

## Infertility

Infertility is a real and difficult challenge for one in six couples. Often couples start to experience tension and anxiety after several months of failing to conceive, and as time goes by the frustration " only increases. Friends and relatives, in their well-meaning attempts to be supportive, may add to the difficulties with insensitive remarks.

### Grieving Process

Facing infertility will trigger a grieving process In many couples. A husband and wife come face-to-face with the death of long-held dreams about their lives and their future legacy. Losing the option of having a biological child can affect self worth, feelings of femininity and masculinity, and a sense of sexual attractiveness.

Men and women often experience the grieving process in different ways, at different rates, and at different intensities. A man already may find it difficult to understand his wife and coming to terms with infertility will often magnify that frustration and bring it to the surface: "Why is she so upset? When will she get over this? Is some-thing wrong with her or with me?"

According the National Infertility Association ([www.resolve.org](http://www.resolve.org)), the best way for a man to understand what a woman goes through is to imagine himself being unable to work for the rest of his life — and having to answer questions about it all the time. Because many men view their primary role in life as working outside the home, they are able to move on more quickly to consider adoption or the notion that they may not have children. But many women view motherhood as an essential part of their identity, a dream that will not die easily.

### Sensitive Support

If you are a husband facing the challenge of infertility, patience and understanding is vital as you relate to your wife. Typically, the experience is harder on her. She needs your sensitive support. You cannot snap your fingers or say a few wise words and make her feel better, so do not try. Simply be there for her through all the late-night tears and mid-day doctor appointments; keep praying with her; be the thoughtful, considerate husband she needs. Do your part of the testing. Take medications that might improve your own chances of fertility. Live a healthier lifestyle.

You also need outside support. Trying to hide the problem can be more stressful than the thought that everyone knows about it. A husband and wife can be worn out dealing with constant stress and anxiety. Many men feel inadequate because of their infertility.

Sharing about infertility with trustworthy, supportive friends who will listen and pray for you will lighten the burden you feel and help protect the well-being of your marriage.

Having a natural child is not as important as having a heart for children and nurturing the next generation. The Apostle Paul, to our knowledge, never had biological children. But he invested himself in numerous "spiritual sons" who carried on his legacy. Whether you choose to adopt, be a mentor, or volunteer as a children's worker at church, God will give you opportunities to express your father's heart to children around you.