by Rick Bowers

Talk about love!
That’s what you’ll hear in Mike and Sandra Kozloski’s voices when they talk about their 7-year-old daughter, Jordan.

Sometimes, though, you’ll also hear something else—the sound of sorrow, pain and guilt.

When the couple adopted Jordan, she was just 2, and they had great dreams of building a happy family. “We believe that God put her here so that we could love her and nurture her, and we wanted to take care of her,” Sandra says.

Indeed, they went to great lengths to do so. “They were building a subdivision behind our house at that time,” Sandra explains, “so I had Mike put up a fence to protect her from all of the heavy machinery and the people going through the subdivision.”

Unfortunately, like many other parents, the couple soon learned—on May 17, 2003, to be exact—that you just can’t protect your child from everything.

That morning, as Mike mowed the yard with a riding lawnmower, Sandra and Jordan came outside to go to the store. Before Sandra could stop him, the 2-year-old darted toward Mike to say goodbye.

Unfortunately, at that moment, Mike ran up against the fence and started to back up. “I looked and didn’t see anything, and then I backed up,” he explains. “And she was there.”

It only took a second, Mike says. “Sandra yelled, but with the lawnmower running, I couldn’t hear her. When the mower suddenly quit, I knew I’d hit something, but, at first, I thought it was the raised garden that we had there. Then, I heard Sandy scream.”

Suddenly, the terrible realization came over him: He had run over Jordan!

Saving her life immediately became the first priority, as the couple simultaneously struggled within themselves, wondering how this tragedy happened and what they might have done differently to prevent it.

Sandra, a nurse, went into crisis mode and immediately washed out and applied pressure to Jordan’s wound. She was bleeding profusely, and only a piece of bone and some tissue close to her pelvis held her leg to her body.

Though devastated, Mike pulled himself together enough to call 911. “I was on my knees praying most of the time,” Mike says, “but I tried to do what I could to help.”

The ambulance took about 45 minutes to get to the house. While Mike and Sandra waited, prayed and tried to save their daughter from bleeding to death, Jordan grasped Mike’s finger. Just before she passed out, she lovingly reassured her distraught father: “I be fine, Daddy. I be fine.”

Jordan was first rushed to a nearby hospital but was later flown to Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta. Later that evening, the distraught Mike and Sandra got the heartbreaking news from the doctor: Jordan’s left leg had to be amputated.

Though happy that Jordan was alive, Sandra struggled with intense feelings of guilt, blaming herself for doing the very thing she had done to protect Jordan: putting up the fence. She reasoned that since she had told Mike to put up the fence and since the fence made it necessary for Mike to back up the mower, the accident was her fault.

“I feel guilty every day of my life,” she says, her voice cracking with emotion.

Mike, too, struggles with guilt. “We have faith that God doesn’t put more on us than we can handle and that everything is for a purpose,” he explains, “but when it’s that severe, it’s hard to keep it in perspective and not feel guilty.”

Over the years, however, the intense guilt that the couple felt in the beginning has lessened. “I feel guilty,” Mike says, “but, at the same time, I don’t because I see some good from the accident.”

Both Mike and Sandra take some comfort in knowing that their story benefits others. “People say, ‘Well, you know, I’ve ridden my kid around on a lawnmower or they’ve been outside playing catch while I cut the lawn,’” Mike says. “They just don’t think about the risk until they hear our story.”

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