

A photograph of two Black men in a church setting. The man on the left has short dreadlocks tied up and is looking down with a somber expression. The man on the right is bald, wearing a bright blue shirt under a dark suit jacket, and has his hand on the shoulder of the first man, looking at him with a supportive expression. The background shows church pews and blurred lights.

THE CHURCH and the REPRODUCTIVE LOSS JOURNEY

REPRODUCTIVE
LOSS NETWORK™
CONNECTING FAITH,
GRIEF AND HOPE

"BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER OF MERCIES AND GOD OF ALL COMFORT, WHO COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR AFFLICTION, SO THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO COMFORT THOSE WHO ARE IN ANY AFFLICTION, WITH THE COMFORT WITH WHICH WE OURSELVES ARE COMFORTED BY GOD."

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

Pastoral ministry is a demanding calling and impacts the shepherding heart. At one moment, a pastor celebrates a joyous prayer update, while minutes later, hears of the loss of another unborn baby this month. Our prayer is that this Guide may be a help to you as you tend and care for your precious flock.

At Reproductive Loss Network (RLN), our mission is to bring a Biblical response to a grieving world through educating, equipping, and encouraging the helpers who support those touched by reproductive loss. These losses are essentially associated with any experience of grief in a person's life related to their reproductive health, decisions, fertility, the outcomes of a pregnancy, or the creation or care of their family.

Pastor, reproductive loss is prevalent in our churches:

- **1 out of 4 pregnancies ends in miscarriage [1]**
- **1 in 175 pregnancies ends in stillbirth [2]**
- **1 in 5 couples experiences infertility [3]**
- **1 out of 4 women will make an abortion decision [4]**
- **The overall rate of abortion following prenatal diagnosis is 64.8% [5]**

Included in this category of loss is the grief associated with devastating prenatal diagnoses, adoption, foster care reunifications, and the ripple effect it has on family and friends.

Grief surrounds us. Like nothing else, misguided, unprocessed grief affects spirituality with its accompanying heart-wrenching questions about God, self and faith.

May we all hold fast to what we know to be true - **God heals and comforts through His Word and His people.** So, we encourage you and your church body to bring the Christ-centered hope to those touched by reproductive loss.

- 1 - <https://www.winniepalmerhospital.com/content-hub/pregnancy-loss-1-in-4>
- 2 - <https://www.cdc.gov/stillbirth/data-research/index.html>
- 3 - <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/16083-infertility>
- 4 - <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2024-04-30/1-in-4-u-s-women-will-have-an-abortion-in-their-lifetime>
- 5 - [https://www.ajog.org/article/S0002-9378\(23\)01956-7/fulltext](https://www.ajog.org/article/S0002-9378(23)01956-7/fulltext)

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THE NEED

"...And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." Revelation 21:4

Pastors, biblical counselors, and church communities can play a crucial role in supporting individuals and couples facing reproductive loss. Unfortunately, despite its prevalence, the discussions surrounding reproductive loss are often overlooked or insufficient for understanding. Most times, those grieving feel alone and misunderstood.

Studies indicate that only about 3% of individuals seek support from religious figures, such as priests, pastors, or rabbis, for after-loss care. This raises the question: why do those grieving reproductive losses often find the church inhospitable to their situation?



For some ministry leaders, the silence of not talking about reproductive loss may stem from ethical concerns, lack of resources, or the pain of personal loss. These factors, among others, can leave church leaders unsure of how to help. However, the good news is that **RLN strives to help churches meet the needs of those in their care through our biblical training offerings, commissioning process, and consultation packages.**

Every church has people suffering from reproductive loss, and they need compassionate and Biblical counsel. RLN will be a priceless resource in this needed ministry area for your church.

Chris Ritter, Ministry Development Pastor and Biblical Counselor, Doxa Church in Rocklin, CA

OUR LANGUAGE

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver." Proverbs 25:11

It is common for the world to identify people by what they have experienced or lack. However, describing a person as post-abortive, infertile, or childless may bring unnecessary pain and hinder their healing. As such, many men and women experience multiple and varied losses, and wearing labels can feel hopeless. Instead, RLN encourages Biblical language when supporting others, helping them see their identity in the image of God, not in their particular sin or diagnosis. By promoting ministries to utilize the term "reproductive grief care," we encompass the many facets of hurt by all reproductive loss. We recognize that sin is in all of us, not only in the state of our bodies or what we have chosen.

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING

"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...'" Genesis 1:28

The topic of reproductive loss is challenging. It is one that may hold pain, grief, and unexpected hardship. Yet, discussions surrounding past loss and possible future challenges seem conspicuously absent from counseling rooms and the pews, especially before marriage.

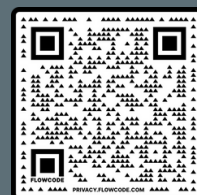
In pre-marriage counseling, the prevailing narrative when discussing family formation focuses on reproductive "success." The emphasis is on the joys of starting a family, the anticipation of children, and the blessings of parenthood. Rarely, if ever, do conversations delve into the pain and challenges that reproductive loss can bring. And rightly so, to some extent—the couple is looking forward to their exciting future.

Yet, just as a young couple discusses finances, intimacy, and communication, it is also important for them to consider the possibility that their future family might not match their childhood dreams.

The church serves as a sanctuary for emotional and spiritual care. However, reproductive loss is an area where more attention and resources are needed. By filling this gap and offering tailored biblical counseling for those experiencing such losses or possible difficulties in achieving pregnancy, the faith community can become an even more powerful source of support and comfort.

By introducing the topic of reproductive loss in premarital counseling, pastors, biblical counselors, and compassionate individuals can help navigate these sensitive topics with hope, approachability, and accessibility, making the church body a known integral part of the healing process (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Helpers' Tip: Access our Pre-marriage Course to assist Pastors and Counselors in their counsel of Pre-Marital Couples



Grief and loss surround us, and most are unprepared for these seasons in life.



HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."
Ephesians 3:14-15

There is much to celebrate as we witness God's glorious work through marriage and parenting. Even our culture extends its praise through holidays and special events. However, not every occasion is celebratory for all.

For many, Mother's and Father's Day remind the grieving of what is lost or desired. On these days, they need deeper comfort. However, on these Sunday mornings, churches can often take their focus from worshipping God and His works to elevating an identity of parenthood.

As believers, our gatherings are to glorify God through teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer (Acts 2:42). Additionally, we must recognize our true identities in Christ, not in what we have or have endured. In Christ, we have the living hope that our worth is far more than being a father, mother, or grandparent.

As you consider celebrating families and children on cultural holidays and events, please remain a place of refuge for those who grieve. And join us as we pray on these holidays for those hurting to choose worship over isolation.

These are days many need deeper comfort.

Helpers' Tip: Our "Meet the Helper Podcast" interview with a pastor who shares compassionate ways to care for those hurting on holidays.



MARITAL COUNSELING

As a couple enters a marriage, they often want to bring their best into their relationship. For various reasons, there is a temptation to keep their past hidden, unknowingly planting a seed for future strife.

Statistics show the devastating impact on individuals who carry secret abortion experiences throughout their marriage. These secrets manifest destruction within the family, and a biblical application can break the silence and foster restoration.

Marital conflict also occurs when couples do not communicate through reproductive losses experienced together, such as a miscarriage, stillbirth, or infertility. Not understanding the individuality of grieving and the gender differences between them can cause resentment and isolation. Couples need guidance as they seek direction under desperate circumstances in the pursuit of medical intervention, such as IVF, embryo selection or adoption, and reduction. These devastating losses and diagnoses significantly increase the desire for separation and divorce.

Pastors and biblical counselors would do well to encourage conversations with couples to discuss reproductive health and loss through a Biblical lens. While these discussions can be challenging and uncomfortable, our training can provide you with a comprehensive foundation to offer valuable tools and resources to enhance your care.

STORIES OF HOPE

At Reproductive Loss Network we often have the privilege of hearing how Christ uses the church community to help families during their seasons of grief. We share a few of the stories to encourage care ministries and helpers world-wide.

And when God felt far away, and we were too consumed by our grief to make our own way, He used the body of Christ to carry us. They were His hands & feet, reaching into our lives and drawing us closer to Him. There wasn't much they could say to "make it better," but they brought us meals, paid for a house cleaner, watched our kids, and checked in on us frequently. They prayed for us and cried with us. Before Isaac was born, a group of women from our church threw a "Celebration of Life" party for me, and I was given a quilt for which they had each created their own unique square. After Isaac was born, those same women came to the hospital to "meet" him and to sit with us in our grief. I will cherish these simple acts of kindness and compassion for the rest of my life.

Rachel Green

Losing a child during pregnancy is a life-altering and devastating blow. Losing twins during pregnancy is unimaginable, and yet there I was...Even still, what I have realized is that by sharing with sisters in Christ and being heard and hearing others' grief, I get closer and closer to healing....Choosing to let someone know me, even in the dark and ugly pit of grief, brings me a measure of comfort. When I look around and see the face of the women who have supported me on this road, I feel known. Those people whom I've allowed into my grief space have acted like strategically placed planks of wood along the walls of my grief pit that have helped me take steps upward and out, and for that, I am grateful.

Kristin Lowther

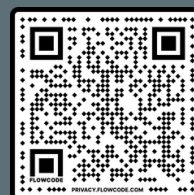
I experienced what they call "a missed miscarriage." Our baby had passed away much earlier, but my body didn't stop acting pregnant. The physical pain that accompanies a miscarriage truly can't be described. It was a swirl of dark agony, loss, humiliation, and fear.

Although reeling emotionally and physically for longer than I can count in some ways – the biggest blessing during this time was people. My husband, family, and close friends. Our church family brought us meals, friends from far away sent flowers, and my sister sat on the couch silently watching TV with me. The sense of presence found with those closest to me helped me grieve.

Taylor LeProhon

*What others say about
our training & resources.*

Helpers' Tip: Read what our learners experience after participating in our live virtual, on-demand and in-person trainings.



WE APPRECIATE YOU

We deeply appreciate your interest and time in reading this resource, **The Church and the Reproductive Loss Journey**. With you in mind, we envision a community of helpers comprised of pastors and their churches, pregnancy care centers, biblical counselors, and ministry leaders equipped to provide care from a solid biblical foundation to those suffering reproductive loss.



Get to know our ministry by attending our foundational workshop, 101: Introduction to Biblical Reproductive Grief Care. In four hours we cover reproductive grief basics, biblical guidance to loss and healthy grieving, and practical application in offering hope. It is an excellent foundation for those new to helping or a welcomed refresher for more experienced helpers. Individuals and groups are welcome!

It was such a wonderful encouragement to me being part of this workshop webinar. It confirmed things that have become a part of my own personal use in the counseling room and also built my faith that the Lord is at work.

Peta Howell, Coordinator, Pregnancy Counseling and Support Tasmania Inc.

MEET THE CO-FOUNDERS

Tanya Flores is a certified counselor with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) and co-founder of the Reproductive Loss Network. Tanya is the Director of Client Services & Education at her local medical pregnancy clinic, where she leads a team of Reproductive Grief Care Advocates. Outside of the clinic, she serves her church as a lead biblical counselor in their Soul Care program.

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Tricia Lewis, Ph.D. is co-founder and educator with Reproductive Loss Network. Tricia applies her expertise to offer in-depth biblical grief education to individuals and groups alike. She focuses on enhancing the support provided by helpers in many fields, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to offer compassionate and effective care to those experiencing reproductive loss.

tricia@reproductivelossnetwork.org



"We would love to connect with you and help you create a culture of care for those impacted by reproductive loss and grief. Let us know how we can come alongside you."



The church is God's tangible place of refuge. As such, church and small group leaders, ministry leads, and staff are often the first to hear of a congregant's spiritual or physical need for reproductive grief care.

Consider us a partner to come alongside your church or ministry by offering Christ-focused training and consulting, specializing in reproductive loss and support.

CONNECT

We'd love to meet you and learn how to pray for your ministry. Please scan our code to visit our website or send us an email. You may also subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter and follow us on social media. We hope to hear from you soon!

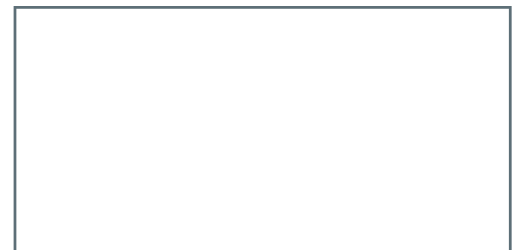
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Wonderful course! I truly appreciated the heart and care of the instructors. Their commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture was refreshing. I wish all church leaders could hear the wisdom they have to share. You're on the right track. Keep doing what you're doing!

Cheryl Braden, Life Tribe & Legacy Incorporated



Visit our website and download our free suggested resources guide, "Helps" and learn about our Commissioning process, trainings and other online resources.



Reproductive Loss Network Partner