



embracing HOPE

comfort & encouragement
after miscarriage

by Teske Vance, Ph.D.



If you've had a miscarriage,
**YOU ARE NOT
ALONE IN YOUR GRIEF.**

In the United States, it is estimated that 15% of known pregnancies end in miscarriage. Even so, you may *feel* alone and may carry your grief in silence.

This booklet was created to help you *embrace hope* as you do the hard work of grieving in the painful aftermath of miscarriage. Grief takes time. Healing is a process. Give yourself the space and grace you need to mourn.

May the words on the pages that follow offer comfort, encouragement, and practical help.

COMMON REACTIONS TO MISCARRIAGE

Anger. Sadness and depression. These feelings are normal after a miscarriage, but you may also experience:

- **Confusion.** You may be questioning the cause of the miscarriage. You may also be wondering who, what, or whether to tell others. The painful grief of miscarriage is just as heartbreaking as the loss of a full-term baby. However, people often fail to reach out and give the same comfort and support or they may expect the mother to recover quickly and “try again,” and that can deepen your pain and confusion.
- **Jealousy.** The mere sight of a pregnant woman may cause feelings of envy. You may experience jealousy of close friends or family members who are expecting, even while simultaneously feeling genuine happiness for them.
- **Guilt.** It is typical to wonder if you did something to cause the miscarriage or if there are things you could’ve done differently while pregnant. Often, there is no explanation for miscarriage.
- **Failure.** As a mother and as a woman. You may experience negative feelings about your body “failing” to carry this child to term.
- **Questioning God.** You may feel as though God is distant, doesn’t care, or question why He allowed such a painful experience to occur. While we don’t know all the answers to these questions, we know that in the same way your heart hurts for your baby, God’s heart hurts for you. He will see you through this loss and give you hope again.

.....
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.....



WHEN PREGNANCY WAS UNEXPECTED

Whether or not the pregnancy was intended, the experience of miscarriage is painful. If you've experienced miscarriage after an unplanned pregnancy, you may be wrestling with some additional thoughts or questions, such as:

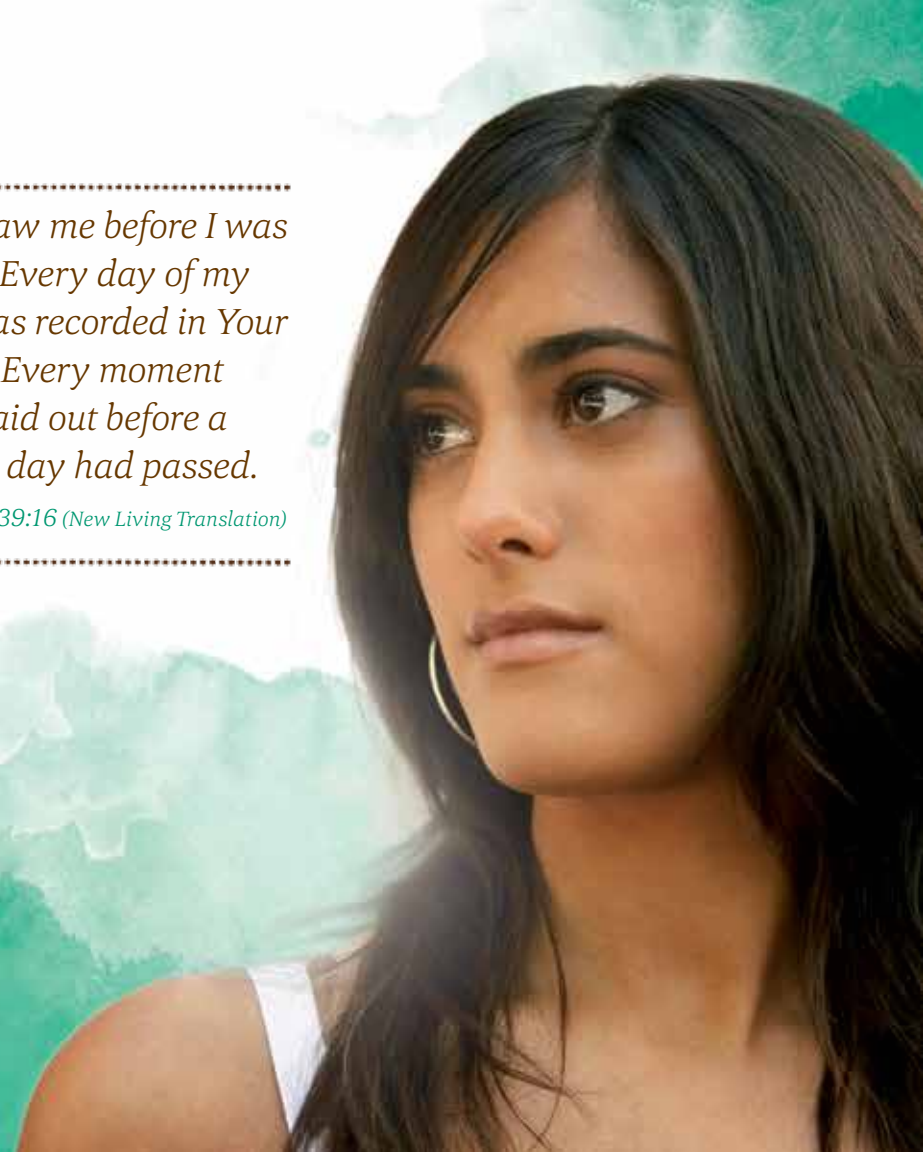
- Is this punishment
 - ...for sin in my life?
 - ...for the circumstances of my pregnancy?
 - ...for past mistakes?
- Did my negative thoughts about the pregnancy cause this to happen?
- In a way I am relieved, yet I feel terribly guilty. Does this make me a horrible person?

You are not alone in these thoughts and questions. Even women who were actively trying to get pregnant struggle with similar concerns as they search to make meaning out of something so senseless. Your questions and feelings are quite normal and you are not a terrible person for questioning God or yourself or for pondering these tough thoughts as you process your pain.

Whatever the situation, you can rest in the assurance of God's unconditional love for you and for your baby lost through miscarriage. Psalm 139 tells of God's intimate knowledge of each and every one of us, with verse 16 affirming that He knows the number of our days, before even one of them begins.

.....
You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in Your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

Psalm 139:16 (New Living Translation)
.....





SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING

- **Share Your Story.** Talk to your spouse or a trusted friend or family member or even a counselor about your loss experience. Keep a journal to record your story and feelings associated with the loss.
- **Grieve Freely.** And give yourself permission to do so. This may include setting up some personal boundaries with family and friends as a way of protecting yourself from people and situations that are difficult for a time (e.g., baby showers, people who tend to be insensitive, baby dedications or christenings).
- **Accept Help.** While boundaries may be necessary, it is also important to let family and friends know how they can help support you. They may not take the initiative or know what would be helpful, so be sure to clearly express your needs and be open and willing to receive their support.
- **Seek Support.** Consider joining a local or online support group (see Online Support Resources on page 22) as you navigate the grief associated with your loss.
- **Turn Toward, Not Away.** Navigating miscarriage grief as a couple can be difficult as each partner tends to express their grief differently. It is important to keep the communication lines open and turn toward each other during this time. Recognizing this difference and choosing to respond to one another with compassion and grace will help as you each grieve in your own unique way.



- **Create Mementos.** Part of what makes miscarriage so difficult is the absence of memories and tangible keepsakes. Create or purchase these items as a way of honoring your child who died. Some ideas include ornaments at Christmastime, a special blanket, or a necklace or other piece of jewelry by which to remember. Create a memory box — which might include your positive pregnancy test, an ultrasound image, your personal thoughts, a poem or drawing — and designate a special place in your home to house these items. Share these items with family and friends as you feel led, which will help them to see that your child was a real baby, was valued, and is loved.
- **Honor your Child.** You can do so by naming your baby or doing something to honor your baby on the due date or other special days. Examples include lighting a candle, releasing a balloon, or making a donation to a related cause in your child's memory.

- **Share with Your Other Children.** It is normal to struggle with the daily activities of parenting after miscarriage. Don't be afraid to ask for help from grandparents, relatives, or friends. You may wonder how or what to tell your child(ren) after miscarriage occurs. Consider their age and maturity level, then share openly and honestly what you are comfortable in a way that conveys the facts and your feelings. Sharing the story with your child(ren) will teach them about the value and preciousness of every life.
- **Seek Spiritual Comfort.** Approach God in prayer. Share your feelings and seek solace in Him. Read Bible verses that provide comfort and encouragement to you in times of grief.

.....
*Can a woman forget her nursing child and
have no compassion on the son of her womb?
Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.*

Isaiah 49:15
.....

HANDLING HURTFUL COMMENTS AND CLICHÉS

You may experience unwelcome and hurtful comments from those around you. It can be difficult to make sense of such remarks, which are usually well intended. Here are some specific examples to be aware of:

- Be prepared for the “At least” comments which, by nature, tend to minimize the experience of loss.
 - At least you were only ____ weeks along.
 - At least you know you can get pregnant.
 - At least you didn’t have to give birth.
 - At least the pregnancy wasn’t planned.
- You can always try again.
- This is just “nature’s way.” Something must have been wrong with the baby.
- It was probably for the better.

Common clichés may also be expressed, many with Christian undertones. While it’s good to embrace truths from the Bible as you are ready and to realize that God sees the hurt you are going through in the aftermath of loss, hearing these phrases is not always helpful. Some common clichés that you may hear include:

- Your baby is in a better place.
- Heaven needed another angel.
- This was all a part of God’s plan.

Decide in advance to forgive those who make insensitive remarks. Strive to look beyond the words that are spoken and examine the intent of the person making the comment. Consider your relationship to the individual and what you believe their true motives are behind their words. Doing so will help you respond with grace. Be prepared for these comments and stand firm in the knowledge that your child’s life—no matter how brief, whether planned or unplanned—matters to both you and God.

.....
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.....



SILENCE HURTS, TOO

Sometimes the silence surrounding miscarriage stings more deeply than insensitive remarks. Silence sends the message that others don't care, and can make you feel alone in your grief. The truth is that most people aren't comfortable with the topic themselves and/or don't want to cause more hurt by bringing it up.

You may be in a situation where you haven't told anyone about the pregnancy, let alone the loss. As difficult as it may be, take the initiative to talk with someone about your experience and the current struggles you are facing. Seek out support so that you can share freely with others who've been through something similar. Even when it may seem as though the rest of the world has moved on, remember that God is with you every step of the way. Turn to Him in prayer and find comfort in the refuge of His love. The Bible tells us, *"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."* Psalm 34:18.

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EMBRACING HOPE THROUGH GOD'S WORD

The Bible is a wonderful source of hope, encouragement, and healing. Psalm 119:28 says, *"My soul weeps because of grief; strengthen me according to Your word."*

The following verses are provided to comfort, encourage, and guide you to embrace hope amid the hurt. Write these verses down and place them around your home, or carry them with you in your purse.

Say these verses aloud or during prayer, which helps you to really think about the truth of what you are saying, and to know that these promises are for you.

.....
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.....

*For if He causes grief, then He will have compassion,
according to His abundant lovingkindness.*

Lamentations 3:32

*Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who
hope in the LORD.*

Psalm 31:24

*Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you
share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.*

2 Corinthians 1:7 (English Standard Version)

*"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows; but
cheer up, for I (Jesus) have overcome the world."*

John 16:33 (The Living Bible)

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit
them together in my mother's womb.*

Psalm 139:13 (The Living Bible)

*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power
of the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 15:13



MOVING FORWARD WITH HOPE

There is no timetable for grief. Others may expect you to “move on” when truly all you can do is move forward. You’ll never “get over” your loss, but with God’s help you will get through this.

Expect to navigate challenges along the way—the sight of pregnant women, birth announcements and baby showers, and milestone dates to name a few.

Know that although you are hurting now, you aren’t alone and there will be joy in your life again. Moving forward doesn’t mean that you are forgetting your baby. There will always be a special place in your heart for your little one. As you feel led, make a plan to recognize your baby on the due date, anniversary date, or other special days as you integrate your child’s life and memory into your everyday, ongoing life.

Above all, remember that just as it takes time to heal a broken bone, healing your broken heart will also take time, and the healing process can be different for each person. So give yourself time and grace as you move from one day to the next, all the while embracing the hope of Jesus on your journey, for [He cares for you](#).

.....
*Let Him have all your worries and cares, for
He is always thinking about you and watching
everything that concerns you.*

1 Peter 5:7 (The Living Bible)
.....

PRACTICAL WAYS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO HELP

If you are reading this booklet because you want to understand how to help a loved one who has experienced a miscarriage, here are some ideas:

- Acknowledge the loss and the life of the child that grew within. You won't worsen the pain by talking about the loss, but silence may send the unintended message that you don't care.
- Pray for and with the parents; let them know that you are praying.
- Send a card or note of encouragement, particularly on special days (such as what would have been the due date, anniversary dates, Mother's/Father's Day, holidays, etc.).
- Give a gift, keepsake, or memento in remembrance.
- Look for ways to serve. Bring a meal, shop for groceries, clean their house, or offer to care for older children. Don't say, "Call if you need anything," because this places the burden on the couple to ask for help. Instead, take the initiative.

- Recognize the child as a member of the family and incorporate their memory into family traditions.
- Don't forget Dad. He's often overlooked and seen as the "protector" or "gatekeeper" to the mom. Instead of asking only about mom, ask how the couple is doing or make a point to ask Dad specifically how he is doing. Acknowledge how difficult it must be for him to maintain strength as he protects and cares for his wife, while also grieving the loss himself.
- Be sensitive to their feelings with regard to birth announcements and baby showers.
- Avoid insensitive comments and clichés, however well intended. Simply being with them, offering a hug or a simple "I'm sorry" will mean so much.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

And Then You Were Gone: Restoring a Broken Heart After Pregnancy Loss, by Becky Avella

A spiritual and practical guide to healing after pregnancy loss, pointing grieving hearts to real hope and equipping family, friends, churches, counselors, and others with understanding and tools for ministering to hurting families after loss.

Hope for Today, Promises for Tomorrow: Finding Light Beyond the Shadow of Miscarriage or Infant Loss, by Teske Drake

A ten-week study that will encourage and challenge women to delve into a deeper understanding of God's Word in the aftermath of miscarriage or infant loss. As women engage in biblical teaching, they will learn to embrace God's promises of love, goodness, purpose, comfort, peace, refinement, restoration, hope, and eternity.

Safe in the Arms of God: Truth from Heaven about the Death of a Child, by John MacArthur

With scriptural authority and the warmth of a pastor's heart, bestselling author John MacArthur examines the breadth of the entire Bible and reveals the Heavenly Father's care for every life in this compelling book.

ONLINE SUPPORT RESOURCES

Caleb Ministries
calebministries.org

Naomi's Circle
naomiscircle.org

Hannah's Prayer Ministry
hannah.org

Sufficient Grace Ministries
sufficientgraceministries.com

M.E.N.D. Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death
mend.org

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Author Note

Teske Vance (Ph.D., Iowa State University) is a mommy with hope for four babies in heaven, mom to two children on earth, and army wife to Luke. Prompted by personal experience, Teske has spent more than a decade researching, advocating for, and providing support to those who grieve. Teske currently serves as a Hospice Bereavement Coordinator, supporting individuals and families of all ages. She is especially passionate for the unborn and supporting women who have struggled with the ambiguous loss of one so small. Teske resides in central Iowa with her family. You may contact her at teske.vance@gmail.com.



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