

Dear Family:

This has been Grace's month.

If you're reading this, you probably also saw the e-mail announcing the birth of Grace Colleen Willis on March 9th at 10:10 am at Washington Adventist Hospital (which, like so many other places with "Washington" in their names, is actually in Maryland). That e-mail featured what is probably still my favorite picture of Grace (wearing my Nats cap), which I won't recycle here. But I hope you find these equally enjoyable.



Grace Colleen Willis (2 weeks)

Like most stories, this one has a long and a short version. What I intend to write here is the "Famlet version," which means it will be long on details I consider the most entertaining and short on some others that are probably more important. I'm curious to see how it turns out.

Our three other children were all born by Pitocin-induced labor. And we had no reason to expect this one would be any different. We arrived at the hospital for our 6 A.M. induction appointment, wondering whether this birth would occur during "The Price Is Right" (between 11 and noon), like Hannah's and Lucy's did, or would take all day, like Sophie's.

It turned out to be neither. Crystal's obstetrician arrived shortly after 8 A.M., felt around for a while, mistook the fetus's butt for a head (insert joke here), and did an ultrasound before determining that she was completely breech and too big to be turned.

Both "operating rooms" (or whatever they call the rooms in Labor & Delivery where C-sections are performed) were available. So they brought in the anesthesiologist (I've yet to meet an anesthesiologist who hasn't made me laugh), prepped Crystal for surgery, wheeled her into the cutting room, called me in a short time later, and within an hour of the ultrasound Grace was getting a rubdown under that prime rib heat lamp thing while the doctors glued her mother back together. (One of the nurses chided me for panning back and forth between the two events with the video camera.)

As I sat in my assigned seat by Crystal's head watching the delivery unfold, it occurred to me that as long as you're not actually the person having the baby, C-sections are really the way to go. They're not nearly as gross to watch, nobody expects you to do anything, and, all in all, it's over in about eight seconds. But since all OB's are women now, I guess it shouldn't surprise me that no one's making any special effort to facilitate my



Love,
Tim, Crystal, Hannah, Lucy, Sophie and Grace

birthing experience.

Grace's name is the direct result of my teaching the New Testament in seminary this year, which has forced me to study the writings of Paul a lot more closely than I've ever cared to. This has in turn provided me with some insights on the doctrine of grace that have had a more profound effect on me than anything else has in a long time. Her middle name is obviously a shameless ploy to curry Coco's favor and score additional gifts and free babysitting. But it's hard to imagine her treating Grace any better than she treats our other children, on whom she already dotes and showers gifts like a proud grandmother.

Characteristically, it was Coco who took the day off work to get the big kids off to school and tend Sophie while Crystal and I went to the hospital. And she enhanced Grandma Christine's 10-day stay with frequent, helpful pop-in visits. Grandma Carolyn landed in town three days after Grandma Christine's departure to pick up the slack and will be with us until Wednesday. We are especially grateful for the timing of this visit as it will make it that much easier for me to make a quick, but unavoidable, trip to Orlando early next week. Both grandmas have made it substantially easier for Crystal to follow her doctor's instruction to avoid doing basically anything for four weeks. She's getting better every day and has almost kicked her Percocet habit.

The other kids seem to be adjusting pretty well, with a few hiccups now and then. Sophie's getting better at pronouncing Grace's name ("Dace") and enjoys climbing into her crib. On an unrelated matter, I'm pretty sure now that Sophie is not going to show any interest in potty training until I make her start paying for her own diapers.



First bath (16 days)

Lucy is enjoying her new status as one of the big kids in the family. This month's Lucyism was delivered to Grandma Christine in reaction to the banana muffins she was taking from the oven: "Why would anyone make such a thing?" Lucy wondered indignantly.

Hannah's mostly taking the whole thing in stride, though she recently asked when everything would be "back to normal" again. ("Back to normal" means, among other things, having Mommy make her lunch for her so she doesn't have to eat whatever Lunch Lady Doris is serving up at school.)

And, oh yeah, Happy Easter. Hannah and I are participating in the Washington Family Theatre Singers' Easter Concert at the "Washington, D.C. Temple" (in Maryland) Visitors' Center this evening. It shouldn't be too bad. Good month.

Grace (4 hours) with proud sisters

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