

**Statement from Jacob's Mother at memorial service
Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Cambridge, February 24, 2006**

What meaning can there be in burying my child who should have buried me, years from now? What comfort for all of us whose lives he enriched?

The only comfort I can find after Jacob's death, I find in his 19 years of life. He was a loving and compassionate friend and family member. He worried about friends who were drinking or drugging too much – even when he was doing the same. He cared about helping his friends and he was angry when he saw anyone mistreated or discriminated against in any way. He cared about justice. He was sweet and patient with little children and he adored his dog, Yoda. He worried terribly about my asthma. He made people laugh a lot with his hilarious tricks and faces and quick comebacks. He had a really hard time with academics, but he was a thinker of profound thoughts – and he learned in the last year that he was simply brilliant at mechanics, his chosen profession.

My son was a good and loving young man. He brought people sunshine. He brought me so much joy, and reminded me not to take things too seriously. He taught me how to love more than I knew possible, and to be less judgmental. When he was little, he taught me patience to help him make birthday cupcakes and muffins for his Pooh-bear two or three times a week, for over a year of birthdays. He taught me to see the tiniest little bug crawling on a leaf on our walk to preschool. He taught me to listen really carefully and to try hard not to interrupt when he had something really important to say without having all the right words.

Jacob was always looking for paths of kindness and peace, and for spiritual meaning. When Jacob was only five, and for years after, he asked, "Mommy, why are we here?" I was astonished that such a tiny person could ask so profound a question. The best answer I could muster was something like, "so we can all help each other." He accepted that answer, but wanted more – and so began his spiritual quest, which started early and ran deep.

I thank God for the spiritual place in his heart, nourished by his parents' Judaism, the relationship he found with Jesus while he was at Heartland, and here at Vineyard, his last spiritual home. Jacob became spiritually whole again, after a couple of years of drugs eating away at that wholeness. It wasn't easy for me when Jacob left Judaism for Christianity, but I embraced his new spiritual home when I saw that his love for Jesus kept him sober for 8 ½ months, gave him hope, restored his moral compass – and restored him to us. I thank his God and mine, the same God, for the priceless gift of his last 8 ½ months of life, when he turned his face back toward us and toward life. I thank God that the day that Jacob died, he was a happy young man, proud of his new-found skills in mechanics, of the A's he got in science labs all week, of his ability to bring a girl he cared about to see the same beautiful view we used to show to him, and thrilled about his powerful – too powerful – car. I thank God he laughed that

night, and joked, and talked about loving us and about his future, which looked good for the first time in years. I thank God for his beautiful and loving heart, and for the light that radiated out from him for all to see.

But Jacob took many wrong turns in his short life, and was often angry at himself for those mistakes. Often, so were his parents and family. His last mistake cost him his life and nearly lost Ryan his. He trusted that his belief in Jesus could keep him sober, and it did, for 8 ½ months.

But Jacob was forgetful, especially when something was on his mind, and for just that brief moment last Thursday night, he forgot his love for Jesus, and his love for life, and our love for him, and he forgot his own knowledge that picking up a single drink or drug could lose him everything. He forgot just long enough to take that first drink, and the second, and the third, just enough to kick in his mania and kick out his common sense. My pain over losing my beloved boy will never end, but I thank God that his friend Ryan lived to learn from this tragedy, and that the other car was unharmed.

All it takes is one little moment of forgetting. I want all of Jacob's friends, and everyone who has ever struggled with substance abuse, or bipolar disorder, or dangerous impulses to remember. It only takes a moment. Remember Jacob, and do not forget your own mortality, or the mortality of those you love. It is real. My son is dead. Please honor my son with your life. Treat it lovingly, as he would.

I want to end with a little story about Jacob as a little boy, because it reflects both the struggles he had with frustration and anger with that frustration, and his ability, even at his angriest and most despairing, to reach out with tender concern for family and friends. When Jacob was six, Jacob was caught up in one of his usual complex lego structures in the middle of the dining room, we were getting ready for company and told him to move it elsewhere. He broke something in the process, got frustrated, and made a big mess of the legos. A bit sharply, I told him to clean it all up, *right away*. Jacob, frustrated, picked up his box of legos and dumped them all over the floor. I yelled JACOB, GET TO YOUR ROOM RIGHT NOW, TILL YOU ARE READY TO CLEAN THIS UP! Jacob responded with the forbidden words: SHUT UP! Really angry, I carried him to his room and told him to stay till he could apologize for his language and clean up.

The next day, the identical lego problem arose, but this time, when he dumped the legos and I yelled at him to pick them up, he yelled, CHILL OUT! The third day as well, the legos got thrown onto the floor, I admonished Jacob yet again, but this time, he yelled: CHILL OUT AND GO IN THE KITCHEN AND COOK – AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!!! Even in his anger at me, he wanted me to be cared for. And that was true to his dying day. He could drive me to distraction, but my son was a loving son.

Jacob, my son, you are the light of my life, you will *a/ways* be a blessing to me, to all our family, and to all whose lives were touched by your loving heart. I miss you so much.