

The Wrong Side of 30

**When you've been told you're
too old to conceive**



**A heart-warming story of faith and
hope against all odds**

Lynne Torrente

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Other books by Lynne Torrente: "Cameras Don't Lie" available in ebook from my website www.angelrays.co.za

CAMERAS DON'T LIE

What would happen if Jesus came to earth today? Who would want Him dead?

When a stranger comes to the town of Spring Manor, the residents are drawn to his words of wisdom and his ability to heal all their diseases. As Devlin Cole spends time with him covering the healings for the local newspaper, their friendship deepens to a point where she begins believing for the miracle she so longs for. But when a murder takes place she realizes that his stance on a very controversial matter poses a threat to certain people. Ignoring her husband's attempts to dissuade her from placing herself in harm's way, she investigates the murder. She begins connecting the dots and with her long-time college friend, uncovers shocking truths that rock her world.

Biblical fiction with a twist!

To my Precious Mommy
Now I understand!
To my Precious Daddy
Love through the Heavens!

Acknowledgements

Firstly, to God my Father for helping me pen my thoughts and journey, and being by my side throughout.

Thanks to all my friends and family who have watched this process and encouraged me to complete it. Your support is invaluable!

And thanks to my Hubby for sharing the bed with me and my laptop!

Foreword

No matter who you are, somewhere along life's journey you've had to believe in the unseen!

It is my hope that as you read this book, you are encouraged to believe once more, if you've stopped believing, that you will start dreaming once more, if you've lost your dreams and that you will lift your head to the skies and know that you are not alone, but are being guided by the Great Unseen!

If you've been given a promise by God, keep trusting Him, because in this uncertain world, He remains the only Source you can entirely trust and depend upon.

I trust that you will be changed from within,
Lynne.

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Where it all began

13 December 2001

I glanced at the wall of smiling faces and I felt sick to my stomach.. Image upon image on a tapestry of silent laughs, glistening happy eyes, and joyous moments celebrated. I felt envious and heartsore at the same time, but mostly I felt a sick jealousy. I turned away, unable to look any more at the painful reminder of why I was here. I had come for answers but wanted to run away. I was aware of my husband sitting in the chair next to me, but still I felt alone in my world of sadness.

After what seemed like an eternity the doctor walked into his office and sat down at his desk, and without sparing us a glance pulled his pen out of his jacket pocket. No introductions were made, but the barrage of questions began. General health questions were asked and I answered mostly in the negative, which was a good thing in the medical world. He suggested we do the internal examination and then carry on with discussions afterwards. As luck would have it, I had started my monthlies a day before. I couldn't cancel the appointment, as we would have had to wait another few weeks before we found another opening. I told the doctor this and he proceeded to zap the tampon out with large tweezers. The wall next to my head suddenly became very interesting. He prodded and pushed and squeezed, and then inserted an instrument to check internally. Not many words were spoken, and he gave no reassurance that everything was fine.

He pulled off his latex gloves and told me to get dressed again. My hands were shaking as I got dressed. I walked back into his office and sat down. I did not even register my husband, who had waited in the office while I underwent the examination. In silence the doctor wrote some more info into the file. He had found nothing wrong with me and everything appeared normal on the scan, and there were no obvious health issues. He sat back in his chair, looked at me and with an expressionless face said, "You're the wrong side of thirty."

I felt as if he had hit me in the chest. I was speechless at his callous remark. Tense from the physical examination and PMS, I sat in stunned silence from the cold hardness of the statement. The tears were too close to venture anything spoken. I sat motionless.

"The most productive time for a woman is from 18 to 25 years," he rambled on, totally oblivious to any emotions I could be feeling. It was evident that he was so used to this preamble that he was quite unaffected by the enormity of the matter for the woman hearing it.

"I've never felt emotionally ready for a child before," I told him, "but now I am."

He carried on writing in his file and took no time to listen or to digest my response, or even to spare me a look. "We'll need to carry out a complete observation, in case of infertility." (I don't think I like that word!). "We'll need to monitor your hormonal level to see if you able to carry a pregnancy."

I took in a deep breath of air and ventured, "How will you do that?"

"You'll need to come in at 7.30 every morning for a few days to have blood samples drawn." In my mind I could see the red pinholes of the entire month's hormonal checks. "Then we'll need to do a laparoscopy to check if the tubes aren't blocked."

I hadn't heard good things about laparoscopies. Hesitantly, I told him my reservations. I got the impression that he was getting a little irritated by my comments, but he explained that if they did not use too much air, a laparoscopy would not be too uncomfortable.

He turned to my husband. "How old are you?"

"43," he answered.

"It's different for a man." In a flash I was excluded from the conversation and I felt so alone in my chair. It suddenly felt as if I was the odd one out, as if not being able to fall pregnant was entirely my fault.

He twirled his expensive pen in his hand and casually continued chatting to my husband. "Men can reproduce for many years." Was it my imagination, or did my husband's chest push out just a little? Or was PMS playing tricks on me and my emotions again? I sat and listened to the wonderworkings of the male anatomy and how it did not matter how many years ticked by, the miracle of conception was almost a certainty.

I was addressed again. "You don't have to make a decision now to undergo the tests. Think about it and come and see me in the New Year," and as unemotional as he was at the outset, he concluded our meeting.

I had to get out of there. The PMS tearful state and the emotional meeting were threatening tears, and the enormous lump that was stuck in my throat stopped me from being able to say my goodbyes. I just nodded and left.

My husband broke the silence as we walked towards our separately parked cars. "I'm sure these specialists have helped many people."

I got into my car, and unable to hold back the PMS tears, quickly covered them up with my sunglasses.

"Do you want to grab a bite to eat?" he asked.

Eat! How the heck was I supposed to stomach anything after feeling that my world was falling apart? It seemed that the infertility problem lay more likely with the one who was "the wrong side of 30": of course, the woman! It's not that I was bitter: I just needed to process what had happened, and work through it on my own and in my own way.

"No, I'll see you at home," I replied and shut the car door on the world. I let those tears flow freely in the safety of my space, my car, where the world did not see the hurt that I felt.

The truth hits home

18 December 2001

I never really realized how much having a baby means to me. It's more evident now since one of my best friends has just given birth to a beautiful little girl.

It's getting more difficult to hold a baby and not feel like sobbing there and then. Of course I don't. I put on a happy face and no-one knows that behind that cheerful playful banter with the baby, I am crying inside, wishing it was my baby I was holding. It's getting harder to smile, especially when my niece's toddler runs to me to be picked up. I hold and cry and wish, and no-one knows. They all just think I've decided not to have children. "Sometimes I think you're wise not have had children in these days," they say. If only they knew. It's not a choice, not a decision, it just is.

We haven't discussed the issue of going for fertility tests any further. I don't know if we will talk about it in the new year. At the moment I am carrying these feelings and tears on my own.

It's been a few days since that visit. I've got through the weepy PMS bit and can think a bit more rationally. I've given the doctor's advice some thought and do realise that if I really want to know why I have not fallen pregnant yet, I will have to go through all those tests, but I am hoping this holiday, in which I can relax, will bring good news.

I have sort of settled down regarding this issue, but that in itself concerns me. Am I avoiding it so that it won't hurt me? I know I can't avoid it indefinitely, because I don't want another year to go by without having made some headway. The other matter that concerns me is the fact that we don't have medical aid, nor do I have a job. But I am praying that all will change in the new year and I will find work with a medical aid. I am trusting God for this.

So I am 35! It's not uncommon to hear of women older than me falling pregnant and having children. So don't look so surprised, doctor! I just wish I could have voiced more of my feelings that day, than just sitting and pretending that everything was fine, while being told that I was going to find it difficult to conceive.

Why is it that those who don't want children, or those who are unmarried, or sometimes those who have been told they can't have children, actually do? Why is it that those who do have children, seem to take it for granted, nonchalant, uncaring, unappreciative of the wonderful, absolute miracle that has taken place? They carry on with life as if nothing miraculous has happened. Do they know how blessed they are? And what about those who have a few difficulties with their newborns, and tell you not to have children? How can they say that? I tell them it's just a phase, that the baby is learning to settle down into this big new world, and Mommy is learning to settle into her new role as mommy. What a privilege to have "difficulties" like that! I wish I had them too! No-one said it was going to be easy, but hey, look around – mankind lives on, we survive.

29 January 2002

Today was a bad day! Everything got to me – my jobless status, my non-diet, overweight problem, and my "infertile" situation. What makes it worse is when I hear

the neighbour's newborn baby crying – her second child. Children in malls – sitting in their mom's shopping carts, smiling at me. It almost seems that they can see what the adults can't see—the tears in my soul. I smile, I cry, I walk on, and do the rest of my shopping. Well, I try.

Last week I went to visit my friend who had the baby girl. She is three months old now, a beautiful little cherub! My friend had kept her pregnancy a secret from me for three months, because she didn't know how I would take the news. I had told her about two years before that we were trying for a child, but it was obvious that nothing had come of this, so she didn't want to upset me by telling me she was pregnant. I'm so very happy for her. How can I be otherwise? She is one of my dearest, special friends. I do understand why she hid it from me.

My heart is aching today. Today was a bad day!

31 January 2002

Another whole month has passed and nothing has happened in the baby-making department. Wait, let me rephrase that, nothing has culminated out of the baby-making process.

I have given some thought to having the tests done, but as quickly as I have thought about it, I have decided against it, because we don't have medical aid, but then again, medical aids don't normally pay for fertility tests. Today I read in the newspaper of a couple who, after trying for a baby, gave birth at age 45. So I guess there's always hope.

I had my hair highlighted today to help me feel a little better. It has helped, if only a little.

No jobs on the horizon either.

Tomorrow I'm going to plant some seeds. I'm trying to do things to take my mind off my weight problem, the other issue that is depressing me. I would feel a lot better if I got rid of about 10kg. None of my good clothes fit me.

Mark 24 says that we are to ask and we shall receive. "Lord, please grant me a perfect, healthy baby that I can hold in my arms, love and treasure and raise in Your Words and life. Hubby will make a wonderful dad. I would dearly love to see my mom's face when she sees my baby. I am asking all these things in Your Holy Name. Amen." So be it! (Mark 11:24: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.") What has been in my mind often is that I need to start thanking God for my perfect, healthy baby, instead of being depressed and moping around. I need to start praising God for all His blessings bestowed on me.

This was all confirmed in our pastor's sermon this morning. He said we need to praise God for what we've asked Him. I really believe his message was for me. God is surely good and has not forgotten me.

My birthday is coming up soon. It would be really nice if I could get a baby for my birthday present!

Today I again looked at all the ideas and dreams I had a few years ago. Somehow they fell by the wayside. I need to bring my ideas around my ministry before God, and then I need to get some action behind the idea. Ideas in themselves are no good. But ideas in action are powerful and can accomplish much.

15 February 2002

Last week I started my diet, weighing in at 72kg. I need to take control of this area. I have no control over my job situation, nor do I have control over my pregnancy situation. I do, however, have and can gain control over my weight problem. Today I take control over this area. I ask God to help me because “I can do all things through Christ.” (Philippians:4:13:” I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”)

We need to realise the things we can and cannot change and those things over which we do have or do not have control. As we make small changes with the things that we can control, we are encouraged to tackle other areas, and when we look back, we will be amazed at what we have achieved overall.

Something else that I have control over is my relationship with my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, so I am making a choice to get closer to God and rediscover that wonderful relationship I had with Him in the past. Already I feel more free.

On the job-hunting side, I’ve sent off my CV to a company which has a few vacancies, so I pray that my CV finds favour and I get a call for an interview. Wouldn’t that be grand, and even more so, if I could land one of those jobs?

Well, if ever I was “the wrong side of thirty”, then that’s certainly true today, as yesterday was my 36th birthday. Maybe the right side of 40, but hey, age is relative, and is a state of mind. You’re as young as you feel.

I would have liked to have been able to tell everyone at my birthday party, “Guess what? I’ve received the most special birthday present – I’m pregnant.” That would have been great. But another year, another birthday has passed and still no “present” to announce. I don’t feel depressed about it, perhaps just a little sad, perhaps a little numb.

The seeds that I planted are growing. This is a real pleasure to observe. I know the God who gives those seeds life, can give and will grant me my seed as well. I do believe this. I pray to Him as I water my seeds every day. I will have to transplant them soon. I sowed the seeds a little too close to each other. But hey, I’m still learning the ropes in my new-found interest. I have never been interested in gardening before, but I felt I needed to take my mind off the fact that I am still trying to find work, and to keep me from going insane.

It’s truly amazing that within that tiny seed lies the potential for a flower, shrub or tree. I guess it’s much the same with us. So much potential lies within each one of us; we need to “water” ourselves so that we can flourish and become all that God intended us to be. What does God want me to be? What am I supposed to be doing with my life? One would think that at this point in my life, I would know the answer. Perhaps the answer isn’t vague or hidden as I sometimes think it is. As long as I am striving for an answer, there’s hope!

20 February 2002

I’ve totally decided against having the fertility tests done. I have left this all in the Great Physician’s hands. He created me; He will create and give me the little life my heart and soul long for.

I have peace about not having the surgery done, for two reasons. One is not having a job to pay for the tests, and the second reason goes beyond what is seen, to The One who has promised me the baby I yearn for.

Two years ago, more precisely, on 21 May 2000, our pastor concluded his sermon, looked at my husband and called him forward to the front of the church. He went to the front and the pastor motioned for me to join him. I stood beside him facing the pastor, not knowing why he had called us out.

“You’ve been trying for a baby.”

My jaw dropped to the floor. Startled, I replied, “Who have you been talking to?”

These had to be words from God, as we had not told a soul, either family or other churchgoers, that we were trying for a baby.

Pastor watched us closely and said again, “Have you been trying for a baby?” I’m sure that he wanted us to confirm and confess that this was true, in order for him to continue.

My husband answered, “Yes, we have been,” and I quickly agreed.

Pastor then proceeded to pray over us for this to happen. I was excited and full of joy. God had told our pastor the deepest secret desire of our hearts. I believe that He will grant us this wonderful miracle. God’s timing for everything is always perfect. If we weren’t ready for this before, we certainly are now.

And so I leave this matter in God’s hands. If He has promised, and He has, then He will be just and faithful to give us the promise, without my having to go for the tests. I feel in my heart that this is the right thing to do, to leave it to Him to sort out.

Today I am feeling a little low. Not sure if it’s to do with the intense summer heat we are experiencing or the cold that I have contracted. Perhaps both. I wish I could forget about the monthly and stop checking for it. The thing with time is that it drags when you want it to pass quickly (as is my case), or it flies when you need to make the most of the little time you have.

I heard next door’s baby crying today and wondered if mine would be crying soon. I wonder how my friend’s baby is doing. I should phone, but today I don’t have the energy. Perhaps tomorrow. I would love to see them both again soon.

23 February 2002

I’m back to keeping the tampon manufacturing companies in business today. The “wait and see” time is over and the cycle continues. I don’t feel too sad; I guess because the “not knowing” is worse than the “knowing”. It has arrived. I don’t have to wonder if I am late or overdue. The answer is in. I’m not! But I will continue thanking God for His provision and reminding Him that His word says “He will supply all my needs according to His riches in glory.” He has also said that He does not lie. His word is true Yea and Amen! So be it and You have promised, Lord. Goodnight; I now lay me down to sleep.

(Philippians 4:19: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”) (Titus 1:2:” In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”)

25 February 2002

Today is our 13th wedding anniversary – perhaps this 13 will be lucky for us! I feel better today. Why is it that some days the broody feeling is so intense, and other days, like today, I don’t really mind not being pregnant? I suppose it is has to do with hormones and one’s cycle.

23 May 2002

Today I heard that I've got the job that I really wanted. Praise God! My priority now is to get into my new job and learn everything about it and the company. It's now foremost in my mind, and the baby issue is on the backburner. Perhaps when I've settled into my new job, the overtures will begin again!

27 December 2002

Another year can be ticked off the calendar. No baby, but I have so many blessings to be thankful for.

I have been at my new job for six months now. The learning curve has been steep and there have been some tough times, but God is good. 2003 will have to be a lot better, though.

Well, no baby, as I said, but I am glad, as I had to have a hemorrhoidectomy. What excruciating pain! If I had not had the op, I would not have been able to carry a baby with the agonizing pain I experienced. Perhaps this is God's way of preparing me and fixing me up for the challenge of carrying a baby.

The broodiness has left entirely. Perhaps it's because I have a job and my mind has no time now to think about this. Although I suppose it's difficult to ignore when your niece's little one runs to you to be picked up. I guess if the truth be told; my heart still yearns and cries. I have just told it to cry a little quieter, so that I can carry on with life. It's been a month since the operation and I have not healed entirely. Not the most pleasant experience I've had!

14 March 2003

I just heard a minute ago that my niece is expecting her second baby. Her daughter is now three, so it's a nice gap. It makes me sad, as I have been thinking along those lines again. I think that I do want a baby, but have got so clever about hiding the fact, I think I have even fooled myself.

24 August 2003

Today we had my niece's stork party for her second baby. She's having a boy. Her first is a girl who is nearly four years old. I felt a small twinge of sadness when I saw all the cute baby clothes, but would not allow myself to think further.

19 October 2003

My niece had her baby on 3 October. The cutest baby boy I have ever seen. I am very happy for them.

What did push my buttons again was hearing last week that my other nephew's wife is expecting their first baby. This affected me. I have not been the same since.

Did I mention that my boss's wife is expecting their second one? I am surrounded by reminders of how I have failed!

The clock ticks on

5 January 2004

The new year might have arrived, but my period hasn't.

I can't take the waiting and wondering any more as I sneak into the bathroom with the pink package. I snip open the foil sleeve and take out the plastic wand. It's now or never. I have to know. The not-knowing is torturing me. I have never used one of these tests, so I read the instructions a few times to make sure I don't mess up.

Nervously I bend and aim the stream onto the end of the wand. My legs feel quite weak with excitement and fear. I close the wand and leave it on the horizontal area as instructed. I wait once more. The five minutes have elapsed.

Two pink lines! I reread the package to make sure that I understand correctly. Two pink lines indicate a positive outcome. I feel my eyes opening wider with astonishment.

"I am pregnant!"

I can't contain myself. I laugh and cry simultaneously. I can't believe it. I do believe it. I want to shout with joy. I want the whole neighbourhood to hear, but I have to contain myself. I can't wait for Hubby to come home to tell him the news. I feel like phoning him but want to see the look on his face when I share this wonderful news.

I stare at the plastic wand that confirms the fantastic news. I read the instructions over and over, just to make sure that I am 100% correct about the outcome.

"I am pregnant!"

The hours drag by slowly until I hear the familiar sound of keys unlocking the back door. The waiting has nearly driven me nuts.

"Hello my love," and I place the plastic wand in Hubby's hand. He looks back at me with a frown. "It's a

pregnancy test and do you know what it says? It says I'm pregnant! We're going to have a baby!"

A shocked silence greets me as he scrutinises the object in his hand.

"It's true. Two pink lines mean it's positive. Can you believe it?" I don't think the smile on my face could get any bigger.

His shock gives way to a smile and we hug each other until I think my ribs are going to break.

FINALLY, it's my turn. My turn to buy cute little things. My turn to have MY stork party. My turn to feel the little bump grow into a large wonderwork. My turn to have people ask me when my due date is.

6 January 2004

I made an appointment to see my doctor today and he suggested a blood test to see how far I was. Now I just wait AGAIN for the test results.

It's afternoon and I have heard nothing from my doctor's rooms. Hubby and I have been running some errands so I decide to phone from my cell phone in the car.

"Hello. This is Mrs Torrente speaking. I had blood tests done to confirm a pregnancy but have heard nothing. Can you tell me anything?" I ask the receptionist.

"No, but I'll put you through to Doctor," she answers.

“Hello, Doctor. I can’t take the waiting any more. Have you got some news for me?”

“Yes, Lynne, you’re five weeks pregnant,” he replies.

There! It sounds more real coming from a medical professional.

“That’s wonderful! Thank you so much, but can you do me a favour and tell my husband? He’s still in shock and it’ll help hearing this from your mouth.”

I hand the cell phone to Hubby and watch his face beaming as he hears the news straight from the doctor. It’s a joy that I have never seen him have before. This is a wonderful moment. We’re going to have a baby!

11 January 2004

“Congratulations,” I told my niece at the braai we were having at my sister’s house today. She had just found out that she was pregnant and about six weeks, if not more.

“Thank you,” she replied and we released each other from a big hug. My heart was just about popping because I was aching to share the news, and I could see from Hubby’s face that he felt the same.

“Well, you’re not the only one that’s going to have a baby, you know,” he said.

She watched his face closely. “What do you mean?”

“We’re going to have a baby too!” I said, and we hugged each other again.

My sister jumped up and squeezed me tightly. “That’s fantastic news,” she said. “Allround celebrations! This is wonderful!”

With cups of tea in hand, we shared the wonderful prophecy that we received years ago about how God was going to grant us a baby and now the time had arrived. God was honouring His Word.

The day progressed and we chatted and enjoyed the braai and the sunny day outdoors with the family.

Nature called and I got up to go the bathroom. I couldn’t believe my eyes. Streams of blood. No, this couldn’t be happening. Not now, please, not to me! But there it was. Rivers of red and it didn’t stop. I started crying. I didn’t want to leave the bathroom. I would have to face the people. I didn’t know what to do, but knew I couldn’t stay there indefinitely. I got up and composed myself and went back outside to where the merriment was. I sat down in silence. I couldn’t speak. Hadn’t we just shared our wonderful news with everyone? And now this. No, this could not be happening, but yet I knew it was.

I didn’t say anything and the time came for us to leave. As I said my goodbyes to my sister, I knew I had to tell her. I did not want her thinking I was still pregnant. “It’s not going to happen for me any more,” I whispered into her ear as I hugged her goodbye.

“No!” she cried. “It’s not fair! No!”

I held her tightly and I could feel her heartfelt sorrow for me.

“It’s OK,” I replied, “don’t cry.” But deep down it was not OK. I was trying to console her sadness while my own heart was being torn in two. We backed the car out of her driveway and I watched her wipe away her tears as she walked back inside.

17 January 2004

I had a difficult day today. I was depressed and sad and angry at myself, because I felt that it was my fault that I lost the baby. Perhaps I should have done something differently? Maybe I did something wrong? I should have taken the pregnancy test

sooner. Maybe knowing sooner would have helped. I know I am speculating and sometimes things just happen. But it doesn't make me feel any less responsible.

I am still bleeding, a week and two days after it started. I go to the gynaecologist on Tuesday, so more than likely will have to have a D & C done. I haven't had a gynaecologist until now, and now my first meeting with him has to be because of a miscarriage. There! The first time I've actually acknowledged what has really happened. I have been using the terms "my periods started," or "I've started bleeding," but truth be told, I've had a miscarriage. When I saw Mom today she said she was worried about me. She said the body goes through a lot when you miscarry. First time someone else actually said the word as well. Horrid word that it is! I feel empty and lonely and alone.

"My Lord knows the way through the wilderness and all I have to do is to follow," so the song goes, but I feel very weak to follow. But I will do it. He understands my frail humanity. I have to trust and have faith that He will honour His Word. My feelings of weakness do not determine Your ability to honour Your Word, and for that I am grateful. Feelings have nothing to do with faith and at least I have faith. The rest is up to God. (Mathew 17:20: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.")

21 January 2004

At the gynaecologist's suggestion in case of infection, I had the D & C done today. It was tough having to answer again and again the same questions from the staff. You can't just answer "Five weeks" and not wonder about the little conception that you lost, and feel unemotional about it. Shucks! My heart is falling out of my bosom. Would you keep on asking questions that hurt so? Can't we get this over with? Then I had to go to the toilet to empty my bladder for surgery. I knew that I had lost it already and was just bleeding now, but I couldn't help feeling that I was having everything taken away from me. I held my head in my hands and let the tears flow as they needed to. The questioning had taken its toll. I couldn't sit there indefinitely to avoid the inevitable. It was time to go to theatre. I dried my tears and walked back to my ward. When I woke again, it would be me only.

The gynaecologist said that 20% (one in every five women) lose their first one. Weird, hey? He said next time round there is a 95% chance of everything being fine. I hope that I have the opportunity of proving that statistic correct. I have many questions to ask when next I see him.

2 February 2004

Last week I bought myself an elliptical trainer. This is the best thing I have done for myself in a long time. Now I can exercise as and when I can fit it into my schedule, no matter the time of day or night. I am enjoying it thoroughly. I am not that comfortable in a gym situation, so this is ideal. No need to worry about weather, wind or rain either. I do it as I want.

I am feeling a lot better – for a few reasons. Time, I guess, heals all wounds, but that doesn't mean that I don't think back and realise that it was actually me that was pregnant.

I felt better enough to put out my weekly motivational email newsletter to the ladies at work. Since the incident, I have not done so. I have been too heartsore to even think of

inspiring or uplifting anyone else. I am now positive again about my weight-loss programme. 8.4kg lost so far. Another 4kg to go!

3 March 2004

It's nearing cycle-end, so I am again going through the motions of wondering, hoping, praying that there is something and that the monthly won't arrive in the next few days.

I went to my gynaecologist this morning and I am feeling positive mainly because he did not say a negative word about my "age" and the non-possibilities of falling pregnant, yarra yarra yarra. When he scanned, he said he saw the thickening of the uterus lining which meant one of two things: one, that the monthly was on its way, or two, that there was a little something there. He said that if my monthly had not arrived by the following week, I should go for a blood test and that would tell. These days of waiting are the longest ever. Time just stands still.

In answer to my list of questions, he said exercise was fine, and that he has had ladies who were 12 weeks pregnant doing stunts on wings of planes and running 56 km marathons. That put my mind at rest, although I don't plan to get strapped to planes or run any long-distance races soon. I also asked about vitamins, and he suggested only taking the multivitamin and stopping the anti-oxidants, which contain too much Vitamin A. I had read, and he confirmed, that it is bad. Overall it was a good visit and even if the monthly does come this time, next time might just be it! This waiting is the pits! Every time I go to the loo, I check the loo paper to see if I see red. Red is a great colour, but not when you are looking for it on the toilet paper. I am trying to get on with my life, but it never leaves my mind – the wondering if this time I will be blessed. Not sure what I feel physically, quite frankly. I feel like I'm going to get my monthlies, but the boobs aren't sore and the back isn't sore, and then it's only now and then I get the familiar twinge.

Right now I am concentrating on losing the last few kilos, as I would like to be at goal weight if and when I get the wonderful news. I must love life and every experience. That's what I said I would teach my child. Even this experience – the unknown, the wonderings, the prayers, the trusting in God – I must love every moment, because I have the privilege of living it.

5 March 2004

My monthly arrived. I feel sad and glad that the wait is over AGAIN. How do I feel "sexy" when I am going through these emotions? I am having a tough time. Right now I feel like crying, but I can't – I'm at work. So the mask has to stay in place.

It's stupid, but I still feel like buying a pregnancy test kit just to make sure. Perhaps the spotting is not the monthlies and then it would help to know if I was pregnant or not.

I need to resolve that I make the most of each day, because life is short. I have so much to be grateful for – my job, my health, my house, my Hubby, my beautiful kitties who love me so much, my family who love me, my Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, and my eternal life.

We were married 15 years last month. Perhaps this is the year that we will be blessed? I also had my 38th birthday last month. Medically – tick, tock, tick tock, but I still trust my God – my Heavenly Doctor. I must resolve to live and not dwell so much on this now, but I suppose it's only natural because I miscarried.

8 March 2004

Yesterday's sermon in church was very relevant. One statement Pastor made that really stood out was: "Forget your reality. Stop focusing on the one thing you don't have – give thanks for all you do have." This confirmed the other day's entry – where I gave thanks to God for all I have. I now take heed to "forget my reality" and stop making having a baby the centre of my world. It wasn't the centre before my pregnancy, but understandably because of it and the loss of it, it became a major focus. I do realise that that is totally human. But now I must move on and make each day I have the privilege of living, my focus.

I do thank You, Lord, for all I have. From tonight I will praise You more each day and throughout the day as I have begun doing. Thank You for You and Your love to me!

My dear Hubby had the florist deliver to my office a gorgeous bouquet of flowers in a lovely vase, with a beautiful card saying that he "knows that I have had a bad time and that when I look at the flowers, I must remember that God will give me the desires of my heart." And that "he understands." This is really special, as it's not my birthday or Valentine's Day. It is special getting something that is not pushed by a commercial day. I know that God will honour His word, but it is difficult when I think back and realise that I was ACTUALLY pregnant, and how happy we were. That great joy and then the loss.

I've also realised that I fell pregnant last year as I was beginning to relax and get into the holiday mode. Now, the question is – How do I get into that same frame of mind as I was last year, NOW while the year has just started?

Make the decision – not to stress, to relax, to go for my facials, smile more, laugh life off more, laugh people off more.

Last night I dreamt that I boarded a bus with only a few available seats. The Exit sign was close to my seat and I knew that soon I would reach my destination and I would exit the bus. I believe that soon it will be my turn to have a baby; I will reach my destination!

15 March 2004

I have lost a total of 9.4kg. Thank You, my Lord, for helping me with this tough task. We have a long weekend coming up so I had better behave, because I will be weighing the day after we get back. For the first time in a long time, I can put my bikini on and not feel too bad.

06 April 2004

(Physical check: Pink spotting started.)

Well, it's round and round the mulberry bush we go again. It's day 33 today in my 30-day cycle. I do see a little pinkish spotting this morning. I did the silly thing of buying a pregnancy test last night and wished I could see that "very faint rose pink" line they talk about. I am sure I did see it, but there is still an element of doubt, so I'm playing with the idea of getting another today. Although I will see what the toilet paper says later this morning. This is the worst part of it all. The waiting... So what's stopping me getting another pregnancy test and trying again, although I should wait at least another day or two? What if the monthly hasn't appeared by then? See the madness? I

guess every woman in my position knows what this feels like, so I mustn't be hard on myself.

I went to the loo now, and it seems nothing yet, although I don't know if it's my imagination that I see a very faint pinkish colour. I really should get on with my work, and not let this fill my mind so, but God knows there's nothing that I want (that we want!) more than having a wonderful healthy baby to add to our family.

OK that's enough – now back to work !

OK, couldn't work, so went out and bought another pregnancy test and there are definitely two pink lines. One is darker than the other, but I do know that when I tested before, and I was negative, there was no lighter second pink line at all. I think I am pregnant! Although I see some more pinkish spotting which I don't like at all, I still feel quite confident that I am pregnant. In fact, I bought two tests, so that if I don't get my monthly in the next two days, I can retest. Although the next step would be to get a blood test. I think tomorrow morning on awakening, I will perhaps take the other test and then go for the blood test because there is a long weekend coming up and that would mean a long wait for the results, which is the worst.

Well, I couldn't wait any longer so went and had a blood test. Now I wait once more – at least the results will be conclusive and I can get on with my life from there, no matter what the result, although I am crazily wanting it to be positive. No joke! I hope that I will have it by close of day today. Now let's see if I can get some work done! Yea, right!

07 April 2004

I got the blood test results and it's positive. I am pregnant! But I am more than scared to get too happy as the spotting is too much to be "implantation bleeding". I am trying not to stress about this.

The blood count was 205. Tomorrow I go for another test to check if it is doubling as with a normal pregnancy. So we wait and see, and as far as possible, I try and get on with my life, which is not easy. Back to the loo to check.

08 April 2004

(Physical check: Heavier bleeding today)

I see darker, redder spotting with little clots here and there, which is really bad news. So I guess the blood test today will reveal whether or not it's decided to leave me. I feel calmer about it now, almost as if I have made peace with the fact that it has gone and that I am no longer pregnant, or have I just numbed myself so that I don't feel too much sadness? Once again, I couldn't keep a pregnancy.

I got the phone call with the blood test results. The count is now 224, and it was 205. It should have doubled at least once since the last test. So I guess I am not going to think I am pregnant any more. I am now just having my period AGAIN!!

Doc wants me to have another blood test Tuesday next week. I will, so that I can get closure on this one as well. I have been bleeding quite heavily since yesterday. I am so tired of waiting, of counting the days, of stressing, of waiting for test results and so on. I am tired and I am heartsore.

15 April 2004

The period (shall we call it) has stopped. So now I have to count my days again. But I am really getting despondent as it seems that my body can't keep a pregnancy. So what does that say? What hope is there really for me? It's not that I can't get pregnant, it's that I can't keep it. And that is more of a problem. In years past I have probably been pregnant more than I would like to know. Thankfully, I can't know. What do I do now? I am supposed to go for the blood test. I haven't been. I don't really want to go, to be told what I already know. But it's more for my records at the gynaecologist I suppose.

Hubby has told me that he does not want to know when next I am pregnant. He says he can't deal with the emotions. I know that the loss also saddened him. I do understand. I am going to have to deal with these emotions on my own and carry the secret if it does happen again.

Yesterday our pastor spoke about Abraham and Sarah and that God made things possible that were not physically possible. Perhaps this is God's way of telling me that He sees and will bring to pass the Words He gave. I have stopped taking my multivitamin and antioxidant and decided to drink only the herbs. It's nearly finished, so I will make a turn at the health shop and find out what they suggest I can do to "keep" a pregnancy. (Genesis:21:2: "For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.")

Within the negatives of this situation there are some positives. I now know for sure that I CAN get pregnant. Nothing is wrong there. It is the next step needs a little help. I have a wonderful gynae who has not once mentioned my age. He is a darling for that. And I am NOT going to mention that myself !

Our pastor also quoted the verse "call those things that be not, just as though they were." Perhaps I must buy a gorgeous little babygrow and touch it and pray over it and call it into being and let it enter my world naturally and "fit in" into the baby-grow and into my life. (Romans:4:17: "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.")

21 April 2004

I phoned the owner of the health shop today to ask his opinion on what I could do. He suggested that I try Chinese herbs for fertility, a natural hormone rub-on cream to "keep" a pregnancy. I asked about Omega 3 and he said it was almost a must-have. The tills are going to ring up a dime or two of mine.

After chatting some more with him at the shop, he said it was more a matter of sustaining a pregnancy than a fertility matter. He said that has had great success with the cream, so I am excited to get that from him.

I went to my weight class and the scale registered a loss of 0.4kg. I am back down to 9.2kg. Just another 0.2kg and I will be where I was previously. And then I have set my goal weight for 63kg. I plan to be good this week and have a nice weight loss next week.

23 April 2004

I am getting used to the needle pricks. The blood test shows that the count is down to 47. The bleeding is not so bad today.

The ladies at the health shop are recognising me when I walk through their doors. One suggested that we take a hair sample and have it analysed. I must admit that I am a little

scared to find out what the problem is, but rather we find out and treat it properly and get to serious business, if you know what I mean.

26 April 2004

I went to the health shop to get the results of my hair test. It seems that I have a few unwelcome guests that think my body is The Ritz. She says that I have nine kinds of parasites, in my liver, colon and uterus. I bought a host of pills, to kill them off, and mega doses of Vitamin C and B2. Amazingly I read last week about the marvels of Vitamin C and the wonderful results in the diseases they fend off. I am not going to have blood tests taken until I have completed the course of treatment. Part of the eradication treatment is not to wear jewellery next to my skin. So for a while I will be "unmarried". I am not sure how hubby is going to understand that one.

In yesterday's message at church the pastor said that God will meet us at the end of our worst nightmare, or at the end of our best effort. I am doing my best at what I can do for the situation, so I trust that God will come through for me.

So today I begin treatment to eradicate the uninvited guests.

3 May 2004

Another month,
Another prayer,
Another hope,
That you'll be there.
To make me happy,
To make me smile,
Please come into my world,
In a little while.

I have waited,
I have watched,
I have cried,
And I have lost.
I have hoped,
And I have dreamt
Of happy times,
And moments spent.

There seems no end
There seems no time
Although I fight
To get what's mine.
To wait and hope
And watch and pray
That God will honour
His Word some near day.

My heart's desire
My heart's cry
Please Dear God,
Don't pass me by.
Others have loved
Others receive
I above all other words
Your true Words believe.

I don't know the day
I don't know the time
When You will touch
This life of mine.
I do believe
Will watch and trust
God will honor His Word
It's a must.

He does not lie
He cannot deceive
He will give
I will receive.
A precious life
A precious love
I will get a piece
Of God's love above.

No money can buy
What the world cannot give
I shall watch and wait
I shall pray and believe.
A gift of life
Of love and kisses
My God knows
It's what my world misses.

Wow, I don't where all of that came from, but it sure flowed out in an absolute stream, without force or strain, so I guess it's in my heart.

I'm still taking vitamins, and de-parasiting meds, so I hope that the guests are checking out by now.

I am big on visualisation, but I'm having a real tough time visualising myself pregnant, making nice preggy clothes for myself. I just can't seem to do this. I hope that I can believe this is for me as well as for anyone else. A daughter of one of the ladies at work, just fell pregnant – not married – a mistake. My heart is sore. I don't know what to do, if after all these meds and vitamins it doesn't work. What then? What do I do?

Do I try and try and try and get positive results only to lose it afterwards? Can my heart and mind take that? I guess then I will go to my gynae and ask what can be done. I suppose I will do what I can, although I hope God doesn't think that I am trying to take over His job of giving me what He promised. Am I supposed to intervene like this? I do think that He would expect me to get the incubator fit and healthy.

I went to weight class last night and I am so thrilled. I have lost a total of 10.2kg. I have 1.8kg to lose to reach my goal. I would not have done it without You, Lord, for you are my Comforter and Strength. I don't want to be fat again. This must be a way of life now and that's where I made the mistake to go back to bad habits, only to regain it all again plus more. I have been through that so many times in my nearly 40 years. I realise that this is the only way to maintain the weight. I feel healthier and my skin is the best it's been in years.

When I fall pregnant I want to be able to maintain and get back to pre-pregnancy weight quickly. I must start exercising when I can find my shoes! I just don't know where I put them. I must drink more water this week and forward. I have increased my intake steadily, must just keep doing so.

I have been evicting non-paying tenants for nine days now. The rest should follow suit.

8 May 2004

"These jeans look nice," I thought as I strained to see behind me, or rather, to see my behind. The smaller pants size did wonders for my state of mind. What a wonderful feeling. The smile in the mirror said it all. I twirled around in the small fitting room. This was a feeling that I didn't want to swap for anything. Let me always remember this feeling when I am tempted to eat something that will destroy this euphoric feeling.

21 May 2004

My niece had her baby today by c-section. A little girl! I feel incredibly sad. More than I have felt in a long time. When, Lord, when is it my turn?

23 May 2004

As I sat on the loo on Sunday praying again (you can pray anywhere, you know!) God spoke into my spirit and He assured me that just as my body told me when it was time to go to the toilet, it would soon be time that my baby would come to me. I felt reassured and content about the matter and knew without a doubt that God had spoken and soon it would be my turn.

Yesterday morning's sermon was exactly what God has been teaching me too. It was about fear, and not to live in fear. It has been a gradual process, but I can see the improvement in me. I am getting better by the day. I do not and will not let fear take charge of me any more. (2 Timothy 1:7: For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.)

25 May 2004

I had the weirdest dream last night. I dreamt that I went for a massage, and fell asleep. When I awoke, the woman had done reflexology on my feet. She told me that I would be pregnant in 20 days' time. If I count 20 days from today, it would take me to day 35

(which is Monday, 14th June), which would mean that in a 30-day cycle I would be a few days over. Perhaps somehow in some way there is some “truth” in the dream? That will remain to be seen! According to her in my dream, I was as good as pregnant.

I started taking folic acid today.

04 June 2004

I have refocused my walk with the Lord and have renewed my mind. I have also made very personal the verse in Isaiah 26:3: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” I have been so anxious, tense and fearful, so I have really needed this verse. It has made me rest in God more than I have done before – or in a very long time, so long that I can’t remember when last I felt “rested” and “stayed” on the Lord. I know that He has me in the palm of His hand and I know that He works all things for good for me. I know that He will move mountains for me. I know that He HAS moved mountains for me.

And so my life goes by. Scary thought. Each day that I wake up to is precious. I am not living it according to its “preciousness”. Last night during quiet time I felt lead to pray over my job situation.

It’s mulberry bush time again. According to the dates, the 30th day is Wednesday 9th June, and day one should be Thursday 10th, so I will not get happy at this point, as there are a few days to go. Also, I have had antibiotics and flu meds, which might have had some impact on my cycle.

Even though I have written that I will look out for my monthlies I have a weird feeling that I am pregnant. I feel calmness with it. I am not stressed about looking at the toilet paper (yet!) but then things can change so quickly, can’t they? But for here and now I feel that I am.

Tonight is weight group but I am not going. It does concern me that I won’t get to goal, but I have been feeling sick and not watching what I eat. The class fees are coming off my salary each month. What a waste if it’s not coming off my body!

9 June 2004

It is so difficult not to start reading into the body’s signs around this time. “Is that the monthlies feeling?” “Is it going to come?” “Is that nausea – or am I having a psychosomatic reaction?” It is difficult, because in my heart I so wish that it will be positive this month because if so, the due date would be around my birthday and THAT would be a wonderful birthday present for me. This is day 30. Perhaps the flu meds have messed the system up a bit? Or perhaps the Vitamin B Complex is helping soften the monthlies symptoms. Lots of “ifs”, aren’t there? Am I going to the toilet more often, or is it just the cold weather?

At home after work my hands are shaking as I open the familiar pink packaging. I snip open the silver foil wrapping and take out the plastic wand. The shaking continues as I bend down and try to get the stream at exactly the right spot. I inhale deeply and close the wand and place it on a level surface. I now wait the five minutes. But no, I don’t need to wait. There are two deep pink lines. The prettiest colour ever! There is no doubt. The bright pink lines scream at me, “You are pregnant!” Praise be to God! I jump around in the bathroom. I want to tell the world. In my heart I know there is

something different about this little one. She has a mission. She wants to be in my world, the world that I have been preparing for so long.

My heart aches to tell Hubby when he arrives home. I so want to share the news but feel I cannot. He doesn't want to know until I can be very sure. Sleep battles to come my way as I lie wondering about the little life within me. I place my hands on my tummy. "It's just you and me, little one. That's the way it must be. For now." I close my eyes to the world and dream sweet dreams of little blonde curls, of hugs and kisses. It could be nothing else.

10 June 2004

First thing on the way to work I went for the blood test so I should get the results by lunch-time today.

Things at work are upside down, now I know why I was lead to pray about my work situation, but I have this smile stuck to my face that no-one will be able to remove.

Tonight I'm going out for coffee with one of my dearest friends. I said I wouldn't tell anyone when I was pregnant, but I need to share my news with someone. She has been my absolute pillar, without her even knowing it. She has seen so many of my tears and has shared in so much of my happiness during the years I have known her. How could I keep this secret from her?

I phoned my gynae and he says that the blood count is 471. I think that sounds wonderful. The count is nice and high (in my "medical" opinion). He has said I must have another blood test done on Saturday, so I'll tell Hubby I'm going shopping. I still feel calm about it, as if the little one is going to hang in there for his/her mommy. I feel a determination coming from within.

Because of my history, my gynae prescribed medication that he feels I should take. It was delivered to work. The insert warned that it might make one drowsy. Well, that doesn't begin to explain how I feel. It feels as if I have taken four sleeping pills. I can barely keep my eyes open. Not quite the meds you need when you are working, but I have no option. Perhaps the body will get used to it.

(Physical check: The crampiness of the embryo settling in is there now and again. It is almost an unnerving feeling. A faint wave of nausea every now and then.)

I am sad that I can't tell Hubby, although if I did, I would see that look on his face and I don't need that at this stage. I need to remain positive and have only positive energy and vibes around me and in my mind.

11 June 2004

Last night I went out for pizza with my dear friend. I told her that I am pregnant and she was so happy for me. We said grace before we ate and she added that God would bless me and give me a wonderful healthy "little Lynn". God bless her for caring. I believe that God heard her prayer, "where two agree as much as touching anything on earth, they shall have it." That's God's Word. We enjoyed a wonderful evening together and I also told her about my dream about the woman who told me that in 20 days I would be pregnant. (Mathew 18:19: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.")

(Physical check: The medication did not have any effect on me as it did yesterday, for which I am grateful. Boobs are not sore, although the nipples are a little deeper pink than normal, which happens when you are pregnant.)

I do feel a bonding with this little one that I did not have with the other pregnancies, not that it made it any less sad to lose them. This time around I have a huge urge to go and buy soft little baby clothes. I feel calm and happy.

Thank You, Lord, for my birthday February 2005 present! I do thank You that You have honoured Your Word. I believe that this time it's for keeps. Please see me all the way through to a healthy bouncy baby in February 2005, Lord. In Jesus' Name I pray! Amen and Amen!

14 June 2004

I went for the second blood test on Saturday and Praise the Lord the count has more than doubled in the 48 hours. It was between 1 300 and 1 400, from 471 on Thursday the 10th. I am going to the baby shop to buy something small and cute. I need to cement this fact in my mind and have something to hold onto.

When I look back to my dream of the woman who said that in 20 days time I would know I was pregnant, it makes today's date of 14th June, day number 20. Awesome! Today it was confirmed with a second blood test that the hormone level was increasing. Praise be to God!

I have made an appointment for a scan for Friday the 18th June at 11.45. I hope that we can see something so that I can get a printout. Maybe I will tell Hubby. I mustn't let any of his doubts upset me. I need to remain positive – for me and for baby. I must not stress, although the Doc said that it is normal to feel this way until you have passed the time that you miscarried before. Difficult – for sure! So help me, Lord, please, to live my life as if life is normal, while I wait this time out. I think that when I have been for the scan and prayerfully have seen the baby on the scan, I will feel a whole lot better. Roll on, Friday 18th I can't wait!

I milled around the rows and rows of pretty baby clothes. I've lost count of how many times I've been inside this same shop buying for others. This time I was looking for something for MY baby! It was a wonderful feeling. The shop didn't have what I was looking for so I settled on a light blue babygrow with little animals printed on it, and a white baby vest. I wanted the tactile experience of the soft vest material. I also bought his/her first soft toy, a pretty spider with multicoloured legs. I held it to my heart. "This is your first toy, little one." I held it to my chest and smiled and kept the secret silent within my heart.

15 June 2004

(Physical check: boobs tender, taking meds and cream at night. Drinking fluids. Only slight cramping now. He/she is quite settled now. There is nothing untoward.)

I am feeling at peace and contented and have welcomed the little one home.

Hubby wants to go to our holiday house tomorrow for the public holiday, to do maintenance work on it. I won't be going with. I will relax at home with the kitties and talk to them about my secret. When I tell Hubby I pray that he will be as contented as I am about this.

Friday is my first scan. I am so excited. I really pray I see the little peanut on the monitor. It's been tough keeping it to myself.

I must praise my God for His goodness to me and Hubby. I know that this baby will bring a joy to our lives that will surpass any other joy we could have felt. I know that this baby will bond us even closer.

Since my boss resigned a few days ago, no-one has told me where or to whom I now report. I am sure that my job structure will change, but what – don't know. Everyone is asking if I'll move offices – don't know. Who do I report to? Don't know.

I am beginning to feel more and more queasy and nauseous. The boobs are as sore as yesterday. My tummy feels quite tight against the pants. I know that I have put on a little weight because I have veered from my diet, but what I am going through right now is more important than counting calories. It is a different tightness. It's actually a wonderful feeling.

18 June 2004

"You look a little nervous," the friendly receptionist said. I could tell it was written all over my face and I didn't feel like disguising it. I was nervous, but hey, do you blame me?

He squirted some gel onto my tummy and started scanning. It was odd seeing the insides of my body on screen, and my untrained eye tried to make sense of the light and dark gray matter. Positively, he says everything looks as it should at this stage. There is no sign whatsoever of any bleeding around the sac. Everything is in the right place. And my uterus that lies towards the back won't make a difference to anything. I asked for a printout. He smiled and said that there was not much to see, but he doesn't understand, seeing the sac is the MOST I have seen, and it is the most beautiful little dark grey blob I have ever laid my eyes on! Doc is cautious in what he says. He says the medication might not prevent anything from happening, but it doesn't hurt to have it. Says he wants me to carry on with the prescription throughout the pregnancy.

I cleaned the gel off my tummy, placed my precious printout carefully in my bag and sat at his desk for our chat.

"When was your last period?" He pulled out his charts to do his calculations for the birthdate.

"The 11th May," I replied.

"You sound very confident."

"I made a note." I could produce my ream of recorded dates if he needed them. "It's going to be a wonderful birthday present because my birthday is on 14th February."

He smiled in agreement and consulted his charts some more. "Your due date will be the 18th of February. You'd better hope that it's on that date because I'm scheduled to be out of town some days in February."

God will plan everything further. He has planned it so far. I leave the dates to Him.

I must see my gynae again on 2nd July at 11.00 which is in two weeks' time. It was bad enough waiting this one week to today's scan, but I am definitely feeling better having seen the little one's home and that everything looks so good. He also mentioned that the blood count was 1390, which is good.

I am really having a problem whether to tell Hubby or not. I am only supposed to tell him when I am a "far way" into the pregnancy. What is a far way? Three months? I

don't know what to do. I would love to share this news with him. No, I can't tell him. I can't bear that "what if you lose it again" face! So perhaps it is "our" secret – me and my kitties.

19 June 2004

"Jack (not his real name) is coming over for a braai and to sit in the Roman Bath later today," Hubby said as he walked into the bedroom. I could see by the expression on his face that it worried him a little.

What to do? I knew that he would not be able to enjoy his visit with his friend in the Roman Bath because he knew how much having a baby meant to me. I could not let him go through that, so I pulled out the precious little black-and-white printout and placed it in his hand. I watched closely for his reaction.

I pointed to the beautiful little gray blob and said, "This is going to be home to our baby for the next nine months."

He looked more closely, trying to make sense of the abstract grays, and back at me for more confirmation.

"Yes, I'm pregnant, and everything is great, and everything is in its right place and the gynae is happy with the progress," I assured him needing him to feel as positive about this as I did.

He smiled and was pleased. "This is wonderful. How far are you?" he asked, inspecting the printout.

"Nearly six weeks. I knew sooner than the previous times, so that's why it feels a lot longer."

We held each other, each silent with his own thoughts. I didn't want to know of any doubts he had. He would need to work through that himself.

Later he came to the bedroom again and I asked if he would do the "head of the house" thing and pray. He said that he had felt to do that earlier in the lounge. So we held each other and he prayed that everything would be fine and that God would give us this baby. "Where two or three agree together – they shall have it of their Father in Heaven." (Mathew 18:19: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.")

24 June 2004

(Physical check: I am tired. Firstly because the first trimester of pregnancy is a huge adjustment for the body. And secondly, the medication is contributing as well. The boobs are tender and the nausea prevails. Constipation is rearing its head. I am drinking water, but it is adding to the nausea.)

Just the other day I was praying for my friend to fall pregnant the same time as I did because it would be nice to be pregnant together. I received an SMS from her yesterday to say that she is six to seven weeks pregnant. Can you believe it? That's about how far I am. She says she feels tired and has no appetite. I told her that it's perfectly normal. I think she was happy that she had spoken to me, because she sounded a little worried. I never told her about my pregnancy because Hubby and I decided not to tell anyone at this stage.

Today is moving past the psychological time period of the first miscarriage. I feel quite crabby at the moment, but I think it's got more to do with my job situation than with my little peanut. But I'm sure that the Vitamin B complex I'm taking is making me queasier.

26 June 2004

"Hubby, my friend has a message for you." This was my sister speaking. "She says that you must stop sitting in the jacuzzi if you are trying for a baby. It's not good." I looked at Hubby and smiled a little. He looked back at me. My sister was quite earnest because by now I think she realised how much I wanted a baby, and the explanations continued.

Hubby couldn't keep silent any longer. "OK, you can all relax, the job is done," he said. The kitchen went quiet and the family members sat in silence wondering what he meant. "I mean, you can all relax." My sister jumped up and hugged me and congratulated me. My brother-in-law also gave me a great big hug. Others who were there didn't seem to get too excited. I guess I can't blame them. We have been down this road before, haven't we? I think they were just a little reluctant to congratulate us too soon. I am grateful to those who are excited with us. This is a trying time, and the support we have received is warmly appreciated.

"So now you can lay off me as I lounge in the jacuzzi. My job is done," my Hubby continued, standing a little taller than he did before.

We had told my sister and brother-in-law a little sooner than we had liked to, but I think Hubby had grown a little tired hearing the do's and don'ts of baby-making.

(Physical check: There is only slight cramping now and then, but that has calmed down quite a bit, which means baby has settled into the new home.)

2 July 2004

I have just come back from my second appointment and scan. It is absolutely wonderful to see the little heart beating in all of 14mm. This has always been someone else's story or life or experience. This is the first for me and it's weird. My gynae said that we would have monthly appointments from now on, but if I feel I need to see him sooner; I could always reschedule.

Lord Jesus, Lord and Lover and Saviour of my Soul, I have never seen a little heart beating inside me. I thank You, Lord, for this little baby growing inside me. I must believe and not doubt. I don't serve a small god. I serve THE only true living God, and HE has promised. Help me trust in You and let me remember all You have promised. I thank You for the little creation that You have given. I trust that You have held his/her hand from before the foundation of the world. In Jesus' Name, I pray all these things. Amen! (John 17:24: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.")

(Physical check: Nausea becoming my way of life now but I won't complain as my gynae says that it's a good sign. I am not too tired at the moment and the cramping has settled down.)

I must not be too hard on myself. I must understand that my body is going through a huge adjustment and I must accept that I will feel a little down, or tired, or despondent. I

must accept the process and not beat myself up when I feel strange. I will get through that feeling and move on.

I think Hubby is feeling a bit out of it. He asked this morning, "How's my baby?" It's a weird phase. There is no tummy to show.

Last night while having my shower, I felt the prompting that God wanted to speak to me. So I stood with the towel wrapped around me in the shower and allowed Him to talk. It was awesome. He said to me that there had been too many sad tears and that He had cupped them in His hands and had gone to the Father, and had pleaded on my behalf for what my heart desired. He said that there would only be happy tears from now on. This is my year. He said that these are not my words, but His. He said that He was very pleased with me and the faithfulness that I showed, and it was this that He was honouring. He said that change (my job) was not easy, but that He would help me through it and that I must remain stayed on Him, calm in Him, and not be fearful, and that I must rest under the shadow of His wing. He will allow no harm to come to me. His main message was most definitely to trust Him, to rest in Him, not to doubt, not to believe man's words, but God's Words, which are that my baby will be birthed into this world, normal and healthy.

All Glory will go to God every day for the wonderwork. There is no doubt about that!

15 July 2004

(Physical check: Nausea takes on a new meaning. Add to it a dull headache, a bit of depression and a touch of weepiness, and I am not a happy camper. Guess the hormones are playing ball with my emotions.)

One has to conquer the mind mostly. To get through this phase I keep reminding myself this is only temporary and that it is all going to be worth it. I also tell myself that millions of women have been through this, and survived. So will I!

29 July 2004

Yesterday Hubby and I went to our check-up and saw the baby on the scan. We were both absolutely amazed at how active the little one is. We saw the little legs and little arms kicking madly. Our gynae is satisfied with everything. Hubby's expression was one of amazement, and it touched my heart, as this was a new side to him that I was seeing. My gynae did the routine skin-fold test to check for Down's syndrome, and he is happy with the thickness of the skin. It is as thin as it needs to be to be normal.

Then I went and had blood drawn to test for iron levels and immunity against German measles. The gynae will phone if there is a problem. I hope not to hear from him!

The next appointment is on 2 September, when the amniocentesis to check for any abnormalities, has been scheduled. I just have to keep telling myself that I have a high pain threshold. It seems that I am going to have to go that one alone, as Hubby says he doesn't know if he can be with me when it's done. He says he hates medical procedures. I asked him what about the birth? He says it would be fine if it's a normal birth, but if it's a Caesarian, he will wait outside. Silly him! That's why we women are strong creatures. But I am sure it will be different on the actual day.

5 August 2004

Praise be to God in the Highest! I am exactly three months today. Perhaps we can tell the rest of the family although I am not really sure I want to. I have got so used to knowing my special secret. I will see how I feel, although Hubby is telling all his friends. I guess he is excited.

8 August 2004

"Hello, this is a nice surprise," my sister-in-law greeted us. "Come in."

"Thanks. We thought we would come for coffee and cake. There's always homemade cake or cookies here." We laughed together and walked into the sunny living room.

"How are the chocolate orders coming along?" I asked.

"Great. I have a few orders lined up for the next couple of months; a birthday party here and there, and a wedding or two," she answered.

The chit chat continued and we exchanged current news. I looked at Hubby and knew that we could begin with the actual reason for the visit.

"Well, we have some news of our own to share," I said. "We are going to have a baby!"

I sat back waiting for the surprise and then the hugs and kisses. We did not get the surprise we thought we would, although we got the hugs and kisses. The lack of surprise surprised me.

"Well, actually, I knew that you were expecting," my sister-in-law said. "I bumped into your friend who is also pregnant and she asked me how you were doing with your pregnancy. I couldn't hide my surprise and she was worried that she had spoken out of turn. I must admit I was a little hurt that you didn't tell me."

"I'm so sorry that you feel this way; we didn't want to hurt anyone by withholding the news. We just didn't want to go through the whole process of sharing our news as before, only to be saddened by a possible loss. I hope that you understand," I said.

She and my brother hugged us. "Of course we understand. Congratulations! We're so happy for you both. Now let's have that cake and celebrate."

18 August 2004

Today I heard something that really made me feel worthwhile in the new job change. One of the women at work said that she had chatted with one of the outside consultants to the firm, and he had said to her that "I brought status to the job," which is really an encouragement. I think that I have already made a difference here in the two weeks I've been here. I thank the Lord that He has given me the wisdom that I asked for to learn the job function, and I pray that He continues to grant me wisdom.

Tomorrow I will be 14 weeks. I can't believe it, but I guess I've said that already. I still feel a little scared to be happy, and I feel bad that I feel this way. Perhaps I should go out and buy a babygrow or jumper. It's not that I don't believe. I do believe this is my turn. God promised only happy tears from here on out. No more sad ones. Perhaps after the amnio in two weeks' time, I'll feel better knowing that all is well.

3 September 2004

Well, today I took a day's leave as I was scheduled to go for the amnio, you know, because I am "the wrong side of 30" after all!

After the usual chat in the beginning of the consultation, we went through to the other room to do the scan and amnio. Baby looks wonderful. Our gynae said that he knows he said previously it was a boy but looking now, he says it's a girl. I saw hubby's face drop somewhat, and I knew he was disappointed. He had set his mind on having a boy, now he had to get used to another fact. I don't mind as long as our baby is healthy, although I am sad for him. He said that because she was a little girl we could go shopping with each other and do girlie things. I know that anyway he will love her with all his heart when she arrives.

As far as doing the amnio, there wasn't a big enough space between the placenta and the baby. She looked as if she was wrapped snugly in cotton wool. He said we can reschedule the amnio in a week's time. But what happens if in a week's time, we still can't perform the amnio? I toyed with the thoughts and felt more stressed about doing it than about not doing it. Even with my reservations I made the appointment for the following Friday, and we left.

I had the weekend to mull over the happenings and then on Monday morning, I bumped into the gynae's receptionist at the shop. She asked how I felt about having the amnio done. I told her that I was more than likely going to cancel. She said that she knew I would. In her years working there, she has come to know who really wants it done and who doesn't. I feel much happier having come to that decision. I feel that it was God's will, and God ordained that I bumped into her at the shop. In all the years' shopping there, I have never seen her there, and to see her there after having gone for the amnio, I know God's Hand is in it.

Lord, I do thank You
For all you've done for me
The wonderful news
That baby will make three.
We have waited for so long
To have what most so easily get
I want you to know
That I am forever in Your debt.
10 September 2004
I am 17 weeks.

Today Hubby came home with booties that a friend of ours gave to him. She is happy for us.

The search for names for a girl is proving to be a little more difficult than names for a boy. There are not many Italian names that we both like, so if baby happens to be a girl as our gynae says, then we will have to do a whole lot more looking.

I bought a maternity sewing pattern and fabric for a top and pants. I am looking forward to making a few outfits. I need to start celebrating and enjoying this amazing event in my life. Tomorrow, Lord willing, I will start sorting out my sewing and checking which material I can use.

I have been booked off sick with flu for this week. It's a bit tough as, being pregnant, I can't really take anything for the cough. I have been prescribed penicillin which is safe to use, so I hope it does the trick quickly. The kitties think it's great having Mom home and they have climbed onto the bed with me. Mitchi is lying on my legs as usual and Sandi is curled up at my side. She is purring away.

I have told only two women at work that I am expecting. I know that they will keep it a secret. I have kept it quiet mostly because of the mishaps before, and secondly because of the uncertain times at work with retrenchments. I think that once everyone at work knows, my pregnancy will seem more real to me. At this point I will approach it that I am returning to work after baby is born, although I know that I will want to stay at home with her.

I need to find out about the times for the antenatal classes which I would like to attend.

30 September 2004

Last week I told my boss the news. He was very surprised; like most people he was under the impression that we did not want to have children. I explained that we had never really talked about having children until ten years into our marriage. Everything happens as it is supposed to happen for everyone. God knows and His timing is best. I know people do not understand these reasonings at best of times, but it is the truth.

Now at least I can start asking my questions about maternity leave. Perhaps I will save some of my leave and take it with my maternity leave. I am looking forward to time off. I'm in need of a holiday.

It's amazing how much advice people feel they are free to give one. Telling them about my pregnancy did not mean I gave them the gateway for constant advice. Today I learnt that I need to clip certain conversations in the bud and walk away.

Heavenly Father - it is your grateful handmaiden here. I want to say a BIG thank you for the life that is moving within me. I am 20 weeks today (five months!!) It is amazing.

I think that Hubby is beginning to come to terms with the fact that it is a little girl. He sees the special bond that dads have with their daughters, and I think believes this will be for him too.

6 October 2004

A few days ago it was our niece's daughter's christening, and for the first time ever I did not feel sad as not having a child. It felt wonderful to be there and to be pregnant with our own child, and not want what others had, and what I did not have. We were asked to be godparents, so to be godparents and soon to be parents is certainly a first for us. This is the first christening where I was happy and smiling both inwardly and outwardly.

I feel her movements a lot more easily nowadays because she is growing. It is amazing and wonderful and weird all at the same time.

I am thinking about going back to my weight-loss class as I am so worried I am going to look like a house when it comes later down the track. It will be good to start thinking along those lines again and begin making better food choices although I will still have what I feel like if I have a real craving for it. Perhaps I should make a turn there tomorrow evening.

I went for my check-up yesterday. Baby is doing fine and growing nicely. Doc checked out all the little limbs and it was amazing to see the little spinal bones. Tiny and cute!

He asked which birth method I would prefer. I told him that, as far as possible, I would like normal birth. I don't want to be pushed and persuaded into a Caesarian section unless it can't be helped or unless baby is distressed or something is wrong.

I phoned the midwife to find out about antenatal classes. She sounds nice. Says she has a class starting 4th November. There are seven to eight classes. I am quite looking forward to it.

I am halfway there. Thank You Lord!

I am starting to look forward to holding her in my arms. And Hubby says that he can't wait to hear the little feet running down the passage. It will be an amazing feeling to hold her in my arms for the first time and I cannot but think that I will cry. I am so hoping for a natural birth. Doc says later in the pregnancy he will perform a check (internal, yikes!) to see what the progress with the cervix is. But I am trusting that all will be fine and more than fine for a natural birth. I must just relax as he does the exam, otherwise I will be tense and he might think that I am too small to have a natural birth. I must relax!

Yeh, right!

I look at my growing tummy in the mirror. Is that me standing there sideways with the tummy? It is a most unusual, but wonderful sight, knowing that within that growing bump is a little life being formed. I cannot comprehend the wonder of it all. This is such a natural event, but one thing I know is that I appreciate it so much more for having waited so long.

Today I draw up my legal shopping list and go shopping after work to get all the legal foods back into the house. No more junk food. Hubby knows that the weight-loss programme has started again, so he can expect healthier suppers. I am glad to have some structure back in my life. I feel a little more in control of that area when the other area (my job) is out of my control. Perhaps the future will change. This does give me hope. I need to feel better about myself and really enjoy this process that I have the privilege of experiencing.

26 October 2004

Tonight is my weight-loss class, and I am hopeful that the scale has gone down a little more. I know that I must not expect major weight losses, but as long as it is going in the right direction, I am happy for any little loss. At least I am eating right and getting all the right nutrients for baby.

I will be six months (24 weeks) this Thursday. Wow!

We have decided to do the baby's room in a theme of fairies and have decided on the colour "Cherish" for the walls. It's a pretty pink shade. She certainly will be cherished!

We will have to reroute the kitties as the window in her soon-to-be room has been the thoroughfare for them for the past 12 years. I have started to use baby lotion at night to introduce them to the smell of baby things, and when I leave for work I rub some of the cream onto my pajamas and leave that on the bed where they sleep. Many years ago, I heard a vet speaking on the radio about introducing a new baby to the pets in the household. He advised that the animals be allowed to walk in the baby's room and smell the baby goodies before the baby arrives. That way they become familiar with the new smell gradually so that when baby does arrive, it is not too overwhelming. I am sure that they will be surprised by the new bundle in the house but then again, maybe I will be pleasantly surprised. I pray that they will accept her with open paws and love her quickly.

I received a lovely little top and leggings from my dear friend for baby. Hubby saw them and said they were too small. I said of course they were small; they are baby clothes - our baby's!

Next week I go for another scan and check-up. I think that Doc mentioned that he will start to measure baby. I am interested to see how he does this. I hope that I don't have to dress down – if you know what I mean. I don't feel like being embarrassed. They say it's like a mechanic fixing cars, they see so many. I just don't feel like a car, though!

28 October 2004

I lost 0.2kg at the weigh-in on Tuesday night. I am happy even if it's a small loss and am happy that I have taken control over the bad eating habits that I picked up.

One of the women at class gave me the cutest little soft pink shoes and socks. The little gift bag has a beautiful fairy on the outside as well as the little attached card. It fits in with the theme of her room.

It's great to be thinking about getting the temp lady in while I am on maternity leave. I have stood in for so many other women going on maternity leave that it is wonderful this time to be the one going on maternity leave and training up a temp. This has been a tough year, and towards the end of the year one does tend to feel the crunch. 30 working days – but hey, who's counting?

05 November 2004

I picked up a little at weight class on Tuesday, but I am still confident that this is the way to go if I don't want to look and feel like a house when she is born. I want to enjoy her and not feel hot and uncomfortable. I am going to my first antenatal class tonight. It's going to feel strange being there amongst other women who are expecting.

We went to Doc for a scan and check on the 3rd and everything looks wonderful. She had her mouth open and when Doc pointed it out, she closed it again hurriedly. That was so cute. She looks so beautiful. We saw her little legs, arms, feet and hands. It's amazing. I have fallen in love. She's naughty, though. For the first time she is lying breech, but there's still plenty of time for her to turn around to get into the right position for normal birth. He also asked if I was going to breastfeed. I said Yes. Breastmilk is the best you can do for baby, so they say. I really hope that my tanks (the size they are now aptly fits this description) have the ability to feed her. I would love that. She weighs around 700 – 800 grams. Doc is very happy with everything that he sees.

I went to antenatal class last night. It was a very big class, in numbers that is. The midwife said that February is normally a busy month for babies at the hospital. I think there were around 25 women there. We did some aerobic exercises. The topic for the class was dealing with serious problems in pregnancy. There were young and older women there. It felt a little strange and tense, but perhaps the next one will be more relaxed when we get to know each other better. To learn as much as I can about what to expect is why I went. I don't want to fear the experience, I want to learn and to embrace it. This is a special time and I must enjoy each moment.

11 November 2004

Praise be to God! I am 26 weeks pregnant today and according to the stats, baby weighs 800 grams and is 31 cm (12 inches) head to toe, or 23 cm head to rump. I can

hardly believe it. I have a miracle inside me. Praise to God who has heard and who has answered.

I have managed to gain more control of my weight gain and have managed to lose ½ kg this past month, which is great. My group leader says that I should only gain 16kg. I have gained 13.2kg, so that leaves me with a leeway of 2.8kg, hopefully less, but I suppose I will gain a little more, as I have just read that blood volume actually doubles, and I know that weighs some.

The baby name search continues. I think I have found two or three that we could probably agree on. I will give the list to Hubby and he can put his pen mark next to the ones he likes, and I'll do the same.

Tonight is antenatal class again, and I am looking forward to it. I am a little scared to hear all that I need to hear, but knowledge is power, and I need to know so that I can be prepared and enjoy the experience, not fear it.

12 November 2004

"How many?" he asked as he walked through the door smiling from ear to ear.

"That's rude," I said with a smile.

His friendly attitude put me at ease; it's not easy seeing a strange doctor.

"What happened?" he asked.

"The backrest of my chair at work broke off and I fell backward. I automatically strained forward to stop the fall. I feel as if I have pulled all my front muscles right down into the groin area." I was talking to our work's IOD doctor.

"That's unfortunate. How far are you?" he asked as he wrote the info into his file.

"26 weeks."

"Boy or girl?"

"Girl."

"Lovely. OK, let's go and do the scan and check up on baby girl, shall we?"

I lay down on the bed and felt a little conspicuous after his "how many" remarks and we joked a little more about it. He had a lovely bedside manner and my shyness was quickly dispelled.

"Baby looks fine," he said as he moved the scanner over my tummy. "She has strong legs."

We watched the little being kick away under our scrutiny. She was going about her business as if nothing had happened, cushioned in her safe little world.

"Baby is fine but you are going to feel the effects of your ordeal tomorrow," he said.

I could already feel the effects setting in, as he had to help me sit up after the examination. My stomach muscles ached with the effort.

"Everything will be fine. Take care now," he concluded the consultation.

I drove home and thanked God that He had His hand on me and baby. As long as she was fine I would be able to manage the muscle ache, and boy was that moving in fast.

16 November 2004

Lately I have been attacked again by the devil with thoughts that this is not going to happen for me. I take charge and authority in the Name of Jesus Christ. God Eternal has promised, and "what He has begun, He will finish and perfect". "No more sad tears, only happy tears" was what He promised to me. There is a very faint almost period-like

feeling, but perhaps it's just my stomach which has not been playing the game with me, unless I take a light laxative. The joys of pregnancy! Anyway, small worries when I will be getting such a beautiful birthday present around my birthday. She must not be born on the 14th of February. She must have her own birthdate.

Tonight I go to weight class and know that I will not have lost any weight. With my eating out I will have gained some. I cannot stress about that. As long as I maintain the majority control over my eating I am happy. When baby is born it will be full steam ahead to get back into shape again. So many moms have done it, I am sure that I can too! It will be tricky to juggle baby and weight management, but there is no excuse, because I'm going to be at home for seven months. If I go back to work looking fat, it will be my fault. There are at least four months where I can give it my attention before I get back to work.

Last night was antenatal classes with the hubbies. Some of them were visibly uncomfortable with the birthing video being shown. Hubby had reservations about attending, but I think he was glad that he did.

The nursing sister explained the stages of birth and natural birth. I really pray that this is the way for me. I don't want to have any cuts on my body. I want to experience the process as nature intended it to be. All the pain that I have had in the past has been sapping, negative pain; the kidney stone, hemorrhoids and hemorrhoidectomy. This time the pain is positive and I will keep my mind positive with the pain. This pain will birth my baby for whom I have waited so long, into this world and into my arms. That will be the most precious moment of my life.

27 weeks yesterday. Praise be to God!

2 December 2004

I went to Doc for the monthly visit. Baby weighs 2.3kg! What a wonderful thing to see that little face on the scan. I know I have her moving around in my tummy, but seeing her just helps make it more real to me. I am 29 weeks!

The girls at work gave me a stork party. I received so many lovely things; clothes, baby toiletries, bottle steriliser and plenty more. It was sweet of them. I have attended so many work stork parties for other women, but this one was for me. It was a dream come true! They were there for ME! For a change it was me sitting with the heaps of prettily wrapped gifts around my feet. At last it was ME who was going to be the mommy and not someone else. It was me, me, ME!

10 December 2004

I finished work today, to go on annual leave and straight into maternity leave. What a wondrous thought, that I don't have to worry about work until 18th July 2005 (DV)!

28 December 2004

Mom has been staying with us for a few days over the holiday and she has enjoyed helping with the room. We bought lavender-coloured curtains and new white voile curtains and with the pretty pink walls, it looks lovely! We have also received, on loan from the family, a compactum, crib, carry cot and snug and safe car seat. We are really fortunate. That's the only good thing about others having had babies before; we get to

save a whole lot of money. It will recycle again, as I know that my one niece and nephew will be planning Number Two sometime in the not too distant future.

My niece and her family arrived from the States for a visit. It was so good to see them. She cried when she eventually got a turn to hug and say hello to me. She looked at my tummy and was really moved and when I eventually released her from the hug, saw that her beautiful blue eyes were swimming in happy tears. She was very sad when I had the two previous mishaps, so is ecstatic for me and Hubby with our little treasure on the way.

Baby is playing the game and has turned around and is ready and correctly placed for natural birth. I am happy as I really want this for me and her. God has answered my prayer that she turns around. I am 33 weeks.

8 January 2005

We celebrated New Year's Eve with a fondue at my sister's house. We wished each other Happy New Year as the clock struck midnight and everyone who wished Hubby and me said that our year will certainly be a happy one. It mostly definitely will be with the most precious little future event for the year of 2005. It will assuredly be better than the sad year of 2004.

My family threw me a stork party, which included some friends. It was so nice having my niece down from the States there to celebrate the occasion with me. She spoiled us and baby as she had brought with her from the states a camp cot and lovely musical swing chair. I really do appreciate her taking the time to find them and bring them over with her, as they weren't the lightest objects to lug around. At the stork party she gave me a gift bag overflowing with the most gorgeous baby clothes I have seen, the cutest little dresses, the sweetest little bikini and tons more. I kept taking from the gift bag forever. I am really blessed! In total I received a huge box full of baby clothes, toiletries, blankets and more. Again, as with the work stork party, it was great having MY OWN stork party.

I have almost finished packing my suitcase for the hospital. That part really felt strange to me. I walk past the baby's room and wonder whose house I am in. It feels strange that after all these years of being my sewing room, the room now holds a baby's crib and swing, waiting for a little bundle to fill them. I am so grateful but my words of thanks to God just seem so inadequate. But I know that He sees my heart and understands all the emotions that are going through me. He, more than anyone else, knows how many tears I cried when no-one else knew how desperately I wanted to have a baby. Hubby had talked of adoption, but I could not see myself going that route, especially after God had given us a word that He would grant us a baby. It took a good few years, but that makes me even more grateful and astounded at my awesome God's honouring and promise. Hubby says that when he looks at my growing tummy, he never thought he would see me like this. I had to believe God and His Word He gave. I had no option. I was not going to believe man and his verdict of my situation. My God was in control and still is. I will trust Him to see it all through and further.

17 January 2005

"Is your suitcase packed?" my gynae asked.

My heart swelled at that wonderful question. I could not stop the huge smile that spread across my face. I looked at him and knew that he had no idea how wonderful it was to hear him ask that. It cemented the event in reality for me.

“Yes,” I answered, “it is. It most certainly is.”

I am 35 ½ weeks pregnant, so this was his way of saying it could happen at any time now.

At the next visit he will check baby’s heartbeat for about 15 minutes, when I will be hooked up to a monitor. She weighs around 2.7kg now. During the scan she stuck her tongue in and out of her mouth. It was so cute. From what I can see, she is as I imagined she would look. Beautiful! But then I am a little biased, I guess. He checked to see where baby’s head is lying. She is still quite far up. Perhaps at the next (internal – yikes!) check-up, he will be able to see what the status is and how the cervix is. That will give an indication of natural birth possibilities.

I have packed, packed and repacked the compactum with all the wonderful baby clothes, toiletries, blankets and other goodies we received.

As I sit and write this, she is moving within my tummy. I spend many moments with my shirt lifted, watching my growing tummy move. I remain awed at this miracle. How can they say there is no God? Words just seem so inadequate!

We still are undecided on a name for baby T. I really don’t know what we are going to do about that. Wait for the day to arrive? There is not much time left and one never really knows when the D-Day, or should I say, B-day is.

I am having a little difficulty in sleeping at night. It is getting uncomfortable to change sides. I am tucking pillows under my tummy and between my legs, which does help, and getting up to go to the toilet more often adds to the challenge. But I am NOT complaining at all. These are little “joys” that come with bringing our miracle into the world. It is all worth it!

I am not quite sure how my other babies are going to take to the arrival of the little bundle. They have seen the baby’s room get painted out and all the goodies move in. They have smelt the baby toiletries and I have been using baby powder and baby lotion so that they can get used to the smell. I am praying that they will not feel rejected. I just hope that they don’t reject ME, never mind them feeling rejected. I don’t think I will know how to handle their rejection. It would break my heart.

1 February 2005

These past few days have been quite emotional. I guess the hormones are really playing havoc with my system. I also have been feeling quite anxious, which I have read is quite normal at this late stage of a pregnancy. I am 37 ½ weeks today, so I think the reality has struck home, that soon I will be a mommy. I have a slight panic thinking that I will have a little life that is dependent on me, looking to me for guidance, protection and love. But hey, if I am not ready at the tender age of 38, then I guess I never will be. Then I think of all the women who have become mommies, and who cope quite fine, then I feel better. I know I will be fine.

This afternoon we went to the gynae for the two-weekly check up. He monitored the baby’s heartbeat and was pleased with the results. He checked my cervix to see how long it was. The “internal – yikes!” was not so bad. It was 1cm. Apparently this is good. He tried to move baby’s head, but couldn’t, which shows that her head has moved into

the pelvic area. I said that I really want normal birth. He did advise that anything could go wrong on the day, and that I must be open-minded about that and having a Caesar. One is totally dependent on the professional opinion, so have no choice but to believe and trust what they say.

He says baby weighs around 3kg and says that she will weigh around 3.5kg on the day of birth, and also thinks that I will carry to full term. He says that he has recently performed quite a few inductions as the women wanted it over and wanted the baby out. I can understand why. It certainly is quite trying and tiring at this last stage. But I have heard that is it more painful with an induction, but then I suppose they have epidurals with their inductions. I will wait for nature to take her course and hopefully not need to induce.

We have eventually decided on a name for baby T. "Chiara" – Italian for "famous" and "light". She will be our little light in our lives, so I think it very apt. We are not sure if we will give a second name. It has been difficult enough deciding on the first one. This was my first choice for a name, although Hubby says he can't remember me telling him. He decided out of his own that this was the one that he liked. So it looks as if this name was meant to be.

9 February 2005

Tomorrow I will be 39 weeks, nearly full term and my suitcase is packed and baby's bag is packed. The room is basically ready and we have her name. I am sure that when the contractions begin, the reality of it all will REALLY set in!! She is a lot quieter today. They say they quieten down before they make their decision to enter the world. I can't wait to see her little face. I take out the little clothes from the compactum and stare at their smallness, wondering how it is going to feel to dress her. She has so many cute little outfits. I am sure that it will be more awesome than I can imagine right now.

Lord and Heavenly Father, the Author and Finisher of my faith and rewarder of my faith, I thank You for the wonderful perfect miracle that is soon to be born into the world. I pray that all will go 100% well when the contractions begin and the process starts. I pray for an easy birth. I pray for good staff that will work well with me and Hubby and our personalities. I pray for him, that he will feel part of the process, and pray that he will not stress me out. I pray this all in the powerful name of Jesus Christ. Amen!

15 February 2005

I went for my last appointment today. I am 39 ½ weeks. Thursday I will be 40 weeks, full term.

We spoke and agreed that if she had not decided to come we would induce on Friday 25 February, which would make me 41 weeks. I pray that she will not come on 19th nor the 22nd February, as my gynae will be out of town. I don't want a strange doctor attending to me. One builds up a trust and relationship over the pregnancy with your own gynae, and the thought of someone whom I have not met attending to me, scares me. How do you know that they are being truthful or sincere? My gynae knows that I want normal birth. What would the strange one try and sell me? I have trusted and believed God all throughout this pregnancy and even before. I will continue to trust that He holds all in His Hand and that He will not cause one hair on my head nor her little head to be

harmful. That is in His Word and He is not a god who would lie. So I will believe that everything will work out. (Luke 21:18: "But there shall not an hair of your head perish.")

I asked about the fact that inductions are said to be more painful and he explained that they are not necessarily more painful. They tend to begin more abruptly than the normal process where the woman is able to gradually become accustomed to the pain. He also said that in the more painful cases, it was due to a medical condition that required them to induce before baby was at full term. I will be over full term, so trust that this counts in my favour.

I celebrated my 39th birthday yesterday, 14th February. I will be receiving my precious gift from God very soon, just as I asked and just as I believed.

19 February 2005

Yesterday was the 18th – my due date, or should I say, baby's due date. I did see the beginnings of the mucous plug they talk about, although this is not always an indication of labour. I read that you can go into labour the same day, or even a week after its dislodging.

Today I feel a lot more intense Braxton Hicks contractions and I experienced cramps similar to period pains. I haven't had those for 10 months but one can't forget what those feel like. The cramps are quite intense too.

I have been sleeping in the spare room some nights because I need to go to the toilet so often. And sleeping is a challenge. I don't want to disturb Hubby with all the rearranging of the pillows when I change sides. I am not quite sure if I should begin noting how far apart these contractions are. Maybe for interest's sake I should to keep a check and see how things are progressing.

I am not telling anyone when I go into hospital because I don't want the pressure of anyone standing outside in the hallways. I am sorry if people feel that I am wrong by taking this approach. I just feel that it is extra pressure that I do not need at that point in time. Mom says she wants to know – to pray! She said she won't tell anyone. I am a person who, when I need to work something out, or focus on something, goes internal and I don't want any other attention drawn to me. This situation is no exception.

I am pleased and thank You, Lord, that she was not born on my birthday, or today, as the gynae is out of town. She now needs to arrive naturally, Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Tuesday, the gynae is out of town again. Not asking much hey?

I am excited as I sit here and experience the first stages of labour, as I know our precious little bundle is about to enter and "light" up our lives – Chiara! Make no mistake, I am a little scared of when the "real" contractions will begin. These ones can go on for about eight hours. I will re-read the stages of labour again just to refresh my memory. I am not sure how close these contractions should be. They do seem pretty close. Are they meant to be so close? Who knows? This is all new to me, but I know I am in God's Hands! And He will not cause one hair of my, nor Chiara's head, to be harmed.

Reality Bites

12 May 2005

Chiara is nearly three months old as I write this, and having her has been a shock to my life and emotions. It has been difficult, especially since she has been suffering from winds and colic.

My friend asked if I was enjoying being a mommy, and I answered, "No." I am sure that I will start enjoying it more when I stop questioning if I am doing a good job or whether Chiara loves me.

Let me go back to the day she arrived. Early contractions began the 18th February, and the mucous signs were unmistakably there and the contractions were beginning to intensify. Still not sure if this was the real thing, I phoned the labour ward at the hospital where I was due to give birth and explained what I was experiencing. She suggested that I go in and have it checked.

The sun was still in the sky and I said to Hubby that I would like to go to the hospital while it was still day. I guess I watched too many movies where everything seems to intensify at night. So we packed my bag and baby's bag and headed for the hospital.

"Church or hospital?" my cell phone beeped an SMS. We had driven past my best friend's house and she was in the garden and saw us drive past. Not wanting to start something that was not quite true, I replied that it was to hospital for a check-up, although I think deep in my heart I knew that it was more than that. I suppose many think me strange for not wanting to let anyone know I was in labour. I just don't like being the centre of attraction, but Mom insisted I tell her when I go in. Looking back now, I guess it does seem weird, but that's just me. I just hope that everyone understands and respects that that is the way I wanted it done.

At 18.30 we arrived at the hospital and the maternity ward that I had toured through with my antenatal class, and it felt strange. I undressed and waited for the sister to examine me. She looked at my tummy contract even before doing the internal and smiled and said, "You're not going home. This baby is going to come tonight." She then checked and said that I was 4cm dilated. They checked baby's heart rate and were happy with everything, although she was still extremely active even then. It should have been an indication of what I would be greeted with in a few hours' time.

The gynaecologist on duty checked in on me and told me that my gynae would be back on duty at 22.00. I was so pleased.

It was going to be quite a while still, so Hubby went home to feed our four-legged babies. He would stay there until later as it was still going to be a while till things really hotted up. At around 20.00 they ran a spa bath for me and I relaxed listening to my CD and enjoying the wonderful soothing warm water. I felt like a queen.

I closed my eyes and let my mind drift across the days and weeks and even months before. I followed the process in my mind and it slowly dawned on me that there was no going back now. My baby girl was ready to enter the world, my world, our world, and I was so ready and excited to meet her and tell her that I had waited for this moment for so many years. I loved her so already and looked at my large tummy in the bath and knew that shortly the bundle that snuggled in there would be snuggling in my arms.

Time went by too quickly and I reluctantly had to haul my large body out of the warm cocoon so that my gynae, who would be arriving at 22.00, could examine me. The contractions were very there but still manageable.

When he checked I was 7cm dilated, which was quite quick in his opinion, from the 4cm when I was previously examined. He broke my waters and he said it would make labour shorter. He mentioned that the contractions would be more intense, though. No kidding! The next one hit me with a vengeance! The contractions intensified, so I went through to the labour ward in preparation for our baby. I phoned Hubby to come back to the hospital. He wanted to know how much longer. Well, excuse me, at that stage I already was beginning to think murderous thoughts even at the most innocent question. Now it was a little difficult for me to tell exactly when baby was going to appear; I just told him to get there!

The nurse asked if I wanted anything for the pain but I refused. I wanted to know the whole experience for what it really was and feel all the feelings and emotions that went with this experience. The only thing I did use was the Entonox gas which eased the pain slightly. Or did it? Or perhaps the process of sucking in the air through the mask being such a mission was a diversion from the pain.

The clock on the opposite wall ticked away the time between the contractions. At times I felt that I would not make it, but the resolve deep within me pushed me towards the moment when I would meet the little bump in my tummy.

The machines registered the contractions and fetal heart rate next to me. As the numbers increased I knew that another intense contraction was on its way. They were now five minutes apart. It seemed as if like this stage was continuing forever. I was tremendously tired. I would fall asleep after the contraction just to be awoken by intense pain. The term "labour" is not used lightly.

The gynae examined me and said I was 10cm dilated. He said that that phase had taken quite long, which surprised him considering how quickly I dilated from 4cm to 7cm earlier. Time came for me to push the little bundle into the world. I pushed a good number of times but it seemed that the contractions were lessening in intensity and she was not budging. The gynae called for the suction to be brought through and tried to position it onto her head. He tried three times. It felt as if my insides were being pried open by giant metal tweezers. He had no success and I watched his face closely. He stood up from his endeavours and clasped his hands in front of him and said, "I'm sorry. I know you didn't want to go this route, but I'm afraid we are going to have to do a Caesarean." She was not moving further.

I was disappointed, tired, and in agony, but I had to think of my baby now before what I wanted. She took precedence now! I felt her strain within me and the decision was made. He asked them to get the theatre ready and I was wheeled in to deliver my baby.

After what seemed like an eternity they administered medication to stop the contractions so that they could perform the operation. I was tired and I was sad. I wanted to cry but wouldn't allow myself to. I had so wanted a natural birth. I had wanted to push my baby into the world and hear her cry and then hold her. I had it all planned in my mind. Even though it was going to be painful, it was going to be perfect. All would go well and I would give birth naturally to a beautiful little baby girl. We would cry happy tears and hold our little doll. But it wasn't going to be for me.

The local radio station was playing in the theatre. Surprisingly it was a small theatre, and plenty of machines lined the walls. Everyone seemed relaxed and in control behind their masks as they busied themselves with their respective tasks.

I sat up and hung my legs over the side of the bed and they told me to sit very still while they injected the spinal block into the space between my vertebrae. The sister held my shoulders tightly so I wouldn't budge. I did involuntarily jerk when I felt a sharp stabbing pain that shot right down into my coccyx area. It was pretty alarming but over in a split second. They then laid me down again and started prepping me for the operation.

I was a little apprehensive as I had heard that spinal taps did not work for a percentage of women. I voiced my concerns to the attending anesthetist who was an absolute darling. He told me that I would feel a warm sensation and that I was to try and lift my legs. His air of confidence did wonders to set my fears at rest. I tried to lift my legs, but the message in the brain just seemed to end there, and the legs would not respond. A moment later he told me that they had already begun the cut. I was relieved. I could not feel anything. Now, let me just lie back and relax a little, well, try anyway.

The gynae said that I would not feel any pain, but would be able to feel them working on me. It was a strange sensation to feel the pushing and pulling to get her out. Thankfully, painless!

Hubby rubbed my head, which was so reassuring. I am sure that he had his own apprehensions to deal with at that stage. He was incredibly quiet and did not say a word.

The pediatrician offered to take the pictures with our digital camera, which was great, so Hubby could sit with me.

"We're nearly there," the gynae said as I moaned when it seemed that they were digging their way through me, which they were, as her head was positioned far down in the birth canal and between my pelvic bones. I was tired and I wanted this all to be over with right now! I had had enough. With that thought still in my head, he pulled her out, and she started crying the second she emerged. He lifted her briefly towards us so we could see her. There she was; the little face to the movement that I had felt for so many months. It was a surreal moment. That little bundle had just been lifted out of my body. She had her little legs pulled up in the fetal position. I cannot even begin to explain all the emotions and feelings at that point. She had a healthy set of lungs; that was pretty evident. She was a healthy wonderful colour and wasn't covered in so much blood and matter as some of the births I had seen on TV.

They began stitching me up and cleaning her. They wrapped her in a blanket and handed her to us to hold for a while. The little face with eyes tightly shut, seemed so peaceful and I on the other hand felt overwhelmed and amazed. Here she was in my arms, mine to take care of from here on out. Inside me, my body had taken care of her involuntarily. Now it was up to me to take care of her. So many thoughts were rushing through my mind. What an awesome responsibility!

Hubby accompanied the nurse to the nursery where they followed their routine tests and examinations.

My whole body began shaking and my teeth were chattering together. It was an awful feeling. I could not control it. I asked why this was happening and they said it was the effects of the spinal tap. They wheeled me into recovery where I lay shaking away while waiting to be taken back to the maternity ward. I felt quite alone. I had no baby now and

Hubby was gone too. Every now and then a nurse would peer down at me to check on me. It was a strange feeling. I had been through so much now, and it was all over, and I was left there alone with no evidence of what I had just been through, bar the shaking.

I was wheeled back into my ward where I lay waiting, for what seemed like forever, for them to bring her back to me. The curtain was pulled back and a smiling sister placed the sleeping angel into my arms. I looked at her little face still in awe that this little bundle that was in my tummy, now lay on my chest. She knew that she was with her mommy, and again I felt overwhelmed. It somehow felt as if she knew more about me than I knew about her. She seemed calm and in control. She knew her little world was now perfect. Mine was too! I had waited six years for this moment, and I was blown completely away. No amount of my imagining it came close to what it actually was. Welcome to my world, little angel. Welcome! May I be all to you that you are to me.

What's on the menu mum?

Time came for me to breastfeed, which I had decided I was going to do. They placed her at my breast. I knew nothing about breastfeeding, other than the bits I had read. They proceeded to latch her onto my breast. It felt strange. There is nothing glamorous about someone pulling and tugging on your boob to get it into your baby's mouth. It was amazing as she knew instinctively what to do, as she latched onto the right breast. I could hardly believe the strength of the suction of that little mouth. It all seemed to be going well. She drank for what seemed ages and then fell asleep.

The next feeding time I tried latching her onto my left breast, only to find that she wanted nothing to do with it. I wondered if she perhaps did not want to feed, but moved her to the right breast, where she immediately latched on and began sucking.

Feeding times began being stressful for both mom and baby, as each time they brought her to me and they placed her to feed, she began screaming, and boy, did she wake the maternity ward! They pushed and prodded the now swollen left breast. Because she had not taken to it, it was now large and was really hot. They eventually got a sister who was very experienced in breastfeeding matters, to tend to me. She massaged it, or shall I say, tugged and pulled, and it became less sore and the colostrum began flowing more freely, but Chiara still did not want to take the left breast. I started becoming anxious about it, the worst thing one can do, but I could not control it. This was all new to me, but it was supposed to be the most natural thing that a mother can do. Right? Well it didn't seem so natural, and it certainly wasn't too pleasant, and I began stressing about it. And I think that Chiara felt that too.

She became difficult to deal with, and on our file was written, "Demanding baby, mother needs extra help." That should have warned me.

"Just the man I want to see. This is what I have to deal with." I pointed out the screaming little bundle to the pediatrician as he did his morning rounds.

He walked around the bed to where Chiara lay screaming her little lungs out. He looked at her, smiled at me and said, "Just as well you are not young." I could have taken that as a huge insult but I understood the gist of what he was saying. Two years later I would ask him why he had said that, and he replied that he could tell almost immediately what a baby's personality is. A more detailed warning at the time would have helped. At her six-month check-up he would pen the words, "big crier" on her file. Yep, you said it!

He opened her clothes and examined her and said there was nothing wrong. He said that breast feeding was stressing her out. No joke! That was my deciding factor. We organised a bottle feed and she took to it immediately.

When I told my gynae later that I had decided to put her onto the bottle, he said that he had thought that breastfeeding was not going to work for us. With his years of experience, he said he could tell who it's going to work for, and who not. I tried it, and for us didn't work.

She began bottle feeding and was much happier now at feeding times. The right decision was made for us. Many times I think moms feel guilty when they can't breastfeed for whatever reasons, and I think that's something they must work through. Each mom has to make her own decision about breastfeeding and ignore those know-it-alls who have been able to breastfeed. At the end of the day, the least stressful route

should be taken because if mom gets stressed, baby gets stressed and will not feed. Feeding time has to be a special time with lots of smiles and love. It should be a relaxing time and should be a time to look forward to. Okay, those midnight feeds are not something to look forward to. Sleep deprivation is one of the most common complaints and things that new moms will need to deal with. There is nothing like a good night's sleep to make you feel you can tackle anything again.

And yes, they say to try and get some sleep when baby sleeps. That's easier said than done. There is always something to do. If not to clean up around ground zero since baby's birth, it's to sterilise and make the next feeds for the demanding little creature.

13 May 2005

Chiara is 11 ½ weeks old. She has started pulling her bottle towards her mouth and trying to get the teat into her mouth. Her co-ordination is still shaky, but it's so cute to see. She moves her head swiftly from side to side as she tries to aim the teat into her mouth.

16 May 2005

Today Chiara is 12 weeks old. I am so glad. This has been a shock to me and to the household. We have not been used to crying and this has been the most difficult part to get used to, as she has the most unnerving cry. When I hear a baby cry on the TV, I immediately turn the volume down. It stresses me out. I guess the lack of sleep is getting to me.

I wish I could say "time flew", but I have been trying to cope with the shock of the reality of our "answered prayer". It has not been easy. They say things get easier from here – I certainly hold onto that and pray so.

Chiara has not kept feeding patterns and is considered a "demand feeder", which means she screams and I mean screams, for milk when she wants it. It's never four hour feeds, not even three hours, more like 2 ½ hours, and then she does not drink the entire feed she is supposed to drink.

She has also been very irregular with her sleeping pattern, or lack thereof, and has sometimes gone to sleep at 11.40 and two nights ago, only at 01.00. That's tough, and during those days she only slept for two one-hour sessions. I am praying that from here on she starts sleeping better. Who knows? This is new to me.

16 May 2005

I went back to my weight-loss class tonight. I am scared of the challenge that faces me because it takes time to plan menus and it's difficult now with a baby. I have 13 kilos to lose. I did it before, so I can do it again. I need to do it one day at a time and it will be OK. There are only a few months, and before we know it summer will be here and I have two pairs of jeans that I absolutely love and want to get back into again. Six months to summer. Two kilos per month. I can do this practically and in reality.

I must and will do this because this is one area that I have control over. Chiara is going to get "better" and I will survive. I am doing a great job with virtually no support. I must not fear and will not fear. I will manage and I will cope. God is on my side and I will make it through. I have made it through three months – it can only get better.

I have done well!

I am coping!
I am going to make it!
I am a great mom!
Chiara does love me!
Each day gets better!
Each night even better!

29 May 2005

This Monday Chiara will be 3 ½ months old. I have been going out during the week to help break the monotony of looking after a baby. She also needs to see that there is a world beyond the walls of our house, although it does stress her quite a bit. It has been hectic and an adjustment because I cannot just do something now. She has to be taken into account. Things are not so simple any more, but I would not change it. She is here to stay – she is mine!

She looks deep into my eyes, and I wonder what she thinks.
I want her to feel secure and know that she is wanted and loved.
I want her to reach her full potential and be all she can be.
I want her to love herself and know only then can she love others.
May I be all that she needs in a mommy!

11 June 2005

Today is marked by Chiara eating her first solids, as she is four months old. She had all of two teaspoons of rice cereal. She was not quite sure what I was putting into her mouth as all she has known has been her bottle with runny feed. Her little tongue pushed the food back out because now she will have to start learning a whole new way of eating. Instead of sucking she now has to move the food in her mouth and swallow. “Oh boy, things are getting tough now that I am going to have to learn to chew my food.”

15 June 2005

Today I resigned from my job to take care of my little noisy bundle.
It was a decision I debated long and hard for many days and weeks. We have waited so long for her that to leave her with someone else to look after her just seemed wrong to me. I delayed making the phone call to my boss to tell him, but when I did he said the same thing. He understood why I felt I needed to stay home with her. I felt that this was confirmation that I was doing the right thing and I felt so much better for having made the decision.

I look into those big blue eyes. She did not ask to be here. Why would I give her anything but a mother's love? She looks at me, and I can't believe a few months ago she didn't even exist! She is here. She is mine! She is so innocent. How can I leave her with someone else? I am not saying that moms who go back to work are insensitive. Nowadays it's costly raising a baby and moms have to go back and work. I count myself fortunate to be in a position where I can make the decision to stay at home. In fact, I admire those moms who do go back and work. They are extremely brave and have an entirely different set of emotions to deal with than the stay-at-home mom. They have to get over the guilt that they feel when they first go back. I admire their resolve to go back

to work. It must be the most difficult thing to do. I don't think that I would be brave enough to do that.

I can always go back into the working world later, or set up a business or do something to bring in a form of income. I would need to figure out what. I will see what the future holds. I can see it in two ways; one, I can dread and fear it, or two, I can look to the future and get excited at the possibilities it holds.

Chiara is crying terribly at feeding time when she has to suck her bottle and she is pulling at her right ear. She had a cold last week and I have a suspicion that it has developed into an ear infection. It's not that I have become psychic that I think this; it's one of the many articles I have read some time that colds can develop into ear infections. I managed to treat the fever with infant paracetamol but need to take her to the doctor to get it seen to. As I thought, the GP confirmed my thoughts and prescribed antibiotics to treat the infection, because if left untreated, it could develop into more serious problems.

10 October 2005

It took quite a while for the infection to clear up and she certainly did not understand why the bright orange liquid was being forced into her mouth when she was feeling so unwell.

We have moved Chiara into her own bedroom, as she is an incredibly light sleeper and even the rumbling of my stomach made her shift in her crib.

There was also another problem lurking, or snoring in the main bedroom. I was badly lacking sleep, as I was staying in a semi-awake/sleep state to stop Hubby from snoring and waking her up. Sleep deprivation isn't a joke!

I still am so grateful that I have a wonderful healthy little girl, although she is not quite so little any more. She weighs around 9.2kg so is quite a weight to carry around now. She is becoming more playful and squeals to impress and show off. Her granny really loves her and it's fun to watch the two of them laughing at each other. Those are precious moments.

I have always been one that starts a project and gets bored with it and then abandons it. This is a project that I cannot abandon, although I don't think boredom would ever be the issue here. Perhaps what I am trying to say is that I have always tried new things and then having tried them, need to find something else to interest me. I decided to start on the project of getting pregnant. That was fine. Now the result of the pregnancy is here and it's here to stay. I can't abandon this one. I have to see it through. And then again, it's never really through is it? It's one that's going to last for a good number of years while she is under our roof and then beyond when she has begun her own life. I really pray that I will be a good mother to her and that she will always feel safe.

What can I say about her character at this age of nearly eight months? She certainly has a mind and will of her own. She knows what she likes and dislikes. I suppose babies are all like this. I have never really taken much notice, or been around a baby for a long period of time to notice that. She is somewhat cheeky and quite verbal while being so. I think that when she begins to talk she won't feel so frustrated, because that's what she seems to be at those times. Frustrated that she cannot say what she feels or wants.

She is enjoying the car more that she did before. And she is enjoying going to the shopping malls a lot more now. She doesn't feel quite so intimidated by the strangers that peer into the pram and coo over her. Although I don't think she likes too much of

this attention all at once. She still is apprehensive about being picked up or held by others. I do not and am not going to force this issue either. She will take to people when she is ready. You always hear people say that they encourage their babies to go to others, strangers included. Their babies don't seem to mind. Each child is an individual and I do get a little tired with those who seem to want to impose their opinions of raising children onto you. I will not force Chiara to go to people she feels a little scared of or apprehensive about. She is different in that way and that's the way I accept it. I believe that she has been given to me because I do understand individuality and accept individuality and accept people for what they are. Everyone is different and we can't expect others to think the way we do or act the way we do. Make no mistake; I am going to teach her right from wrong and know where the line is drawn. Children need structure and boundaries. It makes them feel safe and secure. I will allow her to be herself and have her own opinions. I don't want to impose my personality onto her. She is an individual and I want her to be the best that she can be and provide a safe and loving environment in order for her to do so.

What I find amazing is all the comments by strangers in the shopping malls and even more strange are the comments by high school girls on how cute Chiara is. I don't ever remember even noticing babies when I was that age. Only when we started trying for a baby did I notice babies. I never was one to coo over them, let alone talk to anyone about their baby. I must have been the odd one out. The number of woman, and men, who look at her and talk to us is still strange. Just the other day a man asked me at the checkout counter, on which shelf I had found Chiara and if there were any left. We had a good chuckle and I replied, "No I have taken the last one."

When I stopped to have a cup of coffee at our favourite coffee shop, women at the next table asked me how old she was. One day I heard a woman say to her friend at the table behind me as I took Chiara out of her pram, "Now that's a beautiful baby." Then she asked me what her name was.

Sales assistants in shops hold out their arms to hold her. I sometimes let her be held by them if they don't seem too overpowering, but it doesn't last too long. As I say, Chiara doesn't like to be held by others just yet, family included, although there she is getting a bit better.

I can hardly believe that in four months' time I will have to start planning her first birthday party. But before that, we have Christmas coming up and it's going to be a really special time for us as a family. We are able now to share with our little family the joys of Christmas and have a Christmas tree with lights and decorations and presents on the floor. Christmas will have a special meaning this year. I am looking forward to it. Although she is still too small to understand what it's all about, she will no doubt head for the tree to inspect it, because by then, I am sure that she will be crawling.

Last night I went to supper with one of my girlfriends. It was great to have some time for myself without baby. Hubby babysat and I think he felt a little bit better with it this time than he did before when she was two months old. It's only natural to feel apprehensive about something that you don't think you have enough info on. Well, being a mom feels like that too. I think that Hubby thinks that the woman has this info inbred into her and doesn't fear anything about caring for her baby. That's not the case. She has no option but to jump in head first into the caring thing. And yes, she has fear about this new episode in her life. I think she copes because she looks to the task at hand and

focuses on that and not the whys and hows of how she is doing, although she does question whether she is doing OK or not.

I am feeling a lot better lately with regard to depression. I have realised that this is what I have to do with my life at this point in time. And in future I will be in a position to talk and testify about the goodness of God in giving me this little wild and lively treasure.

14 October 2005

Today I received a postal advice slip in my mailbox. I was a little worried because I thought perhaps it was for a payment that may have slipped my mind in this muddle called momhood. I checked the slip and saw that it was an "insured parcel" slip, and not a "registered mail" slip, which meant that it was a parcel with value. Perhaps there was something exciting for me? I had entered some phone-in competitions in a baby magazine. We shall just have to wait and see.

15 October 2005

What a pleasant surprise! I received a rucksack filled to the brim with wonderful baby skincare products and I saw the parcel was insured for R500.00. Fantastic! The mommy-road can be somewhat daunting and sometimes one does feel alone. Receiving this parcel made me feel special and I could almost feel God smiling down as I gleefully unzipped the rucksack. I am sure that He was moved by my happiness because my happiness is important to Him. After all, we are made in His image and what matters to us in our lives matters in His life, and what makes us happy, makes Him happy. Thank You Lord, I do so appreciate the wonderful goodies that I can use on baby.

21 October 2005

My one cat walks past as I type this and I can say that both of them have been marvellous in accepting Chiara. Sandi especially is not accepting of anything that is not the size of an adult, and at the best of times, she doesn't accept an adult that she has not seen at least 20 times or more and that's no exaggeration. Mitchi on the other hand, is more extroverted and has no problem talking to strangers and making friends with them. Sandi rather takes to the bedroom and lies on the bed and waits for the visitors to leave. They have both been fantastic at accepting Chiara, perhaps because she has the family smell.

I was more worried about how they would feel and whether they would reject me, than I was about the actual birthing experience. But when we arrived home with baby in hand, Mitchi took a look and walked around the kitchen as if there was nothing different. Sandi didn't appreciate this strange, small noisy creature, and went into the spare room and spent the most part of three days (bar coming out to eat) under the bed. After that she emerged and from there on was accepting at her own pace. Now she lies on the bed together with Mitchi, and when I place Chiara on the bed, they both just spare her a second glance. When Chiara cries, Sandi will carry on lying there and Mitchi will get up, walk over to Chiara and sniff her as if to ask what the problem is. Then she jumps off the bed and leaves the room until the decibel level becomes more bearable.

So all in all, I am blessed and we have real family now, a child with our furry children. It's wonderful!

She has slept so much today. I hope that I don't have a problem tonight with sleeping. She slept three hours this morning and now has been sleeping for two hours. Yikes! That's not like her at all. Oh well. I can't wake her up because I'm worried how much she is going to or not going to sleep tonight. But perhaps it's because she fought her sleep last night and eventually fell asleep at 22.10 last night.

I have a little hand-written note stuck on my kitchen tiles: "Whatever happens, I can handle it." I stuck it up there when I was going through a dip into depression. I guess that's normal. But I got to the point where I almost was beside myself with worry about "When will she wake up?" "When she will go to bed?" "What am I going to do with her?" I am having a tough time. I am not sure quite how to describe it except to say that sometimes I feel that I am in over my head. I can't imagine how anyone could have more than one child, let alone four or five like the woman in the shop a few weeks back. Or like the man on TV with the NINE children. What was he thinking? Or perhaps he wasn't and that's the problem!

We think about Chiara's future. What will she be interested in? What hobbies will she like? What sport will she be good at? What will the future look like when she enters the working world? These are big questions, but I have only here and now and as God told me the other day when I was praying to Him about whether we are to have another child or not He said, "Love the one that you have." And so I shall. I will not think about whether she will have a sibling or not. Perhaps we are meant to have only her? Or perhaps we are meant to have another? Again, I don't know, but for here and now, we shall love the one we have.

She is an extremely demanding child and I sometimes struggle with the fact that most of the time she wants to be in my arms and that with me standing as she begins crying madly as soon as I sit down. There have been days where I have stood and watched two movies back to back, because there wasn't anything else I could do, and she cries unrelentingly if I put her in her play area. This has been extremely frustrating and tiring. I can't do anything. For instance, I can't prop her on the bed, while I repack my wardrobe. She will start crying and pull herself onto her tummy and cry even more. She doesn't want to sit still or play with her toys around her. Mommy's arms seem to be the place to be. Thank God that I don't have back problems and that I am by nature quite a strong woman physically.

She is at the beginning stages of crawling, so she pulls herself over onto her tummy and then after a few minutes, begins crying to be lifted onto her bum again, or cries further to be picked up. This is getting very tiring, as she now weighs around 9.3kg if not more. I just hope that when she does get crawling, she won't still insist on being picked up. Hopefully she will enjoy her newfound mobility and start investigating the house. I know that this will present other challenges, but I think it stills beats carrying this little weight around the house all the time.

I know that time will pass and before I know it, I will see a young little lady before my eyes. At least then I will not need to physically pick her up as much, although I suppose that there will be other ways that I will need to "pick her up". And in four months' time it will be her first birthday. I can't say that time flew, although everyone I meet says that it did. Not in my time warp, it didn't!

Let me finish today's entry on a positive note.

I am doing fine as a mother, even though sometimes I wonder.

Chiara loves me, so I must take care of her. It's only right.
Being overwhelmed is normal. Trust God to get me through the tough minutes!

31 October 2005

Today we are going to hit the malls again. Our favourite shopping centre has just opened the new renovations and extension and we are excited to go and check it out.

Chiara has realised that there's more to life than just lying on her back (not that she ever liked that part at all!) and sitting on her donut. She is now eight months, and has begun pulling herself onto her tummy and is crawling, or should I say sliding along at this stage and is quite happy about it. Because she is getting more mobile now, and inclined to get a little dirtier, I have changed her bathing time to night time, so that we can begin to install some night-time routines. I read again that a routine works best for babies. I know that I tried getting her into a routine early on, but that did not work. Now it seems that having more of a routine is agreeing with her.

She is sleeping a lot earlier than she has in the past, with the last two weeks seeing her go to bed between 20.00 and 21.00. This has been fantastic, as before she used to go to bed around 22.00 and even sometimes 23.00. I pray that this will be her pattern from hereon. That will be absolutely great! She sleeps through until around 06.00 / 06.30. I hope that the routine is the thing that has done the trick. Who knows? I guess someone would be able to tell me the reasoning, but hey, I'm happy that this seems to be the way it's going.

The coffee shop in the new extension at the mall did not appeal to me, so back we went to our old haunt. I was thirsty so ordered mango juice. No sooner had the waiter put the glass on the table, than Chiara wanted some immediately. I know that the mango juice from this coffee shop is pure, so I gave her some. She certainly enjoyed it and hardly gave me time to have sips in between giving her sips. She was so cute sipping from the glass, and when I took too long to give her more, she would put out her little hands, hold onto the glass and pull it towards her mouth. Precious moments, me and my little girl!

What's truly amazing is the fact that today she insisted on talking to, or rather being talked to, by the neighbours at the tables next to us. She has got into the habit of making a loud noise when Hubby or I are not paying attention to her. Today she did the same to total strangers. I told the man at the table next to us to please say hello to her, otherwise she would carry on and on, and they would not be able to eat in peace. She did the same to the woman at the table behind us. She waved at Chiara and Chiara smiled back at her. This is a far cry from the baby that I used to take out a few months back. It is almost unbelievable. She is a real handful, but she is adorable.

A man in one of the shops stopped his wife and pointed at Chiara sitting straight up in her pram and said, "Look at this beautiful baby." His little daughter also stopped to touch Chiara. I am glad she has jumped out of her shell and left it behind. That little brain is taking in all the sights and sounds and recording what she sees and hears. I do believe that she is enjoying what she is experiencing.

I have been battling the last few days. I can't blame PMS, as I have just finished that bit. I also have been having a few tough days with Chiara. I don't know if the next two teeth are scheduled to make an appearance, but if this is the case, I wish they would just erupt now and get it over with. Going out is also becoming more challenging, as I have

to carry her and push the pram at the same time. But it does beat sitting at home with her. At least going out, I am distracted by all the things that I can look at.

I am really having a problem with irritation. I am depressed about the weight that still hangs around, not that I have had the energy or conviction to get rid of it, because I don't have the money to buy the right foods, nor do I have the time to prepare or plan the right foods. I suppose that if I felt I had more control over my life, I would feel better about my life. I really feel as if I'm walking round a mountain and seeing all the same things again and again. I feel as if I am fighting the same things over and over again. I wish that I could get victory over these things and my feelings. I could try living in a cocoon, but then that would be ignoring these feelings, and lose the victory entirely over them. I should face them head on. And take one day at a time, and change one thing at a time. Perhaps then I will feel that I haven't lost myself. Perhaps this is what I am battling with. Everything that was me, is gone. I don't work any more. I don't have that. I don't have hobbies. I have no time. I keep trying to remind myself that it's for a season only and that when she is little older, that things will be better. When she can go to a morning playgroup and play with other children, I will be able to do things for myself again. BUT what do I do in the meantime? And what do I do to keep my sanity, which feels as if it is dissipating?

Focus on one thing and make better choices. I must rather make a cup of tea when I feel the need to eat something just for the sake of eating. Start with something small and progressively work on the tougher things.

10 November 2005

It official! We've got our crawling licence! Beware Mom! Here I go – to your pot plants, to your stereo, to your tablecloth, to your wires and plugs!!! And there goes mom after this energetic little bundle, who is so excited to realize that there is way more to life than the lying down of before. She's is definitely a lot happier now that she is mobile. Mom's arms get a rest but Mom's a lot more active now, saving the house from sudden destruction.

Something so cute happened today. She stood on the couch and pulled the blinds down. I explained to her that she could touch but not pull on them. She touched them gently and then bent her head to the side to give me the sweetest kiss just in case I was going to stop her from doing anything further. I thought it was coincidence until she continued and again tried to soften me with a kiss. My mother couldn't believe her eyes. We both started laughing. OK, not too loud in case Chiara realised that her charm had won.

I have had a few tough nights and it seems that the next teeth are going to make their appearance shortly. She has woken up at least two to three times and I have had to rock her back to sleep. She has had an extremely runny nose and a wet cough and is sneezing a lot. I went to the chemist and explained that this time the teething seemed to be through her chest, while the previous four teeth had affected her tummy more. He said that one must suppress the phlegm and runny nose and that I was to watch that she did not pick up an infection at this stage. He gave some cough mixture to dry up the cough and said I must continue treating her with the paracetamol and teething gel.

Tonight Chiara was standing on the couch again, and we played the same scene where she thought a kiss was going to let her get away with pulling the blinds. What a cute little

thing. She will eventually realise that there are things that she can do and things that she cannot do. Already she knows that Mom and Dad don't like her doing certain things. She is good mostly for an eight-month baby.

12 November 2005

Last night she woke up for a bottle at 23.30 and then slept through until 06.00 this morning. This was the first decent unbroken night's sleep in a while. She seems a lot better this morning. Shame, she had rubbed the night's nose runnings all over her face. I checked her teeth and the one tooth is white under the gum. A few more days and that should be through. I hope its counterpart on the other side of her mouth doesn't take too long to follow suit. Then she and we can get on with our lives again. She really has not been well with these two teeth.

I hope that she will soon be over the worst, because in just over a week I have to take her to have her measles injection and that is not a pleasant thing either. So young and so many ouches to have to contend with. But babies are resilient and bounce back. It's how God made them, small but tough. I think the moms take more strain with the immunisations because they know what lies ahead. I pray that she doesn't have any problems with the after-effects of the shot.

16 November 2005

For the past two days or so, Chiara has been battling with constipation. I used some advice that I had been given a few months ago by our pediatrician should the need arise. I put just over half a teaspoon of dark brown sugar in her first bottle this morning. When she woke from her morning nap, she had a soiled nappy which was a whole lot softer. Later this afternoon, she had another larger nappy. I think she is a whole lot happier now that her tummy has gone well again. I know how it feels when my tummy has not been regular. What simple but excellent advice for a change, other than all the advice a new mom tends to get.

Yesterday morning after her morning nap I found her standing holding onto her cot's railing.

"And what are you up to, my baby?"

She rattled the cot's rail and squealed with glee.

Her teeth still have not made their appearance, but are just under the gums. Last night she had a bottle at around 01.00. I have to resign myself to the fact that while she is teething and not eating solids, she will still feel hungry and also need some comfort, so will wake for a night feed. Hopefully when the teeth do make an entrance, she will again sleep through the night. She never has taken to a dummy / pacifier, so I cannot soothe her with that at all. She has not sneezed today at all, which is great, because the past few days had her sneezing continuously. The cough syrup seems to be doing the trick, as her nose is not as runny as it was a few days ago.

Today I feel a bit better where the "overwhelming" feeling is concerned. I suppose I am too hard on myself and still expect everything to be predictable and controllable. I didn't think of myself as a control freak, but perhaps these unpredictable times have shown me to be so.

I have tried to kick the fear habit. Fear of her waking up when she sleeps, fear of her crying, because her crying in the beginning really unnerved me to the extent I cringe

when she does cry. She has such a loud, intense cry. No half measures. I am trying to tell myself not to fear her crawling around and my having to jump up and catch her. Fear has been one of my greatest enemies, and with having a baby and its unpredictability; the fear has sometimes been unmanageable. I suppose it sounds silly, but this has been my reality. Some people seem to be such natural parents, while I at times, feel like a fish out of water, and have thoughts along the lines of “What was I thinking?” and “Perhaps I’m not cut out to be a mother.” I try to tell myself that somewhere in the world there are bound to be new moms who feel this out of place and out of their depth. I tell myself that they have made it, and I will make it too. I tell myself that things will get better as she gets bigger. But I pray that there is nothing else or nothing new that I will fear. I try and remember that “God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind.” Sound mind? Where did that one go to? (2 Timothy 1:7: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”)

And another: “Perfect love casts out all fear.” I know that God taught me a lot around this verse a good many years ago, and there is no better time than the present, to relearn all that I learnt then. (1 John 4:18: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”)

If I love Chiara perfectly, deeply, then I will not fear her waking up, or fear what she is going to do, and whether I will be able to cope, or have the answers I need. One cannot have love and fear operating at the same time. If I love more, I will push fear out of the way. On the other hand, if I fear, where is my capacity then to love? I would have no energy left to love. If I learn to love each moment with her, fear will have no place.

We went to the malls today and I bought her a few more babygrows. It’s best while she is crawling, that her little knees are covered.

Next week she will be nine months old and due for her measles injection. I will see how she is feeling with her teeth and perhaps delay the injection by a week. Hopefully then her teeth will be out and she will be feeling better and able to cope with the injection and aftereffects, which I hope are minimal, or better yet, none at all.

Now I am going to bed and hopefully, we will have an all-nighter, but I suppose I will have to be prepared to get up and give her a feed. Part and parcel of being a mommy. I salute them all today. It is not an easy task and I see mothers in a new light now.

30 November 2005

It has been a long time since I wrote anything and it has been quite hectic. She has been teething and teething and I can’t remember when last I had an all-night sleep. She wakes for a bottle, but afterwards thankfully turns her head to one side and then she settles to sleep again. But it would be great if she went back to her sleeping-through ritual.

Tonight she went to bed at 20.00 which is very early for her, so I am sure that she will want a bottle around 24.00. Do I go to bed or not? What I have noticed is that when she goes to sleep earlier she wakes up for a feed. If she goes to bed at 22.00 or later, she more likely will sleep through. Oh, well, what can I say? Goes with the territory.

Last week she had her measles immunisation at nine months and so far, praise God, has had no adverse reactions or irritations. She was busy chewing on her rattle and didn’t even notice that she got her injection, and I was so relieved when she didn’t cry.

She is getting cuter by the day and is enjoying getting around, although yesterday and today she wanted to be in the arms a lot, so would crawl to me and pull herself up on my pants and stand and moan for me to pick her up. She has learnt to “clap handies”. She now knows where her “stinky toes” are and getting to know where her fingers are. She knows the connection between the light and the light switch on the wall. She crawls into the bedroom and waits for me to switch on the light. She then starts “clapping handies” at this new pastime.

I have bought a few Christmas presents. Tomorrow will be 1st December and Christmas will be here soon. It's going to be wonderful to watch her reaction when she sees the Christmas tree. I know it's going to be a tremendous challenge keeping her away from it. I can't wait to see what she is going to do when she receives her Christmas gifts. For a change, MY baby is going to be getting presents, not only the other children in our family. What a wonderful thought. God is truly great. These are the things that have given our lives new meaning. Then God willing, we will be celebrating her 1st birthday. How our lives have changed since her arrival!

6 December 2005

Well, I give up! I have tried my utmost to get Chiara into some semblance of a routine, as “they” suggest, but to no avail. It's 21.20 and she's been sleeping since 17.00, so you tell me please, what is going on? She will most definitely wake up for a feed. Will she then fall asleep again? Please say yes and that she will sleep all the way through till tomorrow morning, and not 04.00 either. I don't know how people get their babies into a routine.

She is also still not keen on eating solids, unless I am standing eating something of mine, and then she will want some. But sit her down with a bib around her neck, and she begins protesting immediately, throwing her arms around and sending the food on the spoon in all directions. She has not acquired the taste for baby cereal either.

I bought a Christmas tree yesterday. It's the first time that I've bought a fake Christmas tree, for two reasons. One, I always get sad when we cut one down to be used for only a few days, and then I get sad when we throw it away. It could still be living in the wild. And two, I don't feel like running after Chiara to stop her from picking things off the tree at ground level, so I bought a tree that can stand on the table in the lounge. It's not the real thing, and it will take a while for me to get used to the funny tree standing on the table, but my conscience feels better having done so.

I have also started wrapping some Christmas presents – my favourite part of Christmas. The brightly coloured packages around the tree will make the tree look a lot prettier.

I read on the Internet that at this stage I can expect her to be more “clingy” than normal, which will explain why she has been hanging on to my legs for me to pick her up. I read that it's quite normal for babies to wake up during the night, because of “separation anxiety” that they experience at this stage. Yippee – that explains a lot! They say that the waking up at night is not due to a growth spurt, but a developmental spurt, so they suggest that you don't feed during the night. Right! Have they heard this one scream? Nope – didn't think so. She doesn't stop until she gets a bottle. So what then? I don't suppose everything can be explained away and I don't think that babies are text book babies. Yep, I guess the experts have learnt a lot of theory, but try thinking of

theory when in the pitch darkness, you woken by something short of a blood-curdling scream. I suppose one way of looking at the interrupted nights is, that there will be a tomorrow, and somewhere you might have the chance of catching up a little sleep. Right again! There's too much to do while the lady of the house gets her morning beauty nap; doing the washing, or her bottles, or washing floors, or tidying up a little so that you don't break your neck or leg stumbling over the obstacle course that has now become your house since the little bundle became mobile.

She now has six teeth, with the seventh one just under the gum at the top. Perhaps she will sleep better when this tooth is out and the "developmental spurt" settles. Tomorrow will come and there will perhaps be a chance to catch a shut eye. Umph, we'll have to see.

We bought a new car seat, as the snug and safe was getting too small for her. She settled into it immediately. The only thing is that when she falls asleep, I won't be able to take her out snug and safe and all, but will have to take her out of the car seat and this might wake her up.

It's now 22.05 and she's still asleep. I hesitate to go to bed, as it only means that I will have to get up later again, which somehow feels worse than staying up watching TV and then going to feed her when she wakes. I think that I will change and get ready for bed, but stay up a little longer. Perhaps she'll surprise me and sleep all the way through. When I went into her room to check on her, she was lying across her cot on her tummy. She might get a little uncomfortable and move around again. This I suppose is the developmental stage where it's important that they learn to fall asleep again on their own.

I spoke too soon. There I hear that unmistakable cry, soon to become a scream. Let me go and warm that feed that "they" tell me I should not give. I do want to sleep tonight.

7 December 2005

Sleeping beauty slept until 06.00 this morning. I am very surprised. I wouldn't mind if that was the sleep pattern as a norm.

As my little madam is growing by the day and the clothes studs are popping under the strain, I bought the cutest clothes for her in bigger sizes. Now I need to rearrange the drawers and sort out what doesn't fit any more and give it to a shelter or someone that I know who needs them. The clothes are still in good condition.

11 December 2005

Last night she fell asleep at 20.30, early in her books. She has had a cough that seems to be from an irritation in her throat. She had not slept well in her morning nap because of this, and she started coughing when she went to bed tonight.

Around 24.00 she was crying. It wasn't the usual bottle scream, but I made the bottle anyway, but she did not want it. I tried rubbing her and "shushing" her, but that did not work. Thanks text books / articles! This advice has not worked for me as I have tried it on numerous times. So I had to pick her up to settle her. She relaxed immediately in my arms and drifted back to sleep. I put her back in her cot and covered her with the soft, pink blankets. If it is as they say – separation anxiety, no "shushing" is going to do the trick. She wants to feel her mom against her little body. What is wrong with that anyway? When I was small and not well, what was more comforting that a mom's love?

Nothing! So why shouldn't I give her some comfort? She is only nine months. And yes, "they" say I am probably creating a problem, but didn't I ask for her for five years? Didn't I beg and plead with God and cry before Him day and night to give me this precious little bundle? Why now, must I do things that clearly are not going to work for her? "They" say that they grow up so fast, so forgive me when I want to go against what I have read, and hold and rock her gently to sleep again. I waited for her for so long; I will love her with all that I am.

I have been giving thought to whether we would have another baby or not. When I see other women with their tummies, I wish it was me having that wonderful experience again. Then I think, is it just to have the experience, or is it to have another baby? Perhaps both, because I would love Chiara to have a sibling. But there are financial issues to consider, so maybe it is on the cards, but just not now.

I have wrapped most of the Christmas gifts. It has been great being able to add, "With love from Hubby, Lynne and Chiara". Before, there were just two names, now there are three. There are still four presents that I need to buy. Then I will have to start thinking about what I will be making for the Christmas lunch. It will be a family affair with everyone getting together to have lunch and exchange gifts. Christmas is the occasion that we celebrate the most precious gift given to us, our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem.

19 December 2005

Two more days and Chiara will be 10 months old. In just a few days she will be experiencing her first Christmas and in two months' time she will be celebrating her 1st birthday. Praise the Lord! I can say that it has been a challenging time, but with her growing cuter by the day with her little gestures, smiles and kisses, it's truly been worth it.

Yes, I am still getting up at night and giving her a bottle. Two nights ago, we had a bad night with her crying and only falling asleep at 01.40. That was hectic! She has eaten a little more solids the past two days but that has not helped the feeding demand during the night. I read that the separation anxiety eases off around 15 to 18 months. If what we are experiencing is in fact this, then we should see a change for the better. If not, then I have no explanation, but can only hope and pray that it will get better. Wondrous, glorious sleep, where art thou?

We went to the Christmas Carol service yesterday. Although she cannot really understand at this stage, I believe it's still important to expose her to what Christmas is all about and when she is older, she will appreciate it more.

The car seat has been working well, and depending on her depth of sleep I have sometimes managed to take her out without waking her. The times where she has been dozing she has woken up.

The Christmas tree looks pretty. It stands on the lounge table with the brightly wrapped presents lying around it. The blinking lights make a colourful show. Chiara wasn't that taken with the lights when we switched them on. I think her mom is enjoying them a whole lot more. I guess we are all still kids at heart and this is the season when that shows.

It's 23.00 as I write this and I am getting sleepy so will go to bed. My saying "I hope she will sleep right through" has become a cliché and really a waste of brain energy. Let

me go to bed and enjoy the sleep that I have until I hear that cry again. My efforts to quiet her without a feed are in vain, so I eventually warm a bottle. Who knows how tonight will pan out?

21 December 2005

Sun Factor 40, yellow sunhat and cute little red, white and blue bikini means her first swim! Okay first splish splash in her little blow-up pool which was meant to be her Christmas present. Mom and Dad were too excited to wait until then, and today is too gorgeous a sunny summer's day to pass up. Her little legs couldn't kick fast enough for her and the summer air was filled with her little squeals of delight.

When I received the bikini from my niece at my stork party I knew that when it came time that she could fit into it, my heart would swell. Understatement! I thought it would pop for pride and absolute joy. Dad I could see was feeling the same. He could hardly wait for me to rub the sun block on her. I am not sure who was more excited. We will have to buy her something small that she can unwrap on Christmas Day.

23 December 2005

There are two more sleeps and then it is Christmas. It's going to be special to watch her rip open her presents and then play with the paper instead of the presents. Christmas has taken on a whole new meaning. Our sister-in-law dropped off presents for us, and for Chiara. She has received her first Christmas present. It's so exciting!

Today we went to the mall to have her picture taken with Father Christmas. He wasn't the most charming Santa we've seen, but we didn't have much choice, so I placed Chiara on his lap. She wasn't so happy with this red-suited, white bearded man, so she started crying. I had warned the photographer that she would cry, so she should take her picture between the cries. So she did. The photo tells the story.

Two days ago we had blinds fitted to Chiara's bedroom window as her curtains are not thick and the full moonlight and the next door neighbour's lights illumine her room too much. I thought that perhaps the darker room would settle her. The first night of the having the blinds she nearly made it through, and woke up at 04.00. Last night she woke up at 02.30 and 04.00. I did not give bottle feeds during the nights as I am trying to break that habit. Shushing her in her cot did not work so I had to pick her up and rock her to sleep again. I am hoping that she will realise she is not getting a bottle reward and then decide to revert to sleeping through again. Perhaps the darker room has been better in her not needing a bottle. Oh well, I don't know how these things work, so it's really try and do and hope. It seems that around 21.00 / 21.30 is the time that she wants to go to sleep. So now I am trying to stick to that time more or less.

She now wants to feed herself, so I give her her own spoon while I feed her. Today she had quite a bit of baby food, which I am so glad for. She cried a different cry even after having her bottle so I thought it could only be for some solid food. Then I made myself some noodles and sat on the kitchen floor with her and gave her a couple of noodles (one by one) to eat by herself. Then she ate some orange. Perhaps things are looking up in this area.

It's now 22.50 and I am getting sleepy so I am going to make the bottles and go to bed. I truly pray that tonight she sleeps through. Perhaps this is the start of good nights' sleeps?

27 December 2005

Christmas was great! It was the most amazing experience to, for the first time, be the one seeing her baby receiving Christmas presents. Chiara wasn't quite sure what to do with all the prettily wrapped gifts, but I showed her and she was soon ripping the paper with her little fingers. I put her on the couch and had the gifts placed around her. It was such a cute sight. She got into the mood and started smiling. She received the most wonderful gifts; teddies, a soft floppy dog, stacking rings, shape sorter and lots of other goodies. I managed to get some really nice photos that I can use for her "First Christmas" page in the scrapbook. I can't wait to get stuck into my newfound hobby.

Chiara was so good on Christmas day. I put her into the playpen and she happily played there with all her new Christmas toys. She also stood up quite a lot and looked at all the family activity around her with the lunchtime festivities. For her lunch I mashed some of the broccoli I had made, with carrots and potato. I made the broccoli with cream so it seemed that her taste buds enjoyed this as she ate the most she has ever eaten. I was so happy that she enjoyed it. Seems she knows the good things in life at an early age. I don't often, if ever, use cream in the food I make, so this was a rare occasion and one she cottoned onto.

She has learnt in her way to wave bye bye to people as they leave. It first started at Mom's house when Hubby had to leave to run an errand. He said bye bye and Chiara waved in her way as he left. I thought that is was perhaps just coincidence that she waved her hand at that time. But then Mom pretended she was going to leave and she waved again and mumbled something that sounded pretty close to "bye bye".

At home a day or so afterwards Hubby opened the door to leave and said bye. Chiara waved and muttered those words. On Christmas Day when the family started leaving my sister's house and saying their goodbyes, Chiara waved and mumbled her "bye bye". It's the cutest thing!

Feeding is still happening during the night. What can I say? I must resign myself to the fact that this will continue and not look for the day that it will stop or should I say "night" that it will stop. Some day in the future I will be pleasantly surprised by non-interrupted nights. We can hope, can't we?

When I get overwhelmed I tend to sometimes think that I need to do this on my own and I forget that the Jesus who stood by me while I was trying to conceive is the same Jesus who wants to walk this mother road with me. And boy, do I need Him on this journey. I almost think that He left my side when baby was born. Weird, I know, and so not-true. He does want to be with me and does want to give me encouragement, when I am feeling low and wondering if I am doing a good job or not. I must let Him look after me and I look after my baby girl.

Today she tried standing up from sitting in a crouched position. This is her first attempt to walk or possibly stand. Oh boy, then I will have my hands full. It certainly is quite a thing now that she is crawling but I know that her walking is going to be a challenge. My baby will then be a toddler. Time surely has passed by.

She has also learnt to "talk" on her toy cell phone. She holds it by her ear and looks down to the floor as if in deep conversation, and mutters a few little things. Sweet! She has also figured out how to blow her toy whistle. Her little eyes gleam with pride at her achievement.

She now has seven teeth, three at the bottom and four at the top, and the next top two are busy making their way and should be out before the end of the week. I hope that when they do break the gum they are not too painful and that these will be the only ones for a while. Perhaps she will settle in and sleep through. But if the night calls continue, so be it.

It's now 23.00 and I am going to bed and see what this night holds. Tomorrow Lord willing, I think we will hit the malls.

2006 arrives

1 January 2006

2005 came and went and was a tough and challenging year. I can't say that I am sad to see it go as it was one of the most different, sometimes difficult, but mostly good years I have had. I find New Year generally a difficult time as one contemplates the past year and the things that have happened and things that you failed at. Why is it always so much easier to remember the things that went wrong and the things that you messed up at? There was so much more good than bad. I must remember this. I know that 2006 will hold challenges again but just as I made it through 2005, I will make it through 2006.

People always ask, "What are your new year's resolutions?" I feel in my heart that I need to seek God's face again in a new, fresh way. Having a new baby in the house has made it difficult at times to seek God as I have in the past. So what are my new year's resolutions? To be a good mom, to seek God's Face, and to be more positive. I think that I should stop there as it already seems somewhat of a daunting list. I am grateful for the most precious gift that came out of 2005 in Chiara. She certainly tests my patience but I am so grateful that she is a healthy, beautiful little girl, with a personality all of her own. She is perfect in every way. What more could I ask for?

This year I need to look after myself too. I think that I have got lost a little or perhaps even a lot. I need to cherish and look out for myself and maybe even get a little more assertive. I need to somehow take time-outs for myself. The only thing is that I don't have much of a support group. So I don't quite know how I am going to do this.

Yes, I find New Years scary because you don't know what it holds. It seems like a long stretch lying ahead, and you can't see around the corner. That's where faith and trusting God comes into the picture. He has never let me down and has never left my side, so why would this new year be any different?

As I waited for the new year at 00.00 this morning I listened to the fireworks from people's houses. I listened to the cars' hooters and heard the shouts and cheers in the neighbourhood and I wondered what the year held for those people too.

I waited and prayed as I watched the digital time on my phone. At 23.58 I went down on my knees with items of my family lying before me on the couch. As 00.00 displayed I took the cracker and juice and had communion as I dedicated the year and prayed for God's guidance and protection for my family. I laid my hands on the family items and prayed that God would seal them and us together by His Power.

Lord be with us during this new year and show us how You want us to live 2006. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

My first vacation

3 January 2006

It's 14.20 as we hit the highway on the way to our holiday house at Bushman's River approximately 120km from Port Elizabeth. Chiara is getting sleepy and more than likely will fall asleep, which will be a good thing because I am not sure how she will handle such a long ride and her first at that. I look back at her making her cooing noises and see that her eyelids are getting heavy. The next time I look she is in dreamland. The ride is pleasant and the weather good so I settle back in my seat a little more relaxed that she is sleeping.

Around 15.20 she wakes from her nap land and is somewhat surprised that she is still in her car seat, although I suppose she is really oblivious to the length of time she slept. It will be another 20 minutes and we should be at our destination. I am not sure how she will sleep away in a strange place in a camp cot. It used to be her first sleeping space, so hopefully she has not forgotten it and will sleep soundly.

We turn off into Bushman's and the place is abuzz with holiday makers and vehicles with different car registrations. It's a beautiful place with trees lining the streets, and the flowers always seem to bloom bigger and more abundantly here. The rainfall seems different from in Port Elizabeth even though it's not that far away.

We enter our holiday house and Chiara is all eyes as she scans the new environs. I let her take in all the things at her leisure so that she is not overwhelmed and scared. She is totally in awe of this new place. She settles in quickly when I bring out her bag of toys and place them on the floor for her to play with. But she has other things on her mind as she sets off on all fours to explore this newfound playground.

Night comes and I can feel myself tensing, wondering what the night holds. But by 20.00 she is out like a light. Now I wonder if she will wake for a bottle. I sit and read my book, a little reluctant to go to bed in case I have to get up again to make a bottle. By 23.30 I go to bed knowing I now need to get some sleep. She does wake around 01.00 for a bottle and battles to settle down to sleep again. I made the mistake of sleeping in the same room with her. I suggested that Hubby sleep in another room because I knew that his snoring would wake her up as she is used to sleeping in her own room. I hardly slept because I didn't want to move around and she didn't settle down but rolled around on the noisy plastic mattress, restless and unable to sleep. I had to get out of bed and rock her to sleep a good number of times. She eventually fell asleep and I drifted in and out of dreamland, very aware of the little bundle lying close to me in her camp cot.

4 January 2006

The weather was a little overcast but still humid and sticky. Chiara woke up and was ready for the day. We decided that we would take a walk to the river and show her the water and let her feel the sea sand. I put on her cute little pink sunhat and off we set to the river. She got a lot of smiles from the people as we walked past. She was a cute sight. My heart swelled with pride.

We got to the river and I placed her onto the white sea sand. She wasn't quite sure what this was all about, and pulled her little legs up so that her feet wouldn't touch the sand. She did not like the feel of it. I suppose it's fully understandable. I know that as

she grows she will enjoy it. I took a few photos for the scrapbook and we decided to leave as she was getting tired. By the time we got to the first bend in the road she had fallen asleep in my arms. It was quite a way to walk back to the house with a sleeping baby in the arms but I was glad that she eventually had fallen asleep because she had been fighting the sleep for a long time.

It was an emotional walk up this hill, as the last time we had done so was the time I had had the first miscarriage. It was in the past, but was still in my memory and in my heart, and I felt sad for the loss. I held Chiara in my arms as I carried her up that hill and wondered how different the other little being would have been. It wasn't meant to be. Chiara was meant to be, so very real as I looked down at her peaceful little face with the pink hat pulled halfway to shield her from the sun.

"You are here my precious and I am so glad that you are." I tucked those thoughts safely into my heart and knew that I needed to live my life with the little life that I now carried in my arms. She was real and she was here.

When we got back to the house I placed her into the cot and she slept for about an hour and a half.

Night time approached and I decided to sleep in another room and let her have the room to herself. It was a good move as I got a good night's rest and she slept right through from the time she had fallen asleep which was around 21.00.

5 January 2006

Today we just relaxed at the house and didn't do much except read and watch TV.

Sleep time came and she was asleep at around 20.30. I again wondered how this night would pan out and decided to read my book and wait up to see what happened. Around 23.00 I went to bed as she had not woken up for a bottle and I knew that if she did later, I had better get some shuteye. A good decision because she woke for a bottle around 03.00 but I managed to settle her to sleep again. Yippee! I can go back to bed and sleep some more. She slept soundly until morning and woke around 07.00.

6 January 2006

Today we took a drive to Port Alfred which is 25km from Bushman's River. We drove around the sea front and looked at the holiday houses and chalets. Our grumbling tummies reminded us that it was lunchtime. We remembered a nice fish-and-chips shop from a previous visit. We bought some fish and chips and found pretty spot along the road and next to the river where we could eat our lunch. Thankfully Chiara had fallen asleep from the car ride and I could eat my lunch in peace.

After that we popped into the local mall and bought Chiara some more nappies as she only had a few left, and some bottled water for her bottles. She awoke from her sleepy wonderland. She was really so good and did not moan or cry although she did tell us in no uncertain terms that she was getting a little tired of just sitting in her car seat, so we headed back to our holiday house.

7 January 2006

It's 14.30 and we are heading back to Port Elizabeth. The time here has been a little difficult because of her unsettled sleeping and the emotional thoughts I had, but mostly enjoyable.

The motion of the car quickly puts our little princess into dreamland again. The car seems so much fuller than when we left home even though we had not taken any food with us from home to our holiday house. The rain begins to pelt on the windows and visibility at times is almost nil. I am so aware of the precious little bundle sleeping in the car seat. Driving in the car has become a whole different ball game. When it was just us, it was important to drive safely and be aware of other drivers, but since her arrival it has become imperative that one keeps a vigil at all times.

We arrive back at home and the process of unpacking begins. This is the worst part of going away, the unpacking and the dirty washing, and it's amazing how much clothing a little creature on all fours can dirty. I have a few days of washing lying ahead.

13 January 2006

Oh boy, I have had some difficult days again where I worry and am afraid again. I really wish that I didn't. But wishing isn't going to make it go away. I have to make a continual, concerted effort to do positive self-talk. I have made it so far with a demanding baby. What does it accomplish to worry? Absolutely nothing! When she wakes for a night-feed I need to keep telling myself, "There will be a tomorrow when I can sleep." How bad is it anyway if I have to wake up? In the future, somewhere beyond, there will come a time when she has grown to such a point that she won't wake at night, and then I will have my nights back again. I am so privileged that I don't have to get up and get her ready and then go to work. It means a lot to me that I am able to spend my days with her. There are so many moms who would so love to be able to do this.

Having had a baby has made me see God our Father in another light, especially when Chiara is up to something that she should not be doing. I can imagine what God must feel when we get up to things that we should not be doing. And what about when she is about to hurt herself or stretch out to a hot cup of coffee? I quickly react and pull her out of harm's way. She doesn't thank me for doing this. She is totally annoyed with me that I have spoiled her fun.

God has to do this with us sometimes when we are on a course to do ourselves harm. He pulls us away and we have a moan about what has not worked out for us. We are not able to see into the future and see that He has done what is best for us. We feel as if we have been done down. Our fun has been spoiled and we have not got our way. What a relief that we didn't!

There is a wonderful song with words that explain it so adequately:

"When we get what we don't deserve, it's a real good thing.

When we don't get what we deserve, it's a real good thing."

(Band: Newsboys. Album: Going Public, StarSong 1994)

That is so true, both ways. Thanks to God for always having our best interests at heart. We need to learn that He does things, or sometimes more appropriately, disallows things to take place in our lives for our own good.

Then there are the times that I experience absolute pleasure with Chiara. Oh that my God would feel pleasure when He looks at me. Please help me, Lord, to live my life in such a way that You will be pleased with me.

It's now 23.00 and I think I had better go and lay my head down and hit the snooze button.

15 January 2006

We went to church this morning, today being Sunday. Towards the end of the service our Pastor said that there were two ladies experiencing depression. I sat and thought about those words. Was I or was I not in some way depressed? Some days when I looked at Chiara I felt guilty for feeling down. I was supposed to be happy. I had received the most wonderful gift and answer to prayer but yet sometimes I did not feel that way. Many times I had said it was because I was feeling overwhelmed, because I was, but at times, I wondered if it wasn't perhaps more than that. I asked myself should I go up for prayer? Would I want to leave the service wondering if perhaps those words and invitation were especially for me? So I decided it would be better to go to the front for prayer even it wasn't me, because my being there would be an indication that I wanted some help from God, and there was absolutely nothing wrong with that. I didn't want to go home wondering if it was meant from God for me, and I missed out, so I got up and left Chiara in the seat with her dad.

Pastor said he wasn't going to ask anyone who went up for prayer what their needs were. It was between us and God. He began praying for me for hurt to be released and said that God wanted to tell me that I "would cope". I had mentioned nothing to him and it was indeed my first time in front for prayer, so he would have had no indication whatsoever of my reason for being there. I believe that was my answer for the "overwhelmed" feelings that I had experienced. It was so like God to allow Pastor to use those words, because I had wondered if I would cope, if I was a good mom, if I was going to make it? And those words were the answer to my overwhelmed feelings at times. He also prayed and said that I would be able to sleep. He said that 5 minutes would have me feeling refreshed. I have been battling to fall asleep and have been quite tired.

Looking back now, it does seem that God wanted to touch me specially this morning, and I am so glad that I did not leave the service without going forward for prayer. I would have felt exactly the same on leaving as I felt on entering the church, and God would have been sad and disappointed that He did not have the opportunity to meet with me. So one must always be sensitive and listen to what He has to say because more than likely He wants to bless His children. In fact, I know that it brings tremendous joy to His Spirit when He is afforded an opportunity to touch our spirits.

Thank You so much, Lord, for Your touch. You have never left me and will never forsake me.

It's now 22.40 as I write this and I still feel a whole lot more relaxed than I have been over past few days and even weeks. I do pray and will believe that this will stay with me for good. I "will cope". God has assured me of this.

I have happy things to meditate on, one being the planning of my baby's First Year Birthday Party next month. She is nearly 11 months old. I can't believe it, especially when I look at the birth photos that I am rearranging for my scrapbook. She has grown up so much. She will soon be called a "toddler" and the word "baby" will begin to slip into the background, although she will still be MY baby.

I have not yet decided on a theme for the birthday party but am leaning towards butterflies. They are colourful, pretty and free. Perhaps this would be fitting.

18 January 2006

I have had two sleep-through nights. The night of 16th January, she went to bed at around 20.00 and slept through until around 06.00. And last night, she fell asleep at 22.00 and I woke up to feed at around 06.30. Routine or what? And now? Now she has been sleeping since 17.30 and it's now 19.40. So what she is up to now, I just don't know. Will she sleep right through, or will she wake up shortly, only to go to bed at a very late hour? I have no idea. Sunday night she only fell asleep at 01.30, or I should say, Monday morning. It's been quite difficult to come to terms with the irregularity of how she does things. There is nothing I can do about it and nothing over which I have control. It's a case of handling what happens when it happens. I hope that she does not wake up at a strange dark hour and not want to go back to sleep. She has always fallen asleep again after waking for a feed, so hopefully she will fall asleep soon again. I definitely will have to give her a bottle as she did not have solids for dinner because she didn't get a chance to have dinner as she fell asleep at 17.30. She is a little mystery when it comes to sleeping and eating.

She stands in one spot for a few seconds at a time. She has ventured a step on her own but then flops down on her nappy-clad bottom. I think that very soon she will be walking and my little toddler will be walking by my side holding my hand.

The miracle of pregnancy and childbirth is quite remarkable. Also remarkable is the miracle of steady and constant growth that I see almost each day as she learns and attempts something new or discovers a new skill. That is a miracle and one for which I am most grateful. She is so perfect and I never want God to think that I am anything but grateful for her, especially on the days that seem to be so difficult. Lord, I am grateful. I know that at times it's is going to be difficult. It is an adjustment for me and for the household.

As I type this on my laptop on the bed, my one furry baby snuggles up close to me and rests her head on my leg, purring away. They have both been so wonderfully accepting of the new addition to the family. I love them even more for being so. They give me so much pleasure and when I am having a down day, they look at me with such love that it gives me that lift that I need to carry on. My world is so rich having them in it. My special little treasures.

My questions were all answered, as she woke up at 20.30. I wasn't sure if I should give her a bottle in her cot and try and get her to sleep further. I decided to take her out of her cot and give her a bottle, and just to make sure that she knew it was still night, I gave her a bath even though it was later than normal. I had to change her nappy and put warmer clothes on her anyway.

She crawled around after her bottle and bath, but got cranky again because she was still sleepy. She eventually gave in to the sleep fairy at around 22.00. I am going to go to bed as well. I just need to move the furry babies who are lying exactly where I need to lie.

Tomorrow, Lord willing, we will go out. Three days in a row in the house does get a little hair-raising, so we both need a little outside stimulation.

22 January 2006

Yesterday my baby girl was 11 months old. Wow! I don't have much time left to plan her birthday party. I had better get that theme sorted out and the invitations done.

We will have her birthday party the Saturday after her birthday. It's really immaterial to her when she has it as she doesn't even know what it's all about. But I have no doubt that not too far in the future, she will know exactly what birthday parties are all about.

We had people over for a braai last night, so she was quite enamored by the attention. I took her into her room to give her last feed for the night at around 21.30. By 22.15 she was still rolling around smiling at me albeit through extremely heavy eyelids. I then said to her it was bed time, switched the light off and shut the door. She made no sound at all. She was sleepy and decided that the bed was in fact the best place to be. I thought her falling asleep at such a late hour would see her through to morning light. Yea right! She woke at 02.00 for a bottle. 11 months and waking for a feed. Something is wrong with this picture!

Last week Mom and I saw the cutest duvet cover. It had fairies embroidered on it and was exactly the same shade of pink and lilac with which her room is painted. She won't be able to use it right now but when she is big enough to sleep on a bed, I will then have it handy. You don't always find the right colours when you want it. Mom insisted on buying it for her.

I had some difficult days last week, but praise God I am through. It's so easy to slip deeper and deeper into a ditch that you see no way out. Today I feel better partly because I went out on Friday and I have the promise of going out tomorrow, Lord willing. When one feels down, I have realised that you need to put back into your life the things that make you happy. Having a baby gets you so wrapped up in that, that you lose yourself and that's a dangerous thing to do.

So I got myself to do some thinking about what makes me happy and decided that I need to do projects, okay, not heavy ones, but small ones. I have a friend's baby boy turning one and I was thinking about buying him a plain T-shirt and designing something for it, printing it on the special paper I have, and ironing it on to the shirt. That will be enjoyable to do, and it will make me happy, AND it will take the attention off me and the down feelings that I might be having. Maybe I should even get my sewing machines out and design myself a top or dress, or even a quick pair of pants. Heaven knows, I have a cupboard of material itching to be stitched up. I would have to do some rearranging to get the sewing machine set up because Chiara's room used to be my sewing room before. Now I could perhaps take the back half of the office and set it up there, and on some nights, do a bit of sewing. These are the things that were part of me before baby was here. I need to bring them back so that I can get a bit of me back.

23 January 2006

Today she took about three steps on her own. She wants to walk but then drops to the floor realising that crawling is still the fastest mode of transport, besides Mom's arms of course. It is the cutest thing to see. I suppose I am going to say that of each milestone that she reaches. I asked her twice to walk towards me and she took two steps on her own to reach out and take my hands, and then she walked at least five more steps, smiling and laughing all the way. I think she is cottoning on that Mom thinks this is the best thing yet and it won't be long before she is showing off with her walking.

While I was out today, I went to a health shop to inquire about two products that I seen in advertisements. One was a tonic, and the other is St John's Wort, which is a herbal supplement that aids with depression.

Strangely enough, I tuned into a talk show on the TV tonight and lo and behold, they were discussing post-natal depression and baby blues. I know that I got over the baby blues that happen straight after baby is born, I just didn't count on feeling down 10 to 11 months after the event. All the symptoms and explanations applied to me. Thankfully I do not have as severe case as some moms have, but I can certainly recognise the symptoms of the illness, as they call it. It is something that is not discussed and often goes untreated. The lady psychiatrist said treatment should go on even a year after baby is born. I should have perhaps started treating myself a lot sooner but it only hit me these months down the track. I do feel better since I have started my vitamins. I had stopped taking them, just because it was the last thing on my mind. And that was the wrong thing to do.

We came home around 20.00 last night after having been to a braai and Chiara feel asleep in the car. I thought that after her extremely busy day she would perhaps sleep through. Nope, wishful thinking. She woke at 02.00 for a feed.

31 January 2006

I have been going around the "baby number two" mulberry bush again. Should I have another? Do I want another? Yes, I do, and No, I don't (especially with these ongoing midnight feeds!). There is no luxury of waiting too long as the clock it is a-ticking. But I am going to leave this subject for now and maybe revisit it later in the year or next year. It's not a subject for debate at this stage. I have my hands full at the moment and am still trying to cope and adjust. Baby number two would add a whole new dimension and I'm not sure that we would be able to cope right now. I know that I would definitely need to hire some help. Perhaps then the thought would not be so daunting. Who knows?

I have eventually decided on the theme of "Caterpillars" for Chiara's First Birthday party. I could not decide until I saw caterpillar balloons in the shops.

I tried on lovely shoes today in the shops but put them back on the shelves. I can't buy as I want to nowadays since I am not working and really have to think about things before I just willy-nilly buy them. In a way it's good. It does make me think twice whether I really need something, or just want it, and when I do buy, I appreciate it more.

Madam went to sleep at 19.00 this evening. I didn't even get a chance to bath her. She tends to go to sleep this early when she doesn't take an afternoon nap. Yesterday her afternoon nap was three hours long so she fought her sleep in the evening and eventually gave in at around 22.30. She thankfully did sleep right through the night. Wow! What a change! I woke up this morning at around 04.00 to realise that I was not beckoned during the wee hours of the morning. Tonight on the other hand I think I shall be hearing that all too familiar howl for a feed. She is not eating many solids again, because I think she is cutting molars. Her gums are terribly swollen and red and I almost think I see white through the gums. This never-ending teething thing! What a pain for all concerned, not to mention to that poor little mouth. She sat on the floor this evening munching a few peas that I put in a plate because she didn't want me to feed her. She had a couple and then decided it was more fun playing marbles with the little green things.

She is getting quite good at her wobbly walking. She is taking about seven steps on her own before she becomes unbalanced and flops down. It is too sweet. And what do you know? Last night she picked up her bottle standing on the floor and put it into her mouth. She has been a little lazy in that department but I made a huge fuss about how

clever she was, and that got her going. Tonight she did the same thing. My little baby is becoming quite independent.

Now I am going to work on her birthday card invitations. This is about the most creative I have had to be since her birth, so I am enjoying it.

1 February 2006

Wow, it's the 1st of February 2006 and my baby will be turning one this month. I had better get the invitations finalised as well as the party-pack ideas, and start thinking about how I am going to make a caterpillar cake.

Last night she went to sleep at 19.00 and only woke up around 06.30 this morning. Oh, that this would be the norm! Wouldn't that be awesome? I would be able to get so much done in the evenings.

I checked her mouth this morning and can quite easily see the white of the first two top molars shining through. Shame, poor little thing! And lo and behold, the fourth bottom tooth has eventually decided to join the three sitting pretty. I was wondering when it was going to make its appearance. Everything is truly a miracle, including the appearance of the teeth. It's wonderful to think that they are already formed in the womb, ready for use in the outside world. God is truly awesome, and we are "fearfully and wonderfully made". (Ps:139:14: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.")

You are truly awesome Lord, as are Your Words in the Bible. They are food and nourishment to my soul. I really should spend more time with the Word of God. Something I need to put on my priority list.

Now back to getting the invites done. I am a creative person and have missed all the creative things I used to do before she came, so I am enjoying doing something creative in getting her party underway.

Baby went to sleep at 20.20 because she was so tired after only having a one-hour nap this morning. She had a fair amount of pasta tonight. She enjoys feeding herself, and it's quite a battle to feed her with a spoon.

I really feel much better this time around with the monthlies. Not tearful or irritable as I normally do. I am sure that it has something to do with the tonic and the St. John's Wort that I have been taking. I still find my mind very active when I go to bed and get some shut-eye. I suppose in the back of my mind I wonder whether I will need to wake up later, so I stay in "alert" mode. I think I will go and watch some telly now to settle into "down" mode.

13 February 2006

I can't believe that the last time I wrote was the 1st February. I have hesitated to write anything further so that it doesn't vanish. What am I referring to? Well, it's almost been too good to be true. Chiara has slept through for the past nine nights. It has been bliss. The first few nights I slept with one ear open listening for that so familiar bottle cry. I have heard her cry, but it has been the cry in between sleep phases, and she settles quickly again. It has been unbelievable and liberating.

Also amazingly, for three nights this week I have put her in her cot when she becomes almost irritated being in my arms. She then turns onto her left side and snuggles into her pillow and every now and then looks at me and smiles her sweet angel smile. I rub her

cheek and kiss her little forehead and tell her I love her and then I head for the door. The question runs through my mind; will she cry out for me to come back to her? I turn around to look at her and stretch my arm to turn off the dimmer switch. She rolls onto her back and peers at me through the cot's rails.

"Sleep tight and sweet dreams. I love you," I tell her and blow her a kiss and then I click the light off and close the door. I walk down the passage wondering whether she is going to call me back, but she doesn't. She settles down and falls asleep. This has been so awesome and so amazing and in a way so special, because it is an indicator to me that she feels safe enough to fall asleep by herself in the dimly lit room. In a funny way it has really made me feel like a mother. My baby girl is happy to drift off to dreamland knowing that we are out there and will be there again in the morning to see her wake up. If this is the new chapter in our lives then perhaps all those numerous bottle feeds were, as they say, a developmental stage and not a growth stage. If this is the new case (please be so), then she has realised that we are not going away and she is content to stay in her own room on her own.

I couldn't have asked for a better birthday present. Yep, it's the big Four O for me tomorrow. I am not doing anything major for my birthday. Perhaps we will have a braai sometime in the next few weeks. But the most important thing for me now is my baby's First Birthday Party. She will be turning the Big One on 21st February. This time last year I was hoping that she wouldn't arrive on my birthday so that she could have a day all of her own. I got my wish. She has a day of her own and I would like to make it special. I know that she is too small to understand what is happening but I believe it's important to have a First Birthday and make it special and capture it on camera (and scrapbook) for her to see when she's older. It will be a nice storytime story I can relate and show her the photographs.

I have made the invitations and have begun giving them out. There won't be too many people there, only close family children as I don't want her to be overwhelmed.

Chiara is walking a lot better now and even more quickly than before. She is so cute, walking with her cloth that she has become so attached to. I read an article that at this time, they will have an attachment to a certain toy or item. Hers seems to be her cloth. Luckily I have more than one so that I can rotate and wash them.

Last week I put Chiara in her pram and we went for a walk in the neighbourhood. The weather was warm and it was a lovely day for a walk. I wondered if she would sit still for the walk. She did. She enjoyed the scenery and watched the street's dogs and the birds flying around. The distance we walked that day was 1.6 km. My feet are no longer used to closed shoes or walking shoes so I developed blisters on the backs of my heels. Nowadays my footwear consists of sandals or bare feet and no work shoes. Weird how even one's body echoes the changes that one has undergone.

A week after this walk we went for another, this time a little further, and I ensured that my walking shoes were tighter and could not move on my feet. The up-and-down chafing had caused the blisters and I certainly did not want a recurrence. The walk was wonderful and as the day was quite a bit hotter than the previous walk and further, I felt quite exhausted when I got home. I must do more of that in the future. It's good for the body and the mind.

Talking about minds, mine does feel a whole lot better than it did before. I am glad for the better state of mind. I have tried not to be too hard on myself. That has always

been my problem – the pressure that I place on myself. I need to keep telling myself that I am doing a good job and that I am a good mommy. My daughter is a happy little soul so I can't be doing too bad a job. She is always ready with a smile so that is an indication that she likes having me around. But there goes the mind again saying, "Well she doesn't know any other, does she? So how can she know any different than to love the one she has?" Then I have to tell that voice to shut up and tell myself that I am doing a good job and that I am a good mommy and keep repeating it as many times as I need to, to get it to stick. Yep, the mind is a silly thing. It's there that all the battles begin and all the battles are won.

(Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.") This is such an amazing verse. It shows that we have to keep our minds on Christ and He will keep us in perfect peace. If our minds are stayed on Him then there is no space or time to think on anything else. It is easier said than done sometimes, but something that we have to practise.

But for now, let me see what I can get cleaned up while the Princess sleeps because the demands will keep a-coming when she awakes.

17 February 2006

Two nights ago she woke for a night feed again. But since then she has slept through again for a few nights. It is truly great.

Tomorrow we are having a braai at our house which will mean lots of activity and noise so I doubt that she will want to go to bed. I am going to try and put her to bed around the time that she has got used to, that is, around half past eight, and hopefully she will sleep in spite of the activity.

Hubby and I went out on a "date" to celebrate my birthday. It was the first time we went out without Chiara and it felt strange. We chatted about our little wonderwork and how she had affected our lives and how much she meant to us. We also spoke about whether we would have another or not, as we had always said that we would have two, although since her birth, we were currently in the "one only" shock mode. Perhaps it is meant for us. We have decided to leave it for now and talk about it again in the future, but for here and now Chiara was our priority.

Now I am going to go to bed. I am tired. Tomorrow, Lord willing, is going to be a busy day as Chiara is going to a birthday party in the morning and then we have a braai later. I also need my beauty sleep as the people will be coming to wish a 40-year-young lady tomorrow.

20 February 2006

Well it's the eve before the little lady's birthday and it's 22.23 as I write this. This time last year I was breathing very heavily and taking in a little too much gas as I had decided on no pain killers. I was going to be brave and get this little lady into the world the natural way. Things did not go as I wanted and my desire to have natural birth was disappearing into the mist. But the main thing was that a beautiful healthy little baby girl was about to be born into the world. The means was not the most important. Getting her safely into the world was.

We have planned a day out. I still need to buy her a birthday present. I want to buy her a toy that she can grow with, something that she will enjoy playing with now and for a good while to come. I also want to buy my daughter a First Birthday card.

As her birthday falls on a Tuesday, I have arranged her birthday party for Saturday. I have invited her cousins to the party and one little friend who was born three days before she was. This past Saturday was quite hectic with the party in the morning and our braai in the evening. She fell asleep at 15.00 on the Sunday following and slept right through the night and woke up on Monday morning at 06.15. Can you believe it? That's 15 hours flat without waking up for a feed. Now I ask, why can't each night be a straight-througher? I must admit that I was a bit worried when I woke up the next morning and realised that the night had passed without that familiar "feed me" cry. I got up and checked on her just before 06.00 and saw the little bundle with her blonde, curly head at the bottom of the cot with her feet where her head should be. The day before had been extremely hot so I had removed her shirt and pants and had placed her in her cot with only her nappy, so the fact that she slept so soundly without being uncomfortable or cold was amazing.

The depression seems to have abated. Looking back now I think that I should have sought professional help, even if it was just someone to talk to. I know that the depression was because of the overwhelming task that I was faced with when this new little person entered my world. It's scary. It's all new and there's no manual and no classes to attend on raising a little one. The antenatal classes only deal with the labour and delivery. They hand you the baby and bid you goodbye, and you walk off with your new little treasure with starry eyes and dreams for the future. Then reality and sleepless nights set in and despair takes over. How you thought it was going to be, is not, and sadness and depression set in. It's fine if you can manage it on your own. But why should one try on your own? There were so many times that I stared at the post-partum depression help line, but feeling a fool and not really knowing what I would say to the person on the other end of the phone if I did phone, I turned away and walked off to face it on my own. It's not something that people talk about, because there is such a stigma attached. One is supposed to be happy with your new addition, thrilled out of your socks, but sleep deprivation is not something to be ignored or played with. It impedes all day-to-day basic activities. The small mundane task seems like the largest Everest to climb. One shouldn't have to climb on one's own.

"Things get better," they say, and they have for me. I can surely say that since she has started sleeping through at night I feel a whole lot better as well. She has started eating more solids even though there are days that she doesn't want any solids at all and sticks to her formula. I am told that at age one, they can begin drinking cow's milk instead, but I am a little hesitant, as she doesn't (in my opinion) seem to be eating regularly enough. Once she settles into a more set pattern of breakfast, lunch and supper solids, I will switch.

Time to charge my batteries and get some sleep. I need to charge the camera's batteries as well so that I can take photos of her special day.

The big ONE

25 February 2006 (22.00)

The party's over. Everyone has gone home. The sun has set. My baby has had her First Birthday Party and she had a wonderful fun time.

My little introvert is now a proclaimed extrovert and she loves all the attention and buzz. I am so glad that her fear of people has given way to an interest in all the different and interesting faces that she sees.

Her party was great fun. The party packs and colourful caterpillar balloons that were stuck to the wall really gave the party its party atmosphere. Each party pack held sweets, juice and a small surprise toy dependent on age. My fancy caterpillar cake turned out rather handsome with his pink, green and yellow stripes and set on green "grass" with the iced words "Happy Birthday Chiara" and the number "1".

I was glad that I made extra goodies for the adults, as there were some wonderful, surprise guests.

Then it was time for Chiara to open her presents. I placed her on the floor and put her gifts around her. She opened each one eagerly and beamed from ear to ear. She looked a pretty picture in her little peach checkered sundress given to her by my best friend.

Little children are so excited about life and we can learn so much from them. We wake up in the morning and it's just another day. To a little one it's an adventure waiting to happen. What lies around the next corner? What is going to happen today? What fun am I going to have? We adults need to become excited about life and have more fun. It takes time and it takes effort, but anything worthwhile does.

I have taken some photos as a reminder of how her first birthday party was spent. It is the first of many years, I pray of God. Years where I ask God to help me and guide me in what I need to do as mother, mommy and friend to my daughter. I am totally useless and helpless. I need the hand of God to hold my hand as I learn to hold my daughter's hand. I want her always to feel safe holding my hand no matter what age she may be. She'll hold my hand while she is small. When she is bigger, she might not want to hold my hand, and then I pray that I might just hold her heart and pray even more for her as she enters teenhood and eventually womanhood. I know that I cannot do this on my own. It is a task beyond my human thinking.

My little daughter is ONE and my heart is both happy and sad in a strange way. Each day is precious and I don't want to squander one moment more on silly questions of whether I am being a good mom or not. No more time for negative thoughts or negative behaviour. I am the adult. She is my daughter and that is the way it is.

I am blessed and honoured to have her in my life. May I never lose sight of the importance that has been placed into my hand. She is not only a little human that I am raising. She is the future generation of women and I want to know that I have raised a confident, kind, self-assured, happy and content woman, who again in turn will be able to bestow on this earth what is now bestowed on me.

This is an enormous task that has been given to me and only one year has passed. There lie, God willing, many years before us, and I want to know that I have given my all to this new career that I have – mommyhood.

The End.

If you have enjoyed this book, I'd love to hear from you. Please drop me an email to angelraysbooks@gmail.com and God bless you!

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