

The Missing Peace: Coping with Infertility

Devotional Guide



Day 1: What Is Infertility?

Every time I went to Dr. Daniell's office, I was given pamphlets about infertility for my reading enjoyment. Since evenings were quiet, reading up on these things was easy. No pitter patter of little feet, no "night, night, Mommy," no "She hit me first!" no bath, bottle, bed – only quiet times, empty bedrooms waiting for occasional guests and lonely dreams. Such terms as fallopian tube, ovarian production, ovulation, luteal phase and endometrium became household terms.

Infertility took on such an empty, lonely meaning as I spent my evenings reading those pamphlets. I had to admit that I never thought my husband Tom and I would be an infertile couple. God loved me too much to say no to such an innocent desire. He had watched me play with my favorite life-size baby doll named Lisa. He heard my prayers as I rocked those babies while their parents worked. And He provided that star I hung my wishes on night after night when I rode my bicycle home after caring for the neighbor's children.

But after a few months of experiencing "no" for an answer, I began to feel every bit infertile—barren and abandoned. So I prayed:

Father, when I come to You, often the realization that You are totally in control of everything is hard to grasp. There is deep inside me the sincere longing to give birth to a child—to be pregnant with Tom's baby and to be allowed the honored role of mother. Do you hear me? Do you understand my longing? Was it not You who made me as I am?

You know I have spent hours rocking other people's children praying for the day that our baby would fill my arms. Father, I know You hear me; Your Word promises me that. I also know You know me better than I know myself because You created me. And I know You are aware of my heart's desire. You create life. It is a mystery. Please create life in us!

It's Your Turn

- Read Psalm 123.
- Ask God to be gracious to you in your longing.
- Tell Him how you feel right now. Do not try to make your words sound "holy" or "righteous." Just tell God exactly how you feel.
- Write your own psalm, pleading for the mercy of God. Use Psalm 123 as a guide.

Day 2: Mother's Day

The church was comfortably full this particular Sunday morning. As the pastor's wife of a congregation that had grown from about eight people to well over 100, my eyes were trained to notice whether the church was comfortably full or uncomfortably empty. In fact, more women were there than normal. Some of the teenagers were sitting with their parents, and some of the older women were wearing corsages. To the untrained eye these small details might go unnoticed, but to the experienced minister's wife, these details indicated that today was Mother's Day.

Mother's Day had always been a special holiday in my life. Sometimes my Dad placed corsages beside each breakfast plate. My sisters and I wore them with pride as we filed into church. When we grew older, we spent hours thinking of special ways to thank our mother for her devotion to us. We loved surprising her with gifts.

On this Mother's Day, however, my mother was several hundred miles away in another state, and I tried to listen to Tom's sermon—a tribute to godly mothers. But my mind wandered into my own motherhood dilemma: What was my temperature this morning? Did I ovulate this month? Will we be pregnant? Is there a tiny baby beginning to develop even now?

Suddenly I was brought back to reality as the congregation was recognizing the youngest mother present. *She's only 20!* I thought to myself. *What's so great about having three children at 20?! Her husband doesn't even come to church. Why would God bless her with children when her husband doesn't even know Him?! Why? Why?*

I choked back those familiar tears and pretended to look frantically for Scripture. How can the infertile woman face such a holiday?

It's Your Turn

- Read 1 Samuel 1: 1-20.
- Can you imagine Hannah's pain as she dealt with infertility, on top of the situation with her husband and the other wife? Thank God your husband does not have another wife to provoke you!
- Read verse 11 carefully. Are you willing to pray this prayer for your unborn child? If so, print it and make it a constant prayer as you seek God's answer to your longing.

Day 3: Praising God in the Pain

My niece was born in November. She was beautiful, and her parents were rightfully proud. We visited her in the hospital, and on the way down the hall we walked past the nursery. I saw the miracle over and over again: Martin, boy, 7 lbs. 3oz., Wilson, girl, 6 lbs., Hernandez, boy, 8 lbs. 13 oz., Sanders, boy, 7 lbs. 9 oz. The cards were pink and blue and the babies were squirming, sleeping and crying in their plastic buckets.

New mothers were strolling by, and new fathers were taking pictures. I heard these comments, “Just look at that hair! Have you ever seen so much hair? I just knew he was going to be a whopper, what a big baby! All those curls, isn’t she sweet?”

Surrounded by all that joy, my heart welled up and my eyes burned with tears. Excited parents and grandparents, video cameras, new life, dreams come true. The questions in my mind and heart wouldn't die: *Why me? Why me? Why NOT me?*

So many thoughts and so many feelings jumped to my mind: answered prayers, unanswered prayers, waiting, watching, hoping, pleading, believing, doubting, anxiety, patience, helplessness. Other women become pregnant easily. My friends are all conceiving and giving birth. But then there is me.

My struggle with infertility continued that week. On Friday I saw a follicle (a potential egg). I heard the encouraging words: “You’ll most likely ovulate within 24 to 28 hours. I predict you’ll release the follicle by Sunday, surely by Monday. We’ll cross our fingers!” the doctor said.

So that weekend, I prayed. I hoped. I took my temperature: 97.6, 97.8, 98., 98.1, a steady rise. Did I ovulate? Did the sperm find the egg? Are we pregnant? What if I am? What if I’m not? And so continued the waiting, wondering, praying, yearning, hoping—but always growing and learning to say “thank you” to God, even when the answer was no.

It's Your Turn

- Read Psalm 13 and make it your prayer. Look again at verses 5 and 6. Have you trusted in God’s lovingkindness? Do you still rejoice in His salvation? Many of us find it easy to praise God when things are going our way. But when unpleasant situations come that are beyond our control, we stop praising.
- In Psalm 13, David shows us that it is OK to be honest before God, but our complaints and desperate cries for help ought to be accompanied with praise. Praise is sometimes a matter of will. Will you praise God now, even in the midst of your pain?

Day 4: I Trust You Completely

As the bills grew larger, the fertility tests increased in detail and answers became more vague. My hopes began to follow the same course of those sacred basal body temperature charts. The first days I would pray with great anticipation and assurance. I believed my faith could actually move the sperm to find that little egg.

Then my hopes would dip, fearing I was wanting something that would never come about. Later my dreams would soar as I counted the months until the “D Day” (due date) of a hopeful child. As the month came to a close, those dreams would crash around me as the bloating, depressing cramps filled me physically and the “no” answer pounded me emotionally and spiritually.

There is no pain quite like that pain. I experienced my own misconception month after month. My body seemed unable to conceive a child, and my heart seemed unable to conceive how a loving, kind God could say no to my deepest heart’s desire. I prayed:

Father, right now, I long for You to give me the desires of my heart. I want to house desires that are pleasing to You. I want my mind and heart to be consumed with honoring thoughts and wishes. Right now my thoughts are filled with wishing for a baby. Take these thoughts and wishes and mold them into Yours. I trust You completely with my heart.

It was easy to write those words because I knew from past experience that I had to allow God to mold my desires. But it was very difficult to live those words. My whole being cried out at the pain God’s “no” answer brought. My heart and mind wrestled with it. I felt trampled. And yet, my hopes continued to rise month after month, only to fall with the disappointment of a failed conception.

Eventually my tears became comfortable partners as I lived cheerful to the world around me, crying on the inside with the barren, abandoned pain of infertility. I had let longing and disappointment become my bittersweet friends during this trial. But rather than let them overtake me, I learned to be thankful for the compassion it taught me. I learned to thank God for teaching me that whether His answer is yes or no; my faith is still in Christ because He knows best.

It’s Your Turn

- Read Proverbs 13:12. Tell God how you feel right now. Tell Him the most difficult part of infertility.
- Can you thank God for something He’s taught you only because you’ve experienced infertility? Thank Him for keeping your faith in Christ alone.

Day 5: I Want a Baby!

“I want a baby!” I told God over and over again in prayer. Refusing to accept “no” for an answer, I pleaded. I could not admit that God wanted me to be without a child. I simply must have not made myself clear to Him.

In December 1990, I wrestled with the fact that my husband and I had spent nearly \$1,000 on one month’s attempt at conception. I knew I needed to release my desire for a baby and replace it with a sincere desire for God alone. My heart knew it was the right thing to do, but I couldn’t shake the thought that God could not be rocked during quiet evenings at home, or bundled in a blanket and taken to church to be adored. God couldn’t coo and goo and break into a spontaneous smile. He couldn’t call me and my husband “Mommy” and “Daddy.” I wanted a baby, but I knew I needed to want God.

During that time, God spoke gently to me. He reminded me that His perfect plan is brought forth in His way, in His time. The greatest example of this was in Christ’s coming into the world. Prophecy was fulfilled without man having to try to work it out. Too often I forget that. I try to work things out for God myself instead of trusting that He’ll work His own plan out in His time, in His way. When I realized this truth again, I prayed: *Father, thank You for coming to us in Your time, in Your way. I know You’re in control of all situations, including mine. Help me desire You.*

During that year’s Christmas season, when I was thinking through these things, I realized God had already given me a baby. His child arrived one night in a world hostile to even the appearance of His conception. God, in the form of a dependent baby, was laid in a manger rather than a sterile hospital crib.

His mother was young and innocent. God blessed Mary, but He didn’t spare her pain. The pain of my infertility did not even begin to compare to that of Mary when she helplessly watched her miracle Son die a painful death on a cruel cross. My heartache was not anything close to God’s as He watched His only Son pay the penalty for sin on the cross, while He had to turn His face.

And regardless of that pain, although God knew the cost, He gave me the gift of His Baby—the most precious baby ever.

It's Your Turn

- Read Luke 1:30. Think about Mary’s sacrifice when she received God’s favor. Consider the precious baby Jesus and how great God’s love is toward you. Thank God for the treasure He’s already given you in Christ.