

T A B L E O F

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<i>vii</i>
<b>1. If You Get This Book Before Your Baby's Birth</b>	<i>1</i>
<b>2. The First Days and Weeks</b>	<i>9</i>
<b>3. Godly Grieving</b>	<i>27</i>
<b>4. Crossing Grief's Bridges</b>	<i>39</i>
<b>5. When Humans Have No Answers</b>	<i>59</i>
<b>6. Counting Grief's Blessings</b>	<i>67</i>
<b>7. One in Love, Two in Grief</b>	<i>73</i>
<b>8. Helping Children Cope</b>	<i>87</i>
<b>9. "Let Us Go Into the House of the LORD"</b>	<i>95</i>
<b>10. Another Baby? Maybe.</b>	<i>105</i>
<b>11. Relating to Miserable Comforters</b>	<i>117</i>
<b>12. For Family and Friends</b>	<i>125</i>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<i>139</i>

# If You Get This Book Before Your Baby's Birth

*Can this be happening to us? Surely this is a bad dream.* Our doctor has just told us that something is wrong—our baby will not live after birth. Our minds reel in shock. Then the agony becomes surreal, simply too enormous to live with and more than we can bear alone.

Mourning is part of the human story. Through the centuries, individuals have wept and suffered, but they survived. God is with us. We will survive, even though this experience will change us forever. With God's arms underneath us, the pain and sorrow will be endurable. We face a grueling journey, but God will freely give us His grace every moment.

If we have discovered before our baby's birth that we must walk this path, we have a chance to plan. Even though it is painful beyond description, we need to make plans. We can choose clothing and think about what we want to do with this precious little one in the few short hours we have together. We can think about the photos we want—close-ups of tiny features we can study in later

years, poses with favorite outfits, poses with siblings and other family members.

Many parents have no warning, no time for preparation. They listen eagerly for that first cry—and it never comes. Some of those mothers share their regrets and what they would do differently. Others share things they did that helped them heal.

“ If I had to go through this again, I would ask to bathe my baby. But at the moment I was drained physically and emotionally, and I didn't really care.

“ We named each one of our babies, even though they miscarried too early to know their gender. Each time we both felt certain of what the gender would have been, so we used a name that fit. There is healing in naming a child. We did not share the names (or even the fact that we had named them) with others, but my husband and I found that acknowledging them as part of our lives helped both of us.

“ If we have another stillborn preemie, I would want to have a viewing. We were told it would not be right. Now we know better. These babies are real—they have a soul, and a viewing is okay. They might not look like a

full-term baby, but there are adults who don't look normal in the coffin either. Several people said later that they wished they could have seen him, but nobody saw him except us.

“ At first, taking a picture of a dead baby did not appeal to us. But now we treasure our only picture of all seven of our children together, with the baby in the casket. I wish someone could have been holding the baby, but we are glad for the picture we have.

“ I wish I would have dressed Suetta in different outfits for photos. I had some favorite sleepers and a dress and bonnet that I wish I could have seen her in.

“ If I had a chance to do it over, I would have kept Franklin with us longer. We were so tired from a sleepless night, plus medication fogged my mind. We knew we would have to give him up sometime, and we understood that our parents didn't want to see him. So we told the nurse to call the undertaker. I wish someone had told us we could keep him till we left the hospital. And I wish we had asked someone else besides us to come and see him.

## *Hope for the Mourning*

I would have loved to know that one other person had held and connected with him.

“ I wish I had kissed Dori while I held her. I cuddled her but never kissed her, and it still bothers me after eleven years.

“ If this happens again, I would want to dress my baby for the casket. I didn't have anything that tiny, and I was too tired to think what I wanted when the undertaker asked. Even though I had nothing small enough, maybe someone would have been willing to sew something for me to use. At least he was wrapped in the blanket I had brought along to the hospital.

“ I wish I had taken some of the offers of help or let someone buy clothing for our baby to wear in the casket. At the time I felt like it didn't matter, but now I wish I had let others do the things they wished to.

Even if we have a chance to prepare for our baby's birth, we will still wish we had done some things differently. Those few hours we have with that tiny loved one are so brief, so fraught with grief, that our minds cannot

think clearly. "Hindsight is always twenty-twenty," as they say, and in later weeks we will think of other details we overlooked.

These regrets must be given to God. He made us. He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. And we will need to give our pain to Him many times, for in our humanity we will deal repeatedly with the same regrets. But He will give us rest—rest in knowing that He understands our hearts' desires and that we did the best we could at the time.

My Father! This hurts!  
My empty arms ache.  
My heart must soon break.  
I've had all I can take!  
My baby is gone.

My Father! It's true,  
But I cannot believe  
You would give, then bereave  
And leave us to grieve  
The death of our child.

My Father! These tears—  
They flow fast from my eyes  
As my heart pleads and cries  
And my mother-dream dies  
Beside that small grave.