



Micah Robert Wessman arrived as our first child on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008. After struggling through infertility issues and two previous miscarriages, Micah was such a gift to us. We are so grateful for the Lord's gift of Micah to us, even though it was for only 9 short months (October 30, 2008 to July 27, 2009). Micah always had a big smile on his face, especially for his mommy and daddy, and he filled our home with so much joy. His arms and legs would race up and down whenever he was excited—whether that was when his daddy came home from work or when he watched his dog Sadie run around the backyard. He was very courageous in the water --he loved to go in the lake and the pool with his daddy, and he never minded his bath time with his mommy.

His thick, near-white blonde hair would shoot in every direction. During a visit to Target one morning, a little girl saw Micah and exclaimed to her mother, "Mom, look at the boy with spiky hair!" His little voice would crack with giggles and delight while his mommy or daddy pushed him on the neighborhood swing. He was content to listen to his parents read him nursery stories. While he was never a good sleeper, we can look back now with thankfulness of the extra time he had with him during those restless nights.

Our son was suddenly and unexpectedly taken away from us in July of 2009. On Thursday, July 24, 2009, he accidentally fell out of a high chair while finishing his dinner. Medical visits that evening, as well as in each of the next 2 days, indicated that he had a high temperature because he had contracted pneumonia. He also exhibited a seal-like cough, symptomatic of aspirating food. After Micah had died, the doctors determined that he had aspirated a pea while crying following his fall from the high chair.

On Sunday morning, July 26, 2009, Micah awoke from his morning nap in our home and began coughing, then choking. Heather immediately called 911 and attempted to resuscitate Micah. Despite Heather's best efforts, Micah quickly lost consciousness and stopped breathing. Doctors later determined that Micah had attempted to cough up the pea, but it became stuck in his main stem bronchi, ultimately causing both lungs to stop breathing and making resuscitation efforts a failure.

About an hour and a half after Micah lost consciousness, an emergency room physician at Children's Hospital in Minneapolis was finally able to restart Micah's heart. However, because of the length of time that his brain went without oxygen, he exhibited few signs of brain activity, other than some ability to make some breaths while on the ventilator.

The next day, Monday, July 27, 2009, we said goodbye to our first born son, our pride and joy. In saying goodbye to Micah, Heather told Micah to “run to Jesus, sweetie, run to Jesus.” Apparently Micah abided by his mother’s request, because a few minutes later, the doctors informed us that Micah was no longer breathing on his own. Later that day we removed life support from our little boy. Just as his mother held him while he lost consciousness, his father held him as his ventilator was removed, and his little heart stopped beating.

Following Micah’s death, we learned of Smile Again Ministries through a friend. Judy Misener began calling Heather frequently to provide counseling and support over the phone during those first several months of horrific grief. In November of 2009, we were the very first couple to visit the Whitetail Lodge, the new home for Smile Again Ministries. During the course of five extremely fruitful days with Pat and Judy Misener, we were able to share our grief and receive the counsel and ministry of this incredibly gifted couple.

During our time at Whitetail Lodge, we enjoyed just the right mix of structured counseling and time together as a couple. Our topics included (1) dealing with the trauma of the events surrounding Micah’s death, (2) the wide range of emotions associated with our grieving, (3) dealing with all of the “firsts” following Micah’s death (first birthday, first anniversary of his death, first holidays, etc.), (4) considering how Micah’s death will impact our marriage; and (5) how to receive the support of our friends, family and support groups. As a couple, we enjoyed the beautiful wooded and lakeside scenery during our long walks together. In addition to daily sightings of the local family of white tail deer, we also enjoyed smores by the big fire pit and watching the sun go down over the lake.

Having experienced the loss of their own daughter, Pat and Judy were able to empathize with us in our loss and give us practical advice about this life-long journey of living in grief without our son. Pat and Judy encouraged us to continue focusing on our relationship with God through the pain of the loss. We discussed how our grief will either make us **better** people or **bitter** people—and how to allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives so as to increase our reliance on God. Pat and Judy also encouraged us to focus on the promises found in scripture for us and for our children. We are thankful for the living hope that we will see Mickey and Micah again when Jesus raises them from the grave. We are also so grateful for Smile Again Ministries, and we pray that many other grieving parents would be given the same opportunity to enjoy the idyllic surroundings of Whitetail Lodge while receiving the ministry of Pat and Judy Misener.