

January 11, 2009

Testimony of Pam Corbitt

On The One Year Anniversary of Wesley's Aneurism

"Some couples have a special song...one that sums up the way they feel about each other or reminds them of a special event they shared together. Wesley and I have a special number, which is not that unusual for accountants, I guess. It's 111, or any combination of ones. For instance, when we look at the clock and see that it's 11:11, we automatically think of each other. This has been our special number for several years now, but this year it holds special significance. You see, last year 1/11 was the longest day of my life.

We had taken our family on a ski vacation to Park City Utah. We had planned this for over a year, and honestly getting ready for it was a pickle for me. As a high school family and consumer sciences teacher, just before Christmas I had grades due for 80 students, shopping and all the Christmas stuff to get ready, and lesson plans to prepare for a whole week while we were on vacation. I was not a happy camper. I grumbled under my breath all 20 hours while I prepared those lessons for a substitute teacher to give 80 new kids I had never met before. If we could have only scheduled this vacation a week earlier I could have saved so much time and energy. But God had a plan...

All 3 kids, one wife and one girlfriend had the time of our lives snow skiing the best powder we've ever witnessed; over 18 inches per day. We were in ski heaven. Thursday night Ben, our oldest took his girlfriend, Megg for a starlit sleigh ride and proposed to her. We all waited impatiently for them to get home to see the ring, and she did say yes, so we were thrilled. We had skied our hearts out all week and planned to take a break on Friday and go snowmobiling around a lake area south of Park City. After we geared up, we were each assigned a snowmobile and given instructions on how to get one unstuck. We had been snowmobiling several times and thought this was ridiculous since we had never been stuck before, but we listened politely, although impatiently. With clear skies

and a sense of adventure, we were off. Probably a half mile away we took off down a big hill off the main road and Nathan and Melissa got royally stuck. That was just the beginning. Amy, Megg and I waited about ½ hour at the top of the hill while the guys wrestled in 4 feet of fresh snow with those two snowmobiles. It was rather boring and cold, so at one point Amy jumped off her machine and said, Hey Mom, I know what we can do! Make snow angels! She fell back in the snow and we immediately lost her. She went down 4 feet. I remember thinking, “Amy, you could have broken your back. There could have been a boulder there!” Finally we were unstuck and off again on our 2 hour trek around the lake, which we really couldn’t see because of all the snow. You had to guess that the lake was where there were no trees. Since there was 4 feet of snow, we got lost more times that we could count because, although we had a map, the signs were buried in snow. Fortunately, Wesley’s cell phone worked (one of many miracles that day) and the company came to get us unlost and unstuck at least twice. We never made it around the lake and our 2 hour adventure turned into 4 hours. Clouds rolled in and snow began to fall. At one point Nathan had exerted himself so much digging out snowmobiles, he threw up blood. We were frightened and exhausted and lost again. We promised God if we could ever get back to civilization, we’d never go without a guide and some good goggles, because it was a whiteout. We couldn’t see the person in front of us, let alone the road. It was the snowmobile trip from hell.

We felt like kissing the ground when we finally made it back to the lodge and ate lunch around 4:00. Wesley complained of a stomach ache but decided he had swallowed too much air or had become congested and just needed to cough up some of the snow he had swallowed. He drove us back to our condo about an hour away and headed for the hot tub while Megg and I fixed supper. At the tub, he still felt weird, so he sat in the sauna for a few minutes. Fortunately, Nathan saw him when he went to turn on the jets again and realized he had fainted and called 911. The EMT’s examined him and suggested he get checked out at the hospital in Salt Lake City since we were scheduled to fly out the next morning and his blood pressure went down every time he sat up. I called Wesley’s parents while they started an IV on the way down the mountain. The first person we met

in the ER was Dr. Susan, who had blond, brown, and purple hair. Several tests were ordered, including a chest x-ray and MRI but nothing was conclusive. Still in his wet bathing suit, laying on the gurney, he cried because he felt like he had ruined a great vacation for everyone. The doctors kept asking him to rate his pain from 1-10. Most of the time it was a 4-5, but at one point when he rolled over, he asked me to get a doctor, the pain was "a 10, no an 11, no it's off the charts! Hurry!" His blood pressure began dropping fast so a sonogram was done, but since his heart rate was normal, they kept saying, "It's a mystery. We don't know what's wrong!" Before they wheeled him to the trauma room, his blood pressure was 40/20 and going down fast. I knew if they didn't figure out what was wrong fast, he was a goner! I was escorted to the waiting room where I called the kids to come down to the hospital and the grandparents to tell them to pray. Since Wesley's parents had lost their daughter, Susan on vacation and Jeff, Wesley's brother had had a ruptured appendix while they were in Europe years before, I really dreaded making that phone call. I feared almost as much for their safety as for Wesley's, but I knew I needed prayer support and they would want to know.

The kids made it to the hospital and we rested and prayed not knowing what the outcome would be. The verse that helped me through that was Psalm 20: 7 Some trust in chariots and others in horses, but we will trust in the name of the Lord our God" I knew that no matter how good those doctors were, they were just human. I knew they had technology, but it wasn't foolproof. They were working against time and God was the only one who really could help. When the surgeons finally came out, they said the artery going to his spleen had ruptured and he almost bled to death. They removed his spleen and the doctor apologized because in holding one hand on his artery to stop the blood, she had his pancreas in her other hand and accidentally squeezed too tight and pinched part of it off. They expected him to require 3-5 weeks of hospitalization before coming home, so Ben decided to stay with me and the other kids made plans to return on our original flight.

The first time I saw Wesley after his surgery, he had a respirator down his throat and was bloated like a sumo wrestler. His wound was about 12 inches long and 7 inches wide since they didn't stitch him up yet so they could recheck his innards in

a couple of days. It had been the longest night of my life. God reminded me several times just to trust him and gave me that image of Amy plopping back in the snow making snow angels. I needed to plop back into his arms that same way and let Him handle things. It was either plop back or fall apart, so I chose to plop back!

They took him back to surgery the next afternoon and did in fact stitch him up because everything looked good. He was in ICU for 5 days, which allowed Ben and I to get some much needed rest at night. He improved with lightening speed until they started giving him solid food, which increased the secretions from his pancreas and set him back severely. They finally inserted a feeding tube to bypass the pancreas, which was an ordeal in itself since it didn't want to land in the right spot in his stomach. I prepared to be his nurse when we got home, practicing giving him shots in his stomach and working with the feeding tube. All the while, you guys were praying for us each step of the way, and miraculously, he was able to get the feeding tube removed and all his drains removed before we flew home. It was difficult being so far away from home, but having Ben and then Jeff, Wesley's brother there made it so much easier for both of us. Melissa's brother's family from Las Vegas even drove 6 hours to see us and Randy McEwen flew out to make sure we were being treated right.

Thinking back on this I've learned that even though we can't always see how God is working for our good, we can trust that He is. All that complaining I did about lesson plans for a week...if this had happened in Effingham County we would have never made it to the hospital in time. If he had not been in the emergency room of a big hospital with a well equipped trauma unit, they wouldn't even have had enough blood, since they had to completely refill his blood supply. The aneurism could have easily happened in the wilderness when we were snowmobiling a few hours earlier or on the air plane the next morning. In either case, he was a dead man. But no, God's plan is perfect and He knows what he is doing. His ways are higher than ours and his thoughts are higher than ours. Trust Him that he's working all things for your good.

I've also learned that life is short. You may not have tomorrow with the ones you love. Make the best of each day. Ask God to orchestrate your day so you won't get bogged down with mundane things that really don't make any difference in the grand scheme of things. I retired from teaching in May so I could be more available to my family and to God. I don't want to spend every hour feeling guilty because I should be doing something toward my classes at school.

God is still in the business of miracles. When you're going through tough times, take time to look for ways He is working around you. Oddly enough, Wesley's trip to the hot tub, while there are warnings that it may be hazardous for your health, probably dropped his blood pressure enough to make him faint, which triggered that call to the EMS unit and got us to the hospital in time. God is faithful and good. Trust Him because when all else fails, He is big enough to help."