




Agony of a termination brought us back to God

Paula Cross: thought that fourth baby would complete family



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IT'S one of the most agonising decisions that any Christian couple could face.

Paula and Steve Cross had to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy when they discovered their fourth baby wouldn't survive until birth.

The baby had Edward's Syndrome, which meant it had an extra chromosome and wouldn't develop in the womb. The options were either a termination or a stillbirth, but the baby wouldn't survive, whatever happened.

"I was devastated," said the 42-year-old. "I already had three beautiful children and thought a fourth would complete our family, so I was delighted when I fell pregnant.

"But at 11 weeks, the doctor said that our baby was in heart failure already and had this syndrome.

"It was really difficult,

fine - Edward's Syndrome can't be detected until 11 weeks in - but she heard something.

"It was a voice from outside my head saying that there was something wrong," she said. "It felt like a stabbing in my heart, as I knew it was true.

"I didn't tell Steve because it felt so bizarre. But it set me on the path of wanting to check everything out, which is why I had this scan in London at 11 weeks."

Although their experience was agonising, it did drive them closer to God. Paula grew up in a South Wales mining town and went to chapel with her grandmother. But she drifted away from church at art college.

She met Steve, got married, and taught in adult education before they moved to Burringde. They had Gilbert, now 14, Emily, 12, and Rupert, 9, and it was Gil's baptism in 1991 that prompted Paula to try church again.

what she was looking for, and Steve wasn't involved either.

"I think I was just a 'pew-filler' there," she said. "I knew there was something more I was looking for, but I never quite found it.

"Although the termination was traumatic, I came to realise that there wasn't any right or wrong answer. Jesus just wants you to be in a relationship with him, and that experience actually cemented that relationship. Steve also realised how affected I had been by this and it started him thinking about God and the purpose of life."

After having a gap from church, the pair started going to St John's Church in Locks Heath, after being invited to see a musical there.

They went on an Alpha course, and it was during the session on 'How can I be sure of my faith?' that Paula felt God's forgiveness become a reality. It was the first time she'd felt she wanted to give her life to Jesus.

Now Steve is part of the leadership team at the church and Paula sings with the worship group and is involved with the church's prayer ministry team. Last year she also worked as communications officer for the church.

"Sometimes I can't believe that I spent so many years knowing about Christ in my mind, but not having a relationship with him," she said.

"But God often works in you when you are at your most vulnerable. Perhaps that was the only way with me, because I was hard at work being a mother, and that was where I had invested my emotions.

"The whole experience meant I was challenged to put my heart somewhere else. But I know that God loves me and one day I'll hold my baby in heaven."



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my faith

It was a traumatic decision for Paula Cross - whether to terminate the life of her unborn baby. But it actually brought her and her husband Steve closer to God.

because I didn't want to give birth to a dead baby. We even prayed that they were wrong and the baby had Down's Syndrome. But until you get into that situation, you don't know how you will react.

"I was devastated about having to make this decision. Even as they wheeled me into the theatre for the termination, I was still praying that God would show me the 'right' thing to do."

What made things slightly easier was that Paula had felt God telling her that something was wrong with the baby when she had a routine check at seven weeks. The doctor said she was

"Six weeks before his baptism, my mum had died and I was in South Wales organising the funeral," she said. "I had a chance meeting with my old Sunday School teacher and she said: 'You know who you can trust'. It got me thinking. I knew who Jesus was, but I'd never been baptised myself. I decided to get baptised with Gil."

They were baptised at St Barnabas, Swanwick, and Paula started to go to the mothers and toddlers' group at St John's, Hedge End.

She then went to that church for seven years, and sang in the choir. But she hadn't quite found