Case Study:

Healing and Autonomy

Mike and Joanne are the parents of James and Samuel, identical twins born 8 years ago. James is currently suffering from acute glomerulonephritis, kidney failure. James was originally brought into the hospital for complications associated with a strep throat

infection. The spread of the A streptococcus infection led to the subsequent

kidney failure. James’s condition was acute enough to warrant immediate treatment. Usually cases of acute glomerulonephritis caused by strep infection tend to improve on their own or with an antibiotic. However, James also had elevated blood pressure and enough fluid buildup that required temporary dialysis to relieve.

The attending physician suggested immediate dialysis. After some time of discussion with Joanne, Mike informs the physician that they are going to forego the dialysis and place their faith in God. Mike and Joanne had been moved by a sermon their pastor had given a week ago, and also had witnessed a close friend regain mobility when she was prayed over at a healing service after a serious stroke. They thought it more prudent to take James immediately to a faith healing service instead of putting James through multiple rounds of dialysis. Yet, Mike and Joanne agreed to return to the hospital after the faith healing services later in the week, and in hopes that James would be healed by then.

Two days later the family returned and was forced to place James on dialysis, as his condition had deteriorated. Mike felt perplexed and tormented by his decision to not treat James earlier. Had he not enough faith? Was God punishing him or James? To make matters worse, James's kidneys had deteriorated such that his dialysis was now not a temporary matter and was in need of a kidney transplant. Crushed and desperate,

Mike and Joanne immediately offered to donate one of their own kidneys to James, but they were not compatible donors. Over the next few weeks, amidst daily rounds of dialysis, some of their close friends and church members also offered to donate a kidney to James. However, none of them were tissue matches.

James’s nephrologist called to schedule a private appointment with Mike and Joanne. James was stable, given the regular dialysis, but would require a

kidney transplant within the year. Given the desperate situation, the nephrologist informed Mike and Joanne of a donor that was an ideal

tissue match, but as of yet had not been considered—James’s brother Samuel.

Mike vacillates and struggles to decide whether he should have his other son Samuel lose a kidney or perhaps wait for God to do a miracle this time around. Perhaps this is where the real testing of his faith will come in? Mike reasons, “This time around it is a

matter of life and death. What could require greater faith than that?”