

ALL LIVES MATTER

DEANA'S STORY

I was 28 and we had waited til things were as planned until we started our family. The room was ready, the baby showers were accomplished and her due date was January 12, 1996. She was born on January 12, 1996. As a matter of fact, everything with this pregnancy was according to the "book"...morning sickness came and went as indicated, butterfly flutters of movement were felt the very week my book said was possible. Everything as scheduled, including the day she was born. Aaahhhh! That's how I operate. I love knowing what is going to happen next...how and when. We were grateful to God, and after waiting 8 years to start our family, were so ready to pursue this season of life...family life!

At age 30, we began feeling the urgency to try for a 2nd child. Having worked in the OB/GYN field for several years, I knew we shouldn't wait too long, as the risk for a complicated pregnancy grew the older I got. It had only taken 3 months to get pregnant with our daughter. We assumed about the same. We were wrong. After 2+ years, I finally conceived. Elated!! Not sure why God had chosen to make us wait, but grateful nonetheless. After conception, this 2nd pregnancy seemed to be going nicely, just like our first. The morning sickness began. It seemed more intense and pretty much lasted all day, but I was grateful for the confirmation that a baby was being formed in my womb. Our daughter, Kellie, would have a sibling, and we would have the joy of loving another.

I always looked forward to my OB appts, especially now!! I'd get to hear the baby's heartbeat. They NEVER kept the Doppler on my abdomen long enough in my opinion. I could have always listened longer. When I was 4 months pregnant, I noticed I was fitting into an oversized maternity dress, better than with my daughter, at 9 months pregnant. My next appt was soon approaching so I tried not to worry. Hard not to, given my personality and having some medical knowledge. Could it be twins that they have overlooked? Could there be something wrong? (The "What if..." questions can really take root if one is not careful.) When I arrived at my next OB appt, I shared my concern. He measured my abdomen. He was very calm and I don't remember him saying too much. I do remember that my next appointment would be scheduled at a High Risk facility with a specialty Obstetrician.

It was official. This pregnancy was not going to mirror what my "book" said this time. I was considered a "high risk" pregnancy patient. Emotions ran high for all our family. Numerous labs, sonograms, genetic testing. All while being so nauseous, trying to keep up with our energetic 4 year old, and planning around my husband's job requirements of being out of country each month. With no family in town, God used our church friends and neighbors to encourage and support when needed. The labs and sonograms all pointed to something wrong with this little life, but the doctors didn't know exactly what. We'd all have to wait until his birth for further testing. Though given the choice, we knew abortion was not an option for us. I had not formulated a sophisticated definition for the Sanctity of Life, but I did know that God was the Creator of All, and I had no authority to end the life of a "non-perfect" human being.

[From an early age, we are taught to sort, to categorize, and to "choose the best, and leave the rest". All is fine and good if you are buying produce from the grocery store, but I believe we, as humans, have allowed this pattern to cross over to fellow humans...an area God never intended. I'm not speaking solely of abortion. I'm speaking of all who walk and breathe around us. We sort them, throw them in a category rated by our "scale of worth". It starts in our minds, then permeates into our actions. Before we know it, we've made a fellow human feel their life is of less value than God does...all because we were inconvenienced by them or we've mentally decided that their worth is less than mine. Is it their personality, the clothes they wear, their physical features?

*We are ALL God's individual creations. As the Creator, He is the only One who has authority to judge the value and preciousness of a fellow human.]

On October 11, 2000, our son, Jack, was born. Arriving 8 days early by C-Section, my husband shared later he wasn't sure if Jack would live through that first night. The pregnancy had been hard and unpredictable. The joy of preparing his sweet room to come home to, was clouded by the unknown concerns. The one thing I HAD learned and settled in my heart, was that Jack was God's. God had the right and authority to gift us with a baby or not. This realization also carried over to my daughter. She was His too. Not ours. His! That realization brought a settling to my soul... "it's out of my control and in God's hands. He will handle, I'm to trust".

After 13 days in the NICU, and with all that brings, we were released to bring our fragile, yet stable; special needs boy, home. The very next week he was diagnosed with Beckwith-Wiedemann Syndrome. This particular syndrome has specific physical features coupled with the possibility of varying complications. Had we known the complications which lay ahead, life would have swallowed us whole. But in God's mercy, He chose to walk us through each one, step by step, not knowing there was another hurdle to come. Looking back, I see that hurdle brought learning of new medical skills and terminology which helped along the way.

Soon after coming home, things had settled a bit. My husband, back to work and daughter back to school. I decided it was time to take Jack out for his first true outing with mom...the mall! Aahhhhh... something familiar and fun for me. Something other than a doctor's appt. My joyful day was quickly brought to a halt as I entered the elevator with Sweet Jack in his stroller. An older lady had followed in behind me. Her face was bright and sweet as she "ooo'd and aaah'd" and peered into the stroller. As quickly as that happened, her facial expression and voice tone changed upon seeing his protruding tongue. I remember her words and inflection to be... "WHAT'S WRONG with him?!" Somehow, God poised me enough to tell her the syndrome he had. I don't even remember if she said anymore. I don't know if she regretted her reaction, or if she even realized how bad her reaction came across to me. But it was then that God began a work in my mind and heart. Not only was I committed to be Jack's advocate, but I began to grow in knowledge about the Sanctity of Life.

I believe God meant those unfiltered words to be a seed planted. My tears of hurt turned to anger, but then to growth.

The question the lady asked, kept running through my head... "What's wrong with him?", "What's wrong with him?", "What's wrong with him?". I knew I'd be asked that question many more times during Jack's life. How was I to answer? People are curious. Children are curious. How do I not make them feel humiliated for asking a curious question? Yet, how do I value my son as I give an answer? I pondered and pondered. I FINALLY realized something. I didn't need to come up with an answer for THAT question. The question was ill-stated! If God really created all, how could He create something that was wrong? (Something gone wrong means that it didn't go as planned.) God is perfect and only creates things as He HAS planned. Therefore, Jack is perfect! He is exactly as God has intended! THAT'S my answer to this ill-stated question. There's nothing WRONG with Jack. He is perfect because he is exactly as God intended. And God makes no mistakes.

Jack does have different strengths and challenges, different features and different goals. But don't we all?! THIS is how I'm able to value Jack, and not humiliate a person for asking an ill-stated question. And this is how I honor God, the Creator of ALL mankind.

The Sanctity of Life is from our Creator. He makes no mistakes. Though sinners, He deems us ALL precious and valuable in His eyes. We are all in this same category, placed there by Him.

