

Newborn Promise Podcast

"When Infertility Shows Up, Is God Still Good?" with Charissa Kolar

Audra Haney: Thanks for tuning in to The Newborn Promise podcast; A production of Graham Blanchard Incorporated. I'm Audra Haney and you're listening to an interview with Charissa Kolar, titled: "When Infertility Shows Up, is God Still Good?" For today's show notes, transcript, and more information about Your Newborn Promise Project, please visit GrahamBlanchard.com.

Many women struggling with infertility, dread mothers day. Charissa Kolar, one of the coauthors of Your Newborn Promise Project was no different. But she also says, that was the day God broke through and changed her pain into a plan. According to the CDC, there are 7.5 million women in the US struggling with infertility. However, as you'll here Charissa share next, it's easy to also feel alone. We pray that if you are struggling with infertility, you'll dedicate this precious time to soak up her words of experience, wisdom, and home. We think the words the Holy Spirit has given her for this episode, have the potential to be perspective changing, and therefore, life transforming. And so we pray that you will enjoy her beautiful monologue.

Charissa Kolar: We were just following our plan. We went to college, we got a career started, found a great church, had some close Christian friends, got married, and then bought our first home. So having a child was just the next natural progression on our to do list, time in life. I had become more and more curious about what it would be like to have a baby, what it would feel like growing inside of me, delivering a baby, and was just become almost like so aware. Once that was settled into my marriage that my body had this amazing capacity to give life, and I just really had this desire in me grow and grow. I just thought, "This is something I really want to experience."

I think from a practical level, we didn't really have a bunch of peers that had children. We didn't have a lot of coworkers that had children, we were pretty isolated in that. As part of our getting married in our church, premarital counseling type program, we had to serve in kids ministry, which was very clever of our church. We got to see this whole parent child dynamic up close and personal. When you're in the kids classrooms, you really work hard to try to make a connection with the kids and make sure they're having fun and learning about Jesus, but when you see from an outsiders perspective, the parent child relationship that happens during drop off and especially the pick up time, that really spoke to us. The kids would see their parents and run to the other end of the room, "Momma, Momma!" And you would think they'd been separated for a very, very long time, even though it's maybe been an hour. And the kids are just so thrilled to be back with their parents. You can see the parent's face light up and as you watch that tangible parent child bond and their great love for one

Need Help? <mailto:support@rev.com>
[Get this transcript](#) with table formatting

another, it really created a desire in us to have that kind of unique connection with a child of our own.

I wasn't worried right away. Then, I started taking an informal poll from the people who we know. As I looked around, I could see other couples that got married around the same time that we did and I asked them, "How long did it take you to get pregnant?" And often times they would say, "Well it didn't happen the first month, it happened the second month." I thought, "Wow, okay. That was really fast." But I never heard anyone say that it took more than six months, and we were getting there. I started getting a really sinking feeling. It was dawning on me, we might have some really serious issue. My playing it cool and not trying to get worried or maybe not face the fact that I wasn't in control anymore, for regular pregnancy wasn't going to happen for us, I just really had no idea what laid in front of us.

Once I started that comparing of what was the normal amount of time to conceive, all these facts were piling up in my mind and had to face the fact that everyone I knew who got married in the past three years, either had a baby in their hand, or they were already pregnant. I just looked around at them and I'm like, "It's us. We're the last ones here." The other measuring stick we had was that my husband was in graduate school at this time. So he was in school with a lot of other people around our same age, and a couple of guys specifically he was tracking through the program with.

So when we went out to dinner with these two couples, and before we had even ordered, one of them said, "We're pregnant. We're expecting our first baby!" And they were just so excited. And then that other couple shouted out, "We are too! We're so excited. We weren't going to say anything, but since you did." And they just went on in their joy and I thought I was going to suffocate. I was sitting there going, "Oh my gosh. I have like two hours in front of me." [inaudible 00:06:11] captive audience at this table listening to all the joy and excitement and everything I had been hoping for. And it was also confirmation. Those were the last two people I knew that weren't pregnant. It was overwhelming.

I was at the place now where there was so much emotion involved and so much despair and so much head knowledge, it was just becoming harder and harder for me to control my thoughts or my feelings and put on a happy face and enjoy other people's news. I was drowning at that point.

Trying for a baby, having sex, was completely tied now to this one outcome. To conceive a child. Once this had happened for us without any results, it definitely removed all of the romance from the process. In fact, it was starting to really become, in my mind, a set up for failure. Sex, intimacy, equaled my inability to conceive a child, which equaled frustration and disappointment. I think I have control, because other people are doing the same thing and they're getting some result, but we're not. It just added so much pressure in the marriage and sadness where there should be joy and connection.

Then I also wondered, beyond that physical romance happy connection, from a mental place and thinking down the road, I started to have questions. If I can't conceive, is that a deal breaker for us? Do people divorce over that? Or do they stay married but they secretly resent that they got into this infertile situation that killed their dreams? They wanted to be a dad or see their own child being birthed one day. Then I started wondering, how big of a problem could this become? What are the other ramifications? Now, my mental, emotional, relational concerns had all just expanded into this big, looming, fear.

After about nine months now, everything came to head for me on Mothers Day. We were driving to church in the morning and I just had all this stuff in me. All this emotions in me, all these fears in me, and I just kind of started pouring my heart to Rob as he was driving. I was saying things to him like, "I'm not sure I've ever been this low, I don't know what's going to be in front of me medically, I don't even know if this is gonna result in anything, and I just don't even know if I should be in church on Mother's Day." I got out of the car just feeling so isolated in my pain, and we went into church and we sat pretty near to the front. Then the pastor got up and he gave a sermon on Hannah and her infertility. And I just started to cry. I'm not a crier. I know that's not always the normal, girl, female thing, but that's just how I'm wired.

So I'm crying. In church. He goes on to talk about Hannah and her husband Elkanah. As she was explaining to him how she felt, so sad, he really didn't get it and he said to her at one point, "Well, aren't I just enough for you? As your husband?" And I just cried more. And our thought, "[inaudible 00:10:21] can be really insensitive during infertility." And I just kept crying. I could tell the pastor was almost getting a little distracted from his sermon because he looked directly a few times. Which made me feel worse. I just really couldn't stop. And my husband gave me one of those side hugs, "You okay?" And his eyes said to me, "You're kind of making a scene, you're gonna get it together pretty soon, right?"

And I was just awful. It was like, this dam of emotions that I'd been carrying around for nine months just exploded. At the end of the service, we had the option in our church at that time to go into the back and receive prayer. The sweet assistant pastor just prayed over me and I don't remember his prayer, but I was able to gain some composure. And we left church and the whole day was just emotionally draining for me.

As the day went by and the evening came, I went out to run an errand alone, and when I came back home, I parked the car outside of our house and I didn't get out. I just sat there. And I wanted to be alone. I remember so clearly just feeling, I'm just completely cried out. There's nothing left. All of my emotions have been expressed and I just feel empty. As I sat there alone in the pure quite of my car, a thought just burst into my mind. And it was this: I have a special plan for your life. It was so clear. I wasn't sure in that moment if I thought that or if I heard it, and I literally looked around in my car. And all at once I knew instantly that God spoke to me. It was surprising, and thrilling, and humbling all at the same time.

I could remember two key moments in my distant past where that message, that exact message had been spoken to me, but this time, God spoke it directly to me. The first thing I thought was, "He sees me. God is real and I'm so honored that he just came that close to speak to me in my pain." It just made me so happy in that moment that he cared and then equally, the second thing I thought was, "This isn't just a statement, but this is also a question." He has a special plan for my life, but he's also asking me, "Do you want my special plan? Do you believe it? If you believe it, why are you acting like this?" And it was so awesome and special and I thought, "God has a special plan for my life. Of course I want God's plan for my life. And he sees me and he spoke to me and I have no business acting like this any more. I'm never gonna be this low."

It's so funny because when God speaks to you, and it doesn't happen all the time, I know that, but it's reassuring and yet it doesn't answer all of your questions. In fact, it often raises other questions. God said, "I have a plan, and it's a special plan for you." He didn't say, "Here's the plan." And go on and tell me it. And he didn't say, "Yes. You're going to have a baby, and it's going to happen like this." No. I didn't know anything more specific about my child bearing future than I did the five minutes earlier, but I did know I was convinced that whatever God had for me, that his plan is best and it's the one I should desire. That's not just true for me, but that's true for every child of God because we're all unique with a calling just from him that will fit our individual personality, our gifts, talents, interests, and we are who we are for his purpose. Each of us can only fill our own destiny, and nobody else's. God holds out a life for us, and we need to remember to desire him with all our heart and soul, mind and strength. And that's what I needed to hear, and that's what I heard in that moment.

Audra Haney: You are listening to the Newborn Promise Podcast. A production of Graham Blanchard Incorporated. We are talking to the coauthor of Your Newborn Promise Project, Charissa Kolar, about her struggle with infertility. At the very point Charissa hit rock bottom with her infertility, she shares that God changed her pain into a plan. Charissa shared with us the practical steps she took to trust God and the plan he had promised.

Charissa Kolar: So the scripture that I always associate with that word is Ephesians 2:10 and it says, "For we are God's workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus to do good works which he as prepared in advance for us to do." So preparing in advance, by the very definition, is a plan. This scripture always made me feel grounded that clearly God had a purpose for my life, and in face a plan. Because infertility was not my plan right then. But here, God gave me a word, and he has a special plan. In fact, he described it as he has good works, good works, which he's prepared already in advance for me to do. That word right there was very reassuring for me. That was an anchor scripture and one I never lost sight of the whole time.

Secondly, God brought me into community that I really needed. I was getting my hair done about every six to eight weeks, and my friend and hair dresser

would have the infertility status update conversation with me, and she would always say the same thing at the end, "You should try my women's prayer group. We meet every other Friday and it's so good. I know you'll get a lot out of it. We can pray for you." Honestly there were a lot of times she made that invitation and I didn't go. But now, my pain had gotten to the place where I was more open to trying some new things. So I gave up my right to be lazy after a long week on a Friday night and try this women's prayer group.

I didn't know it at the time, but looking back, this was a huge fork in the road for me. This was one of those life changing type of decisions. We would talk about issues in that group and spend significant time together and it felt like a support group. The women that were in there were really dealing with significant things. There was one other young wife in there who just had a baby and she had been through a long season of infertility, and that was really comforting. She knew well what I was, had someone right there who understood what I was walking through. The other women in there were facing real life crisis's too. I was in awe at these people. What they were facing, what they were carrying around on a daily basis and how they were coming together each week praying with fervor to God to intercede in their circumstances and give them direction.

They really taught me a lot about the Christian walk. Every time we came back together, God had some kind of break through or some kind of situation or circumstance had advanced in at least one or two people's lives in the group. I was able to see how God works and how he answers prayer and that really built my faith. I started to develop a really strong faith. It's something that I've gone on to mimic and maintain and have even kept the relationships from this original group over all the years. This community was another really important aspect that was encouraging me and just week by week honestly through the whole rest of the infertility and beyond.

In our book, Newborn Promise Project, there's a chapter called, Remember. They point you to remember or think back to your family history and then to remember that when you're a Christian, the people in the Bible are also your heritage too. There are our Christian ancestors, our shared history. We should draw comfort from them.

This was really true for me too. I love that the Bible includes stories of women who have struggled with infertility. In the Old Testament there's Elkanah and Hannah, there's Sarah and Abraham, and the Shunammite women. Of course, Zachariah and Elizabeth in the New Testament. I feel like when we look at their stories, you can see that the period of infertility was God's way to capture their attention and to signify, "I'm doing something not ordinary here." Hannah goes on to birth Samuel the priest, prophet and last judge of Israel who leads the people well and goes on to anoint the first King Saul, and then David. Sarah and Abraham have Issac who's the promise to start the nation of Israel and fulfill that promise to Abraham. Zachariah and Elizabeth of course have John the Baptist who makes the way to Jesus. It's interesting to me to see how much

purpose there was in God's plan for both the mother and the sons that they went on to birth, albeit later in life than they had expected to give birth.

So some of these, Hannah and Elizabeth, they're pretty well known Bible stories, but a story that I had not really heard prior to the time of my infertility, was that of the Shunammite Women. Her story is in Second Kings, chapter four, and it goes that the Shunammite woman was married but did not have any children. When the prophet Elijah came to Shunan, she urged him to come into her home and cook for him. He began to just stay with them whenever he was in that region. Then she went to her husband and said, "Let's add onto the house. Let's build a room up on the roof with a bed and a table and a lamp so that when the holy man of God comes, he has a place to stay." And they did it.

One day, Elijah was there and asked to speak to her. He said to her, "Is there anything that I can do for you? Can I speak to someone for you? What can I do? You've been so gracious to me." Her reply to him was basically, "I'm fine." In the text she says, "I have a home among my people." Like, what more could I want? So Elijah asked his servant, Gehazi, for an idea and said, "What can I do for her?" And he says, "Well, her husband is old and she has no son." So Elijah prayed for her and then he tells her his prayer, and within the next year she becomes pregnant and delivers a son.

When my pastor preached the story, he really pulled out that of course in that society and in that day, her barrenness would have been disgraceful personally for her. And having an older husband, he could pass away and if she didn't have a son, that could possibly be an uncertain future for her. This woman, though she would have a societal pressure and maybe even just a pressure about her future going forward, she had contented herself so much working and serving God, that she did not even ask Elijah for a prayer to become a mother. It was not on her mind. It was not her present, regular thought. That really encouraged me. It reminds me of the scripture Matthew 6:33 where God says, "Don't worry about what you'll eat or you'll drink or you'll wear, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things will be given to you as well." I wanted to be like her that I was serving God and busy doing the things I was supposed to do in my life so that this was not so on my mind but to let God's plan play out.

So I drew from this that if I could seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, then I would be conquering my fertility from becoming an idol in my life. It could have consumed all of my thoughts, all of my emotions, all of my choices, all of my conversations. But we're commanded in the Bible to have no other God before our God. Prior to my Mothers Day experience, I would say that I had turned my infertility into an idol. But now, I was in this new season and although my pain was real and every single day I woke up with a burden in my heart that I really wanted to become a mom and I didn't know whether or not that would happen, or how, my experiences with God were also real and he was being very faithful to me, teaching me, and leading me. In this regard I was very encouraged by my sisters in Christ and the Shunammite Woman who had

opened her home to Elijah and was just busy serving God and not despairing about missing her motherhood.

I would really encourage everyone, but especially a woman in this season, to search the scriptures, attend church, and listen to those sermons. Take Bible studies. Create opportunities in your life to draw from what God has already recorded in the Bible. God will speak to you in a very personal way when you seek him. That will sustain you so personally like nothing else.

I started seeking medical health. First at the gynecologist. They do some low level interventions to try and increase your probability of ovulating and conceiving. We did that for about three months and then they referred us to the infertility specialist. That's a process that starts with various screenings and tests to help you identify what's your issue or what's your particular obstacle. So Rob was checked out and he's healthy, there was no male issue. I was a problem. Mostly age related. Fewer eggs, lower quality eggs, and when you're in that situation it's just so much more difficult for you to have a spontaneous pregnancy.

They did their first round of IVF on me in January. After taking fertility medications and shots, you have an ultrasound and they see how many eggs your ovaries are producing. So potentially they want to go forward and draw them out, put them in a Petrie dish, add your spouse's sperm, hope they're gonna do the tango and turn into embryos, that's the hope.

So after my first round of drugs, they said, "[inaudible 00:28:24] is typically looking to draw out about 10 eggs to start the process, that's kind of our minimum." I had produced, one. To which they said, "That's really not enough to continue the IVF protocol so we're going to cancel it at this stage. And by the way, I'm not really sure you're a good candidate for infertility treatment at all."

If I had not been in community with the women I was in and seeking God and being sustained the way that I was, that would have been pretty devastating news. But because of the place I had put myself in, I was able to receive that news and say, "Well maybe, but God." I just wanted some time and go and pray about it and see whether that was confirmed for me. And if the door was gonna close, then I was gonna be okay because I knew God was gonna open up some other avenue where he did want to direct me and did want to take me in that other direction closer to his plan.

But, instead, I felt like God brought some other things to my awareness and one of them was that there were things that you can do that were not medical that can help increase your medical results. One of them was stress reduction. Right around the time I became aware of that, there was an opportunity at my job, my boss at work called me in and said, "You know, we have just been going so hard for so long with all these projects, and the next few months we have really no events, no travel we have to go to, no major deliverables, and you've really accumulated a lot of leave on the books. This would be a really good time for us if you would like to go on vacation."

I just smiled. I thought, "God, you're so incredible." I don't even have to go to my work and ask them, "Can I have time off? Like [inaudible 00:30:36] of six to eight weeks to do like a really long rest?" They came to me and asked me if I would like to do that. It was just so clearly God and such a beautiful confirmation. And so I did. I took a very long rest. At the end of my sabbatical, as I call it, my unofficial sabbatical, I went through a full round of IVF treatment in September to which we harvested good eggs that became good embryo that went back and in October I had my first positive pregnancy test, and in July I delivered my first child, my son Jackson.

There is no question that I was a changed person because of this journey. I faced the fact that I was not in control of my life the way that I thought I was before. Though I'm not in control, I do have free will. When I use that free will to surrender my life to God's leading, and go after him, I discovered I can trust him and in the process I gained some very close spiritual friends and mentors and people that really helped me discover how to develop a deeper faith than I had ever experienced before. I fell in love with the practice of searching the scriptures, receiving teachings from my pastor at church, going to Bible studies, and praying. I kept a prayer journal during this time and I wrote down my prayers and I wrote down the answers to my prayers. Just seeing that evidence now, week after week and month after month was so exciting. It was a really tangible record of all the ways God was working in my life.

To be honest as my pregnancy went on as I got to month six and seven and eight, I started almost mourning what had happened in the past few years and I thought, "I wonder if I'll ever be as close to God again. I have been clinging to God daily for a really long time to sustain me and now my dream is here." And I was wondering, I almost mourned the loss of that infertility period because it helped me know God on a level I just didn't know him before. I would tell people that, that I was grateful for my painful season and that I would never want that to have not happened. It could have been anything. It could have been an illness, grief, financial struggle. For me, God just used the infertility that was there in my life and my decision to marry late and to start a family late, just used what I had. I just would never wish for that season to have not happened. It yielded fruit that still persists.

Well, after we had Jackson, we greatly loved being parents, and we also brought the first grandchild into our family on both sides. Frankly, there was just not enough of him to go around. We continued to have struggles getting pregnant, and there was no spontaneous pregnancy that is, and with the busyness of having a new baby and a toddler, I actually didn't try all the time to get pregnant. That is, I just took entire seasons off that I could just focus on my family and enjoy the marriage and not have the pregnancy and the medications and calendars and interventions and blood tests and all that kind of looming over us.

I was hoping that maybe we would have a miracle and have a pregnancy without any of that, but that didn't happen for us. I did again have a wonderful

support system around me and many good times with The Lord and some very specific confirmation and encouragement, but in God's timing he will bring it to pass.

So, we were able to welcome Zachary into the world a month after Jackson had turned five. We had struggled for a really long time to name him and even went to the hospital without any contenders. Then, when we were there, my sweet friend Julie said, "You know, the name Zachary means God has remembered." And immediately that fit for us. We feel like God never forgot that we wanted a second child and though the time between our two kids was pretty long, he did allow me to experience a whole second pregnancy and another birth. God was just very gracious to us with the birth of Zachary.

Consider whether your infertility is becoming an isle for you. If so, I want to start by saying I would encourage you to surrender it to God. Lay it down and ask God to lead you. Trust him. Secondly, I would encourage you to ask God, "Please lead me to a scripture that will help sustain me through the season." Let the Lord know, "I want to hear from you." Only God knows, you gotta remember this, only The Lord really knows where your path is supposed to lead. There are many roads to parenthood or to something other than parenthood. But whatever is the destiny that fits you best, that's God's plan for you.

Search out a growing Christian community that can feed you scriptural truth and have some people in there that are going through struggles as well. You need to find a place where other people are transparent, it allows you to be transparent in a healthy and nurturing environment where people are pointing you back to The Lord but they can really be real about, "We're going through some stuff that's really, really hard."

I think that when it comes to walking this, there's a whole range of ways husbands are supportive, understand what you're going through or don't understand what you're going through, and regardless of where you are on the spectrum of that, I still think it would be good for you to have at least a couple of women in your life that you could connect with about this whole thing. Because there's something about just another women who can wholly identify with that special heartache that you get about motherhood. It's something I think that ... Aspects of it I think men can't completely appreciate or understand what that ache is like or that longing to be mom. I think at least having a few women in your corner is really important as well.

I want to pray over these first, the Ephesians 2:10. Dear Lord, we just come before right now and I want to pray over all of these listeners, Lord, and I want to pray over them first Ephesians 2:10. For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which he has prepared in advance for us to do. And God, we acknowledge we are saved by grace. You did all the work. There's nothing we can do to earn our salvation. You made a way, Lord, where there was no way to over come sin and gain eternal life with you.

Now, through Christ we have the opportunity to do those good works and to do the Plan that you prepared in advance for each one of us to do. And I pray that each person listening to this broadcast will be reminded and encouraged, God has a special plan for your life and he will use all your heart's desires, your gifts, your talents, all your interests, to draw you closer to your destiny. I pray Lord, that these men and women would be able to surrender their pain and all the areas where they feel alone and all the places where there's just actually going it alone. I pray that they will begin to trust you and know that you are a good God with a good future for each person and that they will begin to hope in you because you are faithful and you will not disappoint.

Our God longs to comfort you and show you the way that you should go, and my prayer is that you will take him up on his offer and that you will follow him and discover his great love for you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Audra Haney:

Thank you so much for tuning into Charissa's amazing testimony today. And please remember to share it with your friends or family members who may also be struggling with infertility. Charissa is a regular contributor to our Graham Blanchard Blog and shares posts and insights on our Instagram and Facebook pages regularly, so please go check that out for more of her wisdom. And remember, you can get today's show notes, transcripts, and more information about Your Newborn Promise Project at GrahamBlanchard.com.