

As the parent of two daughters, both adopted, I never had the chance to witness the birth of a child. This in no way diminishes the love I have for my daughters. I love them as any biological parent loves their own child. Yet, as strange as it may seem, the fact that I never had the opportunity to witness the miracle of birth firsthand makes the birth of each litter of pups that we have a special experience and affirmation of the greatness of God. The opportunity to nurture these precious, totally dependent, little creatures that will grow into living examples of unconditional love is nothing short of glorious. Yet, there are times, as infrequent as they may be, when this joy is interrupted and overshadowed by the sadness of death. Today was one of those days as we lost a four day old pup that we had tried our best to help win its struggle for life.

Far away from the house in a secluded corner of our back yard I thrust the shovel into the ground. I pressed down on the blade with my foot digging deeply into the soft soil. When the hole was deep enough I turned around and lifted the black, female pup that I had placed on a small white towel. As I looked at her and felt the chill of her tiny, lifeless body, I asked myself - why?

I gently placed the pup in the ground and covered the hole with soil. The beautiful gift that God had sent us only four days earlier would never be seen again. Within days her life would be all but forgotten. Reflecting on this truth I stood there for a moment and said a silent prayer. As I turned and headed back toward the house the morning sun shined brightly through a forest of barren trees. The warmth of the sun on my face reminded me that spring was around the corner and that the barren trees would once again be abundant with foliage.

After returning the shovel to the tool shed I immediately headed for the whelping box to check on the remaining nine pups in the litter. Peering over the side I saw and heard the fullness of life as the pups excitedly nursed from their exhausted mother. Their vivaciousness was a direct contrast to the limp, lifeless pup that I had just buried. This reality led me to reflect on the contrast of the bright light of the life giving sun peering through the barren trees.

Life is truly precious and we are all blessed by God's creation. Something can be learned and appreciated through all things, even what appears to be the meaningless existence of a four day old puppy. During the four days our family cared for that pup the attention, care and patience that my wife exhibited in trying to nurse the struggling pup to health was a beautiful revelation of the tender, caring and compassionate heart that she has. The concern of my two young daughters exhibited through their suggestions that I place the puppy on a heating pad to ensure that it was warm enough and their gentle handling of the pup while trying to help it nurse affirmed their care and compassion for God's creation.

The death of any pup is saddening. Yet, the sadness we feel because of that loss should serve to strengthen our appreciation for the pups that are thriving and will go on to enrich the life of some lucky person or family.

Reflection in the face of sorrow is a good thing. If we take the time to contemplate the reason for our sadness during a time of loss it will inevitably lead us to a deeper appreciation for all of creation.