

MAGNOLIA MINDS: A Baby That Changed Our Lives Forever



By John Boler, pastor

First Church, Grenada

On December 8, our family celebrated the 15th birthday of Lilly Elizabeth Boler. For my wife Elizabeth and me, Lilly was our second child. This birthday celebration was the same as the past fourteen birthdays, as she celebrated her birthday around the throne room of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lilly's brief life on this earth truly changed our lives forever.

Lilly Elizabeth Boler was born on December 8, 2005, at the MED in Memphis. She was not expected to live much past birth, but the Lord had different plans. Shortly after birth, Lilly was quickly transferred two blocks north to Le Bonheur Children's

Medical Center.

Lilly was born with the condition of an omphalocele, which meant that the skin layers covering her stomach had not developed to the thickness that they should have. She also had several other issues. Her “gifts” (that others would consider as birth defects) were very challenging to her life.

Yet these gifts were given to her by her Creator. He knew Lilly would be a very special little girl. Lilly’s journey in life would last 120 days, as she met our Savior on April 7, 2006.

Many families have faced the difficulty of losing a child early in life. We are grateful this Christmas season as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus was born to die for our sins and offer eternal life. It is that hope to which we cling in our most challenging times of life.

Because of His grace and strength, Elizabeth and I learned many lessons that we hope can be an encouragement to you:

- **The hope of eternity with Jesus is much more real.** Elizabeth and I were both saved at young ages. We both grew up in church and we know the reality of Heaven but when you lose someone so special to you, eternity becomes much more real. We know there will be a reunion one day, and the anticipation of that reunion is on our minds every day of our life.
- **Life is precious.** Even though Lilly had many challenges in her short life, she was a perfect creation from our Lord. Psalm 139:14 says, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my souls knows very well.” Our Lord doesn’t make mistakes. All children are precious in His sight.
- **God’s grace is sufficient.** Sometimes the Lord will bring you through a journey where all you have on which to

lean is His grace, but we are living proof that His grace is enough! When we were at our weakest, His grace was our strength.

- His grace was sufficient when we didn't know what to do. His grace was sufficient when we didn't understand all that was happening to us. His grace was sufficient when Lilly breathed her last breath. His grace was sufficient as we celebrated her life. His Grace is still sufficient today!!
- **His peace does surpass all understanding.** On the back of Lilly's tombstone, we put the words, "And the peace of God will surpass all understanding" Phil. 4:7. We don't have the answers to all our questions. We don't know why the Lord chose to give Lilly special gifts. We don't know why the Lord chose to take Lilly home to Heaven at such a young age. We are so grateful that His peace is greater than our questions.
- **The Gospel of Jesus Christ is worth sharing.** Through our journey in the hospital, we had countless opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While so many were ministering to us, we were blessed to use Lilly's story to minister to others. Fifteen years later, her story is still ministering to hearts today and bringing glory to our Savior.
- You may be going through a difficult time right now. Maybe you are grieving the loss of a loved one. Maybe you are trying to navigate through a difficult time in your life. 2020 has had its fair share of challenges. Jesus is your stability in an unstable world. He is your peace when you don't understand. He is your hope for eternity. His grace is sufficient for every need you have. He loves you tremendously. This Christmas season, we celebrate a Baby that came to change our life forever. "And they shall call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" Matthew 1:21.

The author may be contacted at john@fbcgrenada.com.

