

## **A path through pain to hope? Possible outcomes in the event of no happy ending...**

Sometimes a child eventually is conceived and born, but not always. In such situations couples are left to deal with the pangs of non-childbirth. Infertility hurts. When someone we care about is hurting a gut reaction is to want to take their pain away and make things better. But as with many situations of pain, it can be a mistake to seek to rush resolution and healing. Nevertheless, beyond the pain there is hope of resolution. Though one hope goes unfulfilled, the situation is not hopeless. When supporters stay with an infertile couple for the long haul, in time they may have a part to play in sitting alongside people as they come to places on the journey to healing, or in cautiously encouraging them to move to these places. Some of the passing through points and destinations may be:

- ***Letting the dream die and grieving.***

Eventually many people come to the time when they give up on the hope of having their own birth children. They can then fully enter the healing process of grieving. As such people may go through phases common to that in many other losses.

- ***Being self indulgent for a while.***

Not everyone goes along with this. Some Christians would argue there is no place for any self indulgence, and infertile couples should simply accept the situation and then commit to some other useful role or activity. But it may be necessary for a couple to spend time and money on each other as a sign of love and affection as they recover from an exhausting and on the face of it 'fruitless' episode of their lives. However after a while Christian teaching would emphasise it is in giving and service that true fulfilment is always found; long term 'living it up' as individuals and couples probably won't bring fulfilment and falls short of God's standards for Jesus' disciples.

- ***Exploring caring for children in other ways, including the possibility of adoption.***

As already suggested, as far as possible couples need to have come to terms with their own infertility before beginning to consider adoption, not least because of the lengthy process involved and energies needed in pursuing adoption. If at this stage the desire to have *a* family - and not simply their own flesh and blood children - persists, and that a couple do not see it as a poor second best option, then adoption is worth considering.

- ***Redirecting energies: Finding a purpose in God.***

Childless couples may have possibilities for expressing their discipleship in which those with parenting responsibilities are restricted or excluded. Childless people may have more time and energy with more flexibility and might even be willing or able to take more risks as they explore what purpose God might have for their life.

- ***Using the lessons learnt to come alongside and help others.***

Couples facing infertility often find those who they know to have faced infertility easiest to confide in and therefore for some making their own experience known and offering themselves is a valuable form of service. However for some this is too painful, having potential to open old wounds once more, and they need to leave this period of their life behind.