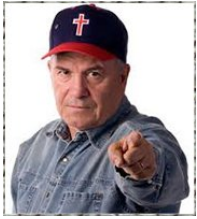


# Maggie's Story



By Dave Daubenmire

*Our daughter Maggie just suffered a miscarriage. She wrote this to help those who have suffered the same tragedy of losing a child...a son...and those who still grieve over their purposeful aborting of a precious child. –Coach Dave Daubenmire*

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” –Hebrews 10:23

I couldn't wait those few more days to be “late”. I already knew it in my heart that I was pregnant. But being impatient I impulsively went to the store and picked up a home pregnancy test. I hurried home and carefully read the instructions and meticulously completed the steps. Not even needing to wait those long sixty seconds my mom gut proved correct, positive! I tried not to let on to anything with my husband when I called him into the bathroom. He of course played dumb and so we both refused to say what our hearts were ready to burst about, our fourth child. After hugging and crying (me) I immediately began envisioning our future with this child. When is my due date? What is the gender? Do I call my midwife now? Will I need a new car seat? Where are my maternity clothes? And on and on. “Slow down” I tell myself but I can't help it, it is instinct. I'm instantly connected with my preborn child and begin mothering from the moment I



pee on that stick.

Weeks go by and we slowly beginning letting family and close friends in on the secret. All the questions arise. When are you due? Is it a boy this time? A home birth, really? Being pregnant is a truly a roller coaster of an adventure. All the hormones and physical ups and downs are nothing compared to what it does to my heart, which is purely overwhelming. My connection with this child grew faster than my symptoms. Nausea, fatigue, cravings, aversions and of course the growing belly, but surpassing all of that my heart was morphing into a mother of four.

My bond with my baby deepened after months of developing together and I pass into the second trimester. Now I really begin dreaming and planning for our family's future once this little one arrives. I'm starting to feel better and have a belly to show for my nausea and fatigue troubles. I have a great visit with my midwife and leave her office feeling truly blessed. The next month goes by fairly quickly given all the distractions going on in the world. I head into my next appointment for a chat and check up.

"Let's get you over here and take a listen" my midwife invites me to the couch. There is always a bit of anticipation when I prepare to hear my child's heartbeat and like the previous time my heart began to beat faster in excitement. I had cried tears of joy the first time I heard that precious sound just a month earlier. This time, now 16 weeks pregnant there is a struggle to find "it". At first I tell myself to keep calm, the baby is just being difficult. A few more minutes go by with no success. I am feeling unsure and really don't know how to process what might be happening. I'm recommended to have an ultrasound done to "check for viability" – words so cold, yet sensitive to my emotions. My entire being became foreign to me. My mind was an peculiar place as I teetered between hope and despair. My body seemed the same as when I walked in the door yet subtly different. And my heart, well that it was

experiencing things it never had before.

I leave there and immediately call to make an ultrasound appointment. They can get me in that night. I call my husband to explain what I don't want to believe. The next six hours were fuzzy in my memory as I pushed away lots of my thoughts and emotions, as I really didn't have any evidence to convince me of what was the inevitable truth. I make the choice to go to the ultrasound appointment alone. I won't go into the details but know it was a tough choice and most people might think I'm crazy for making it. I have a rock of a husband and he of course wanted to be with me but supported my decision because it was what was best for our other children, and looking back I can say it was best for him too. He will never have to relive it like I do.

I drove 45 minutes in the late evening wrestling with my thoughts and feelings. Finally I pull in. After calling the office to tell them I've arrived (COVID ) they tell me to wait until they text me to come inside. I stood outside in the dark and chilly evening wondering and waiting what my near future would hold. I get the text and head on in and it's a beautiful place filled with adorable baby faces and stuffed animals and comfy chairs. It doesn't feel medical at all, but rather quite inviting because it's a place where many families get to meet their babies for the first time. I speak with the receptionist and make sure she understands why I'm there, trying to avoid an uncomfortable situation in the exam room. I pay my bill and take a seat.

I have an almost out of body feeling upon me as I stare down in front of my feet. My name is called and I walk in the room and find my place on the bed. The technician is friendly and professional. I confirm with her again what we are looking for during this appointment. On goes the warm slimy goop. A few seconds later I see my baby's portrait on the screen. My heart leaps for a moment. Then I strain my eyes looking desperately to find the heart pumping, but I fail. The technician kindly

says, "I'm sorry. I should see some blood moving here". I calmly reply by asking her to shut down the image. I did not see the point in staring at the truly lifeless screen in front of me. I wipe the goop off and stand up and thank her. She asks me if I'd like a photo. I hesitate as I really wasn't sure if I did want one. It makes me sound like a bad mom but I pondered it. Would it be too painful? It's not like I'll have a baby book to put it in. I tell her yes and receive the kelly green colored envelope and almost shamefully place it in my bag and walk out the door.

My drive home was much faster than my drive there. I am in complete shock. The phone conversation with my husband is blur as I hear his heart break through his silence followed by crying. Even at this point I have yet to shed a tear and still keep the sobs back as I focus on navigating home. Needless to say I was numb.

The next day was filled with weeping and praying like I had never done in my entire life. I had a pre planned visit out of town with extended family and went ahead with what we had planned. I was still quite numb and had so much to process that I am not sure how I handled these days. During this visit we were given the chance to say goodbye to my husband's grandfather shortly before his passing. I experienced the celebration of a life well lived all while grieving the life my child will never have lived. A 91-year-old beating heart faded in front of me as my way too young child's heart had already stopped. Mine felt like it might as well.

When we returned home of course my husband went to work on Monday and like it does the rest of the world carried on as normal, and I never felt so alone. I now had to confront my tragic reality all on my own. It was a terrible place as I tried to stay busy and take care of my children and home but all I wanted to do was lay in bed and cry. Leaving the home was a challenge too. I had a belly I now felt like I needed to conceal.

I was told it could be a while until my body completed the miscarriage. By a while I mean two to six weeks. Time became my worst enemy. I can't even begin to explain the mental and spiritual battles I faced while waiting. The wondering filled my head and heart beyond measure. Eventually thoughts moved from when toward how. How would I ever deliver my dead child? How will I feel when I see it? More questions I dreaded the answers to but could not overlook their importance.

While waiting for the delivery I learned that I had contracted COVID-19. A forced isolation for a heart already feeling abandoned. The struggle increased as we questioned how could we fully grieve when we haven't even been given the opportunity to do so. With the indefinite timing of the baby's delivery we were stuck, waiting for the chance to hold our child just to place it into the ground. To expand, we were truly captured in our grief as we anticipated our chance to whisper hello and goodbye in the same breath.

Many might question why I didn't have medical intervention to bring the delivery sooner. I have always had a natural approach with my deliveries and this was no different. I knew my body was designed to work a certain way and I would trust that process. I didn't want to force my body into anything it wasn't ready to do. It was not something I felt should be in my hands. But secretly I was terrified. What kind of risk am I putting myself in? Why would I put myself and those who care through this added heartache? Where will I be when it begins?

Four weeks and one day after learning our child no longer had a heartbeat my body began the process of completing the miscarriage. I tried to prepare myself a little for what this might be like physically. I had delivered my three daughters without any medical intervention and thought certainly I can handle this, as it was to be less intense than full term labor. I found this to be false. Maybe it was the heaviness that came with this delivery but my body was undoubtedly challenged beyond what I expected. I awoke from sleep at

3:00am with contractions and knew right away my battle was intensifying while the world slept. My heart broke more with each contraction and it went on for hours. I finally got out of the shower where I had been managing my pain. Fingers and toes soaked and pruned I headed to the couch, I just needed to get off my feet. Everything seemed to fade as I lay there physically and emotionally exhausted. My husband offered encouragement and looked at me with sympathetic eyes, it's then I began to surrender my struggle. After a few minutes I felt the need to head to the bathroom, then completely unexpected my baby entered the palm of my hands. No pressure, no pushing and no climax of arrival. My child so gently entered the world without any effort from me at that moment.

I'll never be able to put into words what I felt when I held that tiny seemingly perfect little baby. No use in trying to describe what it's like, it's something only those who walk through will ever fully understand. We took time to admire the outward perfection of our sweet babe. Fingers, toes, nose and lips all delicately placed. He stretched from the tip of my finger to the end of my palm. We confirm what our hearts already knew, a son. I hold him and tell him how loved he was.

We already had made plans for where we were going to bury our child and after waiting a month for the occasion we were anxious to complete that part of our grieving process. My husband proved his love by meticulously digging the small hole so our son, along with our dreams, could be laid to rest. I wavered in closing the custom made burial box as I knew it would be the last time I ever saw my little boy. We prayed, cried and embraced one another. Unspoken but loudly felt we both breathed an inner sigh of relief. We had been anticipating these last few hours for so long and they were coming to a close. It was finally over.

But that's not true at all. It is so far from being over, in fact these past four weeks will take a lifetime to overcome. Why do I write all of these intimate details and share my

personal experience? Partially it's selfish as I feel it helps me heal when I share my heart. But I also want to speak to the mothers, fathers, grandparents who have lost a preborn baby. I was in the uncommon situation that many people knew I was pregnant and therefore I had so much support when I got the news. But so many go through a miscarriage without ever sharing it happened. I mourn for all those who did not get to share their love and loss. I was given 20 weeks and one day to carry my son. Just because a woman is pregnant for a much shorter time does not lessen the significance of the loss. Moms we need to talk about and honor our children whom we did not get to wholly meet.

More importantly I write so that I can share my hope. I know I will never be okay with the fact that I had to bury my baby. I will never fully get over the grief, as it is endless like my love for my child. But I do have hope to offer. "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Psalms 34:18. I can testify that this scripture is not just a nice thought, it is a reality. The closeness of God is what has carried me through this mess. His presence has been good to me when my circumstances were not. His Spirit has comforted even the most desolate parts of my soul.

It took a tragedy for me to more fully experience the living God. Through my despair God revealed to me His goodness. In this chaos of my heart I rested upon the steadfastness of God's sovereignty. During the torturous waiting period I experienced patience of the God who stands outside of time. In my loneliness I was met with the presence of the great I AM. In my heartbreak I walked in fullness of what it means to belong to God.

My pain still exists but these truths alleviate the power it holds. I am sad and it doesn't mean my faith is too frail. It is the contrary because I know my God will continue to be near me. I pray you can know this same God and experience what your soul is longing for, which whether you know it or not is Jesus

Christ.

God used my son's death to draw me closer to Him. God gave His son to die so you could have a way to Him.

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