

## The Five Stages of Grief

### Denial...

Miscarriage, stillbirth or infant loss can be such a shock to us that our first reaction is disbelief. It may take some time for the reality that a child has died to set in, and it may take longer to allow ourselves to think about the implications of our child's death.

### Anger...

After losing a child we may react in anger – toward God, ourselves, or loved ones. While in this stage, remember that your loved ones are here to help you. Think about the joy your child's life brought you even if it was short, and contemplate the wonderful eternal life your child is now a participant in.

### Bargaining or guilt...

The loss of a child may prompt us to think about what we might have done to cause our child's death. We may feel like we did something wrong or that we are being punished for something we did in the past. While in this stage, remember that we may not know why our baby died, but we can be confident of God's love and mercy for us and our child.

### Depression...

Our sadness may be so deep after the loss of a child that it could lead to depression, even clinical depression. Remember that God does not want you to drown in sadness, He wants you to find joy in life. If you feel you are beginning to be depressed we recommend the book *One Thousand Gifts*, as it can help to lift our eyes to heaven and to the beauty and hope that God offers us every day. If you think you are clinically depressed, see your physician and spiritual director for guidance as well.

### Acceptance...

The final stage of grief is when we can fully accept the cross that God has given us and find peace and joy in our lives, even in the midst of our loss.

## About Finding Hope Ministries

Finding Hope Ministries' mission is to help people value life in all stages, especially life before birth and to recognize the dignity of the deceased regardless of age. We carry out our mission by supporting families who are struggling with the loss of a child and by educating people about the grief that may follow a miscarriage, stillbirth or early infant loss. Finding Hope Ministries was founded in Fargo, ND in 2016.

**Contact us for immediate support at any time during your grief journey:**

[findinghopeafterloss@gmail.com](mailto:findinghopeafterloss@gmail.com)

<http://www.facebook.com/findinghopem>

### What we do:

Finding Hope Ministries strives to meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of women and families who have experienced the loss of a child. The ministry does this through the distribution of grief baskets, education, intercessory prayer and one-on-one support.

### How you can help:

Contact us to learn about how you can get involved in this apostolate. The mission is in need of donations for grief baskets as well as monetary gifts to buy supplies. *Finding Hope Ministries* is completely run by volunteers so all gifts go 100% toward helping those in need.

### *Blessing of a Couple after Miscarriage*

*For those who trust in God, in the pain and sorrow there is consolation, in the face of despair there is hope, in the midst of death there is life.*

*...As we mourn the death of your child we place ourselves in the hands of God and ask for strength, for healing and for love.<sup>5</sup>*

## Finding Hope

*in the midst of*  
**Miscarriage, Stillbirth,  
and Infant Loss.**



*But Jesus said,  
"Let the little children  
come to me, and do not  
prevent them; for the  
kingdom of heaven belongs  
to such as these."  
-Matthew 19:14-*

## Miscarriage

It is estimated that one in four pregnancies end in miscarriage.<sup>1</sup> Miscarriage is considered the loss of life before 20 weeks gestation. Losing a child can have a profound impact on the mothers, fathers, and family members whose child has died. It can be difficult to accept that God allowed a precious life to end before birth.

God breathes life into each child at the moment of conception, creating them in His image and likeness. Given this reality each child from their very beginning is created with inherent dignity as a child of God and is deserving of respect.

## Stillbirth

There are on average 26,000 stillbirths in the U.S. each year.<sup>2</sup> A stillbirth is considered the loss of life after 20 weeks gestation, but before birth. A stillbirth can be difficult because the parents and family members are expecting to meet their child very soon, but then may be shocked with the news that their child has died in the womb.

A stillbirth includes a mother experiencing a normal labor, but likely with the prior knowledge that their child will never take a breath in the world. This may be an experience of extreme pain and suffering.

## Early Infant Loss

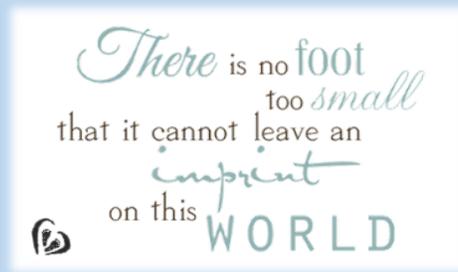
In the U.S. about 11,300 newborns die within 24 hours of birth.<sup>3</sup> In addition, 19,000 newborns die in their first month, and 39,000 in their first year of life.<sup>4</sup> Infant loss can be extremely difficult to bear. A family has experienced life with their child and has created lasting memories with him or her. Life may seem empty and meaningless without their living presence.

Infant loss may be expected, as in the case of a terminal illness or serious condition, or may be tragically unexpected. Regardless, even the briefest amount of time spent with the child may create lasting memories and change lives.

*For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. -2 Corinthians 1:5-*

## Turning to God in the Midst of Grief

- Even though losing a child can be devastating, God can always be trusted. He has our best interest in mind and He can bring good even through loss and suffering.
- Our suffering can be united with Jesus' suffering on the cross and can lead our hearts toward God. God desires that we turn to His Sacred Heart with our pain, even when we may feel like turning away from Him.
- We cannot hope to fully understand the infinite will of God, but can trust in His divine providence and fatherly love for us, our children and our families.
- Our God is loving and merciful. We can entrust the eternal life of our children to His love with complete confidence.
- God is the ultimate source of hope and joy. When we willingly accept whatever He asks of us and pray to Him for healing and grace, He will be a source of comfort and consolation.



## References

1. Hope is like the Sun: Finding Hope and Healing After Miscarriage, Stillbirth, or Infant Death by Lisa Church, HopeXchange Publishing, Copyright 2004.
2. National Institute of Health, "Placental, pregnancy conditions account for most stillbirths," NIH News, December 13, 2011.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Hope is Like the Sun, *op. cit.*
5. "Blessing of Parents After a Miscarriage." In *Book of Blessings*, by International Commission on English in the Liturgy, A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989.

## Helpful Suggestions

- Reach out to your pastor and our group to learn of your options for a burial or memorial service for your child and to get connected with others who have experienced loss.
- Allow yourself to grieve as you feel led to; do not put a time limit on how long you should grieve. Try not to isolate yourself or grieve in unhealthy ways. Let your loved ones comfort and help you, and be honest with them about how you are feeling. Recognize that spouses and other family members may cope and grieve differently from each other or yourself.
- Remember that the loss of your child was not your fault – God is not punishing you. God is hurting right along with you, and He desires that you give Him your pain and suffering that He might use it for good.
- Turn to the sacraments and to our spiritual mother, Mary. Participating in the sacraments and allowing ourselves to be open to God's graces and love will enable us to find true healing. Mary knows what we are experiencing and is waiting for us with open arms. She will bring comfort as only a mother can, if we allow her to.
- Remember your child as you desire to. Some ideas might include:
  - Naming your child.
  - Hanging pictures or spiritual pictures in your house in remembrance of your child.
  - Writing a letter to your child.
  - Keeping a memory box of items that remind you of your child.
  - Talking and being open with your loved ones about your child and sharing memories with each other.