

# Cassie's Story

HEART OF FAITH

CHILDLESSNESS



Heart of Hope





As I write this I realise there are stories within stories, our lives are like that of a vine which twists and turns upon itself. Sometimes meandering along peacefully but at other times looking for direction and answers to the various obstacles and questions along the way, creating life, our lives, our stories.

As far as my journey goes in relation to being childless, it must start at 7 years old when my horror stricken parents told my older 2 brothers and myself that mum was pregnant again. Oblivious to their distress I dared to hope for a sister, an ally in arms to help fend off 2 tormenting brothers! I mean this house was already filled with too much testosterone, even our cats and dogs were male

Perhaps now at the ripe age of 54 that is why I am relentlessly plucking whiskers from my chin. Simon was born just before my 8th birthday. Yes another boy, but as he grew, my love for him grew like that of a mother's heart, in fact he had 2 mothers. I recall wheeling him alone along our busy street in his pram wondering within the purity and innocence of an 8 year old mind if anybody thought I was his mother! Of course an impossibility but maternal instinct had kicked in. Growing up I would quite often say to my mother, "I want a baby boy just like Simon".

After many failed relationships I even wondered if I would take off along the tarmac into the heavenly realms of marriage. No tickets on myself but I never dreamt I would be 30 and alone, yet there I was 30 and alone. Then....suddenly at 31 I finally met my soulmate Jonathan, within a year we were married. It was now, finally within the sanctuary of wedlock, my desire to be a mother was going to be fulfilled.

We wanted a few years to ourselves and so contraception of course was used.

I went on the pill but in the early stages of our honeymoon it soon became evident that this was not going to work as I was so ill. I ended up spending a lot of time flat on my back, unfortunately not in the ecstasy of honeymoon love making. So we went to other forms of protection thinking that we might fall pregnant before we were ready! This is where the vine started to twist and turn as I had married a man with health issues and on strong medication. This in itself consumed an enormous amount of our time and energy. In fact it was ALL consuming.



I would have been around 36 and while visiting our GP spoke of our difficulty to conceive. Blood tests and a sperm sample was taken from Jonathon to ascertain where the issue was, as it is easier to start with the male. The results revealed slow swimmers, probably due to medications. However all that was needed was just one Ian Thorpe. Easy for God the giver of life. So Jonathons GP put him on a concoction of vitamins and I started taking my temperature for ovulation time. Love making became not quite so spontaneous at times and made it more pressured and difficult, especially for Jonathon. I recall going to a naturopath who put me on a revolting tasting liquid vitamin syrup. Due to age my test results were not too promising either.

The option of adopting was non-negotiable as I recall Jonathon walking in the room one day stating that if we did not have a child of our own we would not have one at all. I must admit at the time I agreed with him. We hung on to our dreams and had HIS name chosen DILAN (like a lion: faithful, loyal) ISAAC (child of promise). I had a faith filled mother and many others praying for the fulfilment of our hearts desire.

Life is full of choices and I recall making one during this journey, not to be bitter but to rejoice with others who were having a child. Sometimes with tears stinging the back of my eyes. I was not going to steal another's joy because of my own pain.

It truly was painful in my heart and I was hurting. I believe that wherever there is a desire, passion or dream that is unfulfilled on this Earth, there is with it a sense of loss and with that pain and grief. There is no way out, to sidestep, there is only one option and that is to journey it through.

Eventually IVF was thrown around and at the age of 39 we were referred to a clinic in Newcastle. We talk of IVF being hard on a woman, and yes I'll go into that, but for some men it can be demoralising and pressured. We went to a couple of appointments but did not commence IVF at that stage. Jonathon was uncomfortable with his part to play and we had opportunity to move further north to warmer weather. We well knew our chances of conceiving were dwindling in the natural but we continued to believe for our miracle child, praying and trusting in God. That was our decision at the time.



## IVF BEGINS

After several years away we returned to Sydney by the time I was 42, still with no bundle of joy in my arms. With my biological clock ticking faster than time itself, we finally decided to go ahead with IVF. This time we went through the public health system to a Sydney Hospital that was praised for specialising in IVF. I recall my file going missing after our first appointment, a great start and hopefully not a sign of what was to come. I was very unimpressed with such incompetence. With that small hiccup behind us we commenced our first cycle. I was given my injection kit with a diabetic style pen and started to inject daily into my abdomen/ovary area in the hope of producing an abundance of eggs. Then there were the early morning 30 Klm daily trips each way for blood tests and ultrasounds to check all was going to plan.

In the waiting room you meet women from all walks of life. I met some incredibly desperate, distressed women which my heart went out to. Maybe my trust in God did not put me in that category but I still wanted a child. I met and made friendships with some beautiful Lesbian women and back then wondered how God could bless them with a child and then not loving Christian couples. Now I know Him a little better and He certainly is a gracious and loving God and no respecter of person's.

After the first cycle I produced no eggs. I was incredibly disappointed and it was a tough time. I recall waiting to see the nurse to discuss other options and talking to another IVF hopeful who during our conversation said "did you hear about the woman who didn't grow any eggs?" I said to her, "yes, that woman would be me." Think she was a little embarrassed, but it is what it is. So for my second cycle I was also put on oral medication to add to daily injections and to our joy two eggs were produced and taken. Then these precious ones were injected with Jonathons besties. Only one survived the incubation period and deposited in me.

I was told it would be like having a pap smear so due to that information I told Jonathon to stay at home as I would be fine. It was one of the most painful, uncomfortable experiences of my gynaecological life. The doctor had so much difficulty getting the embryo positioned that by the time I came out I sobbed. Not sure why, perhaps trauma? I felt silly but I just could not stop the tears. The waiting began. We were hopeful, very hopeful. I even went to one procedure of acupuncture hearing it could promote pregnancy. Please God please, we want our Dilan Isaac. I did not fall pregnant.



## CEASE IVF

At this stage I actually asked J if we could cease IVF, possibly due to finding it increasingly difficult to self inject and my prior traumatic experience with the embryo deposit. We still believed that God would perform a miracle, He did with Abraham and Sarah so why not us?

I admire those that go on cycle after cycle of IVF, some successful and some going through every possibility with IVF still left bereft of holding their newborn after miscarriage. I always thought I would have 1 child but I don't. Most of the time I'm ok with this, but it can be at the oddest moments that another layer of pain will rise to the surface and I will get emotional.

My womb will never be used to bare a child. It's empty so there is an element of emptiness in my life. I will never be called mum, that hurts. I will never have a child run into my arms that I can scoop up and cuddle, that I can kiss, read a story to, hear all about their day, discipline and teach, learn from them, family holidays....so many things.

As we have entered our fifties I now see couples our age and older enjoying grandchildren. I see that it brings a blessing and fulfilment, fills in the spaces of time with get-togethers and phone calls, and is a priceless gift. Somehow for J and I we have to find ways to fill in life. It at times feels a little empty and we seek other ways to give and bless others. I presently work as a nanny and find fulfilment in this. I

love and care for the most precious and beautiful, yet at times challenging children. It gives me joy unspeakable and helps fill the void, but they are not our own.

I love that this keeps me young, brings the child out in me and I can deposit good into their lives. It is an honour and I love it. However bitterness and resentment can be arch rival enemies of the heart. I've had to navigate my way through these at times, surprising me the most in those moments when I wonder about my choice in marrying Jonathon. All the 'if only's' can arise in a heart that longed for something it did not get. There is no doubt this journey has taken its toll on us both as a couple and as individuals.