

## **Not Another Divorce Statistic**

**I did not want to be another divorce statistic, but the numbers were not in our favor.**

My husband Rudy is a bus driver and I work in dentistry - both careers that rank high in divorce statistics. We have a severely handicapped son. We struggled financially. My husband has been fighting depression for most of his life. My life and my marriage were in overdrive and I wanted out.

**It all started with the birth of our first son, David.**

We had planned to have a baby when Rudy finished university. Like most parents to be we prayed and prayed for a healthy child. Our healthy baby arrived. Two and a half months later our beautiful baby boy suffered a high fever from his first vaccination and just kept screaming. No one could help us. We were on our own as our child screamed day and night.

**We kept going to doctors, but there was no medical label to put on him.** Tests were ordered, then more tests, but we didn't get any answers. The best they could come up with was, "oh, he'll be fine." It made me want to scream. Something was obviously very wrong, why wasn't anyone helping my son? I felt so guilty. I felt like I had done something wrong and it was my fault he wasn't developing the way he should. Mother's Day was harder to face every year.

**Our lives reduced to just taking care of David.**

I stopped going to college. Our health suffered and the depression Rudy had fought before came back stronger than ever. He was suicidal. I was scared and tired and bitter. Neither of us wanted any more children. Secretly I wondered what it would be like to have a child 'just like the other kids' and I felt guilty about that too.

Four years later, in spite of birth control, I got pregnant. It was a stressful pregnancy. Rudy was angry and I could feel the unrest of my unborn child. We had a son and named him Richard. I honestly don't remember much about the first years of his life -- good thing I took pictures. My life was just survival. There was no energy for anything more. With all the responsibilities and sleepless nights of having a newborn in the house, we still had David to take care of. And David cried a lot.

**There was no escape from the crying.**

We would take turns walking and rocking him, feeding him, whatever it took to get our child to rest and relieve his pain. We put in countless all-nighters trying to help this child. I started walking a lot. It was my one chance at peace and quiet and sanity and I started to feel better.

Then along came baby number three. Richard was only 2 ½ years old and our lives were in overdrive. We expected another boy, but this time it was a girl. All of the stresses of a newborn came back and now there were three children to take care of. Ours was not a calm house. Rudy was still struggling with depression and anger. I wanted to just walk away but I wasn't ready to give up on my marriage completely. When I got married I

promised forever and that still meant something. I still wanted this marriage to work, so I prayed and prayed and waited.

**I started to see where God had answered my prayers.**

David is alive, not dead. He cannot speak, he cannot move his arms or his legs but he is part of this family. He will let you know that you are loved and accepted. You can feel good just sitting beside him. It still amazes me to see my kids together. SharaLynn loves to take care of David. Richard told David one day that there would be no bibs or wheelchairs in heaven. This past Spring Rudy made some major changes in his life and our life as a family is changing for the better.

**God did answer my prayers.** I decided to stay with my family and so I am here to see the changes. I have learned to never stop praying. Even when it hurts. Just as I wanted to do anything I could to help David when he cried, so God is there to help us when we cry. Circumstances were against Rudy and I staying together, but God was for us. It wasn't easy and it still isn't easy, but God continues to carry us through. I am not another divorce statistic. I am a happily married woman and the mother of three. I have learned the value of prayer and with God in my life I have hope for the future.

Credit – Jocelyn Ratzlaff