When We Needed the Church the Most

Michael Paradise

Anders University

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On a very normal Friday, my wife was at home with Isaiah as I was at work. She called me toward the end of the day, sharing that he started feeling a little warm. I got home an hour later, and Isaiah’s fever was getting quite high. Within a few minutes of my arrival at home, I heard my wife scream.

I rushed into the living room to find Isaiah in her arms, shaking violently with his eyes rolled back. He was having a seizure, and we didn’t know what to do! We dialed 911, and tried desperately to get Isaiah’s seizure to stop. Unfortunately, he also stopped breathing throughout the event, and we were afraid we would lose him.

We cried out to God in that moment, begging Him to save Isaiah—even as we attempted to keep him alive. Our prayers were short. “No! Jesus, help!” was all that needed to be said at that time; and while it wasn’t very eloquent, we are positive He heard us.

While my precious boy struggled to take a breath, we felt as though we were running out of time. Isaiah went without breathing for a couple minutes, turned purple and suddenly went lifeless as I held him in my arms. For a few seconds, I held a child I believed had died. In that moment, I, too, wanted to die.

But then, something happened. I cannot explain why, but Isaiah jolted back to life with a gasp as he opened his eyes! He started to breathe normally, and I felt as though God answered our prayers. During the next minutes, Isaiah seemed stable as he rested; and the ambulance soon arrived.

The doctors told us Isaiah had a febrile seizure, which is the result of a drastic change in body temperature in small children. We were told that while it is not normal for a child to lose his breath during a seizure, it turned out that the lack of oxygen is actually what cut off the abnormal brain activity. Isaiah recovered rather quickly, and the experts do not believe he has a high potential for experiencing that kind of episode again.

But while kids tend to bounce back fast, parents sometimes do not. My wife and I found it hard to move past the trauma of the experience, and we couldn’t escape the visual of Isaiah in such a grave state. We discovered we were actually in a state of grieving, although we had not lost our boy. It was a strange condition of confusion, caught between gratitude for the miracle God provided for us and the horror of the event. Immediately, after we came home from the hospital, we were depressed.

There were a few things that happened during the next few weeks, however, that helped us to see God leading us into a place of stronger reliance on Him, and on the fellowship of the church.

"Jesus, help!"

Sometimes, the most important prayers—the ones prayed with the most earnestness—are also the shortest. My wife and I experienced a few tense moments of panic and pleading recently when Isaiah, my three-year-old son, was fighting for his life.

**From My Perspective**

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**BY MICHAEL PARADISE**

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Sometimes, the most important prayers—the ones prayed with the most earnestness—are also the shortest. My wife and I experienced a few tense moments of panic and pleading recently when Isaiah, my three-year-old son, was fighting for his life.
The week of that event with Isaiah we were participating in the “iPerceive” evangelistic series with Dwight Nelson, pastor of the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. The seminars were taking place at the South Bend First Church in Indiana. When the people of the church heard about our emergency room trip, they came together in prayer on our behalf. Anyone who has ever had a group of people earnestly praying for them knows it is a powerful way for the church to show support. We received text messages, phone calls, e-mails and cards as the church family wrapped their arms tightly around us in our time of need.

At the end of the series, I shared our testimony and relayed how appreciative my family was for the prayers of the church. After my testimony, dozens of people came up to share similar experiences, to cry with us and to pray for our family. I heard from a seminary professor whose daughter had been through a seizure. I spoke with a gentleman who lost his son at a young age. A young couple brought gifts to the hospital and dinner to our home.

If I ever had any doubts about the value of church membership, they were erased in those moments. God spoke clearly to me through the actions of the people in His church. For the past couple years, I have been involved in leading worship at Pioneer Memorial Church. Throughout that time, I saw the beauty of congregational worship in a powerful way. When the platform is filled with young adults lifting their voices and playing their instruments for the glory of God, I cannot help but think of the fact that there are millions around the world each Sabbath praising the Lord in their own way. When we come to church, we come together.

God knew we would need each other for support, encouragement, accountability, stabilization and camaraderie. What I received in the weeks following Isaiah’s seizure was exactly what my family needed.

That is the greatest thing we can offer as a church. Jesus provides the forgiveness, the Holy Spirit provides the direction, and the church provides the community. We need to be perceptive of what our fellow church members need. I believe. In order to accomplish that, we need to intentionally seek those who are depressed, struggling financially or are in need of someone to talk to. If we can reach these people in our community of faith, there will be a strong presence of the love of God among us.

Even as we labor to bring individuals to Christ, it is vital to show them what a blessing it is to be a part of a congregation. People around our communities will find our fellowship irresistible if we are able to meet their spiritual and emotional needs. We ought to be thinking about what we can do to help our neighbors in their times of need.

My family’s recent traumatic experience led me to better recognize the role of the church. We all need each other in order to experience more fully the love of God. Thanks to our Lord, we have a vibrant, healthy little boy now. And thanks to the people who helped us, our perspective will forever be changed.

Thank you, church family, for your support, and I will do what I can in order to support you.

Michael Paradiase recently graduated from the Seminary at Andrews University with a Master of Divinity degree. He is now a young adult pastor for the College View Church in Lincoln, Nebraska. Prior to graduation, he served two years as worship coordinator for Pioneer Memorial Church. Michael has been married to Alana for six years; their son, Isaiah, is three-and-a-half years old.