

Beyond the Heartache of Infertility

“So, when are you going to have kids?” That question is invasive enough when babies are part of your plan. But what if you’ve just found out you’re unable to have children or experienced yet another miscarriage? How are you supposed to deal with the awkward conversations about kids that inevitably come up? Facing infertility can cause a woman to wonder about her identity. Looking around at other families with children you might ask, “What’s wrong with us—why can’t we have what they have?” You can feel like your marriage is missing something, or you may blame yourself for making decisions along the way that have hurt your chances to conceive. Maybe you’ve already considered or started some kind of infertility treatment and you’re worried about the cost or risks that you’ll face.

In addition to the heartaches of genetic infertility, more and more couples are finding that time spent finishing degrees, launching careers and establishing marriages have pushed them beyond the ideal window of fertility. Whatever feelings you may be experiencing, you need to remind yourself of several important truths.

REMINDER #1: It’s okay to grieve

Hoping to offer comfort, some may downplay infertility and even point to the things you can enjoy as a couple without kids. If you already have at least one child, some people may not understand why you would be so sad about secondary infertility, ending your hopes for more children. Whatever your circumstances, it’s common to experience a great sense of loss in finding out you can’t have a child. Infertility is a tragic reality of our fallen world, one that rightly causes grief. Jesus told his followers that those who mourn are blessed and will be comforted (Matthew 5:4).

A husband may not entirely understand what a wife facing infertility is going through, especially as her emotions are affected by changing hormones. This can be a vulnerable time for any couple. It’s important to share your thoughts and feelings openly, not stuffing them or letting your grief get lost in distractions and busyness.

REMINDER #2: It’s okay to hope

Because of God’s goodness, you are never without hope. Psalm 113:9 says, “He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.” You can’t know exactly how God will choose to work in your life, but you can know He is able. He can restore fertility when it seems impossible. Or He may help you grieve your inability to have biological children and then cultivate in you a desire to adopt and love a child in desperate need of a Christian home. Your ability to hope in God begins by releasing everything to Him in prayer. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

REMINDER #3: It’s essential to be in community

It’s tempting to avoid talking about infertility and all the accompanying struggles. Couples may want to pull away from other families, unsure of what they’ll think or say. As awkward as it may be, however, you still need Christian community - a safe place where you can “share your burdens with one another” (Galatians 6:2). It’s in community that you also can find encouragement from others who have been where you are. That’s the context of 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of compassion and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”

GOING FURTHER - Resources

Recommended Books:

The Infertility Companion: Hope and Help for Couples Facing Infertility (by Sandra Glahn and William Cutrer) offers encouragement, medical advice, and biblical guidance for making God-honoring decisions.

Hannah's Prayer (by Jennifer Saake) offers help to those facing infertility, dealing with the loss of a child, or working through the adoption process.

(Available from the Grace@Home Center, or church library checkout)

Pastoral insights from Kurt Bruner, edited by Grace Place Pastoral Staff

Facing Infertility