

Grace is a Gift from God

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It was a hot, blustery day in August. We had just received news that a sibling group of five would be joining our family in the near future. The summer months were overflowing with activities involving our four recently-adopted school-aged children, the construction of a new home for our growing family, and my two week absence from the milieu to attend a doctoral seminar hundreds of miles from home. The happy chaos we were enjoying was interrupted on that day by a phone call from our adoptive caseworker. With a slight hesitance in her voice, she stated, "And baby makes six." It took a moment for the meaning of her greeting to register.

After an awkward silence, she explained that the birth mother of the five who would soon be joining us had given birth to a girl just three days prior. In explaining that the infant was born two months premature and in critical condition, the caseworker felt compelled to ask if we were interested in adding her to the sibling group. The answer was automatic for us. From that moment forward, she was a part of our family, regardless of her present condition or her uncertain prognosis. It would take us less than 24 hours to make the necessary arrangements to take birth and adoptive siblings to the nearby hospital to meet their new baby sister.

I noticed during frequent visits to her bedside that a computer monitor hung over her bassinet. The screensaver scrolled a series of nondescript greetings. In my certainty that her addition to our family was an unquestionable blessing from God, I inquired if the screensaver text could be customized. On my next visit, I first saw the words that would greet everyone who entered her little niche of the Neonatal Intensive Care Nursery for the duration of her hospitalization. The bright pink letters that repeatedly scrolled across the dark blue background on the monitor read, "Grace is a gift from God." In her frailty, my daughter Grace was now offering a silent but powerful witness of a loving God to a significant audience of doctors, nurses, and technicians as well as the families of other newborns who received 24/7 care in that specialized setting.

The witness she unknowingly shared in silence is reminiscent of the far more vocal hosannas of the children described in Matt. 21:15. When the disciples questioned Jesus' awareness of the children's chorus, He answered, "Yes, have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?" (Matt.21:16). When I observe my now eleven-year-old daughter sing God's praises in church, I see a sincerity of joy in her expression that is typically missing from the adults sitting near her. She knows her story and she sincerely loves God who saved her and gave her a family.

Her story and example give cause for us to ask questions. When is the last time you reached beyond your comfort zone to minister to a child in crisis? Do you recognize the children in your midst, both in your home and at church, as gifts from God? What is your reaction when the voices of little children are heard above all others in singing praises to Him? When is the last time you exhibited such exuberance in offering praise to your Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer?