

Miscarriage - An Untimely Birth

*Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been;
as infants which never saw light.*

Job 3:16

Most newly expectant mothers begin to look forward to holding a baby in their arms the moment a pregnancy is suspected. Once it is confirmed, there is almost always an excited anticipation and wonder over the changes that have silently and miraculously begun—whether or not the pregnancy was planned. Pondering the reality of a tiny beating heart warmly snuggled within one's own body is no small matter. In fact, it would require unusual indifference to regard such an event with casual ambivalence. For most mothers, it is a time of awe and wonder, of fulfillment and eager expectation as each stage of growth is anticipated. Though there is little outward evidence to suggest a baby is on its way—already, the expectant mother is picturing herself cuddling a baby and wondering who he will be like. She is not a little bit pregnant—she is as pregnant at one month as she will be at seven or eight months. For most mothers, there is no reason to believe her pregnancy will not continue uninterrupted or that her dreams for this baby will not be fulfilled.

The possibility of a miscarriage isn't something any happy, expectant mother wishes to entertain, yet we know that for every eight pregnancies, only seven will continue past the first trimester. Many miscarriages occur without an expectant mother knowing she was ever carrying a child. For these, there is no disappointment at all because there is no awareness at all that a baby existed, even though its development was well on its way in its most embryonic form. On the other hand, for the young woman who has begun to anticipate a live birth, the threat of a miscarriage sparks a natural urgency to protect life. Something besides a tiny little baby dies if the little life within her is threatened or suddenly cut short--what dies are hopes and dreams that have been spinning like a weaver's beam, night and day, into an as yet unfinished tapestry of life. The abrupt cessation of pregnancy quite naturally leaves waves of great disappointment and sadness.

For most women, a brief period of sadness and disappointment after a miscarriage is a natural response to loss. Most will also experience physical fatigue and tender emotions that have more to do with hormonal changes that occur with pregnancy, even though it ended in miscarriage. Emotions tend to be considerably more intense for a small number of women whose miscarriage occurred much later in the pregnancy or was one of several that have occurred in an effort to bring a pregnancy to term. Disappointment and concern will quite naturally be much stronger for these women. Still others experience rather strong emotional turmoil when medical personnel or family members devalue the life that was lost, in direct contradiction to a strongly held belief that an autonomous life began at conception.

Miscarriage is experienced quite differently among women depending on a variety of reasons that include the circumstances of the miscarriage as well as the personality of the expectant mother. Following is a list of common underlying factors that tend to play a large role in the level of disappointment or difficulty that is typically experienced after a miscarriage.

- How the expectant mother views the beginning of life and its spiritual implications
- Knowledge the expectant mother has gained with regard to the normal biological aspects of a miscarriage
- The degree disappointment is involved in the loss
- The degree fear is involved in the loss
- The manner in which doctors and medical personnel deal with the event
- The physiological chemistry of each particular woman and her understanding and acceptance with regards to hormonal changes that are a part of every pregnancy, whether or not it terminates with a miscarriage or birth.

Quite possibly no other factor triggers more emotion among Christian women who suffer a miscarriage than how she views the beginning of life and its spiritual implications if a pregnancy ends prematurely. Assuming an expectant mother believes the beginning of life occurs at the moment of conception, she will naturally regard her unborn child as a baby—not an embryo, fetus, or living tissue. This firmly held belief carries with it a number of natural assumptions that all fit perfectly into the way women progress through a typical nine month pregnancy that does not end in miscarriage.

There's nothing unnatural about referring to her unborn child as a baby or giving him or her a name before delivery. Medical personnel, family members and friends in all likelihood have joined in rejoicing over the anticipated birth of her child. A due date has been set, a doctor chosen, medical appointments scheduled, and many events set in motion to prepare for the arrival of a newborn baby. No one asks how far along her fetus is and no one helps her plot a due date for full-grown tissue. People have talked with her about her *baby*—not the formation of embryonic cells. Until, that is, a miscarriage occurs.

The moment a miscarriage takes place, medical personnel in particular tend to make a quick shift from baby to tissue, from child to fetus. This sounds cold, abrupt and confusing to a woman who has just lost *a baby*! Her mind will recoil if such language and ambivalence suddenly surround her. She may want to scream, "A *baby*, not some tissue, has died! A person, not an "it" has left my body!" Though the people attending to her may be kind and well meaning and may believe casual or clinical references to her miscarried baby make it easier to put the event into perspective, it tends to do just the opposite. An expecting mother will not believe she carried a precious human being with an individual soul one moment, and nothing but embryonic cells and body tissue the next. The two mental concepts are diametrically opposed. Therefore, her mind will struggle in an effort to validate her belief and reconcile what is happening. Was it a five-week-old

baby with a beating heart, or tissue? If it was a baby, where is the dignity that should surround the loss of any human life, no matter what stage of development it is in?

The expectant mother is stunned and often wonders, “If life begins at fertilization and a baby’s genetic code is determined at this moment, why the sudden depersonalization of this human being I have acknowledged and already begun to love?” Like most of us, newly expectant mothers remember marveling over the now famous pictures of a perfectly formed 14-week-old baby sucking its thumb inside his mother’s womb. We now know that an unborn baby has brain waves at six weeks, is kicking at 7 weeks and has a beating heart just 21 days after conception. The many pro-life arguments and scientific facts that verify life begins at conception *do* have an impact! Yet let us not forget they impact those who would not consider an abortion under any circumstance as well as those who consider voluntarily ending a pregnancy. Consequently, this heightened awareness that a person’s unique existence begins at conception also heightens awareness that an individual person dies when conception ends in miscarriage.

No, it is not appropriate to plan a funeral or grieve as though this unformed child had lived outside the womb. On a scale of human tragedies, this is *not* among those of major proportion. Miscarriages in the earliest stage of pregnancy *are* a common and natural life occurrence and ought to be regarded as such. But neither is it appropriate to toss what we call an unborn baby into a trash receptacle. Nor is it appropriate to regard its death with no more thought than we would a deceased goldfish. The way we view the beginning of life of necessity must change the way we view the premature end of life, even though it is in its earliest stage!

A miscarriage ought to produce a sense of awe and wonder as we ponder the marvel of procreation, of human life that lives for eternity—a capability God gives to frail and sinful human beings like ourselves. If a living soul began at the moment of fertilization when sperm and ovum met and merged into a single cell, that eternal living soul is still living. And though we do not know the unborn baby, he or she is certainly known by God, is named by God, and will be raised by God. Yes we are disappointed for ourselves and yes, the fact that miscarriages are a common occurrence doesn’t erase our sadness. Yet at the same time, we who profess to believe God is the author of life *can* rejoice that a tiny, unknown but living soul has been mysteriously added to the population of Heaven. There is *no* sorrow for the believer that is not also mitigated by hope—including the sorrow of a miscarried baby that never grew beyond a tiny network of living cells and never saw, as Job declared, the light of day.

We live in an age where every human disappointment, no matter how large or small, is seized as an opportunity for someone to exploit sorrow into an occasion to make money or gain special attention. Sadly, the grief industry is big business that exploits human sorrow as much as it offers compassionate help stemming from genuine concern for others. When our hearts are aching after any experience of loss, we naturally desire understanding and compassion. At a vulnerable time like this we tend to listen to voices that are kind and compassionate. But sadly, many people—and Christians are no

exception—magnify this natural human desire into an occasion where even the most blatant self-pity and self-centeredness is glorified as something tantamount to a human right. Grief management connected with miscarriages is no exception, so there are no shortage of internet sites, books, tapes, therapy opportunities, mental health options and spiritual advice being offered to disappointed women who have experienced a miscarriage. While it is wonderful to receive genuinely compassionate care after a miscarriage, it is dangerous to believe the words of every kind voice that offers help.

It's not uncommon for grief exploiters to assure women their miscarriage is equal to the loss of any child and is one of life's *most* traumatic experiences. On and on they go, claiming this event is one that leaves "indelible emotional scars on everyone it touches." That a miscarriage is disappointing and often difficult is not in question. That it is often mishandled and trivialized is also not in question. But that it is an experience that invariably leaves indelible emotional scars on everyone it touches is a gross exaggeration that helps no one—least of all the woman who has miscarried and is trying to make sense out of the event. A mother who weeps beside the hospital bed of a child who has just passed away after a long illness does not compare this moment of grief with the grief endured when she suffered a miscarriage.

Let's put miscarriage into perspective. First, as believers, I believe we must seriously reconsider our attitude and the manner we handle the premature death of an unborn baby, since we do profess to believe he is a human being no matter what stage of development he is in. This status of human being ought to afford him a measure of dignity beyond the way we would handle a meaningless mass of body tissue. It is appropriate to reflect on the wonder of life and commit this unknown child to God. It is appropriate to express our sadness, even while we accept a miscarriage as one of the imperfections and disappointments of our human existence and experience. It is also appropriate to take into consideration the fact that pregnancy causes our body to undergo enormous internal changes, and therefore requires time to recover and resume normal functioning. Hormonal fluctuation that is a result of pregnancy *is* going to affect the way a woman feels, both physically and emotionally.

There is much we can do to mitigate the sadness that a miscarriage naturally produces. We can educate ourselves about miscarriages and thereby resolve many of our natural concerns and apprehensions. We can acknowledge our disappointment and give ourselves the needed time to readjust our thoughts and expectations and allow our body to heal. Most importantly, we can lean upon the Lord and go to Him for comfort and strength, committing ourselves to Him as unto a faithful creator. But let's not use a miscarriage as an occasion to elicit unnecessary attention to ourselves or as an excuse to wallow in prolonged sadness and self-pity. Though our heart aches, let us turn to our loving Savior who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and full of compassion and let us take comfort in knowing He can be trusted to sustain us in the valley of tears as well as on the mountain of joy. Truly, though weeping endures for a night, joy comes in the morning.

Scriptures That Comfort Those Who Have Lost an Unborn Child

This passage clearly indicates God considers the unborn baby as a child, not a nonexistent person or simply the product of conception. The penalty for murder was to be carried out on one who caused the death of an unborn child.

If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Exodus 21:22

David's comments reveal a clear understanding that the newborn child went to Heaven when it died. He understood that while the child could not return to him, he would see him in Heaven.

And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. II Samuel 12:22-23

This is one of the most comforting and amazing passages in the Bible with regard to our existence before birth. Though we are imperfect, not yet being formed, we are every bit "there" and every bit a person. We now know that our genetic code that determines everything about us is contained in our DNA shortly after conception.

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous 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. Psalm 139:14-16

We are reminded in the following two passages that it is God who gives life and who forms the child in his mother's womb.

Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; Isaiah 44:24

All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. John 1:3

Jeremiah was not only a person before he was born, he had already been ordained by God as a prophet! God has a plan for every baby, whether that plan is to grow up in Heaven and fulfill whatever place God has for him there, or whether God's plan is to grow into manhood and serve God in some special way according to the gifts God has given.

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Jeremiah 1:5

Though we are disappointed when our hopes and dreams for our unborn child are not fulfilled, we can be assured that our Lord knows all about our sadness and is there to comfort us and give us reassurance that He is working all things out for our good and His own glory.

The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Psalm 9:9-10

Our source of greatest comfort and strength is the Lord alone. Spend time in the Psalms, meditating on the passages that encourage your heart just as they encouraged David's. The following Psalms are some that I found most comforting when I knew I was about to lose twin babies who had only lived into the 5th month.

The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace. Psalm 29:11

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Psalm 50:15

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Psalm 55:22

Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah. Psalm 62:8

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Psalm 73:25-26

I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. Psalm 85:8

Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul. Psalm 94:17-19

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. Psalm 112:4

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. Psalm 119:165

He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. Psalm 147:3

Sometimes we linger too long in sadness because we lack discernment to understand God's wisdom in every circumstance of life. In times of disappointment and difficulty, seek God's wisdom and understanding.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding...Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Proverbs 3:13,17

Remember that Jesus is still our greatest counselor. He is always available, day or night. He charges you nothing for His time, always has the perfect answer, understands our situation completely, listens patiently for hours on end, and is more compassionate and kind than any human being.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

What we think about and how we think after a disappointment will greatly determine how we feel emotionally and will make the difference between being disappointed and yet filled with peace or disappointed and filled with confusion and inner turmoil.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Isaiah 26:3

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. John 14:1

The Holy Spirit united with our spirit at the moment we believed the Gospel and trusted Jesus as our Savior. He is there to comfort us, teach us and guide us. Talk to Him just as you would talk to the Lord if He were sitting beside you.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. John 14:16-18

The world has nothing to hope for when trouble comes or they experience a loss. There is no purpose or promise they can claim to assure them their trial is going to work out for some wonderful eternal plan. The believer, however, has all kinds of

promises and assurances that not one trial comes without God allowing it and using it for a good and special purpose we will understand completely in Heaven for all of eternity.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:28-29

Sometimes mothers who loose a baby before it was born are filled with fear—fear they won't become pregnant again, fear they won't ever be able to carry a baby, or fear of someone's reaction to them. Jesus assures our hearts that He understands our fears and knows all about the things the may secretly trouble our mind. But He speaks to our hearts and whispers, "Do not be afraid. Only believe. It will all work out. You'll see. Trust me."

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. John 14:27

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. John 16:33

If we look at miscarriage only as an event that happens in this life, as a big disappointment with no real meaning, we think like those who do not have a relationship with Christ that fills them with hope and do not live for eternity. But if we understand that every trial and tear in this life is put into perfect perspective the moment we arrive in Heaven, we have *great* peace and joy even in the midst of our sadness and difficulties.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Romans 8:6

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Romans 15:13

It is a wonderful thought to remember that this disappointment is only a temporary sadness that is a blip of a second in our eternal existence. God wants us to be strengthened by renewing our spirit each day as we fellowship with Christ and meditate on His Word, drawing truth that comforts and strengthens us. When we put our disappointments and trials into perspective with eternity, we can rejoice for the joy we will experience when all of life's troubles are over and we are forever with Christ in Heaven. A most encouraging thought with regard to the little one who now lives in Heaven is that he has left his imperfectly formed earthly house and is now living in a new and perfectly formed heavenly house (body). Wow! What an awesome miracle we can't even begin to comprehend!

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 1 Corinthians 3:16-18; 4:1-2

By learning how to find comfort in Christ and in His precious promises and love we become more equipped to point others to the source of real peace and comfort.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Though we may not be thankful for our loss, we can always be thankful for what God is doing through our loss and what He has already done that we are not aware of! We can be thankful even in times like these, because we know our God makes every trial work out for good. Thankfulness for God's work in our lives brings great peace to the heart of a believer.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Colossians 3:15

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18