

were alive. Their loss should be important enough to alter the way I view the world after your death.

The lament created space for me to honor the value you brought to my life, verbalize the pain of your loss, and express the confusion of trying to come to terms with a side of life I didn't expect to encounter. That space to talk about how I cried for you, for what you would bring to my life, was infinitely more valuable than finding a cure for the pain of your death.

Reflecting

In *The Horse and His Boy*, Shasta finds out after spending a miserable night alone that Aslan walked beside him through the night and kept him from falling into a deep canyon. I think that silent presence is a picture of what my faith has been during the last few months. I have often felt alone and confused, especially early on. But looking back, I think I can see the hand of God. As I read *Lament for a Son* over and over; as we received self-conscious, anxious comfort from two friends at church; when a couple co-workers said to your mom, “*I also had a miscarriage. It is an awful thing and I will help you in any way I can;*” when my sister sent a note saying, “*Please know that you are loved;*” as your mom and I cried on each other's shoulders. Each of these moments gave me strength to keep going. I think they helped me out of the canyon of anger and despair. I am still confused, and I periodically feel pangs of grief. I am not angry, and I think I'm not bitter.

I come at last to the question of what has changed. The first change was my relationship with your mom. A level of reserve between us disappeared on

our honeymoon when we changed from engaged couple to husband and wife. Another level of reserve disappeared when we found out she was pregnant. This change initially baffled both of us. The explanation we settled on was a shift in perspective from “This is my spouse” to “This is the parent of my child.” Neither of us has much personal self-confidence in our ability to be parents, but we were both convinced the other person would be a good parent. We were excited to see each other enter that role.

One somewhat surprising thing is that in general the pregnancy did not make me afraid of fatherhood. I wrote earlier about my concerns, and my feeling that it would be cruel to make anyone suffer from being my child. I also had a hidden hope. I think it began in 1995 when I first met my two youngest siblings, who my parents adopted while I was in college. It grew later as I watched some friends from church become parents. Those experiences had kindled hope that instead of being a paralyzing experience, interacting with young children could be something I enjoyed. Since both hope and fear are abstract, many times for me the fear is the more powerful abstraction. The pregnancy put a concrete focus on the hope that made it more powerful. As that happened I found I was not afraid as I'd expected to be, nor as my track record of need for control would have predicted. Many times I've held back from young kids—partly from fear of them because they're so much smaller than I am, partly because other folks just tend to get there first. For example kids are attention magnets at church, and I'm typically in the back of the crowd. I had a sense of

reassurance from the knowledge that “*With this one I’ve got first dibs.*” That may have also translated into being more at ease with small kids now than I was before, because it could have been me in their parents’ shoes. I was much more comfortable than I have been in the past when a co-worker and his wife came for lunch with their 1 year old, and when we visited the other friends in September with their 1 and 3 year olds.

In *Lament for a Son*, Wolterstorff talks about owning his grief redemptively. It is part of his identity, not a flaw to be “fixed.” This should provide an enlarged capacity to share in humanity’s sufferings, to mourn more deeply and cry out at the brokenness of the world that so desperately needs redemption. I don’t know if this has happened for me or not. Characteristically, much of my grieving has been solitary. I shed my tears over the pages of this letter, alone in my hotel in New Orleans, and during discussions with your mom after the D&C. There has been healing just in finding I am able to grieve. I don’t know if I’ve become more open to those around me in terms of sharing my life or being willing to share theirs. I guess time will tell whether that change should, or will, happen.

Farewell

Here I am in early October, completing a letter begun at the end of April. It has been a long process of reflection, and somewhat humorous for your mom to observe how drawn out it has become. I hope you will see from these words that I really wanted to meet you. I was afraid and uncertain, especially early on, but there was a hope and anticipation that grew. I looked forward to meeting you

and learning about this extreme sport called parenthood. I am very deeply sorry that you died so early into this strange journey we began together. No trite answer, theological, biological, or otherwise, will ever change that.

I will close with two texts that were especially meaningful to me during the week after the D&C. The first is a gospel song of farewell that I originally heard on Selah’s *Press On* album. I’ve changed the words to come from a father to his child rather than between friends. The second comes from the funeral service in the *Book of Common Prayer*. I used this prayer to release you into God’s hands when we came home after the D&C.

Now you’ve come to the end of life’s journey
It turns out we’ll never meet anymore
Till we gather in heaven’s bright city
Far away on that beautiful shore.
Since we’ll never get to meet this side of heaven
As we struggle through this world and its strife.
There’s another meeting place somewhere in heaven
By the beautiful river of life
Where the charming roses bloom forever
And separations come no more
Since we’ll never get to meet this side of heaven
I will meet you on that beautiful shore

Into your hands, O merciful Savior, I commend my unborn child.
Acknowledge, I pray you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive this child into the arms of your abiding mercy, into the rest of your everlasting peace, into the glorious company of those who dwell in your light. And may your kingdom of peace come quickly. Amen.

Farewell, child, until we meet face to face
for the first time. Go with my love.

Dad