

Book Discussion: Expectant Parents  
By Dr. Jill Davidson, OB/Gyn

No one knowingly invites life complications; and where pregnancy is concerned, expectant parents dream of a normal birth and a perfect child.

1. At what point did Joy adjust her expectations? When did the dream change for Mark?
2. What makes a child “perfect”?
3. If Mark and Joy would have known about Stross’ birth defects before his birth, how might their story have changed?
4. To what extent should medical professionals be expected to diagnose birth defects during pregnancy?
5. Are Joy’s physicians negligent for not providing antenatal (pre-birth) diagnosis?
6. If testing had predicted Stross’ birth defects accurately, how should that information have been used—by the doctors, by the Newcoms? Should pregnancy termination have been offered?
7. What type of support do you hope a family would have available to them when learning a baby has a birth defect that will result in long-term disabilities? Who should be responsible for ensuring a mother or couple has such support available?
8. Who should pay for the expensive medical care (hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars) a child like Stross requires beginning immediately after birth and continuing throughout his life—the parents, the insurance company, government programs?
9. What are the non-monetary costs a family incurs by electing to have a child with long-term disabilities? How does a child with disabilities impact the dynamics of a marriage or family? How does the impact on a single parent differ?



10. Were Mark and Joy—knowing they had an increased risk (4-5%) of recurrent spina bifida in their next pregnancy—irresponsible in their decision to have a second pregnancy? What if the risk was higher—50% or 75%?
11. Do the costs to society ever outweigh the wishes/desires of a mother, a couple, or a family?

