

Title: Immanuel Approach Labor Story (Jen Coursey)

January 25, 2020

Greetings all,

Just a quick note to share a fun Immanuel story from a friend and colleague Jen Coursey. Also, you can find more thoughts, stories, and insights from Jen at <https://thrivetoday.org/blog/>

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

Jen Coursey Immanuel Approach Labor & Delivery Story:

When Chris and I found out I was pregnant with our first child, I was excited. For a number of years, I eagerly anticipated the joys of pregnancy and having a baby! At the same time, I was terrified of the childbirth process.

I often call myself a *recovering control freak*. Certain seasons of life show me just how much more “recovery” I have ahead. Pregnancy was one of those seasons. In reality, we are never in control of our lives, but there are few places where the lack of control is so apparent as with pregnancy and childbirth. My biggest fear was this: *Once labor pains begin, there is only one ultimate outcome; baby is coming out one way or another.* At this point I cannot change my mind. I cannot say, “Never mind! I can’t handle this. Let’s stop!” as I would if I started jogging and quickly realized I did not have the stamina to finish my run.

Knowing that I lost all peace whenever I thought of labor, I spent the months leading up to our son’s arrival talking to Jesus and seeking His peace. Jesus was faithful to meet me in my fears with the reassurance that no matter what happened, He would be with me, and whatever came up, we could handle it together.

On March 16th at 8:45pm, my contractions began. My excitement grew, as did the frequency of the contractions. From my birthing classes, I knew it might be a while, so I tried to sleep. No matter how much I tried, I couldn’t. The contractions continued throughout the night, the next day and the next night, growing in frequency, length and intensity. As the contractions became more challenging, I called out to Jesus. I expressed that I was scared and I was not sure I could do this. Jesus met me in each contraction. He was my labor coach. With each contraction, I felt Him say, “We’ve got this. Just breathe with Me.” It felt as if He was right in front of me, breathing with me.

After 43 hours of labor, things quickly became more intense. The exhaustion from being awake for 3 days, along with the intensity and length of the contractions combined with the unknown of how much longer this would last, created a perfect storm.

I told Jesus that I could not handle anymore. At this point, my doula (*who was there to help support me in my desire for a medication-free labor and delivery*) suggested I get an epidural at the same time the doctor told me we needed to start Pitocin (synthetic version of oxytocin) to accelerate the labor. I told Jesus I wasn't sure what to do with these options, then I felt Him assure me, "We've got this" and "Listen to your team." So, I agreed to both.

As soon as I received the epidural, I instantly fell asleep. I slept for an hour or so, and when I woke up, my doctor said it was time to push. On March 18th at 7:45pm, after 2 hours of pushing, I held our precious baby boy and I felt that everything in the world was wonderful. I turned to Chris and said, "I want another one!" (In the moment, Chris was not so sure about this plan, but you can read his experience and return to joy story in the book, *Joy Starts Here.*)

There are a number of things I feel thankful for as I reflect on my labor and delivery with my son, Matthew. First and foremost, I felt closer to Jesus during those 47 hours than I have before or since (aside from my labor with my second son, Andrew). Immanuel felt so close that I was sure I could have touched Him. I felt that with Him by my side, we could handle anything together.

Another detail I feel thankful for is how Jesus worked everything out. From the timing of the epidural, which resulted in the rest I needed to have the stamina to push, to the doctor's care in recognizing when I needed some help. It was one of the few times in my life that I felt so assured of God's good care for me and His ability to control many moving parts of a frightening situation. Oddly, I was relieved to know I that I had no control in this ordeal, and only God could do this!

Most of you reading this probably are not pregnant, but this is still for you. Is there an area in your life where you feel out of control and unsettled, either past or present? Perhaps when you think of your labor and delivery experience with your children, you feel a lack of peace or you are unsure where Jesus was in the midst of that difficult experience. Maybe a loved one has a serious health issue, and you are feeling scared about the future.

Regardless of what may be stealing your peace, Immanuel is happy to meet you there with the *peace that passes understanding*. I also like to call it the peace that doesn't require understanding or peace in spite of the circumstances.