



## What I mean when I say my daughter was Stillborn

By: Beth Morey, Author, Still Standing Magazine, April 2013

I don't think that most people understand me when I say that my daughter was stillborn.

That phrasing makes it sound passive, like it was something that just happened to me, externally.

But that's not what a stillbirth is, and I imagine that's not what a miscarriage is either.

A stillbirth isn't something that happened to me, or my daughter, or my family.

It's something that happened *inside* me. That I was forced to participate in.

I keep trying to think of an analogy to explain how devastatingly non-passive enduring a stillbirth or miscarriage is, but nothing seems adequate. Perhaps it comes close to say that it's like having cancer or another horrible, soul-draining, body-emaciating disease . . . only that the cancer that is within you is slowly killing someone else. Someone precious to you. And you are forced to come along for the ride, to participate in the killing.

But then, I've never had cancer or watched a loved one go through cancer, so maybe that's way off, too.

The simple fact is – there is nothing like stillbirth. There is nothing like going to the hospital to check on your baby, only to have the incredibly sweet joy of pregnancy replaced in an instant with the dull, moaning emptiness of knowing that you are still going to have to endure labor and birth and filling breasts and the weeks of bleeding.

Only your baby will be dead. Your labor pains will produce nothing but a shell of this most precious person. Your arms will be empty, and there will be no way to soothe your aching breasts.

And that doesn't even factor in the grief, or the guilt, or the wondering of who or what in this wide world you are now that death has crept into your life, into your body, in such an insidious way.

I think it's the not-understanding that enables people to tell me, not even a year and a half after my daughter's stillbirth as I write this, to get over it. To move on.

But my question to those people is – how long did it take you to "get over" the death of a loved one, if you've ever had to



endure such a thing? How long did it take you to "move on" (whatever that means)?

Now ask yourself: what if you had to *participate* in the death of your loved one, to help bring their ending of breath into being? Then how long would it take you to heal?

Stillbirth didn't just happen to me. It doesn't just happen to anyone. Your baby dies, and then you *give birth* . . . to your dead child.

It's not passive. You participate, even though you don't want to. Even though it makes you want to scream and scream and scream in horror.

You participate, and it keeps you up at night for weeks and months and years.

It's been one year and four months since I birthed my daughter's dead body, and that is still what blooms large in my mind every night as I wait for sleep to descend. I don't ask for the memories to come – they are just there. I can't escape. I birth her again and again in my mind, hold her again and again for the first and last time, feel the lingering ache of afterbirth that prevents me forgetting even for a moment the nauseating reality of what just took place.

Stillbirth does not *just happen*. It's not clean and surgical. Instead, it is messy and active, and it opens a wound whose pain throbs on long past you wish it would. And it changes you.

So when I say, "My daughter was stillborn," please know that I am not describing something that happened to me. I am describing a traumatic and pivotal event in which I was an active, unwilling participant, an event that I participate in the echoes of still.

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...Don't Worry About a Thing...Cause Every Little Thing Is Going to Be Alright...