



Close to Home Study Guide

Dealing with Infertility

1. Opening (1 minute)*

Explain that infertility is a multi-faceted, usually unexpected problem for some couples desiring to have children. While much attention and literature is focused on women's experiences of infertility, it can touch men just as profoundly.

Open with prayer—your own, or the following: *Dear God, we have gathered together in your presence to discern a mystery of life, to better understand the difficulties that people experience when their dreams of fertility go unfulfilled. Help us to listen. Help us to learn. Amen.*

2. Story-telling (7 minutes)

Summarize Terri's story. Note briefly the "trigger" of her emotional response, as well as her deeper questions about God, relationships with others, and her own identity.

Or, if infertility is or has been the experience of someone in the group, ask him or her (ahead of time) to share a similar story.

3. Review of pamphlet (10 minutes)

Review the description, types and statistics about infertility on pages 4-5. Ask the group to identify the details that they did not know. Help them to realize the extent of the "silent" nature of infertility.

Review the sidebar, Myths of fertility. Ask the group to name other related myths of which they may be aware.

4. Reading of Scripture text (14 minutes)

Assign one of these Scripture texts to each individual or small group. Ask them to scan the story, and to summarize two or three key struggles that the couple in the story experienced.

Sarai/Sarah & Abram/Abraham—Genesis 15:1–18:15; Genesis 21

Rebekah and Isaac—Genesis 25:21

Rachel and Jacob—Genesis 29:31–30:22

Hannah and Elkanah—1 Samuel 1:1-19

Elizabeth and Zachariah—Luke 1:5-25

As time allows:

- Discuss what these stories have in common (aside from the fact that eventually each couple did conceive and give birth to one or more sons).
- Imagine: How might these biblical stories be painful and or helpful to couples with infertility?
- What can we learn from these stories?

*The suggested time frames are for a 45-minute session. With more discussion and storytelling, you will need to adjust upward, and possibly extend to a second session.

5. Steps toward healing (12 minutes)

Review **Steps toward healing** in the brochure, pages x-x. Choose from these options:

- If persons in the group are living with infertility, allow them to identify which steps might be their next step, and which steps they would really appreciate support from the rest of the group or from others in their circle of friends.
- Invite the group to name ways that they can be more understanding and supportive of those who are infertile (in the group and or others they know).
- How can you walk with someone when their “faith grows weary”? (#2, p. x)
- How can you pray? Ask persons with infertility how they pray and/ or how they would like the group to pray with and for them.
 - o If infertility is a live issue for this group, ask them to make a commitment to do some reading and research, using the web sites and books listed on page 11.

6. Closing (1 minute)

Dear God, we invite you, as the Creator and Sustainer of all life, to be present in our struggle to understand the complexities of infertility. May the heart cries of men and women who face this life circumstance merge with your heart cries, creating a strong bond of love, faithful living, and peace that passes all understanding. Grant wisdom to friends, family members, and your church, as we seek to support infertile couples on their journey. We thank you for this opportunity to grow in our understanding and compassion. May your will be done in all our lives. Amen.



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This study guide is written by Linda Gehman Peachey, Director for Women's Advocacy in the Peace and Justice Ministries section of Mennonite Central Committee US. It is one of a series of free downloadable study guides for the Close to Home pamphlets, which can be ordered from the Mennonite Publishing Network of the Mennonite Church (see www.mpn.net/closetohome) or the Mennonite Brethren Kindred Productions (www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome).