

Little Dove

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When she was old enough and asking questions, I told my daughter, Kirrally, she was not an only child. We'd had a premature stillbirth before her and named that tiny girl Sophie. The following year we were over the moon to have our precious Kirrally.

Three years later we tried for another baby, but the pregnancy ended in a late miscarriage. We never knew the sex of that baby. All proof of this baby's existence was gone in a day procedure under general anaesthetic. I always wondered if the baby was a girl or a boy, but I didn't even think to ask at the time. I assumed it was too early to tell even though we were fourteen weeks.

A few years on I was encouraged to go for prayer ministry regarding losses I'd experienced. Our church didn't have a prayer ministry at that time, so I went to one that did. Two elderly women sat with me in a small room adjacent to the worship centre. I felt a bit nervous as I explained some of my deepest thoughts to complete strangers. I disclosed that we had had a late miscarriage a couple of years ago. They asked if I knew the sex of the baby so they could pray more specifically and when I said 'No,' they said, 'let's pray for God's revelation now.'

We bowed heads, and I prayed. 'Lord, please show me if our baby was a girl or boy.' We sat there in silence. One minute. Two minutes. Nothing was coming into my mind. I could hear the traffic going past the window and some boys yelling from the bus stop outside. But inside our room, it was silent. How much time had gone past? Was it five minutes now? How long do you wait? Is God busy answering other people's prayers?

Then the woman named Margaret, with a silver crucifix around her neck, whispered to me, 'What has God told you?'

I swallowed. I wasn't sure, but I didn't want to disappoint these ladies who had so kindly prayed for me. I felt under pressure to say something. *C'mon God, please show up. They have faith in me hearing from you. I need to give them an answer.*

'Girl,' I blurted out.

'Praise you, God. Thank you, Jesus,' they said.

Then the other stood up and circled me, clapping and praying for healing. We finished about half an hour later.

I thanked these women and walked out into the chill of a winter's night, wrapping my coat around me. I started the car and, as I pulled away from the kerb, the questioning began. Had I heard God correctly? Were there too many things crowding my mind that influenced my thinking? Was I just saying girl because we had a girl already? I'd felt God speak to me at different times in my life so I knew it could happen, but there was doubt over my own ability to discern God's voice in this situation. I shrugged to myself. *I'll just have to trust you, Lord.*

Seven years on from this loss, I was having coffee with a close non-Christian friend. I ended up sharing my experience with her and I realised those questions about the sex of our baby had not gone away.

'What was the date you lost the baby?'

I took a sip of my latte and wiped the foam off my lip.

'It was the day before Anzac Day. Twenty-fourth.' It was easy to remember.

'That's tomorrow!'

'Oh, wow it is too.'

'And we just happen to have this conversation about something that occurred exactly seven years ago!'

She was putting the pieces together for me.

'Make an appointment with your doctor. I think you're going to get an answer.'

'I don't know if they would keep that information all these years. I probably should have asked my obstetrician at the time, but it's too late now.'

'It's worth asking the question. I'm excited for you. You need this closure.' She squeezed my arm.

So, with her encouragement, I did make an appointment. Once I was sitting across from my doctor, I felt a bit awkward. She might think my request was utterly ridiculous or say there was no way they would keep that information for so long and I'd be disappointed and embarrassed. She asked me what I had come for.

'This may seem like a weird question, but I'm wondering if there was any possibility that my obstetrician or you would have any record of the sex of a baby we lost seven years ago?' I looked at her tentatively.

'Well, that's an unusual request. Let's have a look at your history.'

'Would it go back that far?'

'It should do.'

My heart leapt. She turned to her computer and tapped away on her keyboard. I noticed all the children's drawings hanging on her wall. She saw me looking.

'Those children are not all mine,' she said with a laugh. I tried to smile but I was too nervous.

She went back to her screen.

'Yes, here's the report.' She scrolled down. I held my breath and squirmed in my chair. What would the answer be? Was it a girl? Did I get it right?

'Yes, here it is. A report from your obstetrician.'

She hesitated for a moment and my heart beat out of my chest.

'It was a baby boy.'

'A boy! Are you sure?'

She turned her screen toward me.

'There are the chromosomes. XY. You can't get any more definite than that.'

I felt overwhelmed. This information had been waiting for me all along. Sitting here on this computer. How many times had I been to my doctor, and I never thought to ask? A tear slid down my cheek.

'Are you alright?' She looked concerned.

'Yes.' It felt like I lost this child yesterday. 'I'm just a bit emotional, sorry.'

'That's perfectly normal. Stay a moment if you want to.'

I took some tissues out of the box she offered me.

'I think I'm right now.' I wiped my eyes. I knew my face would be blotchy and red, so I wanted to move through the waiting room quickly.

'Take care,' she said as she opened the door for me to leave.

My head was a whirl. A boy, I kept saying to myself. A little boy. It made all the difference that I knew it was a boy. I suddenly realised God had answered my prayer. The prayer I prayed with those two elderly ladies' years earlier. But God answered my prayer in such a way that there was no question, no doubt that our baby was a boy. My confusion was gone. My uncertainties evaporated.

As I walked into the waiting room, a voice called out to me. It was Mel, one of my closest girlfriends. It was obvious I'd been crying, and she moved a seat over so I could sit next to her. She just 'happened' to be there waiting for her own appointment. I sat beside her and told her. She put her arm around me, and I started

crying again. Feeling the loss all over again. Somehow, it was even more significant knowing our baby was a boy.

'I think I was meant to be here when you came out,' she said.

I nodded.

I rang my husband, and he sounded emotional, too.

'Now we can name him,' I said.

Names are important. They are the descriptor our parents give us. They are special. They make us unique. Some people don't name their children straight after they are born as they like time to get a sense of what name suits their baby. When God created Man, he gave him the name Adam, and one of the first jobs he gave to Adam was to give names to everything under his care. Naming reveals intimacy and connection.

We chose the name Callum for our son. It is a Scottish/Gaelic name that means dove and symbolises purity, peace and the Holy Spirit. Then we told our daughter she did have two siblings, and they were named Sophie and Callum. Whenever someone asks her if she has a sister or brother, she excitedly says she has both.

'They are in heaven with Jesus,' she says, smiling. 'And I'm going to see them one day!'