

Grace through Grief:

Miscarriage and Stillbirth Grief (Pregnancy and Infant Loss)

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This is part four in a four-part series on the topic of grief. It is our hope that through this series, God's people can better understand grief and see the role they play in helping others through it. God's grace comes to us in different forms – sometimes it is through the words and actions of a friend. We pray that this series equips you to be such a friend to someone.

Grief through losses during pregnancy can be especially difficult. Understanding the distinct hardships of pregnancy and infant loss helps us better understand how to help someone who has gone through such an experience.

The difference between miscarriage and stillbirth

Miscarriage, or early pregnancy loss, happens before the 20th week of pregnancy. Stillbirth occurs after the 20th week of pregnancy. Although miscarriage is a common term, the term can cause many emotions if one assumes that something was amiss in carrying the baby to term. As a result, many now refer to the loss of a baby prior to the 20th week of pregnancy as "pregnancy loss".

How common is it?

- It is estimated the 10-20% of pregnancies end in miscarriage. This percentage is likely higher as the loss may happen before a woman realizes she is pregnant.
- Stillbirths occur in 1 in 160 births.
- Often the reason for a miscarriage is unknown, but most occur because the fetus is not developing properly. It is estimated that about 50 percent of miscarriages are the result of a missing or extra chromosome.
- Things that do NOT cause miscarriage: exercise, sexual intercourse, work.
- Keep in mind that miscarriage is not the mother's fault. It is not caused by something she did or did not do.

The distinct hardships of Pregnancy Loss

Miscarriage is often recognized within the subcategory of grief known as "Disenfranchised Grief." This type of sorrow is sometimes referred to as "hidden grief" because it is unacknowledged or invalidated by social norms. Because of this stigma, the grief and healing journey is particularly difficult to process. And if the loss happens early in the pregnancy, many friends and family may not understand that some women already have an extraordinary bond with the baby.

Miscarriage is difficult to talk about, especially if people know about your pregnancy. The thought of informing them of the loss can be excruciating.

Typically, there are very few people who know about a pregnancy in the early months, making your support network small. This can make you feel very isolated, especially since this type of loss usually goes unacknowledged by the outside world. Because of this, you may feel that people expect you to go on with daily tasks as if nothing has happened.

There is a physical component to miscarriage as well. It is important that the mother allow the body time to heal.



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Men and women grieve differently

Parents experience distinct levels of bonding with a baby. A woman can begin bonding from the moment she has a positive pregnancy test. The father may start to bond later, perhaps when he sees an ultrasound picture or feels the baby kick. Real bonding may not develop until after the baby is born, especially for men. Because of this, men may seem less affected when the loss of a baby occurs early in pregnancy. These differences may cause strain in the relationship when working through grief and acknowledging the loss.

Typically, with miscarriage, there is no funeral service or other memorial to help with the healing process.

However, there are rituals you can implement to memorialize the loss:

- Name your baby
- Write a letter to your baby and share your feelings and your grief. Write about the dreams you had for him or her. It does not have to be complicated. Simply write from the heart.
- Plant a tree or flowers.
- Donate a park bench in the baby's honor.
- Include a ritual that has meaning and brings you comfort.
- Find comfort in God's promises to be near in times of trial and sadness.
- We know that Jesus mourned the death of his friend Lazarus. The Bible tells us that in his sorrow, Jesus wept.
- We hear in Romans 8:28 that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose. We are reminded in His Word that it is impossible for us to understand His decisions and His ways. How great are His wisdom and knowledge!
- God also blesses those who persevere under trials, as we hear in James 1 verse 12: "Blessed is the one who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. "

This may be a time when you or someone you know cannot find the words to say. That's OK. When you are at a loss, others will come through. God delivers His grace through friends, pastors, and others such as Christian counselors who offer words when we do not have them. Most importantly, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us and delivers our wordless prayers to the throne of God (Romans 8:26).

I hope you have the opportunity to be such a friend or resource to someone in need. Below is a prayer you can share, written by Rachel Wojo for those who are grieving.

Prayer for When I Cannot Understand

Dear Father,

Today was one of those days - You know the ones. When life just doesn't make sense. When the world seems so unfair. We need you Lord, I need you. I need You to wrap Your arms around me and help me understand that it's a good thing I don't understand everything. How can I possibly comprehend your plan of intricacy and detail for the entire world? You are God. I am not. You spoke the world into existence. You shaped humans from dust. And only You can create beauty from ashes. May I anticipate the exquisite work of your hands to transform my nothing into Your everything. Amen.

-Rachel Wojo

Read our entire Grace through Grief series here: [**The Types and Stages of Grief, Surviving the Death of a Spouse, Grieving as a Grandparent, Miscarriage and Stillbirth Grief**](#)

Do you or a loved one need counseling help? Appointments with our counselors can be requested online through our [**Request an Appointment page**](#) or by calling 800-438-1772.