



## Infertility

Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Adoption, and Foster Care

Keeper'sBook™ series focuses on specific topics relevant to *Keepers at Home* readers. Our goal is to bring together talented writers who have passion for the subject and readers whose lives will be blessed by the information presented in each Keeper'sBook™.

Nothing in *Infertility* Keeper'sBook™ is intended to diagnose or treat any disease. We encourage all our readers to seek competent medical professionals with medical questions.

© August 2012 Carlisle Press

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced by any means, electronic and mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage retrieval system, without written permission of the copyright owner, except for the inclusion of brief quotations for a review.

Editors: Marvin & Miriam Wengerd  
Design: Leah Wengerd

Keeper'sBook™ is not sold by subscription. To subscribe to *Keepers at Home* magazine call 1-800-852-4482 or write to: *Keepers at Home*, 2673 TR 421, Sugarcreek, OH 44681.

ISBN: 1-93375327-7  
978-1-933753-27-0

1st Printing      August 2012      2-5 M  
2nd Printing      December 2013      2-5 M



Carlisle Press  
WALNUT CREEK

2673 Township Road 421  
Sugarcreek, OH 44681  
1-800-852-4482  
Fax: 330-852-3285

# Table of Contents

Pain to Purpose .....	2
Interior Design ( <i>poem</i> ) .....	5
Forgiveness ( <i>poem</i> ) .....	7
Infertility ( <i>poem</i> ) .....	8
Finding Joy in Your Dirt Pile .....	9
Journey Versus Destination .....	11
The Gift of a Barren Womb .....	12
Poor Me?... ..	14
Our Journey Through Childless Years .....	15
Barren & Blessed .....	16
A Motherhood Bestowed .....	17
Poem for Adam ( <i>poem</i> ) .....	22
"Oh, 'Tis Not in Grief to Harm Me" .....	23
Sympathy Pains ( <i>poem</i> ) .....	25
For Love of a Child .....	26
Relating to Empty Arms .....	30
When His Ways Are Not Mine .....	31
September Third .....	32
Immortal Butterflies .....	33
Musings on Miscarriage .....	35
Helps for Infertility .....	36
Choosing Joy .....	38
Overcoming Infertility and Miscarriage .....	39
Understanding .....	44
Our Dear Little Angel Baby .....	45
The Valley of Achor .....	46
On Mother's Day ( <i>poem</i> ) .....	48
Journey Through Infertility .....	49
Safe ( <i>poem</i> ) .....	52
Overcoming Infertility .....	53
This Baby of Mine .....	54
Surrender .....	55
Infertility Overcome .....	57
Of Longings That Linger .....	59
The Letting Go ( <i>poem</i> ) .....	62
Resources .....	63



ANONYMOUS

# Pain to Purpose

## *My Battle with the Giant of Infertility*

*Though the names and a few details of this story have been changed to protect the author's identity, her story is true.*

I thought I'd be like Mama. Mama was the type who, when it came to conceiving, found it easy to pinpoint her next fertile time, and presto, she was pregnant. Well, not quite, but almost.

When John and I married, I expected to be holding a baby within the course of a year. *Like mother, like daughter.*

Nothing happened the first few months. I was naively surprised, but I didn't mind, much. I was absorbed in fixing up our house, planting a garden, and glorying in the intoxicating newness of marriage.

One day my friend Lynette called. Lynette and Isaiah had married two weeks before we did, and we enjoyed chatting about our new roles in life. Today Lynette's voice was marked by a distinct lilt. "Guess what, Melissa!" she bubbled.

I smiled into the phone. "Isaiah brought you roses for your birthday."

Lynette giggled. "You know Isaiah isn't the flower type. Besides, all the roses in Logan County couldn't make me *this* happy! Melissa, we're going to be parents!"

I paused to let the news sink in. "That's awesome, Lynette," I finally said. I was truly excited for their sakes, but at the same time a queer feeling oozed suddenly through my stomach.

I hung up the phone. *Now Isaiah and Lynette are a step ahead of us*, I thought pensively. *When will it be our turn?*

John and I both loved children and our desire was for a large family. We began conversing on a regular basis about this desire and bringing it before the Lord. I also began

taking prenatals and several herbal supplements. Optimum health, said Mama, was important in aiding conception.

The months ticked by and we celebrated our first anniversary. Lynette was by now approaching her delivery date, and several of my other close friends were also pregnant for the first time. I listened to their conversations about gownie patterns and doctor appointments and "feeling the baby move." I was thankful that they didn't exclude unexpectant me from their circle, but still, being with them magnified my own rapidly growing longings.

"I feel so left out," I wailed to John. "I get tired of hearing nothing except baby talk and not being able to join in. I want a baby too! Why is God answering everybody's prayers but ours?"

John looked at me with a glint of a smile. "Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

I knew John wanted children as much as I did, and that by quoting Elkanah's words to Hannah, he was not undermining the fact. He was instead encouraging me to focus on what I already had—a beautiful marriage.

"I see a danger," said John seriously, "of becoming so obsessed with our childlessness that we let it crowd out the other blessings God has given us."

I twisted my hands in my lap. "You're right," I agreed meekly. "I know I've spent too much time the last while in chafing and brooding. With God's help I want to do better at being a cheerful, supportive wife and an asset to the church. It's just that—" my voice wavered as I looked at my empty arms—"it's just that when all my friends get

pregnant so easily, one after the other, and I don't, it hurts."

John looked at me tenderly. "I know, Missy, and that's okay. It is one thing to let our situation become an obsession, and another thing to block and deny our feelings. We do have to be honest with what's going on in our hearts. If we're experiencing pain, we must be real about it."

A tear splashed down my cheek. "I struggle a lot," I whispered, "with believing that if this is so hard for me, then I must not be submitting to God's will."

"Oh, Missy." John drew me close. "It was God Himself who planted the desire for children in your heart. It is an integral part of your womanhood. You are *not wrong* in feeling those longings. Think of the women in the Bible who battled infertility—Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel, Manoa's wife, Hannah, and Elizabeth. Every single one of them faced a deep sense of inner pain at their childlessness. It's *normal*, Missy, to feel that way." John paused and squeezed my hand. "Sometimes, Missy, God moves in ways that bring us pain, and acknowledging that pain is not a sign of insubmission, but a sign of strength."

I brushed away my tears. It seemed John could always offer a fresh perspective in areas where my vision was cloudy. I felt inspired by the example of the women in the Bible. "They all struggled," I told John, "but eventually God gave them children after all. And if you think about it, every single one of those children was born with a special purpose. Like Isaac. And Samson and Samuel and John the Baptist. Maybe God has something special in store for us too!"

John smiled and turned to the calendar. "Let's see... we've been waiting about a year and a half now, and that's not long in comparison to some of those women. It's certainly not long enough to give up hope. Let's continue to stay open before God and wait in faith."

But waiting was not always easy. And hope could be a hard taskmaster. Throughout the next several years, I came to sincerely dread my periods.

Each month, as the time crept closer for my period to start, I came underneath a tremendous emotional strain. *Maybe this month there'll be a baby*, I'd think. *Maybe this month our dreams will come true*. Or—*Lynette is pregnant again*. *Oh, wouldn't it be special being pregnant together this time?* I was always acutely aware of any unusual twinges in my body. *Suppose that slightly queasy feeling was an early touch of morning sickness?*

Each month I hoped. Each month I was disappointed. Sometimes I resolved not to hope anymore. It hurt to hope. From now on I would just cocoon myself in a numb sphere of indifference. *Whatever happens, happens. Whatever God does, He does*. I wouldn't care anymore. Lynette could have a dozen children if she pleased, and so could my other friends. No more of this coming-home-from-church-in-tears business. I would stop being so vividly affected after this.

But always at the onset of the next period, the stark evidence of *no baby this time*, I found my cocoon flimsy and insufficient. I cared after all. I cared very much. And far worse than hoping and being disappointed, was the throbbing pain of not hoping at all.

Sometimes I thought I'd crack underneath the monthly strain of waiting. I'd wander through the house, unable to concentrate on even the most menial tasks. If my period was late, it was nearly unbearable.

"Please, John," I'd beg, "let's just do a pregnancy test and find out. This suspense is too much!"

We would remove the test from its wrapper and do the procedure. Then we would huddle together and stare at the little window, waiting on two blue lines. Always it was just one. One blue negative line. The tension would fall from my shoulders and I would feel limp and exhausted. And grief stricken. I would cry, and John would gather me in his arms and cry with me. Together we'd wade through the barren wilderness.

It seemed by the time I recovered from one period, I was waiting on the next one. It was an indescribable emotional roller coaster.

Then something positive happened. David and Karen moved into our community. Karen was bubbly and outgoing and easy to become acquainted with. She came over one morning to borrow a pattern and we discovered an amazing thing: she and David had married the same spring that we had, and they weren't able to conceive either!

It proved to be a tremendous blessing to have Karen in my life. Finally I had another woman to stand with me in the strange, hurting land of infertility. We became allies—we encouraged each other when yet another sister appeared in maternity clothes, and we guided each other away from self-pity and bitterness. Our friendship was deep and I didn't think it would ever change. It would always be the

two of us, buoying each other up.

I wasn't prepared to have my world upended.

We were sitting beside each other in church one bright spring morning. We always sat beside each other because there was comfort in being close to someone else who held a Bible on her lap instead of children.

We sat there, and I heard a subdued commotion behind me. Turning my head slightly, I saw Rose Marie coming down the aisle with baby Anita. It was Anita's first appearance in church and everyone was straining eagerly for a glimpse.

Rose Marie beamed with motherly joy. She found a seat and rocked the pink bundle back and forth in her arms. I swallowed a choking feeling. New babies always highlighted my empty lap. I moved a little closer to Karen. Karen understood the tumultuous feelings. She knew the cries of a yearning heart.

The song leader led out in the second song. I mumbled along halfheartedly. I was thinking about Rose Marie. Imagine being married for only eleven months and having a baby already. No long, agonizing wait. No groanings and pleadings before the Lord. No expensive, albeit futile, trips to the fertility doctor. Did Rose Marie realize how blessed she was?

The song ended and Brother Jacob rose to begin his message. The baby in Rose Marie's arms squirmed and fussed. Rose Marie hunted for her satchel underneath the bench, then threaded her way to the nursery. I noticed how Karen watched her go.

There was something unusual about Karen this morning. What it was, I couldn't decipher. I stole little glances at her throughout the services. Maybe it was her dress. She always looked good in that shade of blue. But no, there was something more than the dress. Her face glowed. Had Karen's face ever glowed like that before?

An odd little worry flung itself across my heart. I tried to ignore it by focusing on Brother Jacob. He was urging his listeners to a closer walk with God. I knew I needed the message. I listened as hard as I could, but Karen's glow kept shimmering into my sense of awareness.

I risked another peep. She was looking at me and her face was sober. But her eyes smiled. I looked away, at the yellow butterfly dipping past the window. Karen had every right to be happy of course. But what didn't make sense was

that Karen was usually as affected by a new baby as I was. Sometimes more.

A startling memory crowded into my consciousness. Karen had told me on Tuesday that her cycle was over two weeks late already and she was beginning to wonder. Maybe she would run by the drugstore and pick up a pregnancy test. Just in case.

Suddenly I felt fainthearted. Was it possible? But no, Karen had been late before and nothing had ever come of it. Why should it this time?

But there was that mysterious glow. It made me nervous. Maybe I should prepare myself. Brace up...till I knew otherwise.

Church was finally over. Karen led me to a quiet corner where we could have privacy. Her face leaned over me, gentle and caring. "Melissa," she said softly, "I don't know how to tell you this, but the test, it was—positive."

All my steel-girded preparing was suddenly, ludicrously, in vain. I stared stupidly at Karen. Positive? That meant—the room reeled as the implication burned into my brain—that meant that Karen was going to be...a mother. *A mother.* "Oh!" I gasped.

I do not know much of what Karen said after that. I know she was trying to comfort me, but her words were drowned by the tsunami of emotions that raged over me.

The following weeks were some of the darkest in my life. The anguish of my childlessness reached a roaring peak.

I had always felt secure in my relationship with God, but now doubts began to torment me. Sharp, poisonous arrows pierced my beliefs.

If God was so good, why was He inflicting this on me? Why was He shutting my womb, when no one else in my family history had ever been childless? How could God's best for me include the denial of my deepest heart's desire? Was it safe to trust God? Did He really love me? What if He was not the God I had been brought up to believe in, but a mere, abstract Being who didn't care about me personally?

I felt lost and alone, floating on the sea of infertility. Karen had found the shore. Why hadn't I? Wasn't I good enough to be a mother? Wasn't I worthy of receiving God's blessing? The pain of being left behind ravaged my heart. Karen, who had stood so faithfully beside me—I wept for the loss of my ally.



I began blaming God for my pain. I felt that He had betrayed me. He had sent me Karen, then snatched her away again. He preferred Karen above me. He withheld the fruit of my womb—was it just to see me writhe in agony? I tried to pray, but I was choked by angry, ugly thoughts. How do you pray to a God who suddenly looms in your mind as harsh and unjust?

John tried to help me, but I pushed him away. I didn't want to talk. I didn't want to cuddle. I just wanted to crawl into a hole and hide myself. I wanted to hide from life, from seeing Karen with a smock and Lynette with baby number three. Hiding would numb the hurt.

But John refused to let me hide. He was my husband, he said, and hiding wasn't an option. But he would take me on a vacation.

Obediently I got out the suitcase and began to pack. John wouldn't tell me where we were going except to say, "You'll love it, Honey." I stuffed a pile of socks into a crevice. Maybe I would.

We spent a week at a privately owned resort that included a beautiful lake and a woods. John knew me well. He knew how nature spoke to my soul.

We explored the woods, searching out its subtle secrets. We sat for hours at the shores of the lake, and sometimes

STEPHANIE J LEINBACH

# Interior Design

*Why is my pain perpetual?* Jeremiah 15:18a

Oh, God,  
why don't You just pack up the pain  
and move it out of my life?

But if You won't,  
then help me find a suitable place  
to put it,  
a place where pain  
is balanced with acceptance,  
and grief  
is enhanced with growth—  
with You in the center of it all,  
in focus.  
You need to be the Focus.

Help me put my pain in a place  
where I can get used to it,  
but don't constantly see it.

God,  
why does there have to be  
a place for pain?



we waded along its edges. At night we made s'mores over a campfire. Or we sat and looked at the stars.

Gradually the hard knot inside of me began to soften. I felt closer to John again, and to God. God was here. He was in this beautiful place, and He was with us. I could feel it and began to respond.

One evening we sat beside the lake and watched the sun go down. We listened to the slurp, slurp of the waters against the shoreline and it was all so beautiful. So profoundly soothing. Hardly realizing it, I began to cry. I cried and cried. John spoke softly into my hair, "That's my girl, Missy. Let it come out. All of it. Don't hold anything back."

I cried, and then I talked. Suddenly I couldn't talk fast enough. I told John about the pain that crushed my outlook in life. I told him the horrible thoughts I'd been having about God, and how there was no longer any peace within me, just chaos and confusion and longing.

The sun slid down to the crest of the water and we watched the sliding waves turn to rose and gray and gold. There were tears in John's eyes as I finished my outpouring. "Thank you for telling me, Missy."

It was his turn now, to talk. He talked a long time. He said that God loves us incredibly, so very, very much, and when we hurt, He does too. He wants to share in our pain and help us through it, but the devil tries to stop this from happening.

John explained how the devil works. The devil knows that when we are hurting, we are very vulnerable. He sees this as an opportunity to steal a foothold in our lives. He starts by getting us to focus on what we're going through, and how much it hurts. Then our focus gets turned away from God and we don't feel His love anymore, and we forget how much He wants to help us. All we're aware of is our misery.

Then the devil starts projecting lies into our minds. He paints a false picture about God, and ourselves. He tells us that God is unfair and unreasonable. God enjoys torturing us. God gives some people good gifts, but not us. We are not worthy. We don't have what it takes. We must go crying through life, because there is no solution to our pain.

There is no end to the lies that the devil hurls at us. He tells us that our childlessness is a result of not being a better Christian. Or because God is punishing us for something we've done. He says we're alone in this, and no one else really understands or cares. He wants us to feel isolated,

because he's afraid that if we reach out to others, they'll get our focus back on God.

The lies mix in with the pain so that we don't discern them for what they are. We accept them, and don't realize that in doing this, we are giving the devil the foothold that he wants. We are in effect offering the shards of our heart to him.

If the devil grabs those shards and we don't wake up to the fact, the pain will never leave us. We'll become locked in its jaws. Our spirit will become perverted by the devil. The good in our lives will erode as bitterness and anger consume us.

God weeps to see us buying into lies. He wants very much to minister to our pain, but we block that by believing lies.

As John talked, I began to feel deeply convicted. I knew now why I didn't have peace anymore. I had made lies a part of my life, lots of them. I felt like Saul of Tarsus, with scales falling from my eyes. "Please, John," I cried softly, "how can I get myself out of this mess?"

John smiled tenderly. "You must let God expose you, Missy. You must be honest about your pain, but let the Holy Spirit filter out any lies that are twisted into it."

We knelt there, on the grassy shore of the lake. One by one I confessed the lies and renounced them. John searched his own heart and did the same. We asked Jesus to set us free.

The sun settled into the murky depths of the lake and the air began to chill. But warmth stole softly through my veins. I looked at John and we felt the same—it still hurt to think of going through life with no children, but it was now a hurt that could be borne. With God.

"I choose to bless you, God," I prayed, "even if there's rain in my heart. Even if my arms ache, I will not let that control me. Your will for our lives is best, and if that includes childlessness, I accept that. I don't understand it, and it hurts, but help me not to focus on that, but on you, simply trusting that we are in your hands, and your hands are a safe place to be."

The evening by the lake was a turning point. I discovered, in the months that followed, that it was possible to be at peace on the sea of infertility. And that it was not necessary to drown; I could swim.

John remained very sensitive to me as I faced circum-



stances that hurt—reunions, church services, my periods, visiting David and Karen after the birth of their wee one, etc. He helped me to discern between my feelings and lies. I learned that believing lies magnified the pain. And that refuting and resisting lies in the name of Jesus made it possible to stay on top.

Empty arms hurt, but they are not a curse. Our prayers changed from demanding that God fill them, to what can

God do with them? Should we foster? Adopt? Immerse ourselves in a mission that would not be possible with a family?

We don't know yet. But we do know that God is always good and always wise, and thus, all things shall be well.

I do not need to be like Mama. I am Melissa, chosen of God. ❀

# Forgiveness

HOLLY

She didn't mean to hurt me.  
But her curious questions  
And her prying ways  
Ripped off the bandage  
I had so carefully taped  
Over the festering sore  
Of my heart.

She didn't mean to hurt me.  
She had no idea  
That inside this composed woman  
And behind her smiling face  
Lies a broken bleeding heart,  
Just beginning to heal and function again.

She didn't mean to hurt me.  
She has never lost one baby,  
Let alone two.  
She has never known the anguish  
Of having to say goodbye  
Before you could say hello.

She didn't mean to hurt me  
By asking all about my loss;  
Poking through my sad memories  
And prying into my sore spots  
While so proudly displaying  
Her own swelling of new life.

She didn't mean to hurt me.  
But she did.  
Forgive her, Lord.  
And help me to forgive her, too.