

## Roman's Birth

This a tough one for me. For years, it has had the most significant impact on my spiritual being. It is also the most difficult to speak of because it is the most touching to my spirit. It has the most potential for people to think that I am either crazy, lying, or just mistaken. If I ever had doubted the existence of God, Jesus, and heaven, this experience sealed the deal. There is no doubt in my mind. I am 100% sure that Heaven and angels exist. Since I am 100% convinced of this, I must also believe in the existence of the devil, demons, and evil spirits. Why would Jesus talk about these beings and places if they weren't real? There's so much going on in this world that we as humans can't see because of our limited eyesight. Recently I read a passage in the Bible that I should only fear God... so here goes.

When Brent and I were young, newly married, financially poor, and uninformed of our rights, we found ourselves expecting a baby. We were both very modest people. We faced the hard reality of obtaining medical care, in an area of our lives that we were both extremely private. We went to the first appointment where a nurse confirmed that we were going to have a baby. Then we went to a different doctor for my first exam. It was horrible. The doctor kept saying that I needed to relax. How could I relax in a completely sterile, impersonal, and imposing environment? My next appointment was to have an ultrasound to see the age of the developing baby.

We went to our appointment. Brent was told that he was not allowed in the room for the ultrasound. The nurses said that it was hospital policy. They said there wasn't enough space in the room for him to stand and for doctor / patient confidentiality in case the age of the developing baby would upset my husband. (They implied that the developing baby could possibly not be Brent's! He might get angry and possibly cause harm to the equipment, the staff, or myself.) The nurses gave me a choice. Go in by yourself or leave. They obviously didn't know us. We left. I felt hurt and outraged at the same time. It seemed unfair. Looking

back, the staff either lied or hospital policies have changed. Much later, I learned about the Patient Bill of Rights.

Because we were so upset at the exclusion of the father in the development of his growing baby, we sought out other options. We studied as much as possible and planned on a homebirth. This was in the days before the internet. At that time, we were unaware of how to contact a midwife and we had very limited funds. We prepared our apartment the best that we could for our bundle of joy. We had everything we needed and more. We were able to find lots of good things at yard sales from neighboring communities. Brent asked me what I really wanted for the baby. I didn't want to tell him because it was so expensive. He persisted and I finally confessed that I really wanted a video recorder so that we would always have our first moments captured. The cost was huge for us. Somehow, the video recorder was purchased and ready for our new baby to join us.

The day approached and I was having severe backpain...duh... contractions. We timed them and they were still far apart. Because my back hurt and I had not taken any medication at all since learning of my pregnancy, I asked Brent to massage and push on my back and lower back. He kept asking, "Are you sure?" I kept wanting him to push harder because my back still hurt. I was used to his massages working and taking away my discomfort. Now it wasn't working. In retrospect, I suppose that is why women say that labor is painful. A massage won't make the pain disappear... trust me.

This pain went on for about a day. At least the contractions were closer (about 5 minutes apart.) We were not seeing this painful process progress and I was already tired. My water had not broken yet. We started to second guess our decision to have the baby at home. We drove to the hospital.

At the hospital, the staff was outraged that I had only had one visit with the doctor. They were also upset that I refused to sign a paper that permitted extra

people in the room to observe my child's birth. That's right. They wanted me, a very private person, to just show the birthing process, to complete strangers so that they could "observe." No thanks! Staff told me that everyone says that and changes their mind when the time for delivery comes. Well, I'm not everybody!

I went to a delivery room and was hooked to all sorts of machines to monitor both the baby and me. Pitocin was given to increase the speed and intensity of my contractions. At some point I noticed what I thought were toolboxes in the delivery room. They appeared to have been hidden behind pictures in the room. I realized they were cases for medical supplies. I asked a nurse what time the staff had a shift change. In my research, I had read that the number of cesarean births dramatically increases before a shift change. Speculation may lead some to conclude that it is for the staff's convenience. I did not want this to happen to me. I looked at the clock approaching a new hour and again asked my simple question. Nobody would answer me.

Someone came in and notified the doctor that I had not signed a paper. The doctor became very upset and asked Brent if he was going to watch me die in front of him. Brent signed about five papers in about as many seconds. Immediately, approximately ten people came into the delivery room. My heart dropped. How could ten people come into the room the second that Brent signed papers to save my life and I was at my most vulnerable? I felt so violated. My heart sank in an instant. The feeling in my heart wasn't just my imagination. The doctor yelled for them to all leave. The heart monitor relayed my instant distress at the arrival of the people. If they all entered the room to save me, as the doctor had suggested to Brent, why did they all leave when my vitals got worse? I suspect, they were there to observe the delivery now that the proper paperwork had been signed.

Unexpectedly, the lights and all other electronic monitors went out in the delivery room. Staff scurried everywhere. The doctor demanded to know why the backup generators weren't kicking on. Nobody knew. They were upset

because my unborn baby's heart rate had been dropping before the room lost power. Now all machines had stopped working. Nobody knew when my next contraction would be... except it was obvious to me.

Amid the confusion, I said, "There's Roman."

Everyone stopped. Time stood still. "Where?" the nurse beside me asked.

"Right there." I pointed in front of me, but slightly to the left. Roman Hershberger was standing right beside the doctor on the left side. I was not upset by his presence. I was greatly comforted. I forgot about the intrusion of people. I forgot I was in the middle of giving birth. His presence was a shining brightness, so bright that the doctor's headlamp was very dim in comparison. When I saw Roman, I never considered the fact that he had fallen off a ladder several months earlier and had died. All I knew was that I was so happy to see him. He just appeared and stood by the doctor smiling. He never said a word. I recognized his being, even though there was a brightness all about him.

The staff looked at one another. The nurse beside me said, "You are going to have this baby on this contraction. You are going to push with everything you have."

I nodded in agreement. The contraction came. I pushed with all I had. The nurse pushed on my womb. The doctor yelled that she had the head. With another contraction and another push, my son came into this world.

I felt such a sense of peace, but suddenly everyone else went crazy again. The nurse yelled that she had lost my pulse. The doctor said that they were losing me. I thought to myself, how could they be losing me... I was right there. That is all I remember before I lost consciousness.

The next thing I remember was that all the electricity and lights were back on and Roman was gone. My heart monitor showed a flat line and I was zip tied to the hospital bed. I heard the nurse say that she still couldn't get my pulse. Then, she said, "Wait, I have it..." I watched my heart monitor as it changed from a flat line to a line that indicated a heartbeat.

I asked why I was zip tied to the bed. They said it was for my own good. I asked where my baby went. They said he was being taken care of. Someone asked if I had a name for my baby. Brent and I had discussed James, Roman and a few other names, but we had not decided for certain. I looked at Brent and asked, "Roman?" Everyone looked at Brent to see how he would react. They had no idea of who Roman was to me. To them, Roman was a hallucination caused by a lack of oxygen in my brain. Brent shook his head in agreement. Everyone seemed relieved that Brent was satisfied with the name choice. With an exasperated and agitated tone, the doctor looked at Brent and said, "You are lucky to have your wife and son. You almost lost them both." Then she left.

Later I was told that the electricity in the whole hospital went out for a second. The backup generators kicked on for the hospital, but the electricity on the floor where I was at stayed off for a minute or so. In my delivery room, all electricity stayed off until after my son Roman had been delivered. I am confident that the electrical interference came from Roman, our friend from church who had recently passed away.

Roman Hershberger was raised in an Amish family. He fell in love with a Mennonite woman named Carol. Despite their devotion to God, both were excommunicated from their churches for marrying someone of a different religion. They chose to worship in the same building as my family. As humans, we tend to view ourselves as members of different churches. There is just one church... Jesus' bride.

My dad, Roman, and Brent had worked on some construction jobs together. Brent and I agree that Roman Hershberger was one of the kindest people that we have ever met. I think God also likes Roman. I firmly believe that Roman is now some sort of angel. He was sent to help my family in a time of great need. Praise God!

You would think that I would have immediately gone and proclaimed this experience to everyone I knew, but you would be wrong. Instead, I was told that I had hallucinated. I was crushed. I didn't believe it, but it put fear in me. I feared that if I shared my story that people might think that I was a liar, mistaken, or just crazy. The longer I let this fear rule me, the more ashamed I became that I had been quiet about such a wonderful gift. Now, I had acquired fear and shame.

About a year and a half ago, I was talking to God. Four simple words came to me. I have thought about them almost every day since. Sometimes, they come to me many times in a day... depending upon my circumstances. "No fear, just love." It is very close to the verse in I John 4:18 that says, "Perfect love casts out all fear."

You can think I'm crazy if you want. I will not fear that label. I will love you regardless.

(One more thing... we completely forgot about using the video recorder. It sat untouched, on the floor, in its case the whole time.)