

**A GUIDE FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING  
INFERTILITY OR MISCARRIAGE  
AND THOSE WHO LOVE THEM**



# A Guide for Those Experiencing Infertility or Miscarriage *AND* Those Who Love Them

We're glad you're seeking biblical guidance on how to best love and care for one another, whether you are experiencing infertility and/or miscarriage or whether you are the friend or family member. Galatians 6:2 states to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Your desire to "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15) is evidence of a committed and sincere love (1 Peter 1:22). There can be sadness and loss on both sides, both for those experiencing infertility and loss, and for those who care and share life as a friend or family member.

While we attempt to summarize collective "best recommendations" here for both parties, we know that every individual is different and what blesses one person may not bless another. This guide is intended to give those walking through infertility and/or miscarriage and those in their community biblical guidance on how to love each other well, with the expectation that you will listen to and seek to understand those personally involved.

## What's Included?

### **10 Key Biblical Principles for Relating to and Caring for One Another: pages 3-8**

This list establishes a good groundwork for loved ones to be able to begin to understand and communicate about infertility/miscarriage. A good place to start.

### **FAQs about Relating to One Another: pages 9-20**

Digging in a little more practically, you'll find some specific "hot topics" on this list that may come up. A good place to look if your group is feeling stuck in certain areas or if you'd like to check out things to look out for in the future.

### **Helpful Ideas, Resources, and Lists: page 21-22**

Check here if you're looking for additional resources or practical ideas.

### **Learning from Others: Practical Ways to Care: pages 23-26**

Real life examples from those who have walked this road before.





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## How Can Our Group Use this Resource?

To utilize this resource in a group setting, you might consider:

- **Read:** Prior to the group meeting, all members should read the 10 Key Biblical Principles for Relating to and Caring for One Another on pages 3-8. Also, skim through the FAQs about Relating to One Another on pages 9-20, reading the topics that apply to your group's situation. Discuss key takeaways by utilizing any of the below discussion questions or coming up with your own.
- **Discuss:** In what areas has our group been caring for one another well? Allow time for specific encouragement and acknowledgement of the ways you have felt cared for and understood.
- **Discuss:** In what areas can our group continue to grow in caring for one another? Allow for open and honest sharing as well as time for confession and seeking forgiveness in the areas where an individual or the group has fallen short.
- **Discuss:** Are there any boundaries or "ground rules" our group should implement to ensure sensitivity while also making sure topics like children and parenting aren't ignored, children are reasonably included in group activities, and pregnancies are announced and celebrated appropriately?
- **Research and Discuss:** For couples experiencing infertility, what interventions (IVF, surrogacy, IUI, etc.) or alternate ways of building your family (adoption, foster care, etc.) are potentially on the table for you? Briefly lay out what you know about your specific situation and invite your group to speak into your decision-making process as you move forward. The entire group should take some time to research each option on their own to educate themselves (both scientifically/practically, and scripturally/spiritually) and come up with informed questions. Come back together at your next group time to discuss everyone's findings, specifically voicing areas of caution, concern, or confusion. What are the next steps your group should take to be united in this process? Who do you need to invite in or what additional resources do you need to access in order to be better equipped?
- **Pray:** Pray for one another. Pray for wisdom, guidance, and comfort. Include specific scripture in your prayers.



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## 10 Key Biblical Principles for Relating to and Caring for One Another

### 1. Seek to understand.

Proverbs 20:5, Psalm 139:23, Psalm 119:24, Proverbs 24:6

**For those supporting:** We're all different, and what we want and need can vary day to day. Pray for your friend and ask God for insight, compassion, sensitivity, patience, and discernment. Read about infertility and/or miscarriage. Read about the differences between men and women in how they handle this issue. Prayerfully consider the ideas given in these verses and resources on how you can help. Do your own research to fully understand your friend's situation and to be able to offer godly counsel.

**For those on the journey:** Invite those closest to you in and give them license to ask questions so they might understand what you're going through. Give grace to your friends and be clear about what you need from them. Be quick to offer forgiveness when they've not loved you well or done or said unintentionally insensitive things. Be quick to seek forgiveness when you've not been patient with them as they attempt to navigate this journey alongside you.

### 2. Love and consider others as more important than yourself.

Galatians 6:2, Romans 12:15, Proverbs 25:20, Philippians 2:1-4, 1 Corinthians 8:8-12, 1 Corinthians 13:1,4-8a, Ecclesiastes 3:1-7

**For those supporting:** Be sensitive to one another. Be honest with one another in love, with grace and truth. Ask the person how best you can love them. Know what the triggers are for hard days. Know about reminder dates. Ask if this is an okay time/place to discuss something. Celebrate pregnancies, milestones, and birthdays sensitively and appropriately.

**For those on the journey:** Don't be afraid to communicate your grief, sorrow, or anger with your closest friends and allow them to care for you. Your season of "weakness" or emotional need gives others an opportunity to "fulfill the law of Christ" by helping to carry your burdens (Galatians 6:2). Celebrate pregnancies, milestones, and birthdays sensitively and appropriately. Listen to and respect pregnancy and/or parenting challenges. Pray for both the hard things and the happy things.





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## 3. Infertility is a real battle and a real loss.

1 Samuel 1:6-10,15-16, Proverbs 30:15,16

**For those supporting:** The Bible mentions many women who had fertility issues. The fact that it is repeatedly referenced means it is a significant issue and that each story has the ability to highlight God's grace and power. Validate your friend's loss or desire and be patient with and prepared for the potential extended duration of the struggle of infertility. While the grief associated with a miscarriage may look slightly different than the loss of an already born child or other adult loved one, it is by no means an insignificant loss.

**For those on the journey:** Whether you have experienced the physical loss of a baby or are facing the unmet desire of biological children, God cares about the significant loss you are walking through. Be gracious and forgiving toward others who may not understand the depth of the loss or battle you're experiencing. Don't be afraid to let others in to your emotions and grief, but also know that you may have to patiently and gently educate those who have not had a similar experience so they can begin to understand what you're going through.

## 4. Miscarriage is the loss of a life, a baby.

Psalms 139:13, Luke 1:39-45

**For those supporting:** If you do not already have a strong grasp on a biblical view of when life begins, do your own research. If you do not already have a strong grasp on the theology of suffering, grief, and evil in this world, do your own research. Be a student of God's Word and make sure you're working towards being able to confidently share a biblical perspective regarding these topics with those who are truly in the midst of wrestling with these things. Additionally, learning more of God's heart for the unborn will allow you to care for and grieve with those suffering miscarriages in a more compassionate and authentic way. Practically speaking, honoring this child's life much like you would when an already born person dies is often appropriate (i.e. send flowers, sympathy cards, charity donations in their honor, remembering significant dates, providing meals in weeks after the loss, etc.).

**For those on the journey:** Don't be afraid or ashamed to grieve your loss in a way that honors the significance of your child's life. You might consider naming your child, if you haven't already, or hosting a memorial service



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or other event or gathering to commemorate your baby's life and to allow your community to come together to care for you.

## **5. When a person grieves and struggles, it doesn't mean she/he doesn't have faith.**

John 11:4, 35, John 11:21, Job 19:25-27, Job 26:13-27

**For those supporting:** Don't be afraid to enter into and validate your friend's feelings in the midst of the valley of grief, anger, or despair. Gently remind your friend of truth and of God's character when it's appropriate, but also allow them to expose and experience real emotions and struggles. If unhealthy patterns or coping mechanisms arise or despair remains for a prolonged period of time, widen the circle and seek help alongside your friend.

**For those on the journey:** Identify friends and loved ones with whom you feel safe revealing your raw emotions to. It's OK to ask for space or to tighten your circle during this season to a few trusted friends you can be fully vulnerable with, but watch out for patterns of isolation or destructive coping mechanisms and reach out for community even when it's difficult to express the depth of your emotions.

## **6. The grief cycle for infertility and miscarriage may be circular rather than linear. Don't grow weary or give up. If stuck, consider how to take the next step.**

1 Corinthians 13:7, Job 23:10-12

"Rather than viewing these steps [Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression/Guilt, Mourning, Acceptance] to be accomplished once and for all, it may be more realistic to view these emotions as part of a spiral which diminishes in size over time. One emotion may be more intense at times than others...Unique to infertility, the injection of hope at mid-cycle complicates the entire process." - Glahn and Cutrer "When Empty Arms Become a Heavy Burden"

**For those supporting:** It's easy to expect your friend to have moved on from a loss or from a failed treatment or extended time of infertility after a certain amount of time has passed. More realistically, they are remembering and missing the child they miscarried and are still grieving/processing/battling unmet dreams





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or expectations with each new season of life or as different situations arise. Be thoughtful of and patient with the ongoing journey of loss or waiting.

**For those on the journey:** If you seem stuck in a portion of the grief cycle and not moving forward, consider taking another step toward processing your grief and taking advantage of all the truth, support, and means of grace offered: devoting daily to studying scripture, journaling frequently, sharing your faith, adding to a gratitude list, memorizing scripture, serving others, reaching out to friends, getting involved with Shiloh or another ministry to process your grief. Invite others in to your journey by asking close friends or loved ones to help you take the next step in processing your grief.

## **7. Having children or not having children doesn't define you. Be sensitive in regard to the topic of parenting or not having children dominating discussions, social media posts, or the activities of your group.**

1 Peter 2:9, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 1:21,22a

**For those supporting:** Be sensitive to the fact that if you're a parent or you're pregnant, your conversations and activities may automatically drift towards all things kids and pregnancy. Don't overly-censor your life around your friends facing infertility or grieving a loss, but be aware that these topics and situations may be painful at times. Make it a point to discuss expectations with your friend about when children will be invited to group activities, how pregnancy announcements should be handled, or anything else that might be an area of friction within your friendship.

**For those on the journey:** Be clear with your friends when topics or situations are hurtful. Set expectations ahead of time regarding how you'd prefer future pregnancy announcements to be handled. In the same way your friends are sensitive to not dominate discussions with parenting or pregnancy topics and to meet you where you are at in the midst of infertility and loss, make an effort to meet them in their season of life and discuss and do things that matter to them.

## **8. Widen the circle.**

Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 24:6



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**For those supporting:** Are there other ministries, couples, or individuals that could provide additional counsel or support for your friend? With your friend's permission, be an advocate for them and reach out to the local church to see what opportunities are available for the couple to be cared for outside of your immediate group. If your friends are considering fertility treatments, do your own research about the options they're considering so you can have well-informed discussions with them and support them in their decision-making process. Find other Christ-followers who have chosen similar treatments and connect them with your friends so they can gain a full perspective of what's ahead.

**For those on the journey:** It may be very helpful to meet with someone who has been in a similar situation to talk with them about their experience and share your experience with someone who understands. It may also be very beneficial to get plugged in with a ministry like Shiloh or GriefShare to specifically process your infertility or grief. If you're considering fertility treatments, find at least one other Christ-following couple that has walked through a similar treatment plan to meet with. Oftentimes at the beginning of treatment it is hard to see all the steps ahead, so it's incredibly helpful to gain insight from others who can share their experience after walking each and every step through to the end.

## 9. Pray (for all things, but especially for one another).

1 Samuel 12:23a, Exodus 17:12

"There is power in prayer. When men work, they work. but when men pray, God works." - Angus Buchan

**For those supporting:** Words can sometimes be hard to find in the midst of sorrow, grief, or anger. One thing you can always do is pray for your friend and for wisdom to know how to best care for them.

**For those on the journey:** It can be helpful to keep a prayer journal to write down your honest prayers during this season. Don't forget to pray prayers of thankfulness, even if the things you're grateful for seem very small. Praying for others is a great way to take your eyes off of your own situation for a moment and focus on serving and caring for others.

## 10. Consider the Psalms as an example.

Proverbs 25:20





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Many times, the Psalms record expressions of feeling forgotten, rejected, or afflicted. Most of the time these expressions are followed by a statement recalling or declaring God's faithfulness and character. This can be a very helpful pattern to follow.

**For those supporting:** Your friend dealing with infertility or miscarriage may not be in a place of being able to praise God in the moment, like in Psalm 88. In those moments be an Aaron and Hur, lifting up their hands for them (Exodus 17:12), reminding them of truth when they can't see it. But be careful, you don't want to invalidate their grief and sorrow.

**For those on the journey:** Use the pattern of the Psalms when expressing your raw emotions: share with your friends how you are honestly feeling in the waiting or grief then follow it up with statements of what you know to be true about God. That reminds you of truth and also lets your friends know that you do know truth.



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## FAQ's about Relating to One Another

### **1. What do I do when I initially hear someone I know just had or is experiencing a loss or is facing infertility?**

Romans 12:15, 1 Corinthians 12:26, Ecclesiastes 4:9

- Empathize - try to put yourself in their shoes.
- Tell them you are sorry and that you grieve with them.
- Pray with them and for them.
- Do or give something tangible.

Sometimes when a person is in a time of loss or trial, they may not be able to articulate what they need. If you ask what would bless them and they do not know, just do something to show you care, rather than merely saying, "Let me know if you need anything." Obviously, no gift or act of service heals the infertility itself or the sorrow of miscarriage, but it is a kind touch to remind the person or couple that they are not alone, and a meal, flowers, gift card, candle, favorite drink, or sincere note can make them feel loved and send the message "I see you" and "I care."

### **2. What can I do to provide ongoing care and support for a friend through seasons of infertility or loss?**

1 Corinthians 13:7-8, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 6:18, Exodus 17:10-13

Continue to ask how your friend is doing in their grief, sadness, anger, and/or confusion and provide time and space for them to share honestly (however, don't smother your friend and make their situation to dominate every piece of your relationship or conversations). Offer a listening ear before reminding them of truth. Pray for and with them. Ask if they'd like company or to be alone. Would they like to talk or would they like a distraction?

Let your friend know that you are thinking of them days, weeks, and months after they share their loss or their infertility situation. Mailed cards, postcards, or dropped off notes are often best, because they don't require a response. Remember that the pain of a miscarriage will most likely last a long time, and infertility is an





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undefined journey that can feel like a loss month after month. Continue to show care and support, especially on reminder days, holidays, and when those in their community are pregnant, delivering, or celebrating special events.

Encourage your friend to spend time journaling, reading God's word, memorizing Scripture, and, later, when the hurt is not so fresh, serving others, just as you are doing as well. And as is expected of each believer, be mutually accountable to spending time with the Lord and encourage them to continue investing in their marriage, family, and community, even as they continue to grieve.

## **“Reminder Days”**

Reminder days are especially hard. They can actually be any day, but acknowledge that due dates, holidays, their own birthday, the day the loss happened, etc., may elicit difficult memories and grief – for both infertility and miscarriage. As a friend, remember these dates; put the dates on your calendar. Ask them what they would like/how they can be served, loved or encouraged. On special days ask them how they are doing, but also take initiative to show love and care even if they don't respond.

## **“Trigger Situations”**

Remember that parties, things shared on social media, pregnancy announcements, Christmas cards, church events, invitations, insensitive comments, baby showers, doctors' appointments, etc. can all be difficult if going through infertility or loss. Be proactive to ask your friend if there are any situations that are particularly difficult and acknowledge these possibly tough situations when they pop up. Even if your friend isn't bothered by something you acknowledge or ask about, they'll likely still feel cared for that you were thinking about their perception and emotions.

## **3. How should I announce a pregnancy when a friend is dealing with infertility or miscarriage?**

Romans 12:15, 1 Corinthians 12:26, Philippians 2:3-4, Proverbs 25:11

This is a great topic to address prior to the situation arising, if possible. As you seek to understand how to best love your friend after they share about their infertility/miscarriage, ask them how to best address this scenario. Ask, “How would you like to receive this type of news?” Offer options, such as asking if it would bless them more to receive a private text, email, or phone call before a public announcement is made either in group or on social media, etc. Email is sometimes ideal because it does not require an immediate reaction on the part



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of the individual struggling and won't catch them off guard publicly; email also gives more time to process two simultaneous emotions – grief for what they are longing for and joy for you. Another option is to text or email the husband first so that he can share the news with his wife.

It may also be appropriate to recognize and tell your friend that you know this news can be hard because they have been wanting to grow their family, too. A public or group surprise announcement does not foster this sensitivity.

Also, and just as important, ask how you can be sensitive to them as you move forward with your pregnancy and follow through. Be mindful that their sensitivity can change day to day depending on what is going on in their infertility journey or loss. Ask if they want to be a part of gender reveals and/or baby showers. They may be totally strong one day and need more tenderness another day. You may just need to ask how they are doing on a specific day or include a note with an invitation that you know this is hard and that you don't expect them to attend if they don't want to.

### **4. How can we talk about our child or pregnancy (things we're celebrating and excited about, problems, challenges, questions/uncertainties) when we know someone in our group is dealing with infertility or loss?**

**OR**

### **How can I support my friends/group with their parenting issues, when it is so painful to not be "part of the club?"**

2 Corinthians 12:9, 2 Peter 1:3, Colossians 3:12, Philippians 2:1-4, Proverbs 17:17, John 21:22, 2 Corinthians 9:8, 1 Corinthians 12:26, Romans 12:15

**For those supporting:** You want to be a friend that rejoices with those who rejoice and mourns with those who mourn. The key is to not make topics of parenting dominating. Often, especially in groups that are in the family building phase, this ends up being the primary focus of small talk and can even take over the focus of the whole gathering time, and the individual or couple experiencing infertility or loss feels ostracized. Brainstorm topics that include the couple struggling with infertility/miscarriage so that they can equally take part in the conversation. Parenting/pregnancy/family planning are an aspect of our lives, but they are not our entire lives.





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If your group was almost all married couples but had a single person in the group, you wouldn't want to dominate discussions with married topics, because that would leave the single person out. You'd want to find common topics to address so that all are included and can relate. However, you'd also want and need to address issues that pertain to marriage - communication, oneness, intimacy, etc. In those topics that the single person can't relate to, you would want to be mindful of how you talk about it - that it doesn't dominate the conversation, that it is appropriate, and that it is sensitive. In the same way, you may bring up issues about pregnancy/parenting in your group, but you don't want those topics to dominate, and you want to be considerate in how you discuss it and still include the person that is dealing with infertility or loss. Let them know that you are mindful of them and don't want to be exclusive or insensitive.

Having questions and/or topics on an actual agenda to discuss each week that include asking about spiritual growth, accountability, outreach, finances, and loving your spouse can help a group not get stuck overly focusing on pregnancy, children and/or parenting. Remember, our identity is not as parents, but as children of God on mission. And if parenting is only a *portion* of the discussion, the couple experiencing infertility or miscarriage will likely not feel as isolated.

Ask the couple dealing with infertility or loss how best you can support them, what they can be held accountable for during this season, and if there are any books or resources that can help the group understand what they are going through. Be intentional about giving them freedom to be open and honest about what they are struggling with, perhaps week to week.

**For those on the journey:** It is also the responsibility and privilege of the person dealing with infertility/loss to initiate discussions on what is difficult and helpful, (even day to day), and to be a friend that loves at all times (Proverbs 17:17), truly caring about and supporting the highs and lows of those who have children. Each is to look to the interests of others, even when it is hard. God is able to give you the grace and strength to love well. (2 Corinthians 9:8, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 2 Peter 1:3) When going into a situation that you know will be challenging, like a girls' outing with many who are moms, a baby shower, etc., make and follow through with a "planned biblical response." Enlist specific prayer support and encouragement for those engagements from those who know and love you and arm yourself with scripture ahead of time to keep your thoughts and feelings on hope and truth, rather than comparison, frustration, and self-pity.

**5. We want to bring our babies or children to community group and/or the separate husband/wife meetings or to other social gatherings, but it's bothering the couple in our group that is dealing with infertility/loss. What should we do?**



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Philippians 2:3-4

It makes sense to have babies present when feeding makes that a necessity, but even if no one in your group is dealing with infertility/loss, at a certain age a baby or child is going to be distracting to the discussion and may take away from connecting on a deep level and allowing everyone to feel known and heard. Depending on the age, having the child present may not allow the group to discuss more sensitive topics such as intimacy, addiction, pornography, finances, etc. and this could lead to decreased authenticity and accountability. Additionally, if having children present is particularly difficult for someone in your group because of infertility or loss, it would be loving to consider various options. This may be a tangible way for you to love and serve this couple by rearranging what your meetings look like and still creating time for families to bond with one another. Childcare can be hard to arrange sometimes, but get creative with times, locations and babysitter sharing. Community is to be a priority and listening and sharing is a huge part of gathering together. If children are keeping the adults from being focused, attentive, and sensitive to each other during the time allotted for group gatherings, consider options to prioritize caring for the members of your group.

## **Ideas to meet without children:**

- Rotate houses to lessen the need to pay for childcare each time. (The person who hosts may have their kids in bed or playing in another room and not need a sitter that week.)
- Find a sitter (or sitters) to care for all the community group children at one home (or one room) while adults meet in another location and all parents chip in for the cost, perhaps divided based on how many children you each have.
- Consider changing the meeting time to an afternoon to accommodate the children being all at one house so that it isn't during nap times/bedtimes.
- Find a friend in a different group or family member that can swap childcare with you, especially if it is while the children are asleep.
- For women/men only meetings, consider early morning times before husbands go to work, so that husbands can be with the kids while the women meet, and vice versa. Or meet in the evenings, alternating husband and wife weeks.





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### **6. A couple in our group is struggling with why God would give them this baby but then not let the baby grow to term. Another friend is struggling with why they are going through infertility. What do we tell them to explain trials or seemingly unanswered prayer?**

John 5:17, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, James 1:2-4, Isaiah 44:8-9, Romans 11:33, Genesis 50:20, Job 42:2, Psalm 138:8, Job 42:5, Psalm 119:67, 1 Peter 4:12-13

Because God's ways are higher than our ways, we often do not know why specific trials and tragedies come. We do know from Scripture that God is always in control and always good, and because He is the creator and holy, he doesn't owe us an explanation. He does, however, reveal some possible reasons behind painful circumstances.

- To bring us to faith in Christ.
- So we can comfort others. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
- To mold our character and strengthen our faith. (James 1:2-4, Job 42:5, Psalm 119:67, 1 Peter 1:7)
- Personal sin may be standing in the way of answered prayer.
- Evil in this world, not personal sin.
- To give us something better. (Genesis 50:20, Ruth)
- It's a mystery. (Isaiah 55:8,9, Romans 11:33)

**Miscarriage:** Your baby has a purpose and is eternal. Every life matters to God and is created in His image. You can surely recognize your baby's purpose by trusting God and honoring Him in how you live your days. Your baby was not a mistake and all your baby's days were ordained and known by God. Staying committed to Christ, abiding in Him, being faithful, growing closer to God, and making Him more known are the best ways to honor your baby's life.

**Infertility:** God is always at work. He sees you, loves you, and is in total control. He is not overwhelmed, limited, discouraged, or surprised by your situation. Seek him with your whole heart as you live on mission for Christ, asking him for direction and encouragement month by month. He is writing your story, and even though you don't know the titles of each chapter, recall the completed stories of those in the Bible to affirm you have the best author possible.





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Continue to share truth with your friend, even when it doesn't seem to be received or accepted at the time. Resist the temptation to explain their pain away or speak in generic platitudes or sentiments. Make sure the truth, comfort, and advice you share is based on the truth of Scripture. An honest thing to say might be, "We don't know why this precious baby did not grow to term or why your longing has not been fulfilled, but we do know the character of God and are trusting in the testimony of scripture and His goodness, sovereignty, love, and holiness."

### **7. We notice that the couple in our group dealing with infertility/miscarriage is also struggling in their marriage. How can we support them?**

Psalms 127:1, 1 Peter 3:8

This is common, especially because women and men experience infertility and miscarriage and the subsequent emotions so differently.

Consider these ideas in evaluating where a couple is at in their marriage, processing infertility/miscarriage, and encouraging next steps.:

- First seek to understand what the struggles are for each spouse and how long they have been going on.
- Evaluate the core principles of community (Is each person devoting daily?, etc.)
- Pray as a group and as women and men separately for this couple.
- Encourage prioritizing the marriage over growing the family. What activities/roles can be stopped or put on hold to create more time and give more priority to working on the marriage?
- Ask the couple to consider going through the Shiloh Bible Study and Husband's Companion Study if they have not already done so.
- Ask them to consider attending another Shiloh ministry event like Couples Panel Night or a Shiloh Connect.
- As friends, family, or community, read the first four chapters of [When Empty Arms Become a Heavy Burden](#) so that everyone better understands the male and female differences when dealing with infertility.
- As friends, family, or community, listen to the audio recordings of Shiloh Couples Panel Night (available at [watermark.org/Shiloh](http://watermark.org/Shiloh)), for understanding and insight.
- Widen the circle - contact your community shepherd or director for additional support.





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- Would another ministry be able to support this couple? re:generation, re|engage, Shiloh, GriefShare, etc. Help them find additional support and, if possible, consider joining them to show your ongoing support and commitment to their growth (i.e. do re|engage together as a Community Group).
- Consult the Watermark Conflict Field Guide to help this couple navigate conflict or communication challenges.

### **8. The friend in my group who is dealing with infertility is difficult to be around. I feel like I'm always walking on eggshells. How should I handle this?**

**OR**

**There is a member in my group who isn't sensitive to my situation. She/he just doesn't get it.**

Proverbs 20:5, Philippians 2:3-4, Psalm 139:23, 1 Peter 3:8, Colossians 3:12-13, Romans 12:15, Psalm 121:1-2, Psalm 118:8-9, John 21:22, Matthew 7:3-5, Psalm 63:6-8

**For those supporting:** First, prayerfully read Matthew 7 and the scripture in Watermark Conflict Field Guide and see if there is log in your own eye. Show compassion and empathy for what your friend is going through; see if you can find out if there is anything specific underneath their emotion or behavior that can and should be talked about. What are they upset about, struggling with, or fearful of? Seek to understand, be compassionate, humble and gracious. Ask them thoughtful questions. Get down in the trenches with them. Listen.

Recognize the struggle is real and that it may be a difficult time hormonally, relationally, and experientially. In private, convey your care and concern and ask how they are doing and what you could do to help. Once you understand the context, you may perhaps be able to help them process their feelings through a biblical framework. Reflect on anything you can do to love them through word or actions. With the Psalms as a model, perhaps you can walk your friend through what they feel and what they know to be true. Validate their struggle and grief.

It may just be a hard day, or it may be a prolonged time of this "walking on eggshells." You may ask if they feel stuck and if you can help. Also, kindly let them know how that their attitude, responses, words, or actions are affecting you or what they are communicating to you. Be intentional to mutually hold each other accountable for time in the Word, journaling, memorizing scripture, serving others, and being committed to each marriage.



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This can be an incredibly sensitive time for this couple, but it also an opportunity for everyone to grow and for them to not allow infertility or loss to consume them in a way that does not allow them to be present in the lives of those around.

**For those on the journey:** Ask yourself if you have directly explained in a loving way how your friend can more effectively help or support you. When experiencing loss or infertility, needs and preferences can change day to day, and it isn't fair or appropriate to expect someone else to be a mind reader. Friends can sometimes feel it is, "darned if they do, darned if they don't" and subsequently withdraw or get frustrated. Consider what resources you can provide to help mutual understanding. Also check yourself to make sure you are not: 1) comparing 2) overly dependent on any one person to meet your needs or understand you 3) having unrealistic expectations for how others respond 4) judging 5) being overly sensitive or overly focused on yourself and your situation 6) failing to rejoice or mourn with others. If the person continues to be insensitive after addressing your side, follow the steps in the Watermark Conflict Field Guide which follows Matthew 18. Go to them 1:1, then with another person, then widen the circle for more accountability. Your expectation may need to be lowered if your friend is not a believer, and in this case, you may need to rely on others for better support and understanding. Even if a friend is sensitive and supportive, you cannot depend on one person to meet your needs, and they cannot be a substitute for the ultimate friend we have in Christ.

**9. The couple in our group that is dealing with infertility/loss is looking into treatment options and wants our counsel. We don't know anything about treatment options nor the pros/cons from a biblical worldview. How should we handle this? Are there any resources to help us navigate this with them?**

Ephesians 5:15-17, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Romans 12:2, Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 13:20, Proverbs 20:18, 2 Chronicles 16:9

Discussions about treatment options can be very emotional and divisive. It is imperative to seek and give wise counsel for these decisions. It is tremendously important to be educated about the various options that are presented by the medical community and the risks/concerns/benefits of each option before crossing ethical and biblical lines. Often, couples don't know what they don't know, and don't know what to ask or what the pitfalls are of various treatment options until they're in the midst of a decision or even after they've made a decision. Additionally, they may be far enough into the process that they are processing information based on emotion and/or desperation, rather than objectively, wisely, and biblically.





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When a couple wisely seeks biblical counsel from others about treatment, it shows a tremendous amount of humility and wisdom as it can be hard to hear from those who have not had to consider such options/obstacles in regard to growing their families. To “level the playing field,” be sure to invite your community to speak into the decisions and struggles you are facing that don’t involve infertility. The goal is mutual edification.

In order for community to be truly helpful with decision making, the entire Community Group/family/friends needs to get informed, especially from a biblical viewpoint – and not depend solely on the couple for information. It is also imperative to know that many unbiblical practices are commonplace and/or promoted in the medical field for both infertility and miscarriage. For example, pornography is routinely provided in many clinics to obtain sperm samples for testing or treatment. Additionally, pre-genetic testing and/or screening of embryos in conjunction with IVF (in vitro fertilization) is promoted as a way to see if embryos created are “good enough” to give a chance at life; if they are not, they are discarded, which is the same as abortion, because all embryos are already alive. There is no biblical justification for these practices, but without objectivity, conviction, and support, many couples tragically compromise and concede to these options. At a minimum, make sure everyone in your group has thoroughly read Watermark’s In Vitro Fertilization, Cryopreservation, and Genetic Testing FAQ as well as the Watermark Elder Statement on In Vitro Fertilization, Cryopreservation, and Genetic Testing (found at [watermark.org/shiloh](http://watermark.org/shiloh), also linked under the Helpful Ideas, Resources, and Lists section of this document).

To give or receive the counsel of “many advisers” (Proverbs 15:22), it is important to discuss the issues as a group rather than in “one off” or sequential conversations.

### **10. A couple in our group is considering adoption/foster care. We are not informed about the different options and challenges, so how should we help support and counsel them biblically?**

James 1:5, Ephesians 5:15-16, Proverbs 18:15, Proverbs 3:5, Proverbs 14:16

- Learn about it. Watermark’s Family Restoration Ministry is a great ministry with many resources that can be helpful as you walk with them through this decision-making process.





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- Encourage attending Watermark's Intro to Adoption and Foster Care Class, and if possible, attend as an entire group. It would be beneficial for the entire group to become familiar with the anxieties and fears that are common in the beginning stages of the adoption journey.
- Books to read through as a group: [Adopted for Life](#), [Orphanology](#)
- Email Watermark's Family Restoration Ministry or Shiloh Ministry to have another adoptive couple connect with your group.
- We are all called to care for orphans (James 1:27, Psalm 68:5-6). Process as an entire group how you might support and care for this particular couple as a group as they proceed with welcoming children into their home through adoption or foster care.

### **11. We have discussed a biblical approach to treatment or adoption/foster care in our group with the couple who is dealing with infertility/miscarriage, but the couple doesn't seem to be following biblical counsel. What should we do?**

Proverbs 16:25, Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 22:3, Matthew 18:15-17, Colossians 3:12

When a couple is longing for a child, emotions can take over and it can be difficult to process consequences of decisions that are made in the midst of a stressful and painful time. It can be helpful to remind them of truth and your desire for them to walk through the treatment process in a way that honors the Lord, their current/future children (including embryos), and the desire to be thoughtful and intentional in the conversations with their medical team.

- Pray for humility and wisdom on having continued conversations in regard to their treatment choices. (1 Peter 5:5)
- Listen carefully so that you can have all the facts and the group can offer continual guidance that is biblical. (Proverbs 18:13)
- Help them identify beliefs they have and the corresponding scriptures to help them see how/if their current line of thinking is contradictory to God's Word.
- Read through/watch resources regarding decision making and treatment options together as a group.
- Discuss the issues directly as a group rather than in "one off" conversations.
- You cannot control their decision, but you can be faithful to care for them and share truth.
- Use the Watermark Conflict Field Guide as a resource when engaging them in open conversation about your concerns.





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- Consider asking a Shiloh team member or couple to meet with your whole group to share their knowledge and experience and help mediate productive conversation.
- If the couple continues to pursue treatment/adoption in a way that is unbiblical or unwise, connect with your Community Group Director/Shepherd to meet with your group (Matthew 18:15-20).



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## Helpful Ideas, Resources, and Lists

### Books

- Grieving the Child I Never Knew by Kathe Wunnenberg
- When Empty Arms Become a Heavy Burden by Glahn and Cutrer
- The Infertility Companion by Glahn and Cutrer
- Longing for Motherhood by Chelsea Patterson Sobolik
- Holding onto Hope by Nancy Guthrie
- When God Weeps by Tada and Estes
- Shattered Dreams by Larry Crabb
- Heaven by Randy Alcorn
- Calm My Anxious Heart by Linda Dillow
- Pregnant with Hope by Susan Radulovacki
- Every Bitter Thing is Sweet by Sarah Hagerty
- I Will Carry You by Angie Smith

### Thoughtful Gifts and Acts of Service

- Let them know you are thinking of them in a way that doesn't require anything of them.
- Send flowers.
- Offer to accompany them to a doctor's appointment.
- Bring a meal to their home or initiate a meal calendar.
- Initiate a fun outing.
- Initiate a chance to visit over coffee or lunch or set a time to go walking.
- Send a personal card or note to let them know you are thinking about them.
- Leave a little happy surprise on their porch – a favorite flower, candy, candle, journal, snack or drink.
- [laurelbox.com](http://laurelbox.com) – gift boxes in different price ranges for women struggling with infertility/miscarriage.
- Set aside time in group to pray over and with them.
- Donate to a ministry charity they care about in memory of their baby. Could be done once or annually.
- Plant a tree or give a tree or flowering bush.
- Sponsor an orphan as a group in memory of the baby.
- Give a Christmas ornament, perhaps with the year the child was conceived or was to be born.
- Send flowers, cookies, or special treat on the due date, on the anniversary of the lost, on a treatment day, or upon news of an unsuccessful treatment.
- Buy gifts for an angel tree child in memory.
- Make or buy a garden stone for their yard/garden with an inscription, date, or symbol.
- Offer them a night out to spend together to help process or honor a date. (gift card to restaurant, help with childcare one evening or weekend if they have other children, tickets to something, etc.)





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- Give a journal, candle, bubble bath, devotional book, tea or coffee, chocolates, etc.
- Make scripture cards on notecards with encouraging verses they can flip through.
- Text them a verse and a short prayer you're praying for them.
- Make a playlist or give a CD of truth filled, hopeful music.
- Give an engraved keepsake or piece of jewelry with a meaningful date, name, or scripture.

## General Infertility/Miscarriage/Suffering/Grief/Marriage Resources

- [Letter to a Parent Grieving the Loss of a Child](#) (article)
- [Miscarriage Changed Me](#) (article)
- [How to Care for Women Who Have Miscarried](#) (article)
- [A Spectacle of Glory: An Interview with Joni Eareckson Tada](#) (sermon)
- [Real Truth Real Quick: If I have Enough Faith Will God Heal Me?](#) (video)
- [Do All Infants Go to Heaven?](#) (article)
- [The Evans Family Discusses Faith & Loss](#) (video)
- [Do You Know Where to Take Your Suffering Friends?](#) (sermon)
- [Satisfied in Suffering](#) (sermon)
- [Dads Hurt Too: A Father's Memoir of Miscarriage](#) (article)
- [Six Words to Say Through Tears: The Source of Comfort in the Pain of Grief](#) (article)
- [Shiloh Couples Panel Night Recordings](#) (audio)
- [Dealing with Disappointment](#) (sermon)

## Infertility Treatment/Adoption/Decision-Making Resources

- [Should I? Part 1](#) and [Should I? Part 2](#) (sermons)
- [Watermark Elder Statement on In Vitro Fertilization, Cryopreservation, and Genetic Testing](#) (document)
- [In Vitro Fertilization, Cryopreservation, and Genetic Testing FAQ](#) (document)
- [Spring 2018 Shiloh Couples Panel Night Recording \(specifically 39:30 – 1:01:30\)](#) (audio)
- [Real Truth Real Quick: Is it OK to Do In Vitro Fertilization?](#) (video)
- [Hope for the Unchosen](#) (article)
- [Watermark's Conflict Field Guide](#) (downloadable PDF)



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## Learning from Others: Practical Ways to Care

*"Once, after a failed treatment, I had a friend drop off the sweetest gift. It wasn't very big – just some cute hair ties, lip gloss and a candle. But she wrote me a note telling me how hard all of this must be for me. It really made me feel loved and remembered. And it was fun to get a gift when I felt so sad. I will never forget that act of kindness. It meant so much to me."*

*"I really appreciated friends that did not ask me lot of questions; they just listened and allowed me to share and process whatever was on my heart be it sadness, hurt, anger, or just outright tears. Our community group members dropped off meals on the front porch. I received a LaurelBox gift in the mail from an out of town friend with a few keepsakes and some scripture to meditate on. Friends offered to accompany me to doctor's appointments. I loved receiving notes in the mail because I did not have to respond. I also appreciated when I would simply receive a prayer via text message."*

*"When my husband and I received the news from our doctor that we would never have biological children (aside from attempting IVF), we were devastated. We were grieving the loss of a dream of how we would start a family. A female friend in our community group (who had three children and no personal experience with infertility), made no attempt to cheer me up with trite sayings or put a silver lining on our situation. Instead, she showed up with beautiful flowers and a hug. No one in our family knew what we were going through. But this friend with whom we shared this deep, personal struggle, acknowledged the diagnosis we had received as a real loss and mourned with us in this one act of service (and in months/years going forward). It was a gesture that continues to bless me as I think about it almost a decade later and ultimately reminds me that the Lord SEES and CARES about my pain."*

*"After each loss, I always appreciated when friends did a meal calendar, and I always said, "yes" to a meal. It took off a lot of added anxiety and pressure to not have to think about meal planning, grocery shopping, and cooking. So I was completely planning to do the same for a friend who had recently experienced a loss. But when I told her that I'd love to serve in that way, she said she actually felt comfort getting to cook and do her "normal" things. In that situation, I was reminded how different we all are and how important it is to find out what actually makes someone feel loved."*

*"One thing that really helped was when I came up with a list of questions about my infertility that I wanted my community group girls to ask me every week. Because they were not experiencing infertility, they would often not ask me anything about that area of my life. I think it was because they didn't know what to ask or if it would make me upset. Once I came up with my questions it gave them some guidance in how to ask me about infertility and freed me to talk about it. I really needed to talk about it every week but I had a hard time bringing it up. This helped our group so much!"*

*"I let my community group know that I would not be "bouncing back" quickly and that my grief process would take a while and have many ups and downs. I asked that they ask me about my grief whenever we met, which was every two weeks, and I told them I may or may not want to talk about it each time but that it was important to ask so that I'd have the opportunity to share if I wanted to and so that I (or my situation) didn't feel forgotten. I also asked them to ask me what Scripture I was memorizing, if I was journaling, and how I was stewarding my time and gifts. This direct communication helped me tremendously as they followed through, and probably helped them as well."*

*"I found the best way to express my feelings was to also make sure I also shared what I knew to be true, so that my friends knew I knew, and so that I was being held accountable to focus on Scripture. So I would often say something like, 'I am feeling discouraged and don't understand why we are having to go through this, but I know God is always at work and that He is good,' or I'd recite the verse I was currently memorizing. And when I couldn't share anything from God's word or about God's character, it was appropriate for my friends to ask me what I knew to be true or ask to share the truth with me."*





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*"It is so meaningful if you remember dates. One friend from our community group was so good about writing down every date in her calendar that she thought might be hard for me and reaching out to me even years after a loss. It meant so much to know I wasn't alone in my grief on those days and that she recognized that even though years might have passed those days would be difficult."*

*"I'd sometimes get completely overwhelmed by fear. Some of that was hormone related, but some of it was based on all I had experienced with multiple losses and infertility. When I could not get focused on truth, I would ask my husband or text my friends to "tell me what is true", or "remind me of truth". In that, I was being honest about how I was doing, and also giving them the opportunity to be my Aaron and Hur, holding up my arms to the Lord when I couldn't hold them up myself."*

*"In anticipation of the anniversary of losing our twins, a friend called and offered to keep our son so that we could go to dinner, process, and read through the cards we had received when our babies died. We were so touched that they remembered and had thought of this sweet way to love us."*

*"Holidays were particularly difficult for my husband and I in the midst of our infertility as it seemed they were a reminder of the years that were passing while we remained unable to become pregnant. Although, I had a friend that chose to "suffer long" with me all of those years and loved me abundantly, particularly during the Christmas season. Rather than sending a Christmas card with her family photo, every year she would write me a letter that reminded me of her love for me, God's faithfulness, and her thankfulness for our friendship. This blessed me tremendously as I was reminded year after year as she sent those letters that I was not forgotten and I was loved."*

*"I was reading a book about infertility that was really ministering to me and I mentioned how much I was enjoying it to my friend (who has two children of her own and has no first-hand experience with infertility or miscarriage). The next week when I saw her, the book was sitting on her coffee table. I asked her about it, and she said she had ordered it and was reading it so she could gain insight into my experience. That communicated her care for me more than any well thought out words ever could have."*

*"For those walking through infertility, hearing a surprise pregnancy announcement in the middle of a crowd can be very hurtful. We have nowhere to go to gather our emotions to be able to have the response we desire to show, which is joy. By emailing or calling your friend beforehand, it gives them space to receive the news and compose themselves in private. Baby showers deserve the same care and sensitivity. Sometimes we enjoy attending or even hosting a baby shower, but other times it can be during a season when our grief is heavy. Please invite us, because we don't want to be left out or feel like we don't belong. Including in the invitation a personal note to say that you care for us and there is no pressure to attend means a lot. "*

*"I have a sweet friend who was very thoughtful when she told me she was expecting for the second time since I've been trying. She sent me a simple text that was thought out, sensitive and caring. "Hey! Just wanted to let you know that I recently found out I'm pregnant... was feeling off and took a test. I know it's probably hard to hear (with good reason!). So I wanted to text you and let you know before the other girls. I'm here for you and praying for you always!" She told me first so I would hear it from her. Yes, it was difficult and I was sad because it wasn't me, but she gave me the space to process and I felt cared for by her."*

*"It was easier for me, as the husband, to hear news about other couples in our group getting pregnant, so I asked the husbands in our group to let me know before they announced it to the group. That kept my wife from being blindsided and let us process that news before the big reveal. By letting us know ahead of time, the other couples were able to love us well, and in turn, we were better equipped to rejoice with them as part of the group."*

*"One of my good friends was very thoughtful and specifically invited me up to the hospital to meet her newborn baby by myself, instead of along with our whole group of friends who were planning to stop by later on that day. It*



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*allowed me to meet him and experience some of my emotions in a quiet moment, rather than in the midst of a whole bunch of people who all wanted to hold him and compare their own birth stories or pregnancies. It was so thoughtful for my friend to consider the right time and space for me to be able to rejoice with them."*

*"Once when on my way to a baby shower, I could tell I had a "martyr mentality". Before walking in, I called my friend and shared where I was going and how I was feeling and asked for prayer. Just knowing that someone was thinking of me and praying for me changed my outlook when I walked in the door, so I didn't feel alone and sorry for myself, and was more able to be a gracious guest."*

*"I remember joining in on a "Mom's Night Out" before I had any children. I enjoyed being around these other women and was so blessed when our dinner did not focus on their children. Instead, we talked about trips, home renovations/decorating, and other fun topics that pertained to all of us. I don't know if they had made a conscious effort to be sensitive to me or not, but the evening could have been one where I completely felt left out, but instead it was fun for everyone and it made me feel really loved."*

*"One of the most thoughtful things a friend did for me during my time of waiting and loss was to speak up on my behalf. We were at a retreat where a group of women were gathered and chatting about conceiving, spacing of kids, etc. My friend and member of my community group said, I think it would be a good idea if we changed the subject. This is a sensitive and hard topic for our friend right now and we want to love her well. For someone to defend me in that way without being asked showed great empathy and love. It meant so much that she truly put herself in my shoes."*

*"My community group was very sensitive to me in my infertility and my losses in that we generally didn't talk about parenting issues very much at all in group time or girl's accountability time. Occasionally, one friend might talk about her struggle not getting enough sleep or with potty training and another about her 3-year-old daughter who threw fits over clothes. But in addition to sharing something related to parenting, each woman also shared other aspects of her life each meeting – what she was learning from God's word, how she was reaching out to others, if she was loving her husband well, etc. Because it didn't dominate, when parenting issues were addressed, it made me feel included, gave me a chance to hear what was important or difficult for my friends, invited me to give input, and it also helped give me more of a realistic view of parenting."*

*"When our group would share about and ask for counsel on parenting topics, I would often find myself holding back or qualifying my advice or encouragement with something like 'but obviously I don't really know because I'm not speaking from experience.' My friends loved me well when they reassured me that they wanted to hear from me and that I had valuable input to provide, even if I wasn't speaking from the first-hand perspective of a parent."*

*"I wasn't necessarily bothered by having infants around during our group times, and in fact, my friends have usually been really great about giving me unspoken priority in the baby holding department when our group is gathered, which is really thoughtful of them and fun for me."*

*"I really struggled with this question after my first miscarriage. I asked a lot of "why's". My father actually gave me some really encouraging words. He reminded me that God is sovereign. He is always in control. He created the life inside me and whether my baby lived for 9 weeks or 90 years, I was given the gift of motherhood and either way I would be reunited with that child in heaven. The Lord gives good gifts (Matthew 7:11). I may not ever know this side of heaven "why," but I can take comfort in knowing that I don't have to know. I get to cry out to Him when I am sad and don't understand, he hears me (2 Samuel 22:7). He heals the brokenhearted (Psalm 147:3). I also love thinking about the fact that the Lord is already aware of what the future holds for me in terms of having a biological child; the future is not just a place that He knows about...it is a place that He's already at."*

*"One of the most difficult things for me to grieve during our infertility was that I felt as though the Lord had gifted me in ways that I felt were primarily thought of in motherhood, nurturing and tender, yet the Lord had allowed for*





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*my womb to remain barren. I struggled with how to use my gifts and be fruitful in the midst of longing until a close friend consistently spurred me on in this area. She helped me recognize my spiritual gifts and then encouraged me to use them in the waiting. Because of the way she loved me well, I began serving others in ways that I was challenged, reminded of truth, and ultimately fruitful despite grief."*

*"I was hard to love during my season of infertility. A myriad of circumstances (my past heart wounds, my wrestle with the Lord at that time, depression, etc.) resulted in me responding to those around me in a way best illustrated as a "porcupine." Porcupines are hard to come close to and love. I had a hard time identifying how others could love me, especially those who could not relate to the sorrow I was experiencing. Ultimately, I ended up copying the chapter from When Empty Arms Become a Heavy Burden and giving it to my community group. We went through a difficult time relationally through that season. However, because ultimately, we were able to reconcile and work through what looked temporarily "ugly," we are unified and stronger now, playing the role that community is intended to play in each other's lives."*

*"I sure loved my dear friend while she walked through her infertility. However, what I realized really quickly was that love, even with the best intentions, can sometimes injure deeply. In the beginning, I was so confused by that. I, too, was walking through some infertility and we also had similar hard pasts growing up. Because of this, I thought what encouraged me would surely encourage her. Wrong. Though we can relate to each other on so many things, the way we give and receive love is very different. I tried to love her with my kind of love and I harmed her deeply. I love her analogy of being a porcupine at that time. A porcupine is not a violent animal but it will protect itself when it feels threatened even if a threat is only perceived versus actual. I am thankful she let me get close enough to partner with her in how to love her well, in a non-threatening way. I learned a lot through that tough season and it has blessed me, my walk with the Lord and my relationships with other people."*

*"Sometimes I would quickly go to Scripture to redirect my thoughts; like the time I was cleaning the bathtub and started comparing stories and thinking, "Why her and not me," but then quickly had God's word interrupt my thoughts saying "Where were you when I created the earth's foundation?" That verse got me back on track to trust and not compare. Other times, I stayed in the pity party longer than I'd like to admit. For example, one Easter out of town with extended family, I moped around feeling sorry for myself that I didn't have any children to tend to, definitely "sitting out." Once I returned home, God showed me this in my prayer time, and how it had put a damper on the family dynamics and most likely affected everyone. So I called my in-laws, asked for their forgiveness, and got more purposeful with my nieces and nephews the next times we were together- planning talent contests and other family games, using my gifts to get everyone connected rather than focusing on myself or what I didn't have. Had I prepared myself more the first time, I might not have more fully enjoyed that Easter and helped everyone have more fun as well."*

*"When a close friend had her new baby, she would often coo and goo to the baby while we were chatting on the phone. When I'd hang up after a call, I'd feel so alone and sad. I prayerfully considered the situation and knew my friend cared about me and was not intending to hurt me. I also thought about the age and stage she was in with her infant, so I called her back and asked her if she could not coo, ooh, and goo when we were in a conversation. She was so gracious and thanked me for letting her know. Seeing how receptive she was to my feelings helped me be less sensitive to her down the road, and it created a safe dynamic in our friendship."*

*"Unhelpful friends tried to explain away or over-spiritualize or theologize my pain or hardship by attempting to say something profound. Unhelpful friends also made comments that compared my situation or pain to something they were going through or they said things like "but at least..." (you miscarried early, you know you can get pregnant, you can start trying again in a couple months, you're still young, etc.). The most helpful friends listened, validated my feelings with simple things like "this must be so painful for you," or "I am so sorry you're going through this," prayed with and for me, and continued to follow-up with thoughtful notes and acts of service in the coming weeks/months."*

