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## Friday Five: Darlene Davis

by Devon Williams, associate editor

*'God gave me a gift and healed my child.'*

In 1999, Joseph Davis was born with sickle-cell anemia, a life-threatening blood disease that deprives the body of oxygen. At 8 months old, he had his first of many sickle-cell crises — his hands and feet swelled, and he had numerous fevers. He was in and out of the hospital 20 times and had three blood transfusions before he reached his second birthday.

When Joseph's parents, Joseph Sr. and Darlene, got pregnant with Isaac, they learned about treatments available through umbilical cord-blood technology. When Isaac was born in 2002, his cord blood was a perfect match and saved his big brother's life. The Texas family was thrilled by the unexpected blessing.

Darlene Davis shared the miraculous story with *CitizenLink*.

### **1. How did you learn that umbilical-cord blood could save Joseph's life?**

We knew about bone-marrow transplants, but we searched all over the world and couldn't find an adult stem-cell match. I had to step back, get closer to God and ask Him to put people in my life to give me knowledge and to help me. He answered those prayers through the oncology doctors who educated us about umbilical-cord blood.

It was hard for me to get pregnant, so when I found out I was pregnant with Isaac, I knew in my heart that it had to be God.

### **2. When did you find out that Isaac was a match for Joseph?**

When I was six months pregnant with Isaac, I had to have an amniocentesis (genetic testing). I asked if they could test Isaac — whose name means "laughter" — to see if he was a match for Joseph. Within two weeks, we found out that Isaac was a perfect match. The doctor said that Joseph and Isaac were like identical twins. Tell me that God isn't real!

### **3. What was the next step for Joseph and Isaac?**

When Isaac was born, they took his umbilical-cord blood out and sent it to a cord-blood bank in Tucson, Ariz., to get cleaned. Joseph had chemo for nine straight days to clear everything out of his body. The doctors told me he could die, but I went in there with faith and kept believing. Everything didn't go like I wanted it to, but I made sure I put God first and went in there with my mind made up that God was going to have everything to do with this because I know that He doesn't fail.

On May 10, 2002, Joseph had the cord-blood transplant from his brother, and by the end of June he was out of the hospital — healed.

### **4. Joseph is 8 years old now. How is he doing?**

He's doing great and he's loving life. When he was little, the doctors told me he would have to take antibiotics every day for the rest of his life. Guess what? He's not taking anything. And I thank God for that.

### **5. How has God been using your family's story?**

God gave me a gift and healed my child, and I don't want to keep this blessing for myself. So, we travel to state capitals and speak to the senators to try to help pass bills to give women the option of saving their cord blood or donating it.

Joseph and Isaac get the chance to speak at the hearings, too. Joseph knows that his brother saved his life, and he thanks his brother every time he speaks. He calls Isaac "Superman." When Isaac speaks, he says, "My name is Isaac. I saved my brother's life with my cord blood, and he's my best friend. Please pass this bill."

The trials and tribulations I've gone through have shown me what God put me here for — to show people that He is real. I had to go through this for God to show me that.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Texas' [Free Market Foundation](#) arranged for the Davises to testify this month before a state House committee. They also spoke during a 2007 Texas hearing in favor of legislation requiring pregnant women be provided with information about the life-saving benefits of cord-blood storage. That is now Texas law.

[Read more about the Davis family and watch a video.](#)

[Learn about the value of umbilical-cord blood storage and donation.](#)

Visit the [National Marrow Donor Program's Web site](#) to learn how to donate umbilical-cord blood.

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