

An infertile journey ends

by Tina Smith

****final article in 3-part series****

A decade has passed since my husband and I first talked about starting a family. We've changed jobs, built a house, bought a boat and spent a week in Hawaii. We've traveled back to our high schools for class reunions, buried grandparents, made new friends and found comfort in the simpler things in life. All the while, we remained childless.

It's ironic how time doesn't lessen the pain as much as years force us to come to terms with the reality of dealing with disappointment. There have been weeks I wanted to hide under the covers and pray no one would miss me, but I got up and went about my days. I've longed to go to sleep and not wake up, particularly after losing my first pregnancy, but instead plodded along doing the best I could. When I thought my world had ended, it went on – slowly and painfully – and very few around me had a clue about how much my inability to become a mother affected me.

I know I'm not the only person in pain. People all around me are doing battle with finances, family members, health conditions and situations beyond their control. I wouldn't choose their stories over mine, just as I'd venture that none of them would volunteer to be infertile.

Motivated to reach out to other women who were hurting like me, I began speaking about my experience with infertility and helped start a community support group. I collected and shared books, articles and music that brought me comfort and courage. My heart began to reconnect with a Higher Power, and I was surprised to find that God had remained constant even when I had turned away. For the first time in a long time, I felt inklings of quietness in my soul.

My appointments with my fertility doctor continued, as well, but another attempt to become pregnant was unsuccessful. Before moving forward to explore adoption, my husband and I agreed to undergo one final procedure, which would exhaust our designated financial resources and bring closure to our world of assisted reproduction.

So a tiny three-day-old embryo -- made from an egg taken from my body, fertilized by my husband's sperm and cryogenically frozen in storage for more than a year -- was thawed and placed in my womb. Nine months later, we celebrated the birth of our son. His arrival was quickly followed by a daughter, who was completely unexpected and conceived without assistance.

The human spirit is an amazing phenomenon. We have a strength within us that pervades and enables us to do that which seems impossible. The challenge is to remind ourselves -- and each other -- to never lose hope. We must go forward, making the most of each day and finding the blessings along that way that help balance out the pain we carry. Like me, you may be surprised when you find that making a difference in someone else's life can lessen the disappointment in your own heart.

So here's to happy endings -- and the peace that is within our reach even before dreams come true.

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