

I have been a mum for 11 years – 11 joyful and 11 exhausting years; 11 beautiful and 11 challenging years! For 10 years solid I have changed nappies! Maddy was 6 when our 4th child, Rebecca was born. Sammy, our 3rd, wasn't even walking yet.

We moved to Speldhurst in 2008 with our 1st born Madeleine. I remember meeting a neighbour who had just given birth to her 4th child and I thought she was mad – one child had rocked my world and changed the meaning of life so dramatically, what would 4 do to you?

And before long I fell pregnant with Penelope. She was just a baby when we were given notice to leave our rental home. We were desperate to stay in the village and I prayed long and hard that we'd find the right home – and we did, right next do to Douglas and Mary!

Shortly after moving into our new abode a friend said to me "You know what they say, new home, new baby!" I simply laughed but sure enough, a few weeks later we discovered we were expecting again.

Let me just say here, I absolutely hated being pregnant. I felt ill and poisoned, certainly not blooming! I was medicated for vomiting and found it extremely challenging as I was very anaemic too, all the while my own family across the world from me.

But...my heart skipped a joyous beat when we discovered Rebecca was on the way! We found out this news in South Africa and I remember my dad couldn't believe it and thought we were joking. "Gosh you kids are irresponsible" he said to Matt and me and then later he gave me this verse which I hold very close:

Deuteronomy 31:6

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid and do not panic. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you."

And in his own words he wrote to me saying: "You are not alone. God promised to stick close to you. Even better, He says He will go before you so you know that whatever happens He knew about Rebecca first. No worries then!"

This decade of my life has been the most incredible rollercoaster ride. But I know God has been with me every step of the way. Through the darkness of postnatal depression, the trauma for Penny's car accident and subsequent seizure and epilepsy, my sister-in-law having a very rare breast cancer, my brother-in-law suffering a terrible head injury, financial worry when Matt's business folded and then most recently, the heartache following the sudden death of my Dad.

My children are my life and my purpose – my gifts from God! I remember so clearly before Penny was born, the anguish I felt about how I could love another child when my heart was so full of love for our 1st born. But my heart has only just grown bigger!

And so to end, a little story to share with you. A few weeks ago I celebrated my 40th birthday. The best memory of the day was when Penny said:

"Dad, I have a great idea! You know mum loves her children so much, why don't we give her another one for her birthday?"