

The Lord Gave... And The Lord Took Away... Blessed Be His Name

My Story of IVF

‘You’ll never conceive children naturally.’

The specialist was sympathetic with my stunned husband and me, as we sat in her office. It was clinical yet pretty with pastoral colours, a fitting place to discuss fertility treatment and the hope of having a baby.

The previous day I had lost my father, and was not in a fit state to hear more devastating news. I had thought of cancelling our appointment, but Adrian and I had been trying for a baby for several years without success and we needed answers. Wondering every month whether I had finally fallen pregnant was difficult. If my period was even a day late, my hopes would soar despite myself, only to come crashing down every single time.

Just Two Please!

We believe that life begins at conception, which made the possibility of IVF, for us, untenable. The destruction of unused embryos would seem to be against the Bible’s teaching of God’s compassion for the weak and insignificant. However, a friend shared with me that we could have control over how many eggs were fertilised. As only two embryos would be used, we need only have two eggs fertilised.

Before going through IVF I had no idea what is involved in a cycle. I began with three weeks of hormone suppression injections into my abdomen followed by stimulation injections with daily ultrasound scans and blood tests.

Soon the time came for me to have my eggs harvested. The next morning I called the hospital and was given the good news that both eggs had been fertilised successfully. They would now be kept in an incubator to divide.

Parents at Last

As I put down the phone I was suddenly aware that two tiny souls had just been created, little ones precious not just to Adrian and me but also to God. He was even now in the business of knitting them together. This was day one of all the days He had planned for them, and the thoughts He had towards them were numerous and precious. (Psalm 139:15-17.) I felt fiercely maternal. I desperately did not want any harm to come to them; they were so tiny, and fragile, and defenceless. They were my children and I loved them deeply.

The next day my heart was in my mouth as I called the hospital for news about our little ones. How relieved and overjoyed we were to be told that they had both divided cleanly with little fragmentation. With IVF, little or no fragmentation is ideal and the embryo is consequently given a higher grading. Our embryos were graded II and III, so we decided to nickname them Two and Three. Now our babies had names!

Back at the hospital, as I awaited the embryo transfer, I found it impossible to settle. I sat on the bed, rummaged in my locker, paced around the room, then back to bed! It was a fairly dull, overcast day and this only added to my anticipation and nerves. Eventually the wait was over. We arrived in the operating theatre for the transfer and there on a television screen we saw our little ones for the first time. Two beautiful little four-cell embryos. Adrian took photos while I just revelled in gazing at them.

After the transfer from incubator to my womb, it dawned on me in a deeply personal way the wonderful gift God had given me. Tears leaked out from under my eyelids as I took in the fact that I was a mother. Two tiny human people had been conceived: Adrian and I had become parents.

For the rest of that day I tried to take in the enormity of what had happened. Two and Three were now a part of our lives. They were hidden in my womb, being skilfully woven together by a loving Creator. I was very aware that they were two souls, little people that Christ had died for.

Empty and Desolate

Two weeks later, I developed severe period pains and it became clear that the IVF cycle had failed. After calling the hospital for advice, I rang Adrian at work. I could not speak through the tears and he was unable to hide the tension in his voice as he told me, 'I'm coming home.'

Adrian seemed shy and unsure of himself in the face of my grief, but anxious to support me. He helped me into the bath so that the hot water could relax my tense abdominal muscles. I felt curiously empty and desolate as I lost our two little ones. It was many months before I was able to have a bath without it being a painful reminder of our great loss.

Tiny Treasure in Heaven

God comforted me over the following days and weeks in many ways, ministering to me through His Word. 'Begetting' in Scripture indicates the beginning of parenthood. Although we were not given Two and Three to nurture, we feel incredibly rich knowing we have little ones in

Heaven. It is amazing that my father has already met his grandchildren. And Adrian and I cannot wait to meet them one day!

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The opinions expressed in this document are those of Mandy Baker Johnson.