Blessedly Held

A FREE GUIDE FOR CHURCHES

Walking Gently Together

Caring for those longing to be a mom or dad, and parents grieving a baby: infertility, secondary infertility, treatment and IVF, adoption choices, and loss

> “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”
>
> **Galatians 6:2 (NIV)**

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SECTION 1

Welcome, friend

Thank you for caring about hurting families.

Many people in your church are hurting quietly. Some are waiting for a first baby, or longing for another. Some are going through fertility treatment or IVF. Some have lost a baby. **Women and men both carry this grief.**

This guide gives simple, Bible-based ways to care for them, whatever your church's convictions. Share it with pastors, staff, greeters, and group leaders.

This guide is free

It is a gift, not a sales pitch. Please copy it and share it freely.

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Three key tips

- ★ **Lead with grace, not judgment.** Never shame anyone for fertility treatment or IVF, or for choosing not to adopt. Churches with IVF concerns can talk through Bible-based ways (page 7). Share adoption resources only when asked.
- ★ **Care for women and men.** Check in on both. Say the baby's name. Remember the hard days, and share the Light a Candle page (page 8).
- ★ **Build a caring church family.** Offer separate infertility and secondary infertility groups, Christian counseling, a church family-building fund, and Bible stories to lean on.



SECTION 2

Words that help, words that hurt

Even kind words can sting. Try a gentler way.

✕ Can hurt	✓ Can comfort
“Everything happens for a reason.”	“I’m so sorry. I’m here for you.”
“God has a plan.”	“I’m praying for you. Is there anything you want me to pray about?”
“At least it was early.” / “At least you have other kids.”	“Your baby matters. Your grief makes sense.”
“You can always try again.”	“Would you like to tell me about your baby?”
“Just adopt.” (Adoption is a beautiful calling, not a cure for infertility or a duty. This can make a God-given longing sound wrong.)	“Whatever path God leads you on, I’m with you.”
“Just relax and it will happen.”	“That sounds so hard. How can I help this week?”
“You just need more faith.”	“Your faith is not the problem. God is near to you in this.”
“Choose joy, your baby is in heaven.”	“It’s okay to hurt. I’ll sit with you.”

Words about fertility treatment and IVF are in Section 4 (page 7). Words for dads are in Section 6 (page 9).



SECTION 3

Things that can hurt

Most hurt is not on purpose. Knowing helps.

- **Judging or shaming people for using fertility treatment.** This includes IVF, IUI, or medication. Comments like “you’re playing God” or “just trust God instead” cut deep.
- **Pushing treatment or adoption,** or implying someone is selfish for not adopting. Adoption is a calling, not a duty.
- **Introductions all about kids.** “Tell us your name and how many children you have.”
- **Mother’s Day and Father’s Day** services that only celebrate parents with children at home. Those longing to be a mom or dad, and parents who grieve, can feel invisible.
- **Asking “Do you have kids?”** or “When are you having a baby?”
- **Only asking how the mom is doing.** Dads grieve too.
- **Putting couples facing infertility into small groups full of parents with kids.** The same goes for grieving parents in young-family classes full of pregnancy talk.
- **Going quiet.** Never saying the baby’s name, or acting like nothing happened.
- **Rushing grief.** “Shouldn’t you be over this by now?”
- **Surprise baby news** and unasked-for success stories.

A gentle rule

If you aren’t sure what to say, say: **“I’m so sorry. I care about you.”** Then listen.

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”
Romans 12:15 (NIV)



SECTION 4

Fertility treatment with grace

No one should be looked down on for seeking help.

The heart of this section

People who seek fertility treatment, like IVF, IUI, or medication, should **never be looked down on, judged, or shamed by the church.** Seeking medical help does not make anyone less of a Christian.

Churches may hold different convictions about some treatments (see pages 6–7). Whatever your church believes, the person in front of you deserves love.

How to support them

- **Pray for them.** Pray for peace, strength, wisdom, and their doctors.
- **Don't shame them.** No lectures, no "playing God" comments.
- **Respect their privacy.** Don't ask for medical details. Let them share only what they want.
- **Don't push any path.** Some choose treatment, some adoption, some neither. All need love.
- **Honor their longing.** The wish for a biological child is good and God-given.
- **Leaders: keep adoption resources on hand,** and share them only when asked.
- **Offer practical help.** Treatment is tiring. Waiting for results is hard. A meal, a ride, or a short text helps.

About adoption

Adoption is beautiful. But it is a calling, **not a cure for infertility and not a duty.** No one should be looked down on or judged for not adopting, for not being ready, or for feeling it isn't their calling.

Have adoption resources ready, but wait to be asked. Keep a short list on hand: trusted local Christian adoption agencies, foster care and adoption ministries, and church families who have adopted and are happy to talk. If the family brings it up first, offer it gently.



SECTION 4, CONTINUED

If your church has concerns about IVF

You can hold your convictions and still hold people close.

Christians hold different convictions about IVF and some other treatments. Often this is because of concerns about embryos. **Your church can hold and teach its convictions.**

Even so, lead with compassion

The person in front of you deserves compassion, not shame or gossip.

- **Listen first.** Hear their story before sharing your view.
- **Pray with them.**
- **Don't make them feel like less of a Christian.**
- **Keep their choices private.** Their story is not for the prayer chain unless they say so.
- **Don't treat them as a project.** They are a friend, not a problem to fix.

Talking about IVF in a way that honors life

It is okay, and helpful, for churches to talk about ways to do IVF that honor biblical convictions, instead of only saying no.

Many Christians believe life begins at conception. So each embryo is a precious life made by God. Psalm 139:13–16 says God knit us together in the womb (see Section 11, page 16).

> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart …"
>
> **Jeremiah 1:5 (NIV)**

> "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."
>
> **James 1:5 (NIV)**

Bible-based ways to approach IVF

- **Not discarding any embryos.** This is the heart of it for many families.
- **Making only as many embryos** as they are willing to transfer.
- **Transferring all embryos,** or choosing embryo adoption for any they can't transfer.
- **Avoiding selective reduction.**
- **Talking first** with a Christian doctor or an ethics-minded clinic, and with a pastor, before starting.

> **A loving conversation, not a rule**
>
> Couples and churches can talk about these things together, with kindness. This is not medical advice. Each couple should ask their own doctor about medical details.

Other paths are okay too

> Some couples choose other treatments, adoption, embryo adoption, or no treatment at all. **These are options, never expectations.** Don't push any path. Whatever path they choose, **their grief is real.** Grieve with them.

Words that help

✕ Can hurt	✓ Can comfort
"You're playing God."	"I'm praying for you and your doctors."
"Just trust God instead."	"I'm trusting God with you. I'm here for you."
"Your baby wouldn't really count if it came from IVF."	"Every baby is made by God and loved by Him."
"Isn't it selfish not to adopt?"	"Your longing for a baby is good and God-given."
"Why don't you just do IVF?" (Pushing treatment hurts too.)	"Whatever you decide, I love you and I'm here for you."
"So, is it working yet?"	"No need to share details. I'm just thinking of you."



SECTION 5

Caring after a baby's loss

Miscarriage, stillbirth, and child loss. Every baby matters.

In the first weeks

- Bring meals. Help with cleaning, errands, pets, or other kids.
- Send a card. Say the baby's name if they have one.
- Sit with them. Quiet is okay.
- Check in on mom **and** dad.

In the months and years after

- Write down the hard dates: the due date, the day of loss, birthdays.
- Send a note on those days: "Thinking of you and your baby today."
- Grief comes back on holidays. Keep checking in.

Light a candle together

Blessedly Held has a free **Light a Candle** page. Families can light a candle in memory of their baby.

Share it on **October 15** (Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day), and on **Mother's Day and Father's Day**.

blessedlyheld.com/remembrance (QR code on page 17)

October 15: Wave of Light

At 7 p.m., people light a candle for one hour to remember babies gone too soon. Your church can join, or simply name it in prayer.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

John 1:5 (NIV)



SECTION 6

Remembering dads too

Men grieve infertility and loss. They are often overlooked.

Why men get missed

- People ask how the mom is doing, but not the dad.
- Many men feel they must be strong for their wives.
- Men often grieve quietly, at work or alone.

How your church can care for dads

- **Men's groups or mentors** who have walked this road.
- **Check in on dads directly.** Ask him, not only his wife.
- **Say dads' names** in prayers and memorials.
- **Father's Day care.** Pray for men longing to be dads and for men grieving a baby.
- **Make counseling welcoming for men.** Say plainly that men are invited too.

✕ Can hurt	✓ Can comfort
"Be strong for your wife."	"How are **you** doing?"
"How's your wife holding up?" (and nothing more)	"You're a dad, and your baby matters."
"At least you didn't have to go through it physically."	"This was your baby too. It's okay to grieve."
"Happy Father's Day! When are you having kids?"	"Thinking of you this Father's Day. I'm praying for you."

A Father's Day prayer idea

"Lord, we lift up the men who long to be dads, and the dads who grieve a baby. Hold them close. Let them know they are seen."



SECTION 7

Making church a safe place

Coming back to church after loss can be very hard.

Simple changes that help

- **Try new icebreakers.** “Share your name and a favorite verse.” Not “how many kids?”
- **Train greeters** to be warm and careful with family questions.
- **Offer a quiet space** and permission to step out or leave early.
- **Think about class placement.** Don’t place grieving people in young-family classes full of pregnancy talk unless they ask.

Mother’s Day and Father’s Day

- Gently name those who wait, those who grieve, and those whose babies are in heaven.
- Pray for moms **and** dads who hurt on these days.
- Don’t ask all mothers or fathers to stand. Some will feel left out.
- Share the Light a Candle page so families can remember their baby.

Tip for people returning to church

Share these with someone who is hurting: it’s okay to bring a friend. It’s okay to sit near the back. It’s okay to leave early. A simple intro works: “Hi, I’m ___. I’m glad to be here.”

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

SECTION 8

Small groups your church can start

Small, safe circles where no one has to explain.

People heal better when they sit with others who understand. Separate groups let each person share freely.

Infertility groups

Infertility (no children yet)

For couples who are waiting for their first baby.

Secondary infertility

For families who have children and long for another baby.

Why keep these two groups separate?

Both hurts are real. But they feel different.

- A couple with no children may find it painful to hear about kids at home.
- Parents longing for another child may feel they aren't "allowed" to grieve around people still waiting for their first.

Separate groups let both share honestly, without guilt or comparing.

IVF and fertility treatment

For people walking through IUI, IVF, or medication. A grace-filled, no-judgment space.

Men's group or mentor match

Pair husbands and dads with men who have walked this road.

Loss groups

Miscarriage and pregnancy loss

For moms and dads grieving a miscarriage, stillbirth, or loss during pregnancy.

Loss of a child

For parents grieving a baby or child who died after birth. Their grief needs its own safe room.

A gentle note

Let people choose the group that fits. Some may join more than one. Some may need time before joining any.

Tips for leaders

- Keep groups small and private. What is shared stays in the group.
- Leaders who have walked this road are a gift. Train them first.
- Start and end with prayer. Leave room for tears and questions.
- Know when to refer someone to a counselor (see Section 9, page 13).

If someone is in crisis

Call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, free, 24/7). In an emergency, call **911**.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)



SECTION 9

Why Christian counseling matters

Sometimes love means getting someone more help.

Infertility and loss can bring deep grief, anxiety, depression, and strain on a marriage. Friends and pastors help a lot. **A trained counselor can help in ways friends can't.**

A licensed Christian counselor brings both: real training and a shared faith. People can bring their questions, anger, and tears to God without feeling judged.

How your church can help

- **Offer counseling** if your church has a licensed counselor on staff.
- **Keep a referral list** of licensed Christian counselors who know infertility and pregnancy loss. Check each license with your state first.
- **Help with the cost.** Counseling can be expensive. Your church can cover some sessions or offer help through its benevolence budget.
- **Make it normal.** Say from the pulpit that seeing a counselor is wise, not weak.
- **Welcome couples and men.** Say plainly that men and couples are invited too.

Signs someone may need a counselor

Grief that isn't easing after many months. Trouble sleeping, eating, or working. Pulling away from everyone. Hopeless talk. If you're worried about safety, call or text **988** now.

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

Psalm 147:3 (NIV)



SECTION 10

Consider a family-building fund

An idea for your church: help couples grow their families.

"Be fruitful and increase in number."

Genesis 1:28 (NIV), often known as "be fruitful and multiply"

From the very beginning, God blessed families and children. Building a family can cost a lot. Fertility care and adoption can cost thousands of dollars. Many couples can't do it alone.

Your church can set up its own family-building fund to help couples with these costs. Each child welcomed into a loving, faith-filled home helps grow God's kingdom.

Simple steps

- **Pray and plan** with your church leaders.
- **Write simple guidelines** that fit your church's beliefs and convictions, for example fertility care, adoption, or both.
- **Keep it private.** Let couples apply quietly. Protect their names and medical details.
- **Ask your church's accountant or advisor** how to set it up the right way.
- **Invite the church to give,** for example with a special offering on Mother's Day or Father's Day.

Love, not pressure

A fund should never push anyone toward treatment or adoption. It simply opens a door for those who choose it.

This is an idea for your church to run. Blessedly Held does not run or manage family-building funds.

SECTION 11

Bible stories to lean on

God's people have walked this road before.

Hannah

1 Samuel 1–2. She poured out her heart to God in deep sorrow, and was misunderstood at the temple.

Sarah

Genesis 18 and 21. She waited many years and even laughed at God's promise.

Rachel

Genesis 30. Her longing for a child was honest and painful.

Rebekah and Isaac

Genesis 25:21. Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife.

Elizabeth

Luke 1. She and Zechariah were faithful, and still waited for years.

The Shunammite woman

2 Kings 4. She was given a promised son, then faced his death, and ran to God for help.

David

2 Samuel 12. He fasted, wept, and grieved the death of his baby son.

Job

The book of Job. He lost so much and brought his honest questions to God.

A gentle note

Not every story ends with a baby. Some of our stories won't either. **God's love for you does not depend on that.** He is close in the waiting and in the grief.

Comfort verses

> “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
>
> **Psalm 34:18 (NIV)**

> “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”
>
> **Psalm 139:13–16 (NIV)**

> “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”
>
> **Romans 8:26 (NIV)**

When you don’t have words to pray

Romans 8:26 is a gift for hurting people. Remind them: God hears even the prayers they can’t say out loud.

SECTION 12

Share this resource

A gentle place of comfort and encouragement.

Will you help us reach hurting families?

Blessedly Held is a place of comfort, faith, and hope for families facing infertility or the loss of a baby. If it could help someone in your church, we would be so grateful if you shared it.

- Add it to your church's resource list or website.
- Put it in your bulletin, especially near October 15, Mother's Day, and Father's Day.
- Hand it to someone who is hurting, along with a hug or a prayer.

blessedlyheld.com
Comfort, prayer, and support

blessedlyheld.com/remembrance
Light a candle in memory of a baby

Thank you

Thank you for loving these families well. When the church carries each other's burdens, hurting people feel held.

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."
Psalm 147:3 (NIV)

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