

Tears turned to Joy

By Tia Johnson

For the Hendren family, when one door closed, three opened. Kyle and Angie Hendren in West Jordan, Utah, won't deny the pain from their first daughter's death. It was Angie's second pregnancy. For unknown reasons, she began losing amniotic fluid.

Twenty-eight weeks into the pregnancy, on Jan. 20, 2001, Angie had an emergency C-section. Their doctor said their girl, Hailey, would not live much longer and gave the option of disconnecting her from life-support.

"At the chance of being able to hold her, we said yes," Kyle says. "And so they put her in my arms."

Baby Hailey lived less than 14 hours.

"We feel that she took her last breath in my arms," Kyle says. "It was pretty tough at that time, just knowing that she left this world in my arms."

The tragedy took its toll on their marriage.

"It took us a long time to learn how to talk to each other or listen to each other," Angie says.

Patrick Marino, on staff at a church the Hendrens had visited, quickly came to the hospital when he heard of their crisis. Marino now pastors at the Hendrens' home church, Freedom Worship Center (AG) in Taylorsville, Utah.

"He just came up and prayed for us," Kyle says. "He walked us through the whole funeral process."

As others prayed and the Hendrens joined a support group in the community, Angie began to see Hailey's death differently.

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Left and below: Angie Hendren and Baby Hailey



Above: Corey (left) and Miranda Joy joined the Hendren family (right) after the loss of Hailey Hendren.



"I didn't lose a child; God actually gave me a daughter," she says. "I just didn't get to keep her as long as I wanted to."

Kyle and Angie already had a 2-year-old son, Jared. They were also foster parents with an adoption home study on file, but they withdrew their name when Angie began having pregnancy complications. However, two weeks after Hailey's burial, a social worker called looking for a home for a 15-month-old boy.

"I told her we were in no way able to do this because our baby had just died," Angie says. "She apologized and hung up."

But the next day, another social worker called. The boy's file had been transferred from the first to the second social worker. Once the Hendrens informed her of their situation she too apologized and hung up.

But when the agency called them the next day, the third day in a row, the Hendrens began to reconsider.

"By this time I realized God may be calling us," Angie says.

The Hendren family agreed to be interviewed for Corey's adoption. Two other families were also interviewed.

"I didn't think they'd pick us because we had lost our daughter, we had just moved, and we were emotionally a basket case," Kyle says. "But that was God's plan,

and He put Corey into our lives."

Corey came to live with the Hendren family in March 2001, just six weeks after Hailey's burial.

"His adoption was not planned by any means," Angie says. "In fact, we tried to stop it twice. But God knew what we didn't."

Two years later, in 2003, Angie gave birth to a girl, Chelsea. With two boys, ages 5 and 3, and now a baby girl, the Hendrens thought their family was complete.

"We had our adoption, and we had a successful pregnancy with Chelsea," Kyle says. "I thought we were done."

However, in February 2006, Angie began reading about orphans and adoptions.

"Every time I read about a child I'd start crying," Angie says. "I just kept thinking, *No, there's something more to this.*"

She began researching international adoption agencies, then raised the subject with Kyle.

"At first, I just thought she was nuts," Kyle says. "It took a few months for me to soften up and come around."

Kyle says the videos in the adoption packet and the biblical reference in James 1:27 to caring for orphans and widows helped convince him. In August, they began filling out paperwork for a China adoption.

But one looming challenge was the cost.

"Looking at our finances, we weren't exactly sitting on \$25,000," says Kyle, a marketing manager for a window company.

When they submitted their initial paperwork, with plans to apply for a girl who had a special need, they had only \$2,000 in their emergency savings.

"I stressed about it a lot," Kyle says. "I'd have a \$1,000 bill coming up for some paperwork and I did not know where the money was going to come from."

At night, after Kyle had finished paying bills, he dealt with stress through prayer.

To help make ends meet, Angie, who works part time as a mental health counselor, picked up more hours at work. The Hendrens received a grant in March 2007, and in December 2007 they acquired a no-interest loan for the adoption. They also refinanced their van and had a few creative fundraisers.

One fundraiser was called the "China Jar." Whenever the Hendrens had loose change, they tossed it in. Without asking, their friends caught on and started their own China Jars.

In late November 2006, the final document for their file arrived in the mail. With their paperwork

complete, their next step was getting it certified by the state — a \$165 expense.

Kyle decided they would have to wait for his next paycheck before they could afford the certification.

"I was bummed," says Angie. "I understood why, but after months of phone calls, filling out forms and driving all over to pick things up, I was more than ready to have this dossier on its way."

Out of curiosity, she started to count up their China Jar money — both their own and that of their friends' jars.

"As the piles of quarters started adding up, I realized I was close to \$100 with more still to count," she says. "I became very hopeful."

When she finished, the total came to \$164.99. At the bank, Chelsea found a penny on the floor.

The Hendrens consider that one of their many "God signs." Another came a year after they started the adoption process, when they saw the photo of a 2-year-old girl whose assigned American name was Hailey.

"When we first saw her picture, I thought she was the most beautiful thing," Angie says. But they also realized she would need surgery.

A large, hairy growth covered half the girl's face, and they did

not know its implications.

"I could not put my kids through losing another sister," Angie says.

They researched her condition and prayed. In January 2008, the Hendrens brought their daughter home from China. In fact, the day they met her, Jan. 20, was exactly seven years after Hailey's death. Kyle and Angie named their daughter Miranda Joy Zhu Dan Hendren.

The adoption process totaled some \$24,000, about half of which was travel expense. Bills beyond the adoption included deductibles on Miranda Joy's surgeries. The Hendrens are planning multiple plastic surgeries and a reconstructed eyelid before Miranda Joy starts kindergarten.

"We can't imagine our lives without her, and it brings tears to my eyes that we could have chosen to ignore God all those months ago when we were sure we couldn't finance an adoption or add another child to our family," Angie says. "God was and always is faithful." **tpe**

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