A Proposal for a Local Church Infertility Ministry

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ABSTRACT

A PROPOSAL FOR A LOCAL CHURCH INFERTILITY MINISTRY

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
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How is the church addressing the difficult issue of infertility? Pastors may not be adequately trained to handle the demon of infertility, which is a growing epidemic. Thirteen Scriptural remedies for the struggle of infertility are proposed in the form of a manual which is designed to equip and be implemented by churches. The hope is that churches will effectuate either a group dynamic or individual canvas for a detailed analysis of what Scripture teaches about infertility. Research involves surveying pastors and infertile couples about what they believe is being done in churches to relieve the sting of infertility. Results prove that there is an undeniable need for support for couples within the church involving this agonizing issue. A biblically-based manual is presented that focuses specifically on this burdensome trial. Utilizing it, churches will effectively be able to minister to couples and help them forge through the fire of infertility.

Abstract length: 150 words
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband of thirteen years and counting. At least we are able to count something! Even if our quiver is never filled with children, I will love you forever and will know that God brought you to me for such a time as this. Husbands are also one of God’s greatest gifts. I cherish mine and desire only that our love will never end. My husband has been the driving force behind this project. I would like to thank him for standing by me in this endeavor. I know it has not been easy. Not only are we faced with the almost unbearable pain of infertility, but we have been bent beneath our loads as I have striven to undertake the task of this project. You held me up when I was too weak to stand. You breathed new life into my efforts when I felt like giving up. You are the light in my life that keeps shining when mine blows out. I love you.

My daddy has always believed in me, and like no other. Even when things are at their gloomiest, he manages to make me laugh. Thank you for building me up Dad. I need you.

For the professors and mentors who are in the business of sticking by me until I graduate, thank you.

Finally, I thank my mother. I made her last because she was my beginning also. So, from beginning to end, my mother has believed in me and has prayed me through life. She is the reason why I want to become a mother. She is who I want to be. Mom, we did it, and I thank you.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

On a very bright and sunny Mother’s Day morning, a couple left bruised and battered by one of life’s unexplainable misfortunes walks hand in hand and expressionless into the quaint little church that they have been members of for almost a year. Hoping to find some solace and respite for their cruel and somewhat punishing torment of infertility, they have sought answers and support from not only the pastor but also from other members of their congregation for quite some time. The church seems to have everything they have been searching for in a church family and they have tried to blend in and become part of the organization in several ways.

As the couple enters the church, they take notice of their surroundings. On this particular day, they find that most of the women entering the building are doing so with children at their sides or are joyfully carrying them in precious bundles; a feat they have only envied and sad to say, coveted for over thirteen years. It is their sincere hope that no one stares or takes notice of the fact that on this day, they are the couple that is lacking. They are the couple that this day will not celebrate. No, for this is the day for mothers, those women that God called to nurture and love His blessings that He bestowed upon everyone but them. At least, that is how it seems on this particular day.

They quickly find their seats and then they buckle up for a bumpy ride. Mothers everywhere are hushing their children, straightening their clothes, pushing their diaper bags under the pews, and nestling in; preparing for the morning’s super sermon about, well, mothers! The pastor begins with, “Good morning everyone. It sure is great to see all of the mothers here today, would you not agree?” The crowd claps obnoxiously loud, and the couple
steals a quick solemn glance at each other. The pastor then begins making mention of all of the
categories of mothers while having them stand and be recognized in the congregation. There
was the oldest mother, the youngest mother, the newest mother, the single mothers, and the list
went on torturously for what seemed like hours. Then, something unfathomable happened: The
sermon entitled, “Significant Mothers of the Bible” commenced. What? Did the pastor forget
something? The couple sat in teary-eyed amazement as it appeared as though their category for
best actor and actress in the role of most honorable infertile couple was never even mentioned.
Forgotten? Overlooked perhaps? This was very disheartening to the couple and during the
entire sermon he clutched her hand as she sat doodling baby names with the other on her
notepad.

Many infertile couples suffer the same fate in churches today. They wonder if they are
even counted as people sometimes. Just as divorce, alcoholism, substance abuse, battered
women, and other specialty groups are supported within the church, those who are infertile
should have some sort of haven to run to within the church to help heal the sting of infertility.
This thesis is an investigation of what is being done in churches today to help couples be able to
cope with this painful ordeal. As a result of the research of this project, the author presents a
model for churches which will serve as a method of training for leaders enabling them to
effectively guide and support the infertile couple through the Scriptures and what God has to say
about the subject. Just as an infertile woman is barren and void of the pleasures of motherhood,
the Bible is reciprocally pregnant with Scripture bearing sweet balm to her wounds. The
Psalmist writes, “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.”¹

¹ Psalm 147:3 (Ryrie Study Bible) KJV. Unless otherwise noted, the King James Version Ryrie Study
Bible will be utilized for this project.
Statement of Problem

Many churches do not make the slightest reference to those women who are aching in their seats when the blessed mothers are called to attention. “And though churches are increasingly adept at confronting a host of modern problems, they don’t seem to know quite what to do with those of us struggling with infertility.” These women may go ahead and accept the carnations that are being handed out at the end of the service because they are afraid that their inadequacies will be noticed. What is worse and for the same reason, some of these women will even stand with those mothers who are being mentioned. Standing for the wrong reason just makes the sting of infertility more excruciating. One lady who struggles with infertility mentioned, “After a while, I found myself wanting to skip church because it hurt so much to be there.” She stated further, “I know others who ended up leaving their churches altogether, precisely because they felt abandoned during their struggle with infertility.”

Pastors are supposed to shepherd all of the sheep. This means, they are to comfort, care for, and guide them in all situations. The pastor is called and equipped to guide the flock through the Scriptures and to teach what God has to say about certain issues. He is supposed to provide biblical support and answers for his congregation and point to the only opinion that really matters at all; God’s. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

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3 Ibid.

4 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
There are simply not enough churches, if any at all, who place a focus specifically on those dying on the inside from the sting of infertility. Traditionally, church is a place where one could go and lay all of his or her problems at Jesus’ feet and seek and receive comfort on a weekly basis. However, the problem is where there are so many focus groups on every type of circumstance known to man including homosexuality and domestic abuse, there does not seem to be even a scintilla of churches that lift up the couple plagued with the torment of infertility. A sermon or two every now and then on Sarah and Abraham just may not be enough.

**Statement of Limitations**

To an extent, this thesis will prove that there are quite a few churches that lack the necessary training and skills to not only be able to identify with the infertile couple but to provide support and guide them through the Scriptures pointing to what God has to say on the issue. However, this investigation is not without its limitations. First, only twenty-five pastors were surveyed with regard to this matter. Being that there are hundreds of thousands of churches worldwide, the analysis is grossly inconclusive. However, the pastors interviewed were from several different states and countries providing an array of opinions which all seem to point to the dilemma portrayed in this thesis. The author of this project attended many classes in Seminary where her research took on a more personal note as she petitioned some class mates from various states and countries. Those sentiments will remain anonymous but are permitted for use in this research. Accordingly, surveys were conducted appropriately with those individuals in a more discreet manner.

Second, approximately twenty-five couples were identified and surveyed regarding the scope of this thesis. They were endowed with the survey through phone scripts (see appendices)
and via personal interviews. Some of the participating couples are personal friends and family of the author of this thesis. A few of the couples are from churches, and a few are from social media communications made in a private chat setting. The results from this circle of participants in this endeavor are unanimous and will be discussed in further detail. It is interesting to note here that the couples who volunteered to participate in this investigation did so without a speck of hesitation and were eager to know the results of the research in the future. There appears to be a yearning for support from the churches regarding infertility, and this research proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that a manual for churches involving the topic is undeniably needed today.

One of the limitations of this project was that there were not enough participants interviewed to make it completely conclusive. However, the results make it very clear that there is an unquestionable lack of support in churches worldwide when it comes to dealing with those who suffer from this growing epidemic. Says one husband from an infertile couple, “My wife and I attend church full of young families where people seem to have children all the time. Not only does such a church remind infertile couples of their infertility with painful regularity, it can also leave them feeling isolated and alone, out of step with everyone else their age in a different stage of life.”

**Theoretical Basis for this Project**

Scripture is a healing balm to all who are afflicted. Singing, praying, saying, claiming, and accepting the Scriptures as the true Word of God is key in learning how to overcome any situation in which life threatens. Therefore, the basis for this project is extracted from the mouth of truth.

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of the Lord as witnessed through His Holy Scripture given to man for all instruction and as a guiding force in a world that is torn apart by the sins of man. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Therefore, what does Scripture convey concerning the sting of infertility? Likewise, what does God say about children? Moreover, what does God say about the shepherd leading his flock through times of trouble (every sheep, every trouble)? These are some of the questions that make up the basis for this project. The blessing about the Word of God is that everyone is entitled to have it, hear it, see it, accept it, apply it, and claim it. Astonishingly, there is a prescription in God’s word for every ailment. After all, He is the great Physician. “When Jesus heard this, He told them, ‘Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.’” Jackie Mize, the wife of a publically known infertile couple, says this,

We have to totally change our thinking by renewing our mind with the Word of God on the subject of having babies, the same way we renew our mind concerning finances, health, and everything else. We can no longer think the way the world thinks if we want to have the results, the promises and provisions that have been given to us as born-again believers. We have to find out what God thinks on any subject and begin to think and talk the way He does.

God instructs in Romans, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” If this is true, then pastors should be able to provide a clear path from the teaching of God’s Word on the subject of infertility and then be able to support couples suffering from such.

This thesis is designed to shed light on the inevitable fact that some preachers are not going the

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6 Psalm 119:105.
7 Mark 2:17 (New Living Translation).
9 Romans 12:2.
distance when it comes to this type of malady and with those who suffer from it on a daily basis. This is not to say that those pastors are in the wrong. What this project speculates is the fact that many pastors are not specially educated or trained in most medical matters, and therefore it is more perplexing for them to focus specifically on certain issues if they are not more aware about them.

Given the nature of this thesis, it is especially important to note the limitations on the pastors as well; however, where there is a quandary identified, God offers the solution. Therefore, the theoretical basis for this project is extracted from the very breath of God who breathed life into every being whereby we are informed, “God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was good.”

A great place for a pastor to begin guiding an infertile couple would be for him to tell them that the very first spoken words of God, the Creator, to man, the creature, are in fact concerning family: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” How comforting it is for an infertile couple to comprehend that their desire to have children really is in line with the will of God. Some of those who suffer from this plague periodically ponder if what they yearn for is proper to ask of God. It is! However, there are a plethora of pastors who tell these couples that maybe it is not God’s will for them to be parents. It is a predicament indeed because God is the author of family. During the course of this investigation, the author relays God’s plan for family. She further proposes a manual for churches, equipping them with statistics and knowledge concerning infertility so that they may be able to guide couples through the Scriptures with therapeutic help from the Lord concerning the topic. For such a time as this, it is needed. “Who

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10 Genesis 1:31.

11 Genesis 1:28.
can say but that God has brought you into the palace for just such a time as this?" God brought Esther into the palace at just the right time. She had just the right connections that she needed, and her life was changed for evermore because she trusted and obeyed the Lord. Likewise, pastors are called to reach the flock and to teach them and guide them concerning life’s toughest perplexities. When people come seeking, they should not leave still seeking! Therefore, this concentration is ultimately designed to equip the pastor with more tools for his toolbox. In turn, he could aid in the repair of those seeking solace and answers from God surrounding the pain of infertility.

**Statement of Methodology**

This project came about due to the author’s personal connection with the subject of infertility. She and her husband have struggled for years to be able to conceive, and what she found through her own trial enlightens and sets the stage for this thesis project. The author recognizes the need for leadership, guidance, and support from within the church on this issue. She feels that if she is only one part of the body that is suffering, then there may be others. Are others hurting as much? Do others feel left out on Mother’s Day at church? Are there not any support groups in my church or others that I could become a part of and seek solace from? Does anyone here care about my problem? These are some of the personal questions buried deep within the author that birthed the foundation of this project.

Accordingly, the project in its entirety is designed to shed light upon the subject of infertility and the way that it is portrayed and dealt with within the sacred walls of the church. (LIGHT is emphasized and is projected here as the true voice of the Lord, as understood from

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12 Esther 4:14.
God’s Word.) It begins with an introduction that provides insight to a real dilemma that exists within the church. Although the problem may only seem to exist for the couple struggling with infertility, it is worthy enough to be investigated further by pastors as the lack thereof could result in a detrimental loss in the church. Couples have indeed left the church due to a perception of lack of acknowledgement of their pain and suffering.

Included in the introduction is the theoretical basis for the thesis. As the reader is drawn into the thesis by an identifiable couple whom all could relate to in some way or another, the author begins to illuminate the audience as to the reasoning behind such an investigation. When a person goes to a movie, he goes with intent to comprehend what he is watching and hopefully identify with the characters in some way. Even though there are many people who have never been introduced to the torturous sting of infertility, this author wishes for her audience to identify with a little something more than the focus on such. She wants her readers to understand that where there is a problem, God always offers a solution. The author introduces the reader to the players who are those plagued by infertility. Then, she sets the stage by introducing the plot which is that there is a problem with how infertility is handled in churches.

The methodology utilized in this project is also housed in its introduction and could be considered the backbone of this investigation or the cast of characters, music, technical help and support, and so forth. The villain is cast as infertility. The supporting actors are the pastors and the leadership of the church, and the hero of the story is the manual inspired by Scripture, written and proposed by the infertile author herself. The introduction concludes with the last scene of a review of literature summarized for this project. In summation, the introduction provides a glance into the project as a whole.
Chapter two focuses upon the villain of the story: Infertility. Definitions, statistics, disadvantages, and ramifications will be dissected. It is critical for the reader to understand why it is so important that the church must provide support for those facing this type of circumstance. The only way to fully comprehend this is to glean as much as possible about the issue that needs to be addressed within the church. Infertility has an undertone of impending finality. After a diagnosis of infertility, some couples may feel as though life dealt them a death blow. Death could also mean losing hope, the dream, or the desires of the heart. God even says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish. . .”\textsuperscript{13} This chapter opens the eyes of the reader to the problem of infertility and will conclude with a personal submission from the author.

Chapter three displays the research portion of this project. Through several avenues such as surveys, phone interviews, personal interviews, opinions compiled by internet reviews and by personal testimonies, this chapter reveals the crux of the matter of this thesis. Groups of pastors and groups of infertile couples were interviewed either via survey or personal conversations with the author. Then, the surveys and conversations were compiled in such a way as to provide an insight to the quandary addressed in this study. What will captivate the reader is that all of the opinions mainly line up with each other in a unanimous totality which points to the fact that the stated problem really does exist. Further, all participants seem to agree that a training manual and support guide through the Scriptures for the infertile couple is something that is very much needed in churches today.

The fourth chapter introduces and proposes a model for churches in the form of a manual which will both educate the leader about the woes of infertility as well as provide support for the infertile couples or individuals within the church. It is vital to note that this manual is not only

\textsuperscript{13} Proverbs 29:18 (King James Version).
appropriate for couples and individuals within the church who suffer from infertility but is also a great avenue for reaching the unchurched who are seeking answers for the same problem. Just imagine if those who were unchurched and infertile were seeking just the right church home that would welcome them with open arms and support for their personal struggles. If they were apprised that the churches they visited had some sort of manual and support group for them, it just may in fact draw them in and ever closer to the Lord. That is the hope for such a model.

Also within this chapter, the women of the Bible who were plagued with infertility will be revealed along with some shocking turnouts from their stories. The very fact that God uses these women to illustrate His view on infertility speaks volumes to the need for such a manual to be birthed and shared with the world.

The final chapter will then conclude the thesis. As the Scriptures and the research have provided the backbone for this project, the reader will find some treasure in the end in the form of some great news about a certain couple who struggled, cried, grieved, and then ultimately triumphed over the sting of infertility.

**Review of Literature**

Following is a review of the most prominent resources used in the making of this project. Each guided the direction of this venture not only down a path to point to savory remedies of Scripture for the infertile but also to recovery of the author’s own tattered soul. Threads of Scripture are the driving forces for this thesis, and it rightly should be as it lays the foundational story line behind such a heavy topic. Other cords such as books, blogs, sermons, journal articles, and personal touches intertwine throughout to make this project a beautiful tapestry filled with faith, doubt, hope, despair, pain, and triumph. Ultimately, all of the sources used for this thesis
project fit together for one main purpose; and that is to reframe the structure of the support
group at church to include infertile souls.

Books

Julie Irwin Zimmerman divulges that churches make the most out of problems but do not
know exactly what to do with the topic of infertility in her book entitled *A Spiritual Companion
to Infertility*. The offering from her book to this thesis really underscores the problem to be
addressed. Pastors and church leadership need a plan to be able to Scripturally guide the infertile
couple. Her book definitely portrays the inevitable fact that infertile couples search for more
guidance from churches on this particular topic. She says that infertility is not only a hardship
but an opportunity for spiritual growth.

In her book, *Supernatural Childbirth: Experiencing the Promises of God Concerning
Conception and Delivery*, Jackie Mize outlines what God has to say about having children. She
says that God designed bodies for reproduction and that children of God are commanded to be
fruitful and multiply. Her book is also an awesome autobiography of sorts as it displays her own
struggles with infertility and then how she triumphed when she became more in-tune with what
God says about infertility.

Richard Swenson discusses how it is very important for people to learn how to purchase
Reserves to Overloaded Lives*. He prescribes remedies for people who have long lost their
margin in life and who have allowed the pressures and stressors of life to overrun them.

stresses the fact that faith has yet to be utilized as compared to Modern Science. He says that
one day a certain religion will emerge that will tap into the awe and splendor of faith versus science.

Author Sara Hagerty and her husband had a bout with infertility for over twelve years. She has some very beautiful insights into the struggles and sting of infertility. Most especially, her contribution to this project hones in on the malady that is the infertile woman who suffers on Mother’s Day at church. In her book, *Everything Bitter is Sweet*, Sara shares her “Sarah” moments and wakens the joy that is buried deep below the surface of the infertile soul. She is also a woman who cried out to the Lord for years for a child of her own, and He heard her. He blessed her too.

In his book, *Facing Your Giants*, Max Lucado speaks of how there are still David and Goliath stories happening today. For his contribution to this project, he teaches how to overcome worry, stress, pain, and sorrow through purchasing back peace. The peace that is already ours is sometimes stolen by the enemy, but starting the day with the Lord first helps one reclaim peace and joy.

A famous pastor by the name of Joyce Meyer recently wrote a book entitled, *Get Your Hopes Up!* In it, she speaks of hope in the Lord as an anchor. For when the infertile soul has lost hope and is faced with the self-proclaimed knowledge that her day has passed for having children, it is important to remember that Christ is the anchor; and in Him only, there is still hope. Joyce’s offering to this project is that all hope is not really lost, and it is actually the anchor that is not seen because it is doing its work beneath the surface. Even when the storms of life toss us about, there is still hope, anchored within, anchored below. Christ will keep broken hearts still when everything else is moving frantically around them.
The lives of many women in biblical history are displayed in Randy Petersen and Robin Shreeves’ book entitled, *The One Year Women in Christian History Devotional*. The offering of these two co-authors for this project is that the story of Elizabeth, a barren woman of the Bible is divulged so that her story of infertility turned triumph could encourage infertile souls for decades to come. It is a mystery how God uses her story still today to meet the infertile on the same path she traveled centuries ago. Elizabeth’s miracle is being renamed over and over again today.

Pia Hansen wrote a book called *The Mathematics Coaching Handbook*. This resource was valued for this project for its offering of a famous quote: “Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.” This simple quote speaks volumes to the infertile soul. It is rewarding when people from all walks of life share personal insights from faith journeys because it projects God’s message forward that faith really is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

**Journal Articles**

Jeff Cavenaugh wrote an article for *Pop Culture Magazine* about how the church makes the trial of infertility either better or worse. He and his wife, Andrea, suffer from infertility. In his article, he speaks about how they felt at church as they faced this private and very painful issue. He talks about how women who are infertile such as his wife was believe that they are inadequate. His personal journey with infertility and how the church is not fully equipped to deal with the specific trial of infertility contributes to this endeavor. He furthers notes that infertile people need the church’s love.
The psychological effect of infertility is a vital piece in this investigation due to the nature of the problem as not being addressed adequately by churches. How a person feels is directly linked to what a person needs to glean from visits to church. In an article entitled, “Psychological Impact of Infertility,” A.D. Domar and T.M Cousneau display some of those effects that plague the infertile soul. To know what affects the flock is the skill of the pastor; however, if he is ill-equipped concerning what ails the parishioner, then it may be harder to reach some of the members.

Sometimes just a quote is enough to make an impact in a piece. Gibran Khalil says in his article in *The Gibran Khalil Reader*, “Faith is a knowledge in the heart, beyond the reach of proof.” The stories of the biblically historical infertile women used as examples in this thesis lay the mortar of proof for the foundation of this comment. Another such quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. pushes the point of faith as well. He said, “Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.” This quote was found in Pia Hansen’s *Mathematics and Coaching Handbook: Working with Teachers to Improve Instruction*.

Jane and Alanzo Smith wrote an article for *Counseling Values* entitled, “Treating Faith-Based Infertile Couples Using Cognitive Behavioral Counseling Strategies: A Preliminary Investigation.” In this article, the couple appears to imply that they have not found a single study that addresses the religious aspect of infertility nor the spiritual dynamics needed to be in place for a crisis such as infertility. This may be proof positive that the topic of how churches treat the matter of infertility has yet to be cracked open.

Kim Gray, from the *Calgary Herald*, wrote an article entitled, “Infertile Couples Suffering from Stereotypes; Childless Families Seek Their Place in Society Series.” She explains
how not being able to have children is likened to mourning a death. This speaks to the validity of
the sting of infertility and has its rightful place within this thesis.

In the *Moore to the Point* newsletter, Russell D. Moore wrote an article entitled, “Remember the Infertile on Mother’s Day.” One question that he asked in his article really forwarded the message of this project. He pondered how it would be if on Mother’s Day pastors would call the infertile women up to the front for prayer and invited other mothers and members of the congregation to unite in prayer over them. This quandary is perfect for the journey that this investigation has traveled.

An offering from Kim H. Lackawanna in an article she wrote for the *Buffalo News* with the title, “Aid to Infertile Couples Would Help Change Lives,” tackles the issue of insurance hassles that infertile souls have to deal with. This contributes to the theme of the project because it is another way in which infertile couples or individuals are plagued with infertility. Not only are they without the ability to have children, but most insurances will not cover treatment for the problem.

**Seminary Lectures**

Dr. Timothy Clinton, a professor at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, says people of today are searching to fill a hole that only Jesus can fill. In a class lecture from PACO804 in 2012, he stated that problems are spiritual and so must be the cure. Notes from his lecture advance this project in such a way as to reflect that Scripture does provide remedies for every situation, and infertility is no exception.

Ken Nichols, an adjunct professor and speaker at LBTS, spoke of how worrying stands in the way of spiritual growth. In a class lecture in 2012 entitled, “Circle of Control, Circle of Concern,” he discussed how to have a flourishing life instead of a languishing life. He offered
that people should learn how to let go of worry and let God’s Word flow downward to them while they are in the valley of fear. For an infertile couple, this is helpful advice.

Supporting scripture

God’s view on family:

Psalm 139:14-24 says that his children are fearfully and wonderfully made. All of their parts were designed by God to function properly. If this is so, then their reproductive organs are included in this passage. This means that his children were actually designed to create families.

Genesis 1:28 is a command of God that his children be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. His plan was for human kind to multiply.

Genesis 1:31 proves that God liked what He created. He created male and female in His likeness. He did not plan for infertility.

Psalm 127: 3-5 says that a man is blessed whose quiver is full of children. Children are actually a blessing and gift from God.

God’s Thoughts Versus his children Thoughts:

Isaiah 55:8-9 insures that God’s thoughts are higher than his children thoughts. This means that His plans for his children do not involve their plans. Those who face the sting of infertility are always planning the next step. This passage informs his children that God already has the next step planned and it is perfect for them. It is better than anything they could dream up on their own.

2 Peter 3:8-9 assures that God is not slow in keeping His promises. A day is like a thousand years to God and vice versa. Again, His thoughts are higher than their thoughts so
when they do not understand the timetable of God; therefore they should rest assured that He is in control.

Jeremiah 29:11 is a beautiful Scripture that promises that God has a plan for everyone. His plan involves hope and an expected future, which is far beyond anything they could imagine. There is victory in knowing that God’s plan involves hope because their’s will often fail.

Concerning Suffering:

Psalm 145: 14 reminds his children that God lifts those up who are bent beneath their loads. The pain of infertility is sometimes just too much to bear. There is the promise here that God will raise them back up when life’s burdens overtake them.

Romans 5:2-5 says that hope comes from enduring our sufferings. Also, the hope that their suffering produces does not disappoint because God poured out His love to them so that they may be able to endure.

Philippians 4:6-8 tells his children to think more positively and specifically instructs them to think on the things that will reduce their suffering and pain.

Psalm 46:10 tells his children to be still and know that God is God and that He is in control of their circumstances.

Psalm 34:18 says that God is close to those who are brokenhearted. Sometimes it may not seem as though He is close, but what a great blessing it is to be told that God is close to those who have a contrite spirit.

Concerning Wise Counsel:

Proverbs 1:5 warns that his children should gain knowledge through wise counsel and in turn they will be guided down the right path and will be shown what to do.
Proverbs 11:14 says that there is victory in wise counsel and that where there is no guidance, the people fall. There is safety in an abundance of counselors. Plenty of infertile couples seek guidance and support from the church, but so much more could be done in this area.

Promises of God:

Psalm 84:11 promises that God will never withhold any good thing from His children. If this is true then it also means that God is not in the business of withholding the blessing of children either, and God is no respecter of persons as is mentioned in Romans 2:11. He will not withhold the blessing of children because family was designed by God.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says that if his children delight themselves in the Lord, He will direct their paths. In this passage, they are told not to lean on their own understanding, and that is comforting. His children should not rest upon their laurels and rely on their thinking because they often do themselves more harm than good with the way they think, plan, and scheme.

Matthew 6:33 promises that if his children seek God first in all things, then He will grant them the desires of our hearts. This is a promise worth standing upon because it so much as says that if it is their heart’s desire to have children and they have sought God’s wisdom first in their adversities, then He will grant that desire. Every example that God displays in His Word about infertile women who cried out to Him first and then trusted Him with their desires ended in triumph.

Romans 8:28 promises that all things work together for good. This means that God is working behind the scenes to make sure that all of their discomforts, trials, tests, pains, triumphs, and happiness will be woven together for their best interest in life.
Isaiah 61:3 promises that God will exchange beauty for ashes. This verse is helpful for infertile couples who may believe that God has forsaken them in their endeavors to begin families.

There are many more verses throughout this thesis project that forward the message it attempts to portray which is that the church should be better prepared to specifically address the issue of infertility. It is vital for a church to be able to reach all of its people in all ways. This project is an attempt to push the infertile soul to the forefront for better care, support, and guidance through scripture. All of the sources were carefully chosen to supplement this endeavor and the most prominent were divulged here in this review of literature.
CHAPTER TWO

WHEN THE OVEN IS BROKEN:

Genesis 18:11—“Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.”

Interpreting Infertility

In churches where infertility is not focused upon regularly, it has been discovered through the research for this project that one of the main reasons is due to a lack of education on the subject. Pastors do not need to be experts on the topic, but it would help them be able to support infertile couples if more information was available to them in order to do so.

“Infertility is defined as not being able to get pregnant despite having frequent unprotected sex for at least a year for most people and six months in certain circumstances.”

The World Health Organization defines infertility as follows: “Infertility is a disease of the reproductive system defined by the failure to achieve a clinical pregnancy after twelve months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse (and there is no other reason, such as breastfeeding or postpartum amenorrhea). Primary infertility is the infertility in a couple who has never had a child. Secondary infertility is failure to conceive following a previous pregnancy. Infertility may be caused by infection in the man or woman, but often there is no obvious underlying cause.”

It is important for pastors to not only know the definition of infertility if they are going to guide the infertile couple in some way but to also hear what they are actually believing in their

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14 Genesis 18:11.


hearts; and that is, “we are broken.” It appears that infertile couples believe that they were not wired to reproduce. They imagine that they are impaired, damaged, or are unable to perform the very task that bodies were designed by God to do. In fact, they may believe, “If God has called His people to ‘be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth,’ then why has He not blessed us to be able to do so?” This misery is very real, and many cases where churches are concerned, overlooked, passed over, and undermined. This is not to assume that churches err in not focusing upon the sting of infertility but lack for the purpose of this thesis in this one particular area of ministry. Consider it an abandoned opportunity in some instances where these couples could benefit from instruction and guidance from the Word of God on the topic of infertility. The Bible is filled with Scripture pertaining to women who were barren and how as they cried out to the Lord in their circumstances, God opened their wombs. Pastors need to be reminded that one considerable way to reach an infertile couple is to teach about the women of the Bible who paved the way through this tumultuous journey and barreled through with children in tow. The manual that this project produces will discuss these biblical infertile women in greater detail.

**Causes of Infertility**

Primary infertility is defined as the absence of a live birth for women who desire a child and have been in a union for at least five years, during which they have not used any contraceptives. Many are the causes of infertility, and some of the factors that cause female as well as male infertility are shown in Table 1.

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17 Genesis 1:28.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Factors</th>
<th>Diabetes mellitus, thyroid disorders, adrenal disease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DNA Damage</td>
<td>Reduces fertility in female ovocytes, as caused by smoking(^\text{19})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genetic Factors</td>
<td>A Robertsonian translocation in either partner may cause recurrent spontaneous abortions or complete infertility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Factors</td>
<td>Toxins such as glues, volatile organic solvents or silicones, physical agents, chemical dusts, and pesticides.(^\text{20,21}) And tobacco smokers are 60% more likely to be infertile than non-smokers.(^\text{22}) Diseases such as chlamydia, and gonorrhea can also cause infertility, due to internal scarring (Fallopian tube damage).(^\text{23,24,25})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1 Causes of Infertility**

In churches, support and guidance for those couples who face infertility may benefit primarily from isolating the causes of infertility. Specifically, female teachers could support

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females who are infertile if they only knew some of the factors that caused infertility from the beginning. Likewise, male teachers or even preachers could help to support infertile males if they only knew the sources of infertility which caused the problem. Separating support cells in churches may help to reach the couple as a whole due to the fact that each person is gaining hope from being with others who are alike in their situations.

“Certain causes of infertility may only be found in females. For a woman to conceive, certain things have to happen: intercourse must take place around the time when an egg is released from her ovary; the system that produces eggs has to be working at optimum levels; and her hormones must be balanced.”

Female pastors or teachers could benefit from being educated on the causes of infertility only to serve as the starting point for a ministry to infertile females. For women, problems with fertilization arise mainly from either structural problems in the Fallopian tube or uterus or problems releasing eggs. Infertility may be caused by blockage of the Fallopian tube due to malformations, infections such as chlamydia and/or scar tissue. For example, endometriosis can cause infertility with the growth of endometrial tissue in the Fallopian tubes and/or around the ovaries. Endometriosis is usually more common in women in their mid-twenties and older, especially when postponed childbirth has taken place. Another major cause of infertility in women may be the inability to ovulate. Even more causes for infertility for women may include but are not limited to age related factors, previous tubal ligations, tubal blockage, uterine

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problems, and as the case was with Sarah from the Bible, Abraham’s wife, advanced maternal age.

Pastors and teachers in churches may recall that Sarah laughed at God when He promised that He would open her womb and bless her with a son. Sarah was infertile, and in her mind, as with most infertile couples today, she was broken. She believed herself to be comically past the age and well past the realm of possibility for bearing children. Sarah was not merely mocking the Lord as she was proving her doubt that God could work a miracle in her life if she would only just believe. Likewise, the same is true for infertile women of today who are not merely mocking God but who are simply seeking His truth in the matter.

As far as males are concerned with the issue of infertility, the main cause is low semen quality. In men who have the necessary reproductive organs to procreate, infertility can be caused by low sperm count due to endocrine problems, drugs, radiation, or infection. There may be testicular malformations, hormone imbalance, or blockage of the man’s duct system. Although many of these can be treated through surgery or hormonal substitutions, some may be indefinite.

The worst type of infertility for a couple to face is when the doctors have no explanation whatsoever for the reason that the couple is not reproducing. This phenomenon is known as Unexplained Infertility. Through the introduction of this project, the reader is introduced to an infertile couple going to church on Mother’s Day. This couple has been told by their doctor that there is no single reason that they should not be functioning properly with regards to having

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28 Genesis 18:12-13 (Paraphrased from RSB).

children. They have been informed that they have what is called Unexplained Infertility. In the author’s opinion, this is just a man-made term to provide an answer where there is no answer. Couples who face this type of infertility not only question God as to why they are unable to have children, but they are also left baffled as to why science is not able to provide a decent answer for their predicament.

However, in the Psalms, God provides a “beauty for ashes” answer for those who suffer from the sting of infertility in chapter 139:14-18:

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth quite well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, Oh God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

If God says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, then does that mean that the “oven” is actually broken? God has a perfect plan for every person. It is very vital for pastors and church leaders to remember that in every single instance or story about infertility in the Bible, when the woman cried out to God, He ultimately answered with the blessing of children.

To reiterate, in every case in the Bible where an infertile woman is mentioned as having cried out to the Lord for Him to remember her and to bless her with children, He did. This project outlines the stories of those very women in the proposed manual for churches provided in chapter five. Additionally, there is also an intriguing anecdote about a woman who was infertile but she did not cry out to God and chose to accept her fate without Faith. Her name is Michal. God used Michal’s tragedy in a vastly different way than those of the narratives of other infertile women.

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30 Isaiah 61:3.

31 Psalms 139:14-18.
mentioned in the Bible that offer beautiful conclusions. As for the demise in Michal’s story, God provides this warning in His Word, “Without Faith, it is impossible to please Him.”  

**Ethical issues involved with Infertility**

The church is significantly divided in some areas when it comes to certain treatments for infertility, and so this may be one of the main reasons that it is not focused upon as much as is in other focus groups. Table 2 highlights some of the ethical issues associated with infertility and its treatments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>High-cost treatments are out of financial reach for some couples.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Debate over whether health insurance companies should be required to cover infertility treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Resources</td>
<td>Allocation of medical resources that could be used elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Status</td>
<td>The legal status of embryos fertilized <em>in vitro</em> and not transferred <em>in vivo</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>Pro-life opposition to the destruction of embryos and not transferred <em>in vivo</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatments</td>
<td>IVF and other fertility treatments have resulted in an increase in multiple births, provoking ethical analysis because of the link between multiple pregnancies, premature birth, and a host of health problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Religious leaders’ opinions on fertility treatments; for example, the Roman Catholic Church views infertility as a calling to adopt or to use natural treatments (medication, surgery, and/or cycle charting) and members must reject assisted reproductive technologies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| DNA Defects | Infertility caused by DNA defects on the Y chromosome is passed on from the father to the 

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32 Hebrews 11:6
son. If natural selection is the primary error correction mechanism that prevents random mutations on the Y chromosome, then fertility treatments for men with abnormal sperm only defer the underlying problem to the next generation.

### Table 2 Associated Ethical Issues

When there are so many different moral issues involved, the church may be considerably reluctant to get involved. For the purpose of this project alone, these ethical issues may be parsed as the ingredients by which God purposes to fan the flame so to speak in churches that are amenable to participate in supporting the infertile couple.

#### Controversial treatments for Infertility

A multifarious amount of churches are divided over the controversy of how to treat infertility. In fact, some churches are compelled to believe that God does not need assistance in the department of granting the blessing of children to married couples. The truth of the matter is that He does not need the help. However, tremendous strides have been made in modern science to include the assiduous art and dexterity of assisting infertile couples to become pregnant today. Some churches view this type of assistance as a hindrance and interference with God’s perfect plan in the sanctity of marriage.

One infertile couple surveyed for the purpose of this project interjected these thought-provoking questions: “Isn’t this just the same as allowing a doctor to treat a heart condition so that the patient will not die? Or, what about a pastor who has suffered from a heart attack and goes to the emergency room where he is then treated by having quadruple bypass surgery so that
he is able to live? Why is it ok for those people to be saved in their situations but not us?”  

Those questions are fathomable coming from people who are actually forging through this particular type of fire. What constitutes the act of saving a life? Is it the physical aspect of bringing someone back from the brink of death? Is it to save a soul from the fiery torments of hell? Could it not also include the saving of the lives of the infertile couple who are facing the death of their aspirations to have children?

The Bible is frequently taken out of context by some to satisfy certain agendas. Even so, arguments on both sides of the controversy of whether or not to treat infertility have very valuable points to consider. The Bible specifically predicates that God has given divine gifts to those in the manner He deems orderly to do so. One of those gifts in particular that He bestows upon some is the gift of service. If this is true as is outlined in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, then would it not be so for the doctor who specializes in infertility treatments? It is just a stimulating spark to ignite conversation in this debate in churches today. Is it not at least worthy of a nod from pastors and church leaders to consider the arduous decisions an infertile couple must make in their quest for becoming a perfect little family? Even if the church is divided in this controversy over infertility treatments and for the sake of this project, couldn’t an infertile couple at least benefit from a support group and a guided walk through the Scriptures to learn what God actually has to say on the topic? This project is designed to shed LIGHT on the problem of infertile couples feeling defeated and consigned to oblivion from God’s family plan. The fascinating part to mention in all of this is as aforementioned; God blessed every woman in the Bible who cried out to Him in her infertile state. How did He bless each of these women? with children! (To be shouted as read for proper emphasis)

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33 Anonymous infertile couples’ contribution to this project.
To put another way for the skeptic; for every precedent that God gives in His Word of an infertile woman who cried out to Him for children, He granted her the desire of her heart. This is true. There is probably an overabundance of women who were unable to have children back in the Bible days as there are now. The element to notice here is that God provided several alluring stories of particular women in the Bible whose struggles were noteworthy enough to be mentioned and gleaned from for generations to come. These biblically historical women overcame adversity and triumphed only when they put their faith in motion. It is the author’s opinion that God knew that women would benefit from those stories long after the heartaches were healed and the children had gone on to become great and magnificent action heroes in biblical history. Churches may benefit notably from the fruits of this project and the proposed manual which will provide a lighted pathway on the rocky journey of infertility for couples today. Like the plethora of stories He chose to include in His Word about the many characters who came from behind or from those bent beneath their loads to ultimately be chosen by Him to become noted heroes in biblical history, the infertile couple was always on His mind. “The Lord helps the fallen and lifts up those bent beneath their loads.”

When the women of the Bible who were infertile cried out to the Lord, they did so after years of being bent beneath their loads. In the examination of their stories, the reader is quickly introduced to the horrific pain and torment felt by these women who felt inferior, inadequate, forgotten, useless, and abandoned by God. Infertile couples today go through that same gauntlet of emotions daily. One place they should find solace is at church. Hence, churches should be equipped to be able to address the issue of infertility. Granted, the church is not going to be able to treat infertility. As well, the church may not be able to advise the infertile couple on any medical issues. Howbeit, the church

34 Psalms 145:14.
could and should very well walk the infertile couple down the paths of the women and men who went through the same struggles in the Bible. This guided walk through the Scriptures on infertility would definitely provide a starting point for healing. This author believes that it is needed for her own healing process to begin. In turn, this is the framework and highlight of this project; to influence others in ministry to heed the call to support those who are infertile.

Shanna Lehr wrote in one of her blogs, “As I continued reading, (the Scriptures) I found this same verse again in the next chapter: ‘The Lord lifts the burdens of those bent beneath their loads. The Lord loves the righteous.’35 She goes on to say, “Oh that spoke to my heart right there in my kitchen. I realized right then that I was ’bent beneath my load.’ It felt too heavy to carry and I had simply fallen and felt crushed by it. I wanted to cry or call someone. I wanted to call for help, but the Lord was showing me that I just needed Him. He answered, as He often does, with His Word. While my overwhelmed might be different from your overwhelmed, we all have times of it. Scripture shows us that there is freedom to say, ‘I’m overwhelmed! And I need some help Lord!’ It’s once you’re there seeking Him, that he guides you to the words He planned out long ago; Words that would comfort not only my heart, but also yours and the many generations before us.”36

Psychological impact of Infertility

The medicalization of infertility has unwittingly led to a disregard for the emotional responses that couples experience, which include distress, loss of control, stigmatization, and a disruption in the developmental trajectory of adulthood. The consequences of infertility are manifold and can include societal repercussions and personal suffering. Advances in assisted reproductive technologies, such as IVF, can offer hope to many

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35 Psalms 146:8b.
couples where treatment is available, although barriers exist in terms of medical coverage and affordability.\textsuperscript{37}

Churches should sit up and take notice of the fact that infertile couples face much more than the physical aspects and emotional torments of the matter of infertility. It may have profound psychological effects. Partners may become more anxious to conceive, increasing sexual dysfunction.\textsuperscript{38} Marital discord often develops in infertile couples, especially when they are under pressure to make medical decisions. Women trying to conceive often have clinical depression rates similar to women who have heart disease or cancer.\textsuperscript{39} Even couples undertaking IVF face considerate stress.\textsuperscript{40}

The emotional losses created by infertility include the denial of motherhood as a rite of passage; the loss of one’s anticipated and imagined life; feeling a loss of control over one’s life; doubting one’s womanhood; changed and sometimes lost friendships; and, for many, the loss of one’s religious environment as a support system.\textsuperscript{41} These problems are not only noted in women, but also in men, and, emotional stress and marital difficulties are greater in couples where the infertility lies with the man.\textsuperscript{42}


\textsuperscript{40}M Beutel, “Treatment-related stresses and depression in couples undergoing assisted reproductive treatment by IVF or ICSI” \textit{Andrologia} (January 1999): 27-35, accessed February 14, 2015, National Center for Biotechnology Information.


\textsuperscript{42}Cooke, Ian Douglas, in turn citing Connolly, [1987].
Essential to the understanding of this author’s journey is the following. Melanie was a little girl with big dreams. Her parents always made sure that she had everything her heart desired including Easy-bake Ovens, My Little Pony, Lite-Brite, Adoption dolls, roller skates, play dough, stuffed animals, and Barbie Dolls. Melanie had a vivid imagination! She would pretend that her Barbie and Ken dolls were a happily married couple. She made them kiss and hug and go on dates to the movies and take scenic drives in the Barbie Fantasy car through the kitchen, bathroom, down the hall, and under the piano. She wanted married bliss like she imagined Ken and Barbie had.

One day, while with her mother shopping for a new Barbie, her eyes noticed something almost too good to be true. There in front of her, at eye level, was the most beautiful Barbie ever! It was a Bridal Barbie dressed in the whitest, most frilly, and laciest dress she had ever seen. From that moment on, Melanie’s dream of becoming a bride began to live and grow inside of her.

It could be construed that many girls have a big dream and big visions for marriage. Most of them involve forever love and a big family filled with children. Those dreams hardly ever involve the notion that maybe they will grow up and NOT be able to have a child. In fact, pictures of bridal gowns, big houses, little white picket fences, a puppy, a car, and baby outfits and cribs, and a list of baby names may be found in most little girls’ dream books and journals. Preparations for the future begin at a very young age for some. Heartache is hardly ever factored in so early in life.

Sometimes, however, those dreams may be shattered if the envisioned ideal marriage is rocked by the difficult issue of infertility. One out of six couples today face the ever-growing epidemic of infertility. Melanie grew up to be one half of a couple in this category whose
dreams of having a family filled with children have been harshly delayed by thirteen years and counting. She always said she wanted eleven children one day, and now she fervently prays for God to bless her with at least one.

As if the pain of infertility was not enough by itself, there are so many factors at play creating this painful and discouraging phenomenon. Married couples face so many stresses and pressures today as it is, but they are quickly compounded and made much more complex when infertility is introduced. According to the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, “About 10 percent of women (6.1) in the United States alone, ages 15-44 have difficulty getting pregnant or staying pregnant.”

When Melanie married later in life, she and her husband were made fully aware of each player in the cast of the play of infertility, which no married couple just runs out to purchase tickets for ahead of time.

A potentially terrible reality is realized when a couple has been trying for years to conceive and still has empty arms and an empty “hope” room decorated in pastels with Bible verses painted onto the walls such as, “Train up a child in the way which he should go, and when he is older, he shall not depart from it.” The “in sickness and in health” vow wraps back around and smites the couple in the middle of marriage bliss. Infertility would be the introduction of the villain in the play.

For churches and in biblical counseling, the issue of infertility in a marriage could be introduced as a storm to weather, and that is if the counselor is the one introducing. The

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43 “(CDC)-Infertility Fact Sheet” Office of Women’s Health, last modified July 1, 2009, accessed, womenshealth.gov.
challenge to be overcome for couples who face infertility is finding out whether or not each person will remain true to his or her vow in the midst of such a crisis.

In seeking support and guidance from church leaders or from pastors, infertile couples may introduce the crisis to the counselor however, as their fears or mainly their doubts in God. As the villain of infertility is introduced in a marriage, the game of life may shift and leave the couple wondering what to do next. Seeking guidance from the church is sometimes the first or only solution the couple feels they have. It is therefore important for churches to know about the matter and then guide the couples through the Scriptures to be able to hear what God has to say on the subject.

Did not God call His people to “be fruitful and multiply?” Are God’s people not called to replenish the earth as He commanded? These questions plague the hearts and minds of the infertile couple. They may think, “Surely God did not mean for only some to replenish the earth and not others.” This is validated thinking but not truthful thinking. God has different plans for different people, but they always involve better plans than those imagined by His people. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” What a beautiful thought it is to be reminded from God that His plan is better than ours. Infertile couples would benefit from being reminded of such at church in a support group discussing their particular misfortune.

In biblical counseling, helping the infertile couple to realize that God’s plan is always better is sometimes a lengthy process. Stepping over landmines of the emotions is a delicate task of the pastor or counselor when dealing with the sting of infertility. One valid thing that a pastor

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45 Genesis 1:28 (RSB in paraphrase).
46 Jeremiah 29:11.
could and must do is point the couple back to the cross and to the vows in their marriage covenant with the Lord. In doing so, and in time, the pastor may aid the couple in boxing up the pain of infertility and moving it to its next location at the feet of Jesus where it belongs.\textsuperscript{47}

The author of this project is still in the process of finding the perfect box as are many infertile couples today. However, Jesus is only waiting for the feet of faith to move. Sarah, Abraham’s wife, was finally blessed with a child when she moved her feet in faith and trusted God.

“Through faith, also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.”\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} Melanie H. Gruner, “Baby Blues in the Pews,” A paper submitted to Liberty University Theological Seminary (March 5, 2012). (exerts and paraphrases).

\textsuperscript{48} Hebrews 11:11.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH: INGREDIENTS FOR AN INFERTILITY PROPOSAL

The Consent Forms

Pastors and infertile couples were asked to volunteer to participate in the research for this project. In order for those groups of people to provide their own opinions to surveys which would benefit this project, they had to be given consent forms proving that they would volunteer of their own accord and that their answers would remain anonymous and would contribute to a very vital portion of this project.

Participants were introduced to the subject of this thesis by the title of the consent form, “What is being done in churches to help relieve the sting of infertility?”\(^1\) They were invited to participate by taking anonymous surveys which would provide the meat of the research for this compilation. Infertile couples were surveyed, and they consisted of both church attendants and non-church attendants. Approximately twenty-five infertile couples and twenty-five pastors anonymously consented and then participated in the project by taking the surveys and providing personal opinions on the matter of this thesis. Several states and a few different countries are represented by the participants in this project. As well, a plethora of various church denominations are represented. The span of this venture reaches far and wide as well as very close to home for the author. The insight gained from the infertile couples who were surveyed had a focus upon the struggle of infertility and their opinions on how they are treated in churches. The pastors who were surveyed provided input conducive as to how infertile couples are supported or not supported in churches today. Both groups willingly agreed to engage and

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\(^1\) Appendix A: Consent Forms.
more often than not, embellished their opinions with personal narratives and even offered relevant and beneficial suggestions to supplement the project.

The consent form proposed this purpose: “The researcher is trying to deduce what is being done in churches to help couples who are struggling with the pain of infertility. It is very well possible that there is not enough support or biblical guidance available for those who are facing this very painful issue. The researcher is trying to determine the best possible avenues for reaching out to this growing number of people within our churches today. Your answers are valued and maybe the driving force behind the preparation for writing a manual for churches to utilize in caring for those plagued by the painful trial of infertility.”

Those who participated were informed via consent forms that the risks of participating in this study are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life. Those providing input for the purpose of this endeavor were not compensated for taking part through surveys and interviews but were volunteers who shared personal knowledge and insight. They were informed that the data and any records of this study would be kept private and that they would not be able to be identified in any way as the research is completely anonymous and kept confidential by the author.

Surveying the Pastors for this Project

The author of this project attempted to survey approximately forty-five pastors in total so that she would be able to gain crucial insight from at least twenty-five participants. A few more than twenty-five pastors agreed to take the survey to help with this research so the author compiled data through phone interviews and through several surveys which were answered in

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2 Appendix A: Consent Forms.

3 Ibid.
various forms. Following are the questions from the survey and an overall glimpse of the responses as compiled for the sake of this project. To begin, the pastors were given this initial instruction: “With an exception to question #1, please answer all with either YES or NO.”

1. How many years have you pastored your church? Pastors from several different states, countries, and denominations were surveyed. The time frame for how many years pastors have led their flocks varied nicely for the purpose of this investigation. This particular survey question revealed that participants were not only pastors who lead churches for over fifty years but also ones who had just begun serving as shepherd of a flock. There were also participants who were in the middle of Master of Divinity studies who were not yet pastors of a church. Fittingly, several time frames for how long pastors have led their churches were represented in this exercise.

2. Are you aware of any couples in your church who are struggling with infertility? For this question, out of the twenty-five opinions of pastors used for the sake of this project, only four pastors were unapprised of any couples within the church who struggle with infertility. However, just because they are unaware of the amount of infertile couples within their church walls, it does not imply a lack thereof.

3. Do you have a program or Bible study for those who are struggling with Infertility? Overwhelmingly, the answers to this particular question were unanimous. Of every pastor who answered this question, all revealed that he or she did not have a specific Bible study or any type

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4 Appendix B: Survey of Pastors.

5 Table 1: Appendix of Tables.

6 Table 2: Appendix of Tables.
of guidance geared specifically toward the infertile couple. No table was generated for this question due to the nature of unanimity.

4. Does your church have a support group for those who are struggling with Infertility? Just as the answers for the previous question were unanimous, so are they for this survey question. Again, of every pastor who answered this question, all revealed that he or she did not have a specific support group geared specifically toward the infertile couple. No table was generated for this question due to the nature of unanimity.

5. Do you mention the infertile mother on Mother’s Day Celebrations at your church? It is the consensus of most of the pastors surveyed with this question that the subject of infertility does not get mentioned on Mother’s Day. For future concentrations, another profitable question may be, why do you suppose that this topic of infertility is seldom brought up on Mother’s Day? It may be beneficial to find out the reasoning behind skipping this touchy subject on that particular day at church. The author is of the belief it may just be because there is not plenteous known about infertility within the church. Could it also be because infertility treatments are actually the eggshells that pastors and church leaders creep upon when it comes to those who are struggling with the notion that they may never have children? Maybe it could. The manual that the author proposes in chapter four could possibly serve churches today and in the future and help to provide a starting point for being able to guide an infertile couple through the Scriptures regarding infertility.

6. Do you now or have you ever counseled infertile couples within your church? Out of twenty-five opinions from pastors used for the sake of this study, only three pastors had personal counseling sessions with infertile couples within their churches, and they were very general in
nature. A couple of pastors garnished their answers with the notion that the subject of infertility was not expounded upon by either the couple or the pastor and mainly, the trial and the sting of infertility was merely chalked up to more or less, the fiery darts of Satan which may plague a couple in marriage. One pastor added that a favorite verse of his for situations like these is Ephesians 6:16, “In addition to having clothed yourselves with these things, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to put out all of the flaming arrows of the evil one.”

However, the research for this project has ultimately yielded that not enough is being done in churches today specifically to guide the infertile couple biblically.

7. Do you have personal knowledge or education about Infertility? Several of the twenty-five pastors surveyed have a personal knowledge of infertility in some fashion. Some have family members or friends who are infertile, have counseled church members with infertility, or they are competent enough of the subject to understand the need for further guidance for infertile couples within their churches.

8. Are you comfortable discussing the issue of Infertility with members of your congregation? The overall consensus from the pastors surveyed is that they are willing to dive further into the topic with support and guidance if they know more about the issue. When the pastors were interviewed by phone instead of sending the surveys back via U.S. mail, some would begin their answers to this question like this, “Yes, but...” In conversing with these pastors over the phone, the author found that the majority of them wanted to expound here. One pastor added, “I am sort of worried about going deeper with this issue with couples I counsel for fear that I may lead them

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7 Table 3: Appendix of Tables.
8 Ephesians 6:16.
9 Table 3: Appendix of Tables.
10 Table 4: Appendix of Tables.
into my way of thinking instead of God’s way of thinking.” In light of that pastor’s offering to this exercise, it is vital for the reader to understand that at no time is it the intention of this author to shed any negative light upon pastors for the sake of this project. Simply put, there is a specific need for further guidance and support to couples facing the sting of infertility today, and it is beneficial to comprehend where some pastors stand on the matter.

It only makes for a better argument for a manual to be provided in churches to day which would assist in guiding the couples facing the pain of infertility through the Scriptures and what God divulges on the topic. Pastors, counselors, and church leaders are continuously and steadily learning day after day in their study time in the Word of God. The Bible is living, and it breathes knowledge anew every time it is read and studied. “For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Therefore, if more light is shed on the subject of Infertility for pastors, then they would be able to shed more light for infertile couples within their churches.

9. Do you believe there is a need for a Bible Study outlining the Scriptural support and guidance for those facing Infertility? Every single pastor agreed in several variations of answers to this question that a Bible Study of this nature could surely profit infertile couples within his or her church. Even though pastors were asked to answer yes or no, most pastors also expounded here as well.

10. Could your church benefit from a specific support group or Bible study for those couples who suffer from the painful sting of Infertility? Here, two pastors out of twenty-five conveyed that they did not know. The rest of the pastors surveyed, with an exception of one, agreed that

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11 Hebrews 4:12.
their churches could in fact benefit from this type of support group being added to the list of other support cells within their churches. The pastor of one church said in passing that there is no need for such in the church. For the sake of this project, that opinion is fairly welcomed. The author did not venture any further there.

At the end of the survey, pastors were encouraged to comment if there was more that they would like to add; a selection of comments is presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“This would be welcomed in my church.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Thank you for caring enough to do this. Please alert me to the introduction of your manual.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Do not know as much as I would like about infertility, but would be open.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Willing to add Bible study of this nature”</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“This is the type of study that I would have to discuss with my staff.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Please stay in touch. I would love to hear more.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“Waiting to hear how this ends, very interested!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“Thank you, stay in touch.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>“Churches do need this. Thank you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>“Would love to see your manual.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>“Never thought about this before, very interesting indeed, happy to participate!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3 Research Comments**

Of all of the pastors who participated by taking this survey either by mail or by phone interview, the overall majority delighted in the fact that a thesis project of this type is being conducted and were happy to participate. It appears as though a manual for churches to follow and also lead infertile couples through God’s divine opinion of infertility would be welcomed in churches today. A problem therefore was recognized by pastors, and this survey of questions posed to them reaches even beyond that problem to the solution.

**Surveying Infertile Couples for this Project**
The author of this project surveyed at least twenty-five couples or individuals plagued by the sting of infertility. They were surveyed, interviewed by phone, or interviewed in person for the purpose of this project. The participants were introduced to this investigation by the title of the survey, “What is being done in churches to relieve the sting of Infertility?” They were invited to participate and did so by volunteering to divulge personal information which contributed to the vitality of this project. The survey questions follow and with the exception of question #2, are all formed in the likeness of answers being either yes or no:

1. Have you been diagnosed as being infertile? Every single participant or group of participants answered “yes.”

2. How long have you been trying to conceive? Answers varied here from as little as two months to twenty-one years.  

3. Do you attend church? Here, nineteen attend church and six do not attend.

4. Does your church have a support group or Bible study for Infertile couples? Every participant answered, “no.” However, six participants do not have a church home, so the result here could be moderately inconclusive.

5. Does your pastor recognize the infertile soul on Mother’s Day? Two groups of participants avowed that their pastors did make some sort of passing nod toward the infertile couple on Mother’s Day.

6. Do you believe that more could be done for the infertile couple in terms of support and biblical guidance? All participants answered, “yes” for this question. Every group of

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12 Appendix: F
13 Appendix: F
14 Appendix: F
participants within the confines of this investigation that does not have a church home agreed that more could be done in churches for the infertile couples. This is an eye-opening discovery. Could this possibly mean that if churches supported infertile couples more than they do now, then more unchurched couples would actually attend? The reader is left to ponder the aforementioned quandary. No table is officially needed for this particular question due to the nature of its unanimity.

7. Could your church benefit from a Bible study and manual for the infertile couple? For this question, every single participant agreed that churches could benefit from a Bible study and a manual for the infertile couple. Some of the non-attendees asked if such a manual existed and verbally expressed interest in such. One participant added that even though she did not go to church, she would probably end up going if she found out that a support group outside of regular church service existed. For pastors, this conclusion could be constructive and serve as another avenue to getting the unchurched in the pews and maybe even on different days other than Sundays.

8. Does your pastor offer counseling for infertile couples? For this question, many of the couples or individuals mentioned that they did not know for sure if there was a specific counseling session geared toward infertile couples. However, many of the participants who said they did not know also admitted that they have never asked. Even so, some participants faced with this question answered “no.” Even still, some participants admitted that their pastors would probably dance around the issue in a counseling session, but they did not know for sure.

9. Would you personally benefit from extra support from your pastor concerning your infertility issues? One answer here really concerned the author: One participant actually admitted that while she does go to church, her hope is nearly gone so it would not matter anyway. In the
phone conversation with this participant, the author of this project asked the participant why she still attended church if this is the way she felt. The participant conveyed that she goes in the hope that God would pour a message onto her while she is there specifically about her torment in dealing with infertility. She expressed that she will probably not go to her pastor in search for answers, but if her pastor said he had a message for that infertile mother out there in the audience, she may sit up and listen. This is understandable. This alerts the author to the notion that in general, churches must do more concerning the demon of infertility. If only one is discovered to admit such an atrocity from the results of this exercise, then a manual serving as a guide through the Scriptures concerning infertility is needed in churches now. “Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is worth a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish. . .”15 To this person who answered in such a way, it should be noted that God is not willing to have anyone’s dream perish either. The authority to that opinion is found in Proverbs 29:18, “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”16 This must mean that God honors our dreams because He knows their value. He said that the people perish without them.

10. If you do not attend church, do you believe the church should offer support to the general public for those who face infertility? Nineteen of those surveyed answered this question with “non-applicable.” As for the other six who admitted that they do not have a church home and willingly elected to take this survey to share their thoughts to contribute to this investigation, every single one answered “yes.” One could construe this finding and take it to mean that even

15 2 Peter 3:8-9.
16 Psalm 28:18.
the unchurched would love a chance for some Spiritual direction when it comes to infertility.
This is promising, and churches should take note of this particular result and use it as an instrument for seeking and welcoming the unchurched.

11. Do you believe that you may attend a support group or a Bible study for those who face Infertility issues if it were offered to the general public? Every single participant answered this survey question, “yes.”

This research tool of the use of surveys was quite helpful and truly beneficial for the purpose of this project. The author was enlightened by the answers and humbled by a few of them as well. Some of the participants were even willing to expound a little further and felt that they were able to contribute to the crux of this investigation. The conclusion of this portion of the research completed for this project yields the inevitable notion that guidance is needed. The particular help that is needed is not only welcomed but should come in the form of some type of support group or Bible study as a portal to the guidance sought by those facing the sting of infertility. The author’s manual for such training and guidance is introduced in chapter four of this thesis project and is hinged upon the very research that governs the study.

**Phone and Personal Interviews**

The author conducted phone interviews for certain people to aid in the research for this dissertation. Those interviewed included family members, friends, and certain infertile couples who were met on this journey. The basic format for the phone interview followed the surveys for the pastors and infertile couples. The substantial difference in this method of research is that it allowed for a more personal dialogue. It also opened the lines of communication and allowed
the couples or individuals to actually feel as though their misfortunes were given a voice. This form of research was not only enriching but very enlightening for the author.

One individual in particular felt inspired to channel her issues over the phone. This individual is a family member of the author, and she had a few very thought-provoking things to share which are beneficial to mention for the sake of this thesis. When asked of this individual if she would attend a Bible study group within her church which focused upon infertility and its challenges, she answered, “I just might do that, but as long as I have been going to my church, there has been no mention of anything like that ever happening.” She went on to say, “It would just be nice to be able to meet with others who are facing the same fight as I am facing.” She added, “I just want to know how others are able to cope with the pain. I know I am not able to handle this by myself, and I do wish that something could be done in the churches to help in some way.” The author was able to identify with the problem and also sympathize. Many of the people who were interviewed by phone and also in person offered more than what was petitioned of them. It proved to be a sounding board when the participants were made aware that they were contributing to a solution to the problem as suggested in this thesis project.

Networked Through the Internet

Several pastors and infertile groups and individuals were also interviewed via personal chat and conversations through various forms of social media such as Facebook and personal chat rooms for infertility. The author of this project kept in touch and communicated with many of the classmates from Seminary courses taken together from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. Communication was maintained through internet sources, and all of the pastoral classmates which were interviewed for this study were in one accord that more support in church is needed in regards to serving infertile couples in group ministry. Many of the same survey
questions were asked of the classmates preparing to become pastors of their own churches, and every single person interviewed agreed that they would be glad to have some form of a Scriptural model to aid in the support of their infertile parishioners. Overall, there was really no opposition to the notion that more needs to be done in churches today to support those facing infertility issues. Some even offered Scriptural suggestions to contribute to this venture, which have been utilized throughout this dissertation. “The Godly offer good counsel, they teach right from wrong.”17 It was a pleasure to seek others’ Godly counsel when it came to gathering Scriptures for the purpose of this study. “A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels,”18 and, “Where there is no guidance, the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.”19

17 Psalm 37:30 (NLT).
18 Proverbs 1:5.
CHAPTER FOUR
A PROPOSAL

The Rising Agent

The problem has been identified. Some churches do not do enough to support the infertile couple. Where do we go from here? Discovered are the ingredients surrounding the fact that the oven for some appears to be broken. They are searching for answers to one sole question: Why us? This investigation has proven to be very beneficial in many ways and provides the backbone for the manual which follows. The concept of the manual which the author has scripted as a proposal to churches is designed to lead infertile couples and individuals down a Scriptural path to recovery and to equip them with thirteen Scriptural recipes or remedies which will aid them in healing their wounds. A condensed version of the manual follows in this study.

In reality, God never created his children to have broken parts:

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.¹

If this is true, then the “oven” is not really broken. What follows then is a condensed version of the manual which the author will propose to churches to remedy the problem of infertile couples not being supported enough in churches today. While churches are safe havens for all to attend, not all are being specifically guided in their secret torments as necessary. This is of no fault to churches as the problem has not yet been focused upon to this degree. Being equipped with

¹ Psalm 139:14-16.
certain tools such as this manual and all other manuals which churches follow today in order to encourage their people is not only the first step to recovery for those suffering from infertility but also another step for churches to gather the unchurched. Many more people would possibly come to church if they knew they were welcomed in their “broken” states. And, if the oven is not really broken per say, then all that is missing is the rising agent. Jesus said, “I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

**Answering Needs**

For Hope Deferred

By whom we also have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that the tribulation worketh patience; And patience experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

For those who have had their lives torn apart by the sting of infertility, all hope may appear to be lost. God blesses us with a gift through an example from the Bible when He shares the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. This was a person who was helplessly, *hopeless*. Her description may appear to be describing countless people who are struggling with infertility today. For instance, in mapping out through Scripture how the woman came to a point where she had finally given up on life and had tuned God out, it is not too difficult to comprehend why those who face the painful issue of infertility swim in a sea of negativity as well.

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2 John 6:35.

3 Romans 5:2-5.
The following is a paraphrased exert taken from a sermon of Pastor Charles Stanley of Atlanta, Georgia, in February of 2015: The Samaritan woman had already been married five times. She was living in adultery at the present moment when speaking with Jesus at the well. She had endured terrible rejection from her community, and they would ask, “What kind of woman is this?” She was mocked and questioned, bullied and rejected by those around her, and she was ostracized. She was empty as her needs were not being met. She was emotionally dirty, and she had tried it all, but nothing worked nor even satisfied. Her goals and dreams were shattered, and she had no hope. She turned God off. Her life was a dingy, dismal, and dirty mess, and thus, she had given up. However, one personal encounter changed everything!4

Just like that woman at the well, the infertile souls may also feel rejected. Sometimes they may even ask themselves, “What kind of person am I if I cannot even do what God has already designed me to do?” They are also empty and they feel that their needs are not being met. Some have even tried everything medically possible, and nothing worked. Infertile couples may feel as though they do not fit in the community of mothers and fathers. For the most part, goals and dreams are shattered and all hope does appear to be lost for most who suffer from infertility. Some may even think that God has forgotten about them as their dreams lay dying. “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. . . ”5

There is hope for the infertile couple however. True hope comes from what God has to say about the circumstance. First of all, our bodies are divinely designed to reproduce, and we are told in Psalm 139:146 that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. In fact, at the exact moment that the psalmist informs us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, he does so by

4 Charles Stanley, A paraphrased exert from sermon on Hope, (February 2015).
5 Proverbs 13:12.
6 Psalm 139:14.
reminding us of how we were made in secret. How is one fearfully and wonderfully made?

Well, it all started when mom and dad came together in secret and formed us through the miracle of reproduction. What then, does God proclaim about reproduction? “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.” Family is actually God’s plan for our future. God also says that children are a blessing. “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward.” And, “Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.”

Joyce Meyer states, “In a storm, one of the first things a ship does is drop anchor. The ship is tethered to something that is not moving. Everything around the sailors is moving, but they are not. They are anchored to the bottom of the ocean. Our hope in God can serve us in the same way. Everything around us is moving, but we are stable in Him.”

God orchestrates life, and one part of life that He has planned and designed is family. He wishes for all people to be fruitful and multiply, and actually, He commands us to do so. For those who are presently facing the trial of infertility, it is difficult to absorb this fact. Life has many twists and turns, but something that is already in place is God’s plan for family. Most people do not like to hear that the problem of infertility is a result of worldly issues and circumstances. How one eats, when one stresses, how one overdoes things, injuries, working too much and being too tired, pressure to do things appropriately and at the right time are all factors that play a part in hindering the baby-making process. However, it is very easy to turn a deaf ear when someone says that God still wants everyone to have children. It is His plan. We know this to be true because He says so in His Word. In fact, God’s first spoken words to man are, “Be

7 Genesis 1:28.
8 Psalm 127:3,5.
fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.”\textsuperscript{10} “Having a family was God’s idea; God thought up having babies.”\textsuperscript{11}

Hope could be restored to the infertile couple once it is realized that having children is in line with God’s will. When praying, it is important to pray that God’s will be done. If one is praying for children, then that is already in God’s will. What does God say about praying anything in His will, or praying in His name? “Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart’s desires. Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust Him, and He will help you.”\textsuperscript{12} Also, “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.”\textsuperscript{13} And also, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”\textsuperscript{14}

The remedy for hope deferred is to fill the heart and mind with what God has chosen to reveal about having a family. It is His will. “We are to trust and obey Him and leave the consequences to Him.”\textsuperscript{15} Author Dr. Richard Swenson prescribes remedies for people who have lost their margin in life and who have allowed the pressures and stressors of life to over run them. He mentions that the world is no longer holding onto hope. One of the remedies that he prescribes is to ‘hold fast hope.’\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{10} Genesis 1:28.

\textsuperscript{11} Jackie Mize, \textit{Supernatural Childbirth}, 25.

\textsuperscript{12} Psalm 37:4-5.

\textsuperscript{13} John 14:14.

\textsuperscript{14} Matthew 6:33.

\textsuperscript{15} Charles Stanley, (famous quote and motto)

When there is no Peace

Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.  

“He vies for the bedside position, hoping to be the first voice you hear. He covets your waking thoughts, those early pillow-born emotions. He awakens you with the words of worry, stirs you with thoughts of stress. If you dread the day before you begin your day, mark it down: your giant has been by your bed. Goliaths still roam our world. Debt. Disaster. Dialysis. Danger. Deceit. Disease. Depression.”

The opposite of peace is fear, worry, anxiety, stress, and frustration. It is very amazing to discover and note that one word, peace, covers all of these negative emotions. For the infertile couple, peace has long since left and has left the heart void of life and vitality. There is no peace when all the heart and mind is able to focus upon is the fact that there are no children in the home. How could there be peace when all that the mind is thinking of is that maybe God has chosen not to bless the house with a quiver full of children? “Worry is the nemesis of Spiritual vitality, and the positive flow toward a flourishing life begins in the valley of fear when we let God’s Word flow downward, influencing our perspective.” In other words, worry destroys the spirit.

In a marriage where there are no children, true peace is sometimes muddled. If it is God’s design for family that children are added, and an infertile couple would like nothing more than to have children, it is understandable then that peace is something that is feared will never be found.

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17 Philippians 4:6-8.
However, God offers the promise of a peace that only He could give; a peace that transcends all human ways of understanding. God’s peace is promised to guard those who pray with thanksgiving, about everything! In turn, this peace will transcend our ability to even comprehend it. In other words, human reasoning is then incapable of fully understanding the peace of God. When there are circumstances beyond our control, and all we seem to do is worry and fret about them, we are in need of a supernatural peace. God offers this, and all that is required is that we ask for it. For someone who is facing the trial of infertility, an example of this supernatural peace would be: An infertile couple may end up having seven children one day and then proclaim, “I am so thankful to God! That is a praise. However, an infertile couple who has been trying for fourteen years to have a baby may proclaim, “Everything is fine because we claim Romans 8:28, and we have peace in our hearts about it.” This then, is considered to be “the peace that passes all understanding.”

The way the world sees peace is through favorable circumstances. One day things could be going great and all is peaceful. However, if something bad should happen, then peace somehow goes away. What the infertile couple needs is the supernatural peace that only God is able to bestow. God did not design or wire an individual to worry. As a matter of fact, God’s Word says, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”21 Also, “Fear Not” is mentioned in the Bible 365 times, which equates to one “Fear Not” for each day of the year. Here it is important for those facing the trial of infertility to note that God never intended his children to worry about not having their own children. First, He

20 Romans 8:28.

21 2 Timothy 1:7.
commands it. Second, His design is perfect, and third, He tells his children to “Fear Not” so many times that it covers every day of their lives.

“Why” Questions

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed about by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.22

Everyone asks, “Why me Lord?” from time to time. For the infertile couple, it is more often than not. Why do we still worry about not having children when God has placed the desire in our hearts? It is because if we are not focused upon what God has already told us to focus upon in Philippians 4, the eye will deceive the heart in many ways, and, what is it that the infertile couple sees on a daily basis? Babies everywhere! Babies, and pregnant women! It is comical to read it like that, but it is so true. Those who face the sting of infertility will see it as a cruel phenomenon that everywhere they look and no matter where they go, there will be pregnant women and babies beside, in front, in back, and all around them. Here are some of the “why?” questions that beg answers. The answers are simple but appear to be hidden to the infertile couple for some reason.

Why can’t we have children Lord?

I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . .” “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.23

22 James 1:5-8.

23 Psalm 139:14, 16 (Amplified Bible).
“Let all things be done decently and in order.”²⁴

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time and it hastens to the end; it will not deceive or disappoint. Though it tarry, wait earnestly for it, because it will surely come; it will not be behindhand on its appointed day.”²⁵

“My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my foes and those pursue me and persecute me.”²⁶

For we are God’s own handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].²⁷

“Let us fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God’s unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].²⁸

“. . .Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, whey they carry out their wicked schemes.”²⁹

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”³⁰

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”³¹

“But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”³²

²⁴ I Corinthians 14:40 (AB).
²⁵ Habakkuk 2:3 (AB).
²⁶ Psalm 31:15 (AB).
²⁷ Ephesians 2:10 (AB).
²⁸ Hebrews 4:16.
²⁹ Psalm 37.
³⁰ Romans 8:28.
³¹ Jeremiah 29:11.
³² Isaiah 40:31 (New King James Version).
“There is a right time for everything, and a season for every activity under Heaven.”

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

**Why does it seem like everybody else in the world is having babies and we are not?**

“For there is no respect of persons with God.”

“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.”

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

“A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.”

“Be still and know that I am God. . .”

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33 Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV).
34 Psalm 84:11.
35 Philippians 4:13 (NKJV).
36 Romans 2:11.
37 Acts 10:34.
38 Hebrews 13:8.
40 Philippians 2:3.
41 Proverbs 14:30.
42 Psalm 46:10.
“Do not envy sinners, but always continue to fear the LORD. You will be rewarded for this; your hope will not be disappointed.”

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

**God, why are you allowing this torment?**

“But you must let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.”

“For I know the plans I have for you declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.”

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44 Proverbs 3:5-6.
45 James 1:4.
46 Jeremiah 29:11.
47 Isaiah 43:2.
48 Romans 5:3-5 (ESV New Classic Reference Bible).
49 1 Peter 5:10 (ESVNCRB).
50 Romans 8:18 (ESVNCRB).
“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”—Psalm 34:19

“For the light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

“For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.”

“Why?” questions are common. In fact, they are common not only among those suffering from infertility, but from all people. “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

51 2 Corinthians 4:8-10 (ESVNCRB).
52 John 16:33 (ESVNCRB).
53 1 Peter 4: 12-13 (ESVNCRB).
54 Psalm 34:19 (ESVNCRB).
55 2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESVNCRB).
56 1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESVNCRB).
57 Psalm 22:24 (ESVNCRB).
58 Psalm 22:24 (ESVNCRB).
And, it is definitely a temptation to want to ask God, “Why?” when we are hurting. God’s Word says that everyone does that, and it is a common thing. More of these questions are displayed in the full version of the author’s manual.

When Everyone Offers Suggestions

“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established.”

Everyone seems to want to offer their own opinions to those people who are suffering from infertility. The way seems easy and unencumbered for those who already have children and who have absolutely no idea the struggle backing the tears of the ones who are not able to be mothers and fathers. It is very important for those facing this specific trial that they seek Godly counsel. Some of the ways that people try and offer their so-called support when they offer their best opinions on the matter of infertility are as follows: (By the way, the infertile couple has heard every one of these!)

The world offers suggestions, opinions, and questions to the infertile as shown in Table 4.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“If you would just relax, you would get pregnant!</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Maybe you should adopt. I have heard that when people adopt, they get pregnant right away!”</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“You should have a surrogate mother have your baby for you.”</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>“Just stop trying so hard, and you will have a baby right away!”</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>“You could always become foster parents.”</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>“Maybe it is just not what God wants for you.”</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>“It is just not the right time for you.”</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>“You stress too much and it is causing you physical strain. Just calm down, and it will happen for you.”</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>“My friend tried for years to get pregnant. When she gave up, she had twins!”</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>“You know there are certain things you can do differently like different positions, taking infertility medications, and ovulation predictor kits you could use.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>“Just take one of my kids if you want. You will change your mind after that!”</td>
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Proverbs 15:22 (KJV).
Table 4 Suggestions, Opinions and Questions

When faced with an option of a variety of things one could relay to a person or couple going through the trial of infertility, some of these blessed antidotes may just pop out of people’s mouths. After all, they are only trying to help, right? Be it as it may, Godly counsel should really be sought in this unfortunate circumstance. What does God’s Word have to say about gleaning from Godly counsel?

When trying to figure things out on one’s own; God’s Word says, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.” For some, when they are not able to find any counsel at all, and this may even be when they have tried to find counselors at church who would guide them in their specific situation; God’s Word offers, “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”

Godly counsel comes from the authority of the Scriptures. God’s Word says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:” The Word of God is full of guidance and support for those suffering from this unfortunate fate; but too often, the infertile couple is buried beneath their load. To this extent, Scripture informs, “The LORD lifts the burdens of those bent beneath their loads.”

When it hurts on Mother’s Day

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60 Proverbs 12:15 (KJV).
61 Proverbs 11:14 (KJV).
62 2 Timothy 3:16.
63 Psalm 145:14 (NLT).
“‘He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.’”64

On Mother’s Day, those who are infertile prepare to go to church like all of the other women and men in the world do. Imagine the lady who puts on her nice dress, her mother’s necklace that she gave her after she faced her first miscarriage, and her husband’s favorite perfume that he gave her at Christmas. She puts her makeup on a little lighter this day due to the fact that she already knows she will be wiping it away along with the salty tears that will flow when the mothers are asked to stand and be recognized by the congregation. This is one club that infertile women do not belong to, and it hurts very much to have to sit and clap for seemingly hundreds of women who have been chosen by God to be called, Mother.

Something worse is the fact that her church does not make the slightest reference to those women who are aching in their seats when the blessed mothers are called to attention. “And although churches are increasingly adept at confronting a host of modern problems, they don’t seem to know quite what to do with those of us struggling with Infertility.”65 These women will go ahead and accept the carnations that are being handed out at the end of the service because they are afraid that their inadequacies will be noticed. Some women will even stand with those mothers who are being mentioned for the same reason, but this just makes the sting of infertility much worse, standing for the wrong reason. One lady who struggles with infertility mentioned, “After a while, I found myself wanting to skip church because it hurt so much to be there.” She stated further, “I know others who ended up leaving their churches altogether, precisely because they felt abandoned during their struggle with infertility.”66

64 Psalm 113:9.
65 Zimmerman, A Spiritual Companion to Infertility, 24.
66 Ibid., 25.
Another woman who suffered from infertility for over twelve years has said, “At the time, we were attending a church teeming with prolific “twenty-somethings.” Most all the women my age (or younger) were pregnant, nursing, or carrying their six-month-olds strapped to their chests in a tight wrap.” Further she noted, “I was doing announcements for church, so I couldn’t pull the covers up over my head and forfeit my weekly encounter with envy.” And even still she noted, “I kept my eyes closed to keep the others around me from view—those whom, I naively assumed, could more easily proclaim the truths of God in song because they had what I wanted.”

**When the Term Woman Appears Not To Apply**

Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’ . . .And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Who could call herself a woman? To a female who has no children as a result of infertility, the word simply is not a part of her vocabulary. Some infertile women believe that until they have a child, womanhood has not yet been achieved. They make themselves believe that motherhood equals being a woman and anything less is an imposter or outsider. However,


68 PR Newswire, New York: (May 2, 2001) 1, assessed February 15, 2015, www.prnewswire.com. To help women cope with Mother’s Day or other events and holidays, RESOLVE, the National Infertility Association since 1974, has published Wishing for a Baby, an informal brochure providing helpful suggestions for coping with the emotional challenges of Infertility.

69 “Wishing for a Baby,” last modified 2012, accessed,. A free copy of this brochure may be found at www.resolve.org.

70 Gruner, “Baby Blues in the Pews,” (2012). The previous paragraphs under this bullet point are paraphrased exerts from one of the author’s previous papers submitted to her Seminary in 2012.

there is a beautiful truth that God provides us in His Word concerning such: “He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.” In another translation the Bible says, “He will give children to the childless wife so that she becomes the happy mother of children.” This is a promise of God, and those suffering from infertility should stand on it frequently.

As believers, Christians are given the authority to stand on the promises of God and refer to them as often as possible when hoping for something that is in God’s will for their lives. He actually promises children to the childless wife. This is something so seemingly conflicting to the infertile couple. If God promises children, then why are they still fruitless? Again, it is God’s design and orchestrated plan that His children be fruitful and multiply.

Gleaned from taking a Pastoral Counseling class at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, one is informed that it is important for any counselor to validate the emotions and assumptions of the client whether he or she is right or wrong. To validate the assumption that one is not a woman unless she is a mother is not to say that what she is thinking is incorrect. It does however mean that the counselor should try and understand where the pain originates from and let the client know that the pain is valid even though the assumption is not.

God created women with specific childbearing organs and to be able to function maternally. Even more beautiful and heartwarming a concept is the fact that God created us in His own image. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” This means that God created men to function as fathers and women to function as mothers. Yet, more often than not, those women who are infertile may actually talk themselves into believing that they are not actually women until they have become

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72 Psalm 113:9.
73 Genesis 1:27.
mothers. This is an unpleasant opinion to live with, but it is not reality. Again, God provided in His Word that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. He created a man and a woman with specific body parts which when used together in an appropriate way would carry out His command to be fruitful and multiply. He did create a woman for childbearing. Did He then in fact create some women whom He wanted to remain barren? This is a bewildering issue, and it is one which infertile couples struggle with on days when their faith is only as big as a mustard seed.

Counselors could help their infertile couples realize the truth about faith: It is not faith until it is all that is held onto. Also, “faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.”\(^74\) It takes faith for an infertile female to call herself woman. It takes even more faith to envision herself as a mother through the tear-smeared glasses of infertility.

**When Science and Faith Collide**

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”\(^75\) Following are famous quotes regarding the battle of faith versus science: “Faith is a knowledge within the heart, beyond the reach of proof.”\(^76\) “Faith is like electricity. You can’t see it, but you can see its light shining on you”\(^77\) “A religion old or new, that stressed the magnificence of the universe as revealed by modern science, might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly

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\(^74\) Hebrews 11:1.

\(^75\) Hebrews 11:6 (NIV).


tapped by the conventional faiths. Sooner or later such a religion will emerge.“

Anybody who has been seriously engaged in scientific work of any kind realizes that over the entrance to the gates of the temple of science are written the words: Ye must have faith. It is a quality which the scientist cannot dispense with.” Both religion and faith require faith in God. For believers, God is in the beginning, and for physicists, He is at the end of all considerations.”

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”

“I have said that science is impossible without faith. . . Inductive logic of Bacon, is rather something on which we can act than something which we can prove, and to act on it is a supreme assertion of faith. . . Science is a way of life which can only flourish when men are free to have faith.”

“In every science certain things must be accepted as first principles if the subject matter is to be understood; and these first postulates rest upon faith.”

The following are paraphrased exerts from a project submitted to the author’s Seminary:

There are copious amounts of religious views on the issue of infertility treatments involved for those who want nothing more than to become a mother but are having difficulties in doing so. With churches sometimes, it is more of a moral dilemma. Some Christians tend to

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80 Anonymous quote.
83 Cardinal Nicholas de Cusa, in Ronald Keast’s, *Dancing in the Dark: The “Waltz in Wonder” of Quantum Metaphysics* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2009), 104-105.
believe that if a couple cannot conceive on their own, then that is the way God intended it and they are not to be playing God with attempting all of the treatments available to infertile couples today.

Other Christians believe that God created everyone and gave each person gifts and talents which differ from person to person. One such gift is the medical talent and ability to help an infertile couple conceive when they are having difficulty doing so. God created some to be doctors, scientists, researchers, and specialists in infertility issues. Some churches today have difficulty separating science from faith, and this could be tumultuous in the face of the adversity of infertility.

However, think about this: A pastor who is dying from a heart disease may rely upon a Cardiologist for help to stay alive. A Deacon of a church may rely heavily upon a dentist when he has an abscessed tooth. Likewise, a youth pastor may refer a teenage girl to a psychologist for help with sexuality issues if he or she does not have the answers or is not fully trained to handle those circumstances in his own accord. The question then arises as to why it is so hard for some churches to accept the fact that infertile couples may need some form of medical and scientific assistance in order to receive the gifts that God has for them. God designs and orchestrates life in such a way that all of our special gifts, talents, skills, and needs work together. “And we know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Church leaders are not alone in the call. All of God’s children are called according to His specific purpose and plan for life.

These issues do not have technically correct answers, and this is why they are considered moral dilemmas. Is it not possible that faith could involve believing that God will help the

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84 Romans 8:28.
infertile couple to conceive through the expertise of some very talented doctors whom He created and endowed with such skills? Why does this notion carry such a tainted perception among some churchgoing people? Again, most churches are ill equipped to handle such a loaded matter. “Many Christian denominations teach that at least some infertility treatment is wrong. When our only option for conceiving is at odds with what our church teaches, many people feel torn and alienated.”

God is the sole creator of life, and He may use any avenue He chooses to in order to bring the happiness of having a quiver full of children to an infertile couple. It is only faith that could bring one to such a hopeful conclusion, and, God is the grantor of peace; a peace that passes all understanding. Sometimes a person’s faith is not strong enough, and those are the times when we should pray and ask God to send it to us. He does, and He will. Science and religion may always be at odds concerning infertility, but God truly never intended it to be this way. Sometimes, churches would rather just leave science out of the equation involving the matter because they feel more comfortable not having to deal with issues that challenge the very nature of God and their perceptions of how He chooses who will and who will not be parents. Some pastors as well as other church leaders find it very difficult to address infertility because some of the questions from the couples are out of their realm of comfort. “The authors have found no study that addressed the influence of religious practices, biblical texts, and a Spiritual environment on the dynamics of coping with crises often experienced by couples who are infertile and who transition in childlessness.”

85 Zimmerman, A Spiritual Companion to Infertility, 25.

When Insurance is Not Very Assuring

“And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end.”  Of course, it is difficult to find verses about health insurance in the Bible. However, verses about God’s assurance are abundant. What one has to realize here is that God is in the business of directing His children in the paths which they should go. He is not about to forsake us at any time, and this even means in the little details of life as well. One such little detail could often mean the matter of our finances in the form of being able to afford doctor visits and diagnoses and treatments for infertility. If God leads a couple to certain doctors or specialists who could help them with their infertility issues, then it is safe to say that He will provide the finances in some way to be able to cover those trials of longsuffering. “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

When it comes to health insurance and infertility, there are heartaches attached to the matter. For instance, where infertility is concerned, every test that leads to a diagnosis of infertility of any kind is covered by most health insurances. The downside to this is that after a patient has been diagnosed as infertile, most health insurances end coverage for the patient. Then, there is the matter of Unexplained Infertility. Does that even make sense? If it cannot be explained, then how could it be diagnosed? It would seem more reasonable to cover a diagnosis of Unexplained Infertility until it could be explained rather than just to say, “we don’t really know!” and leave it at that. Insurance hassles are very real for the infertile. Again, once the

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87 Hebrews 6:11.

88 Philippians 1:6 (KJV).
diagnosis is declared, the health insurance covered treatments are finished. The author relays this information from personal experiences.

Another heartache looms as the infertile couple comes to the realization that other privileged groups are allowed coverage for infertility when they themselves are not. For an example, gay and lesbian couples are allowed to have their artificial inseminations covered because they are not able to conceive naturally. Health insurances nationwide readily cover those “unfortunate” ones because they must be treated equally. Kim Hughes Lackawanna says in a newspaper article of her own situation, “My health coverage from work does not cover in-vitro fertilization, which can cost more than $5,000 and does not guarantee results. It does cover artificial insemination and even some ‘medically needed’ abortions.” She says further, “Ironically, they’ll pay to end life but won’t help to create one.”

Most of the time, with insurances hassles such as these, infertile couples are forced to end treatments or not even begin them at all. Infertility treatments are demanding and too expensive most times; and as a matter of opinion, it sure would help if health insurance companies cared more about the beginning of life rather than covering how to end it.

Biblical counselors and preachers could help people facing the uphill battle of the roller coaster called infertility by pointing them to biblical truths about such ethical issues as to whether to have these medically sound procedures done or not. Again, this promise is still worth standing upon: “He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.”

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90 Psalm 113:9.
And, when you connect this promise with this promise: “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “Plans for good and not evil to give you a future and a hope,”\(^{91}\) a perfect conglomeration of biblical truths forms a security matched by no other: God knows what He is doing (even when his children think otherwise!)

**Hindered by the Pain of the Process**

“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.”\(^{92}\) Simply put, the pain of infertility could be likened to a certain kind of death. For it is the death of a dream for some. For others, it is the death of the future of new life and family. It hurts. However, the Lord is always near to the hurting. His Word tells us many times that He will walk us through the pain. He is with us. He will never leave nor forsake us. The following Scriptures are provided in God’s Word for comforting those whose dreams are shattered; for those whose lives are thoroughly tested and tried by life’s trials such as the sting of infertility:

“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”\(^{93}\) “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” \(^{94}\)“Surely He

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\(^{91}\) Jeremiah 29:11.  
\(^{92}\) Psalm 56:8 (NLT).  
\(^{93}\) Psalm 18:2 (NLT).  
\(^{94}\) Psalm 34:18.
hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . .” Isaiah 53:4 (NIV).

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Revelation 21:4 (NIV).

“For it is commendable if you bear up under the pain of unjust suffering because you are conscious of God.” 1 Peter 2:19 (NIV).

“The human spirit can endure in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?” Proverbs 18:14 (NIV).

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” Isaiah 43:2.

“Remember your promise to me; it is my only hope. Your promise revives me; it comforts me in all my troubles.” Psalm 119:49-50 (NLT).

Children of God should not stay continuously focused upon what hinders them. However, for those who have been living through the torture of infertility, it is comprehensible when their minds could only focus on a single thought, “We are not able to have children.” It is a looming reality that sucks away life and hope and shatters dreams. To this end, the inspired Word of God teaches that we are to think on certain things when life is not as great as it could be: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Philippians 4:8.
One question guides the hopeful mind; and that is, is the vision in line with God’s vision? In other words, is one’s desire to have children in line with God’s plan? Remember that God’s plan is for us to “be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth,” and, if He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, then the old standby answer of the skeptics, “that was meant for another people in another time” holds no validity. It should be that we could let go and let God direct our paths in life, but the process is so very painful, indeed. When the agony is too much to bear, then one should remember, “The LORD helps the fallen and lifts those bent beneath their loads.”102

Pastoral counselor, Dr. Tim Clinton states,

Pain blinds the eye; evil then rejoices and creates a ‘silencing of the lambs.’ People are searching! However, pastors sometimes cannot and will not preach about what ails their personal lives for fear that something terrible will be revealed about them. So, people are still searching for answers. They wander from church to church asking the question, ‘What can I/we get out of this?’ Again, they are ever trying to fill a hole in the heart that only Jesus can fill.103

This is to say that infertility is something only Jesus is able to heal. Therefore, it is important for pastors and church leaders to include the infertile couple in support groups, couples and individual counseling, and guide them Scripturally through the landmines of infertility. If infertility is a hole that only Jesus is able to fill, then churches should not only provide the fertile soil, but also the shovel. Dr. Tim Clinton has also said, “As counselors and pastors, when answering God’s call for care, it is important to remember that God has a message for hope and a plan for hope. It involves the care of the soul, and God is our great rescuer as is displayed in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. The problem is Spiritual, and so must be the cure!”104

102 Psalm 145:14.
103 Tim Clinton, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Class Lecture-PACO 804, (2012).
For Window Shoppers

“For Window Shoppers

“. . . the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

Concerning the infertile; there are those who have had many years of experience in window shopping for baby clothes, maternity outfits, and baby furniture. As well, they have bought every edition of “What to Expect When You are Expecting.” Some may even have numerous yellow legal pads filled with research of favorite baby names and their meanings. Every place they go there seems to be a pregnant woman or a woman pushing a stroller with twins or triplets; and they begin to think, “If only we were to have triplets about three times and a set of twins once, our dream would come true.”

For those expecting, window shopping is an extreme delight! However, for the infertile couple, it could be filled with both hope and pain. For instance, during Christmas, infertile couples wish for baby clothes and an ornament that reads, “Baby’s First Christmas.” They may even dream of taking their children to have their pictures made with the Easter Bunny or putting money under pillows in exchange for teeth that have been pulled out using string and a doorknob.

Finding joy in most things is burdensome for the infertile couple because everything reminds them of having a child. Their journey through life is a painful one when the desires of the heart are seemingly ignored by God month after month and year after year. “It is a very long process. Not having the child you’ve dreamed of, it’s like mourning a death.”

Please remember

104 Ibid.

105 Psalm 84:11.

that God has provided this beautiful truth for those who face this lot in life: He is not going to withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly. This means, if we are meant to be mothers and fathers, we will be. Infertile couples should face upward when window shopping and seek the Lord’s will without giving up their parental dreams. In terms of seeing things properly and bringing things into a Godly focus, maybe those who are infertile should exchange their dark lenses for crimson –stained lenses instead. Try to see life through God’s perspective, and the only way to do that is to take a walk through the Scriptures in search of what God has to say about the matter. For those who will not park the shopping carts of the mind and trust that God will bring the desires of the heart in His timing: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways, acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”107

When Illumination of God’s Word and Examples are Needed

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin with doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”108 Something so splendid to pay heed to is the fact that God gave examples in His Word of those who walked the lonely and torturous path of infertility way before this present day. God allows His infertile children of today to glean from the pain of the women who suffered relentlessly from the sting of infertility. What is fascinating is the fact that out of all of the examples God provides for us through His Word of the women who actually cried out to God for blessings of children to be bestowed upon them, 100% of those women were

107 Proverbs 3:5-6.
108 Hebrews 12:1.
relieved and had their petitions answered by God. He opened all of their wombs just as soon as they put their faith in motion and began to trust in Him that their desires would be fulfilled.

Only one woman was given as an example of an infertile nature who did not go on to have biological children, and God provided that example to show that the heritage of Saul would be blocked. She was the daughter of Saul and the first wife of David. The examples that God has provided in His Word for the infertile to remember and be guided by are as follows:

Sarah

“Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.”109 Sarah was past the age of childbearing at ninety years old when she finally conceived a child. At first, Sarah did not believe the promise that God was giving her of her blessing of a child to come. She even laughed at God because she knew that her reproductive organs were past their prime and she had already stopped having menstrual cycles. Some infertile couples and individuals today start fearing that they will never have children after only having tried for as little as six months with no success. Sarah was ninety!

What is remarkable about Sarah’s story is that God is showing that nothing is impossible with Him. “But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”110

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109 Hebrews 11:11.

Hannah

“It was this child I prayed for, and the Eternal has indeed granted me the petition I made. So, as I vowed, I will lend him back to the Eternal. For as long as he lives, let him serve the Eternal One.”111 “Hannah prayed year after year for children. She was often consumed with thoughts of infertility, so distraught that she could not eat. The Bible tells us that Hannah was heartbroken, and she began to pray to the Eternal One, weeping uncontrollably as she did (I Samuel 1:9-10).

When Eli saw Hannah praying (she was weeping, and her lips were moving, but words were not coming out. . .) he rebuked her for being drunk. Hannah had to explain to him that she was not drunk, but that she was pouring out the pain in her soul before the Eternal One (I Samuel 1:15).

Hannah’s pain is something that can actually be felt through the Scriptures. The Bible so clearly portrays the depths of her emotional, physical, and spiritual pain. But eventually, God remembered Hannah’s petition; and she became pregnant with Samuel. He eventually became the last and greatest Judge of Israel.”112

Rebekah

“And Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah, his wife conceived.”113 Isaac is the son of Abraham and Sarah.

111 I Samuel 1:27.


Not only did God share a beautiful and timeless story through Abraham and Sarah, He provides the story of their son and Rebekah who struggled with the same issues. The Lord did grant Isaac’s prayer, but only after twenty years of infertility. Rebekah eventually gave birth to twins, Jacob and Esau; but it was only after twenty years of pleading with God. This just goes to show that God’s timing is vastly different from our own timing. Whether it is six months or over twenty years, God hears our pleadings and moanings. Therefore, if this story is any indication of how God works out His plans in His own time, then infertile couples of today should never give up and stay in fervent prayer. God provided this example, so why couldn’t his children simply lean on it?

Rachel

“And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened unto her, and opened her womb.”

The acorn does not fall too far from the tree here. Jacob, the younger son of Isaac and Rebekah, married two sisters. One of these sisters, Rachel, could not conceive and her womb was empty. She was barren. However, Scripture tells us that God remembered Rachel. This is another example of how a childless woman cried out to God, and He granted her petition. God heard her prayer and made her to be fertile. The awesomeness of this concept is made even more awesome if the infertile couple or individual today will remember that God is no respecter of persons. He does not provide these stories for just anyone and for no reason. These precious insights come to us in our times of frustration, loneliness, and despair, and to guide us through our present darkness. However, the stories of the infertile women of the Bible are placed there for only a

114 Genesis 30:22.
chosen few; those who are infertile and need some reassuring today and for generations to come. God did not forget the barren. He mentions the struggle several times.

Elizabeth
And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now will stricken in years. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.115

How absolutely magnificent it is that God allows those who are infertile at this present time to appreciate the story of Elizabeth. Again, she was well-stricken in years, and this means that she too, like Sarah, was probably past child-bearing years when God blessed her with a son. What a son! John, the Baptist, was born unto Elizabeth who cried her eyes out every night and begged and pleaded with God to bring her children. When God answers the prayers of the upright, He really does it in a colossal way it seems! “. . .Elizabeth was also a miracle mom whom God used to further the divine design. She too, was faithful, even though the pregnancy might have taxed the health of a woman her age.”116

The Shunammite Woman
“And he said, about this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. And the woman conceived and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of

The Bible makes no mention of this woman’s name, only her situation. What we are apprised of is that she was the woman that was very hospitable to the prophet, Elisha. The Bible says that every time Elisha passed through Shunem, the Shunammite woman would feed him and give him water. When she was aware that he must be a man of God, she started making room for him to stay during his travels. Elisha would send his servant, Gehazi, to the woman to find out about her. One day, Elisha pondered what he could do in exchange for this woman’s warm hospitality. Again, he sent his servant, Gehazi, over to ask what she may need. The only thing she said that she ever wanted was to become a mother. The Bible shares that her husband was too old to have children. Her heart was saddened.

Elisha had the authority to ask God for this woman’s womb to be opened. For her hospitality to this man of God, God did open her womb. This is heart-warming. The example and the point to be taken note of here is that even the no-named women of the Bible were used of God to admonish the infertile today. This time, her womb was opened because she took care of a man of God. In turn, God blessed her and granted her petition.

Manoah’s Wife

“And there was a certain woman of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and bare not.”118 She is another example of a woman who is not named in the Bible who conceived a child after infertility had taken hold. God uses the unlikely. He hearkens unto those who cry out to Him and who believe and trust in Him for their answers to come. Another great person of biblical history came about through an avenue call

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117 2 Kings 4:16-17.
118 Judges 13:2.
infertility. This avenue was rocky, uncertain, and unfair. However, when the path was taken, Samson was born.

Through these Scriptural portrayals and examples, God provides hope to the infertile. Why did He choose to mention these women and these infertile couples from the past? Maybe it was so that He could orchestrate and prepare the future through His chosen infertile couples to come. What is able to be gleaned from these historically barren figures? Well, for starters, only a chosen few are able to find the golden nuggets of these stories. Take for instance the infertile couple of this present day. Who better to understand the true meaning and worth of these stories than those who are suffering relentlessly today from the same misfortune?

Even better, why did God only make mention of the few women found barren in the Bible that He did? Here is why: It is because when those women cried out to the Lord and trusted in His Divine plan for their futures, He showed up in a big way! He blessed them with the desires of their hearts. He gave them children. Yes, every one of God’s examples from the Bible of those facing the sting of infertility were provided to bless the futures of they that would follow in the same rugged path. Thank you, Lord.

Finally, observe what has been produced as a result of the relentless and fervent prayers of those infertile women of the Bible! For these seemingly unfortunate souls, infertility finally succumbed to the birth of significant biblically historical characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abraham and Sarah</th>
<th>Isaac</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaac and Rebekah</td>
<td>Jacob and Esau</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rachel and Jacob</td>
<td>Joseph and Benjamin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manoah and his wife</td>
<td>Samson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hannah and Elkanah</td>
<td>Samuel (3 more sons and two daughters)</td>
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<td>Elizabeth and Zachariah</td>
<td>John the Baptist</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Shunammite woman</td>
<td>A son</td>
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Table 6 Births of significant biblically historical characters

In light of these historically barren figures mentioned in God’s Word, the infertile couples and individuals of today could feel free to take heart and to not lose hope. Favor is on the horizon, and God’s Word does portray that. However, it is important to remember that God works in His own timing, and He carries out His plan for our lives; not our plans. Remember that His ways are higher than our ways. Remember that seeking God’s will in a matter is the forerunner and key to living happily ever after. If we are seeking His will and His timing, then only the best future imaginable is imminent. It may include children. Then again, it may not. However, God chose to provide the stories of these barren couples and individuals for a reason. It is so that we are able to take heart and remember that God is nigh unto the contrite spirits. This walk through the Scriptures is only the beginning of the journey that lies ahead. God does lead, but the key is, you have to let Him. He will not leave you comfortless, and He will never leave you nor forsake you. Those are promises well worth standing upon. Do not buckle, but even if you do, remember that God lifts those up who are bent beneath their loads. It is very evident that God exchanges beauty for ashes. The previous seven examples prove that. What God does not specify in the Bible are those stories where when the infertile cried out to God, He chose not to answer in a positive and explosive way. Think about that.

The Battle for the Mind

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual
wickedness, in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.\textsuperscript{119}

Often times, people are their own worst enemies. Sure, the enemy of this world is truly after us on a daily basis, but if we let him succeed in our total annihilation, which is his goal; then it is we who are standing in our own ways. Sometimes we allow our minds to be shaped into our form of thinking. But, the Word of God instructs, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”\textsuperscript{120} Again, His thoughts are not the thoughts odf his children. If this is so, then why are his children always trying to make their plans fit and work apart from Him?

For those who face the unbearable sting of infertility, there is a battlefield in the mind going on constantly. The infertile mind wonders why things are the way they are for her or for him. The infertile mind seems to be a whole new entity and different from “normal” minds. It wonders, schemes, plans, prepares, screams from within, analyzes, ponders, and it never seems to be settled. For this God says, “Be still, and know that I am God.”\textsuperscript{121} It is so hard sometimes just to sit still and let God produce His perfect will for our lives, but He does promise that He will do it. He promises peace, and all we have to do is ask for it. He promises to direct our paths, and all we have to do is put our GPS systems down and let Him direct. He promises to fulfill His promises, so we should stand on them. He promises to never leave us nor forsake us, so we should believe that. However, we digress. We want it our way, in our timing, walking on our paths that we have chiseled in stone through blood, sweat, and tears. However, God’s way

\begin{footnotes}
\item[119] Ephesians 6:12-13.
\item[120] Romans 12:2.
\item[121] Psalm 46:10.
\end{footnotes}
requires only that we loosen the reigns and let Him lead. This is the battlefield in the mind. The only clear path from infertility is made known when we lay down our arms and run helplessly to His. The best fights are those which are fought while on our knees. Prayer is key. Further, fervent prayer and perseverance is needed. Here is an age-old phrase, but it holds validity because it is in line with God’s Word: “Let go, and let God.” You see it in many devotionals, you hear it at the pulpit, and still the infertile will neglect it in their minds. It is time to let go. God will fix it in His way, and in His time. Let Him.

**Journeying Through the Storm**

And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them saying, *Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.* And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, *Come.* And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately, Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*\(^{122}\)

As discovered, the infertile are not alone in their struggle; however, journeying through this storm is fiercely horrifying since not knowing what the future holds is characteristic of the journey. We may not know the future, but we do know who holds the future. God calls each of His children in particular ways. He prepares different journeys for each of them and endows them with specific and unique “super powers” which set them apart from everyone else. What is difficult about the journey is that the destination in life is unknown. What is beautiful about the journey is that it is only unknown to the traveler. God is the only one who knows the precise details of where the paths are leading. If everyone knew where they were headed, faith would be

\(^{122}\) Matthew 14:26-31.
unnecessary. But since the Word of God says, “Without faith, it is impossible to please Him,” faith is indeed, necessary.\(^{123}\)

Some people do come to a fork in the road called infertility while enduring the journey. Faith would point to the right where answers are still before them but are still unknown. Doubt would lead them to the left where answers may never be discovered because of the lack of faith. The warmth of the sun would lead them to the left. However, the warmth of the SON leads to the right as He is ever holding their hands and pulling them toward Him. Will they follow Him? It may mean that they will never become mothers or fathers in this lifetime. If this is the case, then here is God’s answer: “Trust in Me with all of your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all of your ways, acknowledge Me, and I will make your paths straight.”\(^{124}\)

This is paraphrased, of course, and reflects God’s spoken Word to His Children. Sometimes the journey leads us through the mud, to the top of the mountain, back through the mud, into the deep, back to the top of the mountain, into the valley, and over the edge at times. Sometimes the journey leads through the fire, and sometimes it will allow you to splash in the rain. The road is not always high and visible. Sometimes it is low and unbearable. But, at all times, it is doable because we are never alone on the journey. Just keep going and trust that He is leading.

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\(^{123}\) Hebrews 11:6.

\(^{124}\) Proverbs 3:5-6 (Paraphrased from RSB).
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This project is a living, breathing testament to the trials of infertility. It lives because the problem is real, and it is valid. It breathes because with every breath, more pain is realized. It is a testament because the road to healing has already been paved by those infertile women who came centuries before this present darkness. This endeavor has been both eye-opening and rewarding. It opens the eyes of the reader because maybe not everyone realizes the depth of the struggle. It is rewarding because it offers hope in the form of a manual that is to be presented to churches around the world. The proposed manual in this project is only a synopsis and brief overview of the complete and detailed final text which will be offered with a Scripturally-decorated notebook for the participants to fill out and follow alongside the Bible Study.

In the beginning of this investigation, it was only originally realized by the author that a problem does exist within churches today to the tune of not being properly prepared to handle a specific crisis involving infertility. As the author conducted and participated in her own research, the void within her own heart began to slowly be filled with anticipation and a hope that others experiencing her same difficulty would benefit from such a proposal.

Pastors as well as infertile couples and individuals were surveyed and interviewed concerning what is or is not being done in churches today to ease the sting of infertility. Some opposition was to be expected but never came. This is rewarding in itself because it is an assurance that help is not only being sought by the infertile, but also appears to be much needed. Statistics show that infertility is a growing epidemic. Survey and interview results from
this investigation prove that increasingly more people are searching for answers from the church. They also prove that many pastors are not specifically guiding the infertile couple through the Scriptures because there does not seem to be enough, if any at all, support groups or personal guidance avenues being offered from within the church walls presently. While this is bothersome to the infertile couple, some may not seem to think it is a problem; however, in light of the fact that if churches were more in tuned with supporting more specific groups of people; namely, those who are infertile, people would be able to understand that this could be one monumental avenue for reaching the unchurched.

Given the nature and delicateness of this project, it tends to be a little more on the personal side of an outreach ministry. It is discovered that most pastors have just not participated in the support of this group of people seemingly; and only because it is a very quiet and touchy subject. Some may feel that they have to walk on eggshells concerning such. However, when the pastors who were interviewed and surveyed to be included and to supplement this thesis project were apprised of the author’s proposed manual entitled, “A Maker’s Dozen,” the majority of them were very open and interested to master more about it. This is refreshing and produces hope that maybe one day more churches will catch on and will start providing a more specific approach to healing for their infertile members of the flock. How did alcoholics, divorcees, or meth addicts come to have their own support groups and Bible studies offered in churches? The answer may surprise most readers. It is because somewhere along the line, these types of ruin made their ways into the lives of the pastors and church leaders themselves. No one is perfect, and everyone suffers from something. This project introduces the fact that infertility should be included in the mix of fixer-upper classes and Bible studies.
After all, God does provide seven beautiful rags-to-riches or beauty-for-ashes stories which define the infertile group and set them apart from everyone else. If they are a chosen example and set apart group in biblical history, then so should they be at church. History does speak for itself as God chose to mention seven different barren women whose gut-wrenching and riveting petitions for children were granted after years and years of no success. The fertile fields were scorched and had tumbleweeds blowing about aimlessly, but God heard their cries. He delighted in their pleadings as it meant that they were truly dependent and trusting in Him for their answers. When these ladies put motion to their faith, God moved them as only God could.

Churches could and will definitely benefit from this type of historical providence. The proposed manual offers thirteen Scriptural recipes presented as remedies for those who face the sting of infertility. It is designed to walk an infertile couple or individual through the remedies that God offers concerning their situation. Beautifully orchestrated examples of those who faced the same lot in life are woven through the Bible like fine tapestry. In fact, some of the same tear-stained threads are still being woven through infertile lives today; but they may never know it unless the church steps up and brings this information to them via Bible Study or support group. The information is already provided by God, it just needs to be put into play. None of this is to say that churches are going about it incorrectly today. However, the nature of this project lends itself to provide churches with better avenues to reach another specific hurting group of people.

As to be expected, a study of this magnitude could really only come about because the author has found a need or a specific problem which has not yet been addressed or needs further addressing. Sometimes, the subject matter digs so deep that it reaches the author personally. These are thy types of dissertations which really tug the heart and produce a fire that could only be quenched when the receiver takes note and then takes a stand to produce the answer to the
quandary. This project is personal to its author. She is one of those women who for years has dressed to the nines on Mother’s Day Sunday only to come home in tear-soaked dresses and salty, blood-red eyes sewn shut from a morning’s worth of balling relentlessly as her group, the childless women of the flock, was never even mentioned from the pulpit. There is nothing saying it has to be this way, but it sure would be nice to be included in the day’s activities in some way.

That’s not to say relationships in the church are easy when you’re struggling with infertility. Those aforementioned feelings of isolation and alienation are real. Friends in the church have seemed thoughtless at times, not considering how thing they say might be hurtful; at other times, they’ve been awkward, aware of our struggles but at a loss for what to say. Often the strain has been entirely our own fault—we’ve promised in our church covenant to ‘rejoice at each other’s happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other’s burdens and sorrows,’ but sometimes jealousy and bitterness sap our motivation to do any rejoicing or accept any comfort. If you’re a pastor or church leader, make your church’s teaching and worship as scripturally and confessionally robust as possible. God intends to use them as guardians to keep hurting people in your church from sin, and as signposts toward our hope in Christ.¹

This project has really proven to be a beacon of light in the storm of infertility that provided the platform in the first place. Maybe one person’s pain and suffering brought about the background and foundation which has spearheaded this project, but how much more perfect is that situation than someone compiling a project with no personal experience in the matter? Pastor Charles Stanley has asked in one of his sermons, “Would you rather someone preach to you about the trials of alcoholism who has never even had a drink, or would you prefer learning from someone who has fallen in the trenches and has survived and is telling you the dangers of alcoholism through his eyes?”² This, of course is a paraphrase of his actual words. Such is the same and is in line with this project. The author knows firsthand the struggles that come with

¹ Cavenaugh, “How the Church Makes the Trial of Infertility Better (or Worse),” 2013.

² Charles Stanley, (Paraphrased quote from a sermon).
infertility. She recognized the problem within the churches just because it is close to her heart, and she has suffered from this longstanding problem herself. From her pain, this project was born.

A story of a surprise ending was promised in the introduction of this dissertation. Though it is not that the author has become pregnant and now moves to tell her story of fight, struggle, and redemption, it is just as beautiful and heartwarming a victory. On Sunday evening, April 29, 2012, in Washington, D.C., Joel Osteen spoke at an event called “Night of Hope.” Inside of his sermon which focused upon keeping hope alive and perseverance of prayer over one’s needs and desires, he added a personal story about his assistant in training. One day, she was rearranging her office, and he noticed and said to her, “Why are you moving things around like that?” She responded, “I am fixing my office to be safe for when the baby comes.” He said to her, “I didn’t even know you were pregnant!” She said, “Pastor Joel, I’m not pregnant, but when I do become pregnant, I want my office to be safe and ready for my babies.”

Not only was she speaking future tense and faith over her situation, as she had been trying to conceive for over ten years; but she said, “babies,” and this is plural, like she believed she was going to have more than one child. She did go on to have twins not long after, and it could be concluded that it was as a result of her faith.

All of the sermons in the world about Abraham and Sarah’s struggle turned to triumph hardly prepare an infertile couple for the sea of carnations, cards, corsages, poems about mom, oldest and youngest mother prizes, and songs and hymns focusing upon the Proverbs 31 woman, and so on. A pastor by the name of Russell D. Moore exclaims, “What if, at the end of a service, the pastor called any person or couple who wanted prayer for children to come forward and then

asked others in the congregation to gather around them and pray?” Just the same, sermons about Hannah, Rachel, and Elizabeth are a dime a dozen. It only proves that problems with infertility and barrenness are age-old but certainly timeless as they speak to us still today. It also means that God provided those stories for those who suffer from infertility today to hear about how He turned situations around based upon people’s faith and obedience in Him.

In sum, churches from today would benefit from this venture and the author’s proposed manual. This project was not designed to point to deficiencies within the church but to provide another avenue to reach more people through using the struggle of infertility as another seeker’s opportunity.

This dissertation project is finalized on this final note: Many people believe that the number thirteen is an unlucky number be it that it is all just superstition or not. However, God used the number thirteen in a very admiral and reinforcing way when He included the story of Joshua and the march around the walls of Jericho. Everyone is mostly familiar with the story to some degree. However, there is a portion of the story that is never really realized today. God told His children to march around the city of Jericho for seven days. Here is how He told them to do it though:  He told them to march around the city one time each day consecutively for six days. Then, He told them that on the last day, they were to march around it seven times and then the walls would fall inward. What this equals to is the fact that they marched around that wall a total of thirteen times. How perfect it is that a baker’s dozen is thirteen; and therefore, the author has proposed a manual entitled, “A Maker’s Dozen,” which is to include thirteen Scriptural pathways to the road to healing for those who suffer from infertility. Further research would also be helpful to the tune of finding more pastors to survey and interviewing even more infertile

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souls to gather data on a greater scale. God bless the reader, and may it speak volumes to those who are searching for more ways to reach the hurting members of their flocks as well as the unchurched. Start with what hurts, then trudge through it to the other side. The other side is where that pain benefits others. This author’s agony is not void if through it those other infertile souls are reached.
APPENDIX A

THE CONSENT FORM

PP. 96-97
CONSENT FORM

What is being done in Churches to help relieve the sting of infertility?
Melanie H. Gruner, MDiv, MAR
Liberty University
Baptist Theological Seminary

You are invited to participate in a research study of what is being done in churches to help relieve the sting of infertility among couples who may or may not be attendees. You were selected as possible participants because of your struggle with infertility, and your insight is valued and would be considered extremely helpful for my study. Please carefully read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in my study.

This study is being conducted by Melanie H. Gruner, a DMin candidate at Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Purpose of Study: The researcher is trying to deduce what is being done in churches to help couples who are struggling with the pain of infertility. It is very well possible that there is not enough support or Biblical guidance available for those who are facing this very painful issue. The researcher is trying to determine the best possible avenues for reaching out to this growing number of people within our churches today. Your answers are valued and may be the driving force behind the preparation for writing a manual for churches to utilize in caring for those plagued by the painful trial of infertility.

Procedures: If you agree to participate in my study, you will be asked to do one of the following: Please complete the anonymous survey that I have provided for you in this letter. Please then return the survey in the self-addressed and stamped envelope also provided in this letter. This would take no longer than 15 minutes. Or, you could contact me at 434-485-2885 or 434-845-2155 to complete the survey over the phone. Again, this is an anonymous survey. Your name will not be included in the survey, and it will be placed in a stack with other surveys so that the candidate will not be able to determine which survey is yours.

Risks of Participation in this Study: The risks of participating in this study are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits of Participation in this Study: The benefits for participation in this study are solely that the participant will understand that his or her valued answers have helped to enhance the ministry to couples who are struggling with infertility. However, there will be no direct benefit to the participants. Contributions will assist in the creation of a manual for ministering to individuals suffering from infertility.

Compensation: Participants will not be receiving compensation for taking part in the study.
Confidentiality: The data and any records of this study will be kept private. The participant will not be able to be identified in any way as this research is completely anonymous. Survey answers will only be accessible by the researcher and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet owned by the researcher. The research data will be maintained for three years, and then the researcher will shred the materials after the study is complete.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Please know that participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Melanie H. Gruner. You may ask any questions you may have now. If you have questions at any time during the research or later at any time, you are encouraged to contact her at 434-485-2883 or 434-845-2155 or melmei1122@live.com. Mrs. Gruner’s faculty mentor is Charlie Davidson, and you could contact him at cdavidson@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the nature of this study and would like to talk with someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board at 1971 Liberty University Blvd, Suite 1827, Lynchburg, Virginia, 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.
APPENDIX B

SURVEY FOR INFERTILE COUPLES

PG. 99
What is being done in Churches to relieve the sting of infertility?
Survey Questions for Infertile Couples

1. Have you been diagnosed as being infertile?  YES  or  NO

2. How long have you been trying to conceive?

3. Do you attend Church?  YES  or  NO

4. Does your Church have a support group or Bible Study for Infertile couples?  YES  or  NO

5. Does your Pastor recognize the infertile mother on Mother’s Day?  YES  or  NO

6. Do you believe that more could be done for the infertile couple in terms of support and Biblical guidance?  YES  or  NO

7. Could your Church benefit from a Bible Study and manual for the Infertile couple?  YES  or  NO

8. Does your Pastor offer counseling for infertile couples?  YES  or  NO

9. Would you personally benefit from extra support from your Pastor concerning your infertility issues?  YES  or  NO

10. If you do not attend Church, do you believe the Church should offer support to the general public for those who face infertility?  YES  or  NO

11. Do you believe that you may attend a support group or a Bible Study for those who face infertility issues if it were offered to the general public?  YES  or  NO
APPENDIX C

PHONE SCRIPTS

PG. 101
Phone Script for Recruitment
Of infertile Couples
And for Family
For Participation in Survey

INFERTILE COUPLES:

Hello, my name is Melanie Gruner, and I am a D.Min. Candidate at Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary. I am currently conducting research for my Thesis project, and I would like to interview you. My research does involve infertility and the way it is supported or handled in the Church community. May I please set aside a time to speak with you and give you a simple survey of maybe ten questions regarding my research project?

Better yet, if you are available today, I would like a chance to be able to speak with you over the phone about my project. Would that be possible?

When would be the best time to call back if you are not available today?

Specifically, my research is about what is being done in Churches to help relieve the sting of infertility. I know that your insight would be a valuable aspect of my investigation.

Thank you for allowing me to tell you about my thesis project and to set up an appointment to speak with you.

__________________________________________

FAMILY:

Example: “Hey ____________, as you know I am a DMin. Candidate, at Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary. The research for my Dissertation involves infertility to the extent that I will be studying how the Church community handles, supports, or does not support infertile couples. Would you please allow me to give you a survey regarding this topic, and would you please allow me to use this anonymous information in my study?

Thank you ____________, I am grateful.
January 1, 2015

Dear Pastor, (Name to be inserted here)

My name is Melanie H. Gruner, and I am a DMin. Candidate for Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia. As part of my DMin. Program, I am conducting research on what is being done in Churches to help relieve the sting of infertility. I am very interested in hearing about the level of care being administered to couples within your Church who struggle with infertility. I would very much like to invite you to participate in my study.

As part of my thesis project, I will be building a comprehensive model and writing an educational manual based upon the Scriptures for Churches to utilize in order to guide and support couples who are facing an up-hill battle of infertility. Through an anonymous survey, I would welcome and value your insights in the matter.

Your participation would involve taking an anonymous survey. I project the survey to only take a matter of 15 minutes or less. The survey is included with this letter. I have provided you with a self-addressed and stamped envelope so that you could return it back to me after you have completed the survey.

This is completely anonymous, and I will not be able to link survey answers with participants. Again, I value your insight, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in my study as you are valued member of your community. If you are interested and willing to participate, please complete the survey and return it to me in the self-addressed and stamped envelope provided. I am also available for a phone interview of the same questions, and I would gladly take your answers over the phone. This would also be an anonymous collection of data.

Thank you kindly in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melanie H. Gruner
APPENDIX E

SURVEY RESPONSES

Anonymous answers to question one from pastor survey:

**How many years have you pastored your church?**

1. 4 years
2. 8 years
3. 11 years
4. 1 year
5. 4 years
6. 16 years
7. 52 years
8. 44 years
9. 17 years
10. 9 years
11. 3 years
12. 14.2 years
13. 6 years
14. 3 years
15. 9 years
16. 11 years
17. 23 years
18. 20. 5 years
21. MDiv. Student, final year
22. 6 years
23. 37 years
24. MDiv. Student, first year
Anonymous answers to question two from survey

Are you aware of any couples in your church who are struggling with infertility?

1. yes
2. yes
3. yes
4. no
5. yes
6. yes
7. yes
8. yes
9. yes
10. yes
11. yes
12. no
13. yes
14. no
15. yes
16. yes
17. yes
18. yes
19. yes
20. yes
21. no
22. yes
23. yes
24. yes
25. yes
Anonymous answers to question six from pastor survey

**Do you now or have you ever counseled infertile couples within your church?**

1. no
2. no
3. no
4. yes, but did not delve.
5. no
6. no
7. yes, but did not focus upon infertility for the whole session.
8. no
9. no
10. no
11. no
12. no
13. no
14. yes, but did not get into medical treatments and so forth.
15. no
16. no
17. no
18. no
19. no
20. no
21. no
22. no
23. no
24. no
25. no
Anonymous answers to question seven from pastor survey:

**Do you have personal knowledge or education about Infertility?**

1. no  
2. yes  
3. no  
4. yes  
5. no  
6. no  
7. yes  
8. yes  
9. yes  
10. yes, several family members and friends (phone survey)  
11. yes  
12. no  
13. no  
14. yes  
15. yes  
16. yes  
17. no  
18. yes  
19. yes  
20. yes  
21. yes  
22. no  
23. yes  
24. yes  
25. no
Anonymous answers to question two from infertile couples survey:

**How long have you been trying to conceive?**

1. 2 years
2. 8 years
3. 11 years
4. 21 years
5. 3 years
6. 5 years
7. 2 and half years
8. 4 years
9. over a year
10. 2 years
11. 4 years
12. 14 years
13. 7 months
14. 8 months
15. 6 months
16. 8 years
17. 5 years
18. 11 years
19. 6 months
20. 2 months
21. 4 years
22. 10 years
23. 4 years
24. 7 months
25. 3 years
Anonymous answers to question three from infertile couples survey:

**Do you attend church?**

1. yes
2. yes
3. yes
4. yes
5. no
6. yes
7. yes
8. no
9. yes
10. yes
11. yes
12. yes
13. no
14. yes
15. yes
16. yes
17. no
18. yes
19. no
20. yes
21. no
22. yes
23. yes
24. yes
25. yes
Anonymous answers to question five from infertile couples survey:

**Does your pastor recognize the infertile soul on Mother’s Day?**

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<td>yes, he mentions those that yearn to be mothers.</td>
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APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL

PG. 112
November 17, 2014

Melanie H. Gruner
IRB Exemption 1717.111714: A Maker’s Dozen: Thirteen Recipes and Remedies for the Struggle of Infertility from God’s Golden Panel

Dear Melanie,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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