

Journey of loss, grief, faith for Selah singer's family

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.—When the contemporary Christian group [Selah](#) recorded “It Is Well with My Soul” and “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” for their 1999 debut album, *Be Still My Soul*, one of its members, Todd Smith, had no idea how those hymns would help him and his family through a season of grief a decade later.

When Smith’s wife, Angie, was 18 weeks pregnant with their fourth daughter, Audrey, she went in for what she thought would be a routine ultrasound.

Todd and Angie Smith were told their unborn baby had several medical conditions incompatible with life, and they were advised to terminate the pregnancy. They refused, praying God would provide a miracle. At 32 weeks, Audrey Caroline was born, giving the Smiths the pleasure of knowing her during her two-and-a-half hours of life.

She recalls the medical technician asking several cryptic questions before her doctor came in and confirmed her worst possible fears, saying: “Your child has many conditions. Her kidneys aren’t functioning, and her heart is much too large. Each of these is a lethal condition. There is no amniotic fluid, and her lungs are not developing. You will have some choices to make.”

The doctor and his staff encouraged her to terminate the pregnancy.

Overwhelmed, the Smiths sought the opinions of other doctors and specialists. The general consensus was their baby would die in the womb, and if she did survive birth, she probably would gasp for breath and live only a minute at the most.

The couple left each doctor's visit confused and shaken, but they adamantly refused to have an abortion.

During their time of uncertainty and heartache, the Smiths had little left to do but cry out to God and trust in him—no matter what the outcome would be for their baby.

They soon discovered providing individual updates to family and friends was too daunting a task. So, Angie Smith began writing a blog for their loved ones called "Bring the Rain."

✖ During Selah's concerts, Smith asked audiences for prayer and shared about his wife's blog. Within a few months, "Bring the Rain" was receiving 500,000 hits per month and Angie Smith became one of America's top-ranked "mommy bloggers."

While anticipating the birth of their baby girl, Audrey Caroline, they concluded a C-section would give her the greatest possibility to live.

"Angie was just so brave. She was in so much pain because there was no amniotic fluid. She just sacrificed her body," Smith said.

On April 7, 2008, Audrey Caroline entered the world and exited it a few hours later. The Smiths consider the few precious hours they spent with Audrey a miracle and precious gift from God.

"When Audrey came out, we got to hear her cry, which we thought we would never get to do, and I got to see her move just a little bit," Smith said.

“I brought her over to Angie, and we just wept. Everything that we could think of to tell her right there, we did. She just had this beautiful little face. We were also thankful that her sisters and many relatives also got to see her.

“She lived for about two-and-a-half hours and never gasped for breath. There was no screaming. It was just so peaceful. In fact, it was the most peaceful day that I’ve ever experienced in my life. I would have never thought that was possible, but there was so much joy. We were with our girl, and we wanted to show her off to everybody. God just really turned a horrible experience into something amazing.”

Shortly after learning that Audrey’s condition would be terminal, Angie Smith wanted to create a song to convey her feelings about baby Audrey. The Smiths met with songwriter Christa Wells and wrote the song, “I Will Carry You.” Although the song originally was intended only for Audrey’s memorial service, the other members of Selah were so moved by it they requested it be released to the public.

Between waves of grief in the weeks following Audrey’s death, the Smith family experienced another devastating loss.

Todd Smith’s sister, Nicol Sponberg, a Christian recording artist and former member of Selah, lost her 2-month-old son, Luke, to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. In their grief, the Smiths had a foundational choice to make.

“We had to look at what we were going to choose to believe,” Smith said. “We had to decide if the God that we chose to worship in the good times was the same and just as faithful in this horrific time. It hasn’t been easy. There have been and still are, major ups and downs, but we choose to trust him because we know that he is good and faithful.

“You need to be honest about your desperation and honest about how awful

it is. Yes, it is horrible. You deal with these different times where you have disbelief, incredible pain, anger, frustration and unanswered questions. But at the same time, there's this incredible peace and this hope. ...

"Every time we hear that a person's life has been changed through what happened to us, it gives weight to Audrey's life. My little girl, who was in the womb for 32 weeks, has made more of an impact on people than I probably will my whole life."

Angie Smith has written a book, [*I Will Carry You*](#), as a way to minister to others who have suffered the loss of a child while sharing that the source of their hope and peace comes from a relationship with Christ.

"I think one of the main themes that I learned through this is that God is not intimidated by my frustrations, questions and sadness," she said. "I definitely developed a different understanding of Christ as a comforter. Just knowing that no matter what I was feeling or how alone I felt, I had to bring all of that to him, instead of shying away. We are all going to go through times where we feel like everything is falling apart, but what God wants is for us to remain faithful and turn to him during those times for comfort and just cry out to him. ...

"I think we'd be lying if we said that there weren't moments where we just felt abandoned and confused. But to come through this experience and feel like our faith is stronger is an amazing testimony of who God is to us when we're in those dark places.

"I think it's different when you've walked through a season like this to be able to say: 'We're just barely on the other side of this, but we do have hope and a strong faith because we know that Jesus will not fail those who trust in him.'"