# Miscarriage



#### (the tell-all stories of 6 women)





These are the "tell-all stories" of six women who have experienced the heart-ache of miscarriage and the roller-coaster emotions of becoming pregnant again.

You will be moved by the *ashes of their broken dreams* but, as you lean in to look more closely, will begin to notice the *crown of beauty* they unknowingly wear.



Matt and Heather due September 1, 2014



Jared and Julie L due December 21, 2014



Nick and Danielle due July 22, 2014



Matt and Deanna due January 4, 2015



Tony and Jennifer due November 14, 2014



Karl and Julie O due January 5, 2015



**Isaiah** 61

<sup>1</sup>The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,<sup>[a]</sup>
<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God,

#### to comfort all who mourn,

## <sup>3</sup> and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty

#### instead of ashes,

the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.



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hy talk about miscarriage?

We women love to tell our birth stories...home birth or hospital delivery room, natural or caesarian, length of labor, epidural, tearing, helpfulness of nurses – we can go on and on!

But not many women know how to talk about their miscarriage. It's an awkward topic...full of pain, lost dreams, and grief.

At the same time, many people don't know what to say to someone they love who has experienced a miscarriage. Is it better to say nothing than the wrong thing? How do you reach out to someone—without feeling like you are just "making it worse?"

#### Who is this e-book for?

The truth is that we all experience promises that die, must struggle through processing our own grief and learn to embrace new hope and dreams. These stories are for everyone.

Let us encourage your heart and bolster your hope in a God that really does love us all perfectly...through the gift of ashes that transforms into beauty in our lives.

**This e-book is for those who have** <u>never</u> had a miscarriage: With as high as 1 out of every 3 women YOU know having experienced a miscarriage...this e-book becomes an invaluable tool for better understanding their pain – how they felt, the gravity of what they lost and the painful emotions involved with the journey of another pregnancy. Learn what to say and how to help them with the healing process.

**For those who have experienced a miscarriage:** Whether you are still working through the grieving process or feel as if you have "moved on" – these stories and resources will help you reflect, feel as if you are not alone and bring hope that there is a God who knows your sorrows and has custom designed your life to perfectly shower you with his goodness and gifts at exactly the right time.



#### How relevant is this e-book?

Every statistic is a face...every number is someone you know...a co-worker, friend, sister, daughter, aunt, niece, and neighbor.

### 15-35% chance of a woman in the childbearing range having a miscarriage

- Women under 35 years = 15% chance of miscarriage
- Women between 35-45 years = 20-35% chance of miscarriage



• 50% of all pregnancies end in miscarriage, usually before the woman knows she's pregnant

80% of miscarriages happen before 12 weeks

## These are the real-life, tell-all stories of 5 amazing women (plus my own) who had a miscarriage in the past and are now currently pregnant.

Each of us took our own time...our own path to embrace grief & joy, death & new life, pain & healing.

Please grab a cup of coffee, get comfy and lean in close to hear the heartbeat of these incredible mothers.

Julie Ostrand (August 2014) www.karlandjulie.com



Mhat is Jay?

"Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation.

You'll find nothing in that definition about happy feelings, because, as we all know, happiness is fleeting and temporary.

We tend to think that life comes in hills and valleys. In reality, it's much more like train tracks. Every day of your life, wonderful, good things happen that bring pleasure and contentment and beauty to you. At the exact same time, painful things happen to you or those you love that disappoint you, hurt you, and fill you with sorrow. These two tracks — both joy and sorrow — run parallel to each other every single moment of your life."

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Kay Warren: Choose Joy: Because Happiness Isn't Enough (order this book now from Amazon)







**Miscarriage. What an ugly word.** This was a word that I was certain would never have to enter my life...thinking miscarriages only happened to people who were at risk and here I am, healthy and young. Not a chance this could happen to me!



Little did I know that ugly word was about to enter my life in a very real way.

The memories of that day, Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> 2013 at eight weeks along, will be forever etched into my life. I had been spotting for a few days and following the doctor's orders, called when it became heavier. After setting up an appointment, my husband and I headed to the doctor's office. Seconds felt like minutes, minutes felt like hours, as we prayed that nothing was wrong.

Not being able to see the ultrasound screen, our eyes focused on the doctor, searching for any sign of good news. As he turned towards us, his face revealed it all. Words began to blur together, thoughts spinning wildly as he explained the image revealed an empty sac filled with fluid but not our precious child.

By the time that we found out about the miscarriage, my body had already begun the natural process of passing our baby. After 24 hours of intense cramping, terrible pains and many other not-so-lovely things, the process was over.

#### And then it was just me, alone...no child to hold, no little one to love. Pain on all levels swept through me, hitting and crashing into me like the constant waves of the ocean.

The physical aspect of passing your deceased child is excruciating, but short lived. What nobody prepared me for was the emotional part. With every cramp, every pain, every trip to the bathroom, I was constantly reminded of the sweet child that I would never get to meet, hold in my arms or watch grow up.

## There is a deep grieving that took place as I mourned the loss of, not only my first child, but of all of the dreams and plans I had for that little life.

The difficult part to mourning the loss of your child, even one as young as eight weeks, is that it can be hard for people to empathize. In the beginning people became awkward and if you listened closely, you could hear the faint "I am sorry". Nobody knew exactly what to say. Did I even know what to say back? Words of encouragement, no matter how comforting, would not suffice.

The only thing that released my pain was continuing to press into the Lord. He was my comfort, my peace, my rock, my shield. Trusting in God and knowing His plan is greater, we earnestly prayed and pleaded with the Lord to use this situation to further His kingdom. We did not want our child's life to be in vain but prayed that his or her little life would bring others to find Jesus. This became our heart's cry! We felt more and more that there would be some good to come out of our deep sadness and loss. We began to share our story and as we did, the Lord opened up countless opportunities for us to share His good news and more importantly His grace.



His grace continues to amaze me. As I type this, I am almost 35 weeks pregnant with a precious little girl. Matt and I were blessed and shocked to find out that we were pregnant on December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013. It was only seven weeks from the time we lost our baby to the time we conceived this precious miracle. What a joyous day it was! After a series of blood work confirmed that I was indeed pregnant again and so far all of the tests indicated that the baby was going to make it.

From the beginning I noticed how different this pregnancy was... from morning sickness to exhaustion and mood swings, I had it all. With each wave of nausea I found myself thanking the Lord and praising Him for the life inside me.

This pregnancy has not been without its challenges but each have been a reminder that God is in control and He is full of grace and mercy. From the miscarriage to this pregnancy, I have learned to lean on the Lord and embrace His peace and comfort. My soul can rest knowing that His plan is more magnificent than I could ever dream.

What miraculous ways God finds to connect with us and help us learn, grow and become more like Him.

Only God truly knows what His plan is, but Matt and I could not be more thrilled that God would let us get a glimpse of what He has to offer. I am so thankful to be able to serve a God who is always good, always faithful and always looks after His sheep.



Ella Grace Allen: born August 28, 2014







My husband and I were one year married when we had a surprise pregnancy. We were a bit apprehensive at first, as we had just applied for insurance (so the birth wouldn't be covered) and it was much sooner than we'd planned. It didn't take us long to get excited though! But at three weeks



pregnant, only a week after discovering our baby's life, I suffered a miscarriage. It was painful, traumatic, and devastating to us both. The LORD had already given us promises and encouragement for this little life, so how could He allow it to be taken away?

Though I miscarried naturally I was required to have a D&C to make sure nothing remained, and the recovery – emotionally and physically – was slow. The grief was overwhelming. No one seemed to know what to say, and I felt a lot of guilt. I have always wanted children, and knowing my first response was concern rather than instant joy made me feel I was somehow responsible.

NOTE: D&C, also known as dilation and curettage, is a surgical procedure often performed after a first trimester. Dilation means to open up the cervix; curettage means to remove the contents of the uterus. Curettage may be performed by scraping the uterine wall with a curette instrument or by a suction curettage (also called vacuum aspiration), using a vacuumtype instrument. – American Pregnancy Association

For a week I couldn't even hear the LORD or feel his comfort. Then someone sent me Jeremiah 31:10-17. I took particular comfort in verses 15-17:

"Thus says the LORD, 'A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.' Thus says the LORD, 'Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for your work will be rewarded,' declares the LORD, 'And they will return from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future,' declares the LORD, 'And your children will return to their own territory.'"

**Thus began my road to healing.** I knew God saw my pain and was not indifferent; I knew He would speak to me, and that there was hope for my future. The LORD began to comfort me. I had various sessions with trusted Christian counselors where the LORD continued to speak and bring me healing. He told me it was never my fault. He gave us a name for our baby, Sarah, because she is His princess and the beloved of His heart. In my questioning the "waste" of ordaining a life and then allowing the enemy to steal it, He reminded me that this world is not our home.

When He creates a life, it is ultimately for spending eternity with Him! Whatever purpose we fill here on earth, it is only a reflection. Sarah is living the fullness of the destiny and grand adventure God specifically created her for with Him, and she has been robbed of nothing.

And whatever purpose the Father had for her here, the enemy will not prevent Him from fulfilling still. He told me that even though we may not get to experience Sarah's life now, ALL His promises still hold true, and the enemy cannot rob us of them.



My road to healing lasted about a year. In the midst of healing there was still much grief. The LORD asked us to wait a year before trying for another child. In that time, at least 10 friends (including one sister and two sisters-in-law) had babies.

## Surrendering jealousy and bitterness was sometimes a daily practice. I was a mother too, yet my baby and my experience seemed so easily forgotten.

There were many other stressful factors in my life during that year so it took some time before I was fully recovered, physically and emotionally. The final release came when I was prayed for and was freed from a deep sense of grief. I had experienced so much healing and peace, yet to remember the miscarriage would bring an uncontrolled grief as fresh as the day it happened. When that left, I could fully move forward.

Our son was conceived a year after we lost our daughter, and is due any day now. It was hard to wait, but I see now the LORD's hand in the timing.

#### I am able to receive my son as a fully healthy and happy woman, and through this entire pregnancy we have experienced such incredible joy.

I confess to feeling some fear and trepidation at times in the early stages, but the LORD would always remind me of His promises – one of which was that we would not experience miscarriage again. The pregnancy has been amazing – from feeling great all the way through, to my husband and I feeling kicks at an unusually early stage, to the LORD's extravagant and miraculous provision of every need, and more!



Logan David Lyonel Thomson: born July 29, 2014

I still miss my daughter, but the terrible grief is gone. My son does not replace her; he fills his own, irreplaceable role in our lives and hearts, as she does. I don't have all the answers, but I have peace. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is good, that He loves me, that He has healed me and I couldn't have made it through without Him, and that my daughter is living a full and perfect life in His presence.

I am so in love with my son and cannot wait to meet him and experience the unique and perfect gift he is. I celebrate the lives of both my children, and am grateful to the LORD who blessed me with them.



Jennifer Bastian



I had my miscarriage in the fall of 2001 at 11 weeks into my pregnancy. We hadn't yet shared the news with ANYONE, as we wanted to safely make it past the 12 week mark. My husband, the doctor and I knew about the baby. That's it.



I miscarried the baby naturally in the common restroom in the ER waiting room as I was waiting to be seen by a doctor. One memory that sticks out was the very awkward conversation I had with the check-in nurse to state that they might want to "get my baby" from the toilet in the bathroom. UGH.

This was my first pregnancy, so what made it especially difficult is the unknown. I didn't know FOR SURE what was happening; I didn't want to alarm anyone, including my husband and my doctor, so the pains I began feeling went largely unrecognized by anyone but me.

My husband and I hadn't yet shared the news of even being pregnant with anyone – family, friends or co-workers; so, when it became obvious that the pregnancy was in jeopardy of continuing, I felt alone. I felt scared. I was vulnerable.

#### The hardest mental battle after the miscarriage was the negative, internal selftalk. I allowed negative thoughts that went something like this... "You know, that ONE thing you wanted to do in life? Be a mom? Yeah, forget about that. Obviously, you're not capable of having a baby. You're not good enough. Your body is damaged goods. Dream on, girl, it's NOT GOING TO HAPPEN for you."

Yet, on the other hand, when I was praying or during devotional time, I did have a strange, un-explained PEACE about it. My husband and I both agreed that whatever was wrong with the baby and/or pregnancy was not our fault. When I prayed with God and talked to my husband or other friends who had experienced miscarriage, the PEACE returned. It's only when I allowed myself to surrender to negative, internal dialogue, that my thoughts and attitude took a serious nose-dive.

Since we hadn't told anyone about the pregnancy and I hadn't been visibly showing signs of being pregnant, I didn't feel compelled to talk about it to friends; I'm an open book, but I still didn't feel as if it was a socially acceptable topic to discuss. When and if it ever did come up in conversation, I was amazed at how many women I would talk to that had experienced miscarriage themselves. I felt such compassion. It's almost as if I never would have known that private, tidbit of their life, had I not experienced it myself. Such a private, heart-wrenching sadness ... that's NOT openly talked about.

#### I also remembering asking my doctor, if now that I had a miscarriage, would I be considered "high risk" in any subsequent pregnancies? He said, "Oh no. You need to have at least two or three miscarriages to even be considered high risk." That shook me...woke me up to the realization that I was truly not alone. Not alone in my sadness. My questions. My sorrow. My loss.

For those of my close friends and family members who knew about the miscarriage, words of comfort were offered; caring looks were given; prayers were said...but, if I'm honest, those felt a little flat to me. They didn't quite reach the intense pain buried deep in my heart. But, my biggest encouragement was from an unexpected source...someone who I didn't think could truly relate to my loss...certainly someone who hadn't suffered a miscarriage of their own. My dad. It was a brief moment in time, really. I happened to be home for Mother's Day, a few months after my miscarriage, visiting my parents'



church on Sunday. When the pastor asked that ALL the mothers in the auditorium stand to be recognized, I didn't stand; I honestly didn't think I qualified. Well, not until my dad reached across my husband and tapped me on the arm and said... "STAND UP. You are a mom." To this day, that act of love and recognition from my dad (a man, who took the news of my miscarriage very calmly and without much outward emotion) still chokes me up. Now, to think that my dad, who died in October 2013, is in heaven and playing with my first child gives me joy that I cannot quite explain.

Since the miscarriage I have had three healthy and successful pregnancies...all full-term boys. Taking a "chance" on getting pregnant again, right after the miscarriage, was difficult. Tony and I were afraid to admit that we wanted to begin "trying" again...so, we didn't try. We didn't not try, either, though. We just didn't do much of anything, really. It had been several months since the miscarriage when my parents, two brothers and two sisters (and our respective spouses) were all together, at my parent's home, gathered around the dining room table. It was at this time, that my brother, Steve, just happened to ask Tony and I about the miscarriage and whether or not we thought we'd try again for children...and if so, when.

I was caught off-guard, as this was not the topic of conversation for the past several hours. We stammered a bit, and basically said, "Well, we didn't exactly plan the first pregnancy and we don't really have a plan to try again. We have prayed about it and have left the timing in God's hands." Steve asked if it would be okay to pray over Tony and I, together, as a family, as we wrapped up the night and headed to bed. Of course, we said, "Sure. That would be great." So, Steve led our family in prayer. And wouldn't you know it?? I delivered Nicholas, our eldest boy, exactly nine months later. God answered our prayers above and beyond our wildest dreams. Looks like His timing and perfect will was all we needed to succumb to.

I am now currently pregnant again, due November 14, 2014. This pregnancy was most unexpected, and I want to share this incredible story of God's grace.

In November of 2013, my good friend Jamie delivered a miracle baby of her own. A precious, healthy, full-term baby girl. Jamie has a bazillion friends and I knew that a visit to see her in the hospital meant I would be one of many in the room and maybe, just maybe, I could make eye contact with Jamie, hug her and look at Baby Eleanor as someone else held her. I just wanted to let Jamie know how much I loved and appreciated her, and how happy I was for her and her precious family and their miracle.

After work, I stopped by the hospital and sure enough, walked into a room filled with a lot of people. Husband. Kids. Family. Friends. Then, shortly upon walking into the room, after a flurry of activity, I realized everyone was saying good-bye to Jamie and, whaddya know - I was the only one left. Well, me, Jamie and Baby Eleanor. I pulled a chair close to J's bed, sat down and she offered me the chance to hold Baby Eleanor - an opportunity which I immediately took her up on! I was holding Baby Eleanor, admiring the perfect face, perfect button nose, perfect ten fingers, perfectly gorgeous eyes, well, you get the point. Perfection.

Jamie and I started talking - about her, how she was feeling, how was the delivery, how are the nurses, etc. As is the case with most conversations with Jamie, she somehow turned the topic of the conversation back on ME.

Wait. What? I'm here to talk about YOU. And this bundle of perfection that you're allowing me to hold for a moment in time. Not me and my day. But, yet, she continued to direct the conversation back...and I found myself verbalizing something I had not even KNOWN WAS IN MY HEART until that very moment. Seriously, God dug deep in me and revealed to BOTH me and Jamie something that had been hidden within. The snippet of conversation was something like this:

**Me:** So, I'm afraid to even put this out there...but I'm really wondering if Tony and I are done with having kids. I love our boys and we have a FULL life, but is there MORE for me? Should I even say OUT LOUD that I'd like another?

Jamie: Tell me more.

**Me:** Well, if I'm going to wish this, I would hope for a girl. As you know, I have three older brothers and having a girl that could experience that as well would be fantastic, as I loved being the younger sister. But, I'm getting old...past my "pregnancy-age". Plus, I imagine that so much would have to change in my life to accommodate another baby. But. But.

Jamie: Jennifer, God will give you the desires of your heart. He will!

Me: I know. I cannot believe I put this out there. I think I just scared myself.

Jamie: I won't tell anyone. This conversation is in the vault.

Day after day, week after week, month after month, Jamie and I saw each other all the time, and we didn't discuss this conversation at all. I didn't forget, though. The small "seed" of hope was rooted. I still thought it was a crazy dream, especially when I would see Tony's reaction to my occasional and casual question about whether or not we should consider having another child. His reaction was always the same...though, sometimes the order of the reaction varied...it always included the following:

- A deep, loud sigh.
- A complete stop in his step, a full turn toward me and a look of incredulity.
- An "Are you serious right now? Please tell me you're kidding"
- "Three is enough. Four is...well, four is a lot."
- "I don't have to tell you this, Ms. Accountant, kids are pricey. Expensive."
- "We'll be almost 60 years old when they finally leave for college."

I didn't try to convince him otherwise; in my mind, Tony is the head of our household and I'm following his lead. And yet, God is the leader of our house - and of Tony - and He had something else in mind...

Fast forward to late March 2014 when I am told by a doctor that I am pregnant. We calculated the due date and thought "Isn't this JUST. LIKE. GOD?" My due date is November 14, 2014. EXACTLY one year, to the date, of the conversation I had with my dear friend, Jamie, in a hospital room that seemed so very long ago.

Immediately, I was reminded of her words to me. God will give ME the desires of MY heart. I didn't even realize, at the time I first uttered the words, that this was the desire of my heart! But, like Psalm 37:4



says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires and secret petitions of your heart." (AMP) Another translation says it this way: "Seek your happiness in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desire" (GNT)

Wow. WOW. I am humbled. I am amazed. God's goodness and faithfulness exceeds my comprehension. And yet, my growing belly is something I comprehend regularly, every single day.

So, if you were to ask me, "Am I surprised that we are having a baby girl?" My answer would have to be, "Not really." And I don't say that smugly or flippantly. I say that honestly and with humility. I mean, this entire baby is and was God's idea. Part of my dream/heart's desire was to have a girl in our family. God knew that. He knew my heart's desire BEFORE I was brave enough to verbalize it. I am so humbled by His hand in this. As we trust Him with our decisions, He continues to pave ways for Tony and me, and it is so apparent to us that He is truly working all things together for our good.

#### I encourage you. Yes, you. To be brave. To dig deep. To think big. To boldly - it can be loudly or even quietly - ask God for your heart's desire. He wants to meet not only our needs...but our DREAMS as well.

Don't underestimate the power of your prayers. Share your thoughts and secret petitions of your heart. If you'd like, find a friend. A friend you can trust - find your Jamie, if you will - and be vulnerable. Someone who can agree with you and believe with you. You will not regret it. Not. One. Bit.



Julie Landreth



My experience with miscarriage began long before I ever had one. I always felt very deeply for people that I heard had a miscarriage. I couldn't imagine how they were feeling and how they



dealt with such a confusing loss, but my heart was always very grieved and overcome for them. I guess it was God's way of gently preparing my heart to one day experience that loss.

Because we had our daughter Sarah in 2008 with a normal pregnancy and delivery, we never thought about miscarriage when we got pregnant again in 2010.

I still remember what day it was and where I was when I began bleeding. I immediately began to worry and called my doctor. I was only seven weeks along and hadn't even gone in for my initial 9 week doctor appointment. They had me come in several times to check my hormone levels and they were in fact dropping, which is the case with miscarriage.

#### I hated how cold and matter of fact the nurses were, telling me I was losing my "fetus." How could they talk about my beautiful baby that way?

I hardly made it to my car before I bawled. Friends and family surrounded us in prayer, and we pleaded with God to save our little one. However, after the miscarriage was confirmed and that there were no complications, I bled for a few days and we thought it was over.

## We were heartbroken. We cried out to the Lord, questioned Him, doubted Him, got mad at Him and even wondered if there was something that we had done wrong to cause this.

God was so gracious to us; to let us be real and honest with Him and others. I felt like we truly mourned and grieved, and He healed our hearts. My husband, Jared felt like the Lord said our little one was a girl and God gave her the name Autumn Peace.

Then a few weeks later we traveled to West Virginia to visit my in-laws for Thanksgiving, and I was rushed to the ER one night with extreme abdominal pains.

#### At first I just thought it was food poisoning and it never occurred to me it could be related to our miscarriage. The reality was that I was still in the process of experiencing an ectopic pregnancy that had ruptured. I lost four liters of blood and almost died!

NOTE: An ectopic pregnancy occurs when the fertilized egg attaches itself in a place other than inside the uterus. Almost all ectopic pregnancies occur in a fallopian tube, and are thus sometimes called tubal pregnancies. The fallopian tubes are not designed to hold a growing embryo; the fertilized egg in a tubal pregnancy cannot develop normally and must be treated. An ectopic pregnancy happens in 1 out of 50 pregnancies – American Pregnancy Association

They rushed me into surgery and, praise God, I lived! Since having already mourned this baby's loss, we rejoiced for my spared life! We had so much to be thankful for that Thanksgiving!

A year later in December 2011 we had another healthy baby with no complications-our little Micah.



This past year we were beginning to think we may be done having natural children and had started praying about foster care. Then we found out we were pregnant! Oh man, is God's timing ever different than ours!

Since having the ruptured ectopic pregnancy, my doctor has always had me come in early for ultrasounds to make sure there are no complications. At only about four weeks along we had an ultrasound and found out we were having TWINS!!! We were of course excited and overwhelmed all at the same time.

However, one baby seemed significantly smaller than the other with a lower heart rate, so we kept going in for ultrasounds and check-ups to make sure they were both still growing. Our doctor said it was still too early to tell, but they could be completely fine, with one just being smaller or this could be a sign of a problem.

We turned to the Lord. We prayed and hoped that we would not lose another baby. At our 12 week check-up the smaller baby, our precious Baby B, had not grown in the last month and the doctor could not find a heartbeat. Sweet Baby A was doing fine though.

Our hearts were grieved yet so thankful for our one healthy baby. We had lost another baby, though. Our twin had lost its mate. Our daughter Sarah had been praying for twins & now that was no longer a reality. We were once again confused. Even as I sit writing this I'm at a loss for words. But this time around we have learned to trust, believe and hope even in the midst of struggle and loss.

#### We know that our God is good, that He is for us and wants the very best for us. We know that He is able, He is powerful and He could have done a miracle and healed our little ones, but for reasons we do not know, He did not. We still love Him. We still know He loves us. We still will hope and pray and believe for miracles in the future.

For as Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

Miscarriage for us has been heartbreaking, confusing and difficult to process but God has always walked through it with us; giving us His peace, comfort and tangible love through His people. We were always surrounded by people praying, weeping with us, bringing us meals, taking care of our children, cheering our hearts with flowers, cards, and just being with us when no one knew what to say or do. I wish no one had to experience miscarriage.

So I am now 19 weeks pregnant with our precious Baby A. It is healthy, I am healthy and I thank God! I still grieve for Baby B not being here on earth with us but I take comfort in knowing one day I'll see my sweet unborn babies in heaven, when I see my sweet Jesus.







I miscarried in Aug of 2013 when I was nine weeks pregnant. My miscarriage is slightly different than what I would have expected (if I ever expected this to happen to me, of course). I started bleeding and



bled off and on for a couple days and then went into see the doctor who, at first, wasn't concerned at all (since bleeding is so normal, and I hadn't been cramping at all).

Once he did a quick ultra sound he told me there was no heart beat and then he had the nurse go call the ultra sound lady to come in and take a look at what he was seeing. I knew there was something wrong, at that point. Especially because the ultra sound lady had already left the building and was on her way home and turned around to come back and see what was going on in my uterus.

I stupidly had declined the offers of my sweet friends to accompany me to the doctor, as I was certain I was fine and just overreacting. My wonderful husband was at work, and I had not made a point to suggest he come with me. So, I had with me just myself and my little sweet daycare baby who was trying really hard to not cause a fuss.

What they told me was I had a Molar Pregnancy (don't look it up online...it's apparently REALLY scary and my doctor told me I was NOT to look it up online at all...I complied). As I understood from my doctor, a Molar Pregnancy is one where the placenta starts to grow on its own and takes over the uterus. Women with a Molar Pregnancy where the baby still has a heartbeat, will continue to grow as if she has a healthy pregnancy, but that is only because her placenta is growing, growing, growing. If this kind of pregnancy is not terminated, the mother and baby will most certainly die.

The placenta turns into a kind of "cancer", although my doctor used the term "pre-cancerous". In the stage I was in, he even said it was not technically "pre-cancerous" yet, but absolutely there had to be a D&C to make sure all of the diseased placenta was removed. I have heard of women who had this kind of pregnancy and the baby still had a heart beat and were forced to decide between aborting or continuing. I am SO thankful the Lord made that decision for me by taking our sweet baby before that horrible discussion even had to take place. Thank you Jesus!

I was actually relieved and horrified to have passed the baby the day before my D&C was scheduled. It's such a graphic experience that I find it difficult to find words to really explain it.

## I was overwhelmed by the physical sensation of passing the baby, the horror of realizing what had just happened and briefly seeing that tiny sweet baby at the bottom of my toilet. Can you believe I'm even typing those words?! My sweet tiny baby lying at the bottom of my toilet?! Sigh.

For me, I just could not physically stand there and take the whole scene in and so I am sad to say I flushed. I don't really know what else I would have done, but I just couldn't think straight in that moment. And I had a house full of daycare kids that I had to get back to, so I couldn't really take a lot of time to stand and think about what was the best thing to do.

That was hard...to just have to dismiss the event, almost, to go back to my daycare kiddos and my own kiddos. But, I was relieved to have the knowledge of what happened to my baby. To think of my little



baby in a steel tray with a bunch of other tissue would have been harder for me, I believe. So, in all things, God is working you see.

#### The next few months were so hard. I had already been planning, of course, for the future and so to roll back those plans, even if they were just in my mind, was agonizing. The loss of the future. Oh man, that was rough.

After the numbness wore off, I just had this PAIN inside me like I have never felt before. It felt so deep, so profound, so overwhelming. I was unprepared. I went out with girlfriends and drank wine, lots of wine. Frequently, I had a couple of very strong drinks after my kids went to bed.

#### I was a mess inside. I. Was. So. Sad.

I saw a medical drama episode where a patient had to be placed into a medical coma. I began to think about that and wish with all my heart that I could be put into a medically induced coma. I had a really close girlfriend who was pregnant at the time, there was another gal in my MOPS group who was only two weeks farther along than I was.

There were pregnant women everywhere. I never felt like I was mad at them, but seeing them just made me so sad for what I had lost. My heart was so broken and so full of pain, but I didn't have an outlet to get that sadness out. I had to keep it together for my kids, my business, my responsibilities, etc. I felt like I had no time to grieve.

My husband, of course, was so wonderful and would always listen, would always do whatever he could. But, there was one pivotal moment on a Sunday. I had drunk WAY too much the night before and was so hung over that I couldn't make it to the first service at our church and so had to go to the second service. And when I got there, I couldn't even make it past the first few lines of our pastor's sermon. I was about to break open.

As I was walking down the hallway out of the sanctuary, I was just praying that God would send someone to me who would let me talk to them. And He did. Of course. This precious woman just let me cry in her arms for way past the point of what people are normally comfortable with. It was a cleansing. It was what I needed when I needed it.

After that moment, the pain was less severe, less overwhelming. And I began to process the loss with the Lord and that allowed me move forward and start processing with my husband. Am I high maintenance or what?!



The Lord was really the biggest encouragement to me. I began to see His hand at work in my heart as He brought that sweet friend to hold me and let me get all of that toxic grief out. I began to hear Him speak to me and give me images to hold onto. I asked Him one day what our little baby's name was, and I felt Him say Jocelyn which means happy, joyful. I found a beautiful picture of Jesus holding a tiny baby in His arms. I found a Hallmark book at Walgreens that had a couple really poignant pieces of encouragement to me in the grieving process.

#### The last part of my grieving was a moment when my thoughts were quickened to the fact that my sweet baby girl would always know a life of oneness with Jesus and all His beauty and the beauty and joy of heaven. I remember I wept and wept at that. That was the end of the grieving stage.

There is about eight months between my miscarriage and my current pregnancy. I had to go into the doctor's office every month for six months to get my blood drawn to make sure my hormone levels didn't spike back up, which would indicate my placenta had started growing again on its own. Thankfully, the chance of that happening in a Molar Pregnancy is very low and I had levels that were well within the acceptable range for all those months. During this timeframe, I was not allowed to get pregnant at all. At first, it was really hard to be forced to wait to try again for another baby, but now I see the wisdom in it. Otherwise, I wouldn't have fully processed the loss of our sweet baby girl.

I am currently 17 weeks pregnant with a Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 2015 due date. This pregnancy has been my most difficult, in terms of physical symptoms. The nausea is worse, although for a shorter period of time, and my body is more broken down from my other two children's pregnancies. I also have two children I am taking care of, and I have a daycare I own in my home.

But, God is so merciful! He caused my husband to lose his job right before I got pregnant so he was home to take care of some things when I would need to rest. What a blessing in disguise (my husband is now employed with an even better job that is more than 25% increase in pay from his last job!)

At first, I was so scared to announce the pregnancy or do anything that was not 100% according to the books, etc. After I made it through the first ultra sound and had some conversations with my doctor and chiropractor a lot of my fears were relieved and I've had a more balanced outlook on the whole thing. I did just buy a really nice diaper bag and had that thought that "I've done it now...I've jinxed myself." I don't even believe in that kind of thing, but there a fear of not only losing the baby but also going back to that dark place and having to go through the process all over again.

One thing I would like people to know about miscarriage: Grieving looks different for everyone. Some people cry, some people sleep, some people look busy. You don't get over it in a couple months. I feel fortunate to have honestly fully processed the loss in four or five months. Some people need to process it much longer or are in different situations which don't allow them to process it right away, etc.



God had blessed me with a deepening in my relationship with Him. I think that always happens when we walk through a season of loss of really any kind. He showed me He is Faithful even when the circumstance itself seems like He let me down.

My husband and I are so much closer for having walked through that season together as well as the current season of loss of a job and the pregnancy sickness.



God is always good, even when it doesn't feel like it in a particular moment. His name is Faithful. I have found that to be so true and I pray others find that to be true as well.



Julie Ostrand



I thought miscarriage is what happens to other people. I forget that to about 7 billion people, I am, in fact "other people."
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We have three little girls – eight years old, six years old, and two years old. Last year during the week proceeding my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday...I found out that I had basal cell skin cancer on my face...then a few days later we found out about the miscarriage of our 4<sup>th</sup> child.

When my husband Karl and I saw the doctor for our 8 week appointment, everything looked great! We could see the baby moving and the heart beat was strong...so when we went in for our 12 week appointment, I suspected nothing but good news.

I chatted with our doctor cheerfully as she began to search for the baby's heartbeat. When I noticed that she was having a hard time finding that precious little "bah-bum, bah-bum", I grew quiet. As I was trying to decipher the look of concern on her face, she said, "Let's not worry yet...I'm going to send you up for an ultra-sound."

Not to worry?!? The tone of her voice seemed to say it all. When she stepped out of the room, I began to cry. I knew something was terribly, horribly wrong and my husband and I were both devastated.

Once in the ultra-sound room, the feeling of despair sank deeper and deeper into my heart. The black and white screen told the stark truth - our once happy, jumping baby seemed to be crumbled into a tiny heap in the corner of my womb. Death, after 100 well-lived years or just nine weeks in the womb, is still death – cold, harsh, definite - a loss of monumental proportion in our hearts.

The ultra-sound technician told me that I must go back downstairs to speak to the doctor. I told her, "I don't want to talk to anyone. I just want to go home." All I could do was weep in Karl's arms. The last thing I wanted to do was walk down that long hall and bump into joyful, pregnant women. After composing ourselves, we spoke to our kind, compassionate doctor about our options for the natural passing of the baby or a D&C. How does one make these decisions?



As I headed back to my parents' house (they were watching our youngest child while my husband and I had been at the doctor), we shared our heart-breaking news and they wept with us.

It was a warm October day in Nebraska, and beautiful maple leaves were all over the ground. I picked-up several of the blood-red leaves...and knew these would always remind of the deepest loss I had ever experienced.

My father and mother spoke tender words of comfort and nature itself seemed to offer a tribute to our 4<sup>th</sup> child.



Going home that night, I decided to pass the baby naturally. For me, it seemed to be the most private, comforting path between two terrible choices.

#### Days passed and nothing happened. I began to wonder if I had made the right decision. Every day was a painful reminder that where I once carried life...my body now housed death. Every step I took, every errand I ran, every meal I ate for those seven days was with my dead baby inside me. The waiting was agony.

In fact, it wasn't till about a week later at 11 o'clock at night when I was watching "<u>Finger of God</u>" that I started cramping. This documentary is so full of hope! It's about modern day miracles and how God's supernatural power is very much alive and well throughout the world. The timing was perfect and my spirit was positioned to trust a powerful God who holds much affection for the likes of me.

## Note: These next few paragraphs are very descriptive – with the intention to talk about the parts of miscarriage that most people don't discuss...please feel free to skip to the middle of the next page.

The cramping lasted for three to four hours and was much like the pains of natural childbirth. I was quite shocked at the agony and was disturbed by the amount of blood that seemed comparable to a battalion of dead soldiers. Karl was wonderful and did everything he could to help, but it's a solitary process.



I remember sitting in the bathroom and having a picture of Jesus next to me, holding a sweet little boy...about three years old on his lap. I felt he was with me, comforting me in the most perfect way.

Around 2:30 am the pain seemed to subside, and I wondered if I had passed my baby. It truly was hard to tell. I started throwing up violently and desperately wondered if this was normal.

#### Somehow I was not at all prepared for this process. It seemed so unfair to experience the pain of giving birth...with no squirmy, precious baby to hold at the end of it all.

By 3:00 am all the pain was gone, and I went to sleep, convinced it was over. I slept in late the next morning. When I got up to go the bathroom, I painlessly passed our baby into the toilet. It was a dark, murky tissue about the size of my fist that looked like it could be a human heart. I froze. What to do?? What does one do in these situations? There really isn't much literature or advice available on this.



I fished the baby out of the toilet and put it in a glass jar...hiding it up high on a book shelf. It was all very awkward and strange. The next day I realized I wanted to do a burial service and decided to look for our baby in that mass.

Knowing this was something I had to do to begin the process of closure, I spread out newspapers on the bathroom floor, put the bloody heart-like tissue there, and cut it open. Inside was a translucent sack about the size of golf ball and in it was a small baby less than an inch long, shrunken from being dead for several weeks. I was immediately struck by how tiny and vulnerable he seemed. Life is so fragile!

I wrapped our baby in tissue, then a plastic bag, then placed him in a small wooden box our oldest daughter Jensen had decorated.



We decided to name our son "David Paul" and planned a memorial service with our immediate family for November 2, 2014. It was a sweet time of singing songs and each family member brought either a scripture verse, poem or something they wrote for the baby. <u>You can read these precious letters from our family in my blog here.</u>

We buried our son in my parents' garden, along with some other items and marked his grave with a blue cross.

We also created a "Julie Tells All Video" of the memorial service, and I shared some honest thoughts about miscarriage and embracing every child as a gift – no matter how long their life is.



I decided to wear a blue ring on my pinky finger to remind me of David Paul.

In the best way I could, I processed the grief. But still, I carried a deep sadness. Many years ago I felt the Lord planted a desire for "four kids" in my heart, and I just couldn't shake it.

A few years previously we had moved to Africa as missionaries, but were home in Nebraska during this time, to be with Karl's mother as she was dying of cancer. Because it seemed unclear how long she

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would have to live, we decided to return to Africa after Christmas, having spent eight months in the states living with Karl's parents.

#### The process was of moving back to Africa was emotionally and physically exhausting. I wore a smile but carried such sorrow: the eight months of transition in the states, living in my in-laws basement while my mother-in-law battled cancer in the room above, the skin cancer, the miscarriage, moving back to Africa with such a hard landing. It was all so much to absorb.

Eventually we moved into our new home and one of my best friends and her husband lived with us for several months. Pregnant with her first child, she was always gracious and sensitive, but there was a nagging sadness I could not shake. I kept thinking I was turning the corner on difficult days – but honestly it was such a difficult season.

Finally settled into our new home and a routine, things were feeling more normal, but still, I dreaded the next month of April – knowing our son would have been due April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

At the beginning of April I made an appointment to see my favorite massage therapist. I really did not talk about my sadness very often, so I was surprised that as I lay down on the table she said, "I was



mixing the oils for you beforehand and felt the Lord directed me to some particular essential oils. But this combination is for grief." She paused and gave me a long look, "Julie...are you grieving something? " She seemed very puzzled.

I took a long pause and said, "Yes! We had a miscarriage last year and the baby would have been due this month. I am just SO SAD!" And with a deep heaving, I broke into tears and loud sobs.

She said, "OK... you just relax." As she began to massage my body, I felt the Lord minister to my spirit and soul in an unexplainable way. As she massaged my right arm and the hand where I wore the "David Paul Ring" – I felt as if Jesus himself was there – ministering to my heart.

I also felt God say that I must believe whatever she told me after the massage.

Afterwards she said, "Julie...were you expecting a boy?"



I said, "Yes...we thought it was a boy. We named him David Paul."

She said, "I think the Lord wants to give you another boy...and he will give you a run for your money!"

Whenever someone gives a word like this, I know it's best to hold it before the Lord for confirmation and to hang on to it loosely. That said, some deep grief was released that day, and I felt a new sense of hope.

Karl had a dream a few weeks later that we were preparing for a baby, and my mother, who did not know about any of this, also had a dream that I was quite far along in pregnancy.

On April 27<sup>th</sup> I posted this on social media...

I woke up this morning thinking, "This is April 27th. David Paul's due date." I looked at the ring I wear every day, reminding me of him. I reflected on the verse I clung to during the miscarriage "I count it pure Joy when I face trials if many kinds." I thought...what is Joy?? Webster was not helpful "a feeling of great happiness."

I feel sad today...not happy. Then I came across Kay Warren's definition of Joy on purposedriven.com... "Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation." Her simple observation that "We tend to think that life comes in hills and valleys. In reality, it's much more like train tracks. Every day of your life, wonderful, good things happen while at the exact same time, painful things happen to you or those you love...These two tracks — both joy and sorrow — run parallel to each other every single moment of your life." I can rest in my mingled joy and sorrow today...knowing God has already written all my days in his book (Psalm 139:16) and His ways are perfect.



The next month we found out we were pregnant again! We were overjoyed...but felt cautious. More honestly, "cautious" on good days and downright "terrified" on bad days. Despite all of the encouragement, I struggled with fear: fear that I misheard the Lord, fear that this baby would not live, fear that other complications would occur.



Around 10 weeks pregnant, Karl had to leave to go back to the states for another two weeks in June for a soccer tournament and was expected to be back just in time for my 12 week doctor's appointment. I was feeling sick, exhausted and a bit war-torn.

On the day of his scheduled return, his flights were cancelled, and I had to reschedule the appointment. Because we had found out about the miscarriage at our last 12 week appointment, I so desperately wanted us to be together and find out quickly if everything was OK.

After he arrived, we rescheduled our 12 week appointment to a few days later and all looked good! The baby's heartbeat was strong, and we even got to see some happy kicking. I began to relax. I focused on soaking in God's promises and choosing to believe the words He gave me.

All looked good again at our 16 week appointment.

Today as I write this I am 19 weeks pregnant and looking forward to our 20 week ultra sound next week. Boy or girl, healthy or not, no matter what happens...I know the Lord is good, his will is perfect and I will choose to trust his ways.

#### I want to continue to hold it all with an open hand and choose to believe God only wills good towards us!

**Upate:** The next week we found out we are having a boy! We celebrated the news with friends at our "Gender Reveal Party."





WHAT IS A "GENDER REVEAL PARTY?" It's a big party to announce the gender of our child. We chose to find out (at the same time as all our friends and family) the gender of our baby. We had the 20 week ultra-sound and the doctor wrote the gender of our baby in a sealed envelope. We gave this envelope to the baker who then baked cupcakes and put "secret frosting" inside the cupcakes (either "pink frosting" for a girl or "blue frosting" for a boy).

## When we bit into the cupcakes at our party the frosting "revealed" the gender of our baby! Cheers erupted across Africa and America...a boy!

#### See photos of the party....

Most people were thrilled because we already have three girls...they were so excited for us to have a boy. For me, it was much more than that – it became another example that God's words to me are forever true and he can be fully trusted with every detail of my life.



Haw ()a

As with any loss, a miscarriage can be hard for friends and family to navigate. Knowing what to do or say can be hard. Here are some tips:

#### 1. ALWAYS SAY SOMETHING:

When something bad happens, people say the wrong things so often. They say weird, hurtful things when they're trying to be nice...But there's something worse than the things people say. **It's much worse, I think when people say nothing...** 

I know we're busy. I know we forget sometimes. More than anything, I think we so desperately don't want to say the wrong thing. It's impolite, we've been told, to bring up nasty topics like loss and sadness. But if we don't bring it up, what are we left with? We talk about the easy things, the happy things, the weather, and then we leave one another totally alone with the diagnosis or the divorce papers.

When you're mourning, when something terrible has happened, it's on your mind and right at the top of your heart all the time...When you're in that place, it's a gift to be asked how you're doing, and most of the time the answer comes tumbling out, like water over a broken dam, because someone finally asked, finally offered to carry what feels like an unbearable load with you...Say something, every time, and ask the simplest questions...How are you? What was it like? What can I do? ...And if you don't know what to say, try this: "I heard what happened and I don't know what to say."

- Shauna Niequist: *Bittersweet* (order this book now from Amazon)

- 2. WHAT NOT TO SAY: Don't be critical or offer advice. Don't say...
  - It was "meant to be."
  - You can try again.
  - It's better this way...your baby is in heaven.
  - I know how you feel.
  - Are you trying again? (you never know how long the grieving process is for that person or how difficult it is for them to conceive it's a very private process)
  - "Helpful" explanations like "there must have been something wrong with the baby or pregnancy."



3. **JUST LISTEN**: Women or anyone processing a loss need someone to talk to. Not to talk back to them, but to listen to them. Even if they just tell the same story over and over or seem to be stuck. They will never be un-stuck without processing their loss with others. And a lot of people are verbal processors and just need someone to listen while they try to sort out their thoughts. She may want to talk about thoughts and emotions, or she may need to talk about the pregnancy and baby. Listen carefully, focusing on what she's saying (not on what you're going to say next) and showing you're paying attention by making eye contact, nodding, gestures, etc.

Sometimes a grieving person just needs you to sit there while the grieving person sits there and says nothing. It means so much to have you there...offer a hug or a cup of tea.

#### 4. WHAT TO DO: You can never go wrong with...

- Bringing a meal (most people will not mention bringing a meal when you ask how you can help, but this is always a much appreciated gesture)
- Sending a card
- Offering to babysit the other children so the parents can have some personal time together
- Send flowers

Very importantly, do not say "Call me if you need anything," because your friend will not call. Not because they do not need you or your help, but because identifying a need, figuring out who might fill that need, and then making a phone call to ask for the help is beyond what they can handle at this time.

Instead, make definitive offers such as, "I will be there at 3 p.m. on Tuesday to bring you a meal so you don't have to cook" or "I will stop by each morning on my way to work and give the dog a quick walk." Remember that your friend WILL need help so offer your help and follow through with your offer.

> - Ana Rodriguez: UnspokenGrief.com (<u>http://unspokengrief.com</u>)

5. **CHECK IN:** Don't be afraid to check in: continue asking her how she's doing and give her the opportunity to talk about her thoughts and feelings. As well, don't leave out Dad: he's grieving, too, so make sure to ask how he is doing.

Note: Unless sources are noted, tips are compiled from the contributors to this ebook and "Band Back Together" (miscarriage resources section: <u>http://www.bandbacktogether.com/miscarriage-</u> <u>resources/#sthash.Pf3bxk2d.dpuf</u>)



<u>Unspoken Grief</u> – Their mission is to build and support a community of individuals and families who have been touched directly or indirectly by miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal loss. Working together to remove the stigma of perinatal grief by sharing our stories and increasing awareness of the lasting effects of perinatal loss.

**Still Standing Magazine** – This is a cool magazine for bereaved parents – who just like any other community and walk of life – want to feel normal, connected by a common thread. Though tragic, it is somewhat comforting that we don't walk these dark paths alone. Great blogs and articles!

**Finding my Muchness** - Finding My Muchness is Tova Gold's journey back up (from the grief of losing twins). She says, "It's my journey to rediscover 'me' and the things that ignite me as a woman, as an artist, as an entrepreneur. Muchness is the energy, the life, the spark of positivity that fuels our days, our imaginations, our confidence. I want to help you reconnect to your Muchness. Visit her site to <u>take</u> the Muchness Challenge, join the Muchy discussions and <u>Share Muchness pics</u> of the day."

<u>Share</u> - Share provides free resources to all bereaved parents and their loved ones. Take a moment to request a packet of information, find a support group, download brochures or join the Share message boards and chat rooms.

**HopeXchange** - HopeXchange offers a wealth of <u>information</u> for those who have been impacted by the grief of pregnancy loss. We provide educational and uplifting articles, booklets, pamphlets, and <u>books</u>, along with miscarriage <u>FAQs</u> and an extensive list of links and <u>resources</u>. Sign up for our free HOPE monthly newsletter packed with helpful and useful information. These materials are provided to answer the many questions that surround pregnancy loss and grief and support those who are working toward healing from miscarriage, stillbirth or early infant death.







This e-book was created by <u>Julie Ostrand</u>. Originally from Nebraska, she and her husband (along with 3 little girls) serve with <u>All Nations</u> in Cape Town, South Africa.

Julie started "<u>Motherhood is Beautiful</u>" - a holistic program in Africa created to disciple moms, while giving them the tools to become better mothers and opportunities to earn an income producing beautiful products.

Visit EmpowerAMom.com to find out more!

