

12/02/04

Dear Misty Bernall,

I read your book "She Said Yes". You have inspired me greatly through your writing. I yearn to be a stronger Christian and an altogether better person because you chose to share your story. Mrs. Bernall, the tale of you and Cassie and all your family is powerful. It is so great that you were able to work through the many hardships you've faced as a family yet you still manage to be closer to each other than many families ever will be. I am really glad you have some good memories to remember your daughter by. She sounds like an amazing person. I think I would have loved the chance to meet her. "She Said Yes" gives such a phenomenal portrayal of your endeavors that I feel like I was there.

I loved the quote in the beginning of chapter one by George MacDonald. It says, *"Sometimes a thunderbolt will shoot from a clear sky; and sometimes into the midst of a peaceful family- without warning of a gathered storm above or the slightest tremble of earthquake beneath will fall a terrible fact, and from that moment everything is changed. The air is thick with cloud, and cannot weep itself clear. There may come a gorgeous sunset though."* I think it is very fitting to some cases, especially Cassie's. I think of it as a story, a heartbreaking and hopeful verse. Unfortunately this tale is all too familiar to many, many damaged souls. I don't know, maybe it ties in a way with my story too.

When I was in fourth grade, (2001) me and my family accepted the role as the foster family to two precious girls, Haley Christine and Jordon Mae. We love them to death and they truly were, and still are, a major part of our family. Haley was three and Jordon was 15 months at the time. The girl's half siblings Dillian and Athena had been in the foster care system before, but this was Haley and Jordon's first stop on the long road that lay ahead. Their parents, who were active drug users, had abused them. They lived with us from January 11th, 2001 until about the end of April that year.

Then, suddenly we had a week to pack everything and say good-bye. The system removed the girls and placed them with their mother. This lasted 100 days in counting. They were again moved when the police found their mom cooking meth in the kitchen of her apartment and the sink caught on fire.

Unfortunately, instead of returning them to us, they went to live with their Nana. Her house is really disgusting, and everyone (which is a lot) there are criminals, thieves, drug dealers and users, and strong smokers. The smoking was a problem for Jordon the most because while with that family, she got pneumonia once a year.

My family worried so much about them, especially since we had no clue what was going on. Finally Nana let them come back to the daycare my parents own and operate. Now at least we knew they were okay. Sometimes we were tempted to just take them home with us.

In 2003 however, we couldn't really take them home as well because my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. While all this was happening my dear Grandpa lost his cancer battle, which wasn't exactly inspirational for my mom. Still I admire

her courage and faith during this devastating and trying time. A sense of loss filled our home that spring. We lost Grandpa, Great-Grandma, Haley and Jordon, and mom was smack in the middle of healing from numerous dramatic surgeries.

Later, in October we found out that we could get the girls back. We jumped at the idea and gladly accepted. The state promised us that this was permanent and our hearts wouldn't be broken this time. Now we had a few problems to fix. Haley was now 5 and would soon start school. Jordy was 3 and could say about ten words, plus she was still wearing diapers! Both had serious behavioral problems again. Still we felt as though this was our second chance to help them, so we kept on loving, teaching, and coping. Now I question the trust a family can actually put in the system.

In May of 2003, Haley and Jordon were moved to an aunt and uncle's house in Georgia, who nobody knew about until now. They seemed like nice people, and even came out to Nebraska to meet us and see what they were getting themselves in to. One of the hardest things I had to do was packing up the small but happy life we had given our sisters and putting special things together to send with them so we wouldn't be forgotten. Good - bye parties aren't much fun in these situations. The girls were sent to Georgia to live with an aunt and uncle and their three sons, Haley and Jordon's cousins. Not to long after they got to Georgia though, they had problems and the girls had to be brought back to Nebraska.

Still, they didn't come back to us, but were sent to a family in South Sioux City. Here Haley went to school for the first time, except she started September 27th instead of August 19th. Soon, the mother got angry with the girls and sent them to a homeless shelter for children in Norfolk.

My mom heard this and immediately went to get them out of there, at least for thanksgiving! Right now, they are with us. Haley is going to Kindergarten at Arlington with my brother, my sister, and me. She is really enjoying it. A few days ago, a really neat family almost adopted Haley, but they decided not to take her. We get to keep them for the time being, and continue searching for someone to cherish Haley as their only little princess and help her regain her confidence and self-esteem which has been damaged greatly.

Sure, your experiences are far worse than mine, but I do in a way understand hurt. I cant stand that everything bad has to happen to the ones that never have done anything to deserve it. What you have written in "She Said Yes" has taught me greater trust and a more spectacular relationship with God. Amongst many family members, band mates, and friends, you have helped me get to where I am now with him. Constantly through books, music, friends, the band I sing with, and much more, I am reminded that he has a plan and he knows what he's doing, even better than we do. I want to thank you so much for writing and sharing your story. I wonder if I would have been able to say "Yes" when faced with the horrifying reality of death. Thanks so much for having the bravery and love for Cassie and the world to write your story and inspire us. ~ Beth Milan