

*Ode to Joella Loraine—Lover of Christ, Wife to Ben,
Mommy to Joel, Nathan, Annie, Alice, and Sam
by her parents Cathy and David Hildebrand*



When I found out that I was pregnant with our second child, I was quite concerned. At that time our first baby was only 4 1/2 months old. So much for nursing preventing pregnancy! I wondered if having another baby so soon would make our first child feel neglected. How could I possibly give her the attention she would still need at age 13 months when I'd have a new baby to care for? My concern that they would be too close together resulted in them being nearly twins and best friends forever. Joey—our surprise baby.

One day in church a lady came and prayed for me. As she was praying, she said, "Though your load will be heavy, God will lighten your load," and so it was. While in the early stage of pregnancy, I became queasy. So, I went to a restaurant nearby and asked if they had and crackers which they sweetly supplied.

I prayed, "Lord, I don't think I can go through this again. Please take away this nausea," and God granted my request, and I never had another moment of it throughout my pregnancy. Joey—my easiest pregnancy.

Another request I had of the Lord was that my second child would "be a sleeper". Our first child hadn't been for several weeks (though by two months she was sleeping through the night). Joella, though, loved sleeping. She would wake to nurse, give me a quick burp, put her thumb in her mouth and go quickly back to sleep. She was the easiest baby on earth. She napped everyday until the second grade, too. Through her childhood, teens, and perhaps even now, once Joey fell asleep, that was it. She could not be awakened. She would behave like someone who had been drugged. Whenever we went to visit, we would do all we could to not let her fall asleep, but our struggles were useless. After a certain point, she was sound asleep on the couch. The whole family got a huge kick out of it. Her dad didn't mind carrying her to the car, but at some point, that was not possible. When God answers prayer, He really answers prayer. Joey—our little sleeper.

Joella was nicknamed Joey almost immediately, but she could have just as easily been named Joy because that is what she lived every day. She was super obedient and cooperative as a child. We actually gave her a couple spankings that she didn't really deserve, just so she'd remember having one or two in her lifetime. She just didn't need to be disciplined. She woke up awake! She played all day long. Although she and her brother got in frequent arguments, the two of them loved to play together for hours. I think this is because his energy level could keep up with hers. Yet, Joey didn't have favorites. She was just as close to her sister with whom she shared a bedroom everyday of her life. Joey—our most well-behaved child.

Joey had a cute aspect of her personality that we noticed before she could even speak. I might be looking for my brush or some other item—asking David if he'd seen it, and in Joey would walk holding the brush. This happened so often, we started calling her "our little finder". That kid had a 100% finding rate. Later, this translated into her being keenly observant. Nothing escaped her "finding" skills. If a friend was feeling blue, she noticed. If he/she had cut his/her hair or bought a new shirt or changed

anything, she'd see it. I think this endeared her to so many, but not only her ability to detect things, but that she genuinely cared about the person and took a natural interest in what was going on in the lives of others. Joey—our little finder

All of our children had good and meaningful friendships, but Joey in particular had an abundance of friends, and every friend's mom claimed her as their own. Not one teacher or parent ever complained to us about her, but always had glowing praise. Joey not only made friend easily, she attracted high quality friends—some of the nicest people you will ever know. Her one request for her wedding was that she could invite ALL of them, which eventually we agreed to. Her wedding included ALL of the family, ALL of her friends, and even some parents of students. She did draw the line at inviting ALL of her former students. We would have needed to rent a stadium eventually. Joey—a friend to all.

This reminds me of when we went to get her wedding gown. Now, Joella was not a good decision maker. I don't mean that her eventual decisions were not sound, only that she took a very long time to make them. I pictured the dress-buying process might be a bit like we would experience when she'd open a menu at a restaurant. On the contrary—she had already agreed with us that if we could find a discounted dress that she liked, she'd go with that. We took several into a room for her to try on, but without saying so, I knew which one she'd pick. When she came out of the dressing room with it on, she was glowing! Everyone KNEW this was her dress. It was white and covered with multicolored embroidered flowers, very subtle, but so obviously perfect for her. In fact, we always thought that whoever made that dress had to know our daughter. It exuded with Joey. It wasn't what anyone else would have purchased. It was Joey. Joey—always unique.

In her twenties, Joey went to her pastor and explained that his church had no eligible men her age (as it was a college-based church), and that she would like to attend a church in town that had more people her age so that she could find a husband. The pastor lovingly understood and blessed her decision. Joey knew God wanted her to get married and be a mom, so this was the logical next step—make meeting a husband possible. She flourished in her new church and met many young men, but she was in no hurry. We first met Ben at a lunch at Dos Coyotes restaurant. There was a large group of people from her church there, and it so happened that Ben sat across the table from me. I didn't know him, and Joella hadn't pointed him out to me, but I instantly liked him and I was annoyed by the girl sitting next to him who was flirting with him way too much. I hoped he'd ignore her advances. As it turned out, this fellow would be the one Joey chose. She'd checked out the menu, but Ben won out over them all. Joey—our eventual decision maker.

Joey was always on the go and threw herself into everything she did from badminton to sewing to acting and eventually into long-distance running. She also began coordinating weddings for her church which helped immensely when we finally did her wedding. She had it all figured out—though she was wise enough to hire a wedding coordinator for her own wedding. Joey—our planner and goal-reacher.

As a mom, Joey shines with the love of Jesus. She genuinely cares for each of her children, and I am sure that they know they are loved.

I think the thing that stands out to me most about Joella is her sweet heart. She is a true friend. She loves deeply and sincerely. She is loyal and confidential. I don't think she is capable of belittling anyone or spreading rumors or seeking to harm anyone. However, I warn you. Do NOT mess with her friends or family. You will meet a Joey you

have never seen. You will HEAR about your error and she will attempt to right the wrong. I'm not saying she would ever be violent, but you do NOT want to be on the receiving end if you are hurting someone she loves. She is a defender of those who cannot defend themselves, and this is evident in every aspect of her life. Joey—defender of the weak.

Joey is a “go-getter”. If she wants to accomplish or learn something, she will do it. We have never ceased to be amazed by what she can do when she wants. As long as it doesn't involve burning the midnight oil, she will get it done. After 9:00, it is lights out for Joella. It's my fault. I prayed for “a sleeper”. Joey—still our little sleeper.

Joella, your mom and daddy have both contributed to this. We are so proud of you and look forward to seeing all the beautiful things God will do through your life, Joey, our sweet, adorable daughter and friend.

