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Giving Mitchell Back: Moving Forward

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Written by Meg McElwain

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Mitchell was only two years old. I often wonder why this happened. I realize that in this life, I may never know the answer.

I have more time in each day; time that before I spent with Mitchell. I keep myself busy as a way to cope with the pain of missing him. I focus on Little Frank. I am grateful that we have him in our lives. I tell him every day how special he is to us.

Even though he is in Heaven, Mitchell is still very much a part of our lives. We talk openly in our home and with others about his death, about how much we miss him and about the funny things he used to do. Grieving is a process and our family is definitely going through different phases of grief for Mitchell.

Most of the time, I feel so much peace and even happiness that Mitchell is free and with God.

Once Little Frank asked me to play with him in his room. He started by lining all his toy horses up in a row and asked me to play the “mama horse.” I asked him what the horses wanted to do. He said they wanted to talk about Mitchie. I listened as he told me that the little horse was sad because he could not do anything to help Mitchie. I felt my heart breaking and told him that the “mama horse” could not do anything either; Mitchie had a disease and we all tried to save him, but that God had a different plan.


At times like this, I assure Frank that Mitchell is safe with God, my mother, father and many others from our family, and that we will see him again in Heaven.

But there are days that depression tries to take over. The empty chair at the dinner table where Mitchell should sit is more visible to me. Our grocery bill is lower. There are clothes I bought that he never wore. I put them in the attic.

I’ve learned how to answer the question “How many children do you have?” The answer: Two boys; a five-year-old here and a forever two-year-old waiting for me in Heaven.

As I continue to move forward, it will seem to outsiders that Little Frank is an only child; but he is not.

I long to hold Mitchell in my arms, but I can’t, so I hold Little Frank tighter. The thought of moving forward and further away from his life and death means the time I had with him will get more distant, too.



Seeing or hearing a two year old child in public places hurts my heart. I stare and imagine what Mitchell would be doing. Little Frank sometimes has a hard time playing with his friends and their siblings.

My marriage to Frank has struggled. Our minister reminds us in counseling that people grieve differently. We love each other and our family, but sometimes our individual pain and sadness for Mitchell makes living together harder. We work together to get through the pain and focus on the big picture of our life together. We remind each other often that we are committed to each other.

I have anger toward the disease. Sometimes my mind goes back to the difficult moments and I see and hear him screaming in distress like he did the night we put him on life support. In those times I pray and give thanks that Mitchell is now at peace. I work hard to channel my emotions into action to raise awareness and money to help others.

I have even less patience than before for trivial things. Cancer and burying a child puts things into a different perspective. I don't relate well to my peers and my group of close friends has gotten even smaller. Yet, it seems that suddenly everyone wants to be my best friend.

I'm compelled to talk about Mitchell and share his story, but I've been hurt when friends say well-meaning, but insensitive things when it would have been better to listen and let their presence serve as comfort.

I have a great life, a family that I love and a lot of work to do to advance childhood cancer awareness and funding. I am not afraid of death. I hope I live another 50 years but that means it will be 50 years before I see my sweet baby boy again. That is hard for me to think about.

I know that many of these feelings will be with me for the rest of my life. Time will ease some of the deep pain but I know that the emptiness will always be there.

Mitchell's life changed me. His story continues to help and inspire others. People often tell me that they are closer to God, have hope and a restored sense of faith because of Mitchell and our family.

I am humbled, but I am proud. I am proud that God chose me to be Mitchell's mother. I am honored that He trusted me to care for Mitchell, to tell his story and to continue the fight against childhood cancer in his memory.

To read Meg McElwain's original blog on MomsCharlotte.com, *Witness to a Miracle*, [click here](#).

Meg McElwain is wife to Frank Turner, III, and mother to Frank and Mitchell. Meg has owned and operated Magnolia Marketing in Charlotte for over a decade. She volunteers and serves the community. After, Mitchell was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer at only 3 months old, Meg felt God calling her to use Mitchell's fight to beat cancer and her journey as his mother to inspire and help others. Meg and Frank established the [Mitchell Bays Turner Pediatric Fund](#) within the Novant Health Foundation and raise money to support, educate and advocate for families facing challenging pediatric diagnosis.

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