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Life is comprised of seasons. Winter in Canada is cold and snow is inevitable, though it won't last forever. In springtime the sun melts the ice away. Summer is always too short and fall brings a harvest of thankfulness. We expect the same pattern every year, and faithfully the cycle repeats itself.

In the winter of 2004 my husband, Kirk, and I discovered we were expecting twin girls. That summer, Annie and Audrey arrived. Big sister Lily was three, big brother Russell was two, and family life was a happy, exhausting whirlwind.

Completely unaware of the chaos to come, we embraced this season of busyness, believing it would come to an end, as all seasons do.

Four months later, the unthinkable happened: Annie had her first seizure. After a CT scan and days of waiting at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Ont., we were given her diagnosis—Tuberous Sclerosis Complex (TSC). I had never heard of it.

Overwhelmed by the volume of information in that meeting, I managed to catch one detail: TSC is genetic.

Genetic? I felt my throat tighten and the tears well up. I told them about Audrey, our other baby at home.

It's not every day you see a medical team lose their composure; this news had just gone from bad to worse.

After Annie's diagnosis, we were told to keep our eye on Audrey and to arrange tests for her as well. Three weeks later, Audrey began having seizures and she, too, was diagnosed with TSC.

Tiny victories

TSC is a genetic condition that allows benign tumours or "tubers" to grow on the skin, central nervous system and other organs (see [tscanada.ca](#)).

Annie and Audrey function at a two- to three-year-old level and suffer from sleep disorders, seizures, anxiety, feeding difficulty, autism, aggression and global developmental delay.

Kirk and I are still changing the girls' diapers, bathing and dressing them, fighting to get their teeth brushed, and guessing at what's wrong when they're upset.

As they get older, their independence will be minimal, but we are hopeful and encouraged when we see tiny victories surface.

Simple things like being able to sit through an assembly at school or going into a store without an anxious meltdown are milestones we don't take for granted.

At times people stare as our ten-year-olds turn in circles. We're okay with that. We understand that our life of raising twins with special needs is not everyone's reality. The truth is, a few decades ago, our girls would have likely been institutionalized by now, and certainly not dancing and singing in church.

But they are in church and are loved by the people there.

An accommodating church

Bramalea Alliance has been our church home for over 12 years and our family has been greatly welcomed there. At about four years old, the twins were physically outgrowing the toddler room. The Children's Directors asked for our input about accommodating the twins. We suggested a special needs room.

Audrey enjoys sitting in church most Sundays but will sometimes opt for the special room with her worker. Annie is usually happy when we pull into the church parking lot and will sometimes stay for the worship time before heading to her special room.

Annie and Audrey's connection to the Lord is undeniable. They will never lead a Sunday School class or give a dime of their hard-earned money to missions. Still, they are part of the Church and they bear the image of God.

"God doesn't give us more than we can handle" is merely a phrase; it's not Scripture. God gives us what he can handle—we just have to be willing to let him handle it.

What does that mean?

It means I am living a God-glorifying life, in spite of chronic trial—and I'm not living it alone.

After a year of dealing with insomniac two-year-olds, Kirk and I were wearing out. I felt like maybe this was more than I could handle. I was discouraged, confused, angry and heartbroken. Annie and Audrey didn't even know who I was.

My toddlers were not progressing well. They slept little, had seizures, and showed signs of having autism. This was not what I had expected my life to be, and this season was not ending.

I prayed. My Christian friends prayed. Our pastor anointed the girls with oil, laid hands on them, and he prayed too.

In the darkness, I shook my fist in the air and cried out to God, "This is all I can handle!"

And then it stopped. I stopped. I opened my fist and the God of the universe took me by the hand, led me to His Word and poured truth into my soul.

A critical choice

I began to recall Scriptures, and listened intently to the worship DVDs the twins were obsessed with, which the Lord used to remind me of some specific truths. God keeps His word. God loves me. God has not forgotten me. God is faithful. God is in control.

I realized I had a choice to make. I could either keep complaining about how difficult this season was, or I could decide to stop being angry at God and look for ways to use my wakeful times for something good.

So what did I choose? In my ongoing difficult season, I chose to give Jesus my worries, my fears and my broken heart. I chose to open my Bible, and read it regularly. I chose to connect with TSC families and stay connected with my church family.

Perhaps the most important choice was choosing to be thankful.

I wrote thankful lists, kept a journal and prayed ... and then it happened.

My perspective changed and God gave me a good gift. I realized that God's design isn't flawed; he designed our family with purpose.

I experience true joy when Annie and Audrey sing and dance, when classmates befriend them, or when they simply play the way other children play.

I have also experienced genuine grief over the loss of dreams and what I had expected this life to be. Yet, in the midst of seizures and insomnia, supernatural peace and illogical joy are mine, given to me by my Father in heaven.

It's been a long winter, a whole decade of dealing with TSC.

It's still snowing, but we live in a season of hope.

After all, our Creator God is the one who faithfully changes the seasons and His love is one thing that does go on forever.



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