



Episode 3-12: Infertility

Resources:

Books

[Infertility - Amy Baker and Dan Wickert](#)

[A Shepherd's Look at Psalm 23 - W. Phillip Keller](#)

[Suffering is Never for Nothing - Elisabeth Elliot](#)

[Longing for Motherhood - Chelsea Patterson Sobolik](#)

Websites

[Faith Bible Seminary](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Welcome back. I am Janet, once again here with my faithful co-host, Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hi, friends.

Janet: And a special friend to me, Ali Engle joining us today. Ali, I've known for, we were just discussing, you've been married almost five years, right? And we got to know each other maybe a little bit before you were married.

Ali: Yeah.

Janet: But not a whole lot. And then Ali and her husband were part of our seminary cohort, so we got to know her there. Since then, they've graduated, moved on to ministry and Ali's gonna talk to us about a subject that is near and dear to her heart this season. God is given and entrusted to Ali and Jonathan the painful road of infertility. But she's learned a lot and I've been encouraged by her walk and I wanted her to share that with some of you. So, to get us started, can you, who are you and why should we care about anything you have to say?



Ali: Well, I'm not sure if you should except for that hopefully the Lord is gonna, you know, use this to encourage someone.

Janet: That's right.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Ali: So like Janet said, I'm Ali. I have been married to Jonathan, my husband for almost five years. Jonathan graduated, like Janet said, from Faith Bible Seminary in 2019. And we were also talking before this about how if it weren't for Faith and for the Aucoins, I probably would not have ever met Jonathan because he lived in Pennsylvania and then the only reason he came to Indiana was because of seminary.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And that's where I was living. And so when he moved out here, we connected and started dating, and then we fell in love working at the community center on Friday nights.

Janet: I mean, what better place.

Jocelyn: Everyone's favorite place to fall in love.

Ali: We joke about that a lot actually. But yeah, we've been married for almost five years. Like I said, we are in ministry. Jonathan is the youth pastor at Harvest Church in Carmel. We've been there ever since Jonathan graduated. So that's three and a half years.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And we have loved it. We love our church. We have awesome kids. I'm sure every youth pastor probably says that, but I really think ours are.

Janet: But yours are true.

Ali: Yeah. And it's been so good. And it's really cool to think about how God knew what we were gonna be walking through before we did. And how when we were praying about where we were gonna end up after Jonathan graduated. We didn't even know what we were gonna need. But being on this side of it, we can see how God has provided so much in so many people that have walked faithfully and really lovingly alongside us in this season. And I'm thankful for that. So that's what Jonathan does. I was a teacher for six years and I was teaching when Jonathan was in seminary. And then I stopped teaching a couple of years ago after realizing I just don't really wanna do this for the rest of my life. And I just figured I would stop teaching when I got pregnant because in my mind, like that's what everyone does.

Janet: Right.



Ali: And when.

Janet: And then you didn't get pregnant.

Ali: And then I didn't get pregnant. And so after wrestling with that for a while, Jonathan, very lovingly. My last year teaching, he kind of stepped in and I'm so thankful, and it wasn't in a domineering way or anything. He just said, I think this should be your last year. I think you should be done. And I was so relieved.

Jocelyn: I love having a husband who leads.

Ali: Yeah.

Jocelyn: It's so helpful.

Ali: Yes. I was so full of relief. I cried and I was like, thank you. Because he just told me, he's like, Al, you don't have to be pregnant to be done teaching. And so I stopped and it's been awesome. And now I do ministry stuff with Jonathan. I'm on our teaching team for women's Bible studies at our church.

Janet: Which would be a lot harder to do if you're working full-time as a teacher.

Ali: Oh, for sure. I would've never been able to do it. And I find a lot of joy in teaching in that capacity and really involved with our students. And we've been involved with some counseling and yeah, that's what we do.

Jocelyn: Awesome. So how has your infertility journey impacted your relationship with Jonathan? Are there any specific temptations a woman should be aware of regarding her marriage relationship, when this is a part of your story? What was difficult at about it? What has been helpful and encouraging truth to guide you as you seek to deal with infertility and strengthen your marriage at the same time?

Ali: So I'll give a little bit of background for where we're at in our situation because infertility can look really different for a lot of different people. So Jonathan and I started trying to grow our family in 2020, which as I think about that, people think about 2020, like, boo. That was the worst because of the pandemic. But for Jonathan and I, it, you know, was hard for a lot of other reasons.

Janet: Right.

Ali: So we started trying in January and honestly, I thought it would happen pretty smoothly because, you know, you really just think about the wife's side of things. Like, well I've, you know, my body has been really regular. I've never had any problems. Everything is.



Janet: Everything's working well.

Ali: Yes. Everything that has ever, you know, at like a pre-pregnancy appointment I had, everything looked really good and so I just was like, whoa, well here we go. This is so exciting. And after about nine or 10 months of things being super regular, and I knew everything was working the right way, I just started feeling like maybe it wasn't all okay. And I don't know if that was me trying to control things and being fearful or if, I don't know if I just, I don't know, maybe the Holy Spirit was prompting me to ask questions. But regardless, I went to the doctor and I asked my nurse practitioner, I was like, you know, I know it hasn't been a whole year, cuz that's typically what they tell you.

Janet: Yep. Wait a year.

Ali: To wait a year. And I said, you know, I just wanna make sure that everything's okay. Is there anything that we should be looking for or doing? Just like a preliminary thing. And she said, well, we can test your hormone levels, we can do that. Check your thyroid. And she said, and we'll check your husband as well. And so I was like, okay. So all of my tests came back great. And I was so excited. And Jonathan and I were very taken aback when his came back not good. And she actually suggested that we get Jonathan tested again.

Jocelyn: Wow.

Ali: To make sure because his like count in his test was zero. So like no sperm.

Jocelyn: Wow.

Ali: Which is very rare.

Janet: Right.

Ali: We've learned. So we got Jonathan tested again, and sure enough, the second analysis came back as zero again. And so we were shocked, you know, you don't really expect you to be the couple that has issues. And then you mostly expect it to be on the wife's end of things, right? Because she's the one that has the baby and carries it, and all of that. So we were kind of at a place of what do we do? What do we do? Can you fix that? What caused it? And so we started down this process of trying to figure out why and what caused it and can we fix it? And so in 2021, that was the whole year of trying to figure out what was going on.

Jocelyn: Yep.

Ali: And also being a little shell shocked, you know, and it, a lot of times that year it felt really surreal. Like, wow, can we wait? Can we, can we not have kids? You know, it was kind of where we were at. And so we went to a couple of different doctors. Jonathan had more testing done



with the urologist, and we, you know, they, when you get that diagnosis, at first, when they find no sperm, it's either because something's in the way and it's blocked.

Jocelyn: Oh.

Ali: Or it could just be a genetic thing. Some men that have that, they've had chemotherapy and it has caused things to stop working, which Jonathan had never experienced. So we went through all that testing. There was nothing blocking it. He had no genetic abnormalities. Every test came back perfect.

Jocelyn: Wow.

Ali: Which was very confusing to us. And so after that, we were given a couple of options that were either extremely expensive or for us personally, we didn't feel good about proceeding in that way because there are, because of science and things, there's so many options now.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Ali: But just because you can do them doesn't necessarily.

Janet: There's a lot of ethical concerns.

Ali: Exactly.

Jant: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: So a lot of decision making. After a while we went to a more holistic doctor, which really helped us a lot actually. And he was a believer, the doctor is a believer, and after seeing him for about a year, we got to the end and it hadn't worked. Jonathan got tested again and it was still zero.

Jocelyn: Whoa, that would be so defeating.

Ali: It was. And so we kind of came to this place of, okay, so what do we do? So back this summer, Jonathan had a procedure where you can actually, you know, go in and check and is there anything there? And if there is, what can we do with it? Can we freeze it? Can we do all these things? So that was at the end of July and after like praying, you know, and asking the Lord, we know that this may not have fixed things and we know that we could go in and find something, but we also know there's a very real chance that we'll go in and not find anything. So, Jonathan had it, like I said, at the end of July, and there was nothing in there that was viable.



Jocelyn: Oh.

Ali: So we, but even after that, the doctor said, well, you know, there still could be some, somewhere in there. We could do this other really expensive procedure and see, and at that point, Jonathan and I were, we decided to move on and kind of came to letting go of having biological kids. So that's where we're at. That's our journey. And you know, that was the really fast version. There's a lot in there, and it's been almost three years. But that's where we've been and where we still are. You know, I think we can kind of look to others as hope where it's like, oh, they have exactly what, what I have or my husband has. And now look, they have all these kids, but I, you know, I'm coming to the table of like, I'm still in this. And in the end, we didn't get what we had initially wanted.

Janet: Right.

Ali: But in that has come a lot of growth and a lot of working through things. And my relationship with the Lord is so different than it was in 2020 and I'm really thankful. But it's been a lot of, not pretty moments, getting to this point. But as far as how it's affected Jonathan and I in our marriage, our relationship at the beginning of all of this, we met with a pastor and his wife on staff at our church. And this is one of the amazing ways that God provided for us in that on our staff, there's a couple that struggled for many years with infertility.

Jocelyn: That's a blessing to have.

Ali: Yes. And again, one of those things we didn't know that we needed that. And they've walked really lovingly with us as a couple that can totally understand.

Janet: Right.

Ali: And which the Lord didn't have to do. You know, we could have been somewhere where no one understood and no one had ever struggled, and that would've been enough. But the Lord's been kind in the people that He's provided. But our pastor said to us, infertility will either drive a wedge between the two of you, or it will grow you closer and it will strengthen your marriage. And Jonathan and I did not want it to put a wedge between us.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Ali: And by the Lord's grace, I really can see ways that we've grown closer and my love for Jonathan has deepened in ways that I didn't know that it was going to or that it even could, cuz when you get married you're like, how can I love you even more? How can I love you even more than I do today? And you don't really think about heartbreaking circumstances being what deepens the love for your spouse. But that's what we have found with each other. And I'm really thankful. I think as, I don't know if it's, it could just totally be me because, you know, I'm a sinner and.



Janet: No way.

Ali: I am an emotional one at that. And Jonathan is very steady. He's not as, he doesn't emote the same way that I do, which honestly I'm really thankful for because if there were two people exactly like me in our marriage, I'd be really.

Jocelyn: That could be some bad, bad valleys.

Ali: Yes. But at the beginning of all of this, I would often find myself feeling frustrated with Jonathan that he wasn't dealing with everything the exact same way that I was.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: That's interesting.

Ali: And to me, there were a few times where I'd be crying and he wouldn't be crying. And I'm like, well, you must not care if you're, you know, you must not want kids as much as I do. Or you must not be as sad as me if you're not crying and you're not handling things. Which was wrong. Probably pretty hurtful to him, which Jonathan has been very understanding and gracious and I'm really thankful for his patience with me. But that was something that I had to fight a lot, was comparing how we were dealing with everything and how we were grieving, cuz we were both grieving, but it looks different for everyone. And I was expecting that we would do it the exact same way, and I am really glad that we haven't dealt with everything the exact same way because he's really helped me in a lot of ways. And I think he would say that there have been times where I've been able to help him think about his feelings because he doesn't stop to do that very often. To think about his feelings and to let himself feel sad because I think it's, you know, he's expressed that, you know, you wanna be the strong one, you wanna be the leader, and you wanna be the shepherd. And it's like, well, I, I can't be sad because Ali's sad. But we have learned how to kinda let each other deal with our feelings in a way that we need to now when my feelings have trumped what's true, and I have handled my feelings in a not very godly way, Jonathan is very lovingly pointed that out to me. And I'm really glad because I am really good at throwing pity parties and sitting in it. And staying there because it's easier, you know? And I'm really thankful for the moments that Jonathan has pointed out truth to me and what's true about the Lord. I think another temptation that I have experienced in it is pulling away when I feel sad. And I think it has a, it has come up in marriage, but also in my relationships with my friends that when I feel sad, I can withdraw, and that's been something that I've had to fight as well because when I withdraw by myself, I'm left to my own thoughts.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Ali: Which is a scary.

Jocelyn: That's dangerous.



Ali: It's a scary place to be.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Ali: And you know, you can justify so many things that you're thinking and you can sit in it way too long and not, not line up what you're thinking to scripture. And so I think that has been helpful where Jonathan is really good at helping me think, help me deal with what I'm thinking, but then reminding me of what's true. And so, but my temptation has been to withdraw from him, from other people.

Janet: So a couple of things that I'm hearing you say though, that I think are really valuable. My story is not about my story today, but mine was very different. We lost several children before my first, but a similar thing as far as learning that it's okay that even though you love each other and you love God and you love the idea of a family, what you're going through is not exactly the same.

Ali: Right.

Janet: And it's not. And that was a difficult thing. I think it's really good for us to recognize just because he was responding differently and maybe even thinking differently about it. For instance, and I'm totally making this up, he may be thinking, well, as long as we end up having a child to raise, I don't care if it comes outta my body. For you, it might have been more painful that it didn't like, and that's not right or wrong. It's just a different experience. So I think part of what you're saying is your relationship has grown closer as you've learned how to love each other and help each other, not expect each other to be feeling and thinking and having the very same experience.

Ali: Right.

Janet: That's actually a blessing because when he's struggling, it might be over something a little different than what you struggle with, and you get to help him. And when you're struggling, he gets to help you. And then it does bond you closer where the alternative is to sit in judgment of each other because you're doing this differently.

Ali: Right.

Janet: Than each other.

Ali: Right.

Janet: So I love that.

Jocelyn: I think that's where the wedge would come in.



Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Where you say because it's not the same as me like obviously our relationship doesn't matter.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Or it's impacting our relationship.

Janet: You can't really understand me then.

Jocelyn: Right.

Ali: Yeah. You can't help me.

Janet: Right.

Ali: And there were moments where I would feel bitter towards him.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And, you know, you don't understand what I go through every month and you don't know what this is like, and you're so lucky, you're a guy and all of these things. And I, for a while, I think I assumed it's harder for me. And so I focused a lot on myself and how I was feeling and how sad I was.

Janet: And thought that he should focus on that too.

Ali: Yes. And I've realized, especially in the last several months, I have felt really convicted about, you know, I've spent so much time feeling sad about how sad I am, but how could I have loved Jonathan better over the last few years if I would've stopped and gotten my eyes off of myself and asked him more frequently? Because we talked about how he felt. It's not like we ignored it.

Janet: Sure.

Ali: But how different could things have been? You know, you can't go, I can't go back and change things.

Janet: But we can just keep learning.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Ali: Exactly. I wish I would have been more intentional about meeting Jonathan where he was at and asking him how he's doing and seeking ways to comfort and love him instead of expecting him to always be that for me.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And I also think you're talking a lot about something that we've talked about in previous episodes of like the value of your marriage being a safe place where you can be authentic.

Ali: Yes.

Jocelyn: And not, not be like, have your sinfulness welcomed, but authenticity in the struggle. And then have your marriage be a safe place where you can work through those struggles together. It's such a valuable thing to have.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And I'm really grateful that you just played out for us how hard it is sometimes.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Authenticity looks different for people.

Janet: And if you think about it, you and Jonathan didn't take any classes to prepare for this. You prepared for ministry. There was, I don't think a thought in your head, how, what will we do if we find out that Jonathan's not able to have? I don't even think that was.

Jocelyn: How did you predict that?

Janet: Right, right, right. So it was a shock. You're both just growing because that's all any of us has to offer. But what I'm hearing is that in that nothing was perfect, but you did show each other a lot of grace and you're learning and through it your marriage is closer than it's ever been.

Ali: Yeah.

Janet: And I think there's great hope there. Yeah. Cause it's not like, because we, we knew exactly what to do and we handled it perfectly. It's because God is so gracious and I'm so, and I can tell you as one watching it, I feel like I've watched your relationship with God, like deepen in front of me and the way you speak about things is very different than the girl I met five and a half years.

Ali: Praise God.

Janet: Struggling with her classroom. If you remember when you were a teacher up here?



Ali: No, I do remember.

Janet: And I'm like, this is beautiful that I get to watch.

Ali: Yeah.

Janet: And of course it was hard and of course you weren't prepared so it wasn't smooth. But we just keep running to the Lord and we keep repenting as He graciously shows us. And we keep talking and working on that relationship. And what you're sharing with us is even in the middle of all of that, when we humbly keep going to the Lord and each other, the deepening there is a beautiful thing.

Ali: Yeah. Yeah. And something that we did, you know, that we decided to do. And this goes back to the withdrawing part. I think it's tempting that when you're walking through something that's really hard and that feels isolating, you know, infertility is lonely.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: Because it's not the norm. And a lot of times if people are struggling with it, they don't always talk about it, which isn't wrong. You know, everyone.

Jocelyn: Cause it seems like a little bit of an invasive topic. Like you're talking about very private parts of you.

Ali: Yes.

Janet: Right.

Ali: Yeah. And people have a lot of opinions about how to go about things.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And you shouldn't even be talking to people about it. But Jonathan and I, at the beginning of everything, we decided it's too hard to do it by ourselves. And it's been good for us to have people like, you know, like our pastor and his wife and people in our small group. And there have been people that are also, some of our closest friends have also walked through infertility. And it's been a comfort. But in that withdrawing, sometimes you forsake, you know, serving at church or being in a small group or, you know, being there and showing up and thinking of others. And I'm thankful for how Jonathan has shepherded me. You know, not only, yes, being a pastor is his job, so we couldn't have said no even if we wanted to, but I'm thankful for how he has shepherded me in that we're gonna keep, we're gonna keep loving people. We're gonna keep serving the Lord and we're gonna do it together and we're gonna press in and we're not gonna stop. And I'm really thankful for that because some of the most comforting and life giving



moments of infertility have come when I haven't wanted to engage with, like, I didn't feel like going to church or I didn't feel like going to small group, but we did. And the Lord used the people there to really comfort me.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: And to walk alongside us and I'm really thankful that, I think that's one of the things that has strengthened our marriage in the midst of this, is to keep serving and to keep loving others instead of totally withdrawing and keeping our eyes on ourselves because it's really easy to do.

Janet: Yep.

Ali: And I'm really glad that we didn't because not only has my marriage with Jonathan gotten sweeter and deeper, but my relationship with other people has gotten closer. Like, I feel like even with you, Janet.

Janet: I do too.

Ali: I feel like even though I lived here for a year and a half and you know, was rubbing shoulders with you a lot, I was just telling Jonathan the other day, I feel like I'm closer with Janet now than I was.

Jocelyn: Living far away.

Ali: Yeah. Yeah. Because Janet has been one of those people that I've talked to about this. And so I'm just thankful for how Jonathan's encouraged me to, and modeled for me, to bring people in and to not just try to sit and deal with my hurt on my own.

Janet: And I think that's another really important thing because, as you've already said, suffering turns us inward. So you and Jonathan could sit and just look at each other and you could, what it surfaces is, I don't, it's vulnerable for you to serve right now. Because what if you serve and someone says something really insensitive. And maybe cuz they have no idea. Maybe they meet you and say, do you have any children? And you just burst into tears. Like they have absolutely had no idea that was painful.

Jocelyn: No idea.

Janet: Or they say, how many years have been married? Why don't you have kids yet?

Jocelyn: Oh.

Janet: Or maybe they know and say, well get a fish. You know, and you're like, wow, that's incredibly insensitive. So if our goal is avoid pain, we will not get out there and serve, right? But when our goal is regardless of whether or not I have to be vulnerable, I will not get off mission.



Together, we will love other people and it's amazing how bonding it is for the two of you. It's certainly how strengthening and the Lord does come through and there will be times, there probably were times when people said or did things maybe inadvertently that caused pain, but avoiding pain isn't the goal.

Ali: Right.

Janet: Loving people is. And I love how God is deepening you guys in that through this journey.

Ali: Yeah. And that's something with loving people. We have met with our Soul Care pastor at our church a few times, and that is one of the things that he has said that has really impacted me because we were meeting with him to talk about like, well, what do we, what do we do? And when we're ready to start making decisions, how in the world do we do that? I don't know. And he said, when you make decisions, you have to make sure that you're being motivated by love and not motivated by fear. And that really stuck with me. And it's been interesting to see how that has applied to many other areas of my life than just making decisions. It's impacted my relationships with my friends who have, in the time that Jonathan and I have been trying to start a family that have gotten pregnant and had kids. And it has impacted, you know, in this moment, do I share, do I relate with this person in this conversation? You know, bringing up things that God's been teaching me or do I just, you know, sit on that because I'm scared and I'm scared that if I do talk about infertility, they're like you said Janet, they're gonna say something that is hurtful.

Janet: Yep and they might.

Ali: Which they might. And people don't mean to, you know?

Janet: That's right.

Ali: That's something that I've had to work through a lot. Not holding that against people. People aren't out to get me. They're not out to inflict wounds upon me. But it is hard because you never know how people are gonna receive it. You don't know what they're gonna say. But that has been something that God has really used in my life. And I even find moments where I'm sinning where all of a sudden the Holy Spirit is like, you're being motivated by fear, and then I can say, I'm like, great. That's great.

Janet: So have there been any particular scriptures that have really helped or encouraged you in this season?

Ali: Many. As I was thinking about all of this, I started to feel a little overwhelmed cuz I'm like, can I just read everything.

Janet: The Bible.



Ali: Yeah. I don't have time . But I would say in particular, Psalm 23 has been something that's been really helpful for me. And I know you guys have talked a lot about Psalm 23 and even the book, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: That's been really helpful. And I think even just verse one, the Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: And what does that mean? And do I actually believe that? You know? And so that's been something that God has really used to both comfort and convict me because when I have, when I don't have. When I don't have what I want most, do I really believe that I still lack nothing? Because it feels like I'm lacking a lot.

Janet: Right.

Ali: And so going through that and just the comforting words of even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death and you know, even, even if I'm walking through the deep valley of infertility and childlessness, I don't have to fear.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: Evil. I don't have to fear being sad even though there are times where I do everything I can to not feel sad because it's not comfortable. But even when I'm deep in that I don't have to fear cuz the Lord is with me.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And the Lord's presence is better than someone saying just the right thing. And His presence is better than being a mom. And so I've really had to wrestle through that because even though I don't feel that all the time, I'm at a point now where I know it's true because I've seen it and I've seen His love towards Jonathan and I so much, actually even more in the last few years than I ever have before, which makes no sense, but because it's the Lord, it does make sense and it's upside down in His kingdom. So Psalm 23 has been a really sweet passage for me. Also, one that has stuck out to me is in Genesis 16, it's the narrative about Hagar. And I know, you know, I think it's easy sometimes to look at narratives like Abraham and Sarah and other people, even Hannah with Samuel in the Bible, and be like, well, they prayed and God gave them a baby. So He must, He must.

Jocelyn: That's how He operates.



Ali: Yeah.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: He must give me a baby.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: Because, you know, and, but you know, that's not the point. So when I say this, I'm not saying that the Lord is gonna provide in exactly the same way that He did for Sarah and Hagar, you know, whatever. But the narrative in Genesis 16 when Hagar flees from Abraham and Sarah because she's pregnant and did exactly what Sarah told her to do, and then got pregnant and then Sarah got mad at her.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And you know, here's Hagar, she's probably just like, well, I'm just doing what I'm told, and then ends up fleeing and she's by herself in the wilderness and she's just weeping and the Lord comes to her and you know, promises her things. You know, that I am not promised because I didn't have Ishmael and you know, a great, you know.

Janet: Right.

Ali: A great nation isn't gonna come for me, but He meets her there and she responds back and it's, you know, she says, surely you are the God who sees me. And that has been a huge comfort to me. When there are times where I'm like, God, You don't understand this. You know, people say, this is something I had to work through, where people say, and this is true, that God understands, He's been tempted in every way just as we are. Yeah, it was without sin, and He understands the longings of our heart. And there were times in the last couple years where I'm like, He doesn't understand what it's like to want to be a mom. He doesn't understand me.

Janet: Right.

Ali: But He has walked alongside people dealing with childlessness for a long time.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: Since Abraham's time. And that's been a huge comfort to me. And even though my situation is obviously very different than that of Hagar.

Janet: But He sees you.

Ali: He sees me and He has seen when I have felt left behind when everyone else seems to be getting pregnant. And He has seen, He has seen the moments where I have felt the most alone.



Janet: Yes.

Ali: And His presence and His nearness have been sweet to me in a way I've never experienced and I never would have.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: I never would've.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Ali: If He wouldn't have allowed this in my life. So Genesis 16 has been helpful and of course there are scriptures in the New Testament, thinking about James and what it says about being steadfast and then contrasting that with the man who doubts.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: Being tossed to and fro by the waves and being double minded. And I have come to the point where I'm like, Lord, I don't wanna be double minded. I wanna believe you.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And I wanna be confident in what you're doing in my life, even though I don't like it. And it doesn't feel good and it's hard and I don't understand so much of it. You know, even just looking at Jonathan's condition, we still don't know why and we don't know if that will ever resolve itself or not.

Janet: Yep.

Ali: And just being really thankful for how the Holy Spirit has brought the concept and the word steadfastness to my mind and my heart a lot in the last few years. And yeah, I think those are the most, the biggest passage and obviously the Psalms with understanding how to lament. I've never really been taught about lament. I honestly don't really think I had a theology of suffering before any of this. And that's been really interesting to see about myself and then to learn and how can I, being godly doesn't mean not being sad about anything.

Janet: That's right.

Ali: And I thought that, I think. So.

Jocelyn: I think godly people are pretty sad a lot of times. Like if you.

Janet: There's a lot to be sad about.



Jocelyn: If you understand what is going on in the world and what God would've wished we would've all done, there's a lot to be sad about.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah, and so just the Lord using His word to help me think correctly about life and suffering and our circumstances. I'm just really thankful for, His word is a gift. It really is. And in the moments where I felt almost resentful, I felt inconsolable. Like no one can say anything that's gonna make me feel better. And then there was God's word, you know? And it was exactly what I needed.

Janet: Powerful.

Ali: Yes, and it's better than being comforted by anyone else. And I'm really thankful. His word is a gift and I have grown to love it even more in the last couple years too.

Jocelyn: That's so helpful. What about books? Have there been any resources that you've used that have been really helpful for you?

Ali: Yes. Jonathan is an avid reader and that has been something that has rubbed off on me, in the last couple years I think. The book that has been the most helpful to me is a book called, *Suffering Is Never For Nothing* by Elisabeth Elliot.

Janet: Such a good book.

Ali: I had heard about Elisabeth Elliot and her story and how much loss she endured in her life, but I had never read anything by her or listened to any of her teachings that they've recorded. And I don't even remember where I heard about the book. I don't know if I Googled, you know, books about suffering. That's honestly probably what I did. And I ordered it and I read it and I read it so fast. It felt like there was, I just didn't know where to go, and so it felt really, it felt very comforting to read something from someone who's so well acquainted with suffering. And even though Elisabeth Elliot had never dealt with childlessness. She lost two husbands, and spent her life serving the Lord. And I appreciate how open she is about how hard it was.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: But also the truths that the Lord impressed on her through His word and the Holy Spirit and those around her, and I love that book. And there's specifically, there's a chapter in there about accepting our circumstances. That was so influential to me. It really convicted me because I think for a while I was resisting what God was giving me. I was trying to control things and I just wasn't, I was not okay with what God was doing. And she talks a lot about what it means to actually love the Lord. And that love always comes with sacrifice, which Christ modeled for us perfectly. And just a, you know, something that I've thought about in the last couple years is, do I



really love the Lord if I'm only happy with Him when I get what I want? Is that actually loving Him?

Janet: It's a really good question we all have to ask.

Ali: So that book really helped me with all of that. And I would say another one is called *Longing for Motherhood* by Chelsea Patterson Sobolik. And she is about my age, I think, and she also has dealt with childlessness. Her situation is different, but she like me, you know, will never as, you know, unless the Lord does a complete miracle, which He could do.

Janet: Right.

Ali: For Jonathan and I, she definitely will never be able to carry children. That's the way that her body was made. She literally can't carry kids.

Janet: Right.

Ali: But she wrote that book a few years ago and everything in it, pretty much I felt to my core. Like she understands. Not that I need to be understood.

Jocelyn: But it's helpful.

Janet: It's helpful.

Ali: But it's helpful.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Ali: So she laid out so many amazing truths in that book. There is a section about where real hope is found. That has been something that I've wrestled with a lot. Where do I put my hope and okay, when I'm responding this way, when I'm disappointed. I've been faced many times with my hope is not in the Lord.

Jocelyn: And it really shows you.

Ali: And I thought it was.

Jocelyn: It really shows you .Yeah. It really shows it, doesn't it?

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: And she talks about Christ and the Gospel being the only place where my real hope can be found, which seems really elementary, you know, I read that and I'm like, I feel like I should know that, but yet it's so easy to lose sight of in the midst of suffering. And so I really



appreciated that book and I think about it a lot. But there's a section in the book where she talks about the loss of biological children and her husband who they were engaged at the time, but it was when they were talking through, this will be part of our marriage. And she talks about being scared to tell him. And he said to her one time, and this has really stuck with me, is Jonathan and I have grieved the loss of having biological kids. Her husband said, I need to be more concerned with having kids that look like Christ than having kids that look like me.

Jocelyn: Wow.

Ali: And I was like.

Janet: That's powerful.

Ali: Oh my. And there have been so many things from that book that have really stuck with me, and that's one of them. And it helped me to have an eternal perspective on, not only motherhood, but just what? What is my life about? Ultimately, my life is not about being a mom. It's not about getting what I want. It's about loving the Lord and pursuing Him and relationship with Him and delighting in Him no matter what that means for me. Even if I don't get what I want. So those are the books that I would say have been the most impactful.

Janet: I love that. And I think as you described, I've read the first book. I've not read the second, but we'll have links for all of them in our show notes. Sounds like both of them. And I know the Elisabeth Elliot, it gets your mind exactly what you said, eternally focused. It's one thing to read a book that that would understand you, but just leave you with, they get how sad I am.

Ali: Right.

Janet: But it wasn't, it was I understand you and now let me take your eyes up.

Ali: Yes.

Janet: And let's go up. And that's where our hope is. That's really where the hope is gonna be in. So that's what I loved about Elisabeth Elliot's book, that suffering is never for nothing. And it sounds like this other book as well. So those will be great resources for our people.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: How would you say this season has impacted relationships with other people? Challenges/encouragements.

Ali: I think the challenges are, well, that pops into my head first, but what's been challenging in this season with relationships is probably when you see other people moving into a season of life that you long to be in.



Janet: Yes.

Ali: And feeling the pressure to just be so happy for people, which you are, but yet you're also at the exact same time, so heartbroken. And that's been a weird tension to live in. And again, I have felt tempted to withdraw from my friends who find out that they're pregnant and it feels, I have felt really lonely in this past year in those relationships, but it's not because of anything my friends have done. It's because I, there have been times where I just want someone to get it.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: And I, it's just hard to be happy when other people are getting pregnant and, you know, when you see announcements on Instagram and things like that. I think another challenge has been jealousy, which I don't even like to say out loud, but.

Janet: But we all.

Jocelyn: But it's true. It's true.

Janet: We might as well say it.

Jocelyn: We all deal with it.

Ali: And I don't wanna be jealous of my friends and just how this has brought out. You know, again, am I really, I really wanna love my friends and how do I do that while I'm also equally feeling this way and I'm really thankful that the Lord has given me friends that are Godly and that love me and that I'm able to talk to about this stuff, and that are sensitive to Jonathan and I. I'm really thankful for that. And one of the, I would say another challenge along with the withdrawing is that I have just pulled away sometimes and I wanna be alone and I don't wanna talk to anyone. And God has used my friends to be some of the most comforting people during the season. And I got to a point where I realized if I withdraw and pull away from all my friends, I'm gonna have no one left. And I don't want that because I had to come to understand most of my friends are probably going to be pregnant and they're probably going to have kids.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And if I try to find people that are in the exact same situation as me. I will have no one left.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Right.

Ali: And so the Lord has really helped me work through that. And something that's been really helpful in my relationships with my friends is just being honest and telling them what's helpful.



And sometimes they ask, you know, when people talk about this in front of you, how does that make you feel? And if I do end up getting pregnant, how do you want me to tell you?

Jocelyn: I was actually just wondering if you've had to kind of be proactive in communicating with your friends. Like, I'm going to be happy with you when you're pregnant.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Please don't. Please don't not tell me.

Ali: Right. Yeah. That's been one of the hard things is that, and this is no one's fault, no one knows how to walk through things like this perfectly. And that's something that God has taught me is just having grace with people.

Janet: Yes. We're all just figuring it out.

Ali: Yes. And people, it's hard and it can be tricky sometimes and there have been times where I feel like everyone is walking on eggshells.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Ali: Around Jonathan and I, and we actually were able to have a conversation with our small group because we're in a small group with a bunch of young married couples, who some are newly married and some are entering into the season where they're wanting to start a family. And we sat down with our small group one night and we told them, we want to be happy with you. We want to join in the conversations with you. Because I think sometimes when someone's dealing with infertility, you kind of wanna avoid talking about anything.

Janet: Anything with children.

Ali: Yes.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And so I started to feel kind of left out of some stuff, and I think it's because my friends were trying to love me and protect me.

Jocelyn: Protect you. Yeah.

Ali: But we ended up just telling them, you know, we wanna be part of it and we wanna be happy with you because we are. And so we have had to be proactive with our friends and something that I read from another woman who has dealt with infertility on her Instagram. She mentioned one time that she asked her friends when they find out that they're pregnant to just text her. I think we can feel like, well, this is a big deal. I need to tell them in person. But she explained that



asking people to text them was helpful because they still were included, but they were able to not have this pressure of responding a certain way when they found out the news. Because there have been situations where people have told us that they're pregnant and I'm really happy and there have been other moments where I've been told and I'm like holding back tears in front of them while they are excited.

Jocelyn: Yeah. And you have to fix your face and yeah.

Ali: Yeah. So that is something that I've asked my friends to do when I, you know, if I know that they're in the process of trying to start their family, I'll just tell them, I love you and I want to be a part of this, but when you find out, if you could just text me first so that I don't make you feel uncomfortable. If I'm crying because I don't want you to feel bad. I'm happy that you're pregnant and I'm glad that God has given you that gift, but I also, it's helpful to have that time to think about it and process it alone. So that if I cry, I don't feel bad about crying.

Janet: Yeah. And it gives you time too.

Ali: Yes, and then we can talk about it when I see them. And so that's been a helpful thing is just be honest in telling people what's helpful. But God has also been kind in giving me friends who are really good at being proactive towards me and asking me like, was that hard for you when they talked about that? Or, you know, I'll get a text. I have one friend in particular who is really sensitive about things like that in social settings, and often after coming home from a church thing or a thing with a bunch of our friends, she'll text me and say, I wondered if that was hard for you and if it was, I just want you to know that I'm praying for you and I love you and I'm really so sorry.

Jocelyn: That's so great.

Ali: And I've learned a lot from her.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: About loving people.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Proactively sensitive. Being sensitive, yeah.

Janet: And, but what you're describing, if you think about it, you could either get your feelings hurt that they, whatever happened, that she noticed happened, and then you could be bitter because nobody gets it and leave. Or you could be upset that your friends were rude enough to just say it and not even think about how hard it would be for you. Or you can in grace just



communicate. This is what would be helpful. This is what's not. So again, it's messy, but you're committed to loving each other. I love that.

Jocelyn: That's what I was just thinking, like, real life is messy.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Real life is not a Hallmark movie. Like real life is full of awkward conversations. Filled with God's grace.

Janet: You don't walk from them. You don't run from them. We just have them. And I love that example. You know, when I was pregnant with my second child, after all of the miscarriages, a very close friend of mine here in town got pregnant the very same time. So that's very fun. We already had kids a year apart. Now we were gonna have kids the same age, and then she miscarried.

Jocelyn: Oh.

Janet: And I did not that time. And I remember thinking, what do I do? I mean, obviously I was there for her when she miscarried, but like, what do I do now? Do I?

Jocelyn: Are you still happy?

Janet: I'm pregnant.

Jocelyn: Do you rejoice?

Janet: Yeah. Like every time she sees me is it a reminder? Yeah. I'm sure it was. What did we do with that? And when you were talking about showing the initiative. What she did for out of love for me was really amazing. But she showed up at my house, not long after it happened, so I was not that far along, but with a baby outfit and said, I'm giving you this and here's what I want you to know. We are gonna rejoice over this child, and we're gonna be excited that you're pregnant. And the gift that was to me, to let me know it's okay for us to talk, I'll start crying. It was so thoughtful of her in her pain. And I cried with her and she rejoiced with me. But had she not taken that initiative, that would've been really awkward.

Jocelyn: Yeah. It would've been.

Janet: Because how rude if I just act like gah, I mean, I don't even know what to, I really did not know what to do.

Jocelyn: You would've felt like you had to avoid her.

Janet: Yes. And I love her.



Jocelyn: Just being kind to her.

Janet: And it's like, um, so it is, you could say she's the one suffering. She should not have to be the one to take the initiative, and yet she did and it was beautiful and it was a gift that in her pain she gave to me. And that's what you get to do even in your pain when you lovingly let other people know how to love you instead of they don't know what to do.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And now you've told them, now they know if I get pregnant, I know what's most loving to Ali. I don't have to be like, what do I do? What do I do? I know. So it's not only a gift to you, that's a gift you give them.

Ali: And it was after spending a lot of time having unrealistic expectations of people that you should know exactly what's loving for me.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And what is so interesting about that is I haven't always known what's most loving for me because this has been new for Jonathan and I, and how unfair for me to expect everyone to handle everything perfectly and I would get so bitter and I, there was a lot of resentment that I carried in conversations with people or we would get home and I would tell Jonathan like, I can't believe that they said that. And it's like, well, they don't even know everything that's going on. And it's like, oh yeah. Oh, you're right. How can I be mad at people when they have no idea what's going on?

Jocelyn: I was actually just thinking about bitterness and how you would really have to root out bitterness as soon as you notice it because it this could take over your life is reminding me of our conversation with Pastor Viars when he was talking through bitterness with us.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I would imagine It's something you have to think about.

Ali: A lot.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: And over and over again, I had an expectation at the beginning of this, that once I worked through things, I expected it to be done. And now I don't deal with bitterness as often as I used to.

Janet: It's been great growth.



Ali: I mean, praise God. That is not for me because if this were all on me, I would be a bitter person, like a really bitter person. And I would probably just be in my house and never leave and never talk to anyone. But when I do feel bitter, I can confess it more quickly because I can see it more quickly now, and it's farther and fewer in between that I feel it. And then when I do feel it, that I sit in it. And I have also learned that when I do feel that way, I need to confess it to the Lord, but I also need to confess it to others. And when I start to feel bitter. Or when I start to throw a pity party, like I said, I'm really good at it. I will either text or call Jonathan and tell him like, I am feeling really tempted to be bitter, or I'm feeling really insecure in this friendship with my friend that is pregnant and I'm scared she's not gonna wanna be friends with me anymore because she's gonna gravitate towards other moms. So I'll tell Jonathan and I normally have a friend or two that I'll ask them to pray for me because I used to be embarrassed when I didn't handle things very well, which, okay, I guess I still am sometime, but the Lord has helped me to realize that I need people. I can't do this on my own.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: And people already know that I'm a sinner, so I don't need to hide it. Jonathan says, I already know the worst thing about you. Which is true. I'm a sinner. And so, I'm thankful that I have friends that I can be honest with and they lovingly remind me of what's true and then they pray and then they check in. Like I'm really thankful for the friends that the Lord has given me in this season.

Jocelyn: We have found it's way easier to deal with sin if you're less shocked every time you do it. You know, if we're just humble about it and be like, okay, I sin because I'm a sinner. I'm not gonna be quite so surprised every time it happens so that I can just deal with it. Right?

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Deal with it, move forward and think about the growth.

Janet: And it just, it's fun for me to listen to you, but think about the growth in your life that where no one enjoys telling everybody their sin.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: That's, of course not. But that your passion to want to do right has grown to the point where if I need to tell other people so that they'll help me to do right that's more important to me than hiding it from other people. And I love that. That's part of the growth that's come.

Jocelyn: So what advice would you have for those who are close to couples walking through infertility?



Ali: I would tell people, first of all, pray for your friends that are dealing with it. Nothing that you can say is going to ultimately fix everything. Christ is the only one that will do that.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: In the most loving thing that we can do for people who are dealing with childlessness is to intercede for them, and to ask the Lord to comfort them. I think another thing is be a good listener, and ask the Lord to give you discernment to know, is this the time that I should say something or is right now time for me to listen? Because there might be things that are true and that need to be said, but your friend may just be in a really tender moment where it may not be the best time to say exactly what they need to hear, even though.

Janet: Right.

Ali: They do need to hear it. You know, we always need Truth, and we just need a lot of wisdom. Really, with anyone that's suffering, whether it's infertility or anything else.

Janet: That's right.

Ali: Is that, I think sometimes we wanna be the person to say the right thing that's gonna help them, and they're gonna think I'm a good friend and they're gonna think I'm awesome,

Janet: Which makes it about me. Now I'm not really thinking about the other person anymore.

Ali: Right. And so I think to just ask the Lord for wisdom to know how to love them because what's comforting to me also may not be comforting for other people that are dealing with the exact same thing and everyone handles it differently and we really need to discern it from the Lord in comforting other people. I would also say that pointing people to what's true is always helpful.

Janet: Right.

Ali: I think there have been times where I think in an effort to comfort, Jonathan and I, people have maybe offered us hope where it's not like hope isn't found there.

Jocelyn: It's not founded. Yeah.

Ali: Whether it's something like, you guys would be such great parents. I really believe the Lord is gonna give you kids.

Janet: Yes, yes.

Jocelyn: You can't really bank on something that God hasn't promised.



Ali: Exactly.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Ali: And so, when you're talking to, or even praying for a friend that's dealing with infertility, remind them of what you do know to be true. I know that the Lord will never forsake you.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: I know that the Lord loves you and He will only act towards you in that loving kindness. I know that He is able and willing and wants to comfort you. And so to remind people of what God has already promised and not inserting things that aren't actually promises for people cuz we don't wanna give false hope.

Janet: That's right.

Ali: And we always want our friends to think accurately about the Lord and about scripture and sometimes when we want to comfort people, we say things that aren't true.

Janet: Which can reveal in ourselves in that moment, what I wanted most is for you to not be in pain. Sometimes cuz that's awkward for me. What I didn't want most is that you would be closer to Jesus.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Because that might mean pain.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: So what do I want most in that moment will determine what kind of comfort I give. And so it's a good reminder to us, we need to agree with God that what they need most is to be close to Him, not to have this situation gone.

Ali: Right.

Janet: Yeah. But you also mentioned, you know, the discernment. Ask the Holy Spirit and ask the Lord for wisdom because everybody's different. I would also say, ask them.

Ali: Yes.

Janet: You know, what's most helpful to you?

Ali: Yes.



Janet: Or when you made the comment, you know, when should I say something and when do they just need me to listen? I can remember when I was having one of my miscarriages and I was crying while I was doing dishes and Brent came up to me and he, cuz at first he was always trying to help, which I appreciate, but I didn't even always know why I was crying, so I didn't really need a counseling session. I just really didn't know. So he learned, he would look at me and say, is this where you need help and you wanna talk? Or do you just need a hug? And he would believe me. And sometimes I would say, I know my mind's going places it shouldn't. And sometimes I would say, I don't even know why I'm crying, that he just gimme a hug. But instead of him trying to figure it out, we could just ask.

Ali: Right.

Janet: You know, and we can do that. We can say, what's helpful to you right now? Would you like to talk? Would you rather not? I want to be helpful to you in a way that's helpful to you.

Ali: Yes.

Janet: And just ask.

Ali: Yes. I have felt the most loved by my friends when they have just taken the time to ask what's most helpful for me.

Janet: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Janet: And I think that takes pressure off us instead of feeling like you better figure it out. What does she want? What does she want? Just to ask.

Jocelyn: It probably opens up the conversation too, because what's most helpful for you right now may change over time.

Ali: Yes.

Jocelyn: And it may, that might look different in the future, but you have a conversation going about it.

Ali: Yeah.

Janet: Yeah. So how about as we see people, who are the ones wrestling with infertility, so, you know, if we're trying to help other people who are helping other people, we gave them some counsel. Now I'm looking at my friend who is wrestling with infertility. What do I do?

Ali: Well, first of all, I would definitely say again, pray for them.



Janet: Yes.

Ali: Because the Holy Spirit is the only one that's going to truly comfort and guide. I would say ask them what they need, whether that is prayer or advice, or there have been times where Jonathan and I either had an appointment and got results back that were discouraging, or I was just really sad and my friends knew and they would bring dinner over, you know.

Janet: Absolutely.

Ali: Or they would ask if I wanted to do something fun. And so I think just being willing to ask even if it's uncomfortable and you're afraid that it'll hurt them, just, I would rather someone acknowledge it and say something than say nothing at all.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So where are you now?

Ali: In my relationship with the Lord? Cuz I feel there are a couple different facets of that. In my relationship with the Lord, I, by his grace, again, this is not of me. Any progress or any growth that has come from me is from the Holy Spirit in me. Christ in me, not me, but when I think this was back at the beginning of this year, I was really wrestling with God's goodness and what that means. And I knew that God's definition of good was different than mine. But I didn't like that it was different than mine. So I was just really wrestling with that.

Janet: Yep.

Ali: And I don't remember if it was something that someone said or something I read, I don't remember, but I remember getting to a point where I had to ask myself, if I never have any kids, what am I gonna do? What is my life gonna look like if I don't have any kids? Or am I okay with that? What does that do to my relationship with the Lord? And I got to the point where I had to either decide I believe God's character and I believe what He says, or I'm gonna continue to live my life being upset and being mad that I don't have what I want. Yes, and continue to try to control things and strive after something that I have no control over. And ever since that point where I really, in my heart, I was able to confess to the Lord and really believe in my heart, God, if even if I never have any kids. In any way.

Janet: Right.

Ali: Biological, adopted children. Even if I never have kids and I'm never a mom, You are still good. And that's enough for me because going back to Psalm 23, if I lack nothing, then I can still live my life joyful and peaceful and believing that God is who He says He is. And for me, that was a big turning point when I got to the point where I could look at the Lord and say, even if this is all I ever have, and even if you take more from me, I believe you and I believe that what



you have for me is good. And also a lot of contentment came when I could look at our circumstances and look at Jonathan and say, even if it's just us for the rest of our lives, this is really good and I love life with you. Because I think for a while I was making Jonathan feel like he wasn't good enough for our life. And it's like, well, you have me, but if you don't have kids, are you gonna be happy with me? And we were able to talk about that. He lovingly brought that to my attention.

Jocelyn: That has to have helped.

Ali: And so once I got to that point where I could look at Jonathan and say, I love you. And if it's just the two of us for the rest of our life, this is fun and this is good. And we'll continue to serve the Lord and love people and love each other and it'll be great. And, but more importantly, when I could in my heart honestly say, God, if I never become a mom, that's okay and I don't always feel like that every single day, but I really do believe it. And I have to get my eyes off of myself and onto the cross and remind myself like, my greatest need has been met. And if my greatest need is met, then I have everything I need.

Janet: Yeah.

Ali: And that has been one of the biggest turning points in this whole process for me. So that's where I'm at personally. And again, it's a day by day thing. Just a couple days ago I had a really sad day and the grief doesn't just go away. And that's also something that's been frustrating for me because I wanna deal with it and move on and never feel it again. But it's not realistic and something else that our Counseling pastor talked to Jonathan and I about was living life with joy and sorrow at the same time.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: Like one hand is holding joy and one hand is holding sorrow, and that's how Jesus lived His life.

Janet: Yes.

Ali: And if Jesus lived His life that way, it's okay for me to feel sad about the brokenness that I'm experiencing.

Janet: Yep.

Ali: Practically where we're at with infertility is we've been looking at different options for adoption. There are a lot of different things that people can pursue, whether that's fostering or there is a ministry that our church participates in called Safe Families, where it's kind of a step between fostering and adopting where you have kids for a little bit, and then they go back with their biological families. And then there's traditional adoption. And for us, what we're walking



through right now is called embryo adoption, where you can adopt embryos that are, this is a sad way to put it, but leftover from people's IVF cycles. And you can adopt them and then they will transfer them into the birth mom and you can carry and give birth to your adopted babies. And that is something that Jonathan and I first heard about when we initially got our diagnosis when Jonathan was at a urologist appointment in January of 2021. We had never heard of embryo adoption before, and that piqued our interest. We were like, oh my word, you can do that. And after doing more research and finding out how many frozen embryos there are.

Jocelyn: There's a lot.

Janet: The need is great.

Ali: They're almost a million frozen embryos.

Jocelyn: It's a huge need.

Ali: In the United States, and everything on my end is healthy, and I'm able to carry a baby as far as we know. And so God put that in our brains almost two years ago. And then after we got our kind of final answer on biological kids, we both felt the desire to do embryo adoption. So we are pursuing that. Currently the place that we are going through is an organization that is owned by believers and they have, you go through the adoption process as well, like a home study and you match. And so that's what we're doing. We are in the beginning processes of that, but we are hoping to adopt embryos and maybe, hopefully be transferring an embryo in the next year, which feels crazy. And just because, you know, and I was talking with Janet a few weeks ago about being hopeful because after all of this, I feel afraid to be excited about things because we've just gotten bad news over and over again.

Janet: It's been such a rollercoaster.

Ali: Yes, but Janet encouraged me to be hopeful about what we know right now. Like what I know right now is that the Lord is opening this door for us to be stewards so that we can maybe give life to a baby that's been frozen for who knows how long, maybe 20 years, because they're not alive, but they are living sort of, they're just, their life is like frozen in time. But we're really excited about that and so right now we are hopeful and we're excited about the opportunity that God is giving us, even though we don't necessarily know how it's gonna end up.

Janet: Yep. But we know He is pleased with what you're doing and why you're doing it. And that right now has to be enough, which I love that you were willing to come on and share with us, when we don't have the answer. This isn't, and then look what the Lord did.

Jocelyn: Look what the Lord did.

Janet: Happily ever after.



Jocelyn: Yep.

Janet: It's, I'm trusting the Lord right now in this and that's what I'm, I am so grateful you were willing to come.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: In the process, not after. Well, thank you. I think everyone's looking at me, so I think this is outro time. So thank you for Ali. Thank you for Ali. Thank you for Ali. Thank you God for Ali.

Ali: Aw.

Janet: Let's try that again. Thank you Ali, for coming. This has been, I've learned a few things. I didn't know a lot of it. I've gotten to watch you as you journeyed, and it has been beautiful and I hope that your commitment to trust the Lord in the middle of things that are hard, without the bow on it yet at the end, can be an encouragement to many other women dealing with all kinds of different things where they're in the middle of it as well because we serve the same God and they can have that too. So thank you for doing that.

Ali: Yeah.

Janet: And thank you listeners for coming with us this week and I pray that you'll be with us for our next episode as we continue on this journey.

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Host Janet and her husband, Brent, also speak at a variety of conferences as a way to raise money for the seminary. If you want to look at what they offer or book them for a conference, [go to their website](#).