

Infertility and the Glory of God

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[0 : 00] Welcome to the Providence Community Podcast.

My name is Chris Oswald, Senior Pastor at Providence Community Church. This is a podcast that I record as frequently as possible, mostly just as a means of caring for the congregation of Providence Community Church in Lenexa, Kansas.

This morning, my wife was sitting on the couch getting ready to get up and go to work, and she said, you know, you might want to, at some point, address the issue of infertility.

And so that was, I guess, probably about six in the morning this morning, and I thought, well, that's actually really wise. It's a good thought to think about. So from, you know, 6 a.m. on, I pulled together just some thoughts and some scriptures about this topic.

And so that's what we'll be talking about today, how to handle infertility. And I would say at the outset that I'm not sure that the word infertility is the right word for every situation that, you know, women are facing in our particular church.

[1 : 18] I don't really know. I imagine there's an official, you know, standard of what constitutes infertility and what doesn't and so on and so forth. But I'm just going to use that term just to put the general issue of struggling to make a baby, struggling to carry a baby, all of that.

I'm going to put all of that together into this word infertility and, you know, just as an easier way to talk about it. There are three ways, three kind of general biblical categories that this problem fits into.

And the first one is the broadest, and it would be something like, what am I supposed to do? How am I supposed to respond when I'm trying to do a good thing that God doesn't seem to be blessing?

So that would be the broadest category that infertility would fit into. You're trying to do a good thing. It just doesn't seem to be happening. The second category would be a little bit narrower, but still pretty broad.

And that would be, how do I respond when my body isn't cooperating with my soul? Infertility would be in that category as well, but then you'd have a lot of other things there, like sickness and disabilities and so on and so forth, age.

[2 : 35] So that would be the second category. And then the third category would be there's obviously a lot of biblical data about infertility specifically that we could look to as well. So we'll get into all that, and we'll examine this problem through those three categories.

The number one is the broadest, which we all go through. How do I respond when I'm trying to do a good thing that God doesn't seem to be blessing? Number two, we'll all go through this one as well.

How do I respond when my body isn't cooperating with my soul? And number three is particular to this particular problem. It's like, what does the Bible have to teach us about infertility in particular?

Now, before we get into those three categories, though, I want to kind of say that broadly, your goal in this season, and I'm speaking to those who are struggling in this area, your goal in this season is to learn to rejoice.

Not merely to tolerate this, but to give thanks and rejoice through it. So don't sell yourself short by thinking that the goal is merely to get through it.

[3 : 40] The goal is to learn to give thanks in all circumstances. That's always the goal. 1 Thessalonians 5, 16 through 18 says, Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

James 1, 2 through 4 says, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

So the main goal in any trial is to become spiritually anti-fragile. Spiritually anti-fragile. So when it comes to the toughness of things, there are three basic categories.

The first would be fragile. You encounter hardship and it breaks you down. You're pushed around by the wind and waves. You're being reduced by the hardship.

The second is strength. So the first one is fragility. The second one is strength. And that would just be you're able just to endure hard things. You're tough. You're not easily reduced by a difficult thing.

[4 : 54] But that's not the goal of the Christian life. The goal of the Christian life is actually the third category, which is anti-fragility. What we mean there is not merely that it's strong, this thing is strong, but that this thing actually grows when put under hardship.

And that's actually the goal of the Christian life. This is what your muscles do. You punish them and they get bigger and stronger. And this is actually what God has for us in Christ.

Not merely that we would be able to endure things without breaking apart, but that we would actually become stronger as a consequence of the things we endure. This is the promise of Romans 8.28.

All things work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. So your goal, broadly speaking, in this season isn't merely to become strong and able to endure this, but your goal is to actually become stronger as a result of this particular hardship.

Your goal is to learn how to rejoice in, not merely put up with, the trials in this life. And that's a huge goal. And I grant you that that is not easily accomplished.

[6 : 07] The only way that this really comes to pass is by learning how to talk to yourself rather than what is more reflexive, and that is to listen to yourself.

In his book, Spiritual Depression, Martin Lloyd-Jones says, Now this man's treatment was this.

Instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts to talk to himself. Why are thou cast down, O soul? He asks. His soul has been depressing him, crushing him.

So he starts up and says, Self, listen for a moment. I will speak to you. Jones continues, The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself.

You have to take yourself in hand. You have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul, Why are you discouraged? What business have you to be disquieted?

[7 : 22] You must turn on yourself, abrade yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself, Hope thou in God. Instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way.

And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, of who God is, and what God is, and what God has done, and what God has pledged himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note.

Defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil, and the whole world, and his lies. So that's what you're going to have to do in order to hit this goal, not only of just enduring, but actually in giving thanks and in rejoicing in this situation.

There's an old saying that says, Shoot for the moon, even if you miss, you'll land among the stars. So here's what's going to happen. If you aim merely to tolerate a situation, you will bounce between bitterness and tolerance.

That'll be your range. But if you aim for rejoicing in this situation, you'll bounce mostly between tolerance and joy, which is far better. So don't aim too low with this difficulty.

[8 : 31] God isn't really just interested in you enduring it. He has sent this season of difficulty to you to make you better. And this is not in my notes, but let me see if I can articulate this really quickly without getting totally sidetracked.

And sometimes in this issue of infertility or miscarriage, and this is something that I hear in other areas of life as well, the question of God's discipline comes into play.

And it's very understandable that the Christian, when they think of God's discipline, mostly think of God disciplining us for something we're not doing right, or something like that.

Like he's correcting us. We've fallen into some sin and he's correcting us. So on and so forth. Well, I don't think that's a false category, but I will tell you that the category in Hebrews, from which we get our whole understanding of discipline, would not be that kind of discipline.

God is not disciplining the Hebrews because they've done something wrong. The discipline spoken of in Hebrews is actually just the discipline of persecution. And it would be, again, with what James is saying in James 1, this would not be the kind of thing where it's like a corrective, like God's correcting something.

[9 : 54] That's not quite right. This is actually more of like the kind of discipline that a coach puts his students through, his athletes through in a workout.

They're not being punished. They're being prepared. And the discipline of the Lord isn't always corrective in the sense of like you've got to figure out what you're doing wrong and then fix it and then God will change your circumstances.

That's not what the Bible teaches explicitly about or only about discipline. There's a brand of discipline, the kind we see in the early church, that wasn't corrective.

It was preparatory. It was strengthening. It was giving them spiritual endurance, giving them spiritual antifragility.

So that's one thing before we get into these three categories that I mentioned before, your aim in this trial is to learn how to rejoice. Your aim in this trial is to become better as a result of this.

[11 : 00] That's what Romans 8 is promising, that all things work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

Okay, so now let's get into these three categories. Remember I said that one is like, I want to do something good, but God doesn't seem to be blessing it. And then the second category is, my body doesn't seem to be cooperating with my plans.

And the third one we'll deal with is infertility in particular. So the first category, God doesn't seem to be blessing my efforts. Well, there's plenty of biblical data for this. And I think of Paul going through the synagogues with the best of intentions, only to be routinely shut out and rejected or persecuted for his troubles.

But another example in the Bible would be the story of Joseph. I almost said David. That'd be another one. I won't get into that one. But the story of Joseph starts this way.

He has two dreams that tell him he will become the leader of his whole family. By disclosing this to his family, he accidentally turned them against him.

[12 : 08] They became jealous and almost killed him, but sold him into slavery instead. Then in slavery, he serves excellently in Potiphar's house unto the Lord, only for that work to crumble in the incident with Potiphar's wife.

And then he is thrown into prison, where again he serves excellently, but is betrayed by someone who forgets him. It just took so many years for that original dream to come to pass.

And what we find is that all of his faithfulness in small things, as he was no doubt tempted to be frustrated with the lack of outcome for his efforts, we find that all of those good behaviors in the past were building a kind of scaffolding for the fulfillment of this promise that he had been given early on in those dreams.

So the idea here is just generally, infertility is part of a collection of problems associated with, I want to do a good thing. God doesn't seem to be blessing it.

And that's something we see in lots of different areas in life, in lots of different areas in the Bible. And the lesson for that kind of category is to not grow weary in doing good, for we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

[13 : 32] Galatians 6. Joseph somehow kept bitterness at bay. Throughout his entire saga, he could have easily had his heart captured by a root of bitterness, imagining how his brother's lives were going.

And this bitterness would have actually kept him from doing his best in the little situations he found himself in. But if he had stopped doing his best in the little situations he found himself in, the big thing would have never actually happened.

So the lesson here, just most broadly, is when you're trying to do a good thing, and God doesn't seem to be blessing it, just do the little things set before you as well as you can, and do not grow weary in doing good.

James 1.12 says, Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial. For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

So that's the first category. I'm trying to do a good thing. God doesn't seem to be blessing it. What do I do? I just do the things that I can do. I do the things I can do. The second category, I think is maybe the most interesting, and that is this pretty broad category again of, how do I respond when my body isn't cooperating with my soul?

[14 : 53] That's infertility is in there, but there's lots of other things in there as well. It's just another example of a sad reality that you and I are going to have a lifelong battle with our bodies.

As Jesus says about the disciples falling asleep in Gethsemane, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. You know, most of us are pretty blessed with reliable cars so that when we want to go somewhere, we get in the car, we start it, and it just takes us where we want to go.

We're not getting in that car wondering, will it start today? But some of us did come up in conditions where the car was notoriously unreliable.

And so in that world, you know, you get in the car and you're like, is it going to start? And then as you're driving down the road, you're just kind of always wondering, is this thing going to die?

And, you know, you get used to this, like, extremely tentative feeling of not having total confidence that this car is going to get you where you want to go.

[16 : 05] I think most of us, when we're younger in particular, just learn to expect our bodies to take us where we want to go. And we really take it for granted. But of course, things aren't that simple.

And eventually your body won't take you where you want it to go. This is just going to happen to all of us. So one of the things I'll end with is this bittersweet reality of you're not special.

And it's bitter because we all want to feel special. But it's sweet to know that, like, this infertility thing, it's just one of many ways our bodies sometimes refuse to cooperate with our plans.

And I remember back when I was living in unreliable car land, I remember probably one of the biggest hissy fits I threw to the Lord was during a season like this.

You know, I had just, you know, I've always had these strong dad vibes. I just want my kids to be taken care of and I want them to enjoy their life and so on and so forth. And I remember, you know, it was a bit of a financial stretch even to do this, but we drove a few miles to a roller rink one night and took our kids roller skating.

[17 : 28] And when it was time to go, our minivan wouldn't start. So we were about two miles from the house. And so I told Ange, take the kids back into the rink and skate some more. And, you know, I would walk back to the house and get the other car or something like that.

I don't remember what the plan was. I just remember the walk. And I remember on that walk, my mind was just reeling with feelings of inadequacy. Why couldn't I afford a car that was more reliable?

And then, of course, on that walk, dozens of cars are passing me by. And I was sure to let the Lord know how unfair it was that all those people had cars that worked and mine did not.

And, you know, early seasons of discovering your body is not going to just do what you want it to do all the time are very similar to that.

You just haven't learned that lesson yet. And so it just feels so strange and frustrating for your body not to be your completely obedient servant.

[18 : 36] When you get older, you make peace with that fact. Your body's actually going to limit you. You know, my memory's not as sharp as it once was. I have various aches and pains and physical limitations. And that's just an undeniable part of life.

But when you're younger, you're just not used to that uncooperative body. And it feels very strange. And for some of you, I would imagine that infertility is the first time your body has let you down.

Well, I'm sorry that that's happening to you. I really am. But just understand if it wasn't this, it'd be something else. Like, we just were part of a fallen world.

And we all have to taste a little bit of the curse. Obviously, none of us want to do that. But I want to remind even our Johnson County gals, like, you got to carry the curse too, man.

Like, that's just a part of life. And it's part of that is your body's not going to do everything it should do. You want it to. So why would God do this?

[19 : 45] Like, why would he allow us to have this sort of frustrating relationship with our bodies? Well, the broadest answer is that he has subjected all of creation to a curse of futility so that things don't work as easily as they could.

And he has done this to match the spiritual state of the human race with the physical state of the earth and with creation.

So everything from achy knees to ovulation fits into this category. And nobody wants to have a disease or a disability or some kind of physical limitation.

But these things happen. And when they do, it's important that we understand that they are dispensed carefully and wisely from the Father's hand. Remember, you're not alive to tell the world your story.

You're alive to tell the world God's story. And one of the ways you will tell that story well is by getting a limp of some kind and learning how to walk with that limp in joy.

[20 : 58] Listen to this word from Charles Spurgeon, who himself was just severely afflicted with lots of ailments and didn't live in especially a long time.

Had just a regular parade of disabilities and things come into his life. His wife also, he wrote, It would be a very sharp and trying experience to me to think I have an affliction which God never sent me, that the bitter cup was never filled by his hand, that my trials were never measured out by him, nor sent to me by his arrangement of their weight and quantity.

So not only is God at work in your limp, but he has very carefully measured and dispensed your particular body problem to you with utmost care and love.

He knows exactly what he's doing with this bodily limitation. And the broadest explanation of that is that he is going to use your suffering to proclaim his glories.

And so remember how we said at the beginning, the goal of this is to rejoice, not just to endure, but to rejoice. It's like, well, how does that work? Well, take for instance in Acts 5, the disciples had just been beaten for preaching the word and they left rejoicing because they were counted worthy to suffer for his name.

[22 : 41] What they're rejoicing in there is that God has chosen to include them in his story that he's telling the world. He is doing that in your life with this limitation.

He is telling a story, not just to you, but to the world through this bodily limitation. And he is doing that mostly, I think, more specifically to show that the power belongs to him.

2 Corinthians 4, 7. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. It's just a weird feature of youth to not understand that your jar is clay.

And some of you understand that because you had childhood illnesses that were severe and you know the inside of a children's hospital and so on and so forth, but others of you don't.

And that's okay. Like that's just where you are. But you've got to realize like this is whether it happens in your 20s or your 60s, you're going to have this. This is going to be a part of your story.

[23 : 49] And God is allowing you to experience this so that his power may be known in your weakness. Honestly, like infertility and Paul's thorn in the flesh are not very dissimilar.

Let me read that section of 2 Corinthians 12 to you. It's like verses 1 through 10. I must go on boasting, though there is nothing to be gained by it. I will tell you, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up in the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise, whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know.

God knows. And he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man, I will boast. But on behalf of myself, but on my own behalf, I will not boast except my weakness.

Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.

[24 : 59] So, to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, I will boast more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.

For when I am weak, then I am strong. Now, this is actually God's plan for all of us. None of us are going to end this life, I mean, unless we die, you know, prematurely.

None of us are going to end this life without some kind of a thorn in the flesh, maybe multiple thorns in the flesh. And the goal in this is that God would get the glory, and that we would learn to revel in God's strength and not our own strength.

[26 : 07] And, again, I think one of the challenges of infertility in general is that we tend not to understand that this is just another aspect of something that everybody is going to go through.

And that is that, you know, we are going to have physical limitations sent to us by God. Now, that limitation did, from the thorn in Paul's flesh, did limit his productivity, but it also limited his pride.

And so here you have to see that God's got a purpose to humble us. He's always doing that. But in the case of Paul, he wasn't necessarily humbling Paul, but he was keeping Paul from becoming prideful.

And that may be your situation, too. It may not be that you're prideful, but it may be that God's just using this to just remind you of what you really are, of the very little power you actually do have.

And these can be frustrating lessons to learn, you know, to your flesh, to your pride, and so on and so forth. So the idea, though, is that Paul was, yeah, he was limited because of this thorn in the flesh.

[27 : 26] He really couldn't do everything he wanted to do because of this thorn. But what he did was accentuated with humility and faith and trust in the Lord so that even the less that he was able to do wound up producing more.

So I think a big thing to realize is that being a person who has to lean on the Lord, who has to trust the Lord, that is ultimately going to lead to fruitfulness in a way that being a person who just kind of figures it out on their own will never do.

There's another aspect of this body issue that I thought maybe we would talk about. And that is this season could be, in some respects, a way for you to see, like, yeah, I can't take my body for granted.

In Ephesians 5, Paul says, For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it. And I'm like, Paul, have you seen 20-something-year-old girls? You can barely get them to drink enough water to eat enough protein and so on and so forth.

And one of the weird things about youthfulness in particular is that you don't necessarily know your body yet.

[28 : 45] You don't necessarily know your particular unique sort of plan that you need to follow to be healthy. And this is, again, where comparison is such a problem because, you know, for so many years I resisted being me in this area.

I looked at other people who could eat whatever they wanted. I looked at, you know, and I just thought, well, like, I should be able to do that too. It's like, well, no, I have a particular body, I have a particular story to tell with this body about the Lord's glory and strength and so on and so forth.

So for me, obviously, I've never struggled with infertility exactly. But, you know, there was a period of time in my, gosh, in my mid-30s where, for whatever reason, and we don't really know, my health just plummeted.

And my testosterone went down like 200. I gained a ton of weight. I think I weighed almost 370 pounds at one point.

And I was just, I just, I didn't sleep. I was in constant pain. And, you know, you get to a situation like that and it's very frustrating because you look around and everybody else seems to be doing okay.

[30 : 06] And you've got this body that isn't doing, isn't being as low maintenance as somebody else's body. So the comparison thing comes in. And then also there's the sense of, like, uncertainty about how long is it going to take me to fix this?

And what's even wrong? And you have to figure all that stuff out. And then once you figure it out, you have to start working that plan. And then you'll find that there'll be setbacks and so on and so forth.

And, you know, I really think that now that I look back at that season and I've had some other, some of you know, I've had some other physical struggles that go back even to being a teenager.

I really look back at those things and understand that, man, I would, not that I'm super humble, but I would be a mess of pride if I didn't have opportunities in my relative youth to walk through these issues with my body not being as, I guess, you know, as good in some respects as other people's.

So for you, you know, in this season of infertility, I would say, you know, number one, like, yeah, your body's not cooperating and you need to trust that the Lord's in that and that he's teaching you how to trust him.

[31 : 27] But also this could just be a good time for you to start figuring out how to take care of you. You know, in first Timothy, Paul has to tell the young man, take a little wine for your stomach.

So his care for Timothy had to include kind of older guy wisdom about, hey, you got to take care of this body of yours. You got a unique situation here. You've got stomach problems.

This is, you need to take a little wine for your stomach. Another aspect related to this is just beauty standards. The, you know, the Instagram model ideal, that is not, just so we're clear, that is not a baby making body.

A baby making body doesn't look like that. Are they able to have babies? Maybe. I don't know. I mean, but you need to understand that many, many women, young women have mistreated their bodies in a pursuit, in the past, in a pursuit of just being skinny.

And there's nothing wrong with being skinny, but there's also nothing wrong with having a little bit of heft. And so if you've had bouts of anorexia or things like that in the past, you need to understand, like, you're still needing to pivot into kind of mom genes land.

[32 : 51] And I mean that in a good way. And I don't think of that as disparagingly at all. I don't think most men do, by the way. Just understand that you can't, you may have spent time in the past chasing things that are actually counterproductive to just having kids.

And that you just got to deal with that. Like, it's just part of your individual journey. And one final thing on just taking care of your body. We know that anxiety is like a big enemy of fertility.

And you'd be surprised. Just, again, this is just dad wisdom, like Paul telling Timothy to drink wine. Don't take it as, you know, anything more than it is.

But, girls, you'd be surprised how much weight training helps anxiety. Just putting a little bit more weight on. Just putting a little bit more strength on.

You know, when you feel like the wind is going to blow you over, anxiety is a much bigger problem. So, I would say you'd be surprised if you maybe just got some little dumbbells and just, you know, did some arms and some shoulders and some things like that.

[34 : 02] I think you'd just be surprised by how that can actually affect anxiety. And, I don't know, it just, to me, we used to do a lot of hard things with our bodies.

And that had all sorts of benefits. It had benefits at the insulin resistance level. It depleted glycogen.

It made our mitochondria decouple. Like, there's all these things that are happening when you're physically, not just like cardio, that's fairly unnatural in history, but when you're like moving heavy things, you know.

And I would just always want to tell ladies, like, you're supposed to be strong too, like, you know, in your own way. And that could actually help you. I hope that's not going too far out of bounds and giving particular advice.

But I think you might find some benefit there. So I guess the big takeaways on taking care of your body would simply be, like, you can't only live on baby carrots and soy dip.

[35 : 07] You've got to figure out, like, what a woman eats, not what a 15-year-old girl eats. And, you know, you might have some detox issues to handle.

There's a woman in our church who found that that was a significant source of her fertility troubles. And if you don't know who I'm talking about, you can ask me and I'll tell you so she can tell you about it. So that's number two.

Your body's going to betray you. First part is, is like, just learn that that's part of God's plan for you. We're all going to go through it. And he has a story to tell through our various physical limitations.

He's also building up humility in us to help us to see that all the power belongs to him and not to us. Because we kind of have to get introduced to our jars of clay when we're at some point in life.

Some of us get longer than others to live under the illusion that we are anything other than a jar of clay. And then, you know, in this season, it's just a good time to just think, okay, well, you know, what can I do to make my body better?

[36 : 09] And maybe there's stuff you can do. Maybe there's not. But it's worth looking at. And then the third category we were going to talk about just has to do specifically with the biblical data related to infertility.

As you know, this is a major theme throughout the Old Testament. And in terms of the women in God's story, you know, you could almost say that pretty much everybody who's anybody struggles with infertility in the Old Testament.

You have to remember that there's sort of two competing motivations at work in these women as they are struggling with this issue.

So on the one hand, they are all very self-conscious of God's promise made in the garden after the fall where God said, I will put enmity to the serpent.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

[37 : 18] So one of the things to think about with all the girls in the Old Testament that are struggling with fertility is that they are self-conscious about the possibility that they're going to produce a Messiah, the promised deliverer.

So in one sense, there's a series of motivations that are kind of aimed at playing their part in the redemptive story of God. But also, on the other hand, there's another series of motivations where, you know, childbearing was held up as a key sign of status and security.

So there were some more selfish motivations at play as well. And you can just see these women, you know, struggling between these two motives. And I don't think any of them ever really nailed it.

Even Hannah, who promptly gave up her child, Samuel, into the service of the temple, you know, she also received more social clout as a result of having this kiddo.

So the point, I think, to take away from this is that you've got to do your best to make your main motives for having children be kingdom oriented.

[38 : 26] Like, I want to have a baby to bless the world with godly offspring. I want to have a baby to be a key, to be a player in God's redemptive story and so on and so forth.

That should be your main motivation. There are also going to be other motivations. I want to have a baby because they're cute. I want to have a baby because I will feel as if I have accomplished something I was created to accomplish and so on.

I don't think there's any way of utterly, you know, canceling out those lesser motivations. They just need to be put into order.

The main thing is I want to have a baby to contribute to the world's set of godly offspring. I want to have a baby to bless the world with another Christian voice.

I want to have a baby to have one more voice in the heavenly choir proclaiming the glories and excellencies of God. That has to be your main motivation. These other motivations are basically inseparable from who you are as a person, but they need to be subordinated beneath this larger aim of God getting the glory.

[39 : 39] You can think of it very similar to the way that a man's sense of self-worth, you know, is partly connected to his job. And if I tried to entirely cancel that part of it out, I don't think I'd be doing what God would want.

I think even if you had a man who was fully disabled, you would still want to try to help him to find a way to feel productive. So likewise, there's a tension with infertility.

There's a sense in which your main reason should be to glorify God. But there's also a sense in which, like, you know, there's some of your glory is attached to this as well.

So you're just going to have to keep sorting those out and reminding yourself of what comes first and what is most important. The biggest why is to glorify God.

The lower whys have to do with, you know, some of these other motivations. A good passage for you to look at would be Habakkuk 3, 17 through 19. Many of you probably have heard this before.

[40 : 40] I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

God the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the deer's. He makes me tread on my high places. So that's Habakkuk 3, 17 through 19.

And if you're going through this season and you're going to have to battle these motivations, that's your text. You know, that's your text. You have to resolve that I'm going to praise God no matter what.

I'm going to rejoice in the God of my salvation no matter what. And that's the best way to keep those motives in check. Do not feel bad about having these other motives.

These are built into your creational fabric. If God never blesses you with children, he will help you over time to deal with these secondary motivations and to help you to find ways of expressing those in other avenues.

[41 : 55] But really, that's very unlikely for most of us. Most of us are just going to go through a season of this. And during that season, one of the things we need to do is make sure that we're mostly motivated to glorify the Lord.

Okay, final thought would be about infertility in community. So we are meant to live as truth and beauty in community. And one of the things that this means is that there's always in a local church going to be interaction between suffering people and not suffering people, between rich people and poor people, and between healthy people and sick people.

That's just the way the church works. So, again, especially when we're younger, we can tend to isolate our circumstance and think of it as more special or unique than it is.

We certainly do that with our limps. We feel as if no one else has this limp and everyone else has got the exact opposite of this limp and so on and so forth. But just remember, the local church is always a place, and God has just designed this, has always been a place where rich and poor rub elbows and suffering and non-suffering rub elbows and sick and healthy rub elbows.

And they love each other. And so that's just the way church is going to be. How do we interact with each other in these issues? Well, Christian fellowship, it's a miracle, first of all.

[43 : 26] It's empowered by the Spirit. It pleases the Lord. It's an expression of the Lord's love for the Father and the Father's love for the Son and so forth. But Christian fellowship works when we thinking, W-E, we thinking, eclipses me thinking.

That's really the miracle of Christian fellowship. The me decreases and the we increases. We are members, Paul says, of one body.

So when one part of us is doing well, then we all rejoice. And when one part of us is not doing well, we all express concern and care for that part.

That's really where we need to land in this situation where we've got, in the case of infertility, we've got women fellowshiping with one another, some of whom are struggling with this issue and some of whom are not.

We need to get the me diminished and the we expanded. So for the person who's struggling to carry a baby, you need to try to move your thinking from me to we as best as you can.

[44 : 31] And think through, like, we as a people are having babies. We are growing the kingdom of God. We are being blessed in this area. And to the person who's not struggling in this area, you need to do the same thing.

You need to move from the me to the we and just say, we are struggling with infertility. We are feeling frustrated in our efforts to conceive and so on and so forth. So we have to stay together even when we have disparities between, like, some of us are up, some of us are down, some of us are healthy, some of us aren't.

And the way we do that is by both thinking of the we and the unit more than the me, the individual. This is what we find in Philippians 2, 2, 3 through 4.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

This is also what we find in Galatians 6, that we're to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. So to those of you that are not struggling with infertility, you need to know that your blessing isn't automatically someone else's burden, meaning you can't feel guilty just for existing.

[45 : 52] You don't need to make it awkward. Don't feel awkward about it. Just understand that this is just like if you were walking with someone who lost a job and you didn't or someone who got sick and you're not or so on and so forth.

Like this is just this is something you have to learn how to navigate with grace and kindness. And, you know, you're probably overthinking it in many respects where you're walking on eggshells when that person who's struggling just needs you to like just forget about the differences and just be their friend.

Like don't let the differences dominate. That's not why we're together. We're not together because of our differences. Obviously, we're together because we have Christ. And so don't let your differences dominate in these areas to both parties.

To those who are struggling, another part of this I would comment on is that a key part of the happy life of a happy life is just to learn how to admire something without feeling the need to own it.

It's like learning how to admire something without feeling the need to own it. So like take what's the difference between noticing a pretty woman and lusting after her?

[47 : 13] It's ownership, isn't it? Like one is able to say that's she's pretty and just leave it there. Like just leave it out of admiration and be done. But then, you know, for the male, kind of sinful coveting can come as like she's pretty and I must own her.

And then for the female, it could be something like she's pretty and I must, you know, own the attribute she has or whatever. So learn how to admire something without needing to feel the without feeling the need to own it.

What's the difference between admiring someone's house and coveting it? Well, you can admire someone's house and think like that's great without having thoughts of I must also have this house.

You will be so much happier when you can learn to see something wonderful in the world and appreciate it without automatically saying to yourself, I want one too.

So that would be my advice just to women who are struggling with this. And again, I don't I would not say this is like if you're struggling with just a general kind of covetousness and it's been a part of your life for a while, comparison and covetousness.

[48 : 23] Do not think that this infertility that you're struggling with is somehow a corrective discipline from the Lord. I don't think that's the right way to think about this. I don't I don't think that's probably what it is.

But what it could be is that God is giving you an opportunity to get this this thing sorted out through this particular trial. And it really could just have tremendous benefits for you overall.

So I would look for if you're struggling with infertility, I would just take that season to look for just ways in your whole life, not just in this area where you've got some consumerism kind of stuff going on.

Look for these ownership impulses at work elsewhere in your life. Learn how to look like learn how to like something without needing to have it. Learn how to be content with what you have.

Learn how to experience beauty without needing to control it and make it yours. Just learn how to have a loose handed admiration of things.

[49 : 28] And and try to practice that holistically, not just on this particular issue. Generally speaking. This is a problem for a lot of people.

So I feel safe in saying, like, just look for this. Just see if this is a thing for you. And realize that if you can get this thing, if you can use this season to get this kind of general impulse to ownership sorted out.

That is going to have so much fruit for you in other areas of your life for a very long time. There really is a just a sweetness to learning how to see a glorious thing and let it be its own thing.

In the context of fellowship, that would look like, you know, so and so is pregnant. I'm not. Like I but I don't I don't see that pregnancy as a thing I must have.

I I see it as a beautiful thing. It is what it is. I'm glad I don't necessarily need to feel like I have to have that, too. Really, in that situation, just be like, well, Lord, I just trust you, you know, that you'll do what you want to.

[50 : 41] But this thing over here isn't provoking me. I'm just celebrating it for what it is. It's sort of like, you know, when you when you're if you're friends with someone who's considerably wealthier than you are.

You're going to have to either make peace with that and be glad for them or you won't be friends with them like it's just that that thing has to be dealt with.

And you'd be surprised how quickly. Maybe not won't feel quick to you initially, but you'd be surprised how quickly this thing gets turned around and just a little holistic discipline across your whole life where you're just like, I'm just going to like work on not being an envious person, not being a covetor and so forth.

That really can. You'd be surprised if you just set out to do something. And just looked at every little thing in your life as a way to learn how to do that thing.

You'd be surprised how how quickly it comes to you and also how kind of how it holds. A lot of people are trying to fix. An attitude in one particular area of their life.

[51 : 57] Because that's the area where that, you know, that attitude is causing the most problems. But the real answer is, is to is to look at your whole life and. And try to fix that attitude in all of the little things, too.

And you'd really be surprised by the difference that makes. To those who are not struggling and just say, lift up your sisters in the Lord, be their biggest prayer champions. Remember, your day is coming.

There will be a time when you feel like God isn't blessing something that you think is good. And there will be a time when your body doesn't do what you want it to do. So do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

The day is coming when you'll have your own limp. And maybe you do already. But one day you'll feel singled out for some season of suffering while everyone else seems to be doing just fine. So do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

There's one more area that I won't get into. But it's possible that if you're struggling with infertility, one of the things you'd be tempted to do is just look out into the world and see a bunch of people who don't even love their kids. Who may not even want their kids.

[53 : 03] And to feel envy toward people like that. So I won't get into that here. But I just want to point you to Psalm 73. That's your text. Just go read that text.

I've read that text and felt like the Lord purified things almost within the first reading. So that'd be your text if you're struggling with that. Well, I hope this is helpful.

I am self-conscious that my tone may not be adequately grave for this conversation. And I think that's because, you know, I don't think that's because of a lack of compassion.

But I do think it's maybe more because I'm confident in the Lord on your behalf. You're going. He is going to do something with this.

This is going to turn out for your good. The Bible is always right. It always winds up being right. And it'll be right about this, too. So I know that maybe I was a little too, you know, sunny in my vocal tones during this conversation for an issue that is actually really hard for you right now.

[54 : 13] I'm sorry. I'm sorry. But I also know that that's coming from a place of not seeing your situation lightly, but rather just seeing your situation.

You know, I think from the Lord's perspective, this is going to be for your good. It absolutely will.

So when you feel frustrated that your efforts are not producing the good that you want them to, just keep being faithful in the small things. Be like Joseph. When you feel frustrated that your body isn't doing what it's supposed to do, well, I think join the club.

Understand that this is a lesson we all have to learn. Understand that the limitations of our body are meant to show the lack of limitations that the Lord has. Our physical weaknesses are meant to show the strength of the Lord.

Understand that this could be a season where God's inviting you to just take more ownership of your health, not to put something on you or to make you feel guilty in any way, but just it could be that this is something.

[55 : 17] This season is for that purpose. And then finally, you have to just keep reminding yourself that the goal of having babies is to bring glory to God first and foremost.

And all these other things that come as a result of having babies are good, but they're kind of like papers. They need to be held under the paperweight of mostly I'm seeking God's glory.

This is Jesus. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. We keep all these other motivations, like leaves of paper, we keep them weighted down with the number one thing, which is I want God to be glorified with my body.

I want God to be glorified with my reproductive system. I want God to be glorified with having babies or not having babies and so on and so forth. Next, we just touched on just the need to stay in community during this time.

We have to shift from me thinking to we thinking. For those who are struggling, you'll do well for yourself if you just look toward not just struggling with coveting in this area, but look at the smaller things.

[56 : 29] Look even like if you sometimes covet or are envious of your husband's life or so on and so forth. Just look for this everywhere. Look for this when you go when you're scrolling social media and you see a product.

Like just develop a kind of season of I'm going to really try to learn how to look at things and say that's nice without feeling a need to own them.

That'll break some of the fundamentals of the coveting part of this issue. If you are not struggling, if you're being blessed, again, it's more we than me.

I'm glad you're doing well, but if other parts of the body aren't, then you're not really doing that well because you're part of the same body. So sow seeds of compassion and kindness while at the same time not feeling ashamed of your blessing.

The focus of that relationship isn't who has a baby and who doesn't. The focus of that relationship is you both have Christ, and that should be the main focus of that relationship.

[57 : 32] God wants us to learn how to rejoice in the midst of our trials, not merely to endure them, but to learn to count them all joy. And to the ladies that are struggling with this, I really am sorry you're going through it, but I assure you, not only I, but many, many people are praying for you.

I get texts from all sorts of people just adding, when I ask for prayer requests, and on their prayer requests, I'll be included so-and-so who's having trouble.

So God is good. He has raised up people who really love you and who really want this for you, but we ultimately all have to trust the Lord. The thing is, ladies, if you're going through this, this is just your thing for now, and we all have our things.

We all have our seasons. I pray that this season is short for you, and most importantly, though, I pray that this season is productive for your souls, trust in the Lord, and joy in the Lord.

I'll leave you with Paul's benediction to the saints in Thessalonica, the end of 1 Thessalonians 5. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[58 : 47] He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Blessings, friends.