

A PLAIN, WHITE CARD

By Kevin Boozer

Ask any father and most will agree that you cannot be ready ahead of time for the job. That was especially true for a man named Wayne, for whom fatherhood came 13 weeks early – and with a very big surprise. Twins! In 1978, before ultrasound, the boys’ heartbeats were so in sync that the doctors believed Wayne’s wife, Alice, was having a normal, single pregnancy. But the amusement of friends and family turned serious as doctors worked to keep the twins alive.

During that touch-and-go period, Wayne and Alice drew closer to God and to each other. Wayne’s faith had been lukewarm since his adolescence – a time when he quit attending church altogether. But when their pastor arrived, scrubbed up, and used sterile water to baptize each son, Wayne’s faith in Christ reignited. That day, alone in one of the hospital’s conference rooms, the new father prayed, placing his trust in the Lord no matter what the future held for him and his family.

An accountant at a Columbia construction company, Wayne joined his wife at Richland Memorial Hospital each day after work, except one – the day the family gathered around the tiny coffin of the oldest twin, nine-day-old Patrick. He had developed intestinal gangrene and had died of a staph infection. His death shook everyone’s faith, including Wayne’s. Patrick was the bigger twin with fully-developed lungs and a healthy heart, so odds of his survival were more favorable than his brother’s.

While Wayne and Alice grieved Patrick’s death, their other son’s condition remained so guarded, it wasn’t certain he would survive another day. He weighed less than two pounds and would soon require open-heart surgery. Once more, people from around the state prayed for the child’s life, and over the next two months, his condition steadily improved.

Still keeping vigil over his hospitalized son, Wayne was in scrubs one day when a group of medical students assumed he was a doctor and began asking him questions about the child’s condition. Wayne answered them in such detail that they continued to mistake him for a doctor until their supervisor told them, “Wayne’s not one of the doctors, he’s one of the daddies.” Wayne had made it his priority to know everything about his son’s condition and treatment. In fact, Wayne and Alice were so attentive to their son’s care that the hospital allowed him to come home a few days before his first Christmas, even though he was a pound under the weight requirement for release.

Four years later, Wayne and Alice had another baby, a healthy boy named Andrew. The young family lived in a house next door to Alice’s parents in rural Newberry County. Her father, Pat, taught Wayne how to run the combine machine that harvested the corn, oats, and milo they would grind into hog feed. Pat showed him how to butcher the hogs when the weather turned cold and put meat on his family’s table.

Pat, his wife, Cornelia, and Wayne’s family also worshipped together at a local church where Wayne joined the choir, helped lead worship, and taught Sunday school. Over the years, Wayne involved his sons in many activities at church, especially outdoor activities of the men’s group. In fact, Wayne spent countless hours with his boys. Either he or his wife read to their children every night, were involved in their school, and dealt with the occasional fistfight one or the other son got into. Wayne taught his sons to ride bikes and water-ski. Because he and his father-in-law often took the boys hunting for rabbits and deer, Wayne also taught them gun safety.

Years passed and the boys’ childhoods went with them. Before long, Wayne and his wife dealt with the first crushes, parties, girlfriends, and fender-benders that went along with raising teenage sons. As a father, Wayne did his best to be fair, consistent, and to treat each son equally. He helped with trigonometry homework, coached one son in how to play trombone and the other to sing in the choir, and built props for the high school band. Then, one by one, he sadly ushered them away from home and into college.

His boys are grown men now, and Wayne has moved into a new phase of fatherhood.

He is father-in-law to Andrew’s new wife, Lindsay. Wayne is now helping landscape the site where the couple will build a new home on family land.

The father that Wayne has become shows how “...blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him” (Jeremiah 17:7). This Father’s Day, Wayne will celebrate being a daddy for over 31 years. Andrew and Lindsay will visit and give him a gift with a Father’s Day card attached. The other envelope he’ll open will contain a plain, white card with one sentence written inside. The card will be from his older son, whose chances of survival were but three percent, and whose odds of being able to write even one sentence were closer to one percent. The card will read:

Happy Father’s Day, Daddy.

Love,
Kevin

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