

blown away by that comment but proceeded with “I am so glad that you feel you are ready, but sweetie where is this coming from?” (We had always wanted this to be a decision that she made on her own and not one that she felt persuaded into, besides we had missed the past two Sundays of church because we were out of town.) She then in her sweet little voice said back to me, “I just want to know that if I died today, that I would be in heaven with Jesus.” She then asked me what she had to do to become saved. I told her that first she had to realize that she was a sinner, and that no one is perfect- that we all make mistakes. And then I told her that she had to believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins so that we could all go to heaven, and then I told her you have to ask Jesus to come into your heart. But just as quickly as I told her this, I told her that later on that night-her daddy and I could talk more to her about this and we would pray together. When I got home, I told my husband that no matter what it cost, we were going to have tests run on her heart. I said, “because that little girl thinks that she is dying”, and besides, what five year old complains constantly of chest pain.

I talked later with her doctors, Dr. Ward and Dr. Regina Phillips about what they thought could be going on with her and asked what I needed to do. The very next day Dr. Regina’s office called and said that they had a cancellation on Thursday and wanted to know if I could bring Ashtyn into the clinic that day. So, on Thursday October 28th I took Ashtyn in to see Dr. Regina. Dr. Regina immediately noticed how pale she was. After thoroughly examining Ashtyn, Dr. Regina agreed that Ashtyn should go ahead and have some tests done. The theory was that maybe she had a viral infection that had caused inflammation of the heart lining—a condition called myocarditis. Since Ashtyn had just recently had her tonsillectomy it was probable that an infection could have entered into her blood stream

then. The tests were set up to take place on November 10th at Children’s



Hospital. We had blood work done, lateral chest x-rays, an echocardiogram and an EKG. After the completion of the tests almost immediately I was asked to go back into the echo room because the doctor wanted to talk with me. I thought it was going to be her heart. The tech picked the phone up on the wall and told me that Dr. Phillips was on the phone for me. It was at that moment that I knew something was wrong. At first she wasn’t going to tell me over the phone. She wanted to come to the hospital to tell me in person, but I insisted that she tell me. The words that Dr. Regina said to me will forever be etched into my memory! “We think Ashtyn has leukemia.” Ashtyn was going to be admitted immediately because her blood counts were really low and she was going to have to have a red blood cell transfusion. My husband was out of town! Why Ashtyn? She was a month shy of her sixth birthday, why my child-she’s too young! So many questions raced through my mind, because I just didn’t know what all this meant! All I

knew was that my daughter had cancer! I was all alone-- getting the worst news of my life! How could this God who had merely saved my life and saved the life of my new baby, just four months earlier now allow my other daughter to get cancer?! I did not understand. I still do not understand. But what He taught me through the past three and a half years is what has changed my life forever! God did not forsake me, nor did He leave me alone-- He sent at least 40 people to the hospital that very night to comfort me. I am still so amazed at the outpouring of love and support we received! Eric was finally reached by phone and had to fly from Orlando into Nashville and then drive to Knoxville to be with us. He said that the drive from Nashville to Knoxville gave him the opportunity to pray and ask God for peace and understanding. We were told that Ashtyn would undergo her first bone marrow aspiration the very next morning. This test would tell us exactly what type of leukemia she had. From the moment Ashtyn was diagnosed-prayer chains began. Prayers all across Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Nevada, Arizona, Texas, and even Africa! Oh how we felt the prayers! Late Thursday evening we got the first results. The cancer she

had is called acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). Thank God that is the more common one, and most treatable one. This was such a Praise! We found out that in just five short weeks the leukemia had taken over 89% of her white blood cells. On that Friday, she had a porta cath placed inside her chest wall, and underwent her first round of chemotherapy via her port and through a spinal tap-- spinal fluid was also removed for study. Our oncologist is Dr. Victoria Castaneda. She told us that if they found five leukemia cells in her spinal fluid then her chance of survival would only be 30%. Again, the prayers continued. The results came back and only ONE leukemia cell was found in her spinal fluid. Hallelujah! We also found out that Ashtyn had a chromosome change in her DNA caused by the leukemia. The long arm of one of her chromosomes translocated with the short arm of another one of her chromosomes. This was not hereditary, but environmental. It was the leukemia that altered her DNA. The doctor told Eric and me that we were very lucky to have caught this as early as we did because had four more weeks gone by the cancer would have been in her brain. Thank you God!! This too was a Praise! I prayed to thank God for giving Ashtyn the type of leukemia that she had. I prayed to God to thank Him for letting me know my child well enough to know that something was wrong. I thanked God for saving Ashtyn just ten days prior to her diagnoses. (She walked down the aisle of our church on October 31st and declared her salvation and love for Jesus and just ten days later, she was diagnosed with cancer!). We have so much to be thankful for! God has given us reassurance time and time

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