



## Our Story

Anyone who knows me also knows I love to take pictures. But many don't know why pictures are so important to me. I didn't even realize that I had begun to take way, way too many pictures of our children doing everything until they began to point it out and JB began to dislike them, or more honestly, hate taking pictures. I finally realized why they were so important to me. When the picture you are looking at is the first family picture you ever took, it makes you want to have pictures look anyway but like that for the rest of your life.

We were in our early 30's when I became pregnant with our first child. We waited like everyone else to find out what it was going to be. I was young enough and was fortunate enough not to have had any medical concerns to require me to visit the high risk doctors. Those many visits would come later. Instead, we rejoiced when we found out it was a girl and I began to buy a lot of pink things. Being our first child, we had time on our hands and had her nursery and full bath completely decorated and ready for her to come home to. 33 ½ weeks in, God had other plans for us.

In October of 2005, I was volunteering for Susan G. Komen's Central Oklahoma Affiliate and helping with Race for the Cure. My mom is a breast cancer survivor and I had been participating in events to help raise money for that cause. My back started hurting and I didn't know why. I knew we had an appointment that Thursday at a 3D imaging place to take cool, more defined pictures of our little girl. Both sets of grandparents went with JB and I and her heartbeat was just fine and looked good. Everyone was excited. We got several views except she was being stubborn and the technician couldn't get a good, clear view of her face. She told me to come back the next Monday. And I did.

JB had taken off work already for the first round of pictures so I told him it wasn't necessary he go again. He had been at every one of my other appointments and we didn't have any real cause for concern. My back still hurt, but it was my first pregnancy and I didn't know the kind of pain I was having was not ok. My mom said she would go with me. She drove back all the way from my hometown and I am forever thankful she was there with me that day. Still unknown to us, she and I walked in and I remember lying there on the table waiting for the technician to show me a great, clear picture of my little girl's face. There was silence and a lot of rubbing in different places on my stomach. She didn't say anything for the longest time and I began to get that ill feeling rise in the pit of my stomach. I couldn't describe it, but I finally knew before she said the words. The technician then informed us she could not find a heartbeat and that I needed to go see my doctor immediately.

My poor mom... I was getting my first taste of what it felt like not wanting other people to feel bad because of me. She couldn't drive because she was crying so hard and I could drive because I was still trying to process what was happening. I called JB and told him to meet me at Dr. Schlinke's office and then I called Barbara Matthews, a dear friend of mine and co-owner of Matthews Funeral Home in Edmond. I told her the baby's heart had stopped and could her husband and other co-owner of their funeral home, Randy Matthews, please call JB. We didn't know what needed to be done. I am forever grateful to both of them for their support, knowledge and the way they jumped in to help us with logistics we never dreamed we would be doing.

I met JB at our doctor's office. Dr. Schlinke was delivering another baby so one of his partner physicians in his office stepped in to confirm. He did and then contacted Dr. Schlinke. We had two options: I could carry her one more day or go to the hospital and deliver her that afternoon. We chose that afternoon. I remember we picked up Taco Bell and went home to eat and get my bag. It was already packed for when we left for the hospital to bring her home. We ate in disbelief and went to leave. One of our neighbors at the time saw us pulling out of our driveway and smiled and waved, rolling down her window asking if it was baby go time. Of course, she had no idea. We just waved and knew she would find out soon enough. We arrived at the hospital and got another reminder of what it is like to tell someone the news. I will never forget this. There was a sweet older man on the elevator as we were going up to the maternity floor. I of course still looked healthy and pregnant. You see, as much as I wanted there to be something wrong with me and not with Kendal, it just wasn't the case. He was smiling and asking if today was the big day and if it was a boy or girl. We tried to avert our eyes at first but he kept talking. JB finally lost it and stated that I just lost the baby. The poor gentlemen didn't know what to say. I gave my first of many it will be ok smiles that I would learn how to do expertly for others, to let them know it was fine, even though it was far from it! I was so grateful some of my good friends came to the hospital before I had her. I was so thankful they were there. I was still in disbelief and I could tell they knew I was still in denial.

We had Kendal Janae Edwards on Oct 7, 2005. It was an easy delivery; I was induced and given more pitocin than usual since there were not any worries about its effects on her so it did not take long. Dr. Schlinke deduced her heart wasn't strong or developed enough to make it. They let me hold her and we had our first family picture taken. As you can see I didn't know what to do in it. Usually you smile but here I was holding a baby whose eyes would never open, would never learn to say "mom". How does one handle that? Not to mention, we leave the hospital and don't take anything home. Nothing really changes. Two people don't become three, I still have my post-baby weight, but nothing to hold and really make it worth it.

Why did this happen? It's thought and asked by everyone in situations like this. We went home from the hospital, made funeral arrangements, picked out our burial plots as well so she wouldn't be laid to rest alone forever. All of it was a blur. A few things helped us through this. First and foremost was our faith in God. One of my favorite Bible verses now is Psalm 18:16 "He reached down from on high and took hold of me." My husband found this while we were planning her service and it is engraved on her tombstone. I take great comfort in the fact that if we can't hold her, the best being is; no one tops Him, the good Lord above.

Family and friends were also crucial to us during this time. Kent Allen, our preacher at the time, was also a great advisor as he met with us and officiated at her graveside service. His wife, Phyllis, also joined us for her memorial which meant a lot to us. But, the other thing that helped us through this was another family who had gone through this same thing. Sarah McBride is someone I will never forget. At the time, her and her husband were in the same Bible class at church and I knew of her, but we weren't that close. That did not matter to her. She was one of the first people at my front door telling me it was going to be alright. Sarah too had lost a baby and would never get to know that sweet precious being. She told me that maybe not right then, or five years from then and it might not ever be one hundred percent ok again, but that one day, it would be bearable. That gave me so much hope.

Our story does have a happy ending. We didn't let this experience turn us against God or each other. It wasn't always easy at first, but we made it through and I am so proud of JB and me for this! We went on in 2007 to have Meagan Kyla Edwards and then in 2009 to have Berkley Caneel Edwards. We were very fortunate to have the same nurse, Jessica Anderson, RN, BSN, along with Dr. Schlinke, at all three births. Yes, it was destined for JB to be surrounded by girls! I can't complain at all about my family; they are awesome. But I will be honest and say some days and at certain times, I wonder what it would be like with her here; how our story would be so much different. Kenny Chesney, one of JB and mine's favorite country singers, sang a song around the time we lost Kendal. It is called Who You'd Be Today. At the end of the song is my favorite part where he sings: "Sunny days seem to hurt the most, I wear the pain like a heavy coat. The only thing that gives me hope, is I know, I'll see you again someday." As JB stated perfectly at the time, at least we were one for one in getting our children to Heaven. That is the one and most important statistic I hope we continue with our other two girls. Until then, I will aspire to help others through similar experiences.

In Him,

Melanie Edwards



Sometimes love is for a moment.

Sometimes love is for a lifetime.

Sometimes a moment is a lifetime.

Author Unknown