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HEALTH & FAMILY

## Faith carries a mother through her baby's fatal cancer

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*Charlotte mom Meg McElwain has blogged on the Observer's website [MomsCharlotte.com](#) about her son Mitchell's lifetime fight with leukemia. Diagnosed at 3 months old, and suffering a relapse in February at age 2, Mitchell died April 13. MomsCharlotte's site administrator Mandy Ravin shares her gratitude.*

When I put out a call last fall for guest bloggers, a reply came in immediately from Meg. Sharp and direct, Meg told me her 17-month-old son was battling a rare form of leukemia and that she wanted to tell their story. Uncertain of what to expect, Meg and I planned to meet for coffee.

The morning of the meeting, I was dragging my feet. How could I be excited about meeting a woman who was administering daily chemotherapy treatments to her baby? I prepared myself for a sad and heart-wrenching cup of coffee.

I surely didn't expect to leave that meeting filled with awe, joy and hope; with renewed energy; with a smile on my face. Instead of the frenzied, sad mom I was prepared to meet, I met a courageous, optimistic and open woman full of raw emotions she was willing to share.

We chatted about her life, family and marriage, as well as her marketing firm and the campaigns she was working on. And, of course, she shared the story of Mitchell. She talked about the shock of his diagnosis and the difficulties of seeing her baby in pain during daily treatments. She talked of the bonds formed with other families in the halls of the children's hospital, and of the sadness.

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And she talked about her deep, trusting faith in God. After Meg began blogging and I understood more fully the intensity of Mitchell's illness, I posed a question to her about her faith and how she had maintained it in such a terrible crisis. Her response once again left me in awe: "My relationship with Him gives me so much peace in knowing that no matter what, everything will be OK."

No anger, no blame, no asking, "Why?" Just faith.

In these days of darkness following Mitchell's passing, I read those words and know that they are more than just words. They are the truth in Meg's life. Her faith in God allowed Meg to write for us, to share her family's journey and to give hope to all of us.

When I sat down for that cup of coffee with Meg, I couldn't understand why a woman who already held the roles of wife, mother, church volunteer, marketing firm president and momcologist would possibly want to throw blogger on top of everything else. I couldn't fathom being willing to share such a deeply personal story with a terrifying beginning and an unknown ending.

But that is what makes Meg special. She possesses the drive, determination and need to let the world know not just about Mitchell and his story, but about the painful truth of the many children fighting cancer each day:

*Often, society only sees a pediatric cancer patient in a hospital marketing photo. I wanted to show the side of pediatric cancer that I was seeing.*

The cruel, ugly, unfair, agonizing side that only a parent, caregiver, doctor or nurse of a pediatric cancer patient knows.

The side when your child moans in pain and you comfort helpless cries of desperation that come from aching bones, internal ulcers or strange external skin burns that chemo drugs can cause.

The side where hope means having one more surgery to get that new tumor that grew overnight or a hope that a little more time on life support will allow the antibiotics time to kill the infection that has taken over a weak child's body.

The side where all you want to do is hit rewind and do something, anything to end the nightmare.

While Mitchell's nightmare of pain and doctors, procedures and medicine is now over, it is heartbreaking to know that Meg's pain endures. And though there is little I feel I could ever do to ease her suffering, I thank her for sharing her son, her story and her faith with us. She has changed my perspective on cancer and reminded me of the gift being a mother truly is.

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