



"How do I help someone...

... (my wife) while she is giving birth?"

Beforehand

Preparing for the birth of a baby is a very rewarding time, if your wife is well. It is very helpful for both of you to be involved in preparation - birthing classes, much walking together - a general togetherness as the day approaches. If it is your first baby, there are probably no other distractions as you prepare. As the husband, you can attend the classes together - become involved in the breathing exercises, counting and, in general, learn about the bits and pieces associated with the approaching 'event'. If it is your second, or subsequent baby, you can be involved in taking the load off your wife by helping more with the daily chores and looking after the other child or children.

Remember that as the birth approaches, your wife will have difficulty with equilibrium and walking, so the more you are able to help in tasks that she finds difficult will be very useful. This applies to a number of activities but especially to longer distance walking and lifting, especially of children and general daily chores. It is wise to remember, however, that if your wife is well, she will still be able to do many things and will want to do them.

As the day approaches, it is useful to be prepared with a bag of clothes for your wife, and ensuring that the car has sufficient fuel! You should be well prepared for the events that lead to imminent birth. Your wife certainly will be.

The birth

So the time has arrived for you to go to the birthing centre. How this pans out will depend on a number of circumstances. I recall that in the birth of our daughter, I took my wife to the hospital where I was greeted by the Head Nurse (with a capital "H") who took the bag of clothes turned

me around and said, "Thanks, Mr X, you can go home now and we'll let you know when the baby is born!" Four years later and in another State, I was roundly welcomed at the hospital and encouraged to stay with my wife right through the whole experience - which was a few hours from admission to birth. I even recall eating my wife's breakfast because, understandably, she did not feel like eating.

Exhilarating!

What an experience the birth was! The birthing suite was alive with activity and (mostly) happy noise - chatter and laughter. My wife, understandably, was not able to participate in the happiness initially. When the birth took place, there was a round of applause from the team. The doctor was also excited. He did what he had to do very quickly with the baby, wrapped it, thrust it (him) in my arms and said, "Here you look after this while I look after your wife!" This has always been a slightly sad memory for my wife - she did all the hard work and I got to hold and cuddle the baby first! However, this was probably a good reason why my son and I have had such a wonderful bond. It has led to marvellous experiences over the years.

During the birth itself I was probably side-lined somewhat. I had to make sure I was not in the way, but, I was able to help with the counting and breathing up until the doctor arrived and the serious end of the experience was reached. (I'm sure the pre-natal classes about breathing and counting are designed more for the husband than the mother-to-be!)

God's gift!

The birth of a child is a most amazing experience. I am in awe of what my wife went through and the way in which God guided us to have two wonderful children. Certainly, from my perspective, the experience I had with the second birth helped me understand the amazing experience my wife went through and helped in the strengthening of the bond between us and our children. I should mention that in no way did my non-attendance at my daughter's birth detract from the immense bond we now share.

Birth is one of God's magnificent creative experiences. I will never be convinced otherwise.

