider, but so far, so good. They also took the OG feeding tube out as well. Yeah! He is still asleep and very sleepy, not really awake yet. Keep praying.

MESSAGE

Tom Mull (Granddad): Praise God! I want to thank everyone around the world that has been praying for this blessed grandson. This is a wonderful example of Ephesians 3:20 in action, and God is not finished yet. Nathanael has had more impact for the kingdom of God in his first two years than most of us have had in our longer lifespan. Way to fight, Nathanael. We are all proud of you.

Bad news: June 17, 6:15 p.m.

Even though having the breathing tube out went well for a couple of hours, Nathanael started developing respiratory distress because he's very congested. He did really poorly for a while, but they are trying to avoid putting the breathing tube back in, which is the next step if he does not improve.

This morning, I woke up and immediately thought, Nathanael is going to be off the breathing machine today, so I was so excited when it happened. So excited to see a step forward. Even hospital staff were coming in, excited that he was doing better. Now, to be honest, I am extremely depressed, angry, and frustrated. Why does this process have

to be so hard and long? Anyway, the bottom line is that we need prayer so much as we continue to believe God to heal Nathanael and bring him through this trial. Please pray Nathanael can overcome this congestion and not have to be put back on the breathing machine. Thank you so much.

MESSAGE

Ric and Kelli Schoon: From across the world, we lift our prayers and praise to God, the Father, who is the Maker of heaven and earth. His love is amazing, and His mercies are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness.

Worship and grief, grief and worship: June 17, 10:46 p.m.

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:20–22 KJV).

What a response to tragedy. Job showed radical grief, shaving his head and putting on a mantle. Some want to only speak positively, but grief is okay. The grief Job showed was mixed with worship.

We don’t have answers. Job never got all the answers why. Some of Job’s friends said it was sin. One close to him said, “Curse God and die.” Others gave strong rebukes. God, in the end, rebuked the friends and answered Job with a bunch of questions.

I love the questions at the end of Job. They speak of the majesty, faithfulness, power, love, and divinity of the Lord. He is over all, all-wise, creator, loving, faithful, always good, always right, and always just. Nothing is more powerful anywhere.

Sometimes worship is a choice. I know my son is healed. It has not fully manifested yet. I know my God is faithful. He is Jehovah Jireh. My heart is full even through the disappointment of temporary setback because I know my Redeemer lives. He loves me.

Nathanael was re-intubated at 10:30. It was great to see him breathing on his own, but he had a lot of congestion and labored breathing. Thank you for not growing weary in praying for our son and standing alongside us.

MESSAGE

Peter and Fiona Horrobin: Just a note of encouragement to say we love you and all the family as you stand together in the Lord during your time

of standing in faith for dear Nathanael. We and all the Ellel family are standing with you.

WEEK 3, DAY 17

Dad here, Count your blessings: June 18, 7:07 a.m.

We have so much to be thankful for. I've been pondering things that God has done to bless us during the last few weeks and months.

1. Nathanael was dead but is now alive.
2. We have such a wonderful group of people interceding, making meals, and helping at the house.
3. We have four wonderful children that love the Lord and are so patient through this time.
4. The Lord has been with us through this trial.
5. There has been more time to listen and hear the Lord and wait upon Him.
6. Dawn and I have grown closer despite being two ships passing in the night.
7. We have two supportive and wonderful families behind us.
8. Dawn's mother has spent two weeks taking care of everything around the house.
9. My parents jumped in to pick up slack at the ministry, stay some nights at the hospital, and have helped in many other ways.
10. I get to watch the sunrise most mornings.
12. I serve a risen Savior.
13. God's Word is faithful and true.

Try it, you will become more thankful as you reflect on all you are blessed with. If you have trouble thinking of blessings, then ask someone close to you to remind you of all your blessings. Some people see what is wrong with every blessing. Don't do that today.

One thing I learned from African American friends about thankfulness. When they pray, some pray thanking God that they woke up this morning, that they have two hands, two feet, a job, a vehicle, a home, and they go on and on. The sun came up; God is on the throne, etc.

Dawn's update, time limit for discouragement: June 18, 1:51 p.m.

Nathanael is on a ventilator that is allowing him to take all the breaths on his own, and when he does not take a deep enough breath, the machine helps him. The good part about that is that it will allow his lungs to get back in shape for when they take the tube out (extubate) again. We are skipping dialysis today and seeing if he pees on his own. He is running a high fever today, so they are trying to find out where the infection is. He is sedated and resting comfortably, so that is good. I think we just tried to do too much too fast yesterday, and he wasn't up for the challenge. Hopefully, next time will be more successful. One thing new to pray for is his airway. When they put the tube back in, his airway was very swollen. Normally, you can give a dose of steroids and that will take care of it, but since the steroid probably gave him the ulcer, we don't have that option. So please be praying that God supernaturally takes that swelling away.

I was feeling very discouraged, so thank you for praying for me. My good friend Karen told me this morning that I had until 10:30 to be discouraged and then it would be time to get back in the fight and put my eyes back on the Lord and off my circumstances. I obeyed her godly advice. I thank God for so many incredible friends and people who stand with us in prayer. It would take pages for me to tell how each of you have encouraged me or prayed or served at just the right time. Thank you to all those intercessors who are praying around the clock for Nathanael. God will answer, and we can rejoice together when we see it happen. I appreciate all of you so much.

Dawn's evening update: June 18, 6:44 p.m.

Two friends encouraged me today to do more updates. There isn't anything new to share. Nathanael is still on the ventilator and resting comfortably. He is still congested with a low-grade fever now, so that is a praise. They are feeding him both through his IV and his feeding tube. Thanks for your continued prayers. I am feeling less discouraged and back on track with believing that God will keep his promises for Nathanael's health. I am thankful for all of you.

MESSAGES

Gail Frezza: I know this is discouraging, but I believe God is working slowly but deliberately. Keep your faith, and we will continue to pray. We love you and are praying for all of you.

Gordon Wadsworth: Dawn, a large group of men incarcerated at the Atlanta Federal Prison prays for Nathanael too. As you might imagine, they pray all the time, and now they are praying for your little guy.

Marilyn Hough: The apostle Paul instructs Timothy in I Timothy 6:12 "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (KJV). We are watching you two "fight that good fight of faith." The Lord has been speaking to me for two weeks now that our fight to keep the faith in the goodness of God is our greatest battle. We believe God exists. We believe in the existence of God. Our fight is to believe that the Lord wants only the best for us and our families. That our wants and needs are important to Him, that He has time to pay attention to our needs.

Carol Napolitano: Many years and many miles have separated me from your mom’s daily friendship; we remain close in each other’s lives and memories. We shared her joy when Nathanael was born and pray with you now for his health. Please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers.

WEEK 3: DAY 18

Dad here, time for a breakthrough: June 19, 8:18 a.m.

Dawn and I just finished praying over the phone for a breakthrough today. We renounced all unbelief and stood together in faith, asking our heavenly Father for a breakthrough. God created Nathanael’s kidneys. His name means “gift of God.”¹ God doesn’t give broken gifts. We will persevere till we see the God who heals, Jehovah Rapha, do what He does best. We will stand in faith. I know you will join us believing God for this.

Many miracles Jesus or His disciples experienced happened immediately. I know God is working in mine and Dawn’s lives through all this to change our lives. Now is the time for breakthrough. God is pleased when we pray, believing the truth of His Word, trusting His faithfulness, and expecting Him to fulfill His promises.

“Lord, I ask you today for a miracle, to raise up Nathanael, to strengthen his body, soul, and spirit. I ask that his kidneys will function, his congestion will clear. Lord, protect Nathanael in that hospital room. I pray that your mighty angels surround him, angels to minister, warring angels to guard and protect. I take authority over all spirits of darkness prevalent at the hospital and all spirits of darkness and infirmity that have been sent to torment him in Jesus’s name. Heal my little boy today, in Jesus’s name. Amen.”

I miss the little guy. Yesterday after work, I stayed home to spend time with my other three kids who have seen little of Dad lately. Granddad stayed with Nathanael to watch through the night.

Dawn’s update: June 19, 5:20 p.m.

They put a catheter into Nathanael’s bladder, and the urine is leaving his bladder through the tube. It is so encouraging to know his kidneys are working some. They are still not doing the filtering part, but at least they work some. We are very excited about that and have had a busy day in the room repairing all the broken items. Nathanael got a new bed because his bed was leaking hydraulic fluid. We switched him to a new bed, which is a big deal with all the tubes, and the new bed has a problem as well, but that is for another day. We also repaired his light.

1. “Easton’s Bible Dictionary – Nathanael,” *Bible Study Tools*, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/nathanael/>.

My mom leaves tomorrow to go home. She has been here for three weeks and been with me through the hardest days with Nathanael and at the house holding down the fort with our other children. She has been an incredible blessing, and I see even more what an incredible woman she is. We will really miss her. Thankfully, she is coming back in a week to help when Richard goes out of town. I pray she can have a restful week at home.

MESSAGE

Sally Steiner: Yay! Pee! That's so awesome! I think this is a peak, not a valley. That is so great. Love you guys. Praying for little man to get better every day.

Dad's back: Looking good: June 19, 7:55 p.m.

I really missed this little guy. He looks great if you ignore the tubes and all. His skin looks good, his color looks normal, and everyone loves his blonde hair and blue eyes. Right now, he is resting very soundly. I'd say we had a breakthrough today. When I called Dawn early this morning and there had been no output, she confessed it looked like his little body was shutting down. Inside, I screamed, "No!" I wouldn't accept that. God has healed our little man.

Today, a member of our ministry team said she saw two angels in the room standing over Nathanael ministering to him. She saw Nathanael in the spirit, wide awake and aware of the angels, comforted and alert. Did you know that our spirit can be awake and alert even when the body is asleep? That is why the Lord can speak to us in our sleep, through dreams.

I would like to ask you to pray with me about some practical needs that are weighing on me right now. A member of our office staff moved about two weeks ago, and that has created a gap in our ministry that is a burden. The financial needs of our ministry and family distract our attention.

This week, someone is coming from out of town for ministry all week. Next week, we begin ministry for someone who just got out of a mental health facility. Two weeks ago, we had a couple who are worship leaders come from out of state for extended ministry. God is healing and setting captives free, and the need is great.

Slow down, make time! June 19, 11:51 pm.

I am so glad for all I have learned about healing and how it has affected this walk. I have more to learn, and tonight I have been deeply impacted. I listened to six testimonies from Andrew Womack's ministry, one about a kid named Jason, just like Nathanael in many respects. Testimonies of healing will encourage you.

I urge you! Take some time! Slow down! Watch at least one! They are easy to find. Let God build your faith and understanding. Nathanael is sleeping peacefully. I'm about to join him.

MESSAGE

Amy Altadonna: During my prayer time for Nathaniel and your whole family, here is a verse the Lord gave me for you all. “The Lord your God, in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you in His love. He will rejoice over you with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17 NKJV). The Lord is in the midst of your family and that hospital room! He is rejoicing over Nathaniel and quieting him with His love, and He is rejoicing over him with singing!

WEEK 3, DAY 19

Dawn’s morning report: June 20, 8:41 a.m.

Good morning, and I hope you all have a wonderful weekend. There were no major setbacks last night, and Nathanael is peeing some, so that is a praise. He is receiving dialysis right now and will continue to have it every day until his kidneys filter the way they are supposed to and his output increases. Please continue to pray for his lungs, digestion, and kidneys. I’ll update again after rounds. We appreciate all of you very much.

Afternoon update: June 20, 3:47 p.m.

They just did an ultrasound of Nathanael’s abdomen, kidneys, and bladder. We’ll get the results on Sunday, I guess. His lungs are really congested today, and he is running another fever. This congestion needs to get better if they are going to get him off the breathing machine. Thanks for your prayers.

MESSAGE

Teresa Manganello: It sounds like a busy day. Baby steps! It is a good thing when they are taking things out! Still praying. We love you guys!

Dad’s update: June 20, 9:35 p.m.

Nathanael’s fever broke within an hour of my arrival. Our friends Len and Robin Harper came and prayed over Nathanael. They have a healing ministry in their Baptist church, so the reinforcements were appreciated, along with all of you. Thanks to our friends who mowed the lawn for us. I almost felt guilty. Naw! Also, thanks for all the meals, prayers, and financial blessings.

Right now, all Nathanael's stats look great. He has had his eyes open a lot. I took some pictures, but I'm going to wait and see if they remove the vent tomorrow before I post these. His skin looks great except for the incision. I so much want to pick him up, hold him, and walk out of here. It won't be long.

MESSAGE

Jodie Gregor: Thanks for the update. I'm so glad you got to spend time with your other kids today. We are continuing to pray for you all!

WEEK 3, DAY 20

Dawn's morning update: June 21, 11:18 a.m.

Good morning to everyone. Happy Father's Day to all you fathers. Although Nathanael's fever broke at one point last night, it still ran high at other times during the night. It is very up and down all day and night long. They think he has an infection somewhere because his white count is up, but they can't find it yet. He has been out of it and looks like he really doesn't feel well.

They will still wean his sedation medication, and today, they are giving him another blood transfusion and dialysis again. His kidneys are still working at about 20 percent. Although his chest x-ray looks pretty good, he is very congested. They have stopped feeding him because his digestion is not moving along very well. I know it must seem odd to read a post from Richard and then one from me. Richard's posts usually seem very positive, and mine seem more negative. Part of that is our distinct personalities; part of it is my focus and awareness of the medical problems. Ultimately, I must work harder to keep my eyes on the Lord and not all the medical issues. Anyway, we appreciate your prayers so much through this long, agonizing process. Be in prayer for his kidneys, lungs, incision, infection, and now his feet that are getting foot drop from being in bed so long. Happy Father's Day. We love you all.

MESSAGE

Schrimshers: You're not being negative....[or] necessarily more realistic, but you look at details differently than Richard does. All this to say, don't be down on yourself! You're not negative; you're a mom with a precious baby in the hospital, and you're stressed. Lean on the Lord and your husband to help you put matters back in perspective. We're praying for you!

Dawn's afternoon update: June 21, 4:09 p.m.

The infectious disease doctor was just in, and they found that Nathanael has a fungal or yeast infection in his bloodstream that is probably giving him these fevers. So they have doubled his anti-fungal meds for today and will continue to test to see which med will be most effective. Of course, we are making it worse by giving him the other three antibiotics, but they say he needs those to fight other infections. The bottom line is with that with every new med or procedure, we cause another problem. I'm looking forward to getting off this merry-go-round and seeing healing take place. The surgeon was also in, and he took out the remaining two sutures left from his abdominal surgery. Please pray for those five open areas to heal quickly and that they will not become infected. So the prayer list is now kidneys, lungs, fever, incision site, and fungal infection in the blood. "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him....Do not fret—it only causes harm" (Psalm 37:7–8 NKJV). Thanks for your prayers.

MESSAGE

Linda Gagg: It seems unbelievable that Nathanael is going through so much at one time. I read your pages every day, and we just keep believing for Nathanael. Happy Father's Day to all the fathers and just know that we are all praying for Nathanael.

WEEK 3, DAY 21**Dawn's update: June 22, 11:25 a.m.**

We met our new pediatrician and kidney doctors who are on for this week. Nathanael is having dialysis. He still has many infections, which could be hindering the kidneys, and is still on the breathing machine. They are going to restart feeding him through the tube today and see how he tolerates it. We still need to continue to pray about the same things. It would really be nice to see some progress.

Dawn's update: June 22, 3:28 p.m.

Dialysis didn't go well today. Nathanael was restless, and they could not get as much fluid. But maybe tomorrow. The fungal infection in his blood is serious, and they are adding another medication. Please pray for protection from side effects. Boy, are we keeping all of you busy in prayer! We appreciate every prayer so much.

MESSAGE

Paige Blanchat: “Who have I in heaven but You, and besides You there is no other. My heart and my strength may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:25–26, author’s paraphrase). Praying that for you today.

Dad’s back, night shift: June 22, 11:06 p.m.

I missed Nathanael. Yesterday, I spent the whole day with my kids. I can’t remember them saying, “What do you want to do?” so many times. I’m also not used to thinking about what I want. So we hit the driving range, rented a dad movie, and started a thousand-piece puzzle with Rachel. (We’re halfway through) It was great being with the other kids, but I also missed being with Nathanael.

None of us imagined anything like this four weeks ago. It is amazing how much this type of event can turn your world upside down and right side up. This experience alters your perspectives, rearranges your priorities, slows down your life, and makes you reflect more.

I’ve spent more time with the Lord. When I’m with my other kids, I look at them a little longer, hold them a little tighter. When I hear petty squabbling, it sounds so frivolous. Things that would have tried to worry me weeks ago don’t seem to matter.

Someone asked how I was doing tonight, and I was at a loss for words. Something very trying happened today. My son is in the hospital with lots of issues, and yet I have a peace and a joy found through abiding in the Lord that transcends circumstances. Peace comes from placing my hope in the Lord—not my ability, not the doctors or nurses—but in one who is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Great Physician. He cares more than any mother and is a better protector and provider than any father.

MESSAGE

Tracy Erwin: Today, I felt such a heavy burden for Nathanael. I have spent much time weeping and praying. I cannot tell you that I could even pray warrior-like words but just words from my heart to the heart of Father God, pleading and asking Him to bring Nathanael back home with his mom, dad, and siblings. Please know I am with you, praying for you, and love you. Be blessed tonight, Richard, as you sing and pray.

CHAPTER SEVEN



WEEK FOUR

WISH ME HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

WEEK 4, DAY 22

Dawn's update: June 23, 12:01 p.m.

It has been a busy morning here with tests and dialysis. I've attempted to sit down and write, but multiple interruptions have occurred. Anyway, Nathanael's lungs are doing well, and the doc is pleased with that. No talk of extubating (taking the tube out and off the breathing machine) yet, but we'll see what they think later in the week. Still, no kidney improvement, so that is a disappointment. They are starting his feeding again. His digestion is going very slow, so they would like that to improve as well. He has not had as high a fever today, so we continue to pray that these infections will go in Jesus's name. They are going to fit his feet for a boot because he is getting a little drop foot on one foot. That happens when you are in bed for a long time. He's more awake today. I want to share more, and hopefully, it will quiet down this afternoon and I can write more. Thank you again so much for the ongoing prayers and all the encouraging messages. They are a lifeline for us.

Afternoon update: June 23, 4:33 p.m.

Nathanael has had a good day today. PTL! His fever never went above 100 degrees all day and is normal now. He did well on dialysis, and they took off almost two pounds of fluid. His lungs have been much better today as well. So finally, we have some positive news to report.

Yesterday, someone called with an exhortation for me. Thank you. One aspect was that God wanted me to give my fears to Him. As I thought about that, I realized I do not fear Nathanael dying. In fact, during the code, I released him to the Lord and know that if he died, he would be happier and not in pain in heaven. But one of my fears is if Nathanael had to live in pain or disability. After prayer, I could release that to the Lord as well and trust Him. I am also in fear of how all this is affecting our other children and Nathanael since I cannot be with them. So it was a day of surrender amid a constant moment-by-moment surrendering to the Lord. Through all of this, I pray that my trust in God would increase. Still looking to Him to heal Nathanael completely and so thankful for all of you and all your prayers.

MESSAGE

Robin Harper: Sometimes it's hard to admit our struggles, but when we do, we realize that others are there to walk through it with us. Thanks for sharing your heart. I love you dearly and pray for you regularly. You are not alone.

WEEK 4, DAY 23

Morning rounds: June 24, 10:01 a.m.

Nathanael had a good night last night. Doctors are going to do dialysis again and every day until Nathanael's kidneys kick in. They will take him off the breathing machine for an hour every three hours and see how he does. The plan is to take the tube out and get him off the ventilator tomorrow. That would be a great birthday present for him. He has a wound on his back that does not look good, so wound care is going to come look at it today. They will increase his food a little more and see how he does. He is running a low-grade fever. So those are the updates and things to be praying about. I think we are coming out of the valley we have been in for the last five days, which is encouraging. Thanks so much for your prayers.

Afternoon update: June 24, 3:18 p.m.

Nathanael did well with dialysis today and is now taking a much-needed nap. His fever is down, and he did well on his one hour off the ventilator. We are waiting for other results, and if those are good, they may start weaning him off his antibiotics. If all continues to go well, the plan will be to take the breathing tube out tomorrow afternoon. Thanks for your prayers.

MESSAGES

Devon Gokmen: The Lord woke me at 4:00 a.m. to pray for your precious baby last night. He is working on the hearts of many through your trial. Thanks for keeping us all in the loop!

Rebecca Pulido: Have a party in the room and take lots of pictures. Please know I carry Nathanael and your family in my heart every day.

Linda Boswell: So glad to hear Nathanael is on an uphill climb. Just continue to let the Lord have your cares, and He will take care of everything.

Chris and Carol Hammer: Sounds like good progress, which is wonderful. You spoke about a birthday. I suggest you have the party; it will be good for all. Our prayers are with you.

Wish me a happy birthday! June 24, 10:39 p.m.

In one and a half hours, I will be two years old. I'm working on getting ready for the big party. I've been squirming all over the place, feeling great, and making the nurses and my dad keep checking on me. They are finally going to pull out one of the big tubes.

For some reason, I still have all kinds of wires and tubes hooked up to me. All my escape attempts have failed so far. It's hard sneaking out with these things plugged into me. Maybe I'll try again after they take out the big tube. It is so much fun hearing Code Yellow (patient missing) and know that it's about me. Timing is everything when it comes to escaping. If you ever must do it, remember that advice. Pay attention to the times when others in the room are asleep and after the nurses leave.

I like it here. The nurses talk nice to me. They think I'm handsome, adorable, sweet, a miracle boy, and too many other compliments to remember. They are still drugging me but not as much, and I figured out that they are feeding me through the tubes, but I'm convinced it is just enough to keep me alive.

I'm going to get some birthday cake tomorrow though. Just watch me. Tomorrow, I'll be a free man. Okay, a free boy.

MESSAGES

Bob and Shirley Floyd: Happy birthday, Nathanael. We are so glad you are feeling better. I know you can't wait to get home with all your family. Jesus is taking good care of you.

Dawn Whitehead: Happy birthday to you. I pray you have a fantastic day!

Nicole Leu: Happy birthday! You're a blessed little boy. We love you. Save some cake for me!

Joyce Recenello: Happy Birthday, sweet, little Nathanael! Jesus has already given you His gift of healing! It's yours, little one, promised by the Father. Enjoy all the extra special attention on your second birthday. God bless you, Nathanael!

WEEK 4, DAY 24: NATHANAEL'S BIRTHDAY

Dawn's update: June 25, 8:59 a.m.

Nathanael says thank you for all the wonderful birthday wishes. He had a good night, and the plan is still to get the tube and breathing machine off this afternoon. He is getting dialysis now. I'll keep you updated. Please pray for his airway to not swell and for the congestion to go away so he can breathe well without the tube. Thank you all for your prayers.

Free at last! June 25, 5:05 p.m.

The great news is that Nathanael is free of his breathing tubes. For the first hour, his stats were perfect, breathing easy, all levels what they should be. Then in a minute, he became labored. We were told that this is normal. The first twenty-four hours off the ventilator is like this. We don't want normal; we want supernatural. Pray that we don't ride a twenty-four-hour rollercoaster. The doctor is hopeful, and I fully expect that Nathanael will not need to be on a ventilator again. Others in the room are not fully

expecting but very hopeful. He is much stronger this time than last time and has been getting in better shape with the new way they were allowing him to breathe.

Dad's report: Ups and downs: June 25, 6:09 p.m.

We will still have the birthday party, but Nathanael was knocked out. His birthday present to us came as a solid stream of pee that tagged one nurse and filled a small towel that was on hand.

Momma had a little cry, and Dad watched over the entire procedure.

Lord, strengthen Nathanael, body, soul, and spirit. Fill him with your peace. Decrease all the swelling in his larynx, throat, and all his airways. Continue to heal his kidneys and every part of his body. Give Momma strength and continue to work your miracles in all our lives.

I have learned and grown so much. God didn't do this to teach me, but I thank God that the Lord takes full advantage to work everything out for good, His glory, and our growth. Especially thank you for the CDs, websites, and books on healing. I've gained a lot from many others who have written on this subject. The enemy is going to regret that this ever happened because God is working in us to grow us so much.

Dawn's correction: June 25, 6:51 p.m.

They took out the breathing tube, and he did well for about an hour. Then his airway closed, and they had to put the tube back in. Then they took that new tube out and put one in his nose instead so that it would move around less and maybe help his airway heal. Each tube they have put in has been smaller than the one before. They say that they have seen this process with Down Syndrome kids, and they are confident that one day, they will be successful in getting the breathing tube out. Thanks for your support and prayers through this process.

MESSAGES

Eloise Barnes: We pray for you here at Bell Shoals Baptist Church. God bless you and your folks.

Gail Shipley: Amen. Satan will regret this cause of what he meant for harm, God can and will turn it around for good!

Margaret Shumway: Dawn, be strong. I know it is so hard. I am with you, Mom.

WEEK 4, DAY 25

Dawn's morning updates: June 26, 9:16 a.m.

It's a kind of rainy, gloomy morning. I feel that way today as well. Yesterday was very disappointing. I think Nathanael will need a few days to recover from the trauma. We have backtracked on his breathing machine and some other areas. But with a few days' rest, we can bounce back again. The issue for him is not his lungs, not his inability to breathe, but his "floppy" airway. His airway swells easily, so the tube coming in and out really aggravates it. Please pray for Nathanael that the swelling in all his body, especially his airway, and stress levels will decrease, and his body will heal. This is going to be a long process unless God intervenes supernaturally. God continues to answer, and He is giving us strength, peace, and perseverance through this trial. My heart just so hurts for Nathanael, yet I know God is with him through this and that extra angels are assigned to him right now to help him. Love you all and again, thank you so much for your prayers and encouragement.

Morning rounds: June 26, 10:24 a.m.

Nathanael has a few sores on his back that need to be looked at. He is running a fever again, and his skin does not look as good today. It may be from the difficult day yesterday. So, hopefully, we will have a quiet day where he can rest. Thanks for your prayers. I really ask that despite all this that Nathanael can be at peace.

MESSAGES

Linda Gagg: I know how hard this is on you. All mothers are the same. We just want to protect our children from anything harmful, but we are all the same. Just know that we are all praying for all of you. One day, you will walk into that hospital room, and our prayer will be sooner than later that the good Lord performs a miracle on Nathanael.

Karen Tierney: The Lord's timing is not our timing but is perfect! Keep trusting His promises to you and Nathanael. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Much love and prayers.

Marilyn Hough: Hang in there! It is a dull, dreary morning but thank God for His blessing of rain! Those showers of blessing bring forth the good from the earth, flowers, green grass, and produce for food, and

blessed water for our needs. As Jesus prayed for Peter, “Lord, I pray their faith does not fail them.”

Sherry Fatjo: Be strong and stay steady even when issues arise that rock your boat. It would be a mistake to throw up your hands in frustration and despair, having come so far already. Keep the faith by believing, knowing that He’s with you to cause you to triumph. You can gain the victory if you don’t give up in the middle of the fight, says the Lord. “Now thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place” (2 Corinthians 2:14 NASB).

WEEK 4, DAY 26

Dad’s morning updates: June 27, 6:12 a.m.

It is great to be alive. We had a great night. Nathanael was wide awake and alert till almost 1:00 a.m., looking like he had a lot to tell me. When I arrived about 7:30 p.m., he was asleep for the first time for most of the day, so about 10:00 p.m. when he woke up, he was ready for Dad time. I had to get some coffee, and it was a good thing.

All the stats were good through the night. After he went to bed at 1:00 a.m. he slept great. The 5:00 a.m. bathing came too soon. He loves it. Three nurses and Dad, bathing him, putting lotions on him, making all the bedding as comfortable as possible, and doting over him.

Pray for Dawn and the kids. I fly to Phoenix for two days tomorrow. I will be part of a young man’s funeral and ministering to their family. Dawn’s mom is coming, and her sister and my parents are picking up the slack to make this trip possible.

Dawn’s update: June 27, 10:06 am

They found fungus growing in his IV line, and a fungal infection in his blood has attached itself to the IV (central line) that he receives all his medications from. They are going to have to pull that line and can’t really put another line in until that fungal infection clears up. They are increasing some of his sedation meds because he is uncomfortable and agitated (I would be too). Thanks so much.

MESSAGE

Stephanie Bernaldo: We continue to pray for your family and precious Nathanael. We will make specific requests for the fungal infection, inflammation, and the kidneys. God is the ultimate healer and hears every petition.

WEEK 4, DAY 27

Dawn's updates: June 28, 11:34 a.m.

Good morning. My sister spent the night here and had a sleepless and stressful night. She went home to get some much-needed sleep. Richard left for Arizona and will be gone till Tuesday evening. Nathanael had a rough night last night. They increased all his sedatives because he had been agitated. He seemed to have a hard time with the ventilator, and the machine was beeping all night. I feel like we have backtracked again about one-to-two weeks, and it's very discouraging. Our prayers are the same and would love prayer for no more infections. Thanks so much for the prayers. I really appreciate all of you and your encouragement and prayers. Have a blessed day.

MESSAGE

Laura Hoffman: I send you a hug and a shoulder to lean on. So wish I could sit with you. You are a great mom. Peace and hope to you.

WEEK 4, DAY 28

Dawn's update: June 29, 7:52 a.m.

Nathanael has not had a fever in twenty-four hours, which is good news to start the day. Last night, as I was praying for Nathanael, I felt compelled to ask for mercy for him. Mercy for all he has and is going through. Then on the way in, "Everlasting God" was playing on the radio. The words encourage us from Isaiah 40:31: that we should find strength as we wait upon the Lord. That's what I am claiming for Nathanael today. Please agree with me that God will strengthen and comfort Nathanael and shower His mercy on him today. So keep those prayers coming as we wait for God's strength. Thank you for all the encouragement and prayers. It is so encouraging to know we are all in agreement.

Dawn's update: June 29, 6:40 p.m.

Nathanael had a very busy day. He had dialysis for 5.5 hours to get as much fluid off him as possible. Great job, Kim! Then they put in a pic line, which is a long IV line, so he can get his medications. Then they took the catheter out. So he will not have dialysis tomorrow, and the next twenty-four hours would be a great time for Nathanael's kidneys to work! Nathanael has not had a fever in 1.5 days, which is great. They are going to limit his fluid intake over the next twenty-four hours since he won't be having dialysis. We should increase our prayers for his kidneys. Hopefully, Nathanael will sleep well tonight for Granddad on the night shift. Thank you for your prayers. We continue to ask God to strengthen Nathanael as we wait upon the Lord. Have a blessed evening.

MESSAGES

Jeanie Shireling: This is my first post but not my first time praying! We have been and will continue to lift precious little Nathanael. Isn't God so good to have that song play just when you needed it most! And people say that God doesn't speak to us today. I think they just aren't listening! Be encouraged, sister! God is on His throne! Nathanael is in His hands, and He loves him even more than you do! I know, how is that even possible? We are praying for you all and watching the updates closely as you send them. Our silence does not mean that we are not praying. Be encouraged!

Mary Rogers: We agree and pray with you today in Jesus's name. All to Jesus we surrender as we wait upon Him and come boldly to His throne of grace. Praise His holy name.

CHAPTER EIGHT



WEEK FIVE

ESCAPE PLANS!

WEEK 5, DAY 29

U pdate: June 30, 11:51 a.m.

They did an ultrasound today of the central line and dialysis catheter sites they took out just to check to see if any fungus was still there, and apparently, those sites are fine. They are switching some of his meds because he has been on them so long and switching the formula they are giving him in his feeding tube. They drew more blood to make sure the fungus in his bloodstream was gone. The biggest prayer requests for today are that his airway will relax and really be healed before they try another extubation and for his kidneys to work again. Thanks so much for all the prayers. Love you all.

Evening update: June 30, 5:50 p.m.

Nathanael has remained heavily sedated all day. They changed some of his medications, and I am uncomfortable with some of his vital signs. Please pray against the adverse effects of all these medications. I started looking up these meds and their side effects online, and I had to stop or they would have to give me meds for anxiety! It is hard being out of control with what is being done and given to your child. Please pray and agree with me that these meds would help him and not adversely affect him. Thank you also for continuing to pray for his airway swelling to decrease and his kidneys to work. Have a great night.

MESSAGES

Janice DeKlavon: Thank you so much for the link. I feel badly that we lost touch with you. I think of you every time I say “Elizabeth Dawn.” In fact, when Nathanael is recovered, let’s catch up.

Christina Kenyon: Praying that Nathanael’s entire body would begin to function in the whole and perfect way God designed it to function. Especially that his kidneys would say “Thank you for the break. I needed to rest, but now I’ll take over again!”

Gordon Wadsworth: Don’t ever think that we get tired of hearing from you or won’t keep praying for your little guy.

Becky Green: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7 NKJV). Requests have been made and they are known by God. and though we do not have understanding right now, we can have peace. We are thankful, and we stand waiting as God’s peace stands guard over our hearts and minds. He is at the door. Bless you.

Kera Lee: We do agree in prayer with you for the meds. You all are constantly in our prayers and on our hearts. We love you and may the God of all comfort surround you tonight.

Tom Shumway: Dawn, we love you. We agree with you - we’re praying that the new meds will be effective and there will be no side effects. Go kidneys!

WEEK 5, DAY 30

Dawn's update: July 1, 10:18 a.m.

Good morning. We have all new residents and interns for the month of July. Nathanael had a little fever last night and this morning, but so far, they are not concerned about it. He peed last night into his diaper about sixty cc so that is a big praise, and we want to continue to pray that continues. The kidney doctor was excited, so they will not do dialysis today. His lungs are clear, and they are talking about when to take the breathing tube out again. The blood cultures came back negative so far for fungus in his blood, but it is usually two days before they can really tell. They are trying to find the right doses of sedation meds where he is awake but not uncomfortable. So continue to pray for his kidneys, swelling to be gone in his airway, and fungal infection to be gone. Thank you so much for your prayers and encouragement. You are all a great blessing during this ordeal.

MESSAGES

Barbie Phelps: We praise God for the progress! We have been praying for Nathanael and your family. May God bless all of you. May he give you peace, faith, and encouragement. We pray that He continues to heal Nathanael.

Becky Beach: Bless you, my friend, in this time of storm and darkness. Rest under the shelter and shade of His wings, even as I pray for Nathanael and the entire Mull family. Funny, times like these make us better understand the reality of all life—that we are not in control and God is. And He is good and loves us. Lord, make sense of it all for us. Keep our eyes fixed on your loving face.

Debbie Bradley: We are praying for all your requests. We know that the Lord hears your cries and loves you all so much. We look forward with you to His complete healing of Nathanael!

WEEK 5, DAY 31

Afternoon update: July 2, 3:30 p.m.

The wireless network at the hospital has been down all day, so I couldn't get online. Nathanael is having a good day. No fever last night or today. The doctors are all very encouraged. His kidneys seem to be kicking in, and that is an answer to all your fervent prayers. The plan is still to take the breathing tube out tomorrow. Let's all agree together that his airway will not be swollen and that this will be successful, and we will be on the road to recovery. Thank you all for your faithful prayers and support.

My mom headed home today and brought Andrew and Philip. They will sail with my sister and her family for the weekend. I'm sure they will have fun. My mom is such a tremendous help when she is here. She thinks about everything and is such a comfort to me and the kids. We have had some laughter, and that is always good. Thanks again for all the prayers. Dawn

MESSAGES

Liz Randall: Awesome news, love the upward trend! Go, pee! Give him a kiss for me.

Vicki Crews: Agreeing with you that extubation will go smoothly tomorrow and all will breathe a sigh of relief!

Robin Harper: Yes, your mother is a blessing. She's an amazing woman. I'm glad your boys decided to go sailing for the weekend. They will have a great time. It will probably be so good for them to get away like that with fresh air and sunshine and activity! I'm excited about Nathanael's progress and cannot wait to hear good news about the extubation! I agree!

Dad's Hallelujah: July 2, 9:54 p.m.

What an amazing and thrilling day. Remember, hope means "wait." We've had hope and have waited on the Lord for this miracle. Deferred hope can make the heart sick, but when hope is realized, it is awesome. We are so close to realizing what we have been patiently longing for and praying for what seems like an eternity.

Nathanael is coming off all his meds and looks like a druggy detoxing. It is sad, but as we pray for Nathanael, we ask the Lord to protect him from any negative effects from the drugs. He seems at peace even while his body shakes some. (In 2009, when this all happened, no one was giving any warnings about fentanyl. Our two-year-old was receiving adult doses. This is why he could not be extubated. It was truly criminal. It is a miracle he survived all the medicines.)

Thanks for persevering with us in prayer for pee. It was humorous, but the need was very serious. It is amazing how quickly the bladder has finally worked well. The nurse just said, "This one feels pretty frickin' heavy." I'm not sure what a frickin' is, but I can tell it is a lot. I'm not up on all this medical jargon and stuff. Now I found out the exact weight of frickin' is in diapers. Nathanael is highly motivated to get out of here.

Signing off now. I'm barely awake after a red eye from Phoenix and an all-nighter at the hospital.

Thank you for praying. I've never heard so many people say that a funeral was life-changing, an incredible experience, something no one should have missed. God's presence was very real there.

WEEK 5, DAY 32

Morning rounds: July 3, 10:23 a.m.

The kidney doctor is pleased with Nathanael's progress. He says that Nathanael's kidneys are probably at 45–50 percent right now, which is a big jump from 20 percent, and he will not need dialysis anymore. Thank you, Lord. They are waiting on an x-ray and then plan to take the breathing tube out this morning. Nathanael is still detoxing and shaky but more awake. Please be praying that his airway does well, and we can keep this breathing tube out. Thanks for your prayers today. I'll update you after the breathing tube is out. Blessings, Dawn.

Update: July 3, 5:21 p.m.

Nathanael's breathing tube has been out for six hours now. He is working hard, and the detoxing makes it harder. It will be a long night, but please pray he can hang in there and make it without having the tube put back in. Thanks for the prayers.

MESSAGE

Kim Geiger: Father, you are the breath of life. Please keep Nathanael's swelling down and allow the tube to be removed. Please fully restore his ability to breathe on his own. Praise you for the blessing of seeing you work in his little life. May your love and the power of your healing hand rest upon Nathanael.

Bad news: July 3, 8:00 p.m.

Well, it has not been a good day or evening. They had to re-intubate tonight. His lungs look terrible, and I am not exactly sure why he didn't make it this time. I don't know what else to say. This is so discouraging. On a positive note, his kidneys are still going well. Please keep him in your prayers.

MESSAGE

Katherine Lake: Dawn, It was a good day! Nathanael is still fighting, the kidneys are still pumping, and the breathing tube was out for a long time compared to before. You are not alone, and God is still on His throne. Nathanael will rest well tonight and continue to get stronger. He loves you and is thankful that you are there for him. He doesn't want you to worry.

Dad duty, second place: July 3, 10:38 p.m.

Tonight was bittersweet. Nathanael seemed to do well except the detoxing and readjusting to breathing on his own again. Even the nurses expected this was it. By 6:40 p.m., Dawn was calling and telling me that Nathanael was being re-intubated.

I was leading a meeting at Celebration Church. The room was filled with wonderful friends who have prayed so faithfully and supported us in so many ways. Even before the night began, someone pulled me aside to tell me God told them to write a check that would catch up OLF on payroll. What a blessing. Many came with words of hope, encouragement, love, and support. Everyone left excited about the vision God had set before us. I was the first to leave my own party.

It feels like I just lost the Super Bowl. Losing the Super Bowl feels terrible. Grown men cry like babies. You don't want to settle for less than victory. Playing in the Superbowl is awesome, but it is little consolation when you lose. People can say, "At least you got to play in it," but those words ring hollow after the loss.

The truth is, Nathanael has been healed of almost everything we have prayed for. His skin looks the best that it has, and his kidneys work well. His breathing is good. Get the drugs and the tubes out, and we have a healthy kid (Okay, I admit that is an oversimplification but close to the truth). We can rejoice in these truths, we can thank the Lord, and we can continue to stand in faith and hope in Jehovah Rophe, the God who heals. We can count it all joy when we face trials of many kinds, knowing that the testing of our faith produces perseverance, character, and hope (Romans 5 and James 1).

As humans, we are hurting, crying, disappointed, and even discouraged. As sons of the living God, we are standing, thankful, rejoicing, peaceful, and expectant. How can all this be true? Don't ask me to explain it. I just know it, and I mean, I know it.

Especially pray for Momma and baby tonight. Mommas are so attached to their kids that they hurt when their babies hurt. I'm sure the moms out there know what I'm talking about. Us guys, well, don't be mad at us. God has wired us special too. Just different.

MESSAGE

Lou Fioritto: Hi, guys. I went to bed at about 11:00 p.m., and it was 12:30 a.m. I woke up and just felt Nathanael needed prayer. I turned on the computer and read this update. Just want to say people are praying all the time for total healing.

WEEK 5, DAY 33

Afternoon update: July 4, 4:56 p.m.

They are trying to figure out the right dose to keep Nathanael sedated and out of pain. It's hard to know because they have him paralyzed right now. I pray that whatever he feels that he experiences God's arms wrapped around him and his little spirit will be at peace. They say that the next step is to put a trach in him. That is a tube that they put below his vocal cords, and he can breathe in and out of that. It gives his airways a rest. The tracheotomy is a big issue for me. Probably because I was a respiratory therapist for eight years and worked with lots of patients with tracheotomies. In fact, I've always said that if I had the choice between dying or a tracheotomy, I'd pick dying. When I said that to the respiratory therapist working with Nathanael, she said she felt the same way. So of course, I've had to turn this over to the Lord and lay it down at his feet. We'll probably make the tracheotomy decision on Monday. Have a happy Fourth of July, Dawn.

Nathanael's kidneys are doing great, his skin looks great, his incisions are healing nicely, and at this point, his blood work is looking good as far as the fungus goes. So there are several positives and answers to prayer. Now we must deal with this airway issue. Please continue to pray for peace for Nathanael and healing for his airway. Thanks for your faithful prayers and endurance to stand with us during this time.

MESSAGES

Tracy Sullivan: Stay encouraged for when you have done all the Lord says, stand and see the salvation of the Lord. In stillness and quietness shall be your confidence and strength. (See Isaiah 30:15.) Let go of things that block His abiding peace. His love is a banner over you all. Just know that. I love you.

John and April Kliesch: A tracheotomy is a good thing. It is probably easier to wean from the vent with a trach than an et tube.

Lisa Westcott: That may be just what he needs, Dawn, for his airway to fully recover. Don't get distracted or set off course by this. That is what the enemy wants right now, especially after last night's celebration and corporate praying for your baby and Richard's ministry. God is still in control, and Nathanael is healed in the name of Jesus! Things may seem slow, but progress is progress, and he is progressing. Just believe, and he shall be healed.

WEEK 5, DAY 34

Afternoon update: July 5, 2:31 p.m.

The kidney doctor said he no longer needed to see Nathanael. His job is done. That is good news! His kidneys are doing well. Nathanael's skin continues to look good, and they have fed him again in his feeding tube. They just stopped the paralytic medicine, so Nathanael should be able to move again in about an hour. His lungs are still very congested, but his x-ray today looked better than yesterday. Monday morning, we will discuss the plan for the week and update you then. Thanks for all the encouraging messages and prayers. Love you all, Dawn.

MESSAGE

Sherry Moore: What an inspiration Nathanael and your family have been to me this morning. Although I don't fully understand why Nathanael is suffering so, I can clearly see your love for him and God's power in all that is happening. So many people are praying and being united because of Nathanael. Nathanael's pain and suffering is being used for God's glory. I will continue to pray for God's strength to help this little saint to pull through.

Nathanael here. I've had it! July 5, 10:17 p.m.

Hey, Nathanael here. I worked so hard, and all of you prayed for me to pee. I heard them say that is all I needed to do, and I could get out of here. Not true! I've been peeing like a champ, and no, they won't let me go. Now they are talking about putting a tube in my throat. Do you read me?

I really need your prayers or one more escape attempt. I figure we could be in Mexico by the end of rounds tomorrow if someone can foot the bill for plane fare. (I'll pay you back in about eighteen years. I promise.) They heavily sedated me, so I couldn't get a message out to you, but I heard everything they are saying. I know it's true. It's great having a dad who doesn't know much. When he asks questions, I get to find out what they are talking about with all the medical terminology.

Please, if you can't break me out, then pray that I'm healed enough that they won't even think about cutting into my beautiful new skin again.

I don't get my dad. All he does is pray and sing over me, and hold my hand. That stuff is great, but how about breaking me out of here? Come on! He even made me watch golf and Wimbledon highlights. How about some Winnie the Pooh or Auto Be Good? Will someone please tell him to put on something I like? This tube makes it hard for me to talk.

MESSAGE

Catherine Hope Rupp: I'd break you out if I could do it. Hang in there, little nephew!

WEEK 5, DAY 35

Dawn's update, on a more serious note: July 6, 1:00 p.m.

The doctors are saying that the only real next option for Nathanael is to do a tracheotomy, which they would do this week. He would probably need to have it for three-six months and give his airway time to heal. We would still be in the hospital for another month at least and then take him home with the trach. This is hard for us, and we feel so badly for Nathanael. He is suffering so much. Please continue to pray for us and for Nathanael. We appreciate you all very much.

MESSAGES

Traci Goodfellow: This is a very hard time for you, I know. I will never forget the day I found out that a trach was the only option for our son, Ian. I'm sure it's hard to hear this right now, but a trach is so much easier on the little guys than prolonged intubation! Unless God intervenes, if you do go through with the trach, once he recovers from that surgery, he will be able to move about freely and build up his strength again. The movement will, in turn, keep his lungs from being so junky.

Sally Lee: After reading your post I felt led to read Psalm 63:1–4. “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So, I will bless you as long as I live; in your name, I will lift up my hands” (ESV). I am praying that you and Nathanael will know the steadfast love of the Lord during your trial.

Evening update: July 6, 5:30 p.m.

The plan is for the tracheotomy surgery to be on Friday morning. That gives the Lord a few extra days for a miraculous healing of his airway. The surgeon would like to wait until Friday because he has more time that morning to spend with Nathanael. He recommends that we not put in a G-tube (a tube through his side into his stomach) yet and wait several weeks to see if Nathanael is having trouble swallowing and eating. If so, then they would need to put the G-tube in with another surgery. So Nathanael continues the breathing machine and will be waiting. Let’s continue to beg the Lord for his divine healing this week of Nathanael’s airway. I appreciate all of you and your faithful prayers! You are all incredible. Have a blessed evening.

MESSAGE

Joyce Fioritto: I know how “down” you must feel right now after our talk yesterday, but we also know that God is in control and makes no mistakes, no matter how it looks to us. We will “beg” God though because he can do a miracle.

CHAPTER NINE



WEEK SIX

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

WEEK 6: DAY 36

Dawn's update: July 7, 10:50 a.m.

The docs just finished rounds. Nathanael's hemoglobin is down, so they are going to have to give him some more blood today to get ready for surgery on Friday. He is running a fever again. I informed the doctor that we are praying for a supernatural healing of Nathanael's airway and inquired about how they could determine if it was healed. Basically, the only way to tell is to take out the breathing tube again, which we will not do, or to plug the trach when he has it and see how he is breathing. That is discouraging because even if God heals Nathanael's airway this week, it wouldn't change the fact that he will get a trach on Friday. Nathanael is resting comfortably most of the time, but when awake he is still shaky and opening his eyes. Thanks for your encouragement and prayers.

MESSAGES

Traci Goodfellow: I just want to say that if God does choose to heal Nathanael's airway, He can also find a way to let the docs know that He has done it. God could very definitely allow him to extubate to prove there is no need for this surgery.

Chandra Christie: Dawn, my mother's heart goes out to you. Loved talking with you yesterday, and remember, you are in God's care. It takes every inch of faith that God graces you with to cling to Him and trust Him to know the best care for Nathanael. Aah! We know and believe in His healing power and love for us. I am praying, of course, and hoping the surgery goes well on Friday. My sister love to you.

Nathanael's update again. What a blessing: July 7, 8:39 p.m.

Wow, my daddy really cares about me. Yesterday, when the doctors were telling my mommy and daddy that it was their opinion that I had to have a tube put into my throat, I didn't like what I was hearing. I looked at my mommy and daddy. He had tears in his eyes. He kept wiping them, and even with all the people in the room, he kept weeping. I wondered why they did nothing to get me out of here. Now, I know they don't want these things to happen to me and want what is best for me.

I also know in my spirit that all of you, even many who have never met me, care about me, are praying for me, and have been an important part of my healing.

I need one more miracle. My airways get irritated with these tubes that come in through my mouth. Every time they take out the tubes, my airways swell up. My airways are getting better, just like everything else. Pray that the doctors realize I am healed and won't need to insert the tube into my mouth.

One thing that I know deep inside is that God has done these miracles for me because He loves me. He has also done this because He has a purpose for my life. When I learn how to talk better, I am going to tell many other people about the great God that I serve.

God has become my closest friend. He has helped me so much, sent His angels to comfort me, and speaks many things to encourage me when I hurt, feel lonely, or wonder why no one picks me up.

When death came to get me, God stepped in, and His angels delivered me. When fear tried to fill my heart, He let me see Him and His angels protecting me. Sometimes I have been laughing on the inside when my body has been shaking from the drugs that were given to me. I have peace even when my body has been hurting and cold and when the nice nurses keep doing things that bug me all day and all night long.

Pray that my mommy and daddy know that I am more than okay! God has even made me happy. Don't get me wrong. I'd break out of here today if I could get these drugs out of my system, these tubes out of my mouth, and these sharp things out of my body that have tubes coming into them.

Now, I bless you. May you know the peace that I feel and the joy that is in my heart. And may you know God and His voice and experience half as many miracles as I have. I just need one bigger one. Pray that the airway is so healed that the doctors can't miss it because it is so obvious. Nathanael Mull (beloved of God).

MESSAGES

Kelli Schoon: Thank you, Nathanael. You are a brave little boy, and one day I look forward to meeting you in Florida and seeing your mommy and daddy again. It has been a long time since we saw them, but they were and still are special friends of our hearts. You will have to ask them about the fun times we had together at a place called Ben Lippen. We are praying for you!

Christina Kenyon: We all know that our Father is big enough to do this one more big thing for Nathanael and many more big things to come. I believe that He did all the things that are shared above and that He will heal Nathanael's airway. Our God is mighty to save (not just our souls but little Nathanael's airway too). Amen!

Margaret Shumway: Richard, I am hugging you. Love, Marge

WEEK 6, DAY 37

Dawn's update: July 8, 12:03 p.m.

I haven't posted yet today because I've been sitting by Nathanael's bed holding his hand and rubbing his head for five hours now. He has been awake the whole time I have been here. His eyes are wide open, moving all around and fighting sleep. He likes me to sit with him and talk to him. I've been reading him all the messages from last night's post. He seems to like them. Nothing new to report. They increased some sedative meds last night because he gets used to the doses and the night shift really doesn't like him to move around a lot. On day shift, we like to see him move around if he is not in pain. No recent changes today. We are just waiting for Friday morning. Thanks for your continued prayers and encouragement. Have a blessed day.

MESSAGES

Julie Pardue: We just wanted to let you know we are continuing to pray for all of you and believe we will see restoration of Nathanael's airways. I

wish I could be there to help in some way, but please know that we are covering your family in prayer. We love you.

Keeli Goins: “Trust Me with your family.” We didn’t know exactly what that would mean. Touch is so important, keep touching. I’ve been praying for the Holy Spirit’s breath to fill the room and be Nathanael’s air. I love you and am praying continually.

WEEK 6, DAY 38

Dawn’s noon update: July 9, 12:12 p.m.

I can’t believe it is noon already, and I haven’t done an update. We just got Nathanael to sleep about an hour ago. He’s been so wide awake; he even watched a little TV this morning. But then he starts to be too awake and starts gagging on his breathing tube, so we have to give him a little medicine so that he takes a nap. We have scheduled the trach surgery for Friday morning. They say it will only be a twenty-minute surgery. We are still praying for divine intervention and trying to prepare ourselves for this life-changing surgery. I am not looking forward to tomorrow. I’m dreading it but trusting that God will continue to be our strength and help. Thanks for your continued prayers. We really appreciate all of you.

MESSAGE

Fareed Shegadeh: We are in prayer. May the Lord give you strength and courage to cope and stay a witness for Him. We still trust God for a miracle. He might come in the last moment. Be assured of His love and goodness.

WEEK 6, DAY 39

Richard here: July 10, 11:43 a.m.

Dawn and I are waiting outside of surgery right now. The procedure for a tracheotomy is supposedly very short, like ten–fifteen minutes. I prayed an angel would extubate Nathanael, turn off the machines except the ones that showed all his stats were fine, keep the nurses away from his room, and that the trach wouldn’t have to happen. That didn’t happen.

The trach will allow Nathanael a lot more freedom and allow them to wean him off more of the medicines.

It is amazing the difference the last few days seeing Nathanael's alertness. His eyes have been opened; he was reaching up to me, watching TV, following different people all around the room with his eyes.

Fred Stubbs just stopped by. It was the first time I had seen him since he was here at Tampa General after a motorcycle accident. It was so encouraging to see my former jogging buddy, fellow pastor, and military legend. Fred confirmed the legend that his helicopter was shot down twice in Vietnam. Fred was the pilot and left without a cut but rode a Harley one time as a seventy-year-old and had a wreck.

Dawn and I were both encouraged by his recovery, how he had no bad memories from over three months in the hospital except a few weird dreams. He had a trach for seven weeks and hardly has a scar.

We know that the trach is nothing more than a breathing aide with little or no side effects apart from the scar. We just know that God could totally heal him. It even seems that the Lord has totally healed him but three failed extubations are enough, so we are rejoicing because Nathanael will soon be one step closer to the freedom, home, and the extraordinary life of a special two-year-old.

Thank you all for your friendship, encouragement, prayers, and practical gifts of various kinds.

Dawn's update after surgery: July 10, 4:43 p.m.

The surgery went well. The surgeon said everything went just great with no problems. Nathanael has been sleeping most of the day. They have already weaned (come down on his settings) for the breathing machine. So far, so good. Thank you for all your prayers. They upgraded us to room 501. It is a bigger room with our own bathroom. I guess the longer we stay, the more benefits we get. Anyway, I'll continue to update but right now we are having a quiet afternoon. Thanks again for your prayers.

Richard here: July 10, 10:24 p.m.

Nathanael has the trach, and he still has the breathing machine attached, but the medical team will gradually wean him off it, along with all the medicines. We will let him out of the restraints a lot. He cannot pull the trach out like he could the tubes, and eventually, he can breathe on his own through the trach.

Time for bed. I'm tired. How about you?

WEEK 6, DAY 40

Morning update: July 11, 10:41 a.m.

I could hold Nathanael for about two hours this morning. That was so nice. He is longer and heavier than the last time I held him. They continue to wean his settings on the breathing machine. They will also wean his sedation medications.

Here are some things to pray about:

1. His body to tolerate coming off these sedation meds without detoxing
2. No infections in his trach
4. His muscles to regain strength quickly
5. Pray for me. My nerves are really frayed right now. I need God to give my body peace.

Thanks so much for the continued prayers. You are all such a blessing to us. Come by and see Nathanael now that he is awake.

MESSAGES

Colleen Bishop: I remember when my daughter was in the hospital, and we could not hold or touch her for fourteen days. I believe you have surpassed that time frame for not being able to snuggle your baby. I am so happy that you were able to hold him in your arms today. My heart hurts for you. I know the hope we have in Jesus Christ and God our Father, but sometimes our fears can take over. I know God is proud of your faith, and He is teaching so many of us so many things through you and your precious miracle baby boy Nathanael.

Carol Napolitano: My thirty-six-year-old son has hydrocephalus. I spent many months like you, waiting for surgeries to be over and for him to reawaken from a coma. I, too, kept a diary (the old-fashioned way). One day, I wrote, "Please give us just a few days of peace." The next time I found the book, I wrote, "Dear God, You have given us a year!" When He answers, time flies. I wish you your start of many days! My son lives independently, works, and has given us joy. As all children, he is sometimes a real pain in the neck.

WEEK 6, DAY 41

Nathanael again, great night: July 12, 7:46 a.m.

When Dad came in last night, he walked right past me. I cried. Doesn't he know he must come and hold my hand right away? Well, I trained him well. For the next few hours,

we held hands. If he walked away, I would cry just to let him know it wasn't okay for him to do that.

It was great getting to sit in his lap for a long time. We just looked at each other and hugged each other some. My head is very floppy right now. I'm thinking my escape attempts were actually dreams. I can't move very well right now. I must start my pushups, sit-ups, leg lifts and head lifts if I'm going to break out of here.

I think I've been in here half my life; it seems like years. I can tell I'm getting used to the drugs or that they are giving me less. Sometimes they make me shake a lot. But that is getting better as well. They are finally letting me wear clothes so my pictures look better. I'll post more later. All the nicer nurses tell me I look so handsome.

Dawn's update: July 12, 10:44 a.m.

Nathanael had a good night. They decreased his breathing machine, so he is breathing completely on his own. Now they are slowly lowering the amount of pressure the breathing machine gives him, and if he continues to do well, he will be totally off the breathing machine. All his labs are doing great. In a few more days, they should be able to pull the IV out. They ordered a rehab consult for tomorrow and a physical, occupational, and speech consult too. He is doing well with his feeding tube, and his skin looks great. The doc says the rash was from a nutritional deficiency, either zinc or fatty acid, but we may never know which. I said we will always make sure he has plenty of both. They say the trach looks good too. So pray for a positive recovery, no more infections, and strength for his muscles. Thanks for your continued, steadfast prayers.

Afternoon update: July 12, 6:22 p.m.

Nathanael has been off the breathing machine for six hours now and is doing great. He has been very tired. Just getting him out of bed, having us hold him, and putting him back wears him out. But he looks great, and it has been great to hold him too. He loves sleeping on his stomach again and seems to be very peaceful. He only cries when he coughs or daddy doesn't give him enough attention. He only gets seven medications now, and one more will be gone tomorrow. They hope to pull out the IV on Monday or Tuesday. So our next challenges are coming off the meds, eating and rebuilding strength, and avoiding any more infections. He got so much bigger and has outgrown his clothes. We want to say a big thank you to whoever is doing our lawn. It has never looked so good. Thank you for your continued prayers. For the first time, we feel like we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I am even hesitant to say that because as you have seen, things can change in a moment, but right now, we are excited with Nathanael's progress. You are all a blessing. God bless you and your families.

MESSAGES

Sue Borden: Great news! The bowl of prayers is being tipped, and many answers are on the way.

Laura Young: Wonderful news! It sounds like he is doing fantastic. What a blessing to be able to hold him in your arms again!

WEEK 6, DAY 42

Dawn's morning update: July 13, 11:24 a.m.

They took the breathing machine out of Nathanael's room today. He is breathing on his own; his lungs are doing great. He doesn't like the trach but is handling everything very well. Today we saw speech and physical therapy and had a rehab evaluation. They will determine the speed of his recovery throughout this week. He looks great and sat up in a chair for about two hours today. Keep praying.

MESSAGE

Lydia Calderon: Praise God for His mercies and answered prayers. Continuing to pray for complete recovery. We love you, Nathanael, and know that God is going to complete the work in you.

CHAPTER TEN



WEEK SEVEN

HE'S BACK, AND HE'S BEAUTIFUL

WEEK 7, DAY 43

Dad's back for some Dad time: July 14, 5:33 a.m.

Hey everyone, I almost wrote a post at 1:00 a.m. Nathanael switched days and night last night. He was awake most of the night but has been calm enough for me to get some sleep. He is doing incredibly well, and for a while, he didn't need any breath support and his stats were great. I held him on my lap for forty-five minutes, and it was great. He reached out for a hug. Dawn told me that yesterday he signed "all done.". All these little steps have been very encouraging.

I love time with him, talking to him, praying for him, and singing to him. It is hard during this time as well because he is more alert and sometimes cries and is more agitated. Some of that is the effect of coming off drugs. Some is his desire to get up, move, be active and his frustration with not being able to do what he wants. When you don't have any idea why, it would probably be more frustrating. He is usually peaceful and content, but it is hard as a parent to see his tears and distress.

Pray for Nathanael to regain his strength and development quickly as far as speech, walking, signing, and more. The resident who was on duty last night was amazed by Nathanael's remarkable progress.

Nathanael's ode to my mommy: July 14, 7:10 a.m.

Hey everyone, I had to type another update today, a special update to tell everyone how special my mommy is. I know she loves me, and I really love her so much.

Mommy comes every day about the time the sun comes up and stays all day long. She watches over me all the time I am awake, and when I wake up, she's usually the first face I see. She speaks so sweetly to me all the time and makes me feel so peaceful. She is always watching out for me. Even after she leaves at night, she calls to check on me many times.

My mommy is so pretty, and she is always sweet. She makes me feel like the most important person in the world. It makes little sense to me. What do I contribute to the world? I can't even lift my head right now. Don't get me wrong, I know that I have a lot to contribute eventually, but right now, what do I offer? Sure, I'm cute; the nurses say I'm the cutest. But really, what does cuteness add to the world? Mommy loves me anyway.

I also know that I have a heavenly daddy who loves me even more than mommy does. He is always with me, cares about me, talks to me, and never sleeps. My daddy in heaven loves me even though I have done nothing great.

Do you have someone who loves you like that? God does. Think about that today.

MESSAGES

Patty Batson: How blessed you are to have your beautiful mommy to wake up to every day and your wonderful daddy to kiss you goodnight and your heavenly Father to watch over you every second of every day. I love you, little one.

Lisa Westcott: Oh, that was precious. I'm crying and going over to hug my little guy, Nathanael. Your mommy will always love you, but God who taught her how to love you.

Mendy Gray: I agree, Nathanael! Your mommy is the best! I pray for her often and you too.

Dawn's update: July 14, 12:37 p.m.

Nathanael is doing great. He was sitting up in a chair today, playing with the toys that Rachel got him for his birthday, and watching TV. Now he is napping from his busy morning. They continue to wean his medications. Please pray for no new infections, increased muscle strength, and the ability to eat when that time comes. If all goes well,

they are projecting two–four more weeks in the hospital. It all depends on his ability to eat, how quickly he regains his strength, and no new infections. It really is amazing, miraculous how great he looks. Thanks for all the prayers. God really has been answering and continues to do so.

Nathanael again! Woo-hoo, new pictures of me: July 14, 10:13 p.m.



Well, tonight has been a fun ride. I found out what happens when you pull the little yellow tube out of the nose. Everyone gets excited, and you get a lot of attention. The yellow tube is my feeding tube. Look at the first picture and read the caption. That says it all.

I just had an itch, and my hand found this little tube that drives me crazy and sticks out of my nose. Well, I pulled it, but they put it back in. Bummer! All the attention was a blast but wore me out, and now I'm going to sleep. Today, I really enjoyed playing with some toys and listening to my awesome mom. And now I get to hang out with Granddad. What a day. I feel a little stronger today and a little less groggy or shaky.

Come and see me some time. We can play with some toys.

Messages from my adoring fans: My parents can't keep them all because there are too many.

Gordon Wadsworth: All the inmates at the Atlanta Federal Prison are cheering for you, Nathanael. I can promise, they pray a lot for you.

Lou Fiorito: Just think, today you are pulling tubes out of your nose, and soon you will be picking other things out of your nose. And all the time, people will tell you to stop doing that.

WEEK 7, DAY 44

Dawn's afternoon update: July 15, 12:58 p.m.

We just got Nathanael down for a nap. He only slept two hours last night and was up all morning, and finally, at 12:45 p.m., he took a nap. He was so tired. Last night, he pulled his feeding tube out twice. This morning, he pulled it out again with a smile on his face. But of course, we had to put it back in, and he did not like that. He had speech therapy this morning and ate some applesauce and did very well with it. He was playing with toys. They will take out the IV this afternoon. He is now only on one antifungal med, two sedatives which they are weaning, a drug to prevent ulcers, his hypothyroid med, and something to help replenish the good bacteria. So that is great news. They will watch to see how he does without those meds, change the trach on Friday, and then probably transfer us to the pediatric floor. So our continued prayer requests are for no new infections, ability to eat and drink, and regaining strength. Nathanael really looks good and is playing and signing. He even learned a new sign today from the speech therapist. He cries often, but we are not sure if it is because he is tired, in pain, or a reaction from coming off all the drugs. Pray for peace for him. We appreciate all of you very much and all your prayers.

MESSAGES

Patrick Nolan: My hero is Nathanael Mull, the trooper of troopers! Richard and Dawn, you are in our prayers every day. Thank you, Lord, for this healing. We will always give you praise.

Nozomi Johnston: I wanted you to know that Zack and Ellie have taken praying for Nathanael into their hearts and have been faithfully praying for him every night. They love seeing his pictures and the improvement from the first pics they saw. Can't wait to see a picture of him smiling again. Love from Tokyo!

Dad's take. This is fun: July 15, 10:47 p.m.

I love having my boy back. It is amazing! He was pounding on the balloon for a long time, tossing a ball around, reaching out to be held, signing "more" and "all done," smiling, and even laughing a little.

I knew this day was coming. Even when Nathanael was coding and we went past eight minutes, ten minutes, twenty minutes, and finally ended after forty minutes. I knew God was going to restore him. Faith is the "assurance of things hoped for." (See Hebrews 11:1.)

Hope is what you are eagerly waiting for founded upon the source of your hoping, which in our case is God, Jehovah Rapha, El Shaddai, Elohim, YHWH, etc.

One of many Hebrew words for hope is yachal (yaw-chal), which is translated in the King James as the following:

- hope twenty-two times
- wait twelve times
- tarry three times
- trust two times
- and used a few other times.¹

In Proverbs 13:12 we read, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life” (NKJV). Hope is the waiting part of expectation. When your expectation is delayed, it makes your heart sick. Don’t give up hope in times like that. As the proverb says, when what you desire, expect, and are hoping for comes, it is a tree of life. Watching Nathanael now is like a tree of life. His growing strength, love, returning personality, intelligence, and zest for life do wonders after a hard day. They make up for the sleeplessness, financial stresses, other responsibilities, and all the trials of the past three months.

You all have been a tree of life as well. Good friends, faithful prayers, encouraging words, timely gifts, uplifting visits, tasty meals, and so much more. We love you all.

MESSAGES

Amber Stebbins: Hallelujah! I am so excited! It is so good to see Nathanael in those pictures, looking so full of color and playing. Your post was so beautiful as it talked about our great God, something I read about this morning in my quiet time. It is okay to ask God for something great, out of our reach, because He is a great God, capable of handling anything. With Him, all things are possible. Praise Him!

Amanda Bodie: I am moved to tears of joy to hear of Nathaniel’s progress this week. Praise God for this miracle shared with all of us through your precious little boy. I continue to keep you all in my prayers.

WEEK 7, DAY 45

Dawn's update: July 16, 5:20 p.m.

Nathanael has had a great day. He is not as emotional as he has been and is peaceful. It's great to see him up in a chair, up in the bed, and playing with toys. He's taken two naps today. He has been smiling a lot today, which is great to see, and tried again to pull his feeding tube out, but I caught him in time to thwart his attempt. Tomorrow will be a big day with the first trach change and change of rooms from ICU to the pediatric floor. The plan is to start rehab over the weekend. Thanks so much for the continued prayers. You have all had such an important role in Nathanael's story! Have a blessed evening.

MESSAGES

Stephanie Higgins: Every post gets better and better. What an amazing testimony Nathanael has! God has used a two-year-old to bless, encourage, and stretch the faith of many. God is so awesome.)

Joyce Fioritto: What awesome news! He probably figures he's been sleeping for over a month now and is well-rested! Who needs more sleep, Mom?

Cristie White: He looks awesome! Praise the Lord for answering our prayers. I am continuing to pray for your strength during all these transitions.

Sally Lee: I had a beautiful dream that Nathanael was singing children's praise songs with you, Dawn.

WEEK 7, DAY 46

Morning update: July 17, 11:31 a.m.

Nathanael had physical therapy today and did great. He had his first trach change, which we will have to do at home too. It's a soft trach with an extension so that it doesn't rub against his skin. He is taking a much-needed rest now. The docs want him to stay in ICU for the day or maybe over the weekend just to monitor him and then Monday get the swallow study and possibly switch to the rehab team following him and start rehab three hours a day. I thought all of that would happen sooner, but it looks like it will be a restful (ha) weekend. He keeps pulling his feeding tube out. He slept a little better last night, which was good for Granddaddy who stayed with him. He looks better and better and gains more strength each day. Thanks for the continued prayers.

MESSAGES

Joyce Recenello: Wow, what great news! My heart is leaping for joy over your "miracle in motion" little boy! What a blessing to be able to love on him and interact with him. That entire hospital staff will be talking about Nathanael and his silent witness of a life sustained by the breath of almighty God! Again, wow!

Mary Grand mommy Mull: I held Nathanael for a short time last night, and it was like holding a newborn. He smiled when I sang "Jesus Loves Me" to him. He is a new baby and more alert than ever. Jesus touched him in a special way when he was in heaven. Thank you, Jesus!

WEEK 7, DAY 47

Dawn's morning update: July 18, 10:33 a.m.

Nathanael had a great night last night and a good morning. They will transfer Nathanael to the pediatric floor today. He is doing well with his new trach and is alert, smiling, getting stronger, and playing more each day. Today, he rolled almost the entire way from his stomach to back. Pray for the sore on his back to heal, no new infections, the ability to eat and drink, and the strength to regain all his previous skills. We start rehab on Monday. Thanks for the prayers. Have a blessed day.

MESSAGE

Carol Abbott: Praise God, out of ICU. The next step is out of the hospital! You are all in our daily prayers. Your entire family is such an

inspiration to all of us. God bless you, Nathanael. I hope you like your new room!

WEEK 7, DAY 48

Dawn's good morning: July 19, 9:28 am

Nathanael had a great night and slept most of the night. Mom didn't do so well. I don't know how Rich and his dad can sleep in this place. I think I slept 1.5 hrs. last night, jumping at every sound and peep that went off and hearing the doors slam each time someone went down the hall. I am very thankful to my husband and father-in-law for night duties. It will be a restful day today. Tomorrow Nathanael will get his swallow study, and if all goes well, he can start eating and drinking. Also, tomorrow, he starts rehab and the hard work of regaining his strength. Thank you all for continued prayers. I look at Nathanael and am very thankful for each one of you and your faith-filled prayers over the last seven-eight weeks. Nathanael really is our miracle boy. His sweet spirit is back, and he is so adorable, winning the hearts of everyone he meets. Thanks also for the continued food, cleaning, and lawn care and financial help. You are all such a blessing. Keep up the prayers; we are on the home stretch. Have a blessed day.

MESSAGE

Robin Harper: I love keeping up with these wonderful posts. I am so grateful to God for Nathanael. I am eager to hear the testimonies of the people who were impacted by his life during this most difficult time. I know God does not waste our pain!

Yeah, Daddy's back: July 19, 11:06 p.m.

I thought he'd be thrilled to have Dad back, but Nathanael turned away and went back to sleep. About two hours later, he reached out his arms and with those longing eyes, said, "Daddy, pick me up." It melts your heart when he does it. We had a great time playing with all the toys in the room, reading a book, and sitting together, and then I had a little cry. We watched a little of Extreme Makeover Home Edition, and Mark Shultz was on singing "He's My Son."

I identify with that song so much. I'd like to rewrite some of it to fit our circumstances but here it is.



When I have heard that song before, I have pictured God our Father crying with Jesus on the cross, calling out to all humanity throughout all time.

Can you see Him? I did this to make everything all right. If you can hear me, I would take His place right now. See, He's not just anyone; He's my son.

I've often thought how powerful that song would be if it were from our Father regarding His son to the entire world. Hey, Mark, just a thought. Try it sometime.

WEEK 7, DAY 49

Dawn's update: July 20, 11:53 a.m.

Bumps in the road. I really don't like them. Thankfully, this is probably just a minor bump in the road. Nathanael started running a fever today. He probably has tracheitis, which is common in the first two weeks after you get a trach and is an infection, inflammation in your trachea. This bumps rehab back to Tuesday or Wednesday. The swallow study is on Tuesday a.m. So Nathanael had speech and physical therapy today and did great. We need to pray for this infection to go, for his swallow study to be successful tomorrow, and for his strength to grow every day. Pray for Richard and I. After eight weeks of hospitalization, we are exhausted, and there is still more to come. Also, please pray for Rachel (our twelve-year-old) who is at home with a fever and sore throat. We really appreciate and need your prayers.

CHAPTER ELEVEN



WEEK EIGHT

ALMOST HOME

WEEK 8, DAY 50

Dawn's updates: July 21, 10:37 a.m.

Nathanael and Dad had a rough night last night. Nathanael's trach tube kept getting plugged, and at one point, they had to take the trach out to unplug it. When I came in this morning, I discovered his humidifier had been off all night, and that was the source of the problem. He also pulled his feeding tube out again, and the nurses had a hard time getting it back in. I am so glad Richard was there to handle all those things. He handles them even better than I do. Nathanael had his swallow test this morning. They only got to test three swallows. Two were good, and one was not as good. The rehab team will be in later to tell me the plan, but I think they will let him eat some thicker foods and then test him again next week. The eating process will go much slower than I was expecting. Please pray his swallowing improves quickly. Pray for patience for me because I am ready to be home. Rachel is still sick, so I'd also really appreciate prayers for her. It is so hard not being able to be there for both of my sick children. Have a blessed morning.

MESSAGE

Grandmommy Mary Mull: Lots of prayers are going up constantly. I will be with Rachel the rest of the day. I am taking her some food. Tom and I may try to come tonight. We miss Nathanael when we don't see him. Lots of people love you.

Dad's drama. Tuesday is better than Monday: July 21, 9:59 p.m.

Nathanael is doing great tonight. He's so popular. All the nurses from PICU are coming to see him. He grabs their hands and gives me that "Don't you wish all the girls swooned over you?" look. He's sleeping and I'm about to. Before that, I have some things to share and a serious confession.

I share the following for comic relief as well as to encourage you if you had a bad day. At least now you'll know someone who had a worse day.

Ever have one of those days? I'm just glad that today wasn't a repeat of yesterday. I'm not usually one of those who thinks that God is out to punish me, but after a day like yesterday, I had to ask, "What did I do, God, to deserve this?" The problems started on Friday, but it felt the strongest on Monday.

I picked up my car from the shop on Friday, and the brakes were grinding loudly, and the bouncing was incredible when I hit sixty-five miles an hour. I went back to the car shop where I found out the brakes were not too serious. The bouncing came from a tire that was separating. Didn't expect to buy two new tires but not a problem.

The next problem to tackle was the one that had me stuck in the mud. On Friday night, I thought I would find out what would happen to my computer if I stepped on the screen with all my weight. Afterward, I realized that wasn't a good idea. It happened because I got up in the dark to take care of Nathanael when he was crying. I had to suction some water behind his bed. As I stepped away from the bed, my feet got tangled in all the wires and hoses. Stepping back from the bed, I lost my balance and put my full weight on the computer screen. A monitor looks bad after that.

As you already know, Rachel was sick, and I had to take her to the doctor's office, get home to make dinner, and then go to the hospital to trade off with Dawn. Most days, I get to work at least 80 percent of the day. But not Monday.

Okay, here comes the confession. I played golf on Sunday. Yes, the mortal sin. That must have caused all my Friday/Monday tragedies. I thought I'd try the "worshipping on the greens" excuse, but that didn't fly. Every year, Dawn's family plans a golf outing for the weekend, and I bring the boys. We had a great time, and even though I missed Dawn, Nathanael, and Rachel, it was great to get away. This is my once-a-year or once-every-other-year chance to golf.

WEEK 8, DAY 51**Dawn's update: July 22, 11:08 a.m.**

We think Nathanael has decided that his nighttime is between 3:00 p.m. and midnight. At least that is the way he did it yesterday. Richard got little sleep last night, about two hours. He headed off to work, anyway. Pray for strength for him today. Nathanael had physical and speech therapy today and is now having a much-needed nap. He will have both therapies again this afternoon. His eating time today did not go very well, but I

think it was because he was so tired. They will try again this afternoon. Other than that, he is getting stronger every day. I think eating is going to be the most challenging, so we could really use extra prayers regarding that issue. It is amazing to watch how people are so drawn to Nathanael. That has always been true, but even more so now. His past docs and nurses come often to visit and see how he is doing. He is a blessed boy, and we are so blessed to have him.

Rachel is feeling better, and her fever is lower each day, so that is a big praise. Richard's mom, Mary, has been spending the last few days watching Rachel, which has been such a comfort to me since I have to be at the hospital. Thank you to all of you for the meals, rides for the kids, errands, cleaning, and lawn care. We are so blessed to have so many wonderful, caring friends and thankful for all the persistent, faithful prayers that have gotten us to where we are today. My guess is that we will be here another two–three weeks. But I am trying to learn to just take it day by day and not get ahead of this day. Another lesson I'm learning through this process.

WEEK 8, DAY 52

Dawn's update: July 23, 9:11 a.m.

Nathanael had a good night and slept well for Granddaddy. He had a good morning and took a nap before therapy began. He was sitting up, and I could start a haircut for him. We still need to pray for this sore on his back that is not healing and for him to eat and get stronger. On the home front, Rachel's fever seems to be gone, and she is feeling better each day. Andrew is now running a high fever and sore throat. Richard's mom, Mary, is coming again today to take care of the kids. Please pray for our protection so that we can continue to care for Nathanael. Crazy times! I read in Psalm 27:13–14: "I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord, be strong and let your heart take courage" (NASB). We are waiting on the Lord for healing for our whole family. God is good.

MESSAGES

Beverly Sipe: You are such an encouragement! May I never complain of day-to-day aggravations.

DJ Eubanks: God bless you, Dawn. The faith and strength that the Lord has given you could move mountains. Stay strong and continue with the victory dance with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dad play time! This is a blast: July 23, 8:13 p.m.

I loved the time that I had with Nathanael tonight. It's a good thing that Mom wasn't here. Don't anyone tell her, okay? I was singing silly songs and acting silly, and Nathanael was laughing and copying me. Then we started doing something that we used to do before. We face each other, holding hands, and rock back and forth. It was like a lightbulb went on. When I would get a call or someone came in the room, we would stop. Nathanael would point at me, shake his head or rock like he was saying, "Okay, Dad, get back to being silly. If you are going to act like that when no one is around, I want to see you do it when people are looking."

Last night, Dawn and I had a great time with the other kids. Andrew and Philip roasted me from 9:00 till 10:00. First, they told Mom about all the bad things Dad did on the golf course. I was pulling practical jokes on them, and after all the stories of things I did, they said they want to come and speak at our next conference. They want to tell the top ten reasons that it is hard to be a child of mine.

It is obvious that my children need many hours of ministry because of my parenting. We were all crying, laughing after hours of reminiscing. The tears were from the side-splitting comedy roast that, thankfully, only my wife and kids could see and hear. Does anyone know a ministry that helps children from dysfunctional families?

I've told my kids that I am writing a book *101 Ways to Legally Torture Your Kids*.

I know some of you are really concerned right now. If you were there to hear the roast, you would only be laughing. Maybe one day I'll tell you some things that came out.

MESSAGES

Beverly Sipe: I'll bet God was laughing along with you!

Chris and Carol Hammer: Sounds like a wonderful family. Don't change a thing. And by the way, when you are a grandpa, doing those things in public is acceptable. That is another thing that makes life so full. God bless you all.

Linda Guthrie: When I see all of you laughing with a good belly laugh, it reminds me of the verse that says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22 KJV). I'm glad to hear you are all having moments of laughter and pray you have many more as the Lord continues to heal your family.

Lou Fioritto: Roast! Hey, I want to help roast you. It isn't fair that just the kids and Dawn have all the fun, is it?

WEEK 8, DAY 53

Dawn's update: July 24, 11:34 a.m.

Well, it's another bump-in-the-road day. Nathanael is running a fever of 102. They are going to draw blood and take an x-ray to see what's going on. He is not feeling very perky. He's been really congested and a little wheezy. Rachel is feeling better every day. Andrew is still running a fever off and on. The kids are home today. So please keep us in your prayers. Have a blessed day.

WEEK 8, DAY 54

July 25, 12:14 p.m.

Nathanael was up starting at midnight. Granddad was tired but had fun. Nathanael had two therapies this morning. He played with blocks and rolled a little and reached for his mom and toys. Dawn is currently holding him while he takes a little nap. He is doing great. We broke the bed and are waiting for a new one. He enjoys playing with the hospital tubes and bandage boxes better than the toys. He is having fun, which wears him out.

Evening update: July 25, 6:25 p.m.

Nathanael did well most of the day. We took a brief ride in the wagon and went to visit the PICU unit and say hi to all the nurses. We saw where the playroom was and checked out some movies and had a pleasant visit with Aunt Liz. We also did another taste time with carrots, and he ended up coughing up some carrots, which probably meant he was not swallowing correctly. Please keep these issues in prayer. On the home front, Rachel is feeling better, and Andrew is doing well too. Thank you so much for your prayers for them as well. God bless you all, and thank you so much for the food, help and prayers.

MESSAGES

Rachel Culver (ten years old): I am praying for you, and I am so glad he is feeling better! My mom and I check on Nathanael every day.

Lou Fioritto: That a way, Nathanael. Break as much stuff as you can, then they will learn how much a two-year-old can destroy. We're praying.

Silly songs with Dad: "Everybody Wants to Be a Cat": July 25, 10:40 p.m.

The song is stuck in my head. Rachel brought a movie for Nathanael. The theme song is "Everybody Wants to Be a Cat." Nathanael couldn't take his eyes off the movie. When it was over, I went to get up, and he wouldn't take his eyes off the screen. Then we danced and sang the song some more. Usually, Dad sings other songs about the Lord or His Word, but lately, we've been singing silly songs. We had a great time. My goal was to keep him awake till after 10:00 p.m. so we could both sleep for a while.

You never know who is watching you. Dawn told me that the psychologist came and said she would normally come to see parents sooner after a crisis like we have faced. She said everyone had been talking about us and how we have handled the crisis. You never know who's watching.

I'll tell you all honestly, yesterday I wasn't handling things well. Life without sleep can be draining. Then some people in my life who care about me but who are challenging me objected to certain goals I believe the Lord has given me. They've been critical. Another person close to me who has affected my life a lot spoke hard things to me. Fatigue, discouragement, and heaviness all set in, and my friends and staff could see right away that I wasn't my normal self.

Two staff came over to encourage me and noticed I didn't look them in the eye. Their words ministered to my spirit and made me want to cry. I'm okay with crying. I just don't like to do it in big rooms in front of many people.

One friend gave me a CD series from the book of Job. It has ministered a lot to my spirit. I'm looking forward to the double-portion anointing. When Job faced his trials, he went from being a prominently respected man to one whose friends seemed to scorn him, question his worth and integrity, and much more. In the end, Job got a picture of a God who was so much greater than he had imagined. He also received back double of everything that he lost.

Thank you for not being like Job's friends. You have encouraged us, prayed with us, given sacrificially, cleaned our bathrooms, and mowed our lawn. We are overwhelmed with gratitude and consider ourselves rich in what matters most: genuine friendships. Thank you immensely.

WEEK 8, DAY 55

Afternoon update: July 26, 3:04 p.m.

Richard blessed me to sleep in this morning. I have gotten up at 6:00 a.m. for almost nine weeks now, and I am not a morning person. It was so nice to sleep in, do some things around the house, eat breakfast with our kids, and come to the hospital at 11:00 a.m. Nathanael had a great time with Dad today. He was worn out by the time I got here. We

had some cuddle time and movie time, and now Nathanael is taking an afternoon nap. They decreased his feeds to see if that helps him not throw up so much. On Tuesday, we will meet with the rehab team and see what the plan is for this week. Nathanael continues to get stronger every day. He can hold his head up totally on his own now and can support himself for a little sitting up too. Every day, we see improvements and increased strength.

The respiratory therapist that we have today was the one who took care of him when we first got here to Tampa General. He told me that when he saw him that night, he did not think he would make it and was calling him a miracle boy today and was so excited to see how wonderful he was doing. He just kept saying that he was a miracle boy. We all know that, don't we? Thanks for the continued prayers. Have a blessed Sunday.

MESSAGES

Mary (grand mommy) Mull: Nathanael is a special blessing that was sent into our family from the Lord, and he is our miracle boy. It was great to be with him on Thursday night and see him clap his hands and blow kisses.

Becky Green: Glad to hear you got some much-needed rest today. There is only so much a body can do and glad you have a sensitive husband to acknowledge that. Blessings on your day and continued strength and healing for Nathaniel.

Katherine Lake: Alleluia! Let the praises ring! You are the miracle family. It is so encouraging to see how you are being blessed. May health and wellness pervade your family and home.

WEEK 8, DAY 56

Evening update: July 27, 6:20 p.m.

It has been a very busy day, and Nathanael has not felt his best. He was running a fever today, rubbing his eyes nonstop, and not acting very happy. He slept very little today, so maybe he will sleep well for Dad tonight. I think we are going to have to have the G-tube talk with the rehab team tomorrow. Nathanael is not eating well and only tolerating very thick foods and only a little. Between getting used to the trach, the swelling in his airway, and his current difficulties eating, I think the fastest way to get home and have him get his nutrition is to do a G-tube. I hate to even say that because it means another surgery

and another foreign object in his body. But like the trach, it would be temporary. Please pray for wisdom for us and the medical staff as we talk through all the options and come up with the best solutions for Nathanael. We really appreciate all your prayers and all the wonderful meals. We truly feel blessed. Have a great night, Dawn.

MESSAGE

Nozomi Johnston: Just wanted to let you know that my seven-year-old prayed, “Please let Nathanael have ten steps forward and zero steps back.” I thought that was a very cute, very specific prayer! Thinking of you daily.

Dad here. Thank you for persevering: July 27, 10:07 p.m.

Perseverance is a wonderful quality to have but such a tough character quality to gain or maintain. Eight weeks seems like an eternity. We feel so close to coming home, but we believed it was only a couple of weeks when we got started. The Lord honored persevering prayer. Though many miracles were immediate, perseverance was often essential.

All of this has gotten old for us, maybe for you as well. Yet many continue to give words of hope, encouragement, and love. The prayers and encouragement are so appreciated.

I recently shared how tough the battle has been. There is a fatigue when enduring a constant battle. Then add to these battles other outside battles and what would normally seem like a little nuisance can feel overwhelming.

God has filled me with such amazing peace in some of the recent battles. The greatness of my God has overwhelmed me, making me realize how small the enemy and those who allow him to work in them are. When God is big, the trials are small.

May your God be huge. One outstanding book by J.B. Phillips is titled *Your God Is Too Small*. I wrote a book that I haven’t published yet called *Let God Out of the Box*. Despite this enduring trial, faith is increasing. Perspective on trials is being shaped and hope remains.

Again, may your God be huge.

MESSAGES

Shirley Floyd: You have been in our prayers and the prayers of our church constantly. We share each encouraging word about Nathanael and each step backward. We continue to pray for strength for the entire family. We do believe that you will take Nathanael home soon. God is an awesome God.

Rebecca Little: You're not getting old, though I imagine you are ready to get back to "normal" ASAP. Thank you for including so many in your journey.

David Schappacher: Gotten old? As one parent with an injured or sick child to another, it will never get old. Your family is an inspiration. In some of the darkest hours, you continue to look to our heavenly Father for love and support. Your faith is unshakeable. Thank you.

CHAPTER TWELVE



WEEK NINE

WEEK 9, DAY 57

Dawn's afternoon update: July 28, 1:04 p.m.

Nathanael had a great night of sleep from 8:30 p.m.–7:30 a.m. except for being awakened by nurses several times. He had a great day of therapy today with physical, occupational, and speech therapy. Today, I get to change out the trach for the first time. And we still have several more therapies this afternoon. Rachel is spending the day with us at the hospital, and that has been a treat, especially for Nathanael. It looks like we are moving ahead on the G-tube with surgery, possibly Friday or Tuesday. The rehab team says we could be here another three–four weeks. That sounds way too long for me. Pray for endurance for us in this long home stretch. Thanks for the continued and faithful prayers. You are all so awesome. Have a blessed day.

MESSAGE

Mark Webster: Yo, Mulls! You are an awesome family. My son Mason and I have been praying for Nathanael since this all began. Your faith and love shine thru, despite the trials and heartaches. Thank you both for that. Our continued prayers are with you all.

WEEK 9, DAY 58

Dawn's morning update: July 29, 10:34 a.m.

Good morning. Nathanael had another good night of sleep. He has done physical and speech therapy today and did great. We really need wisdom as we decide how to do the G-tube. The surgeon really feels like the surgical way would be the safest, but there is a longer recovery time, longer procedure, and more anesthetic. We are calling for a GI consult to see what they think about doing it endoscopically, which is a shorter procedure with less anesthetic and a shorter recovery time. Please pray for wisdom for us to know how the Lord would want us to proceed. Thanks so much for your prayers. Thank you so much for all the food and for transporting our children so many places this summer. You are all such a blessing.

Time for holy boasting: July 29, 10:38 p.m.

If you were here, I might make you sick. What I mean is, I'm so proud of this boy that you might get sick of me bragging about him. He took steps tonight, supporting his own weight. He and I sat on the floor for thirty minutes. Nothing was supporting him as he picked up plastic cups and balls and threw them around for me to chase around the room. When the nurse came in, I had to show him off.

By faith, we knew Nathanael would be well, even when he spent days not moving. We believed, even when there was little evidence he hadn't experienced brain damage. If you look back at all the updates, you notice that we never mentioned brain damage. Because we knew God healed our boy completely. Now God's amazing power is visible for all to see.

Faith is the assurance (knowing it in your spirit) of things hoped for. Hope sounds like wishing, but that is not what hope is. Real hope is founded upon God's Word and His character. It is founded upon unshakeable truth. It is founded upon an immovable God. Faith has a solid foundation.

What has only recently become comfortable to me is that this miracle was not immediate because God had a plan. He has accomplished something so profound in our lives and in the lives of many others that couldn't have been achieved quickly. My prayer has always been for the instantaneous miracle, the dramatic.

We get to see those types of miracles often. A woman just flew down from Massachusetts who had pancreatic cancer. She arrived here and hasn't taken a pain killer since then, and she is healed. She came here bedridden and after three days of ministry, God healed her. All the while, Nathanael is being healed gradually, painstakingly, and at significant cost to our convenience, time, and resources and with monumental challenges.

Even though much of what he is dealing with came at the hands of medical treatments, God has seen fit to use medical procedures to bring a measure of the healing. The reason

that the doctors and nurses call Nathanael a miracle baby is that much of what has happened defies the norm and is against the odds.

No one can believe that he coded for forty minutes and can do all the things he can do. It is not typical. I truly believe that if I had not prayed with the authority and understanding of Scripture, he wouldn't be with us today, and yet people were also doing compressions, giving him all kinds of drugs and support. There was a marriage of the divine components of healing and the medical.

I'm learning more every day and have grown in faith, although things have not gone at all as I would have written the script.

Well, time to quit musing and get some rest and you too. Get some great rest. I'm in the downtown Davis Island Hilton Hospital Hotel. Room service is great, a little noisy, but great.

Urgent plea! From Nathanael: July 29, 10:52 p.m.

I'm training for the great escape. Now that my head is clear of all the drugs, I'm seriously planning to blow this popsicle stand. They play mind games in here that are driving me crazy. They always promise that I can get out if I just do one more thing. First, they want me to pee and I pee, then they want me to get off all the drugs, then they want me to get this tube stuck in my throat. Then they want me to eat, and that's hard to do when they are pumping me full of stuff through my nose.

Now the nurses are fighting over who gets to watch me. They think I'm so cute. I really think they have brought me here to exploit my good looks and charm. When they take my blood; they are trying to extract my DNA to produce a race of cute ones. This is not for me. I don't deserve this.

I hear people really like it when I write. Well, if you like it so much, why don't you come and bring me the schematics of the hospital? I need to know the air ducts, the alarm systems, the schedule for the security guards, and where all the cameras are. I need grappling hooks, rappelling gear, a zip line, tear gas, a gas mask (toddler size), black spandex (size 3t), a ski mask (small kid's size), black gloves, and a really fast electric stroller. If you can find a stroller that is also amphibious, it would be great since I'm on an island.

I need it all before Friday so they can't stick this tube into my stomach. You can call me at 3:00 a.m. while Dad sleeps at Tampa General Hospital. Just ask for Nathanael. They all know me here. I think I'm famous. Hurry, time is of the essence.

MESSAGES

Linda Gagg: Nathanael, I am with you. Time for a great escape. I think they like you so much, they just want to keep you there, so you must give them a daily laugh. All kidding aside, wish we could find an escape for you, but the only way is to get better quick so you can go home.

Chris Gould: Morse code response to Nathanael .-.- --.. I suggest night vision goggles and a collection of well-padded clip boards that you can randomly leave around to distract nurses and doctors. To add a sense of mystery to your escape, leave a Bobblehead Jesus on your pillow.

Jeannette Neal: Nathanael, I am putting myself at great risk by writing this, but your cuteness is worth protecting. I know someone on the inside. I may have to press her to get the info you need, but I will do what I can. The stroller could be a problem, but I am certain a boat could be arranged. Keep up the good work. Train while everyone else is asleep—push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups—do them all. You need to build up your strength. This escape will not be easy, but we are pulling for you. Just keep up the cuteness, and no one will suspect a thing.

WEEK 9, DAY 59

Morning update: July 30, 11:34 a.m.

Nathanael did not have a great night's sleep since they stuck him three times for blood and must get more today as well. He looks so good that it's hard to see surgery as a step forward, which the doctors are saying. Surgery is scheduled for Friday afternoon. The GI doctors said they would not do the G-tube with the endoscopy. So we are stuck with surgery. It feels like we are going backwards, but they all say it is forward. Please pray for Nathanael that there are no complications with this surgery or anything associated with it and no fear or anxiety. He has had such a great attitude, and I don't want fear setting in. I feel anxious about the surgery, and I'm not sure why. Please pray for me about that. Thanks so much for the continued prayers. Have a blessed day.

Surgery update: July 30, 9:50 p.m.

We just found out they have changed Nathanael's surgery time to 9:00 a.m. tomorrow (Friday) morning. The plan is for us to go straight to the PICU after surgery and be in ICU for one–two days and then back to our room on the pediatric floor. They are keeping our same room F510 open for after ICU. We really appreciate your continued prayers for Nathanael. Have a blessed evening.

MESSAGE

Christina Kenyon: I pray for Nathanael's spirit, that he feels happy, whole, and healthy, knowing that his physical healing is coming. (The physical follows the spiritual.) May God give him (and you) continued strength to endure this waiting time.

WEEK 9, DAY 60

Dad's updates, Nathanael's in surgery: July 31, 9:59 a.m.

Nathanael is now getting his G-tube or gastric tube, which is how he will get most of his food. I was doing everything I knew to do to get him to drink from a straw at night. Please pray for his protection, for peace for Dawn, and for no negative side effects or setbacks at all.

It felt like we had our old boy back lately. I think he would have been walking by Monday on his own, but we won't be working on any of that. I showed Mom this morning how he could walk. He stood on his own and took several steps. I only had to balance him a little. He has also been enjoying sitting up and playing. We took him off all ventilation and walked around the hospital. It has been so much fun.

We ask you to join us in this prayer: that Nathanael will be released to come home soon. We know everything about taking care of him and do a great job at helping him with all his stuff. The best rehab is playing with Dad and Mom and his brothers and sisters. We look forward to getting home and getting back to normal.

Update after G surgery: July 31, 1:45 p.m.

Nathanael is out of a long surgery. Dawn and Rich saw him finally! He had a bunch of scar tissue, so it took an extra-long time. Plus, things had shifted from where they would normally be from the last surgery. But he is doing good, has two IV lines, and is in a recovery room waiting to transfer to ICU. Thanks for all your prayers.

Back on Daddy's shoulder: July 31, 3:25 p.m.

Nathanael is back on Daddy's shoulder and sitting in his lap. He is doing good and trying to nap. Back in PICU with our old friends. He has two boards on his hands/wrists to protect the IVs, and he still can rub his eyes. Thanks for your prayers. He will plan his next escape soon, I'm sure.

MESSAGE

Lisa Westcott: Way to go, Nathanael! Things will pick up fast now! Upward and onward! Praying for you, little man!

Dad here, miracle boy sleeps peacefully. Reward offer: July 31, 8:43 p.m.

Well, I finally had to get up and put Nathanael in bed so I could take care of some business, if you know what I mean. He is totally at peace in my arms and totally ticked off when in his bed. For my UK friends, ticked off in the US means “angry,” not a check mark in a box.

The progression has been one more thing off the list and more freedom until today. To take a step forward, Nathanael had to temporarily take a few steps back. The IVs should only be in for a day or two, and then the NG (nasal gastric) tube can come out as well.

All the girls in the ICU are excited to have him back and can’t believe how great he looks. Nathanael is not as excited. We learned about an escape plan he was working on. Packages arriving from all over the country with spandex outfits, tear gas, and night vision goggles and even this strange stroller.

Packages were all in his name, and we had to open them. One of them had a list of items they had printed from CarePages. I asked Dawn if she had anything to do with the list, and she said she didn’t. Then we asked the few other people who have access to posting, and they all said they didn’t. So we went back over old posts and found posts by Nathanael. I know that’s impossible, so we are trying to figure this one out.

If anyone has information leading to the culprit who is posing as Nathanael, let us know. There might be a reward.

WEEK 9, DAY 61

Dawn’s update: August 1, 3:55 p.m.

I had to hold Nathanael all day. He has been in a lot of pain and very upset at anyone and everyone that walked in the door. We were just moved back to our old room on the pediatric floor F510, and Nathanael is so much calmer. He recognizes where he is and is more content. That made my heart very happy. The surgery went long but well. Hopefully, over the next few days, we will take all the IVs and tubes out. Nathanael has settled back in his room on pediatrics, and he is thrilled to be back in his room. His stress level has decreased, and he is not crying every time someone comes in. Thank you so much for the prayers. God is answering. Keep praying for Nathanael and his spirit to be at peace and for his body to heal quickly.

Dad here, fervently praying for sleep: August 1, 11:12 p.m.

It is like having an umbilical cord right now. He is very dependent on us. Still wondering about all the new hardware and feeling the effects of surgery. He was on Dawn's lap for twelve hours yesterday. I slept very little the night before last. He is perfectly content while on our laps but hard to keep calm anywhere else.

He looks great and will be back to full strength quickly. Tonight, he decided that since the doctors were taking their sweet time in removing the NG tube, he took matters into his own hands and pulled out the tube right in front of the nurse and me. There was no stopping him.

I can't wait to take some new pictures with his face free of tubes. But not now. He is sleeping (sort of), and I'm praying that I can get some sleep. Sleep is wonderful. If you are getting sleep, thank God when you wake up. It is a blessing I am currently not enjoying much of.

MESSAGE

Lisa Westcott: Hang in there, Dad. Right now, you are providing Nathanael just what he needs: comfort, security, and love. When he is back to his old self, he will give you guys what you need so desperately, a few hours of uninterrupted shut-eye. Love you!

WEEK 9, DAY 63**Monday update: August 3, 4:17 p.m.**

Nathanael has decided to set his own course of treatment options by pulling out his NG tube over the weekend and IVs yesterday and today. They have just started feeding him through the G-tube this afternoon, and we have decided not to resume rehab and try to get home by Friday. Pray the surgeon agrees. Everyone else is. Thanks for the continued prayers. Have a blessed evening.

MESSAGE

Patrick Nolan: Nathanael, you stay on God's course. Get yourself home to your family. Your toys miss you, your bed misses you, well, everyone and everything misses your smile!

Nathanael here, someone had to make a decision: August 3, 10:37 p.m.

Today, I finally had enough of this place. I've gotten almost all the supplies I requested for my escape plan last weekend, and then they drugged me again and stuck the tube in my side. I've been doing great and getting stronger all the time, but no one was taking all these silly tubes out of me. They like me so much here, they are trying to figure out how to keep me.

Well, I finally decided to take charge. I started by pulling out the crazy tube that they kept sticking back in my nose. Finally, they paid attention to my demands. This gave me the courage I needed for the move I made today. I pulled those needles out of my hands and made them take off all my bandages.

As you can see from my new pictures, I'm ecstatic. My face is finally back to its beautiful self, free of silly tubes, and my hands are free again. I think they got wind of my escape plans, and they put things on my hands that made it impossible to do anything. Now, I have my hands back, and I'm ready to go. Friday is the night. This time I'm really doing it. I feel the strongest I have felt, and I've been making notes of all the nurses' rounds, security cameras, guards, and other important factors relevant to my escape.

I still need a high-speed electric amphibious stroller. Check eBay—they have everything. I better get my rest now so I can make the great escape.

MESSAGES

Robin Harper: Yay! Funny, the other day, I was amazed how he wasn't pulling at his IVs. He was just waiting for the right time! He looks great! I loved seeing him so awake and alert. I even got to hold him, and he gave Josh and I high fives. I love having him back. I told him how much I missed him! What a precious boy!

Sally Lee: Nathanael, if you come to North Carolina, they probably won't be able to find you. I will try to get a helicopter on the roof for Friday.

Joyce Recenello: My heart is just pounding! I'm in awe of what the Lord has done and how sweet and beautiful your precious Nathanael looks! How wonderful to see his smile! I'm so excited to hear all this good news, though I'm not one bit surprised! I'll be praying that everything goes smoothly for Nathanael's escape on Friday. What an awesome homecoming celebration there will be! Praise the wonderful name of Jesus!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



WEEK TEN

FULL SPEED AHEAD

Full speed ahead: August 4, 11:29 a.m.

The light at the end of the tunnel just got a lot closer. They are working to send us home on Thursday of this week. The staff is scrambling to get all our home supplies ordered and nursing care lined up. Today, I am learning how to do the G-tube feedings and probably doing all his care for the next few days, so we are comfortable to do it all at home. Amazing! Please continue to pray for no new infections, his feedings to go well through the G-tube, and all the details of the transition to go smoothly. Thank you so much for all your prayers through this ordeal. You are an integral part of Nathanael's recovery, and we appreciate you all so much. We will keep you updated with any changes. I guess we'll have to plan Nathanael's celebration party soon! Have a blessed day.

MESSAGE

Joyce Recenello: Oh, praise be to God! I haven't stopped crying with great joy as I read the newest update. Even though I knew beyond any doubt this day was inevitable, I can't praise the Lord enough for bringing it about! What glorious joy! Look what the Lord has done!

Wednesday update: August 5, 11:07 p.m.

We are making all the preparations for Nathanael to come home tomorrow! Thursday! Can you believe it? His bedroom is being transformed by oxygen tanks, feeding machines, suction machines, and lots of other supplies. We will also have a nurse come to our home for twelve hours a day to help with Nathanael's care. Nursing will come at night so we can get some sleep and know that Nathanael is being watched and cared for. What a journey these past ten weeks have been. Thank you for your faithful prayers, encouragement, and support. Each of you is an important part of Nathanael's story. I am going to continue to make posts on the Care pages. I may not make them every day, but I want to keep you up to date on his progress. We will be busy with doctors and therapy appointments for the first several weeks, but what a blessing to be at home and together as a family once again. We are truly blessed and so thankful to God for all His provision and answers to prayer. Have a blessed evening.

MESSAGES

Katherine Lake: Words cannot express the joy and thanksgiving I feel as I read your post. We serve a generous, patient, awesome God. He gives in abundance. Your family's testimony will last through generations. Praise be to our God, who never leaves us. One of the best gifts that is coming is a return to another level of normalcy in your lives. May your home be surrounded by God's army to protect your family from all harm. Alleluia!

Lena Chadwell: I have kept up with the updates and prayed for Nathanael as the weeks went by. I rejoice with you and your family this day for the marvelous things the Lord has done in your lives. Nathanael is so precious! May peace, joy, and blessings be upon your house this night and in the coming days. I will continue to pray for all. And, Nathanael, I loved your escape plans!

Our son returns home: August 6, 6:24 a.m.

What a joyful day it is! I keep thinking of the Father in the story of the prodigal son. Now, Nathanael is nothing like a prodigal, but the Father's response shows the heart of the Father. The joy was unrestrained, the emotions raw, and the celebration was ecstatic. Even before he saw the son, the longing in his heart brought him to the edge of the road daily to look for and wait for his son's return.

We have prayed for this day, longed for it, and never lost hope that this day would come. Well, here it is. A time for celebration, jubilation, thanksgiving, and praise.

Nathanael is doing very well. He is calm and very restrained in his responses. He had surgery only a week ago. I had surgery when I was in college, in the best shape of my life,

and I was supposed to have two weeks of recovery in bed. I went back to college after only a week, and it wiped me out.

He is still taking steps when I support him. I can't wait to see the progress he will make at home, in his own environment, with his brothers and sister to keep him entertained, and all his old toys.

I know we have said this before, but we cannot say it enough. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Nathanael: Finally, the help I need: August 6, 6:41 a.m.

Wow! You guys are incredible. Today is the day. The plans are all in place. I'm having a hard time deciding whether to abandon the original plan or go with Plan B, which is the helicopter on the roof and a trip to North Carolina. We went to North Carolina on our vacation last year and a helicopter sounds like fun, but I haven't had time to work through all the variables yet.

So here's what I'm thinking. Bring the helicopter because that will cause a great distraction. Fly around the hospital while I'm escaping, and no one will notice a little boy dressed in black toddling and crawling toward the water. It needs to be precisely at 10:00 p.m.

I'll pretend to be asleep at 9:00 p.m., and I'll drop some of the sedatives I held back from what they tried to give me in dad's drink. He'll be asleep in a minute. The poor guy looks so tired. Then I'll follow my secret plan. I can't tell you because it's a secret. You only get this little bit.

At 10:00, I'll make my toddle and crawl for it. (I can't wait till I can run.) Once we take the stroller across the waterway, I'll take the stroller up the street to the big building with the M on it. I think I heard someone say Marriot. Have someone meet me with a getaway car there. We can then meet up with the helicopter at a helicopter landing place. I don't know where those are, so if you can talk to each other, that would be great. Then I'll take a trip to North Carolina.

When things settle down and the police stop looking for me, we can inform my family and invite them to join me. Remember, 10:00 p.m.

MESSAGES

Fareed Shehadeh: We are with you. Hope I can make it to M at 10:00 p.m. I want so much to see you, your parents, brothers, and sister. Meanwhile, we pray for an easy escape and arrival home. We love you.

Peter Buczynsky: Might want to have a backup plan in case the door is locked leading up to the roof. I'll arrange to have a WaveRunner ready for you with enough fuel to get to Mexico. Welcome home, buddy!

Paul Loftin: Congratulations! You are one tough cookie! This is an answered prayer. I love the pictures. Don't stop posting them. Someday, we shall meet, and when we do, I want to shake the hand of the boy God is using as a man. You keep up the good work of getting better and keeping your families united. You're one heck of a dude!

Sally Lee: Okay. I will be there with the helicopter. Hopefully, I can fly the thing.

Early release: August 6, 7:20 p.m.

All plans are off for tomorrow night. I'm free at last, free at last. Thank God almighty, I'm free at last. Finally, Mom and Dad figured out that I want to get out of here and did something about it. I didn't believe it while it was happening. Was I really going outside for the first time in ten weeks, or was it those drug-induced hallucinations? Was I really riding in a car seat again? Was that really my home, my bedroom, my toys? This isn't a dream. I'm home. I hope we can return all the getaway gear. I really hope we can still take the helicopter trip to NC or at least come up for another vacation sometime.

If you don't claim the getaway gear that you sent, I'll sell it on eBay and start my getaway business for other kids who have been held against their will because of their cuteness or the value of their pee. People really need to know about this. It is a crime.

Well, I have to get back to playing now. I hope all of you will still come to visit me. I've enjoyed all the visits, prayers, and gifts. Nathanael

MESSAGES

Rachelle Castellana: We have been checking every night for this update! God is faithful! God is trustworthy! Nathanael is a blessed child of the Lord! He is very special! We are so happy for you guys! I'm going to tell Guyatano right now if he is not asleep yet! He will be so happy!



CHAPTER FOURTEEN



LIFE AFTER ESCAPE



Day 69, Sunday update: August 9, 10:46 p.m.

We came home on Thursday afternoon and brought home more than just Nathanael from the hospital. Thanks so much for the prayers. Nathanael is feeling better and is so glad to be home. Life is very busy taking care of him, but we are all so happy to be together at home. Nathanael starts his evaluations for his therapies tomorrow, and then it will be three days a week of physical, occupational, and speech therapy. He is a little frustrated that he cannot do the things he used to do, but it will be no time before he is crawling and walking again. We will keep you posted on his progress and let you know when we plan the Nathanael celebration. Thank you again so much for your prayers, encouragement, meals, and the many other ways you have all been such a blessing to us. Have a blessed evening.

MESSAGES

Barb Kern: Tori and I have been praying for your precious Nathanael and your family. We are so happy to hear you all are home and well.

Stephanie Higgins: I love the last pictures. It is fun to see him with Rachel, being a little boy, and wearing regular clothes. God is so awesome!

Tuesday update: August 11, 4:57 p.m.

It is great to be at home all together and to be involved again with our older kids. Life is very busy taking care of Nathanael. But he is such a sweetie. It has been good to see some of you and for you to see Nathanael for yourselves. We appreciate all of you and your prayers so much. Nathanael is still having some stomach issues and can be frustrated not being able to do what he once could do. We had his PT and OT evaluations this week and will start full steam with those therapies and speech next week. Nathanael is sleeping well at night, which is such a praise! So thank you for your continued prayers, and we will continue to keep you updated and let you know when we plan our celebration. Have a blessed day.

Dad here, a huge thank you: August 13, 7:39 a.m.

We are all adjusting to being home. We are home, but home is not the same. It beats being in the hospital, but bringing the hospital home is taking some getting used to. Nathanael's room is filled with much of the same equipment he had at the hospital. I think it is overkill and even a little ridiculous, but some people throw things at me when I say things like that.

Nathanael is doing great. Every day we see more of the Nathanael that we knew before. His smile is coming back more. I can't wait till the trach comes out, and he can laugh again. He has one of the best laughs. Everything is healing up well. His stomach bug that zapped us all (except Dawn) is gone, and we are adjusting well.

We all still need your prayers. The added burden on Dawn is huge. I try to take on as much as I can when I am home, but it is hard to get her to sit down. Her back is hurting from having to lift Nathanael. Imagine having a twenty-five-pound newborn. That is what it is like. I think Nathanael will walk again soon. Pray for that. I work on it with him some when I'm home, and he can support his own weight and remembers the motion but doesn't seem really motivated yet.

Dawn and I haven't had a date night since this all began, and Momma doesn't foresee that happening anytime soon, so pray that we could get quality time together and for the doctors to see Nathanael's progress and to have a speedy plan of removing the trach and the feeding tube.

MESSAGES

Maureen Bravo: I am keeping up with you all and hoping that the end is soon in sight! Praying that the new dawn breaks on a totally healed and whole Nathaniel and a restored, refreshed, and invigorated family!

Amy Pacheco: God is so good! I'm so happy for you that your baby is home with you! Our continued prayers are with y'all.

Dawn's Thursday update: August 13, 11:34 a.m.

We hope all of you are well and have a wonderful day. We want to invite you to a drop in at our house to thank you for all your prayers and support. Have you seen Nathanael and celebrate all the answers to prayer? Nathanael is sleeping well at night. We are still dealing with some stomach issues, but other than that, he is doing well. We continue to pray for strength for him as he regains muscle strength and relearns to sit, stand, and walk again. Come celebrate with us if you can. We look forward to seeing you then.

MESSAGES

Steve Buchelt: Hi Dawn, I have been receiving these updates daily and praying for them each time. I rejoice with you and Richard. Wish I could celebrate with you in person but will from a distance.

Mike Stanco: I haven't written much, but I want you to know that Linda and I have been reading your updates and praying over them every day. We rejoice with you in Nathanael's healing and homecoming! We would really like to be at your celebration, but North Carolina is a little too far for us to travel. Maybe next time you're up this way, we will meet up. Until then, know we continue to be connected through our prayers.

Joanne Towles: I truly would love to be there and meet Nathanael, but Phoenix is a long way off! Know that we're praying for complete and perfect healing for him.

Nathanael's Saturday update: August 15, 12:19 p.m.

Hi everyone! I finally got some time to myself to get back on the computer. My family has been keeping me busy, so I haven't been able to send my updates. They are still taking me to see doctors and therapists who make me exercise. I get exhausted, but they say it is good for me. They still must be trying to clone me because they took some more of my poop and sent it to a lab for some tests. They must have done DNA testing, although my mom said it is because my poop is too watery. These grownups sure spend a lot of time worrying about silly things like pee and poop. I am so happy to be home and playing in my new ball pit. They say it is excellent exercise, but I just think it is fun. I hope you can come see me on Sunday, August 23, so I can give you a high five and say thank you for praying for me and helping me with my escape.

MESSAGES

Toñi Peña: Beautiful and brave Nathanael, we are so happy for you, and yep, grownups do worry a lot but, it will be all well with you!

Lou Fioritto: First, they worry that you didn't poop, now they worry that it is too watery. What's a guy supposed to do?

Enjoying some normalcy: August 21, 7:31 a.m.

Dawn and I were reflecting the other day about how our entire ten-week ordeal seems so long ago, almost surreal, like it happened to someone else. I questioned if they had slipped us some of the amnesiac medicine while we napped at the hospital.

After ten weeks, the crazy became normal, so the first week it felt so unnatural going to bed at 11:00 p.m. and sleeping through the night. I have always been an early riser, but at first, I was trying to figure out why I was waking up at 4:00 or 5:00 every morning. Since Nathanael was born two years ago, I have not had regular sleep. I have tried to let Dawn sleep and get up with Nathanael, who is now sleeping through the night and is watched by a nurse who stays in our home each evening.

Now, I am rejoicing in a consistent time with the Lord and waking up refreshed.

I'm concerned for Dawn and the extra burden on her with all the additional aspects of care for Nathanael. I encourage all her friends to insist on getting with her in the evenings to get her out of the house and away from all the stuff. She trusts me (mostly), so when I'm home in the evenings and weekends, she needs to get out.

Nathanael is doing awesome, by the way. It is amazing to see him, so healthy, getting stronger every day and quickly returning to the kid who loves everyone. It is not amazing because we didn't expect it, but it is amazing like the sunrise is amazing every day. Watching God do what you expect Him to do through faith still holds me in amazement and wonder at His greatness, goodness, power, and love.

MESSAGES

Michelle Holton: We are so happy for you guys. It has been awesome to see what God has done in your lives. It is amazing!

Nozomi Johnston: Oh man! We wish we could be there. Your home is a bit far from Tokyo. It has been an honor to be a part of it all through prayer. Please take lots of pictures and post them for those of us who cannot join. We want to see tons of pictures of Nathanael!

Wednesday post: August 26, 8:44 a.m.

Hello everyone. Thanks so much to all of you who drop in to see Nathanael. It was great to see everyone and for you to see Nathanael. He had a great time. Nathanael is getting stronger every day. We have therapies three days a week. We have lots of doctors' appointments as we come up with a plan to get this trach and G-tube removed. Please pray for wisdom for us in these decisions. Also, please pray that the swelling in his trachea will go back down to normal and if there is any scarring that it would be healed. Richard will post pictures of the drop in soon and some new pictures of Nathanael.

September update: September 7, 10:35 p.m.

Thanks to all of you who continue to pray for and follow Nathanael's progress. Life has become very busy and complicated with all that goes into Nathanael's care and the six doctors who are now following his care. We also have night nurses each night who allow Richard and I to sleep, which we are very thankful for. Nathanael continues to get stronger each day and more active. He is happy most of the time. We have an appointment with the surgeon, and he will take out the G-tube that Nathanael now has and replace it with another one that will be flat against his side on the outside. We are also following with an ear, nose, and throat doctor and a pulmonary doctor and discussing the options and procedures to remove Nathanael's trach. It is a difficult and complicated process with more hospital admissions. Please continue to pray for Richard and I to have wisdom in this process and continue to pray for complete healing for Nathanael. He is such a blessing, a happy boy who loves life and loves his family. We are very thankful for him. We are very thankful to the Lord for all the answers to prayer and for all of you and your faithful support, prayers, and encouragement.

Life is a miracle: September 15, 12:14 p.m.

I posted some new pictures of Nathanael. He is doing great. What a joy.

It is awe-inspiring to see what God is doing in Nathanael. To watch the healing take place daily right before our eyes is incredible. Thank the Lord every day for life. Thank the Lord for His presence. Draw near to Him.

I just hung up with a friend from another state who was asking if I was hearing anything from God about this time in our nation. It seems like almost every conversation comes to a place of talking about the times we are living in.

As believers, we always try to live as if we are in the last days. We have always known that He is coming back one day, but it certainly seems more imminent today than at other times in my life. The challenges that face many, if not most of us, today are greater than ever before.

What we have gone through has been teaching me something. Also, what I hear from the Lord is that more than ever, we, the people of God, need each other. At times, it seems we couldn't make it without each other.

We have lived for a long time like we can make it without one another. We have been individualistic. Today, families are losing their homes and more. It is time for a whole new level of giving, receiving, and sharing. I believe the Lord is telling me that like Acts 2 near the end of the chapter, people will open their homes, share meals, and get back to living in community, not communism, but biblical community. Don't wait until you have to. Start today living in a greater community with others and with the Lord.

MESSAGE

Lisa Westcott: I totally agree that we are being drawn to each other. I can say that for my family, we have recently begun hosting and leading a life group in our home on Friday nights, and my husband just began going to the Iron Man prayer time on Sunday mornings with other men of our church. We need community like never before because if we rely on our own eyes, we will fall under the scariness of our situations. We are freaking out at our difficulties, but God is not! Maybe He's allowing this critical state to draw us all to rely on Him more.

I am listening and surrounding myself with other like-minded people to uplift, encourage, put my life into perspective, and pray with me.

Latest update: October 30, 11:38 p.m.

He is doing really well and is just about where he was before this summer began with walking, eating baby food, playing, laughing, etc. He has passed his swallow study. We will see a nutritionist in a few weeks so we can have a plan of supplementing his nutrition without the G-tube. We have an appointment next week to see the pulmonary doctor and two weeks after that to see the ear, nose, and throat doctor, and after those appointments, we will hopefully have a plan in place to take the trach out. Our days are very full of doctor's appointments and therapies and lots of phone calls to doctors, equipment companies, and the nursing company. I should be awarded some honorary degrees after all that I have and am learning through this process. Actually, I hope I can help other parents who have to walk this road. Please continue to pray for Nathanael and that the swelling of his airway heals. On a practical note, pray that he would stop pulling at his thermovent, which is attached to his trach. He keeps pulling that off, and it is really irritating his trachea. Keep us in your prayers as we try to juggle all this and life too. God is so good and full of mercy, and I am so thankful for the supernatural grace He continues to give us. We will update with more pics soon. May God bless you today and meet all your needs as you look to Him. We appreciate you all very much. Have a blessed day, Dawn.

MESSAGE

Devon Gokmen: I was just talking about Nathanael today and wondering how he was doing! So glad that things are continuing to move along in a positive direction. God is good! I'll continue to pray for strength for your family. I know that all those appointments become exhausting.

Update: November 21, 1:50 p.m.

Hello to all, and I pray you are all well and looking forward to a great Thanksgiving this week with your family. I wanted to let you know that on Wednesday, we have an appointment with an ear, nose, and throat doctor, and our prayer is that we can start getting this trach taken out. I just wanted to ask that you continue to pray with us that Nathanael's trachea heals and that he will be ready to transition to life without a trach. Nathanael continues to get stronger and is doing well. Thank you again for your prayers. Have a blessed Thanksgiving.

MESSAGES

Patrick Nolan: Well, I know that God is with you, and this Thanksgiving we all have a great deal to be thankful for. Nathanael is growing stronger each day and this extended family of brothers in his arms.

Kimberly Pettit TGH nurse: Dawn, I love to continue hearing about Nathaniel's progress. He is so amazing. I still keep him in my thoughts and prayers all the time.

Trach update: November 25, 2:35 p.m.

We had our appointment with our new ear, nose, and throat doctor. We really liked her a lot. She wanted to start the process and get the trach out on December 7, but her schedule is full that day. So our scheduled date is December 21. On that day, he will have a bronchoscopy, which will have to be done surgically. They will put him under anesthetic and put a scope down to look at his airway and lungs. If all is clear, which we are all believing and praying for, then they will keep us in the hospital overnight and take the trach out. If all goes well, we could be in and out in twenty-four hours. In the meantime, the doctor had us use a one-way valve that goes at the end of the trach. Nathanael will breathe in the trach and out his mouth so he can talk and make noise, and it will strengthen his lungs to get ready for the trach to come out. We will use it every day until the trach comes out, so we have a light at the end of our trach tunnel! Please agree in

prayer with us that all swelling and airway damage heals. We will be at St Joseph's Hospital for the procedure and overnight. Thank you so much for your continued prayers and have a very blessed Thanksgiving. Love, Dawn.

MESSAGES

Robin Harper: Wow! That's awesome, Dawn! You have a date. And you get to hear his precious voice and baby noises again! So, so glad! So much to be thankful for, isn't there?

Paul Loftin: Happy Thanksgiving! And that it is! Nathanael is still here with us. I give God the thanks, praise, and glory for answering so many prayers for Nathanael. I thank God for the mighty work He has planned for Mr. Miracle and how this ordeal is preparing the whole family for what is yet to come.

Hey, little guy, you just keep on keeping on and keep those parents straight while you're at it. I must admit the pictures now are greatly improved over those at first. May you enjoy Thanksgiving with God, family, and sweet friends sharing more love than you get, giving more happiness than deserved, and leaving no one without a big old smile.

I'm back, Nathanael: December 2, 4:49 p.m.

Hey everyone, I guess you all heard the great news. Not about the track. That is exciting and thanks for praying. What I'm talking about is my video debut. I'm working on my video resume so I can be in commercials and movies. You will see from this video that I'm amazing. I think I'm cut out for comedy.

I only regret to inform you that some of the best video will have to be reshot. It doesn't matter how good you are if the help isn't skilled, and you can miss some great stuff. I was using Mr. Potato Head pieces to make faces, and everyone was falling down laughing. Too bad you can't see that. I'll rework it soon and give you a show you won't soon forget. Here is a little piece for your enjoyment. I call it "Dining with Nathanael."



Paste this in your browser and you will be in for a show. Or look up Nathanael Mull on YouTube. I have a couple of videos. This is one of the newer ones.

Five days to go: December 16, 10:50 p.m.

Hello, we have five days to go until Monday. Nathanael is back on an antibiotic for another trach infection, and we pray that the infection clears up by Monday for the bronchoscopy and the trach to come out. Thank you so much for standing with us throughout this entire year! Please continue to pray that all will go well, that the infection will clear, and that we will have a successful time with no trach. God bless you all, Dawn.

MESSAGES

Katherine Lake: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23 ESV). Yes, indeed, He is faithful! We stand in agreement with you for the complete restoration of Nathanael’s health!

Joyce Recenello: Dawn, wow, the first thing that came to my mind when I read your letter was “You are coming down the home stretch!” I heard once that if we really want to be encouraged, we just need to look back and see where God has brought us from. He has been so faithful, and He will continue to work in your precious little Nathanael’s life! There’s light at the end of this very long tunnel, and His name is Jesus!

Monday surgery: December 18, 1:07 p.m.

Nathanael has his bronchoscopy on Monday morning. We have to get to the hospital at 6:00 a.m. Please continue to pray that Nathanael’s airway heals completely, that there are no complications, and that everything goes smoothly. We really appreciate your prayers so much, and we will update you as soon as we can after his procedure. God bless you, Dawn.

MESSAGE

Carol Abbott: I will most definitely be praying for Mr. Nathanael. I pray for him every day and ask the Lord to use Nathanael to share his own testimony! I'll be praying also for you Dawn, Richard, and children. You are a very special family. You have been so faithful to trust Jesus through such trials. I just know that God is proud of you. I will wait for the good report!

Another time around the mountain: December 21, 3:56 p.m.

Well, the journey isn't over yet. During the scope, the doctor found a little granulation, which is extra skin that comes because of all the stuff that has happened. It wasn't much, and they took off the extra skin and still wanted to take out the trach when he woke up. Well, Nathanael was taking a good while to wake up since we had woken him up so early. He did great for one minute. Then he decided to see how long he could hold his breath. When he started turning blue, the room became pretty tense. We had to put his trach back in.

He likely had some congestion that he wasn't awake enough to clear out. There could also have been some swelling from the cutting away of the extra skin. Nathanael stabilized immediately. They have scheduled the next try for two weeks. Mom was slightly traumatized but had thicker skin. Dad just grabbed the trach and put it in. We are both disappointed. We cannot wait for the journey to be over with. I feel like my kids do on the long journey. "Are we ever going to get there? Are we there yet?"

I'm so glad the Lord is a patient Father.

MESSAGE

Beverly Sipe: The destination is worth the journey: bumps, potholes, roadblocks, hills and all! (Jeremiah 29:11.)

New date for trach removal: December 22, 11:08 p.m.

We go back on January 7 to St. Joseph's Hospital to have another bronchoscopy, just to make sure everything still looks good and then to take the trach out again. Today Nathanael's doctor said that normally if they do a procedure like they did for him yesterday, where they scraped the tissue off his trachea, then they would not attempt to take the trach out the same day. Our doctor wanted to try since we were all looking forward to that Christmas present, but in hindsight, it was too much for him to handle all at one time. A big praise is that when she looked at his trachea, all the swelling is gone. That is a big answer to all your prayers! We are thankful to be home for Christmas and that

Nathanael has recovered nicely from his surgery, and we look forward to January 7. We are very thankful for all of you! Have a very blessed Christmas!

What can I say? January 6, 2010, 3:50 p.m.

I called the hospital today to find out about Nathanael's surgery time for tomorrow and they informed me that my doctor's schedule was canceled. So, we rescheduled for Monday, January 11. Thanks for your patience and continued prayers for Nathanael. I pray he will not get any infections during the next week and that all will go as scheduled on Monday. Pray for me because I am very frustrated with the medical community right now. It has been a very stressful, frustrating month, and I am exhausted. Thanks again so much for your prayers. You are all really appreciated!

MESSAGES

Joyce Fioritto: Pastor Mark told us on Sunday to use "GGT": God's Got This! No matter what is happening in our lives—good or bad—God's got it, and He is in control of each aspect of our lives. Monday must be better for Nathanael to get this trach out for good! You are in our prayers and for God to fill you with His peace!

Kim Platt: Hang in there, my sweet friend! I understand your frustration, but there is a reason for this delay that only He can see. I know you know that too.

Thank you: January 7, 2010, 8:01 a.m.

Thank you so much for all the encouraging messages. I know God is watching over Nathanael, and we are trusting in Him. We got a call from the hospital today, and Nathanael's bronchoscopy is at 12:20 on Monday afternoon. We will get to the hospital by 10:20 a.m. If all goes well with the bronchoscopy, then they will try again to take the trach out. Thanks for your continued prayers.

MESSAGE

Linda Boswell: We just have to pray that God knew Nathanael's airway needed a few extra days to heal completely and that was the reason behind the schedule mishap. We will keep you all in our prayers on Monday.

Nathanael: I'm trach free: January 11, 2010, 3:26 p.m.

I was just about ready to take matters into my own hands and pull this thing out of my neck on my own. Now I am finally free. The whole family has been looking forward to this day. Last time they tried to take the trach out, I was at an unfair advantage. They kept giving me all kinds of drugs and last time I was so out of it. I was dreaming of all kinds of crazy things. This time, I was much more awake. And things have gone smoothly.

Keep praying for me, though. Sometimes I get agitated because they have all these tubes sticking out of my hands. When I get agitated, I have a hard time breathing. It freaks my mom and nurses out.

I'm trying to take a nap right now. It sounds like they will pull a lot of these tubes out in just a little while after I eat.

I've been looking forward to another sleep over with Dad all week. I'm sure he is looking forward to it as well. I have a contingency escape plan in place and have secretly stored my escape gear. If they even think about keeping me here for more than one or two nights, I'm out of here.

Pray for my parents. We are all so over this. From what I hear, my parents will go out on a date again, and we might even go on a brief vacation as a family. I look forward to hearing from all of you again soon.

MESSAGE

Christina Kenyon: Nathanael, woo-hoo! Way to go, kiddo! Enjoy the sleepover with your dad! (And for Mom and Dad, what a milestone for you all! We celebrate with you and pray for smooth sailing from here on out!)

Four hours and counting: January 11, 2010, 4:01 p.m.

Nathanael has had his trach out for about four hours now. Mostly, he is doing well. Two times, he has had an episode where his upper airway constricts, and he can't breathe well, and we have to give him a breathing treatment to help him breathe. The nurses aren't too concerned about it and say that he just must get used to having the trach out and that we need to keep him from crying or getting upset. Please pray for his upper airway, that it would not react and that it would relax and enable him to breathe well without strider. Right now, Nathanael is sleeping well after a much-needed nap. We really appreciate your continued prayers. We will be in the pediatric ICU at St. Joseph's Hospital overnight and hope that we can go home tomorrow. Thanks again for the continued prayers.

MESSAGES

Jodie Gregory: My kids were so excited to hear the news today! As you know, they've been praying for y'all every night, so it was a rejoicing prayer time we had tonight. However, we all still prayed for continued strength and a smooth transition. We love you guys and are praying for you!

Paul Loftin: Come on, Nathanael, you're man enough to beat this! Heck, you're more of a man than most men I know. Our prayers are with you to be made well and lead a normal Spirit-filled life. Our prayers are with your family too.

Nathanael, the battle is on: January 11, 2010, 11:08 p.m.

You wouldn't believe it. They tried to pull one over on me. They tried to stick one of those trach things back into my neck. I wouldn't have it. The doctor finally got the message and said that God and I decided it wasn't time. Dad was such a wimp. He didn't think I needed to get the trach put back in. So I'm having a hard time coughing stuff up now and then. Sure, it's a little scary, but freedom is worth it.

I'm working hard to make sure that mom and Dad don't get any sleep tonight . . . Zzzzz.

Dad here. Dawn and I stepped out for a second and found Nathanael asleep at the keyboard. Well, it has been an interesting day. For any of you late-nighters or friends across the pond who get this message soon, pray for Nathanael. He looks great for hours and then suddenly has trouble breathing, coughing up even the normal secretions. His stats get seriously low. It lasts for maybe a minute or two, then his stats are fine. No one knows exactly why, but the normal answer is sticking a trach back in and trying again later.

We don't want to try again later. We believe the time is now. The building is very dry, and that makes it tough to breathe anyway. There is a lot of fear in the atmosphere, which causes breathing difficulties. Pray that the peace that passes understanding will guard Nathanael, Mom, Dad and all the nurses and doctors. Pray that Nathanael gets free of all the anesthesia and is strong enough to fight this.

We place our faith in a mighty God who can heal completely. Lord, give us this total healing.

MESSAGES

Anne Cristie White: I am believing God for great things. His hand is on Nathanael in a powerful way. So I will trust and pray and believe for his total healing.

Dan Graves: Hey guys, we will be agreeing with you that God does want to heal completely and totally. We will pray protection over his body and his lungs. Thank you, Lord, that your angels have charge over him lest he dash his foot against a stone. Thank you, Lord, that your name is Jehovah Raphe. Thank you that by Your stripes we were healed in Jesus's name! Let us know if there is anything we can do for you.

Great night: January 12, 2010, 7:56 a.m.

The trooper slept great throughout the night. He is a very active sleeper when he isn't on tons of narcotics and sedatives. A few times, he would slam himself into the side of the crib, so we created bumpers all around.

It has been interesting coming back to this hospital. Yesterday, the anesthesiologist who was working with Nathanael saw him, recognized him from the day he coded, and got choked up. I'm choking up right now, just thinking about it. He said that they were going to "call his code" which means pronounce him dead. The anesthesiologist was amazed to see how well Nathanael was doing. Then other nurses throughout the day would see him, remember, and have the same reaction.

He is a charmer. Thanks for all the prayers.

Dad got some winks, but Mom didn't.

MESSAGE

Patty Batson: This is wonderful! Praise God! I am in awe of His works and power. He is touching many lives through the Mull family. Will be praying for continued healing in Nathanael's body and peace and rest for all of you. Praising God for all He's done, for all He is doing, and all He will do.

A good day: January 12, 2010, 4:34 p.m.

Nathanael has had a great day today! The doctors want him to stay overnight for one more night of observation. So hopefully, we'll be able to go home on Wednesday. He has not had one of those spasm episodes since 11:00 p.m. last night! Rachel, his sister, says he looks older without the trach. He's entertaining all the nurses, and God's answering our prayers. Have a blessed day, Dawn.

A trach-free life: January 13, 2010, 12:31 p.m.

We just got home from the hospital. Nathanael is doing great without his trach. It is such a great day! Thank you so much for all your faithful prayers! God has answered! Love you all and again, thank you so much!

Messages

Kimberly Pettit: I have continued to follow Nathaniel's progress through CarePages and am always so happy to see him doing so well. I am thankful that I miss him since that means he doesn't have to be in the hospital. I think of him so often and thoughts of him always puts a smile on my face. Enjoy every day with your miracle boy, and please blow him a kiss for me!

Lorraine Griffith: I am so thankful for your miracle! What a journey you have been on since June. I'm praying for a break for you, for refreshment and a huge collective sigh! Maybe even a dinner out.

A good report: Jan 21, 2010, 11:34 a.m.

Just wanted to let you know we saw the ear, nose and throat doctor yesterday, and she said that Nathanael's stoma (the hole where the trach was) has closed and all looks great. She was amazed how quickly his stoma closed and was so happy that he was doing well. In fact, we do not need to see her anymore unless we need her. The doctor encouraged us to stay away from large crowds and nurseries for the next few months just to keep him as infection-free as possible. Thank you for all your prayers and encouragement. Our next project is working toward getting this G-tube removed. We appreciate you all very much. Have a blessed day, Dawn.

MESSAGES

Joyce Recenello: Wow, Dawn! Praise be to God! What a blessing to hear such great news! This whole story is so amazing. Thank you so much for continuing to keep all of us up-to-date. Love to sweet Nathanael! xo

Laura Young: How wonderful to be able to hear his sweet voice again!

Christina Kenyon: That is wonderful news, and I am thanking God that He has healed Nathanael's airway and praying for healing for his digestive system! Rumor has it that Nathanael's selling his escape-plan gear (rope, night vision goggles, etc.) on eBay for a great price!

Doing great: February 10, 2010, 3:22 p.m.

Nathanael continues to do very well. They took his trach out a month ago, and he recovered fully from that and is doing fantastic. We saw his GI doctor this week because we would like to see the G-tube come out as well. We have a return visit on April 12, and if Nathanael has gained weight and has still not needed to use his G-tube, they will take the G-tube out then. Thanks so much for your faithfulness to our family and for all the prayers for Nathanael. We will update with new pictures soon. Have a blessed day, Dawn.

Back in the hospital: February 24, 2010, 10:18 a.m.

We're back at St. Joseph's hospital because Nathanael has pneumonia. He is doing well. He's on antibiotics and breathing treatments. The main reason we're in is because he needs oxygen at night. Once the pneumonia clears enough that he won't need oxygen, we'll be coming home, hopefully in just a few days. Thanks for praying for us, and we'll keep you updated.

Nathanael's escape is a success: February 27, 2010, 2:47 p.m.

I made my escape. No way was I going to let them do more stuff to me. I remember these guys, and this place is no place for a kid who loves life like I do. Of course, I quickly became so popular that no one wanted me to leave, but I wouldn't stand for it. My mom must be getting better at understanding my cries, signs, facial expressions, and other forms of communication. I saw a break in the action and fussed so that she got the message, and we made our move. We were down the hall and out the doors before anyone knew what we had done. We are home now. I haven't heard police cars yet.

I feel a ton better than the other day. I have double my normal energy, and Dad has half. I'll make sure to burn him out. Now it's time for soccer. See you later.

Nathanael is tubeless: April 12, 2010, 10:25 p.m.

Tubeless is the word we are using to describe Nathanael today. Today, we had a GI appointment, and we could have Nathanael's G-tube removed. They were thrilled with his progress and the fact that he was gaining weight and eating well. We pray that the holes from the G-tube will close quickly. Already, they seem to be closing really fast. Thank you again so much for all of your support, encouragement, and faithful prayers. We appreciate each one of you so much and we are so thankful to God for all the answers to prayer. Love you, Dawn

CHAPTER FIFTEEN



NATHANAEL'S STORY IMPACTS AFRICA

HIS STORY BEGINS TO IMPACT THE WORLD

The impact that Nathanael's story has had around the world already is profound. This book is the first time anyone has heard the entire story, but the bits and pieces that have been shared have radically affected many lives. The first time that his story was told was in Kenya. I had no actual plan to share about what we had just been through. It was still too new, too fresh.

Here we were, five ministry leaders packed into a well-used Land Rover riding through the dusty streets of Eldoret, Kenya. I was invited to come on the trip by Nolan Edwards, pastor of Champions Church in Winter Haven, Florida, and Paul Pickern, the founder of All Pro Pastors. One other dear pastor friend, the amazing Bishop Willie Bolden, rounded out our team. These seasoned men seemed to think that this former Baptist youth pastor could help them speak at a pastor's conference. The funniest part of them inviting me is that I had the reputation of being able to deal with the demonic stuff. In case you don't know, Baptists are seldom called upon to deal with that kind of stuff. Who knows, they may have been joking when they told me that's why they wanted me on the team. Either way, I was ready to preach, teach, or carry their bags if necessary. I love those men.

It was the day before our pastor's conference, and I somehow drew the morning slot. They save the heavy hitters for clean-up at these types of things. I knew the guys that I was sharing the stage with and knew they were anointed. God never lets me down, but to be honest, I felt a little more pressure than normal.

So I was asking the Lord what He wanted me to speak on the next day. All I heard Him say was, "Tell them I love them."

Okay, Lord, sure thing. Then what do you want me to speak about?

He again just repeated Himself. “Tell them I love them.”

Okay, Lord, are you messing with me? That’s what these guys teach the kids in children’s ministry.

Then He said to me, “You’re a good father.”

I said, “Thank you” and wondered what that had to do with anything. I was so lost in where this was leading.

He said it again, patiently letting it sink in. “You’re a good father.” Then He told me that these people had never seen a father’s love. He told me a father’s love was almost non-existent in their culture.

Then the Lord said, “I want you to speak to their hearts and not their heads.” Wow! As if I have a file for sermons to the heart and sermons to the head. I was feeling so nervous about what the next day would look like. I was still trusting Him, not me. And believing in Him, not me, I listened on.

He said, “Tell them about Nathanael’s story.” He gave me the details. “Tell them about the rash and how much you took care of him and prayed for him. Speak to them about how you sang over him when they took a piece of his skin, and he did not know why you weren’t rescuing him. Explain how you stayed up with him all night, headed to another hospital, and then tell them he died.

“Then tell them how you said, ‘No, death, you cannot have my son. I will fight you for his life.’ Tell them how you stood over him for forty minutes and would not leave his side. Tell them how you commanded your son to come back. His spirit had completely left him, but you refused to let him go. Tell them that in that hospital room that day, the heavenly Father heard your cry for your son, had compassion on you, and granted your request. Nathanael is alive. He rose from the dead.

“Let them know you had been fasting for eight days for him when all this happened and kept fasting for forty more days. Tell them the fight was not over. It was just beginning. Explain how for ten weeks, you ran the ministry during the day, but almost every night, you came back to be with your son at the hospital.

“Tell them how you prayed over your son every night in that hospital, wept over him, changed his bandages, cleaned him, and talked to him about me. Let them know about the songs. Sing the songs just like you sang them over Nathanael almost every night.”

So I did!

THE FATHER'S LOVE SONG

I told them the story in as vivid of detail as I could. I had tears in my eyes. The entire story was so fresh and raw. I got to the songs. My interpreter, Shii Tasha, was amazing. Every line was interpreted as I sang it so beautifully, as I cried, and she wept.

DON'T YOU KNOW THE FATHER LOVES YOU

BY HELEN BURGESS

Don't you know the Father loves you.
 Don't you know how much He cares
 Don't you know He's thinking of you.
 Don't you know He sees you there.
 He sees right into every part of you.
 He see right in the very heart of you.
 He loves you like no other could
 He loves you like no other would
 He sees the hurt, the pain that you've been through.
 He's here to comfort and to rescue you
 He loves you like no other could.
 He loves you like no other would

JASON UPTON

Daddy don't sleep, Daddy don't slumber,
 I don't wonder when it thunders cause
 I'm safe, in Daddy's arms.
 Daddy don't sleep. Daddy don't slumber
 I don't wonder when it thunders
 Cause I'm safe, safe in Daddy's arms.

Then I told them that with every part of my being, I would have taken Nathanael's place. I couldn't take the rash. I couldn't take the dialysis, not the biopsy, none of it. All I could do was to be there, love him, and pray and sing.

BUT GOD!

God took their place. He has taken their punishment on the cross. And took the stripes on His back for them. He took their sin, their shame, their pain with Him to the cross.

And, gave His only son because He loves them.

My love for my son is just a poor example of the Father's love for them.

"The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save;

He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet [you] with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17, emphasis added, NKJV).

Then the Lord said to sing it again, but this time sing it from me. Again, the interpreter was flawless as we both wept. The Father was releasing His love over the men and women in the room.

DON'T YOU KNOW THE FATHER LOVES YOU?

BY HELEN BURGESS

(Changed to the first person with permission)

Don't you know how much I love you?

I want you to know how much I care

I need you to realize I'm thinking of you.

Don't you know I see you right there?

I see right into every part of you.

I see right in the very heart of you.

I love you like no other could

I love you like no other would

I see all the hurt and all the pain that you've been through.

I see all the hurt and all the pain that you've been through.

I'm here to comfort and to rescue you

I love you more than anyone ever could.

I love you more than any would

You know I don't sleep, and I never slumber, watching over you

You don't have to wonder when it thunders cause

You're safe in Daddy's arms.

You know I don't sleep, And I never slumber, praying over you

You don't wonder when it thunders

Cause you're safe, safe in Daddy's arms.

You could hear a pin drop, but there were sniffles everywhere. One very distinguished woman who stood out in the crowd for her height and her beauty was laying prostrate over the next few hours.

I felt completely spent. I had tapped into my own deep emotional well for that word. Our interpreter sat down and could not look at me or answer me for the rest of the day.

She couldn't interpret for anyone the rest of the day. I was totally unsure of how it had affected anyone else.

That night when we went to dinner, I was heading toward the restroom. Our interpreter finally looked at me and said, "That was the first time I felt God's love." She burst into tears and did not come out of the lady's room for at least a half an hour.

The message profoundly affected her. She could not make it through the rest of the day interpreting but had spent the day trying to hold it together. Even to talk to or look at anyone brought her to tears. After ten hours, she finally felt composed enough to answer the question. Just telling me she had felt God's love for the first time had brought waves of emotions that she only allowed herself to pour out in a lady's room at a restaurant. Little did I know what was behind the need to fight back the emotions so fervently, but I would find out in a little less than a year what that was all about.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN



THE DREAM

THE DREAM AND THE LADY ON THE FLOOR

The night after I shared about the Father's love, I was asleep in our hotel when I had a dream. I remember nothing about the dream except that the Lord was telling me that the next day, someone was going to ask me to come back to Kenya and speak at a conference. I also knew God wanted me to tell them yes, I would speak at their conference. When I woke up, I pondered the words God spoke to me in the dream. I figured then that if someone asked, I, of course, should answer yes.

Normally, I would need to pray about an invitation and talk it over with my wife before saying yes to any conference. A conference in Kenya was 100 percent for sure going to require some prayer and discussion before I would say yes. Well, 100 percent unless the Lord gives me a dream and tells me His answer.

So we arrived at the church again, and as the pastors were all worshipping inside, the pastor of the church where we were at, Peter Simwa, wanted me to come outside with another pastor to meet a woman who wanted to thank me. She also wanted to share with me she had experienced healing from AIDS the day before.

Outside was a frail woman who had been running a rather large orphanage for years, but she could hardly function due to her poor health. She normally would not have had even enough strength to come to a pastor's conference, but God had told her to come because He had something special for her. She made it there in the morning and was so powerfully affected by the Father's love, the song, and the story. Pastor Simwa and the Bishop Andrew Mulongu, who had come out with him, both said several times that all the pastors were profoundly affected. Then Bishop Andrew asked permission for him and his wife to join us for lunch. I said it would be our honor for them to join us.

We went back in, and several of the pastors on the team gave powerful messages. Then we took a break for lunch and went to the home of Pastor Simwa. Bishop Andrew Mulongo and his beautiful wife, Katherine, were there. She was the woman who had been laying on the floor for hours the day before. I had felt bad for her because we were not talking about a carpeted arena. She had a beautiful dress on and was lying in dirt and weeping for hours.

Today, she displayed her beauty with grace and dignity along with a humility and timidity that I was not accustomed to and did not comprehend. First, her husband told me how profoundly the Father's love had affected them. Then he told me about the fifty churches that he oversaw all around the country. They had planted these churches in some of the most remote and neediest of places, as well as in major cities.

Then Bishop Mulongu told me about their strong national women's ministry, overseen by his wife. Then he allowed Katherine to speak. She told how profoundly the message had affected her, which moved me to tears. I wish I had recorded her words. She spoke eloquently, yet with such timidity and humility. She then asked as humbly as anyone has ever asked if I would come back in nine months to lead their national women's retreat and be the keynote speaker.

Me, a man, be the keynote speaker at a woman's retreat for a full week? Only God! He set me up for that one. I could not have dreamed that I would be invited back to speak at a woman's conference. But my answer was ready, and I knew I didn't have to ask my wife. Women from all over an African nation would come to hear me? I don't know if it was fear and trembling, awe of God, or the sheer wonder of what in the world had I gotten myself into now. I was so dumbfounded as well as honored. I, of course, accepted the invitation.

I love women. Now let me make it very clear. There is only one woman for me, and my wife is confident about that. She trusts me. When I say the only one, I mean only, ever. But I have done so much personal ministry for more than twenty-five years and sat with so many women and watched God heal them from the inside out. When I say I've heard it all, believe me, more than you would care to know. We have ministered to the abandoned and abused, neglected and confused. God has sent to us former high-dollar prostitutes, millionaire women, women who were trafficked, and those who did the trafficking. We've seen pastor's wives delivered and real-life witches leave that life for Jesus. I could go on. I see faces when you see words. I know their names. Their stories all break my heart, but their resilience is inspiring. When I say I love women, I mean it in a pure, Christlike way.

Some have spit on me and then wept in my arms. What breaks through all the bitterness toward men is patient love and the power of God. I did not know how long He had been preparing me to minister at a woman's conference. I did not know that I was about to minister to women from across an entire nation who had the cry beaten out of them. Yes, you heard me right.

I did not realize that when I first released the Father's love message and song is that the sniffing and weeping that took place in that room were monumental. Everyone in that room had grown up in a culture where you are not allowed to cry. Girls are beaten when they cry until they don't cry anymore. That is because, in their culture, no man wants to marry a woman who cries. The boys don't have it any better. At thirteen, the

boys go through a public ceremony. They'd better have learned not to cry. The boys are circumcised, and everyone present is watching to see if they cry. The real men, or so they say, are the ones who take it like a man and don't cry.

Let me just tell you, at this women's conference, I still did not know any of what I just told you. God did so many amazing things. It is worthy of a separate book. I would not be surprised if those ladies did not cry at nearly every session, and believe me, they pulled as much out of me and more than I had to offer that week. God was giving me amazing downloads from heaven for those ladies. Every session and every message felt like it was not from me or my wisdom or even vast experience. God loved those ladies, and I was just His mouthpiece.

One of the more poignant moment that is forever etched into my heart, mind, and spirit was when I spoke about a father's blessing. My plan was to give each of them a father's blessing. I could not do them all individually, but I could make it as personal as possible. I wanted to show what a father's blessing was. How to choose the person to demonstrate a father's blessing was impossible yet simple. The interpreter for many of the sessions was a single mother who had her daughter on stage with us. She had played around me, and we had become buddies. She had even crawled up in my lap when I wasn't speaking and fallen asleep a time or two. Her mother said that she would not trust any man but Pastor Simon.

I asked her and her mother if it would be okay if I demonstrated what a father's blessing looked like. Her mom seemed delighted and said yes. I asked her daughter to join me on the stage. I pulled her close to me as I got on my knees so we were face to face. I spoke the kind of blessing I believe a good father should speak over his daughter. She did not understand any English. I had hardly even begun when tears formed in her eyes. Her mother could only interpret a few lines before she could no longer interpret. Katherine, who spearheaded the conference, took over the interpreting. I told this little girl of her beauty. I told her of her boundless capacity and her incredible worth. Looking in her eyes, I spoke of the man she was worthy of and to settle for nothing less. I told her of the Father's sheer delight in her and the wonderful things that were destined for her. God always throws something very personal and prophetic in there. She was in my arms before I finished. When I was done, I held her on that stage as she cried in my arms. She wept and wept, and we hugged and hugged. It was a very tender moment.

When I turned to the crowd of women, many were in tears. I asked if any of them wanted a father's blessing. I am not sure if the interpreter told them all to stand up or if she gave them a choice. As soon as she spoke, they all stood, wiping tears from their eyes. I spoke over them all as if they were each one standing before me face-to-face. I spoke many of the same things now directed at their hearts, at their spirits. By this time at the conference, a lot of deep and profound healing had already taken place. Many of the walls in their hearts had already been torn down, which made the next step possible.

I felt led to offer these women a father's embrace. They had witnessed this when the little girl was wrapped in my arms. They knew I was safe. We were breaking so many cultural barriers that I was unaware of, but it was God. He can break cultural barriers and do it so well. Again, I don't know what my interpreter said, but it was as if she said, "Would all of you come forward right now and get a father's embrace?" They all stood in line for what seemed like forever.

These ladies had slept on floors, traveled dusty roads, and sat for days in hard plastic seats in non-air-conditioned buildings, listening to preaching. They were so much shorter than me. Most came up to my chest. Only a few in the room, who came from a different tribe, could almost look me in the eyes. I held each one, wept over them, prayed, and spoke blessings, which most probably did not understand, but each of them came for a father's embrace and blessing. They wept and spoke to me in their language, even though I did not understand.

None of us will ever forget that moment.

At the end of the conference, woman after woman came up to me to thank me. They had not cried in years: five, twenty-five, thirty-five, fifty-nine years, depending on their ages. This was all very shocking to me. I had to ask the pastors what all of that meant. That is when I learned about their tribe and how crying is not allowed. Oops, what had I done? They told me it was everything they could do to keep it in when I had preached on the Father's love the first time. Now, everything I did destroyed those walls, and they had been tapping into deep wells. I thought these women were more emotional than in other places. I honestly could not fathom what they were telling me.

Thank you, God, for giving me that dream and telling me to say yes. You are so good to give me a wife who trusts me and to prepare me for an event like this. Thank you for the Father's love and for rejoicing over me with singing. What a blessing Nathanael's story is that is going all over the world to impact many. May they encounter your love, your blessing, and your embrace through this book.

POSTSCRIPT: THE BATHTUB STORY

This story really happened, and the only witness are me and Nathanael, but I wish the cameras had been rolling.

One night, I was giving Nathanael a bath. It was not long after I went to Africa. I had wondered many nights if my singing over Nathanael had meant anything to him. Could he hear me? Was he too drugged for it to have any impact? I was singing to his spirit anyway. I hoped it ministered to him but had no way to know. Nathanael did not recover his speech and is still struggling to speak. That night, he answered my question loud and clear.

He was in the bathtub when I sang "Don't You Know the Father Loves You." Now when I tell you that this kid is never still and never quiet, you would hear a chorus of "amens," "that's rights," and "uh-huhs" from everyone around him who knows him. In this moment, he locked eyes with me and did not flinch or break eye contact through both our songs. Something deep inside him was connecting with the song. Then he signed "more" in the most emphatic way I had ever seen him beg for anything and spoke the word "more" with gusto. I sang again as he sat in the bath perfectly still, drinking in every word. He normally moves to music all the time, but not this time.

He begged with his fingers again and again and again, at least six or seven times. Our eyes stayed locked. I sang it over and over and over. I finally said, “It is enough,” and he got up and dried off.

It was one of those moments, the kind you never forget and hold on to. I knew in that moment all those nights were worth it. God has done so much in our lives through this little boy, through this tragedy. The lessons he has taught us have made our lives richer. The perseverance has strengthened us. There has been so much transformation that continues to impact many others. If we press into God, He doesn’t waste our tragedies.

We held a Father’s Love conference in Oldsmar, Florida. I shared much of what had happened in Africa and told the bathtub story there, which affected at least a few people. When I got to the part where I was releasing the Father’s love over the people by singing over them, several of the men in different parts of the room caught my eye and with tears, they were emphatically signing more. I almost lost it and struggled through the song. I need to hear the Father’s love again. Keep singing, Abba. Keep singing.

POSTSCRIPT: MORE AMAZING NATHANAEEL STORIES

Nathanael continues to amaze us. He is so full of life and a love for life and people. He was diagnosed with Downs Syndrome at birth. Yes, that makes him special, extra special. He gives more hugs than anyone I have ever known. Yesterday, when we went to a pool to swim there were twenty-five people there. My parents have a home in a fifty-five and older community. Normally there are a mixture of people that know us and those who do not. I think there were two people that we barely knew. Everyone else was strangers, but Nathanael never sees strangers. He just sees friends. Every one of those people got more than one hug while we were there. He lightens people’s spirits and ministers to them all the time.

Before Nathanael’s stint at the hospital, he was in the typical developmental range in all categories as a two-year-old. He was slightly delayed in his speech but spoke very many clear words. Since his time in the hospital, he has lost much of his ability to speak clearly. Believe me, he can communicate. The difficulty with speech has more to do with the trauma and the ten weeks in a hospital and additional time with a tracheotomy. We believe that he will one day speak clearly. We cannot wait for him to tell us about his forty minutes with Jesus and the things he has seen and experienced.

I waited for fourteen years to write this book because I wanted to see the miracle finished so that Nathanael could tell us more of his story. I had no idea that the message of his death and my nights in the hospital alone with him, singing over him, would become this book’s message. Maybe there will be a sequel one day to tell the story of him regaining his speech. Who knows?

In 2025, we also plan to release another book, *Can You See Me? Do You Hear Me?* An individual who has special needs and their families contributed to this book to share their hearts. As amazing as Nathanael is, only families with special-needs children go through certain experiences. The stories are hilarious and tragic. Some people and churches have

walked with families well, and others have been judged, mistreated, and misunderstood. This impactful book calls the church to rise up, to understand, and to respond.

Along with that, we are also excited to release a curriculum for churches written by Dawn Frederick, aka Coco. She is a BCBA, a behavioral specialist with extensive experience helping children with special needs. She also helped run children's programs at large and small churches. Too many children's workers don't know how to handle children with special needs. With this curriculum, we hope to equip churches to deal with this ever-increasing issue in effective and Christlike ways.

SEEING ANGELS

When Nathanael first got out of the hospital, he seemed to have an even greater sensitivity to the spiritual realm. At times, he appeared to see angels. I was helping lead worship at a church, and when I would begin to lead, Nathanael would turn his face toward the ceiling, and his face would light up. He would wave all around the room at the ceiling. He never did that except when I led songs. It was actually hard to lead because it was so beautiful. I wanted to look up, and when I did, I never could see what he was seeing or waving at.

One night, as I was praying over him in his bed before he slept, I prayed a prayer that sounded strange to me. The words rolled off my tongue, and I wondered why I had prayed such an unusual prayer. What I prayed was that Nathanael's angels would entertain him or similar words. I had just finished the prayer and was a little bewildered by what I had prayed when Nathanael lifted his face from the mattress and looked just past the front of his bed. As he did, he began to belly laugh hysterically. It was the kind of laugh that normally, only his brothers could elicit from him.

I looked up past the top of his bed and did not see what he was seeing or what was making him laugh. He looked up again, and his laughter erupted even more. It was such a special moment, and no one was there with us to witness it. Again, I knew that he was seeing something that I could not see. What were those angels doing that made him laugh so hard?

DIVINE ENCOUNTERS

Something else that has happened periodically with Nathanael that can only be explained as a special connection between Nathanael and God has to do with numerous divine encounters. Some are simple and minor but impact people profoundly. It could be a hug that lasts a little bit longer than usual or a wink. But some are way more profound and hard to believe.

One night we were at a larger church and a large crowd of people was hanging out in an auditorium. It is often hard for us to connect with people in those settings when Nathanael is around because we need to keep our eyes on him at all times. Tonight, he

was a young man on a mission. Little did we know that it was a mission from God. He saw a young girl across the room and headed toward her. It was hard to keep up. Then he grabbed her hand and began to pull her across the room to another girl whom we had been talking with. I was apologizing to her as he insisted and dragged her across the crowded room.

Without any words, he introduced the two young ladies and me. The awkwardness was quickly overtaken as one girl shared that she was going on a missions trip to Kenya, specifically a small city called Eldoret. The other girl's face lit up, and she shared that she had just gotten back from a mission trip to Kenya and had spent some time in Eldoret. I was stunned since I have been to Eldoret numerous times to hold crusades, pastor's conferences, and even a woman's conference with churches. Nathanael was very proud of himself and acted like of course he knew what he was doing. Wow!

In 2023, my wife and son were eating with Nathanael at his favorite chicken restaurant that happens to be closed on Sundays. Nathanael was pulling at his brother and mother to go and talk to some men across the room. Andrew asked if he wanted them to go talk to those men and Nathanael said, "Aye," which means yes. Andrew agreed that after they ate, he would go if they were still around. Nathanael was content with that but finished his food quickly and began to insist that they go across the room to meet these men. The men were in ministry and were missionaries to Africa. Nathanael insisted that his brother tell them about me and my many trips to Africa.

I knew when I heard the story that I needed to contact these two men. After a short game of phone tag, we connected and shared some stories. Then the lightbulb went on for the other man. He had been meeting with someone earlier in the week, a pastor who had written several books, who had agreed to go with him to Africa. The morning of the day we met over the phone, he had picked up those books, and the pastor had mentioned several of my books and the Bible I helped develop. He had written about how impactful my books were in his life. So the same day he reads about my books and wanted to connect with me, Nathanael happened to walk across the room to connect with him. So many amazing coincidences, right?



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- *Is there a need to clarify the vision, and make it clear for your people to be able to run toward the vision?*
- *Are you and your people ready to learn how to do the things that Jesus did and taught his disciples to do?*

Richard can come and speak or lead an entire conference. He can also inspire and impact your business or your entire congregation.



Richard Mull

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BETHABACH FINE ARTS AND MULTIMEDIA

Betha Bach is a talented visual artist with expertise in diverse art forms and crafts, including multimedia projects. Her recent artwork and multimedia projects can be seen on the book covers of "Restoring Joy" and "The Father Sings Over Me" in the Operation Light Force Library.

EXPLORE BETHA BACH'S ART MARKET TO BUY PRINTS AND VARIOUS PRODUCTS FEATURING HER ARTWORK.



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THE FATHER SINGS OVER ME

The Father Sings Over Me is the gripping story about how Nathanael, died in his father's arms, spent 40 minutes with Jesus, and rose from the dead. It is the story of the faith filled prayers of his parents, Richard and Dawn, along with the challenging and inspiring journey of his recovered from the devastation caused by medicine. The prayers, encouragement, and care from friends all around the world helped sustain this family.

Day and Night they prayed and sang over their son, not knowing that the ordeal would turn into a message about The Father's love that would impact people around the world. Nathanael is so full of life and love now. God did a miracle in the life of a boy with Down's syndrome, and God wants to do a miracle in your life too! Now this amazing story can transform your life as well.

RICHARD & DAWN MULL



Richard and Dawn started Operation Light Force over 25 years ago out of their home which has grown to impact the world. Richard is the president of the ministry, hosts the Mullitover Podcast, and has written numerous books and compiled the God Speaks Bible. Dawn is powerhouse who supports the work and cares for the family. Dawn has also authored a book called, Living a Life of Love. They are proud parents and grandparents of some amazing grandchildren and 4 incredible children.