

Ways to Minister To Someone Going Through Infertility or Miscarriage

It can be hard to know what to say to someone going through infertility or miscarriage. Here are some things to consider when talking to your friend, family member, or co-worker. The Shiloh ministry would love to come alongside you and/or the person going through this and offer additional support and encouragement.

"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." Proverbs 25:11

"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:5, 6

- ❖ Contact the Shiloh Ministry if you would like someone from the Shiloh Ministry who has had similar experiences to contact your friend. (Responding as quickly as possible is best, as times of grief and struggle vary in length—from just days to even years. The window to minister may not last long. And what would mean a lot right away, may not mean as much 2 weeks later.)
- ❖ Listen, listen, and listen again. Sometimes it is better to not say anything at all than to say something hurtful.
- ❖ Tell the person that you are sorry that they are going through such a difficult time.
- ❖ Using words like "This must be so painful for you" is a good way to validate someone's feelings.
- ❖ Pray before you visit with the person that is suffering that God will give you the words to use in that particular situation. It is important that we don't just put it on our list of "things to do today" and forget to stop and pray for God's leading.

- ❖ Send cards often to remind the person that you are remembering them and praying for them. Even just a postcard that says "Praying for you today" can mean a lot when it is heartfelt and true. Cards send less expectation for a response, compared to email or phone messages.
- ❖ Ask if they would like to be connected with someone else who has walked a similar road. The Shiloh ministry has a Bible study that meets for 10 weeks in someone's home at different times of the year and also has a group of volunteers who meet one-on-one. These volunteers have experienced similar trials and have a special heart for ministering to others going through this.
- ❖ Give your friend a chance to tell you what helps and what is hard. Ask her/him what things are hard. Ask what ministers the most to them (ie talking about their situation or not talking about it...). Ask if she would like to go to your child's birthday or not. Ask if she would like to go to your baby shower or if that would be too hard. Be aware that situations change, and what someone can or can't handle at one point may be different later, so keep communication lines open.
- ❖ In a situation of loss or treatment, provide a meal or meals. Gather others in your community or theirs to help with this.
- ❖ After the loss of a baby, try to remember the due date and be sensitive around that time and around various holidays (Mother's and Father's Day, Christmas...). Send them a note or give them a call to let them know you are thinking of them and praying for them during those times. New Year's and your friend's birthday can also be hard, as they are reminders of time passing with unfulfilled dreams. These are wonderful times for encouragement and prayer.
- ❖ If the baby who was lost was named, use the name in your note or conversations. The person may also appreciate a keepsake with the baby's name on it- a handpainted cross, an engraved bracelet charm, a monogrammed pillow, Christmas ornament or blanket. A tree, flowering bush, or donation to a special charity may also be sweet gifts at a time of loss or on the anniversaries of the loss. Contact the Shiloh Ministry for recommendations on related charities.

- ❖ Try to eliminate the words "but at least" from your vocabulary. Any time you use these words you are minimizing someone else's pain. For example: "But at least you miscarried early in your pregnancy."
- ❖ Remember that you cannot compare pain. Make sure that you don't try to compare the pain that you or someone you know has experienced with another person's pain. For example: "Don't worry, you've only been trying to get pregnant for two years and I know another lady who tried for six before she got pregnant."
- ❖ Try not to talk too much about your own children around those that are suffering from infertility or miscarriage.
- ❖ Don't come up with solutions for the person that is suffering. For example: "You can always adopt." Or "Maybe you should try another doctor."
- ❖ Don't try to make the situation better by saying things like "You're only 28, you still have plenty of time." Or "At least you already have a child."
- ❖ Don't act like you know exactly how the person suffering feels. Just because you experienced a similar situation doesn't mean that you will have the same feelings/emotions as someone else.
- ❖ Make sure not to ask personal questions like "When is your next fertility treatment starting?" or "Are you going to try again?"
- ❖ Don't take the things we know to be true and turn them into hurtful words. For example: "God's timing is perfect." "It must be God's will." Or "You need to just turn it over to the Lord." Although these are true, they are not comforting to someone who is struggling.
- ❖ Pray with the person for the peace and comfort that only God can give.