

## **A Journey Through Loss, Heartbreak, and Understanding**

**Pregnancy is supposed to be a time of joy and anticipation. But for me, it has been a journey marked by heartbreak, fear, and painful decisions—ones that no woman should have to make alone or uninformed. I have faced multiple pregnancy losses, each leaving a lasting impact on my heart and my life. I share my story not for sympathy, but for awareness—because these experiences are real, and they happen to women every day.**

### **The Loss of My Son Jason**

**My first loss began with the discovery of two gestational sacs during my first ultrasound. I was early in my pregnancy, and they immediately noticed I was bleeding. The doctors urged me to follow up, but it was too early to determine where the bleeding was coming from. A week later, when I finally saw another doctor, the ultrasound revealed no heartbeats. One of the two sacs had stopped developing, most likely what they had initially seen during the first ultrasound with the bleeding.**

**Despite the heartbreak, I still carried one baby. But I was terrified—pregnant, with four young children already at home. As morning sickness faded, excitement returned, and we eagerly anticipated the gender ultrasound. But that excitement quickly turned into a nightmare.**

**During the scan, the technician abruptly left the room, rushing to get the doctor. If you've ever been in that position, you know—techs don't do that unless something is seriously wrong. The doctor soon confirmed our fears: our son, Jason, had bilateral cleft lip and palate. It felt like a cruel twist of fate—my husband at the time had been born with a unilateral cleft lip and palate and had suffered tremendously growing up. But that wasn't the worst part.**

**The doctor was concerned about Jason's umbilical cord and sent us to a specialist. We waited anxiously for an entire month before we could be seen. When we finally met the specialist, he performed the ultrasound, then simply turned to me and said, "I'm sorry," before walking out. I was left in shock. What was he sorry for? What was wrong?**

**Another doctor came in to explain that Jason's umbilical cord was deformed and unusual. But instead of giving me the full picture, they sent me home. No explanation of what this truly meant for my baby. No real understanding of what was coming.**

**At 28 weeks, past the point of survival, my son Jason died—and almost took me with him. My blood pressure skyrocketed to 210/110, and I began to hallucinate terrifying**

things in my hospital room. My three-year-old daughter witnessed things no child should ever have to see as medical staff rushed to save me.

I suffered an unbearable loss—this was my first and only confirmed son. The pain was unimaginable. And as I grieved, a doctor had the audacity to tell me that Jason’s death was my fault for not coming in regularly for blood pressure checks. That was a lie—I was already classified as high risk and had been coming in for weekly appointments.

I now believe the specialist knew Jason would not survive with the condition of his umbilical cord, but I was never given the option to terminate at 16 weeks. I wasn’t fully informed about how bad it was. In North Dakota, after 20 weeks, we are required by law to name and have a funeral for a stillborn child. At the time, we were living on one income and struggling financially. The state helped cover the plot, headstone, and funeral costs, for which I was grateful.

But if I had to live through that all over again, I would have chosen to abort earlier—not because I didn’t love Jason, but because I deserved to know the full truth about his condition. I should have had the right to make an informed choice before risking my life and traumatizing my young children, who nearly watched their mother die before their eyes.

### **My Ectopic Pregnancy: Another Heartbreaking Loss**

Years later, I found myself facing another devastating situation. I was pregnant again, but this time, it was a tubal pregnancy—one that was not viable. Medical science has no way to move a developing embryo from the fallopian tube into the uterus. That option simply does not exist.

The reality of my situation was clear: this pregnancy could not continue, and if left untreated, it would rupture my tube and cause life-threatening internal bleeding. My options were devastating but unavoidable. I had to choose between removing the pregnancy or losing my fallopian tube, which would impact my future fertility.

Once again, I was forced to make a decision to save my own life while grieving a pregnancy that had no chance of survival. And yet, some people still fail to understand these situations. They assume that there are alternatives when, in reality, there are none.

### **Why I Share My Story**

These experiences changed me forever. They opened my eyes to how little autonomy women have over their own medical decisions—how often we are misled, misinformed, or outright ignored when it comes to our own bodies.

**No one should have to fight for access to life-saving medical care when faced with a non-viable pregnancy. No one should have to go through what I did—losing a child, almost losing my life, and not being given the full truth about my own pregnancy.**

**I share my testimony not for sympathy, but to shed light on the reality of pregnancy complications. To help others understand what really happens in situations like mine. Women deserve the right to make informed choices about their health, without judgment, without shame, and without misinformation standing in their way.**

**These losses have shaped who I am, and though the pain never fully goes away, I hope my story helps others feel less alone in their struggles.**