

Not my plan

By Kathleen Basi

"For I know the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope"
(Jeremiah 29:11).

This wasn't how it was supposed to be.

Not that I had a plan, not really. I know better than to tell God how things should be. But the day Julianna was born, I knew this much: things were not the way they were supposed to be.

I was not supposed to be having a repeat C-section. I had controlled my diet throughout pregnancy specifically to avoid it. But at 37 weeks, Julianna somersaulted into a foot-first breech, so off to the O.R. we went.

She was not supposed to be born with low blood sugar. She was not supposed to be whisked off to the nursery for her first feeding, far from the warmth of mother's arms and the nourishment

of mother's milk.

My daughter most definitely was not supposed to have Down Syndrome. I was not supposed to spend the hours after surgery lying helpless on a hospital bed while my husband and I wept in each other's arms. We weren't supposed to spend our first hours with our daughter wondering how, or if, she would ever function independently in adulthood.

She wasn't supposed to be born with three holes in her heart, or to have blood drawn six times in the first three days. Nor was she supposed to become so jaundiced that she had to spend those days under bilirubin lights, only visiting me long enough to nurse.

I wasn't supposed to spend

two and a half days alone in a hospital room while my husband argued with nurses and doctors by telephone. He wasn't supposed to be fighting medical battles while simultaneously trying to maintain a normal routine for our two-year-old son, Alex.

We weren't supposed to spend Julianna's first week running from one hospital to another for echocardiograms and genetic counseling, sitting in examining rooms for hours while doctors disrespected our time and Alex began to act out from sheer boredom.

Julianna wasn't supposed to need heart medicine that made her lose a pound in her third week. She wasn't supposed to start her life with the threat of open-heart surgery looming over her.

We weren't supposed to receive an email praying that God would remove the demonic influence from our daughter and make her perfectly healthy.

A lot of things weren't supposed to happen. Or so I thought.

But as time goes by, I am learning that in spite of how wrong everything seemed those first few days, God does have a plan. It's just not my plan.

Julianna was supposed to be born into a family that gathered fiercely around her — and us — from the moment the words “chromosomal abnormality” first

were spoken. It was God who gave her four grandparents who adored her at first sight, lavishing her with love when her parents were too overwhelmed to do so. It was God who gave her one uncle who would defend her passionately before he even saw her picture, and another who has a special place in his heart for children just like her. It was God who surrounded her with aunts who are teachers, physical therapists, lawyers and researchers, to say nothing of the army of cousins waiting in the wings. In other words, it was God who sent Julianna to a family particularly suited to welcome her into this world.

Alex is supposed to have a little sister whose very nature will challenge him to be kinder and gentler than he would otherwise have been.

My husband is supposed to have a child whose very nature challenges him to release control into God's hands, an act of faith greater than any he has faced before.

I am supposed to have a child whose very nature challenges my notion of “perfect.” A child who teaches me to recognize the beauty in every person I meet.

I do not know what challenges we will face in the days, months, and years to come. I do know that God has a plan, and that in time, He will reveal it. At times, I still grieve for the child I planned to have. But at the same time, I am

fiercely in love with this little girl whom God has given into my care. And as she changes me from the woman I am into the woman I am

called to be, I pray that God will make me worthy of her love. ❖

Kathleen Basi shares her personal story from Columbia, Missouri.