

Olympic Gymnast Mary Lou Retton's Daughter Shares How God Answered Prayers Through Difficult Birth

The arrival of a child is often filled with joy, anticipation and carefully made plans. For McKenna Kelley, daughter of Olympic gymnastics legend Mary Lou Retton, the journey into motherhood became a reminder that God's plans are greater than our own.

Kelley recently announced the birth of her first child, Jones Harper Doughty, whom she welcomed with her husband, Braden Doughty.

"Jones Harper Doughty □ 8lbs 10z, 21 inches 5/12/26," Kelley and her husband shared in a joint Instagram post.

The couple revealed that the birth came after a day and a half of labor that ended in a cesarean section. Yet through the unexpected challenges, Kelley pointed to God's faithfulness.

"A full day & a half of labor that ended in a c-section and yet the Lord met us every step of the way," the couple wrote. "The birth we didn't plan for became everything we could've asked for. The hardest 36 hours of my life led us to our sweet girl."



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In a follow-up post, Kelley reflected on how her Christian faith carried her through a delivery that unfolded differently than expected.

“‘The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.’ Proverbs 16:9,” she wrote.

Kelley explained that she and her husband prayed intentionally throughout the pregnancy and prepared extensively for an unmedicated birth.

“From the day we got two pink lines we prayed so intentionally for the birth we desired,” she wrote. “I did all the prep, the courses for an unmedicated labor and delivery.”

After more than 24 hours of labor and numerous medical interventions, those plans changed.

“On paper, not a single thing we specifically prayed for happened,” Kelley wrote. “But spiritually? The Lord met us through every contraction, every intervention and answered our prayers in a way that my ‘perfect birth’ couldn’t have.”

The new mother said the experience taught her that God’s faithfulness is not dependent on circumstances unfolding exactly as hoped.

“It’s a funny thing to think that though we are parents now, we don’t stop being children of God,” Kelley wrote. “Braden, myself and Jones are all children of God.”

She said God used the experience to prepare their family for the season ahead.

“I believe with every ounce of myself that our birth experience was designed for us to be the best parents for Jones,” Kelley wrote.

Kelley also shared a story from her pregnancy that she sees as evidence of God’s hand at work long before her daughter was born.

While searching through old notes on her phone, she discovered a message she had written years earlier to a future daughter

she hoped to have someday.

“As I reread it, my heart stopped when I noticed the date: May 4, 2025. Our due date? May 4, 2026,” Kelley wrote.

The discovery reinforced her belief that God had been working behind the scenes long before she became a mother.

“The Lord was so intentional before we were even pregnant,” she wrote. “He is a God who works in the whispers and in the details, and He knew Jones would be ours all along.”

For Kelley, the birth of her daughter became more than a family milestone. It became a testimony that God’s presence remains constant when life takes an unexpected turn and that His plans can be trusted every step of the way.

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