

# Table of Contents

Foreword . . . . .	15
Prologue . . . . .	17
Meet Judson . . . . .	21
Month One: My World is Crumbling . . . . .	27
Month Two: Crying Out in Affliction . . . . .	63
Month Three: Developing Unwavering Faith . . . . .	125
Month Four: Risking with Expectant Hope . . . . .	169
Month Five: Surrendering in Heartache . . . . .	199
After Loss: Trusting in Brokenness . . . . .	229
Epilogue . . . . .	265
Further Information . . . . .	271
Index . . . . .	273
Endnotes . . . . .	279

## Foreword

Periodically you stumble upon a gifted new author with a compelling story, and you know you have found a treasure. It did not take me long to realize that *Eyes that See: Judson's Story of Hope in Suffering* by Christina Levasheff is one such treasure.

A long-time friend of mine who is part of the same church family as Christina gave me a copy of *Eyes that See*. My husband, Bob, and I picked up the manuscript to peruse it while in flight to the East Coast but soon discovered it was a book we could not put down. We read the entire story during our travels and were very moved by this journey of unfailing faith.

Christina writes as though we were talking over a cup of our favorite tea. She is sharing her intimate, personal thoughts as she experiences every parent and grandparent's worst nightmare. The smooth flow of her writing allows us to easily enter into her family's faith, love, hope, and joy during their intense struggles as their beloved son, Jud, battles an awful disease.

We quickly see that Judson is an extraordinary boy. Even at two years old, he was speaking truth from his heart and revealing Jesus to everyone around him.

As his body deteriorated, he still offered love and encouragement and kept the family hopeful. He had a real zest for life, even in great suffering, and always shared his smile.

In the beginning of this book, there is an important paragraph where Christina writes how God whispers in her ear: "Judson is special. I have great plans for him, but I will care for him. He is special." I believe that everyone who picks up this book will quickly see that Judson certainly is special, and God wants to use him and the faithfulness of his family to help each of us have eyes that see and trust the Lord in adversity.

David, the psalmist, writes in Psalm 30:5 (NASB), "Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning." Our dear Levasheff family, we look forward to the day you will hear the shouts of joy!

—*Emilie Barnes*

Emilie Barnes is a best-selling author with over sixty-five books including, *A Journey through Cancer*, *Safe in the Father's Hands*, and *Heal My Heart, Lord*. She is also an internationally acclaimed speaker and founder of "More Hours in My Day" seminars. Emilie is listed as one of the 100 Christian Women Who Changed the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

# Prologue



“Daddy, why are you crying?”

I watched my husband, Drake, tenderly reach out a trembling hand toward our almost two-and-a-half-year-old son as tears streamed down his face.

“All the problems we’ve been having have been hard, Judson. We want you to be able to see and walk again.”

In that moment, Jud began quoting, word for word, the story of Job from his toddler Bible<sup>1</sup>, “One day a man ran to Job. ‘Your children and animals have died,’ he said. Then Job got sores all over him.”

Drake began to cry harder.

“Do you want me to hold you, Daddy?”

“That would be great, Jud, but why don’t you finish eating first.”

Jud continued with the story of Job. “Did Job get angry at God? No! ‘God gave me all I had,’ said Job. ‘I will still love him.’”



As the weight of truth expressed in Judson’s words settled in our hearts, we became convinced that our beautiful son had uncommon spiritual understanding, and it would be vital for us to listen closely to all God might choose to convey through our recently vision-impaired child; Judson could see God ... we wanted to develop eyes that could see him too.

Contained in these pages is how the Lord chose to reveal himself through the story of our dearly loved son, Judson, whose body, having been healthy and whole for the first years of his life, began to rapidly deteriorate just prior to turning two and a half. His story may be remarkable, but inherent in his journey,

and our journey along with him, is deep suffering and pain—the kind of affliction that redefines one’s life and faith forever. And with the onset of this adversity in our family came a choice: what lens will we use to view God in our heartache?

I began to recognize that the Lord was calling me to embrace the vision of life found in the story of Job as articulated by my blind and suffering son. I needed to see my circumstances through the lens of God’s character and grace, despite the hardship, affliction, and pain. I had to make a conscious choice every day to keep my eyes open for whatever the Lord wanted to teach me through this precious little boy entrusted to my care. Judson’s story became a considerable journey of faith and hope, coupled with tremendous agony and ultimately an underlying call to trust my heavenly Father in *everything*.

I invite you to walk with me on this road of faith and hope in suffering conveyed through our sweet little man as experienced by us, his parents. The following chapter will allow you to meet Judson, while the subsequent chapters are a chronological compilation of letters, personal reflections, correspondence, and thoughts from others, along with stories of Jud, all written throughout this journey.

They are dated and were actually composed on the given dates during his season of affliction. They tell Jud’s saga the way it was revealed to those who walked this path of pain with us as it occurred. You might laugh, cry, and hope with us, but most of all it is our desire that Judson’s life will challenge you to view your own life from a new perspective.

May the story of our suddenly blind little boy give you *Eyes that See*.

## Journal Entry: Thursday, July 5

### *Endure*

Though we long to numb it, discard it, delete it, dismiss it, eliminate it, purge it, transfer it, or wipe it out, pain cannot be taken away or removed.

It must be endured and hopefully redeemed!

## Letter 6: Saturday, July 7

Dear family and friends,

I know it may be hard to believe, but I am going to give you a *brief* update on Jud.

He had his second MRSpectroscopy yesterday in LA. It went far better than our last experience, which felt like God's merciful hand upon us.

We go back to Los Angeles on Monday for the neurogenetics clinic. A geneticist, metabolologist, pediatric neurologist, and possibly some other doctors will all review Jud's history, development, symptoms, and test results to try and ascertain a diagnosis for his condition. We are longing for answers but are also desperately afraid of what we might hear (many of the genetic disorders are ultimately fatal or result in a vegetative state). As you can imagine, our hearts are heavy. We ask that you join with us in prayer on Monday; please pray for our strength, for the doctors to have wisdom, and please continue to pray for God to heal Jud's body. Your prayers are dear to us!

Much love and gratitude,  
Christina (on behalf of Drake too)

## Journal Entry: Saturday, July 7

### *Quite a Contrast*

An MRI takes images that measure contrast in the brain, but it was the contrast between Jud's two MRIs that is an image worth comparing.

Yesterday was Jud's second MRI, a Spectroscopy. Admittedly, Drake and I approached the event with dread. The first MRI incident, three weeks ago, had been so difficult that it was hard to imagine walking through the experience again.

The two occurrences were like night and day.

First and foremost, Jud had an amazing attitude! Last time, he cried and screamed during most of the preparatory events, which was completely understandable considering the circumstances. This time Jud was short on sleep (we had to wake him at 5:30 a.m. when he usually gets up at 8:00 a.m.) and he had not been able to eat or drink anything for over seven hours (last ate and drank at 6:00 a.m.—preparation for the MRI began at 1:00 p.m.), yet, through all the poking, prodding, measuring, and testing, Jud smiled and chatted with the nurses. He was our usual sweet and content little guy, displaying not even an ounce of fear or protest.

Secondly, we did not have to observe or assist the nurses in starting the IV line. Last time, the oral sedation had already started to wear off when, on the first attempt, they were unable to thread his vein. Meanwhile, we were holding Jud down as he flailed and screamed in pain. This time, though we wanted to be able to comfort him, it was actually a gift not to be there at the time they started the IV. They carried Jud away in a state of "loopy" happiness.

God was extremely merciful with us today!





## Journal Entry: Saturday, July 7

### *A Bellowing Voice*

At the hospital yesterday we had some downtime in the waiting room prior to Jud's preparation for the MRSpectroscopy. Jud, being the social butterfly that he is, would ask, "What's your name?" when he sensed someone nearby. He also occupied himself with magazines by pretending they were books about turtles and fish; he is quite a storyteller and had the people around him in stitches.

But my favorite moment came when he declared, "Mommy, I want to pray for your balance."

“Oh, thank you, Jud, but I think my balance is okay. Why don’t you ask God to heal your balance?” I replied.

He climbed up into a chair nearby (he still has the strength to climb), and with a bellowing voice for all in the waiting room to hear, he said, “Dear God, I just want to pray for Mommy’s balance and Daddy and Aunt Danielle, Uncle Marty, cousin Ella, Cameron, Collin, Carson, and Avery Joy. Amen.”

“Amen!” I echoed.

All the women in the room began gushing, oohing, and aahing with comments about how adorable and cute Jud is, and of course, I was proud; but more than that, I was reminded of why God adores children—the innocent hearts that approach his throne with anything and everything on their minds.

Lord, please help me lay it all at your feet.

## Journal Entry: Sunday, July 8

### *Tree of life*

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

*Proverbs 13:12*

We desperately desire for God to heal Jud! Yet I am afraid to hope. I am afraid to hope that God will actually restore our boy to health, because our hearts are already sick, and the delay of hope brings more brokenness.

However, we long for the faith that is able to see and experience God’s supernatural healing hand. We want to reach out and touch the cloak of our Lord Jesus wherein he says, “Your faith has healed you” (Mark 5:24–34).

## Journal Entry: Sunday, September 23

### *Grasp the Rope Boldly*

Prayer is like a rope on a bell. When tugged, the great bell rings in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give but an occasional pinch at the rope. But he who wins with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continually with all his might.

*Charles Spurgeon*<sup>20</sup>

I have been learning so much about prayer through this season; Drake, in particular, has been an incredible model of persistent prayer.

I am regularly discouraged and find it difficult to pray in my brokenness. There are also moments I give up hope, so I tend not to want to pray in my hopelessness either.

We are called to persistent prayer.

In reading Spurgeon, I am learning that persistence in prayer requires us to pursue it with an energy that never tires. When discouraged, we must increase our earnestness in asking. Even in hopelessness, persistence requires pleading with God until prayer prevails. By waiting patiently and praying persistently, we learn to trust God, we find strength under strain, and it develops a spirit of expectancy.

Drake is truly standing in the gap for his son. God has moved him to persistent prayer, and in Drake's persistence, I believe God is moved.

I am moved as well.

## Journal Entry: Tuesday, September 25

### *Empty Vessel*

This afternoon I was chatting in our office with my mom, who was holding Jud, and my dad, who was sitting at the computer. Meanwhile, Jessie meandered around the room enjoying her mobility and independence. All of sudden, Jessie tripped. As she fell, she banged her head on the corner of our desk. She hit it hard, with a sound that made us all cringe. Screams of pain erupted immediately, as did the indentation on her forehead. I jumped up, hoisted her into my embrace, and held her tightly as I tried to console her.

As she bawled, I began to weep too. Upon hearing my lament, my mom began to cry as well. It was a chorus of sobs.

I immediately recognized that I was not crying because Jessie was hurt (neither was my mom); my tears flowed because I have no reserves. I have no reserves for coping with even the smallest of challenges.

I am empty.

I am physically drained and depleted as Jud's needs continue to intensify. I am emotionally taxed as the deterioration of his body torments me. I am spiritually exhausted as my soul continues to be significantly stretched through this process.

I am weak. I am empty.

However, is it not an empty vessel that God can fill?

Fill me with your power, oh Lord, that my every breath may be a testimony of your strength being perfected in weakness.