



God's word says in Isaiah 42:3

“A bruised reed He will not break,
and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.”

That was my promise.

On 19 June 1999, the day before Fathers day. A cold wintry day in Pretoria. My fourteen month-old son, Niel, woke up at 6:30 and decided that it was time to play. It was a Saturday and I tried to convince him that we should still be asleep, but after fifteen minutes of intense struggling, he got off the bed. I heard him in the room next door rummaging around.

When it got quiet, I heard a voice say to me: “If you fall asleep, you may sleep forever.” I got up and started to look for him.

I had a big house, so I first searched all the bedrooms, then worked my way through the rest of the house. As I entered the kitchen, I saw that the backdoor was open! I realised that one of our dogs must have jumped up, pushed the door handle down and opened the door. I immediately thought about the swimming pool – water is such an attraction for toddlers!

Without checking first, I started to run, ripping off my clothes. As I ran outside I saw my little boy floating peacefully facedown in our pool! I screamed a prayer for God just to protect Niel's brain.

I jumped in and turned him over - his lips were blue and his eyes half open. I started CPR immediately, but Niel was dead and not responding.

We raced for the hospital and once there it took ten minutes before his heart started beating again and twenty-five minutes before he made an attempt to breathe. The doctor told me afterwards that he suspect that Niel was with out oxygen for 20 min, but in my mind that couldn't be.



In I.C.U. two days after the accident

Niel was placed on a ventilator. With a traumatic brain injury they worry about epilepsy immediately – Niel's EEG showed no epilepsy patterns, but it showed reaction similar to that of a person in deep sleep; I believe that this was because of all the medication. His brain scan showed no shut-off areas, but there were irritations in the Basal Ganglia areas. The Basal Ganglia controls motoring skills and sleeping pattern.

Niel was hospitalised for a week and two days, and was allowed home on Monday, 28 June 1999. Two days later, he started to vomit intermittently and by Friday we had to race him to the hospital again. This time Niel was suffering from acute dehydration and had dropped in weight from 11,5kg to just under 9kg. He was put on a drip and I was told to go home to get some sleep; the hospital would take good care of my baby.

The next day, Saturday, I was pleased to see that he had improved and we even celebrated my mother's birthday next to Niel's hospital bed.

In the early morning hours of Sunday, I woke to the sound of the telephone ringing. It was the hospital - they had given Niel too much electrolysis, which had caused brain swelling and this in turn caused his blood pressure to sky rocket. There was a danger that the raised blood pressure could lead to either kidney failure or a stroke. They asked me to come in as he might die. I sat there next to my sleeping baby's bed and just prayed.

The neurologist was not optimistic about Niel's condition and I was told that Niel would never walk again. With all the brain swelling he was cortically blind and not reacting. The advice I was given was to put him in a home and move on. I was also advised not to rush therapy, but my nature wouldn't allow for that and decided to rather intensify therapies so that he could reach the next level in his recovery sooner.



Initially I took Niel to physiotherapy three times a week, hydrokinetics twice a week, and he also attends occupational therapy sessions. He also did speech therapy once every second week. Equestrian twice a week and nero-physio once a week. And at home we did music therapy and bio kinetics. Reflexology was done by my hydrokinetics instructor.



Practising with Mommy

God has given me a miracle and Niel has done exceptionally well – far above what any of the doctors or therapist expected of him.

He's in Grade 2 now – he walks, but prefers to run everywhere. His sight is perfect and the retina scaring from the oxygen given to him in hospital, has healed. The optometrist can't find anymore scaring.

Niel is as sharp as ever and talks the hind leg off a donkey and changing from Afrikaans schooling to English, hasn't made a difference.

He's reading everything... and I mean everything! I think he'll be a doctor, cause he has the hand writing of one. 😊

He still gets OT and physio at school and also goes for remedial reading/writing and maths.



Forgiveness has been a very hard issue for me and I beat myself up for many years, but I've found comfort in God promises in the book of Isaiah 40:4 to make the crooked places straight. Bad choices God can iron out and transform into something miraculous. His love is so great that He forgave me my mistakes.

Today I want to thank God for my miracle and how far He has brought us. Praise God.

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