

— AN EXCERPT FROM —

CALLED TO ADOPTION

A CHRISTIAN'S GUIDE TO ANSWERING THE CALL

A SPECIAL NOTE ON

RESOLVING INFERTILITY



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CHAPTER NINE

A SPECIAL NOTE ON RESOLVING INFERTILITY

Sometimes, in the midst of trying to conceive, taking pregnancy tests, and experiencing monthly failures, it can seem difficult to see past the unfulfilled dream of parenthood.

Yet through it all, God sees you for the treasure you are.

He sees the value you offer to the world, when you may not feel you have much to offer.

He sees your worth, when you may not feel worthy of Him.

Much like a diamond has no concept of the value it holds or the beauty it is, you, too, may not be able to see your own value and beauty.

“God created man in His own image.”

Genesis 1:27

Did you know that right now, over 2 million married women are experiencing infertility? 11.8% of all American women are unable to conceive a child after trying for one year. Some will go on to have a biological child; others will not. And each year, over 60,000 couples from all walks of life will adopt because they share a belief that their lives will not be complete without a child.

Since fertility declines with age and so many women are pursuing careers, trouble conceiving is common among those who wait to start families. The most proven method is in vitro fertilization (IVF) where eggs are drawn from the ovaries and fertilized in a lab dish with concentrated sperm. Grown for three days into tiny embryos, several are placed in the uterus. If attempted for five cycles, this will make a baby in one out of three patients. The cost? About \$15,000 per cycle.

Driven by a seemingly desperate need, some couples have spent over \$150,000 on this procedure. Along with the financial toll, comes an emotional one, as well. Repeated failure is felt mostly by the woman, and many marriages cannot thrive during this time. Sadly, when families have invested so heavily

into failed fertility attempts, they may have no financial resources left for adoption.

Even when IVF does succeed, many are challenged by the dilemma of “left-over” embryos or reducing a pregnancy when doctors recommend this as a measure of increasing the chance of carrying just one baby to term. As Christians, many would never consider some of these options, but the moral dilemmas remain, often resulting in unthinkably difficult choices to make.

I believe that the desire to be a parent is from Him, yet how we approach that desire when biological pregnancy does not happen easily also needs to include His plans for us. While many of us are called to become parents, few of us are called to adoption.

Coming to Terms with My Infertility

As the oldest of five children, I had one sister and three brothers. I loved and helped care for them from the time when I was quite young. Mothering came naturally to me, and by the age of 11, I knew when I grew up, more than anything else, I wanted to be a mother.

I collected clothes and quilted a baby blanket that I kept in a hope chest for the child I would have one day. I fell in love with a man who also wanted children. He especially wanted to have a son he could teach to fish, ride a bicycle, and play baseball. From the first days after our wedding, we set out to have a family.

The months went by, then two years passed, but no baby came. Couples all around us seemed to get pregnant without even trying. I must have gone to a dozen baby showers during those early years of our marriage. I laughed with my friends as the expectant mothers opened their gifts, but I was crying inside.

We decided to see specialists, and we discovered that we both had fertility problems. Starting in the spring of 1985, I remember the months starting as a blur of tests and fertility drugs, another ovulation on the temperature chart, more poking and prodding, the start of one more menstrual cycle.

I came to dread holiday gatherings because of the humiliating questions. Getting dressed before one New Year’s Eve party, we took bets on how many insults we’d hear that night. He said 10, and that was about right. The topper was when my Grandpa asked at the dinner table, “Haven’t you figured out how to *do* it yet?”

“We lost that page of the manual,” I said with a smile, though his words had pierced me to the bone.

Some friends I had confided in offered remedies they said had worked for people they knew. We were supposed to eat fish twice a day, make love on the night of a full moon, and I was to lie on a propped up board that stood me on my

head. I started to avoid those friends and even my business associates, fearing that someone would ask when we were going to have children or if I was pregnant yet. We continued to see a specialist who was growing less hopeful.

As the months passed, life did not seem so bright. As the owner of a medium-sized manufacturing company, I had come to believe that if you wanted something bad enough, worked hard and smart enough, you could have it. But that didn't seem to help with pregnancy. As the CEO, I came to expect that when I needed something, I could pick up the phone and have it delivered. But I could not order a baby.

In my spiritual life, I came to wonder, since I was sure that God wanted us to have children, why He had not blessed us with a family. Was I doing something wrong? I prayed for an answer and prayed for a baby.

An avid reader, I bought books on infertility and human reproduction, on infant care and early childhood development. I hoped that somehow a baby might pop up out of a book as a result of all my studies! I went to the library almost every day (there was no Internet yet), and the librarian became my friend. One morning, she gave me a book on adoption. I took it over to a table and set it down. I sat in the chair and looked at its cover, but I could not bring myself to open it. I pushed it away and got on with my research into getting pregnant.

When I left the library, I set the adoption book next to me in the passenger seat of my car and took it home. Finally that night, I opened it and started to read. It was scary, because it was about 15 years out of date and written about the old ways of adopting, which seemed cold, secretive, and formal. Then I read another book about modern adoption, which seemed warm, honest, and comfortable.

After some really bad news from our doctor, my husband and I lay in bed one night talking. I saw that the door to adoption was opening, just as the door to getting pregnant seemed to be closing shut.

Within days, we decided to adopt. Right away, it seemed like there was light shining into our lives again. We were excited about our future with children. Adoption was the answer to my questions and to my prayers.

Resolving Fertility Issues

Sometimes I see people rush into adoption without taking the time to grieve the loss of the biological child they did not have. They risk sabotaging an adoption or, worse, treating the child they adopt as second best to the son or daughter they might have had biologically.

Before you can adopt with success, you must come to terms with your infertility. Pray and seek confirmation – this takes time. Move at your own pace, but realize that you are not getting any younger, and the longer you wait, the

more you delay the precious time you could have with the child God has meant for your family.

For me, coming to terms with infertility meant accepting that there was a reason for everything. I don't know why I was unable to have babies, but were it not for my infertility, I would not have adopted my wonderful son. I would not have opened an adoption center that has brought thousands of children and parents together, changing their lives.

I have known many couples who have faced infertility and moved on quite naturally to adoption. I have known others who have edged toward it uneasily, because their dream of having a biological child meant so much to them. Before you are ready to adopt, you have to know the answer to this question: Do you want to be a parent, or do you want to have a biological child?

You may feel as though you must *settle* for adoption. You cannot do this. A child deserves to have parents who love and cherish him as the most precious gift on earth. If you have unresolved issues about infertility, seek prayer and counseling before you adopt. You may choose to put adoption aside and press on with medical treatment until you have exhausted all options. Then, when you return to take up adoption, you may find, as many people do, that the adoption process is less stressful and more enjoyable than your infertility treatments. If you are not sure you can accept a child who will not inherit your genes, it may help you to talk with other adoptive parents or a counselor.

We are still amazed by the traits and characteristics that parents pass on to their adopted children. Like the adopted daughter whose sweet southern accent sounds just like her mother, or the son who has the same walk as his adoptive father, the same crinkling of his eyes when he laughs. Even biblically, Joseph, as Jesus' adoptive father, passed on the skills and talents of carpentry.

As with many things in life, we can only see God's beautiful plan as we look back to see how He was working to bless and care for us along our journey.

Dear Lifetime Staff,

Well...it's been a whole year, and we are still in disbelief!! We still marvel at our daughter and how much joy she has brought us, as well as our entire family. Looking back through all of our trials with infertility, we just could not see or understand what God's plan was for us. Now, looking at our daughter, we understand. All the sorrow and tears that we had for so many years seemed to disappear instantly with her birth. We are so looking forward to our lives as a family—Life could not be happier!

*Always,
Dave & Tiffany.*

Answering Your Questions

How do you know when it's time to move on from fertility treatments?

I wish there was a simple answer. For me, it was when I realized that I wanted to be a mother more than I wanted to have a biological child. Adoption could make that happen for me.

You see, choosing adoption doesn't have to mean giving up on being pregnant. I just knew that I was ready to be a mommy and God was leading me toward the dream down a different road. A number of years later, I was blessed with a successful pregnancy, but I never questioned the unique way my family came together.

Spend time together talking and praying about what each of you wants for your family. Adoption doesn't have to be closing the door on pregnancy, just be sure you know how your adoption professional feels about a pregnancy while adopting. At our center, we will place your file on hold during this time and start up again when so advised. Other organizations may have different policies, so be sure you ask.

A MESSAGE TO YOU FROM MARDIE

Infertility sometimes feels as though your body doesn't work correctly.

Perhaps it is just God calling you to another purpose, another part of His perfect plan? He is calling you to be more than you are and to love a child born outside of your womb, yet inside of your heart.

*"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit,
who is in you, whom you have received from God?*

You are not your own; you were bought at a price."

1 Corinthians 6:19,20



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TO
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