

So How'd It Go?

Overall, so much better than my fears were telling me it would go. I had my second cesarean section on Friday, October 7. Boy was I nervous beforehand! I figured I would write out the details, just in case we decide to do this again I can look back at it and know what to expect. So I warn you, if you're squeamish about medical procedures or just plain not interested, then skip the post. But if I can make just one person feel more at ease about their impending cesarean, even if it's future me, then it's worth writing this all out and sharing the details.

The day of my scheduled cesarean, the hospital told me to arrive at 5:30 AM. Hubby and I set the alarm for 4:30 and got there a little early so we could visit the hospital chapel and pray together. Thankfully, Grandma had arrived in town the night before and had our 4 kids at her hotel. The first nurse we asked did not know where the chapel was in the hospital, which I found strange, but then again, our local hospital is undergoing major expansion and renovation, so I guess that's the excuse I'll let them have for the fact that their chapel (when we finally found someone who knew where it was) was just an empty room. No matter because God listens where ever you are, so we prayed together and went back to the maternity ward where they began to prep me for my surgery. They put an IV in, which didn't go very well. Seems I have great veins in my arms for drawing blood (the blood techs always ooh and ahh over me and my veins, which makes them weird in my book), but in my hands, not so much. Getting IVs is always very painful for me, and it bruises up my whole hand. This day was no exception. It hurt a lot, and they had to give me 2 holes before they got it right. Then the nurse comes and tells me that because of the combination of it being my 5th baby and the fact that I had to have a blood transfusion last time that they were going to have to give me a back-up port in my other

hand just in case. So they start doing that, and that one hurts even more. Next thing I know, I have a golf ball sized lump in my hand – “The vein blew” the nurse told me. I don’t ever want to hear anyone tell me that something carrying blood throughout my body “blew”, and I still haven’t googled that one to see what it is because it sounds so nasty. And at this point, I’m near tears thinking that if things are going wrong already, what will happen when they cut me open? But they finally got my second IV port in, and then after the insertion of the catheter (not a big deal and I will spare the details), I was ready to be wheeled off to the surgery room in a wheelchair.

Luckily I had taken the c-section class at the hospital, so the cold sterility of the operating room did not alarm me, and I also knew that my Hubby had to wait outside until certain preparations were made. On our way into the operating room, I saw the backup doctor, and he was talking to himself in the hallway in kind of a strange way. He is known for being a bit different, so it didn’t really worry me, especially since I knew my regular doctor would be there also. Besides, Dr. Strange delivered my 3rd child, and she was the easiest delivery I had. I will spare details for what happened next; it’s a bit personal – if you really need to know how they prep a patient for a c-section then take a class at your local hospital. Then the anesthesiologist came in, and my heart sank when I realized it was the same lady who gave me my epidural during the birth of baby #4 – the epidural that never worked. She gave me my spinal, and it pinched a little, but much less than an epidural, not really a big deal at all. My legs started to get tingly, and I was really starting to panic big time. I kept asking the anesthesiologist if everything I was feeling was normal, and she was so nice and reassuring. They had a blood pressure cuff on my arm which kept going off every few minutes, and they also gave me oxygen in my nose – I felt very well cared for. They let Hubby in, and he and the anesthesiologist (so tired of typing that word, think I’ll

just call her Dr. Drug from now on) sat by my head the whole time. Dr. Drug said that they would test me to make sure that I was numb before they did anything, but guess what – they didn't. I brought this up to someone after it was over, and they had a good point – they probably tested my numbness but didn't even tell me about it. Since it was working, I didn't feel the test, so they proceeded. Duh. It's just that I was so nervous about the numbing not working after what happened with my epidural; you can't blame me for being concerned.

The next thing I remember is the tugging and pulling, which is also something for which the c-section class prepared me. But it was actually much less unpleasant than I had panicked it would be. It's just that it seemed to take forever. They said it would take about 1-2 minutes and according to Hubby, it took 4 minutes. If you ask me, I would say it took 15 minutes. The whole time I could hear the doctors talking and I kept asking Hubby what they were saying because I was panicking about the health of the baby and the fact that I was lying there sliced open on the table. He said they were just discussing their techniques. My Hubby kept looking down there, past the curtain, and I kept wondering how he could do that – if it were him lying on a table sliced open, I don't know that I could look. But then again, I don't think it was like surgery looks on tv – I was picturing a completely open body cavity, but that's a different kind of surgery. I guess that's why there was all that tugging and pulling. So anyway, finally Hubby says that the baby is out, but I don't hear crying, so I begin to panic even more (notice a trend here? I am a worrywart, in case you haven't noticed). But both people seated at my head tell me everything is fine, and then I hear the baby (Luke James) cry. I feel so relieved, and I can't believe it's over. Except it's not. They clean up the baby, and they hold him up in front of my face for about a millisecond, and then they take him out of the room along with my husband and probably about half the staff that was on hand. At some point, I don't remember when, but I'm pretty

sure it was after the baby was born, Dr. Drug held up a little vial and says, "I'm going to give you this." She puts it in my IV, and I find out later that it was Duramorph, a form of morphine. I'm wondering now if this is something they give all their c-section patients (those who are not opposed to medications), or if I got the "panicking patient" special. At any rate, after the morphine, my memory gets fuzzy, but I do remember lying there getting sewed up (still not feeling a thing below my chest). My complaint was that it seemed to take FOREVER because I had nothing to do but lie there, and all I could think about was seeing my baby. I even got envious of my poor husband, because here I had just gone through this surgery and now HE was getting to spend all this time with the baby and I hadn't even barely gotten a look at him. They should really think about putting a tv in there or something... or would that distract the doctors? Best not to think about it, I guess. I had to keep talking myself out of looking at the ceiling because it was reflective, and I could see a little of me and a lot of red there – they ought to fix that too; I would bet that no one wants to see themselves getting surgery. But finally they were finished, and a few of the staff people worked together to lift my helpless body onto the gurney for the transport back to my room.

When I got there, there was Hubby with the baby, all excited to see me, and then I finally got to hold our new son. And he was (is) so incredibly beautiful. The rest of the day was wonderful. Slowly my legs began to work again, and I could not believe it that I had absolutely no pain! It did not resonate with me that I was on drugs. I did feel kind of loopy, but I didn't really think much of it and enjoyed the euphoria of having a new healthy baby and the relief that the worst part was over. Weather-wise it ended up being a terrible weekend to be stuck in the hospital – it was 80 degrees out and sunny, and the grandmas took my kids to the zoo on Saturday, so I had to miss that, but at least they got to go. When I was released from the hospital on Monday, it

was still very nice out for a few days, but I didn't feel up to going outside and by the time I did, Northern Ohio fall weather was in full swing and I've been cold ever since. Oh well, such is life, and my Hubby had perfect advice when I was bummed about missing the beautiful fall colors (it was amazing how different our neighborhood looked with all the leaves on the ground after just 3 days!). He said, "There will be plenty more color-changing seasons, but there are only so many baby seasons." What a wise, wonderful man!

Back to my recovery in the hospital, it went fairly smoothly, although I did have a lot of pain starting Saturday once the morphine wore off. The baby was up all night on Friday, but I didn't mind at all because I just wanted to be with him. I haven't watched tv in years, but over the weekend, I watched countless episodes of 3's Company, Roseanne (forgot about the one where Becky gets into the liquor cabinet, haha!), and Everybody Loves Raymond – you know, shows from when tv was actually good. I learned about the Prohibition era from PBS, and I also learned that there are conspiracy theorists who believe that there really isn't gold in Fort Knox – hmm, that's something to think about I guess. Luke slept a full 5 hours on Saturday night from 1:30-6:30, and so did I since no one came for my blood until 6:30. Last time I was in the hospital, I seem to remember them coming for blood every hour on the hour which made it really hard to sleep, but then again I had a lot of complications last time including the need for an emergency cesarean and a blood transfusion. Sunday night, little Luke decided he wasn't going to sleep again, and I woke up from my 45 minute nap that night feeling terrible – achy and lots of other pain, and chills because of a fever I was running. Not only that, but there was a mean nurse who informed me in a not-so-nice way that I was over my limit of acetaminophen, which meant I was not allowed any pain medicine. That really ticked me off; partly because of the way she said it, and partly because no one had given me any indication that this was a problem. Had they warned me that I

was getting near the limit, I would have declined some of the meds offered to me to avoid this. Actually, all of the other nurses had been telling me that I should stay ahead of the pain. They specifically said not to wait until the pain was really bad to take the meds otherwise they wouldn't work. The staff must have known I was upset because at 11pm Sunday night, my doctor called my bedside phone personally and reassured me. And my doctor is the one I credit with my smooth delivery and quick recovery – she has been 1000% better than my previous doctors in every way throughout this process, and for that, I am so thankful.

Since I've been home, I've been resting (probably not as much as I should have, but I have 5 kids now, who can rest with 5 kids in the house??). Hubby has been *amazing* at taking care of me AND things around the house, but he also started a new job 2 days after the baby was born, which leaves him with 2 jobs, taking care of the 4 kids and me AND waking with the new baby at night as he likes to do. My mother did a ton of laundry while she was here, and I'm just now starting to do laundry again a week and a half later, so that helped a lot too. People from church have been wonderful about sending meals for our family, and that has been incredible. Not only that, but we also have frozen meals that people sent and that my husband's mother made while she was visiting for when our meal delivery runs out. It's been crazy, but we are managing, and a week and half later, I've been out and about and back in the real world. I still have pain, but nothing extreme, and my 600mg ibuprofen works pretty well for that. There are 2 complications I had that I was not expecting; one is worthy of a blog post all its own and I'll get to it next time. The other is the return of my backaches. I've had a sore back since high school; I worked fast food and had to pop a Doan's before every shift to make it through. There are various things that I think caused it, but what does that matter now. The strange thing is that during my pregnancy, my backaches disappeared. Most women find new backaches during pregnancy,

and mine disappeared. I didn't think much of it until I get home from the hospital and experience my back pain again. This is discouraging because I know the incision pain will go away with time, but the backaches seem to be getting worse, and I have no guarantee that my back will ever feel better. I guess it's something to talk to my wonder doc about in my 6-week follow-up. I already had my 1 week follow-up with the doctor, and she said my incision looks really great and my body is healing well – for that I am thankful.

Baby's healthy, 4 big sisters and brother are healthy, I'm getting healthy, and Hubby is healthy (even if he needs much more sleep – praying for that to come soon) – what more can we ask for! Life is good; God is great!

And oh yeah... everywhere little Luke goes, he has a constant crowd of admirers. If it wasn't so sweet, it would be annoying because hey, when is it MY turn to hold the baby?!?

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A tale of two gatherings...

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... (Sorry Mr. Dickens)

But then again it was. This weekend families gathered to mark similar yet different events.

On Saturday, my nephew celebrated his birthday. He has reached his teen years, and is more interested in the presents, food and television than the actual gathering. I do believe he 'suffered' through the gathering just to make sure he got his presents. Nothing really wrong with that, I'm sure most young people of his age do exactly the same thing. The gatherings, unless totally oriented toward the youth, are for the adults. We ate, talked, laughed and remembered many of these events during the day. This is what, through the ages, kept families together. We share common bonds and we celebrate those bonds. Be they birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays, times with family and friends keep our bonds alive.

On Sunday, another gathering was held. This was a memorial of the birth and death day of my grandson. He received no physical presents, and he won't be living into his teen years to complain about the attention he is or isn't getting. This was a day to support those who will miss his presence in the world. It was a time for family and friends to gather and support one another. We ate, talked, laughed and remember many events, but we also shared a tear or two. Coming together in the hard times is another thing that keeps families together. Death, sickness and other troubles are also something we all share. Another common bond. Another way to show support and love.

While on the surface, I wish that all we ever had to do was share the happy occasions, I realize that it is the difficult situations that are the true measure of what we mean to each other. These hard times can show the best humanity has to offer.

So this weekend was the best of times and the worst of times, with the best of times far outshining the worst. Those closest to the sadness may not feel this for quite some time, but in

looking back they will eventually remember “The Best of Times.”

What next?

This may be a difficult post to read. It was certainly hard to write.

No happy or witty sayings in this post. This is a story of life, death, mourning and maybe life again.

At the beginning of this year many wonderful things were in the making. My 3rd daughter had her wedding scheduled for June. My fourth daughter was to graduate High School. Those two events happened as planned.

Also occurring early in the year, my two oldest daughters told me they were expecting new arrivals. The oldest was due in September, my second daughter due in November. Expanding of family going full force this year. I was really looking forward to visiting my new grandchildren.

The first bad news came when my 2nd daughter had a miscarriage. I was unable to fly down to Florida and be with her. I am very glad she has a wonderful network of support with her. At that time, I had a countdown to the impending birth on my blog. I quietly removed that and all other mention of that news from my blog. This was news I didn't feel like sharing with the rest of the world. Stick with the good news. Too much bad news news in the world.

Last Thursday brought news that my oldest daughter lost her baby too. Much farther along, she had only a month before the due date. I quietly removed the countdown that that impending

birth, and wrote a quick cryptic post. The mind was not working well enough to post anything else. I could write about the cause, but I will let [this site](#) handle that. I just needed to get these words out.

I spent the past few days with my oldest, at the hospital and her house. There were many tears flowing. Hugs given and received. While the words were not initially spoken, we were worried about my oldest daughter's life too. She had a serious medical condition that could have taken her as well. In this we were fortunate. Physically she is recovering well. The emotional and spiritual recovery will take more time for all of us.

I did say something about life again didn't I. There is a little bright spot in all of this. I've written a few posts about my daughter's friends. These are people I consider to be my friends also. Our ages and backgrounds vary widely, but they are true friends. People who will be there for my daughter and son-in-law. My children came home to a clean house, because someone thought this would be a good thing to do. They didn't ask, they acted. The bedroom for the newborn was in the final stages of finishing, but the door was off the hinges. It was put back in place and closed. Friends and family will supply food, companionship, or solitude when needed or wanted. Can we ever ask for more?

Through all of this, I've had many old wounds opened again. I keep wondering if each new death will bring back the memories of others. Faces I've not seen in years, faces I never saw, came into my thoughts and dreams. The past and future molds into one. The laugh of a child not heard may be one of the saddest moments in life.

Flashback!

In the last few days, my recovery from the emergency c-section has not been going well. I awoke from a nap Thursday night feeling awful, but luckily my medication kicked in, and I was able to enjoy the midnight showing of The Dark Knight – more on that later. Friday we met Grandma in South Bend Indiana which is halfway between Chicago where she lives and Ohio where we live to transfer my kids for a week's vacation with Grandma. I felt awful all day, and I started shivering in the restaurant. I knew there was something really wrong when I went outside into the 90° oven and actually *enjoyed* it – uh oh.

When I got back to Ohio, I had an appointment with my doctor for her to take out my staples (yes, they had to actually use *staples* to put me back together, yuck) and that actually went well. Hardly hurt at all, just a little pinch, and it didn't take long. I brought up my symptoms to my doctor and she said everything was normal, and I believed her because when I had my other babies, I would heal up right away, so I figured these were all just side effects from the cesarean. But I took another nap when I got home and when I woke up, I felt like I was dying – that's really the only way to describe it. We took my temperature and it was 102.7°, so of course I had chills, the sweats, headache, and pain. A quick look on the internet gave us the diagnosis: mastitis – a common infection often suffered by breast-feeding mothers. We called the doctor and they wouldn't prescribe any antibiotics over the phone, so we headed to the hospital for the 2nd time in a week...

The admissions people panicked when they saw us coming in with the baby, but we quickly explained it wasn't him, thank goodness. Anyway, after a quick look, the ER doctor confirmed our internet diagnosis and sent us home with a prescription. But since all the pharmacies were closed in our town, they

gave me some medicine right then and there. "Name and birthdate", they always ask at the hospital before they give you your meds, and I was like, FLASHBACK! I thought I was done with this for awhile! But for spending a Friday night in the ER, it wasn't so bad; we were actually in and out in an hour. If this had happened in suburban Chicago where I used to live, it would have taken 3-4 hours to wait our turn in the ER, and they would have wheeled a few body bags past us while we were waiting. So today, I feel much better comparatively, and since the girls are with grandma, I slept until 11:30, so I'm sure that also helped. The antibiotics seem to be working already, and it was nice to wake up and not feel like I was dying, something that hasn't happened for a few days. I also feel better that now I think my recovery from everything is headed in the right direction, whereas when I felt crappy and didn't know why, it was discouraging because I was thinking, will I ever feel better?

My husband is peeved at my OB-GYN for not checking me more thoroughly during my visit with her yesterday. I agree; I did mention my symptoms and she was too dismissive, but being a man (especially one who won't listen to doctor's orders – if the doctor tells him to do something or recommends some sort of exam or test and he doesn't want to do it, he just won't) I don't think he understands how important to me it is to have a woman OB-GYN, and she is the only one in town. Besides, I do like her, she is gentle and she has been through 3 c-sections herself, so she knew exactly what to tell me about what to expect. If we do have any more children, there will be some debate about which doctor we will use. Well, anyway... off to Walmart to get my *third* prescription this week!

Just waiting

Has there ever been a time in your life you have just had to wait on something? The anxiety sets in while trying to be patient and it's difficult to think of anything else. When a child this anticipation is often felt in birthdays and Christmas when you just can't wait for that toy you've kept bugging mom and dad about. For parents this sort of anticipation runs in the birth of children when the due date approaches. I am not married, but I imagine the mother-to-be is anticipating the day when that child is finally out because she's worn from carrying the baby for the last several months. For dad, I imagine the stress of waiting on his wife causes him to anticipate the birth. For both mom and dad, they can't wait for the baby to be born so the nightmarish hospital visit is over and they can see their baby finally.

Well, as we know my friends C and L are at this time once again in their lives with baby number four, and this blogger is having to just wait on news of what's going on. They were to go in Friday to have labor induced and their child born. It is now two days later and in the absence of news all sorts of things have been going through my head, most of them not helpful in relieving the anxiety. Is L okay? Is the baby okay? Is this just a very long labor or has something unexpected happened, and if so what? As you can tell this line of thinking goes nowhere good fast. I keep checking my email and my friends' blogs- all of them since maybe my OH friends know something I don't yet know, and I have prayed more than once, but still I am anxious for news. I pray it's good news.

Unfortunately I just have to keep waiting...

FINALLY!

Unless I finish some of the drafts I've been working on today, this will be my last post for a little while – the Dr. finally gave us the green light to have our baby tomorrow! I am to report to the hospital at 7 am for an induction, and hopefully (unless this baby takes after 2 of his older sisters who were actually born a day after their induction) we will have a healthy baby soon after that. I would like to thank everyone who has been thinking about and praying for us, and I will ask hubby to email and / or call people when there is news tomorrow or Saturday. We will send pictures ASAP!

Thanks again so much for your thoughts and prayers – it means a lot to us!

A Miracle for Every Season

Today when I was putting away laundry, it occurred to me that it's almost that time of year when I need to pack away winter clothes and see if I have enough spring / summer clothes for the kids in the right sizes. And, since I'm going to have another little bundle of joy, I started thinking about what I already have in the way of baby clothes... Since this is my 4th girl, I have plenty of pinks and purples. However, I really do need to check if any of these clothes are fitting for a July baby – I've never had a summer baby before! Come to think of it, my girls were born in December (winter), May (spring), October (fall), and now, July (summer) – giving me miracles for every season! We are so blessed!

Since #3 arrived not even 2 years ago, I still have ALL of her baby clothes, and my friends at the time were so nice to throw

me a baby shower, even though she was #3... I think it had something to do with my friend Sue insisting baby #3 (Disney) was going to be a boy, but it was very thoughtful of her at any rate. This next part is weird, I'm warning you... The problem is, all of my baby clothes are in the basement, and I have put myself on strike from going in the basement for awhile... It's a long story, but I probably won't be ready to go down there until the end of summer or fall – it's just not something I want to deal with these days... maybe I'll go into it in another post. So, I guess I'm going to have to bribe my husband to dig around in the basement to find all of our newborn baby clothes in time for me to wash them and see if there's any shopping to do before our new arrival. The good news is, since it will be July, I shouldn't need too many clothes off the bat... some onesies and blankets will do it until fall, and maybe by then I will be basement-ready!