

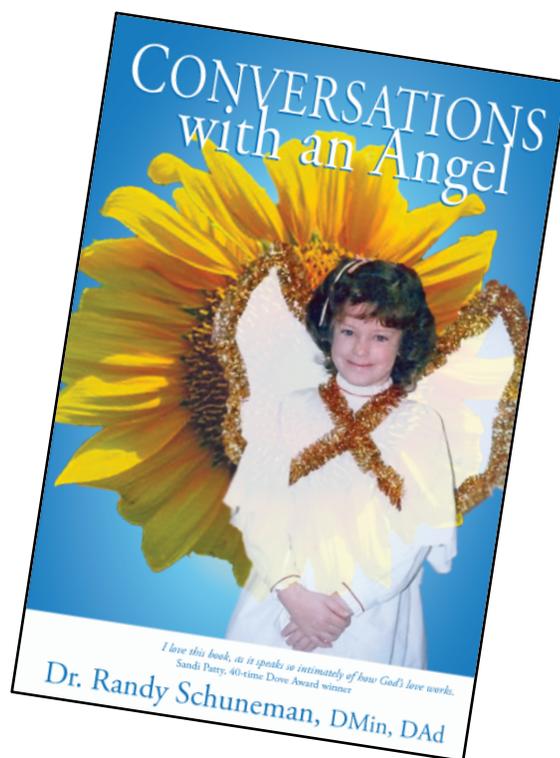
IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY, BABY GIRL!

a *Conversations with an Angel* “web extra”

by Randy Schuneman

I love the fact that I am living close enough to my family to celebrate major milestones of their children with them. My nephew, Jonathan Meisner and his wife Michelle are expecting their first baby in November. Bonnie's niece Cindy Keathley and her husband Jonathan are expecting their second child in January. Bonnie's niece Natalie and her husband Chad are expecting their second child early next year as well.

Along with those new arrivals, I have the joy of watching Henry “I haven't seen you in years” Stanford and Annabelle “I am already in the Homecoming court” Keathley play soccer with other three-year-olds. By the way, watching three-year-olds play soccer is a hoot! Between the eye-poking, the crying and the pouting, some soccer gets played. One boy was holding the soccer ball when his coach “slapped” it out of his hands. The look of dismay on that boy's face was priceless! I could tell he was thinking, “Lady, what did I do wrong to make you do that?”



I get to go on “movie dates” with Mariah and Rachel Slothower. Michael Key Jones and I make regular “runs” to Lowe’s. I get to watch Kenzie march in the band. If all goes well, Kaitlin and I are planning to go to a Taylor Swift concert! I am trying to convince Bonnie that I just want *quality time* with Katie! I have been able to teach Cayden Cook how to walk. I do not get to see Hannah and Wyatt as often, but they are a source of great joy.

The celebrations now are major events. Spiderman showed up at one birthday party. There are lots of little friends with presents and cake. When Jennie reached her first birthday, it was a fairly quiet event. There was cake. There were family members present. There were an abundance of gifts. However, once the gifts were opened and the cake eaten, a simple act of love was shared. Dressed in the silliest looking clown suit I could find, I knelt down before Jennie and read her the original poem I had written for this special occasion.

The poem was entitled, “It’s Your Birthday, Baby Girl!” The work was never confused with any of Robert Frost’s work, but in my own way, I communicated how much I loved my daughter. Jennie did not understand a word I said, but did manage to smile while I was reading it.

The Christmas before she died, I wrote a letter to Jennie that would prove to be my final written message to her. I was preparing to lead the men of our church through a ministry entitled *Letters from Dad*. The ministry is great for men, because it only requires one meeting a month for four months. It provides a great opportunity to “bond” while writing a letter to your wife, then your children, then your parents and finally, a letter to be read at your funeral.

We were scheduled to start the ministry in January, but I wanted to make sure it worked. I decided to write Bonnie the first letter. Our anniversary was in November. As I started writing her letter, a part of my brain opened up that had never been used before. You know, the part where a man actually *plans* to celebrate his anniversary instead of that “*last minute*” shopping that we are so good at.