

Miscarriage:

A Plan to Help Women Think Biblically and Respond Rightly

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## Abstract

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Miscarriage is a staggeringly common form of infant loss touching one in four pregnancies. This type of loss can be unexpected and unpreventable, sometimes resulting in confusion, helplessness, shame, guilt, and many more emotions. Biblical counselor's and Christian women could benefit from a resource that aims to help women think and respond to miscarriage in a God-glorifying way by pointing to the hope found in Christ and His sufficient Word.

This thesis research aims to identify common heart issues associated with miscarriage suffering and to look to God's Word for hope, healing, and a solution to those issues. The secondary aims were to expose the hopelessness in the world's healing techniques, elevate the sufficiency of Scripture, and supply a counseling plan to biblical counselors.

Most of the research was conducted through library searches in the Bible, books, journals, and websites. A small portion of the research was conducted through a survey on miscarriage experiences and long and short-term responses. Finally, three interviews were conducted to gain a detailed insight on heart themes and reactions to miscarriage.

Common felt sentiments experienced with miscarriage are identified as feelings of isolation, disappointment, and frustration with the human body's frailty. Common heart responses associated with losing a baby in utero are despair, bitterness, and worry.

While the world encourages seeking hope from within oneself, the Bible points us to unwavering hope found through Jesus Christ and His Word. Through Jesus, we are given salvation, newness of life, eternal hope, and an end to sin and its consequences. From God's Word, we learn how Christ can identify with all our suffering. Through careful and diligent study and application of God's Word, a woman can renew her mind and set her desires and affections on Christ, which uproots despair, bitterness, and worry. Finally, thinking about trials and their purposes biblically encourages sanctification and brings glory to God.

## I. Introduction

### A. Purpose Statement

1. The purpose of this thesis is to help women who have experienced miscarriage to think and respond to this tragedy in a way that would honor God, provide healing, and facilitate sanctification. A biblical counselor can use this thesis to minister hope and healing to a woman hurting from miscarriage or by a sufferer of miscarriage as a tool to point her to Christ, the only source of true hope and comfort.
2. This thesis serves as a means for biblical counselors in the church to understand miscarriage grief, challenges, and the road to healing so they may be equipped to minister truth and comfort from God's Word to these hurting women. The church must be prepared to offer love and compassion while pointing women to the hope of Christ through His Word.
3. The nature of miscarriage and several personal, cultural, and perceptual factors can lead a woman to minimize the loss of her child. Helping women to think rightly about grief and the nature of their loss will help them appropriately deal with their grief.
4. The experience of miscarriage varies between women and even among pregnancies. In turn, how women respond to miscarriage differs and directly impacts their grieving process and worship of Christ. Identifying common responses to pregnancy loss paves the path to assessing these responses in light of

the truths of Scripture. Examination of the heart (in light of Scripture) is essential for a woman to glorify God and grow spiritually (Prov 4:23).

5. To highlight the sufficiency of Scripture in addressing the loss of a child through miscarriage (2 Tim 3:16-17). This will be done by first examining three secular methods of viewing and treating women who have lost a baby to miscarriage. These psychological therapies may make accurate observations about sadness after a miscarriage and offer helpful techniques on the road to healing, but they neglect to provide women with purpose and hope in their pregnancy loss.
6. Developing a biblical perspective on suffering gives women experiencing miscarriage hope and provides meaning and purpose to their trial. Death and suffering are a reality in our fallen world (Rom 6:23; Jn 16:33). The world tries to escape sorrow and death, but God can use these horrible realities for the good of those who love Him (Rom 8:28).
7. Through our hurt, we can come to know God better, draw closer in communion with Him, and experience healing and hope through Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Coming to know more of the sufferings of Christ, a woman can identify with the suffering of Christ, and give her burden to Jesus, resting in the peace that transcends all understanding (Matt 11:28-30; Phil 3:10, 4:7).
8. To identify and address the manifestations of the heart that the trial of miscarriage is prone to reveal. As part of the process of sanctification, suffering can serve as a means of bringing forth remains of the sinful nature to make us more holy

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<sup>1</sup> Joni Eareckson Tada, and Steven Estes, *When God Weeps: Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), 19-20.

(Heb12:11).<sup>2</sup> Through the Scriptures, despair, bitterness, and worry will be addressed.

## B. Intended Audience and Scope

1. This thesis is designed to address biblical counselors within the church desiring to know more about miscarriage suffering and how to help women through this time of sadness. The audience could also be women who have or are experiencing miscarriage and desire to learn more about thinking and responding rightly to this sorrow.
2. There are many experiences of miscarriage and components that complicate the grieving process. This thesis does not address every question, experience, response, and challenge. Instead, it aims to point women to Christ and the teaching of His Word, so they may think about and respond to miscarriage in a God-glorifying way.

## C. Definition of Terminology

1. Miscarriage- The secular world defines a miscarriage as the spontaneous loss of a fetus or embryo resulting in the loss of a pregnancy.<sup>3</sup> A Christian should view a miscarriage as the unforeseen death of a child in the womb, resulting in the loss of a pregnancy.

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<sup>2</sup> Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), 266.

<sup>3</sup> Heidi Murkoff and Sharon Mazel, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed (New York: Workman Publishing, 2016), 582.

2. Major Depressive Disorder- A diagnosis given to an individual exhibiting at least five of the listed symptoms most days for a minimum of two weeks.<sup>4</sup> These symptoms include: unexplained sadness, decreased interest in and little pleasure from daily activities, increased or decreased appetite resulting in weight loss or gain, insomnia or hypersomnia, psychomotor agitation or retardation, fatigue and lack of energy, feelings of worthlessness, preoccupation with guilt, diminished ability to think and concentrate, recurring thoughts of death.<sup>5</sup>
3. Despair- To have no hope in such a way that an individual gives up.<sup>6</sup>
4. Bitterness- To be angry, enraged or infuriated.<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 29:18 describes bitterness as something that roots itself, spreads, and is poisonous.<sup>8</sup>
5. Control- Is to have power over someone or somethings behaviors so that one can obtain a desired outcome.<sup>9</sup>

#### D. Research Methodology

1. The bulk of the research will come from books, internet searches, and journal articles.

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<sup>4</sup> Marshall Asher and Mary Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, 2nd ed (Bemidji, Minn.: Focus Pub., 2014, 2004), 110.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall Asher and Mary Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, 110.

<sup>6</sup> John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 2001), 2998.

<sup>7</sup> Kohlenberger III and Swanson, *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 4843.

<sup>8</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (United States of America: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2006), 287.

<sup>9</sup> *Merriam- Webster Dictionary Online*, "control," accessed October 13, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/control>.

2. Data on common heart themes struggles will be collected through three interviews and a questionnaire handed out at two churches and amongst my personal friends.

## II. Defining the Problem

This section will look at the unique factors of miscarriage that contribute to downplaying the grief experienced, typical responses to the trial of miscarriage, and how these responses impact the grieving process and reveal the worship of the heart.

### A. The Uniqueness of Miscarriage Grief

1. While miscarriage is a common experience, it is not always openly discussed, which can contribute to a sense of aloneness.<sup>10</sup> There are several reasons women may not talk about their experience with miscarriage. These factors can isolate women and their partners as they grieve.

2. Unlike other types of loss, women mourning the loss of a baby in utero mourn over a child they have not known. In addition, a mother grieves the loss of an envisioned future with the lost child.<sup>11</sup>

3. The physical circumstances around miscarriage are unique within themselves. The physical factors, timing, duration, and experience of miscarriage are different between each woman and each miscarriage.<sup>12</sup>

4. Currently, there seems to be but a handful of biblical resources addressing the topic of miscarriage. There are many resources addressing grief, sorrow, and suffering but do not address the unique components of miscarriage. Biblical counselor's and women who

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<sup>10</sup> Stephanie Green, *Miscarriage: You Are Not Alone* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2014), 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> Green, *Miscarriage*, 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Heidi Murkoff and Sharon Mazel, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed, (New York: Workman Publishing, 2016), 584-592.

desire to think and respond rightly about miscarriage may benefit from a resource that can point them to the Scriptures and offer some Biblical application on topics relevant to miscarriage.

## B. Minimization of Loss

1. Undervaluing of unborn life diminishes the significance of the loss of a baby in the womb. [Should I Get An Abortion? | Information to Help You Decide \(plannedparenthood.org\)](#) notes; one in four American women will have had an abortion by the time they are forty-five years of age. Further, in Canadian law, abortion is legal at all stages of pregnancy, right up until birth, according to [Legal Abortion in Canada – Love4Life.ca by AbortioninCanada.ca](#). Even in the secular definition of miscarriage, the baby lost is referred to as a fetus or embryo.<sup>13</sup> The undervaluing of life, especially life in the womb, perpetuates a notion that the death of a child in the womb is insignificant.
2. The values of North American culture directly impact what is deemed an appropriate response to the death of a child in the womb, even the degree and length of a proper grieving duration.<sup>14</sup> The criteria for Major Depressive Disorder (a common diagnosis after miscarriage)<sup>15</sup> outline what is deemed as inappropriate and appropriate responses to sorrow. According to the Diagnostic Statistical Manual, anyone experiencing a minimum of five of the listed symptoms of sadness for two weeks is diagnosed with Major

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<sup>13</sup> Murkoff and Mazel, *What to Expect When You're Expecting* 582.

<sup>14</sup> Allan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield, *The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow Into Depressive Disorder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 44-45.

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer E. Johnson, Ann Back Price, Jennifer Chienwen Kao, Karen Fenandes, Robert Stout, Robyn L. Gobin, & Caron Zlotnick, "Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) for Major Depression Following Perinatal Loss: a Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial," *Women's Mental Health* 19 (2016): 851. doi:10.1007/s00737-016-0625-5.

Depressive Disorder.<sup>16</sup> The criteria deeming appropriate duration and response to sorrow downplay the significance of the death of a child in the womb.

3. Sometimes the responses or lack thereof response to one's experience with miscarriage can minimize pregnancy loss.<sup>17</sup> People may try to extend comfort through comments that can be perceived as insensitive ("well, at least you know you can get pregnant" or "at least you already have children" or "God is sovereign"). Unfortunately, while these comments may be intended to comfort, they can trivialize the grief.
4. Different grieving styles of fathers can give the impression that their felt loss is not as significant as the mothers. Some women may be confused or upset by how their husbands displayed grief after losing their baby.<sup>18</sup>

### C. Responses to Miscarriage

1. There are many ways women may respond to miscarriage. The following looks at general observations about responses to miscarriage and what may be some of the driving factors influencing these responses.

- a) Some women experience sadness coupled with peace.<sup>19</sup> Many of these women, while grieved, can rest in the sovereignty and goodness of God. These women seek comfort and hope in the assurance of God's will for their and their child's

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<sup>16</sup> Marshall and Mary Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, 110-111.

<sup>17</sup> Green, *Miscarriage*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Ashley Walton, *Miscarriage Survey Data*, October 11, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Ashley Walton, *Miscarriage Survey*, October 11, 2021; *Miscarriage Interviews*, September-October 2021.

lives. Grieved for a time, these women seem to return to normal living within due time.

- b) Some allow sadness to turn into despair.<sup>20</sup> These women may carry guilt and shame related to their loss as if they or their body is somehow responsible for the miscarriage.<sup>21</sup> When sadness turns into despair, withdrawing from God and others, neglecting daily responsibilities, and being consumed with worry, are common among other depressive behaviors.<sup>22</sup>
- c) Other women experience confusion and react to miscarriage with bitterness. Miscarriage can come as a complete surprise for some or can be a drawn-out physical process, resulting in confusion and shock.<sup>23</sup> When emotions and unbiblical thinking are left free to rule the heart, the temptation to become bitter towards God can also be experienced.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Heather C. Trepal, Suzanne Gibson Semivan, and Mary Caley-Bruce, "Miscarriage: A Dream Interpreted," *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* 1, no. 3/4 (2005): 160, doi:10.1300/J456v01n03\_10.

<sup>21</sup> Teske Vance, *Embracing Hope: Comfort and Encouragement after Miscarriage* (Focus on the Family, 2017), 4.

<sup>22</sup> Marshall and Mary Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, 110.

<sup>23</sup> Miscarriage Association, *Your Feelings After Miscarriage* (Wales, New England: 2020), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Sue Nicewander with Jodi Jewell, "Walking Through the Dark Valley of Miscarriage," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 55-56, [https://www.ccef.org/jbc\\_article/walking-through-the-dark-valley-of-miscarriage/](https://www.ccef.org/jbc_article/walking-through-the-dark-valley-of-miscarriage/).

- d) Some women experience anxiety related to the uncertainties of their fertility future.<sup>25</sup> These women may experience a general sense of doom about actual or imagined events and may feel their worrisome thoughts are uncontrollable.<sup>26</sup>

#### D. Responses and the Heart

1. Every person is created to worship (Rom 1:18-32), and worship is directly related to how a woman responds to the event of a miscarriage. If the human heart is not worshipping God, it worships some created thing (Rom 1:23-25). The affection of our heart determines how we respond to our experience (Prov 4:23).<sup>27</sup>
2. When hardships like the loss of a baby, hopes, and dreams come along, they test the authenticity of one's faith (1 Pet 1:6-7).<sup>28</sup> Trials reveal whether we love God or the things of the world.<sup>29</sup> When we are stripped of earthly blessings, our response exposes whether we desire God or the gifts He gives to us.<sup>30</sup>
3. The emotion of sadness is not in itself sinful. Our Lord Jesus experienced the emotion of sadness, sorrow, or grief (Jn 11:32-36; Mk 14:34). Jesus even declared that those who mourn were blessed and would be comforted (Matt 5:4). Ecclesiastes 3:4 reminds us that there is an appointed time to weep and mourn. While it is not sinful to be sad, sadness can

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<sup>25</sup> Johnna Nynas, Puneet Narang, Murali K. Kolikonda, and Steven Lippmann, "Depression and Anxiety Following Early Pregnancy Loss: Recommendations for Primary Care Providers," *Prim Care Companion CNS Disord* 17, no. 1 (January 2015): doi:10.4088/PCC.14r01721.

<sup>26</sup> Marshall and Mary Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, 14.

<sup>27</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2002), 67.

<sup>28</sup> Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), 265.

<sup>29</sup> Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 265.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

become sinful if a woman uses her sorrow as an excuse to become hopeless, bitter, and/or worrisome.

4. A woman's beliefs and thoughts regarding God, suffering, and life make the grieving process profitable or destructible. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to guard our hearts because from it flow the springs of life. Wrong beliefs and thinking about God, and suffering, coupled with idolatrous desires, can lead a woman to despair, become bitter, and worry. We can allow suffering to conform us more into the image of Christ, or we can allow it to harden our hearts and turn us away from God (Phil 3:8-11).

### III. Healing the World's Way

This section will look at the most common diagnosis given to mothers after a miscarriage and three forms of secular treatment used to help women cope with miscarriage grief.

#### A. The Diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder

1. A common diagnosis given to a mother grieving after pregnancy loss is Major Depressive Disorder (MDD).<sup>31</sup> A diagnosis of MDD is more likely if a person has experienced a significant loss.<sup>32</sup>
2. A woman who experiences a minimum of five out of eleven criteria symptoms every day for at least two weeks is diagnosed with a major depressive episode.<sup>33</sup> The symptoms

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<sup>31</sup> Johnson, Price, Kao, Fernandes, Stout, Gobin, & Zlotnick. "Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) for Major Depression Following Perinatal Loss, 851.

<sup>32</sup> Marshall and Mary Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, 110.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

listed within the MDD criteria are similar to symptoms of grief and bereavement, hazing the line between what is normal grief and what is depression.<sup>34</sup>

3. The diagnosis of MDD and the criteria for diagnosis seem to contrast one another. A diagnosis of MDD is often given to grieving women despite one of the eleven symptoms being "unexplained sadness." An important question to consider is, "is sadness related to the loss of a child explainable, and if so, when and should women who have miscarried be diagnosed with MDD"?
4. The most common treatment for MDD is psychotropic medication in joint with psychotherapy according to [Depression \(major depressive disorder\) - Diagnosis and treatment - Mayo Clinic](#). The most popular drugs given are Prozac, Elavil, and Desyrel.<sup>35</sup> Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy, and the Reproductive Story are three psychotherapies used with those diagnosed with MDD after a miscarriage.<sup>36</sup> These treatments fail to offer genuine hope and address the heart issues revealed during the trial of miscarriage.

## B. Talk Therapy (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Interpersonal Psychotherapy)

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 25, 90, 110.

<sup>35</sup> Edward T. Welch, *Blame It on the Brain: Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998), 125.

<sup>36</sup> Kirsten Weir, "Healing the Wounds of Pregnancy Loss," *American Psychological Association* 49, no.5 (May 2018): 26, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/05/pregnancy-loss.>; Johnson, Price, Kao, Fernandes, Stout, Gobin, & Zlotnick. "Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) for Major Depression Following Perinatal Loss, 849-859; Janet Jaffe, "Reproductive Trauma: Psychotherapy for Pregnancy Loss and Infertility Clients from a Reproductive Story Perspective," *Psychotherapy* 54, no.4 (2017): 380-385, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pst0000125>.

1. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is psychotherapy that views a person's thoughts and feelings as the driving force behind behavior.<sup>37</sup> CBT teaches the counselee to respond differently in situations by replacing old thought patterns with new ones.<sup>38</sup>
2. While CBT addresses the thoughts and emotions that make healing from miscarriage complex, it does not address the influencing force behind destructive thinking and behaving, which is the worship of the heart, nor does it give the hope of Christ.
3. Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) seeks to decrease suffering by enhancing the counselee's interpersonal relationships.<sup>39</sup> IPT modified for MDD due to miscarriage seeks to resolve grief, reestablish interest in life roles and relationships, and resolve relational conflicts.<sup>40</sup>
4. IPT has been found effective in improving symptoms of MDD after a miscarriage by accelerating social support and functioning and improving MDD symptoms.<sup>41</sup> IPT may help to improve the quality of life, grief, and relationships after miscarriage but lacks to offer a solution to the problem of sin through the gospel and address the worship of the heart, wrong thinking and beliefs.

### C. The Reproductive Story (TRS) (A combination of CBT and IPT)

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<sup>37</sup> "Psychology Today," accessed October 23, 2021, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/basics/cognitive-behavioral-therapy>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> "Psychology Today," accessed October 25, 2021, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/interpersonal-psychotherapy>.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, Price, Kao, Fernandes, Stout, Gobin, & Zlotnick. "Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) for Major Depression Following Perinatal Loss, 847.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 857.

1. TRS is psychotherapy hypothesizing that all people develop a reproductive story beginning from childhood into adulthood.<sup>42</sup> The reproductive story is a person's narrative as to what their reproductive life will look like (number of children, gender of children, age at when they will begin a family, etc.).<sup>43</sup> The reproductive story is considered part of one's identity, and therefore trauma occurs when the story is interrupted.<sup>44</sup>
2. TRS aims to help a counselee rewrite their reproductive story so it does not end in grief but hope.<sup>45</sup> The process of this psychotherapy takes a counselee through a succession of steps that include honoring their lost child, identifying stages of grief, addressing the interruption to the reproductive story (miscarriage trauma), normalizing of feelings, improvement of interpersonal relationships, and the rewriting of the reproductive story.<sup>46</sup> Sadly hope is found in new dreams of the future rather than in Christ who is the solution to sin (Heb 9:26).
3. There are many helpful components to this form of psychotherapy. The reproductive story helps the counselee gain an understanding of the significance of their loss.<sup>47</sup> Recognizing the significance of loss is theorized to be essential in helping counselees move forward after miscarriage.<sup>48</sup> But, hope is not sought in Christ but is found within man.

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<sup>42</sup> Janet Jaffe, "Reproductive Trauma: Psychotherapy for Pregnancy Loss and Infertility Clients from a Reproductive Story Perspective," *Psychotherapy* 54, no.4 (2017): 380-385, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pst0000125>.

<sup>43</sup> Jaffe, "Reproductive Trauma, 380.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 381-384.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.

<sup>48</sup> Jaffe, "Reproductive Trauma, 384.

4. TRS fails to address feelings of shame and guilt in light of the cross, to point counselee's to hope in Christ and acknowledge the role heart worship plays in developing a reproductive story and in its interruption, to name a few.

#### IV. Healing Through Christ

This section will focus on Christ, the hope and solution for grief, comfort, uncertainty, and healing.

##### A. Grief (An Appropriate Reaction to Miscarriage)

1. Grief is a deep sadness caused by loss, especially death.<sup>49</sup> Deep sadness can be better understood as "sorrow." The word sorrow means deep distress, sadness, or regret over the death of someone.<sup>50</sup> The book of Lamentations uses descriptive language to describe the sorrow experienced as Jerusalem experiences God's judgment. Weeping bitterly (Lam 1:2), no comfort (Lam 1: 2, 9,12, 16, 17, 21), groaning (Lam 1:8), severe pain (Lam 1:12), weakness (Lam 1:14), distress (Lam 1:20), and an overturned heart (Lam 1:20) are just a few words used in lamentations to describe grief and sorrow.
2. The experience of grief and sorrow caused by death exists because of sin (Rom 5:12).
  - a) Sin is the human disposition to turn away from God and fail to uphold His moral law.<sup>51</sup> While sin is a reality that taints all areas of life, God did not create man

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<sup>49</sup> Merriam-Webster, "Grief," assessed October 28, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grief>.

<sup>50</sup> Merriam-Webster, "Sorrow," assessed October 28, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sorrow>.

<sup>51</sup> Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 217.

with a sin nature but with moral goodness (Gen 1:31).<sup>52</sup> It was not until Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that sin entered the world, separated them from God, and physical death became a reality (Gen 2:16-17; Gen 3:7; Rom 5:12-14).<sup>53</sup> Miscarriage is a result of the effects of sin in the world.

- b) Is miscarriage a punishment for one's sin? For sure, there are instances when deliberate or neglectful sin choices result in the loss of a pregnancy. But, Jesus explains in John 9:1-3 that sometimes suffering occurs to put the works of God on display. Further, Romans 8:1 reminds us that "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Through salvation, a woman does not need to fear that her miscarriage was punishment for her sin.<sup>54</sup> Jesus paid the penalty for our sin with His death on the cross (Rom 5:6-11).
3. Grief is an appropriate response to miscarriage because it acknowledges that something is not right.
    - a) Sorrow acknowledges that a wrong ought to be made right. Romans 8:20-23 tells us that all creation longs to be restored to its original state, untouched by sin.
    - b) Grief over miscarriage acknowledges that life has been lost. Unborn or not, a child has died in the case of a miscarriage (Ps 139:15-16; Jer 1:5). The death of a child is significant, and the response of sorrow is natural.
  4. Christ is the solution to grief. Revelation 21:4 says, "and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying,

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Jessalyn Hutto, *An Inheritance of Tears: Trusting the Lord of Life When Death Visits the Womb* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Cruciform Press, 2015), 27.

nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” One day all believers will inherit an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and that will not fade away, reserved in heaven (1 Pet 1:4).

#### B. Heavenly Comfort (God’s tender care for your child)

1. Your baby is in heaven. The heavenly eternal home of your child is supported throughout the Scriptures. God describes children as innocent (Jer 2:34; 19:4) and His possession (Ezek 16:20-22).<sup>55</sup> Jesus Himself claimed that the kingdom of heaven belonged to children (Mk 10:14) and that God did not will for any child to perish (Matt 18:14).<sup>56</sup> And King David said after the death of his infant son, "I will go to him, but he will not return to me," indicating that David believed he would one day be reunited in heaven with his son.
2. Your baby is without sin and has been completely transformed into the image of Christ.<sup>57</sup> We know from 1 John 3:2 those who are in Christ will be made like Christ in eternity.<sup>58</sup> Further, because Christ is without sin (Heb 4:15) and because we will be made like Him, your child has never sinned and does not live with any consequences of sin.
3. Through salvation in Christ, you will be with your child in heaven. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom 3:23). Thankfully, God's love for us is so great that He sent His one and only Son to live a perfect life, to die a brutal death on the cross, taking the wrath of God upon Himself as payment for our sin, and was raised to life on

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<sup>55</sup> John MacArthur, *Safe in the Arms of God: truth from heaven about the death of a child* (Nashville Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2003), 34-35.

<sup>56</sup> MacArthur, *Safe in the Arms of God*, 58-59.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.

the third day conquering death (Rom 5:18-21; 1 Cor 15:3-4). Those who confess with their mouth and believe in their hearts that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead will be saved (Rom 10:9) and inherit eternal life (John 3:16).

### C. God's Sovereignty and Providence

1. The providence of God is His constant care and action in all the events of His creation, to govern all things for the good of His people and His glory.<sup>59</sup> God is so intricately involved in His creation that He knit your baby together in your womb (Ps 139:13).
2. The sovereignty of God is His control over all the events and actions of His creation.<sup>60</sup> God does what He pleases, and nothing and no one can deter His plans (Ps 33:11; Job 42:2; Is 46:10). Alongside God's sovereignty are His other attributes (love, wisdom, goodness, etc.). We should take comfort in the sovereignty of God. While a mother has no control over the events of a miscarriage, God is in complete control. While we may never know the reason for such a short life as that of a miscarried baby, we can be sure that the event did not happen outside God's all-loving, wise, and good plan.
3. God's soul desire for Christians is for them to be conformed into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29).<sup>61</sup> How each believer will be transformed is unique and specific to God's plan and purposes for that life (Eph 2:10; Ps 138:8).<sup>62</sup> God's will that you be conformed

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<sup>59</sup> Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God* (United States of America: NavPress, 2008), 13-14.

<sup>60</sup> Bridges, *Trusting God*, 24.

<sup>61</sup> Bridges, *Trusting God*, 35-36.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 36

into the image of Christ is woven into every event that God sovereignly ordains for your life, including the trial of miscarriage.

#### D. God's Love, Wisdom, Goodness, and the Cross

1. Trials that endure or seem meaningless can cause one to question God's love, wisdom, and goodness.<sup>63</sup> During trials, God can seem far away, even as David noted in Psalm 13:1-2. Peace and comfort during trials occur when we rest in what we know to be true of God. Steading our minds on the truths found in Scripture (God's steadfast love, the realities of salvation, etc.) causes one to sing and rejoice in the face of adversity (Psalm 13:5-6).
2. God's love does not waver when we are under trial. God's love is not dependent on us but rather on Christ.<sup>64</sup> God loves us and loved us at our worst (at the foot of the cross) because as He gazes upon us, He sees the finished work of Christ (Rom 3:21-26; Rom 8:39).<sup>65</sup>
3. God graciously exercises His love, wisdom, and goodness in our trials. The Father's love for us is much like a parent's love.<sup>66</sup> God desires what is best for His Children, and that is to be holy (Heb 12:5-11). Using His wisdom and out of His love and goodness, God orchestrates trials for our ultimate good (holiness) (Rom 8:28-29).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 148-149.

<sup>67</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000), 193.

4. God is good and worthy of our trust (Ps 34:8). God's goodness is displayed through the redemption of our sin on the cross and the future end to all sin.<sup>68</sup> Nahum 1:7 expresses the safety that comes from trusting our God, who is good.<sup>69</sup> We may not know the specific reason why our little ones did not live long, but we experience peace when we rest in the goodness of God.

## V. Manifestations of the Heart

Here the heart issues of despair, bitterness, and worry will be closely examined in light of pregnancy loss. The goal is to better understand common reactions to miscarriage so counselors may help women examine their hearts and minds and understand the connection between heart worship and their responses to miscarriage.

### A. Desire of the Heart

1. We are creatures created to worship (Rom 1:21-25). We are ruled by what we desire.<sup>70</sup>

While not directly related to miscarriage, James 1:1-4 explains how desires impact how you live within the context of quarrels and fighting. Humans desire things, and when idolatrous desires rule our hearts, we may sin to get our desire or sin because we did not obtain our desire. Below is a general idea:

2. Worship: As stated in Romans 1:25, there are two options when it comes to worship. We either worship the Creator (God) or worship the creation (anything man-made or of this

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<sup>68</sup> A.W. Pink, *The attributes of God* (United States of America: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), 64.

<sup>69</sup> Pink, *The Attributes of God*, 65.

<sup>70</sup> Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 78.

world). Christ rules our hearts as Christians, but we can be tempted to allow earthly desires to compete for His spot as King.<sup>71</sup> Will glorifying God rule in the wake of a miscarriage or will the desire to be a mother?<sup>72</sup>

3. Thinking/ believing: What begins as a good God-given desire (having a baby Gen 1:28) can quickly become a demand because of our disposition to worship created things.<sup>73</sup> If allowed to rule in one's life, the desire to be fruitful and multiply can become an idol, something we believe we have a right to or require to be satisfied.
4. The Heat: Heat can be understood as any stressful circumstance that comes into a person's life (miscarriage, hurtful responses from others, physical symptoms of a miscarriage, etc. ). Whatever the stressors are, they beat down on one's life and force an individual to respond.<sup>74</sup>
5. Fruit: The pressure that stressors produce force an individual to respond. The response to the stressor (miscarriage) will be the result of what is ruling the heart. When a good desire has become a need, felt right, or a demand, it will produce bad fruit when threatened (bitterness, withdrawal, worry, despair, etc.).<sup>75</sup> When the heart desires God and trusts His will for your life, you will bear good fruit when the heat beats down in your life (Jer 17:7-8; Gal 5:22-23).

#### B. Despair (Withdrawal, Desensitization, and worry)

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 78-80.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>74</sup> Jay Adams, *How To Handle Trouble* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1982), 1-2.

<sup>75</sup> Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 86-88.

1. Despair is different from sadness in that a sense of hopelessness accompanies it.<sup>76</sup> Sadness, on the other hand, is described as broken-hearted, grieved, sorrowful.<sup>77</sup> Ecclesiastes 2:18-20 compared to Genesis 40:6 paints a contrasting picture between despair and sadness. In Ecclesiastes, King Solomon speaks of the hopelessness or vanity in toiling. Whereas in Genesis 40:6 sadness is described as a countenance.
2. Some fruit common to despair is guilt, a drivenness by feelings, neglecting daily responsibilities, hopelessness, a sense of purposelessness, ruminating over negative thoughts, sleep and appetite disturbances and suicidal thoughts.<sup>78</sup> A person in a state of despair produces several of these fruits at one time, over a lengthy period.<sup>79</sup>
3. Thoughts and beliefs about God, others, and ourselves that are pessimistic, prideful, indulging or demanding contribute to despair.<sup>80</sup> Thoughts and beliefs that do not align with Scripture and do not keep Christ as the center of our affections can lead to fear, anger, dashed hopes, feelings of failure, shame, guilt, legalism, and suicide (all common denominators with despair).<sup>81</sup>
4. A heart that trusts in man or created things will wither when seasons of drought occur (Jer 17:5-6). A woman who hopes in a child rather than Christ can find herself hopeless,

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<sup>76</sup> See Introduction (pg. 4) for the definition of despair.

<sup>77</sup> Kohlenberger III and Swanson, *The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 3510 and 3512.

<sup>78</sup> Marshall and Mary Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, 110.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Edward T. Welch, *Depression: Looking Up from the Stubborn Darkness* (Canada: New Growth Press, 2011), 110-114.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 127-185.

angry, and can fall into self-pity when her desires have not been met.<sup>82</sup> When Christ is not the standard of righteousness, shame, guilt, legalism, and a sense of failure remain.<sup>83</sup>

### C. Bitterness

1. Bitterness differs from anger in that it dwells on a hurt for an extended period.<sup>84</sup> Anger is an active emotion in response to a perceived wrong or evil.<sup>85</sup> Hebrews 12:15 describes bitterness as a root, and Viars suggests bitterness begins with a desire we have wrongfully allowed to rule. We can be tempted towards bitterness when:<sup>86</sup>
  - a) First, when God directs us into difficult, unexpected, or undesirable circumstances. These situations (such as a miscarriage) ask us to trust God's Word, character, and plan.<sup>87</sup> If our desire for a more pleasurable circumstance is given reign to rule in our heart over God's plans for us, we may find it difficult to trust God, leading to bitterness.
  - b) Second, when God's plan is different from what we had planned or desired.<sup>88</sup> If our plans or desires have been allowed to trump our desire for God's plan and glory, we may be tempted to become bitter.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 148-150.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 157-176.

<sup>84</sup> Lou Priolo, *Bitterness: The Root That Pollutes* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2008), 7.

<sup>85</sup> Robert D. Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help For A Common Problem* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2005), 15.

<sup>86</sup> Stephen Viars, *Overcoming Bitterness: Moving from Life's Greatest Hurts to a Life Filled with Joy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing, 2021), 86.

<sup>87</sup> Viars, *Overcoming Bitterness*, 82.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 83.

2. There are many fruits of bitterness. The following is just a sample of examples: anger, seeking vengeance, harboring grudges, rumination over the painful event, turning to alcohol or drugs, anxiety, depression, worry, fear, and strained relationships.<sup>89</sup>
3. Thoughts that foster the root of bitterness revolve around replaying the painful event over and over in one's mind.<sup>90</sup> Thoughts and beliefs that plant the seed of bitterness can be demanding, accusatory, self-pitying, critical, rebellious, and vengeful in nature.<sup>91</sup> Bitter thoughts will be void of gratitude towards God and full of selfishness, pride, idolatry, envy, and resentment.<sup>92</sup>
4. Bitterness can begin in the heart when life's circumstances do not turn out how we had desired.<sup>93</sup> When our desire for circumstances of ease and pleasure outweigh our desire for God's glory and plan, we risk planting the seed of bitterness.<sup>94</sup> In light of Ephesians 4:24, Viars suggests as Christians, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can choose to put to death lustful desires and replace them with desires that please and align with God and His Word.<sup>95</sup> A heart that desires God's glory and plans over its own whisks away the seed of bitterness before it can be planted.

#### D. Worry and the link to control

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>91</sup> Priolo, *Bitterness*, 8, 43-44.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>93</sup> Viars, *Overcoming Bitterness*, 83.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 86.

1. Worry and anxiety are concerns and obsessive focus on future possibilities that do not consider God, His love, wisdom, and sovereignty.<sup>96</sup>
2. Anxiety, fear, and worry can be identified after a miscarriage by specific behaviors (uneasiness, guilt, unrestrained thinking, and neglect of daily responsibilities).<sup>97</sup> Worry acts as if it can control something that is out of one's control.<sup>98</sup> Controlling the conception of another child or the lives of current children (to protect them) is a fruit of worry.
3. Miscarriage can leave a woman feeling helpless. This sense of helplessness can lead to worrisome and controlling thoughts. Some thoughts and beliefs that may contribute to worry and control are: "If I could just improve my diet and exercise, I could have a successful pregnancy;" "If I could time marital intimacy with my cycle, I could achieve another pregnancy soon". These types of thoughts and beliefs foster the idea that a woman can control the uncontrollable.<sup>99</sup>
4. The anxious heart is set on earthly things. In Matthew 6:19-21, within the context of wealth, Jesus warns to store up treasures in heaven opposed to earth where rust, moth, and thieves destroy. Then in Matthew 6:25-34, in the context of worrying, He warns to seek after His kingdom and righteousness rather than material things. When we set our desires on earthly things (successful pregnancies, babies, happy family life, motherhood, etc.), we set ourselves up to worry.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Marshall and Mary Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, 14.

<sup>97</sup> Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*, 14.

<sup>98</sup> David Powlison, *Worry: Pursuing a Better Path to Peace* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 12.

<sup>99</sup> Powlison, *Worry*, 12.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

## VI. A Counseling Plan

This section will lead the biblical counselor through a plan to counsel a woman struggling after miscarriage/miscarriages and will include adaptable homework assignments.

### A. Hope in Christ and His Word

1. The most important hope to give the counselee is the gospel and gift of salvation.
  - a) Salvation of the counselee is necessary, or the counsel offered will be foolishness (1 Cor 1:18), and changes (if any) will be rooted in works righteousness, opposed to Holy Spirit taught and led (Jn 14:26, 16:13; Gal 5:16-17; Eph 1:17-19).
  - b) To understand whether the counselee is saved, the counselor can ask the counselee to share their testimony through questions such as these:
    - i. When and how did you come to hear the good news that Jesus had died for your sins (Rom 10:17)? What was your life like before you heard the gospel message (Eph 4:17-19, 5:8)? What has your life been like since you believed in the gospel (Eph 4:20-24)? If you were to die today and stand before God, on what basis should He let you into heaven (Jn 14:6)? How are you currently trusting and believing Jesus as Lord of your life (Eph 2:8-9)? How are you presently seeking to obey and follow Jesus (Ps 119; Jn 13:34, 14:15; Rom 12:3-8; 1 Pet 4:10-11)?
  - c) Next, it is crucial to go over the components of the gospel. Covering the gospel is beneficial for reminding the counselee of the hope of Christ and revealing any wrong thinking she may have about the gospel. Romans 1-4 is a passage that goes through the gospel. Some crucial points to cover are:

- i. God as righteous creator (Rom 1:18-23)<sup>101</sup>
  - ii. The problem of sin and God's judgment (Rom 1:21-3:20)<sup>102</sup>
  - iii. The good news (salvation through Christ) (Rom 3:21-31)<sup>103</sup>
  - iv. Faith by grace and repentance (Rom 4, Rom 6).<sup>104</sup>
- d) As homework, it would be beneficial to assign Romans 1-4 and these questions:
- i. Who has made us, and to whom are we accountable?<sup>105</sup>
  - ii. What is our problem? In other words, are we in trouble, and why?<sup>106</sup>
  - iii. What is God's solution to our problem?<sup>107</sup>
  - iv. How do I come to be included in salvation? What makes this good news for me and not just someone else?<sup>108</sup>
2. Three areas of challenge to miscarriage grief can be a sense of isolation, dashed hopes, and the human body's fragility. Christ can relate to these challenges, and therefore is our greatest hope and comfort (Heb 4:14-16).
- a) The woman who has miscarried may feel alone in her trial and grief. Jesus experienced a sense of loneliness (Is 52:14, 53:3; Matt 27:46; Jn 17:5).

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<sup>101</sup> Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010), 37-45.

<sup>102</sup> Gilbert, *What is the Gospel*, 47-58.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-70.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-84.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

- b) Disappointment is common with miscarriage. Jesus knows disappointment (even though He is all-knowing) (Gen 3; Lk 22:31-34, 45; Jn 13:21).
- c) A woman can experience frustration with the fragility of the human body (hers and her deceased baby). Jesus experienced the weakness of the human body (Matt 4:2, 11; Lk 8:23, 23:26, 46; Jn 4:6; 19:28).
- d) Homework could have the counselee complete the following:
  - i. From the three challenges discussed in the session, please list from greatest to least which are nagging you the most: Loneliness/isolation, dashed hopes/disappointment, and weakness of the human body. Please indicate why you have listed these challenges in the order you have. This assignment helps the counselor gather data on what immediate challenges should be dealt with first.

## B. Addressing the Heart

The trial of miscarriage can be a disheartening time in the life of a woman. Addressing the counselee's heart must be done with careful consideration of timing (Prov 25:11) and with great compassion, love, and care.

### 1. Grief

- a) Grief should be seen as a natural reaction to miscarriage. Miscarriage is the death of a child (Ps 139:14-16; Jer 1:5). There are many scriptural examples of grief over a child's loss (Gen 37:29-35; 2 Sam 12:15-23; Mk 5:21-24, 35-43). Weeping, wailing, fasting, tearing clothes, inability to be comforted, and a sense of helplessness are normal reactions to miscarriage.

- b) A simple assignment to extend comfort through God's Word is to have her write out Psalm 34:18 on cue cards. She should put to memory this verse. In addition, she can post her cue cards in key areas as a reminder of God's faithfulness.
- c) As believers, we can find comfort in knowing that through suffering, we may come to a more intimate knowledge of who Christ is (Phil 3:7-10). In addition, Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us that Christ is our sympathetic High priest, who knows firsthand about our weakness. It may be helpful to have the counselee study various passages about the sufferings of Christ and assign her to write out a prayer of thanks for the sufferings of Christ and an acknowledgment of wanting to draw nearer to Christ during her current period of grief.

## 2. Shame/ Guilt

- a) A common concern for women after having a miscarriage is whether they had a hand in the death of their child. Where there is shame or guilt, teaching on God's sovereignty over the womb and sustaining of life, combined with His attributes of love, wisdom, and goodness are helpful (Gen 16:2; Jdg 13:3; 1 Sam 1:5, 20; Lk 1:13; Ps 139:13-16; Jer 1:5; Acts 17:25-28).
- b) Have the counselee study Psalm 139 throughout the week. Then have her answer questions (each day) that have her draw out the concepts of God's sovereignty, providence, love, wisdom, and goodness in human formation and life. This assignment helps the counselee understand how God's love, wisdom, and goodness interact with his sovereignty in her trial for her good.

## 3. Despair, Bitterness, and Worry

- a) Next, the counselor can focus on specific remaining heart issues.
- i. The despairing woman should be encouraged to set her trust and hope in Christ and to seek satisfaction in eternal things (Ps 1; Jer 17:5-10; 1 Pet 1:3-6; 2 Cor 4:16-18). The above passages could be assigned with questions to draw out where she has placed her trust and hope and renew her thinking in the truths of Scripture.
  - ii. The woman struggling with bitterness would benefit from a study on God's attributes. Studying one attribute (along with corresponding Scriptures) per week will help begin the process of combating false assumptions about God's motive in her suffering (Rom 5:8; Is 40:13-14; 1 Cor 2:16; Ps 52:1; Nahum 1:7; 1 Jn 4:14).
  - iii. The woman feeling out of control and ridden with worries would benefit from a study on trusting God. While she is powerless to control her circumstances and future, God is in complete control. A study on Matthew 6:25-34 would help set her mind on God's kingdom and righteousness. A practical component to this assignment would be to have her choose a way to serve and minister to others within her church body and put it into action.

### C. Healing in God's Purposes for Trials

1. God's loving activity in our lives is so great that He has purposes for a trial that seems as senseless as a miscarriage. The counselee will be greatly encouraged in learning and practicing some of these purposes.

- a) Production of good (Rom 8:23); Sanctification (Ps 119:71; Jn 15:2; Jam 1:2-3); Deepening of trust and dependence on God (Duet 8:2-3; Job 42:5); Increased perseverance (Rom 5:3; Jam 1:3); Identifying with Christ (Phil 3:10); Intimate knowledge of God (Ps 23:42; 61:62); Advancement of the gospel (Phil 1:12)
- b) Homework that will assist in understanding the purposes of trials and encourage spiritual growth could look something like the following:
- ii. Each day complete the following tasks:<sup>109</sup>
    - Write out what your present trial is (generally and specific to the day). Then list at least five ways God may be at work in your trial.
    - Romans 8:28 says, “For we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” With this verse in mind, list some good things that might come from God working in your trial.
    - List opportunities God may be giving you to minister to others through your trial and share the gospel in word and deed, then list ways God is glorified if you take the opportunities he gives you.

2. The counselee nears graduation from counseling when she has gained significant independence in regular study of the Scriptures and prayer. In addition, she should be thinking biblically about her loss and suffering and viewing her trial as an opportunity to grow in Christlikeness. Finally, she should be purposefully serving and ministering to others within her church body.

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<sup>109</sup> The ideas of the assignment have been adapted from Adams, How to Handle Trouble, 1-60.

## VII. Conclusion

A. A woman can glorify God in her suffering caused by miscarriage by looking to Christ as her Savior, taking comfort in the sufferings of Christ, and aligning her thoughts and beliefs with the attributes of God and truths of Scripture. Further, she should desire Christ alone and view trials as an opportunity to grow in Christlikeness.

B. This thesis aims to seek from the Scriptures how a woman can think and respond to miscarriage in a way that would glorify God. It then seeks to put together a counseling plan to direct women to the hope of Christ, deal with heart issues, and think rightly about trials and their purpose.

1. Unique components to miscarriage grief are identified as isolation, dashed hopes, and uniqueness of physical circumstances. While a woman who miscarries may be tempted to think no one can relate to these unique factors in her suffering, we discovered that Christ experienced all these things during His life on earth.
2. The loss of a baby in utero can be minimized by societal and cultural factors impacting perceptions of unborn life and grieving length and style. Miscarriage suffering can be trivialized through insensitive reactions of others and differing grief styles between men and women. We came to see through Scripture that life in the womb is life indeed and that grief over the loss of a child in the womb is an appropriate response.
3. Common responses to miscarriage are sadness accompanied by peace, despair, bitterness, and worry. We saw through Scripture that one's response to miscarriage is directly a result of the desires of her heart and fueled by her thoughts and beliefs.
4. A diagnosis of MDD is most commonly given to women who have experienced miscarriage. MDD in the case of miscarriage is treated through talk therapies such as

CBT, IPT, and TRS. These therapies seek to reconstruct destructive thinking, improve interpersonal relationships, and rewrite the reproductive story with a hopeful ending. We came to see that these therapies were void of the gospel, true healing, addressing the worship of the heart, and hope (among many other things).

5. The eternal destiny of babies, the sovereignty and providence of God, God's love, wisdom, goodness, and the cross were identified as essential theologies to understand when looking at the trial of miscarriage. We came to see that through salvation, mothers will spend eternity with their lost baby. We also came to see how in God's love, wisdom, and goodness, He ordains trials for the good of His children and to fulfill His purposes.
6. Despair can be rooted in trusting and hoping on earthly things. Bitterness is rooted in selfish desires allowed to rule within the heart, replaying hurtful events in one's mind, and entertaining self-pitying thoughts. Worry is rooted in a heart storing treasures on earth. We learned that despair is uprooted by trusting Christ and hoping for eternal things. Bitterness is uprooted by putting off selfish desires and putting on a desire for God's glory and plan along with meditating on Scriptural truths. Worry is done away with when we first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and grow closer to Christ.
7. Finally, a plan to counsel a woman going through the trial of miscarriage along with homework assignments was given. This plan includes pre-counseling, addressing heart issues, and biblical thinking on trials and their purposes.

C. God's Word is saturated with the answers to every aspect of miscarriage grief. A woman of God can expect to find healing, hope, and life change by seeking to set her heart on Christ through right thinking and believing taught in the sufficient Word of Christ.

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