

# life matters

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Baptists for Life, Inc.

P.O. Box 3158

Grand Rapids, MI

49501 [mail]

5075 Clay SW, Suite C

Grand Rapids, MI

49548 [street]

616.257.6800 [tel]

616.257.6805 [fax]

b4life@bfl.org [email]

www.bfl.org [internet]

**Baptists  
for Life inc.**

## Miracle or mistake?

One rocky marriage + a lost job = not a good equation for pregnancy. Nevertheless, Amylynn Kaptein was determined. God is the Giver of life, and no matter what her husband said or did, she would not abort their baby.

He chose to abandon her and their toddler-age son. Suddenly single with no income and a baby on the way, life looked bleak. Then came a prenatal checkup. The sonographer began to cry and left the room.

Alone in the examination room, Amylynn wondered at the woman's strange reaction. Could she just be having a bad day? The door opened and two people stood before her, a doctor and a geneticist. Silence. Tears welled in Amylynn's eyes.

Both had reviewed the ultrasound results and believed her baby had Trisomy 18, a genetic disorder in which the person has an extra 18<sup>th</sup> chromosome. It causes people to have misshapen skulls, malformed ears, and heart defects. The condition is usually fatal within weeks or months of birth. Children who survive often have intellectual disabilities.

### A girl with no face

Now late in her second trimester, Amylynn felt crushed when offered an "early termination." After rejecting that option, the doctors referred her to grief counselors, state assistance to pay for medical and funeral costs, and social workers. They expected her to give birth prematurely. After all, it appeared the baby was missing a left heart ventricle. And oh, by the way, she doesn't have a face.

What!?! How could a baby have no face? "Could I have another ultrasound in a couple weeks?" Amylynn asked. No. "Your baby won't grow a face in two weeks. If your baby doesn't have a face today, she's not going to have one. Ever."

Amylynn chose to hope that the Lord would comfort her in her loss, sustain her through grief, empower her to care for a baby with Trisomy 18, and equip her to care for a child without a left ventricle. Or no face.

She also chose to obey 1 Corinthians 2:5 – "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" – and

decided to give her daughter a name. This would strengthen the maternal bond and aid her prayers for her baby. She revealed her heartache to only a few family members and friends, enlisting their prayer support.

During the remaining weeks of pregnancy, Amylynn had five more ultrasounds, with an amniocentesis at 25 weeks. This genetic test revealed her daughter did *not* have Trisomy 18. Praise the Lord! Yet, each ultrasound foretold the same dire prediction: "Baby will not have a face. Baby does not appear to have two heart ventricles, only one."

Due to other health concerns, Amylynn was scheduled to give birth by Caesarean section. One last ultrasound was performed right before surgery and the prognosis was the same: "Baby truly did not appear to have any facial structure – a big hole where her mouth and nose should be."

### A trial of faith

On the operating table, Amylynn broke down sobbing. "Was I prepared, really, for this? I cried for my husband who had no idea his daughter was about to be born. I cried for him as he would not experience the miracle of birth. I cried for my daughter who would not know her father. I cried for my daughter who would face life without a face. I cried for myself because I felt alone and weary just from thinking of what challenges lay ahead, and I cried out of shame for not trusting in the Lord. I prayed, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.'"

Amylynn's sister, an ER nurse, tried to calm her by holding her hand. Reciting scriptures such as Ephesians 3:20 and Philippians 4:13, Amylynn felt as though God was holding her other hand. She doesn't recall feeling any pain during surgery. "I was numb with waiting and anticipation."

Her baby was born, and it was a few seconds before she cried. Amylynn asked her sister, "Is she okay? What's wrong? What's going on?" Her sister finally found her own voice, enough to say, "Oh, Amy . . . her face is perfect. She's beautiful!"

Inside, Amylynn was screaming, "Let me see!" but said nothing until they placed her

in her arms. "I cuddled her to my chest and thanked God for the miracle of her birth, for her face, for her health." She was perfect. No defect. No missing heart ventricle.

### The face of God

Today, Abigail Analyse is 15 months old, still beautiful and bright.<sup>1</sup> Amylynn says, "I do not believe the doctors were wrong. Rather, I believe God answered my prayers."

Abigail in the Old Testament was wise and beautiful. Amylynn says, "Now, when I look at my sweet, precious Abigail, not only do I see a face, a miracle, and an answer to prayer – I see the face of God." Analyse means "the oath and grace of God." To Amylynn she is "living proof of God and His grace and that His word never returns to Him empty." Abortion violates God's word, and denies its life-giving power.<sup>2</sup>

What do we make of flawed prenatal diagnoses? While rare, "false positives" do occur. Studies show a false positive rate as high as 9.9%.<sup>3</sup> Many parents weigh the anxiety of an unsettling diagnosis against being reassured and having the ability to prepare.

Amylynn has a good philosophy: "I trust science, but I believe God." No matter what happened, she knew He would care for her.

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1) For photos, go to [www.bfl.org/Pregnant-/Difficult-Prenatal-Diagnosis/Miracle-or-Mistake.aspx](http://www.bfl.org/Pregnant-/Difficult-Prenatal-Diagnosis/Miracle-or-Mistake.aspx). 2) Deuteronomy 8:3; John 6:63; Psalm 9:10 & 56:3. 3) "The performance of routine ultrasonographic screening of pregnancies in the Eurofetus Study," *Am J Obstet Gynecol*, August 1999, 181:2, pp. 446-54; "Correlation between prenatal ultrasound and fetal autopsy findings in fetal anomalies terminated in the second trimester" ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/117335106](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/117335106)), 2007; "Correlation between prenatal ultrasound and autopsy findings: A study of second-trimester abortions" ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17121414](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17121414)), 2006; "Comparison of prenatal ultrasound findings and autopsy findings in fetuses terminated after prenatal diagnosis of malformations: an experience of a clinical genetics center" ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20336773](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20336773)), 2010; "Comparison of ultrasound and autopsy findings in pregnancies terminated due to fetal anomalies" ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17068680](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17068680)), 2006.

For more on this subject, read "What About Prenatal Testing?" ([www.bfl.org/Issues-Answers/Bioethics/Prenatal-Testing.aspx](http://www.bfl.org/Issues-Answers/Bioethics/Prenatal-Testing.aspx)) and "What About Abortion for the Baby's or Mother's Health?" ([www.bfl.org/Issues-Answers/Abortion/Abortions-for-Health.aspx](http://www.bfl.org/Issues-Answers/Abortion/Abortions-for-Health.aspx)).