

Why Us?

a bible study for those dealing with infertility

by casey and julie ross

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Our Story

As we finish writing this Bible study, we just found out that our second attempt at a FET (Frozen Embryo Transfer) failed. All of the emotions of a failed attempt and wanting more children are fresh and real. We are reminded of how each one of the sections in this Bible study is so relevant to what we're going through. God has been using this Bible study in our lives as we have been writing it to prepare us for this failed attempt. God is awesome that way!

You are about to read our story. We hope by sharing our story you'll see we are not experts at infertility or understand why God allows some to go through infertility, but we're two people who love God, want children, want to make some sense of the situation, and want God to use our infertility struggles in others' lives.

We had been married three years when we started trying to have children. We'd just moved to a new city after I graduated seminary for my first full-time ministry position. After trying unsuccessfully for a year and a half we figured it was time to ask some questions. We were both healthy, fit, and young. Sex was good. What could be wrong?

After much testing and getting poked with lots of needles, we discovered the problem was with me (Casey). It was the typical guy problem (low sperm count), but it was enough of a problem for the doctor to tell us we would never have kids without adopting or seeking help from an infertility specialist. So we did both. We started the adoption process with a Christian adoption agency, and we started meeting with an infertility doctor. We slowly moved along the adoption process while two attempts at IUI (Intrauterine Insemination) failed. We then took a break from the infertility world for a little while. After regaining some energy and sanity, we stepped up to the big leagues and began the IVF (In Vitro Fertilization) process. This was a year and a half after we were told we would not have kids. Amazingly, it worked! Julie became pregnant, we had two embryos to freeze for next time, we dropped out of the adoption loop, and our daughter, Bennett, was born.

After a year and a half of parenting we decided we wanted to unfreeze our two embryos and try to have another child. To our shock, the FET worked! Two attempts and two successes. Amazing! Miraculous! But at 10 weeks, Julie experienced a rough miscarriage. Devastating! We waited several months and decided to try IVF again. This time with a new doctor and without insurance that covered infertility (we had moved to a new city and a new job). We were very ready for our second child. This time it did not work. The pregnancy test was negative. Again we had two embryos to freeze. As soon as possible we had those thawed and transferred. As I mentioned at the start of this section, it failed. Today, we wait and wonder what our next step will be...if there is a next step.

The Cliff's Notes version of our story is...

IUI – failed

IUI – failed

IVF – successful

FET – successful but miscarriage

IVF – failed

FET – failed

This Bible study is meant for you to do on your own or with a small group. If you do it on your own, make a strong effort to talk with someone about what God is teaching you and showing you. To get the most out of it, go through this book with someone else or a small group of people who are struggling with infertility. You will get so much more out of it. Ideally, it would be awesome to do this study with your spouse. The more the two of you communicate and go through the infertility journey together, the greater your marriage will benefit from this obstacle that has been thrown in front of you.

When you come across **Q/D**, it means two things. First, it means Question. A question is being asked and you should write your response in the space provided. Write down your answers and thoughts. It will help you better understand what God is saying to you. It will also help you in the future to be able to look back at what you wrote. Second, it means Discussion. This is something for you to discuss with those whom you are hopefully going through this book. Whether it is your spouse, a trusted friend, a Bible study group, or a support group, talk about what God is showing you. Ask questions that God puts on your mind. Having someone or a group to talk to as you go through this study will allow you to get so much more out of it.

Q/D What is your story? Write out your story or the highlights of your story. Use the back of this page if necessary. It is important to see how you have gotten to where you are today.

Study 1: Why Us?

I don't think I will ever forget that exact moment when the doctor told me that we would probably not have children without assistance from an infertility doctor or through adoption. Julie was waiting in the car for me...not expecting the news I was about to bring her. I remember walking out of the examining room in a fog, asking the receptionist where the bathroom was, and sitting in the bathroom for a few head spinning minutes. Once I felt stable enough to walk out, I met Julie in the car and told her what the doctor said. Her reaction was normal. Confusion. Disbelief. And once the thought settled in our minds, the rest of the ride home was very quiet. Silent questions raced through our minds. And the end of the road for both of our thoughts were...

"Why us?"

"What did we do to deserve this?"

You look around and see lots of people having children who are not nearly as good of parents as you will be or are. It's not right that they get to be parents and you don't. It's so easy for everyone else to get pregnant, you think. Why have you been given the burden of infertility? It hurts bad. It effects you emotionally, physically, socially, and spiritually.

Look at what Psalm 10:1, 3-6, 17 (NLT) says.

O LORD, why do you stand so far away?
Why do you hide when I need you the most?

For they [the proud] brag about their evil desires;
they praise the greedy and curse the LORD.
These wicked people are too proud to seek God.
They seem to think that God is dead.
Yet they succeed in everything they do.
They do not see your punishment awaiting them.
They pour scorn on all their enemies.
They say to themselves, "Nothing bad will ever happen to us!
We will be free of trouble forever!"

LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless.
Surely you will listen to their cries and comfort them.

On more occasions than I would like to admit, I said something like this in my mind or to Julie. I wondered why God seemed so far away. We knew plenty of people becoming parents that we could run circles around when it came to parenting. We knew plenty of people having children not as committed to God as we were or who wanted nothing to do with God. And we knew that God knew our hopes and desires for a child...we told Him plenty of times.

Infertility is a problem you cannot get away from. It is always there. And it seems like there is always something reminding you of it...the pregnant lady in the mall, the dad

playing with his child in the swimming pool, a TV commercial advertising the latest minivan filled with kids, the preschool area of your church, a person's well meaning but insensitive comments, and the list could go on. Each instance leads you to ask, "Why us?"

Q/D There are some verses in the Bible that make me wonder even more "Why Us?" Not that we need any more reasons to ask it, but take a look at Proverbs 30:15-16. What is your reaction to these verses?

My reaction: "Why us?" Proverbs says the grave, a dry desert, a blazing fire, and a childless woman are never satisfied. If God wants us to be content in every situation (we'll look at this later on), why would He put us in a situation where we may never be satisfied? "Why us?"

It is a question asked everyday by countless numbers of people who find themselves in situations they don't want to be. It is normal to ask this question. And, more importantly, it is okay to ask this question. You are not being selfish or inappropriate when you ask it. God is not turned off, threatened, or disappointed in you when you ask, "Why us?"

Job had more reasons than any of us to ask this question. All of his animals were stolen or killed. His servants were killed. His sons and daughters were killed. He had sores from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head. His wife told him that he would be better off dead. How do you think Job responded to this? I love the honesty of the Bible. **Q/D** Read Job's response in Job 3:26. In what ways can you relate to his response?

We believe that one truth every person must understand and allow to penetrate every area of their life, whether they are dealing with infertility or not, is found in the following verses. **Q/D** Read each of these verses and write what they have to say about you.

Psalms 139:13-14

Colossians 1:16

Isaiah 43:7

Truth 1. Simply, mysteriously, and amazingly put, God created you for His glory!

Another critical truth that will transform your life is found in the verses below. **Q/D**
Look up these verses and write what they have to say about your life.

Jeremiah 29:11

Romans 9:16-17

Truth 2. Simply, mysteriously, and amazingly put, God has a plan for your life that is the absolute best for you and for Him.

We want answers, though!

In dealing with infertility, you may get some physical answers. You may find out your infertility is caused by endometriosis or low sperm count or some other physical problem.

Most recently, we used the Piedmont Reproductive Endocrinology Group and its great staff to try to have another child. They provide some statistics on their web site (www.piedmontreg.com) that give some possible physical answers. "The fertility (pregnancy) rates for normal (fertile) couples is about a 20% chance of pregnancy success per cycle (month). Most infertile couples have pregnancy rates that are generally 5% or less per month depending on the infertility factor(s) that are present. Most infertility treatments are designed to improve your monthly pregnancy rates from between 5% to 15% per cycle. 40% of all infertility is male-related (abnormal semen analysis). Ovulatory dysfunction (not ovulating or not ovulating consistently) and tubal disease/blockage are the most common female-related infertility factors."

But those are not the answers we really want.

We long for spiritual answers to our infertility.

But will God give us answers?

The fact is that we may never get the spiritual answer we're looking for. Earlier in this session we saw all that happened to Job. He eventually got to the point where he questioned God and demanded a spiritual answer for his troubles. **Q/D** Read Job 38:3-7 to see how God responded. Why do you think God responded this way?

God is more interested in us understanding and living out the two truths we discovered earlier than He is in revealing all of the whys of His plan. God's response to Job is pretty direct. Most of us don't want God to respond to us this way. **Q/D** Look at Isaiah 40:25-29. How would you respond to God if He answered you this way in your search for answers? Why would you respond this way?

Because God is eternal and the Creator of you and everything else, He has no equal. In our search for answers, the best thing we can do is constantly remember who God is. And many times, we must be satisfied with this...who God is. But despite the fact that we may never get all the answers we want and we will never understand all about God, God is very aware of us and what we need.

By seeking the answer to the question, "Why us?" you begin a journey of making sense of your infertility and understanding what God is doing in your life. Our hope is that this Bible study will help you in that journey.

Study 2: God Owes Us A Child

Psalms 127:3 says children are a gift and reward from God. What?!

Julie and I were both committed to God. I was a full-time Student Pastor. Julie was a teacher. I had been obedient to God by quitting my job in corporate accounting to go into full-time ministry. We waited until we were married to have sex, and we were both virgins when we were married. 99.9% of the people who meet us like us. Neither of us drank, smoked, or did drugs. Neither of us had been rebellious as youth. We got along well with our parents and siblings. Neither of us had any major sin in our life. We tried our best to do what God wanted us to do. Throughout our ministry to students, we had been “parents” to numerous students whose parents were absent from their lives. We could not think of one reason why we did not deserve a child, and quite honestly, it seemed like God owed us a child. If anyone deserved the reward or gift of a child, it was us.

If most of us were honest, we would eventually admit that we think there are certain things in life that God owes us. Even people who are not committed to God believe God owes them certain rights: good health, a degree of independence, a certain amount of financial resources, and at least a few good relationships.

Q/D J. Oswald Sanders in his book Spiritual Discipleship (Moody Press; 1994; page 106) said, “The only right a Christian has is the right to give up his rights.” What are your thoughts about what he said? How do you connect his statement with your infertility?

The question for us in this study is...Does God owe us a child?

Regardless of your commitment to God, everyone who deals with infertility is eager to obey God's command in Genesis 1:28a (NIV).

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

Be fruitful and increase in number means to reproduce! If I want a child and God tells me to have children, then does He owe me a child?

To truly get to the bottom of this question, we have to remove something very difficult. We have to remove our emotions and feelings. To determine if God owes a child, we have to let God speak for Himself. What we think and feel does not matter. We must allow God to answer this question. And, yes, He does answer this question.

Q/D Read Romans 6:23. According to this verse what does God owe you? How does this make you feel? What does God offer (notice it is a gift offered and not something He owes) you instead?

When you work, what does your employer owe you? A paycheck! You are owed wages because you work. This verse says God owes us death, or eternal separation from Him, because we sin. Not exactly the happiest thought. But think about it. God is perfect or without sin. He cannot even be around sin. To be in God's presence we have to be without sin. But that is impossible for every human since every person sins. Therefore, every person is separated from God unless they do something about their sin. We'll look at the way God has given us to take care of this problem in the last session. For now...

In all of God's Word, death is the only thing mentioned that God owes us.

Despite the fact that God does not owe us anything but separation from Him, He does show us much grace. Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve. Everything you have, your life, your relationships, everything is from God and is an example of His grace. **Q/D** Read John 1:16 and James 1:17 and write everything and everyone in your life that shows God's grace in your life. Be as specific and as exhaustive as you can.

Q/D Look at 2 Peter 1:3-4. These verses really take God's grace in our lives to the next level. According to these verses, what does God give us? How does this change the way you view your infertility?

The harsh reality is that God does not owe us a child...or anything else for that matter. This was a very difficult thing for us to admit when we learned of our infertility. In fact, it was months or maybe a year after finding out before we could say to God, "You don't owe us a child." And Julie and I got to this point at different times. It was a difficult journey getting to this point.

Q/D Read Philippians 4:11-13. How do these verses relate to the paragraph above? What is God saying to you? How important is the last sentence in these verses to your situation?

Q/D Are you at a place where you can say to God, "You don't owe us a child."? If so, how did you get to this point and how difficult was it for you to acknowledge this? If not, do you think you will ever get to this point and what might it take for you to get to this point?

Study 3: You Need People

Joe was a law student, and Susan, his wife, worked at a large corporation. Soon after we found out about our infertility, God put them in our lives. They went to church with us and volunteered in the Student Ministry I led. Throughout our journey leading up to our first experience with IVF, they were a source of tremendous support, encouragement, and fun for us. We hung out and ate out so much with them, they knew almost every detail (I mean every detail) of what we were going through. They asked us questions, listened a lot, and prayed for the details of what we were facing. They celebrated with us when IVF worked and were at the hospital with our parents on the snowy day Bennett was born.

One thing they did for us has to be told! In our visits to the doctor's offices, I had to visit the lab on a couple of occasions. The lab was where men went to deposit their "contribution" to the process. If you have ever been in a lab, you know the doctor's office provides videos and magazines to encourage men in their endeavor. Julie and I had decided from the beginning that we did not want pornography to have any role in my deposit, so she went to the lab and helped me make the deposit (that was probably too much information...sorry). On the night before our IVF retrieval, Joe and Susan presented us with a gift. It was a gift basket filled with items to make our retrieval more enjoyable. Some of the items in the gift basket included:

- Chex Mix to snack on in the waiting room...we always had to wait a long time at that doctor's office
- popcorn to enjoy while we watched the movies provided in the lab (for the record...we did not watch any of these)
- a magazine to replace the ones provided in the lab
- disinfectant wipes to clean the lab (the lab was very nice and clean but it felt dirty having all that pornography around)
- gummy worms representing my donation
- Cadbury chocolate eggs representing Julie's donation

Going into a stressful situation like retrieval, their gift gave us just what we needed: lots of laughter and the reminder that we had their support and friendship as we went through this! What great friends to have during a time like this!

One other group of people we have in our lives is our prayer group. Each time we go through some type of infertility procedure we carefully select people we know will pray, be sensitive to us, and respect our desire to keep our situation confidential. It consists of family members and close friends who live in our city and clear across the country. They pray for us through the peaks and valleys of each day. To this day, we have a bond unlike any other with this group of people.

There is one fact you must come to grips with in your struggle with infertility:

Most people will not understand your struggle. There will be family members, friends, coworkers, neighbors, acquaintances, and strangers who will not understand what you're going through. This is a reality of infertility.

Although sad, it is also true that most pastors and churches will not understand what you're going through. For many reasons, they are usually so focused on adults and their children that they forget about those adults who cannot have children.

This is why establishing a small group of people to support and pray for you is so vital. You need people in your life who will ask you how you are doing, mean it, and want to listen to the truth. You need people in your life who know what is really going on in your life. You need people with whom you can share your feelings and stories. You need people who get on the internet to learn all they can about infertility and the various procedures instead of asking you a million questions. You need people in your life who will care about you and for you.

Q/D Read the following verses and write down the benefits of allowing God to put people in your life who can care about you and for you.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

1 Peter 3:8

1 John 4:11-12

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Romans 15:7

Q/D Who do you have in your life that helps you experience the benefits of these verses?

It is also important for you to eventually have other people in your life who are dealing with infertility. Early on, Julie and I decided to tell our prayer group that we wanted

God to use our infertility to minister to others going through similar experiences. We told them it was okay to share our struggles with those they met or heard of who were dealing with infertility. I cannot tell you how incredibly God has used us because we were willing to use our hurt for His glory.

- Julie was reconnected to a good friend of hers from high school who was dealing with infertility issues. They are now close friends again.
- We were reconnected with a couple of friends from college who were now married and dealing with infertility.
- Julie was reconnected to an old friend from her early childhood who now lives on the other side of the country.
- We were reconnected with my college academic advisor who adopted because of infertility issues.
- Julie led an infertility Bible study at our church and connected with a group of women with a variety of infertility stories and issues.

Don't force this to happen, but begin to seek these types of relationships when you are ready for them. And once you are ready, expect God to put people in your life quickly.

Q/D Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. What do these verses have to say about allowing God to use our infertility to minister to others?

Q/D You need people in your life who will care about and for you! Why?

Q/D You need people in your life **you** can care about and care for! Why?

Study 4: Let It Out

When we arrived at the doctor's office, he immediately did an ultrasound to see what was going on. Two days earlier the ultrasound showed a healthy, active baby. On this day, the ultrasound showed no signs of a baby. The doctor said it was as if Julie was never pregnant. We went from there to the surgery area for Julie to have an outpatient procedure to clean everything up. We'd never had a more emotional day in our marriage. Discovering our infertility was emotional, but at least that news allowed us some time to process it all. Dealing with infertility, being pregnant, and then losing the baby was like standing under a Niagara Falls of emotions. It was fast and heavy.

Julie cried a lot that morning. I wanted to. I almost cried numerous times. I wanted to cry with her, but I felt like I needed to be strong for her. Later that afternoon, I went to the store by myself to pick up some medication for her. On the way to the store it happened. I have never cried that hard in all of my life. All of my emotions came out. I pulled over to the side of the road and could not stop crying.

Letting out your emotions does not always mean crying, though. It does mean dealing with your thoughts and feelings in a healthy way for yourself and those around you.

Q/D What other healthy ways can you let out your emotions...other than crying?

Denial.
Anger.
Defeat.
Sadness.
Confusion.
Grief.

Do these emotions sound familiar? These are some of the emotions Julie and I have experienced as we have gone through infertility. **Q/D** Write the emotions you have experienced in dealing with infertility.

Q/D Read Ecclesiastes 7:3 and Matthew 5:4. How do these verses make you feel especially in light of what you just wrote down?

There are two sides to the coin in this session. The first side is you needing to be able and willing to freely express your emotions. The second side is allowing your spouse to freely express their emotions.

Being able to express our emotions is the easy part. We're all able to do it. It is the willingness to do it that causes problems. Men, most of us are weak in this area. I am stereotyping here. This can be a weak area for a woman also. It is important that you find a time and place when you can let your emotions out in a healthy manner. You need to do this for yourself and for your spouse.

There is a difference between allowing your spouse to freely express their emotions and trying to force your spouse to express their emotions. Women, you tend to be the guilty party more than the men on this one. Again, we're stereotyping. Trying to make your spouse feel guilty because they are not expressing emotion the way you think they should is wrong and unhealthy.

Every person experiences and expresses emotions in different ways and at different times.

Q/D Jesus let it out. Look at Matthew 26:36-44. On the night before Jesus was going to be killed, he knew what was about to happen and why it was going to happen. But look at how he lets it out each time he prays to his Father. Each time he prays he asks God to change what is about to happen. Don't miss the anguish and emotion in Jesus' prayers. He is letting out his emotions to God. But Jesus also reveals he knows that whatever God wants to happen is the best thing. How does the fact that Jesus let it out help you in letting out your emotion? How can you apply these verses to your situation?

Q/D When we let out our emotions, it is important to let them out to God. Why? Acknowledge Him when you let them out. Read Matthew 11:28-29. What is the result for us when we go to God with our emotions?

Q/D Just in case you are worried that God is not going to like what you have to say to Him or how you let out your emotions to Him, look at Job 1:22 and Job 2:10. Remember, Job had lost everything...except a nagging wife. How do these two verses help you? What do they tell you?

Will you ever get over infertility? We don't think so. Even when you get to the point where having children is not an option, it will still be a part of you. Hopefully infertility will be a part of you in a healthy way.

Study 5: Learn To Laugh

I used to get impatient with people who did not drive as perfectly as I did. I was known from time to time to talk to other drivers as they did things I would never do. When other drivers did something really badly, I would even let them know about their mistake by driving so close to their bumper that they could see the disapproval in my eyes. Then infertility hit us.

Infertility changed the way I drive and react to other drivers. I became much more patient with other drivers. "Why?", you ask. It's simple.

When you are driving with a "sample" of sperm in a sterile container being held close to your body that has to get to the doctor in 30 minutes or less from the time it was "collected" and the doctor's office is a 20 plus minute drive on a good day (add morning traffic, a railroad crossing, a school, numerous traffic lights, and lots of two lane roads between our home and the doctor's office), you throw out all traffic laws and courtesies. This drive turns into a survival race!

On the mornings I had to make this drive from our home to the doctor's office, I did things as a driver I have only seen in the movies. As I found myself driving in ways I had yelled at others for driving, the thought hit me...why are those other drivers driving the way they are? Up until this point, I had assumed they were idiots who were not as perfect as me. But what if they had some reason to drive the way they were? On the mornings I had my survival race to the doctor's office, no other driver knew I had a container of sperm in the car that had to get to the doctor within 30 minutes or else it was useless. I probably don't want to know what they thought of me as a raced around and past them.

But I can now say that I am a better and more patient driver because of infertility.

Infertility is a very serious matter. And since we're being honest, infertility stinks! But if you don't learn to laugh at it from time to time it will defeat you.

Have you ever sat through a boring sermon? Better yet, have you ever slept through a boring sermon? As a child, I slept through many sermons. As a pastor, it's probably not a good idea for me to sleep (or at least get caught sleeping) through too many sermons. Take a look at Acts 20:9 (NASB):

And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.

Other translations say Paul talked on and on, went on and on, or was long preaching. Regardless of how you describe it, Paul must have been speaking a long time. If I were listening to a sermon like this and felt myself falling asleep, I think I would find somewhere other than a third story window sill to sit in! This guy fell asleep, fell out of the window, and died.

I'm sure Eutychus' family did not find this funny when it happened, but 2000 years later

this verse makes me crack up. Maybe it's because I am Pastor and have seen more people than I care to admit fall asleep when someone is preaching. Maybe it's because I have a sarcastic sense of humor and this kind of thing makes me laugh. But don't you know, as time passed, some of Eutychus' family and friends began to see the humor in how he died? They found the humor in a bad situation. And that's my point to you. Find the humor in your infertility. It's there!

For some people, the laughter will just come. You won't realize you're ready to laugh about your infertility. It will just happen.

Others have to learn to laugh. You have to look for or create those lighter moments when you can laugh about infertility. If this is your situation, it may help to use some of those people who are caring about you and for you to help you laugh.

Q/D Read the verses below. Write what they have to say about learning to laugh about your infertility. Write how you can apply these verses to your situation.

Ecclesiastes 3:4

Proverbs 17:22

Create your own inside or personal jokes. Some other occasions we've been able to find humor in include:

- Having gone through IVF/FET four times, we now refer to the embryo transfer as hoping the velcro sticks.
- The term "the lab" will always have a different meaning for us.

One of Julie's friends went through some infertility issues. One morning when her husband was driving to the doctor to drop off his "sample," he called her from a stop light. He called to tell her, "Me and the boys are just waiting at a red light." That's finding humor in your infertility. Something small, but something that brings a smile to your face.

Q/D People will try just about anything to get pregnant. What are some crazy suggestions or advice you've been given to try to get pregnant? Which ones did you try?

Q/D Where can you find the humor in your infertility experiences? Write at least three things you can now laugh about.

1.

2.

3.

It is probably no surprise that laughter is good for you. Articles have appeared in medical journals, books have been published, web sites have been designed, and studies have been conducted all focused on the benefits of laughter. There are so many down and stressful times when dealing with infertility that your mental and physical health needs you to laugh.

Q/D What is God saying to you in the following verses?

Psalms 126:2

Luke 6:21

One final note about learning to laugh. Be careful not to put yourself or your spouse down when laughing about your infertility. You know how sensitive the situation is. Laughing together as a couple will strengthen your marriage and help you deal with infertility. Laughing at your spouse will separate the two of you.

Study 6: Without Hope, You Are Hopeless

For many people, hope equals wishful thinking.

Julie and I had a lot of hope, or should I say wishful thinking? We hoped my test results would come back different than the previous results. We hoped God would work in a way to cause Julie to become pregnant naturally...after all, "It only takes one." We hoped IUI would work because IVF was much more involved and expensive. We hoped infertility would just go away. Not one of these things ever happened.

I have to be honest, I am not sure how a person or a couple who has not placed their hope in God can get through infertility. I don't say that as a pastor, but as a person who has hoped in things and people who let me down and did not come through. Julie and I have had our hopes crushed. We have felt hopeless when we have put our hope in anything or anyone other than God. But we have never felt hopeless when it came to our hope in God. Hope in Who God is and what He has done for us has been the primary reason we have gotten through infertility the way we have.

For those who place their hope in God, hope equals confident expectancy.

Q/D How would you define hope?

Q/D Romans 8:24 really differentiates between hope in things and people and hope in God. What does it say?

Q/D Hope is a result. Read Romans 5:4-5 and write what produces hope in a person's life. Do you have hope? If so, in what/who and how did you come to have hope? If not, why don't you have hope?

True hope is a total trust in God, Who is unseen, that comes from suffering, perseverance, and character as God works in your life.

Q/D What are the results of false hope or hopelessness? Read the following verses and write the results of false hope or hopelessness. In some of the verses, you may have to think of the opposite of what the verse is saying is a result of true hope.

Isaiah 40:31

Isaiah 49:23

Isaiah 57:10

Matthew 7:24-27

Psalms 42:5, 8-11

Hope in God is not hope that He will give you a child. It is not hope that He will do what you want. It is hope in Him, period. Hope in God is hope that God is Who He says He is and will do what He says He will do. The only way to have this hope and to grow this hope is to know Who God is and what He has done. You must get in His Word and allow God to speak for Himself.

Look at what Psalm 119:74, 81, 114, 116, 147 (NIV) says.

May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in your word.
My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word.
You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.
Sustain me according to your promise, and I will live; do not let my hopes be dashed.
I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word.

Q/D Read Psalm 130:5. What does this verse mean to you? How can you relate to it? What comfort can you find in it?

Julie has pages of verses that God has shown her as we have gone through infertility. Through these verses we have found hope in Who God has shown us He is and in what God has reminded us He has done.

In addition to knowing Who God is and what He has done through Scripture, what other ways can a person gain true hope?

First, believe that life is not about you. It is not about being a parent. It is not about putting others first. It is not about doing good things. Life is about God. Life is about you making God look good and bringing glory to Him.

Q/D Look at Philippians 2:5-7. Even Jesus realized life was not about himself. It was about God. What kind of attitude did Jesus have when it came to who life was really about?

Second, believe that life is not about today or your 75 years or so on earth, it is about eternity. God is most concerned about your eternal life. And He wants us to use eternity as our perspective on life.

Q/D Read Ecclesiastes 3:11. What does this verse say about your ability to have an eternal perspective?

Third, accept God's forgiveness and commit your life to God. Become a Christian and be sure of your salvation. Unless you do this, you will never experience true hope. It is not possible. Only those who belong to God can truly know what hope feels like.

If you trust what Jesus did for you, accept God's forgiveness for your sins, and commit your life to God, you are a Christian. It involves a decision and a life-long journey. Very simply, here is how a person can become a Christian.

1. Realize that you do things that separate you from God. The Bible calls this sin. No one is perfect in what they do or why they do it. Romans 3:23 (NIV) says,

For all have sinned...

These sins separate us from God.

2. Realize that your wrong actions or sins are against God and hurt God. We may hurt someone else or do wrong to someone else, but the truth is we are hurting God and doing these things to God. Romans 3:23 (NIV) says,

...and fall short of the glory of God.

Not the glory of your spouse or anyone else. We disobey God.

3. Accept God's forgiveness by trusting what Jesus did for you. This is the decision. God is so awesome that He gave us a way to be forgiven for all of the things we do that hurt Him. The way is to believe that Jesus (God's Son) died for your sins. Jesus was punished instead of us. You must see your need to be forgiven and believe what Jesus did for you. Acts 13:38-39 (NIV) says,

Brothers, listen! In this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is freed from all guilt and declared right with God – something the Jewish law could never do.

4. Commit your life to God. This is the life-long journey. When you truly accept His forgiveness you cannot help but live differently. It is like you are a new person. You do what God wants you to do out of your love for Him and because you know His way is the best way for your life. 1 John 5:3 (NIV) says,

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome...

God wants you to have hope, but He cannot force you to have hope. It is your decision. Look at the relationship between the following verses.

Q/D Read Jeremiah 29:11-14. How do these verses give you hope?

Q/D Look at Lamentations 3:25. What must you do to experience Jeremiah 29:11? How can you begin to do this more in your life?

Q/D The heartbeat of someone who has true hope from God is found in Psalm 25:4-5. Could you honestly say this to God? Why or why not?

Hope came home, home to me today
And fear has run the other way
Words are weak, they don't know how to say
You know I still believe in you
And should my dreams fall through
I will be safe with you
So with every breath I can breathe
I'll sing about how you love me
I'll sing about how you love me

"How You Love Me" by Bebo Norman © 2004 Appstreet Music / New Spring Publishing, Inc.

Your Journey Continues

Everyone's journey through infertility is unique. Your spouse is walking through it differently than you are. There are, however, some common emotions and struggles, and we have tried to honestly look at some of these in this study. We're sure we have left out some things you are dealing with. Just because this study has ended and did not cover it does not mean you cannot discuss it. Talk with your spouse or your small group.

Use the six sessions in this book as a beginning; a beginning to openly talk about the feelings and emotions which are unique to your journey.

We hope you have not and will not attempt to deny your journey or bring your journey to an end. We have one child, but we want many more. We don't know if we will ever have any more children, though. There will come a point when we will know we have all of the children we are going to have. Every one of us will come to this point. You may have zero, one, or more children when you reach this point. But even then, your journey goes on. Infertility is part of your story. For whatever reason, God has made infertility part of who you are as a person and as a married couple.

The journey continues. Your journey continues.

We are praying for you. We pray that you will allow God to make you more like Jesus through your struggle with infertility. And we pray that you will allow God to use your journey through infertility in others' lives.

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