

Stories of Strength

THE JERNAS FAMILY

July 2016

I grew up in church. My father is a pastor. I was in church for every Sunday service, midweek service and frequently in-between. I knew that God loved me. I knew that He sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment for my sin. I had asked Him to be my personal Savior when I was 5 years old. However, it wasn't till I was much older that the truth of that knowledge hit home. There are many "big events" in my life that I can reflect back on as a time where I saw God moving in my life. There is one specific event and it took place in October of 2009. Let me start in February of 2009. February 17 was a Tuesday. I still remember the phone call. It was about 6:30 or so. My husband was at work for a meeting. So, it was just me at home with the kids. Jared was 4 and Maggie was 3. Maggie hadn't been feeling right so we had taken her to the family physician. The phone call was our doctor telling me that they had found a tumor in Maggie's abdomen.



The Jernas Family

(from left) Jared, Rachel, Maggie and Rod



Maggie Jernas

She needed to go the next day to Memorial Hospital and see a Hematologist. Sobbing, I called Rodney, my husband. By Thursday we were in Riley Hospital getting lots of testing and scans and Friday she had surgery. Within 10 days she started her first round of chemo. We had been told that she had Stage 4 Neuroblastoma. The doctors didn't want to tell me but I discovered that at that time this specific children's cancer only had a 50% rate of survival.

Over the next 6 months, Maggie endured 6 heavy rounds of chemo. She spent much of those 6 months in the hospital – either inpatient or outpatient. She vomited and had diarrhea and got poked and prodded. Maggie cried every time the dressing of her central line needed to be changed. I had to learn to become a nurse and do things I never wanted to learn to do. After those 6 rounds, we were told that Maggie was cancer free, but because of how aggressive the type of cancer it was we needed to continue with treatment. Maggie had to go to Riley Children's Hospital for 2 stem cell transplants. This is similar to a bone marrow transplant however, she received her own stem cells. She was given an extremely high dose of chemo – so high that the doctors told us that if she didn't get her transplant of stem cells that she would probably die. The first transplant was difficult but the second was worse.

The second one she just felt miserable. She had mouth sores so bad that she didn't want to talk let alone eat. She wouldn't even swallow her own spit because it hurt so bad. She started running fevers of well over 104 degrees. So she laid there in her hospital bed, eyes closed and not talking. She became unresponsive to me.

I. was. scared.

I can remember crying out to God. "Lord I just wish that someone could know how this feels. How heartbreaking this is... How scary...

How much I wish that I could take this away from her...

How incredibly lonely this journey is...."

And it hit me. And I knew that it was God whispering into my heart.

He said "I know. I know how painful it is to watch your child hurting.

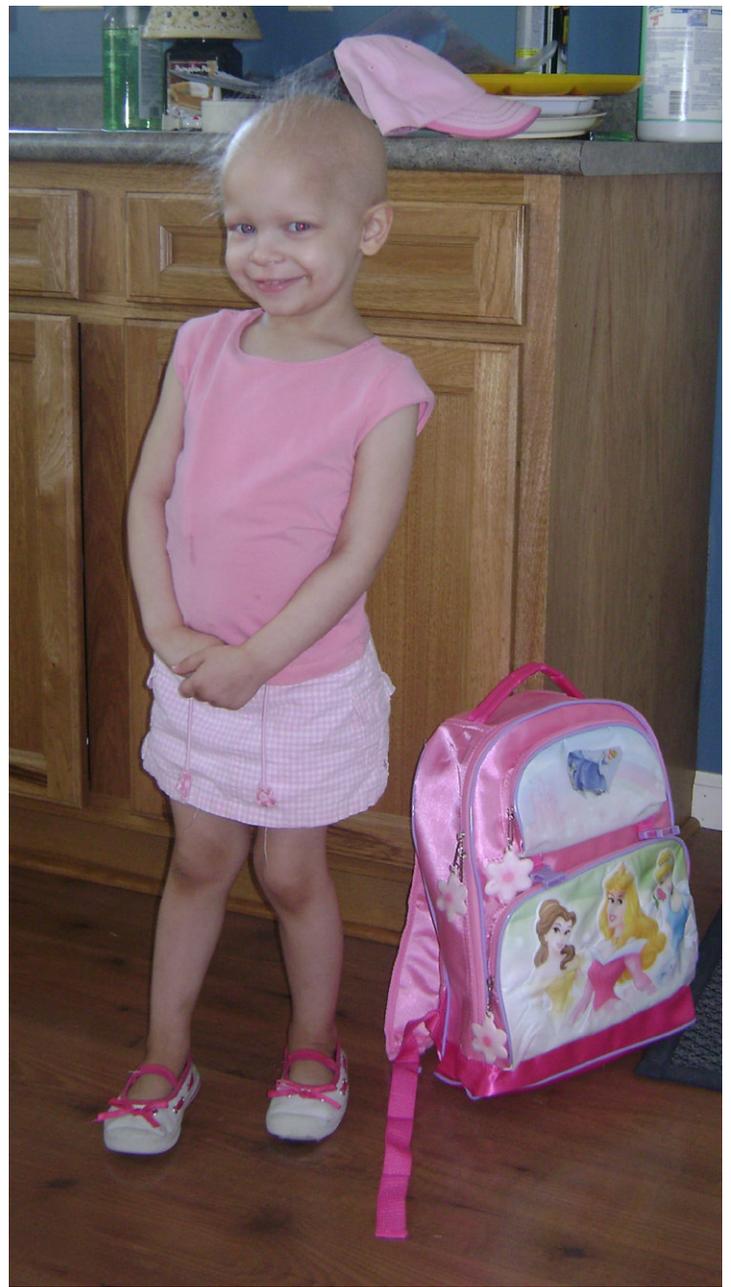
I know how it is to wish away a tremendously painful situation from someone you love so dearly. I know what it is like to be lonely. That was me watching my Son, Jesus, on the cross." I was brought to tears.

I realized that God understood what it was like to watch a child go thru this pain and trauma. **As I thought about it, I realized one major difference was that He had a choice. He could have taken His Son off of that cross - He could have saved His Son from that horrible death but He didn't. At that moment He chose to love ME (and you) over His Son.**

Wow! I'm sorry but I can't think of anyone I love over my family. I knew that God loved my little girl and I so much and He was hurting with me. Ephesians 3, Paul writes that he wants us to know "how wide and high and long and deep is the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge". What knowledge surpasses knowledge? Experience. In that hospital room, I experienced God's love in a new way. During her year and a half of treatment, we saw God do many, MANY miracles: the doctor removing her primary tumor, her blood counts being where they needed to be to continue treatment and countless others. Maggie is now 10 years old. She is still cancer free.

However, we are still battling with the effects that the chemo and cancer left on her body.

My prayer is that each of us come to know Jesus through a unique experience that draws us each into a deeper relationship with Him.



PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE 3RD ANNUAL

6 STRONG

DEUTERONOMY 31:6

1 MILE WALK / FUN RUN & 5K

SATURDAY, JULY 29TH 2017

Place: Bremen High School, Bremen, IN
For more info about this event visit our website:

www.bstrong316.org