



The Sand Dollar

Here's the story behind the fourth www.Keys2Heaven.com song, leading up to release of *Stories of Faith: 12 Songs Inspired by You!*

The Sand Dollar is often called the “Holy Ghost Shell,” because of its religious symbolism and markings. The outline etched into the top resembles an Easter Lily, the center is the star of Bethlehem, the five oval holes the wounds Christ suffered on the cross. The opposite side resembles the Poinsettia of Christmas. If broken open, the little pieces inside resemble white doves.

With the unveiling of Spring and the Easter Season, the following, beautiful story submitted by Mike Hainsey of Columbus, Mississippi, just seemed heaven sent for April—pronouncing God's desire to reach beyond the expanse of time and assure us of our eternal connection with loved ones, awakening that part of us yearning for the ultimate Homecoming and Reunion:



In October 2005 our son, Chris, a gifted musician, left this world to be with our Lord, his 5 ½ year battle with brain cancer over. In the time since his death Brenda and I struggled with this terrible loss. Dealing with his death is far more difficult than dealing with his disease because there is no hope to see him again on this earth.

We know the logic--that Chris is with God, perfect once again and free from all earthly ills. But the emotion of missing him is often overpowering. Like most parents who lost a child we would often pray for a sign or signal that once again

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connects us with our son. We hoped for some sort of reassurance that all would be ok. In our case, we had been to the ocean dozens of times with Chris, either visiting family or just to walk Sanibel Island looking for shells. So Brenda asked for God to send us a sign in the form of a sand dollar. She wanted to find one on the beach.

I grew up on the east coast of Florida, and the surf is too rough to find shells that are intact, especially ones as fragile as a sand dollar. In all my years there I had never seen one intact.

One morning, exactly 6 months after his death, we found ourselves on the beach in Florida. I went for a walk just before sunrise, hoping for a prayerful time to help get me through this "anniversary". The tide was out, and the beach was littered with pieces of seashells broken by the surf. It was a beautiful morning, and I was on a quiet, deserted section. At that point I stopped, turned toward the rising sun, and said a prayer. In this prayer I told God that I knew we were not worthy, but knew that all things are possible in Him. So I asked him to make Brenda's prayer for a sign come true.

I finished my prayer and turned to continue my walk. I took about ten steps when directly in front of me was, you guessed it, a fully intact sand dollar. At first I just stood there. Then I slowly bent down and gently picked it up, tears swelling inside me. How was this possible? You know the answer.

Now, some will read this with skepticism and conclude that this was merely a coincidence, that two grieving parents want to make it more than it is. That's fine. But Brenda and I believe it is a prayer answered. I can tell you stories from other grieving parents with similar "coincidences". We quit believing in coincidences years ago.

Today is Easter Monday, 2008. While on the phone today with Mike finding out more details of the story, Tim called me. He shared that last week he was thinking of adding another instrument for the fourth song. "Something" moved him to choose tenor sax, a full week prior to learning that tenor sax was Chris' instrument of choice! Also, Mike sent me an email noting that today, the first day after Easter, is the anniversary of discovering the Sand Dollar! There are no coincidences.

One final thing. The "Amazing Grace" theme in the song is a tribute to Chris, a song he loved to play, and even more to the God whom Chris now worships eternally.

Purchase the beautiful instrumental to this story now.

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What's Your Story?

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