

Solution Story - Sadness

Amen!

“Grandma, what does ‘Amen’ mean?”

My seven-year-old grandson’s curiosity had finally broken the silence. In the two days that he had been staying with me, his silence had become deafening. Brad had always been a happy-go-lucky boy with a wide grin and a bright spark in his eyes. The shock of his mother being in the hospital had stymied him. Each time I looked into his tear-filled blue eyes, it broke my heart.

I had been singing an old gospel song, “His Eye is on the Sparrow,” while my silent little helper and I made fudge, stirring the rich, mouth-watering chocolate on the stove. As we poured the hot fudge into a bowl, I had finished the hymn with a rousing “Amen, Amen, Amen”!

And then came Brad’s quiet question, the first words he had spoken in two whole days. “Grandma, what does ‘Amen’ mean?”

As I beat the fudge by hand to get it to just the right consistency, I replied, “Sometimes people use the word ‘Amen’ when they’ve said something they think is important,” which is what I did.

“And sometimes people use the word ‘Amen’ when they think someone else has said something important, to let them know they approve.” I emptied the fudge onto a plate.

Brad tentatively poked his finger into one end of the cooling fudge, and I said with mock-seriousness, “Wait until it sets, young man!” and swatted him away with my dish towel. I was rewarded with a small smile.

Sitting down next to him, I went on, “Sometimes I use ‘Amen’ when I pray for something good to happen or when something good has happened. It’s a way I use to affirm my blessings and my gratitude for all the good in my life.”

I cut the cooled fudge into squares and handed a yummy-looking piece to Brad. He didn’t take it. Instead, he said quietly, “But how do you feel grateful when you are feeling sad, really sad?”

I popped the piece onto a napkin in front of him. “Oh, that’s one of the most important times to feel gratitude! Even when we are feeling sad we can be grateful. Right now, I’m grateful for the doctors and nurses who are taking good care of your mother. I’m grateful we have each other and this nice house. And I’m grateful for the strength to carry on, and the promise of hope that your mother will be well soon.”

Brad just stared at me. I held my breath. Then, he picked up the fudge, and in a tiny voice said, “Okay, I’m grateful for this fudge,” and popped it into his mouth. I breathed a sigh of relief and said, “Of course, you are! Who could help it!” And chewed my own piece with grunts of pleasure and eye-rolling satisfaction.

Brad laughed, and then his words poured out—all of the things he was grateful for.

“Mommy has magic kisses, Grandma! One time I fell off my bike in front of some big kids who laughed at me, and Mommy kissed my tears and told me I was a big boy and they were just being silly-heads and I felt happy and got back on my bike and I haven’t fallen off since. Not once! And at night, when she tucks me into bed, she always plugs in the nightlight, hands me teddy, and tells me stories til I fall asleep. I love her stories, they’re magic, too—all about princes and dragons and baseballs and rocket-ships! You know what else, Grandma?”

Just then, the phone rang and I said, “Hold that thought!” and answered it.

“Hello. Yes? Yes? Oh, that’s wonderful news! Thanks so much for calling. We are so grateful!” I turned to my grandson’s eager face.

“Your mother is going to be all right. She’s coming home soon!”

We danced around the large, old kitchen, shouting “Amen! Amen! Amen!” until we were both out of breath. Then, Brad pulled me down to eye-level and said, “It works! Counting our blessings in time of trouble works, doesn’t it, Grandma?”

“Amen to that, Brad,” I said with a laugh. “Amen!”