

JOURNEY TO PARAH

DAYO ODUKOYA

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my maker who gave me the GRACE to go through the journey of FRUITFULNESS, to my sweetheart, Prince Tosin Odukoya with whom we went through the journey together, to IniOluwa Naomi Odukoya whose birth brought completeness to my marriage and birthed the vision of Parah Family Foundation and to all families trusting God to have their own children.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge God in my life and I give Him all Glory and Honour for giving me the Grace to put this book together for humanity. I want to specially appreciate my sweetheart, Pastor, prayer partner, mentor, husband and brother, Prince Oluwatosin Odukoya for believing in me, for supporting me before, during and after the journey and being supportive of my career, passion and vision.

I also specially appreciate my big Sister, Pastor Mrs. Adejumoke Airuoyo who God divinely chose to be a blessing to the vision as the President, Board of Trustees of Parah Family Foundation. Many thanks to the members of the Board of Trustees and Executives of Parah Family Foundation for their various supports to the vision and their encouragement to write this book.

I also acknowledge all the spiritual mentors, financial partners and all medical practitioners that have been supporting the vision of Parah Family Foundation in various ways to proffer solution to challenges of families going through the fertility journey. I appreciate all members of Parah family for believing in the call to encourage, counsel and share my fertility experience. I say your testimony is NEXT!

This book would not have been possible if not for the encouragement of my beloved brother 'Dapo Omojola who helped with the manuscript and publication of the book. God bless you richly.

I specially thank God for the womb that bore and birthed me, Madam Alice Ayeni, a mother INDEED! Being the last born of your loins, you nurtured and nourished me both physically and spiritually. Your prayers and wishes with God's Grace have brought me thus far. Thank you very much MAMA.

Special thanks to IniOluwa Naomi who understood and embraced the vision even as a child. Thank you for allowing God to use you as a channel of blessings to humanity and for

cooperating with me in yielding to the call. I pray that you will fulfil your God ordained destiny in Jesus Name.

Foreword

It is an honour as well as a singular privilege for me to be asked to write the foreword to **“JOURNEY TO PARAH”** a much-needed resource material. The responsibility the author took upon herself is so profound, and her work will impact greatly not only on this generation but the one to come. The Author, a giver by nature, is constantly doing something to provide advice and help to pay or reduce the medical bills of many couples and she has done it again.

This time she has written a book! I commend the author for finding the time to write this book or shall I say put together this resource material, since she also included the experiences of some individuals and couples on their own journey to Fruitfulness. This helps the reader understand what the Author has been saying, which is that each one has his own journey and we will reach our destination if we do not give up. Princess Dayo Odukoya has shown in her book that on the Journey to Parah (Fruitfulness), while some simply have a Marital or physical journey to fruitfulness, some of us have a Medical or a Spiritual journey to fruitfulness, while some on the other hand may have to take all three routes on their journey to fruitfulness. We may take one or more of the three routes the author reveals to us; the goal is to arrive at our destination- fruitfulness.

The tips provided by the author on things to avoid and the positive things to do will assist couples in their quest for fruitfulness. Furthermore, the author emphasized trusting in God’s word. The detailed “confession of faith” for before and after conception is a wonderful aid which produces results as can be seen by the experience of the lady who won an “all expenses paid” IVF treatment which resulted in **TRIPLETS**. It will also provide the right attitude as well as the confidence required to make the journey to Parah, helping you to turn stumbling blocks along the way to stepping stones. In this Book, the Author provides access to materials that are not only useful tips but will also expose what may have been hindering conception or causing miscarriages. Princess relentlessly makes available useful suggestions, admonitions and advice which are of great value to individuals and couples who have “nowhere else” to turn to for such vital information.

I feel obliged to mention in this Foreword that, I sincerely thank the Author for this wonderful resource material, and for being committed to wiping away the tears of many, by exposing them to the knowledge they need (Marital, Medical and Spiritual) which will get them smiling

and keep the smile on their faces. Finally using the titles of some of the chapters in her book, I align myself with the submission of the Author who encourages us to **“STOP THE BLAME GAME” “WAIT FOR IT, IT IS POSSIBLE”, “YOUR TESTIMONY IS NEXT”**.

Her Honour,

Adejumoke Olagbegi-Adelabu (Mrs.)

CHIEF MAGISTRATE, LAGOS STATE JUDICIARY

Testimonial

The challenges facing couples who are confronted with the stigma and 'shame' of being married and waiting for so many years (which may sometimes feel like eternity) with no blessing of the womb and thus no child cannot be overlooked in any society especially here in Africa. This is one of the major underlying factors in most marital counselling sections and has led to several divorce and even suicidal cases in marriages. Though it's quite unfortunate that crucial issues like delayed pregnancy, the birth of female children or loosing of pregnancy is blamed on the woman, I believe that this issue can be arrested through family life counselling, medical awareness wrapped in spirituality which is the major thrust of why PFF was birthed in the first place.

Before I read or recommend a book. I have two questions in mind: Does the life of the author produce the efficacy of what is being communicated? And how applicable are they in reproducing the results in the lives of others. Princess Dayo Odukoya explicitly answered these two questions as she takes the reader through her life journey of being married for 8 years with no fruit of the womb, how she overcame and blessed with a beautiful daughter as a positive proof that what she is sharing with her readers in the book produces the desired results and thus works.

The Journey to Parah I must say is indeed a journey into the life of Princess Dayo Odukoya - someone I have known over the decades. It chronicles how she waited for many years after marriage with no child of her won, the ups and downs of IVF experiments, and how she finally had a successful IVF. It is through this bitter experience that Dayo built from her 'mess' a 'message' to the women, couples and the world through her NGO (Parah Family Foundation). I strongly recommend this book as a must read for singles and couples facing pregnancy issues. This book "Journey to Parah" is a narrative of the practical and spiritual steps Princess Dayo took in overcoming the pains and stigma of delayed pregnancy and I believe the tools, education and God that did it for her will do same to all those expecting the fruits of the womb through reading this valuable book and an association with PFF.

PFF has impacted positively on the lives of so many couples as I joke with Princess Dayo that she is now like the biblical Sarah with so many children coming into this world as a result of their parent's association and keeping faith with PFF. I have seen how Princess Dayo has labored, kept vigil, given of her time and resources to so many women that have gone through IVF, and coaching those that even had to adopt babies due to medical conditions IVF cannot mitigate.

I pray that our good Lord who has used Princess Dayo as a voice for those seeking the fruit of the womb, will continuously bless her with more wisdom and strength and also provide to PFF more material resources needed to keep offering this valuable selfless and thankless service to her generation and generations unborn so that no woman in our land shall be barren or suffer miscarriage as a result of lack of knowledge.

Engr. Frank Ene

I came to know of Parah Family Foundation through the Visioner, Princess Dayo Odukoya whom I fondly call Princess.

Her passion for equipping families waiting on God for the blessing of children with the right information and resources to ensure that these families make informed decisions and have the right care on the journey to fruitfulness is outstanding. No wonder it gave birth to this book. The support and guidance provided by Parah to such families cannot be quantified as she tirelessly, together with the Parah team, sees to it that these families have the correct tools to handle the issues and challenges that arise, particularly in the Nigerian society, as they wait on God for the fruit of the womb. These and more are what you will have the privilege of enjoying through this book, **'Journey to Parah'**.

God bless Princess and the entire Parah team.

Taiwo Afonja

Looking at Parah Family Foundation (PFF) from a very close range, I would like to thank the Almighty God, who gave the Vision for PFF, thank Him for the one (Princess (Dcns.) Dayo Odukoya) who saw the vision, made it plain upon tables, and kept it. I appreciate the Almighty also for making the provision available. The vision has brought so much hope, joy and happiness to so many homes and families. In ***Journey to Parah***, you'll discover how families and yours too can have their eyes 'opened' and be at peace trusting God through the teachings and guidance of Parah Family Foundation.

Pastor John Airuoyo

Introduction

A journey can either be long or short, it can either be time bound or not. When a man sets out on a journey, there are lots of things you come across; it can either be good or bad. There are also different kinds of journey a man makes in a life time. It can be a physical journey, marital journey or a spiritual journey. Whichever journey a man wants to embark upon, you need strength to accomplish it. A journey can be full of stress or stress free and interestingly every man has one journey or the other to make in life and these journeys comes with diverse experiences and challenges.

Life itself is a journey not a destination. Everyone is created to embark on a journey of life which ends with a journey to eternity (heaven or hell). Journey is an act of traveling by a means from one distance to another. Man, as a creature has a part to play in the journey of life.

A journey might be straight or crooked, long, short, tedious or smooth. In all of these, what is most important is the destination. No matter how tedious, tense, long or crooked a journey is, it will surely end at a destination. It is also worth saying that this journey does not respect race, ethnicity, culture, gender or colour.

Life may not go as planned and you cannot know everything that will happen to you in the journey of life; there will be ups and downs, storms along the way, on this journey there are experiences to be gathered, lessons to be learnt and these are usually for a purpose. Some of the reasons or purposes could be to test your faith, develop your character, get you out of your comfort zone and strengthen you or to learn new things.

❖ Test of faith – there is a saying that ‘Without test, there is no testimony’.

Test of our faith sometimes is to check if what we believe is what we profess. Difficult and tough times will come in the journey of life, but our faith will show if we will come out of it or not.

- ❖ To strengthen us – there is strength and reassurance when we come out of a difficult situation. God did not promise us a smooth ride all through the journey of life in fact He said that every time you pass through fire and water it will not hurt you because He will be in it with you.

Isaiah 43: 2. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

- ❖ To learn new things – in the course of our journey we learn through life's setback and mistakes and through these, God usually does a new thing. You are to learn through your mistakes and setbacks, you should not allow setbacks to keep you stagnant, learn from your mistakes and move on.

- ❖ Get out of your comfort zone – sometimes we are accustomed to our situation, giving up on life and resigning to faith, we are just comfortable with the little that God has blessed us with. For us to move to the next level, God will usually bring challenges our ways.

For instance, you went to school and graduated with a first class, maybe from a rich family, you have all you need and life is good, but after marriage the challenge of fertility (delay in child bearing) wakes you up from slumber, which will make you go out of your comfort zone and start seeking help and solution.

Are you wondering what **PARAH** means?

It means **FRUITFULNESS** in Hebrew language, so, the focus of the book “**JOURNEY TO PARAH**” is about ‘**Journey to Fruitfulness**’, meaning, fruitfulness in the body.

This book promises to open your eyes to see how to walk in the path of fruitfulness.

Dayo Odukoya

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CHAPTER 1

Marital Journey to Fruitfulness

As established earlier that there is always a beginning to every journey and indeed everything in life, marriage as an institution established by God is not an exception. Marriage really is designed to be forever, but the problem is that we live in a society that doesn't know what forever really means.

Hopefully, the vows you took were the traditional ones which had meanings attached to them: "for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, 'till death do us part.' That means forever... while you're both on this earth. Knowing you and your spouse are committed until your dying day will save you from some challenges that might seem bigger than they really are.

Gen1:26

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

Marriage is also a new beginning in the life of a man or woman.

Gen. 2:18

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Within the space of six days, God created dry land, sun, moon, stars, sea creatures, birds, and animals. At the end of each day, His verdict was that "it was good" But interestingly for the first

time during the beautiful process of creation He saw something that was not good, which was, man being alone.

The **'it is not good'** statement by God even gets more interesting when we consider that Adam had not yet sinned when He uttered that statement. We typically think of anything being "not good" was after the fall. Since Adam had not sinned yet, it was not Adam himself who was not good neither was it anything he had or had not done that was not good. **It was simply Adam's being alone that was not good.**

Why isn't it good for man to be alone?

1. It is not good for man to be alone, because he won't have the desired help he needs.

Giving Leadership and tending for a family is some work, and a wife can help lighten that burden. This is why Paul said, **"Man was not created for woman, but woman for the man" (1 Corinthians 11:9)**. A lot of discouragement can come a husband's way, and if he does not receive encouragement from his wife, where will he get it? Part of the reasons He said, "I will make him a helper."

2. It is not good for man to be alone, because he may miss out of the blessing of fulfilling God's second command which is to "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it." Isn't it amazing how the Bible always discusses children by presenting them very positively?

Psalm 127:3-5 says:

Behold, children are a heritage (some translations say "gift") from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128 contains,

"Blessings for those who Fear the LORD."

The main blessing is children as in verses 1 and 3-4

**Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways...
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house,
Your children like olive plants all around your table,
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.**

It was a sign of God's blessing when He multiplied children.

Deuteronomy 7:13 says:

"He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb".

The blessings for obedience under the Old Covenant are again repeated in Deuteronomy 28, and verse 4 saying, **"Blessed shall be the fruit of your body"**.

3. It is not good for man to be alone, because he won't be able to satisfy the desires God has given him

God has given men (and women) healthy, sexual desires (Hebrews 13:4) that He wants satisfied within marriage. The desires for intimacy can be emotional, mental or spiritual. We can't rule out the possibility of us having great friends, but they should not take the place of a husband or wife. God wants people to have a companion through life, and part of the reason He created marriage is to see that fulfilled.

4. It is not good for man to be alone, because he won't have the benefit of a woman's influence

While it is not always the case, it is common for married men to become more coordinated and more sensitive. After marriage, it is frequently seen how much the woman would have influenced the man for the better.

5. It is not good for man to be alone, because he will miss the experience that sanctification in marriage provides

God accomplishes much of the work He wants to do in our lives through marriage. After Scripture and the Holy Spirit, marriage is the greatest way God teaches us forgiveness, sacrifice, patience, dying to self, and the list goes on. When people remain single they can often develop a greater selfishness as they are able to live only for themselves. Once married they should be living for their spouses, and this can be wonderfully satisfying.

Proverbs 18:22 says, **"He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favour from the Lord"**

This is quite a nice corollary verse to **Genesis 2:18** such that when a man finds a wife, he should see her as a favour from the Lord. He should understand he is not receiving something ordinary or worthless. To illustrate how much of a good thing a wife is, consider God's observation when He finished creating the heavens and the earth: **"Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So, the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (Genesis 1:31)**. In essence, a wife takes "not good" and makes it "very good"

This is the end of the sixth day, but earlier in the day, in Genesis 2:18, God observed, "This is not good." **What changed from "not good" to "good"?** God created a woman. That is how good women are. That is how much of a good thing a wife is:

- When a husband thinks about his wife, he should see her as someone who takes him from "not good" to "very good."
- When a wife thinks about her husband, she should think about helping him move from "not good" to "very good."

So, practically speaking, for a woman who has finished school or graduated, the next thing on her plate is usually marriage and a lot would have already dreamt of having their home and children almost immediately after marriage, just like me.

I came out of school dreaming of the kind of family I want to have and have at least two Children however, it took several years before marriage could even take place, talk less of having children. 'Is it not the WILL of God for me to marry'? Yes, it is, but did it happen at my own timing, NO! It did not, but at God's timing.

In marriage especially, it is pertinent to wait on God for His perfect WILL for our lives because of the journey we may embark on; journey to fruitfulness. It's such a journey that only your God given partner can patiently walk in with you.

Isaiah 40:31

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint

It is also important to marry your friend, when I said, "I do", I was oblivious of what the future holds for us but with an inner assurance because we were friends. And we were able to walk the journey of fruitfulness patiently together on the strength of that friendship.

The Journey begins!

Myself and spouse got married late, having agreed on the number of children we would have; without much ado, we started trying for conception. Approaching the end of the second year, we knew something was definitely not right. As at this time, we couldn't discuss with anyone, not even family members and there was no known fertility support group like **PARAH FAMILY FOUNDATION**. Medical breakthrough for Assisted Reproductive Treatment (ART) has not been

publicly accepted or embraced unlike today moreover, the cost was back breaking and not easily affordable.

When conception did not occur in the first year of marriage, I did not see it as a big deal, we continued to hope that it will happen the following year, but after the second year we started visiting doctors and in the course of looking for medical solutions, I underwent HSG (**Human chorionic gonadotropin**) procedure and was diagnosed of blocked fallopian tube. **(this is nostalgic for me, I remembered my ordeal with the use of toilet while in the higher institution which caused a serious infection that lasted a long time to cure; Alas! this may probably be the cause of the blocked tube. Women! Be careful of the use of public toilets).** The Doctor advised us to try IVF (**In Vitro Fertilization**) in order not to waste time, but where will the funds come from!

Since one of the tubes was blocked, we decided to do Laparoscopy surgery here in Nigeria which almost took my life due to post-surgery complications. This surgery did not bring the much-expected result, so we continue the search.

We later decided to travel to United Kingdom to have the blocked fallopian tube opened, this was 5 years after our marriage. I went to England for another laparoscopy surgery, this time the professor of gynecology who was the head of the surgical team gave us all the assurances that it was a done deal, but this did not proffer the needed solution.

We did not stop at medical intervention, but prayer was simultaneously being offered with fasting at regular intervals with loved ones constantly praying with us and encouraging us.

At a time during the waiting period, the search also took us to the United States when we decided to try IVF (Intro Vitro Fertilization), we were scheduled for a date that necessitated that we come back to Nigeria before going back for the procedure. When we got to Nigeria, we were introduced to another IVF Specialist and we went through 3 cycles without success, one of which though resulted into pregnancy but was miscarried at 12 weeks.

Psalms 127:1 says; **except God builds the house the workmen work in vain**, despite all the human efforts medically, pregnancy did not occur. Why? I guess because it was not yet according to the time appointed by God. I must also state here that I was regularly attending the monthly “Shiloh Hour” at the Redemption Camp. In March 2007, I attended Shiloh Hour, a programme for families trusting God for Children which takes place every first Monday of every month at the Redeemed Christian Church of God. My husband got to the camp before me, while the ministration was ongoing “Daddy GO” announced he was going to lay hands on all the attendees on that fateful day. My Husband called to inform me of the announcement which was the first time such will happen. I headed to the camp, by the time I got there, laying of

hands was almost ending so I joined the line and hands were laid on me. I went through another IVF cycle that same March 2007, I became pregnant and by December our joy arrived.

I must state here that while the waiting was on, my husband (Sweetheart) was solidly by my side, “no blame game” giving me all the needed support at all times. In all of these, we enjoyed being together and going on vacations. We were able to do all these together because of - **FRIENDSHIP.**

After the birth of our Angel, IniOluwa (God’s Heritage) Naomi, Oluwapamilerin, Ayomide, Odukoya, the Lord began to speak personally to me to start using my waiting experience to encourage others and to pray with them. Although I delayed, the formation of “**PARAH FAMILY FOUNDATION**” is the result of my obedience to the vision!

As God lives, your testimony will be next, I enjoin you not to lose hope but to continue to trust and believe God, He who is faithful concerning me will also do yours.

And someone else was even more grateful for the gift of the first Parah baby that he wrote this poem to appreciate God on her behalf.

Worth Much More!

You are worth much more than to be celebrated for only one day.

You are an embodiment of OMOSEEBI – (It is possible to give birth to children).

You are the authority used by GOD to divide so many oceans of stagnant marriages.

You are the reason why PARAH was birthed.

You are the first fruit of PARAH that bears more fruits continuously.

You are the product of genuine Godly Love – Agape.

You are a preacher of possibility unto numerous families that are trusting GOD.

You are God's Own Heritage, the embodiment of liberation and enlightenment.

We celebrate you always! - **Pastor Marcus**

Oneness

It is pertinent to wait for the right person for marriage so that if or when you embark on the journey of having to wait for children, you can hold each other's hands and stand by each other. Without friendship and oneness in marriage, journey to fruitfulness might be awful.

In the story of Ruth, the long-term view of oneness is expressed beautifully when Ruth says to Naomi:

Ruth 1:16

"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God".

In this statement you find the kind of commitment that expresses a future of togetherness, it conveys the principle of oneness that I'll be talking about. To maintain oneness in marriage, husband and wife **MUST** be committed to the principle of oneness in marriage. This principle of oneness in marriage should be of importance to couples. If not, their goal of becoming fruitful might be a mirage.

Couples who are committed to maintaining oneness in their marriage, view their relationship like an investment in the stock market. There is a measure of realistic expectation that there will be low times and high times in the marital relationship, one of the low times being the period of waiting for children. However, there is a commitment to staying in the relationship for the long haul and giving close attention to the little things that nurture the relationship. If your marriage has become a routine due to the pressing challenge of not having children, it is important to stop and reflect on how it all began so as to recapture the oneness you once had. Perhaps you may need to take the counsel given by Jesus Christ to the church at Ephesus:

Revelation 2:3-5a

"You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first".

How to Promote Oneness During Your Waiting Period.

From the moment you say 'I do', your mutual responsibility is to become one. What God has put together, let not the 'delayed' arrival of the boy(s) or girl(s) put asunder!

How can two individuals having a few similarities and lot of differences achieve oneness?

Here are some useful tips for achieving oneness in marriage while waiting:

❖ Pray with one another, not just for one another.

Individual prayer is still important but praying together as a couple is a game changer, but many of us don't. As much as some like the idea of praying everyday with their spouse, it takes courage, persistence, and patience to put it into practice. Praying together allows us to have unity of purpose by sharing each other's burden, concern, struggle and aspiration. It also requires humility and faithfulness, both of which promote intimacy between one another and cultivate a greater dependency on God. Best of all, praying together as a couple is an instant reconciliation tool. Imagine how difficult it is to remain angry or keep malice for days when you know you need to pray together.

❖ Spend time together.

It sounds like a no brainer; after all, we get married because we want to be with the love of our life as much as possible. It's amazing how quickly we drop dating in the list of priorities during the waiting period. Rather, we find it easier putting in a few extra hours at the office every day. It's hard to grow apart, when you make the effort to experience life together. Never stop courting your spouse even during this turbulent period.

❖ Talk about it.

Communication is just one of those things that we all think we are good at but fail miserably to execute in marriage. Unfortunately, if that communication is coupled with a lack of conflict resolution skills, then you have the perfect ingredients for spontaneous combustion at any moment aided by the frustration of waiting. Sometimes the problem isn't even with your spouse, a bad day at the office, a struggle with the chores, the unabated menstrual cramp (a reminder that it's not happening this month), or perhaps the Lord is dealing with you in an area (when God is refining us, we get slightly irritable). When this is the case, talk to your spouse about it at the very least, put him or her on notice that you might be short and snappy, but that it's not him or her, it's you.

❖ Be intimate often and be openly affectionate.

Sexual intimacy is a gift from God, and He created our physical bodies to promote pleasurable physical intimacy between husband and wife. When God brought Adam and Eve together, He commanded them to "be fruitful and multiply". This includes enjoying sexual intimacy together! SEX IS FOR US! God is a miracle worker, but I doubt if he wants to produce another immaculate birth. Sex keeps you connected. Another aspect is

displaying affection. Open affection here doesn't translate to public indecency or an attempt to make others uncomfortable. I am talking about those soft touches, holding hands, sharing a hug and laughing together, these things affirm your mate, and keeps you connected.

This is not an exhaustive list by far, but these are major influences impacting the growth and oneness that I have experienced in marriage. Once we learned that oneness was the goal, we could shift our focus from our own needs, to one another, and work together to create a marriage that reflects the unity originally intended by God. We need to learn sacrifice, compromise, submission, and forgiveness.

Think about your marriage and consider how making oneness the main thing that could benefit the relationship you share with your spouse. When the going gets tough, the temptation is to turn inward, against each other or to isolate from one another. That's the enemy's plan for your marriage. Be vigilant in pursuing God's plan - **Oneness**. Love your marriage and value the season of struggle and misery as the strengthening of your relationship and your identity together as one.

CHAPTER 2

Medical Journey to Fruitfulness

We got married in April 2009, and never imagined we would not start having children immediately after our wedding.

In January 2010, we moved from one hospital to another without any positive result.

In 2012, after two years of no specific diagnosis, I was told I had hormonal imbalance and was advised to go for IVF without any delay. My doctor was of the opinion that we go for IVF treatment while age was still on my side and referred us to an IVF clinic. When we were told the cost of the IVF treatment, we were overwhelmed. We decided to seek other cheaper options. My husband met a gynecologist and we started in that clinic. This doctor was of the contrary opinion that I was still young, and IVF should be our last option.

On this journey, we prayed, fasted and went for deliverances. We had anointed men of God and brethren pray with us, but our situation remained the same.

I was invited to Parah Family Foundation monthly meeting in 2013. I attended three meetings and then stopped. Little did I know that God was going to answer our prayer through this foundation. Despite being blessed in the meetings I felt I needed a gathering where serious and thunderous prayers on fertility are raised.

In December 2015, I personally got tired of using drugs and going through one procedure or the other. We visited our gynecologist that month and left disappointed. As we walked out of the hospital, I told myself that I have had enough, my husband and I decided that night that we should go for IVF treatment in 2016.

In January 2016, while observing prayer and fasting in my church, the Holy Spirit told me to ask God on what to do about our fertility issue, but this made no sense to me because we already knew what to do (to go for IVF procedure and go for it that year).

However, I obeyed God, I sought His face on what we should do in the New Year. God gave me three instructions but the third surprised me, He said 'start attending Parah meetings'. I told God I will do just that when I conclude my MBA.

In March 2017, I attended Parah monthly meeting again since after March 2014 that I stopped attending the meetings. I met the Visioner (Mrs. Odukoya) and discussed my situation with her.

In April 2017, Parah supported us to begin the IVF procedure and the burden of where and how to go about pregnancy matter was lifted just like that. I was confirmed pregnant in May 2017 for the first time in my life. It was like a dream.

In December 2017, I delivered my set of triplets (2 boys and a girl). God recovered all our lost years and gave us rest. We encourage couples who are waiting, to trust God and His word. He can never lie. Add works to faith. Don't ever give up. The God that did it beyond our expectation will surely visit you in Jesus name. AMEN.

Bimpe

Your testimony is next

Medical Intervention

It is on record that some fertility problems are more easily treated than others. In general, as a woman ages, especially after age 35, her chances of getting pregnant declines and the risk of miscarriage increases.

Infertility is the inability of couple to conceive after one year of regular sexual intercourse

If you are 35 years or older, your doctor may recommend that you skip some of the steps younger couples usually take. It is because your chances of having a baby decreases with each passing year. It's important to understand that even if you are able to get pregnant, no treatment can guarantee a healthy baby. On the other hand, scientists in this field have made many advances that has helped millions of couples to have their babies. Embracing science as a solution to infertility is not out of place.

Infertility is not common to either Women or Men alone, it involves both and some cannot even be explained. Statistics currently shows that;

30% - Caused by Men

30% - Caused by Women

30% - Caused by both couple

10% - Unexplained (Secondary)

Take Time to Plan

It is important for you and your spouse to have singleness of purpose before starting treatment at all, before you start, talk about how far you want to go with the treatment. For example, you may want to try medicine but don't want to have surgery. You may change your mind during your treatment, but it's good to start with an idea of what you want your limits to be.

Treatment for fertility cost a lot all over the world; hence it is absolutely important to plan ahead just like you will plan for a mortgage. Where support is minimal or almost non-existent and earning capacity of people are somewhat low. If cost is one of your concerns you may need to ask how much the medicines and procedures will cost and talk with your partner about what you can afford and seek help where available. This kind of planning ahead of time may help keep you from becoming emotionally and financially drained from trying a series of treatments you hadn't planned for.

Causes of Infertility in Women

Addressing the fertility problems in women usually depends on what may be keeping the woman from conceiving. Sometimes the cause is not actually known, and it may range from the following:

- **Anovulation** - This is a state of non-ovulation in women. Treatment may include taking medicines that stimulates the ovaries to release eggs. Some women even get to menopausal stage without knowing it at a younger age and stop ovulating.
- **Amenorrhea** – This is a situation where a woman no more have menstrual period
- **Hormonal Disorder** - High Prolactin, Low progesterone and estrogen, thyroid, excess weight etc., are some indications that may result in imbalance of a woman's hormones. Once these deficiencies occur in women, it might be difficult to get pregnant

- **Blocked or damaged tubes** - This may be blocked as a result of infection (STD's), adhesions from past surgeries. If the fallopian tubes are blocked, treatment may include tubal surgery, which may necessary not solve the problem.
- **Endometriosis.** These are tissue from the lining of the uterus growing outside and affect the reproductive organs. It may cause abnormal bleeding between periods. If anything from mild to moderate endometriosis seems to be the main reason for infertility, treatment may include laparoscopic surgery to remove endometrial tissue growth. This treatment may not be an option if you have severe endometriosis.

Fibroid/Ovarian Cyst –

Fibroids, also known as uterine myomas, leiomyomas, or fibromas, are firm, compact tumors that are made of smooth muscle cells and fibrous connective tissue that develop in the uterus. In more than 99 percent of fibroid cases, the tumors are benign (non-cancerous).

The exact cause of fibroids is unknown, but hormones and growth factors seem to play a role. The growth of the fibroids depends on the presence of estrogen and progesterone. Hormonal birth control, hormone therapy , and the hormones of pregnancy can all cause fibroids to grow more rapidly. Most fibroids shrink after menopause.

Never being pregnant

Getting your first period at a young age

More frequent periods

Family history of uterine fibroids

African descent

Obesity

High blood pressure

Diabetes

OVARIAN CYSTS

According to American Family Physician; An ovarian cyst is a collection of fluid that comes from an ovary. Many cysts are completely normal and are called functional cysts. In women who are having periods, functional cysts are normal, they occur as a result of ovulation (the release of an egg). Functional cysts will normally shrink over time, usually in about one or three months. If you don't ovulate you don't form cysts. If you are menopausal and not having periods you shouldn't form functional cysts.

Possible symptoms include pain and abdominal bloating, feeling full quickly after eating just a little and constipation. Ovarian cysts can develop anytime, while, many are benign and it is important to have them examined, Ovarian cysts may go away on their own after a cycle or grow to become problematic. If they twist or rupture they can become very painful and may require surgery

- **Age** – Age is a major factor responsible for infertility today. Research has shown that if a woman marries later than 35 years of age, it may be difficult to have children. **It is therefore advisable for single ladies to marry early to avoid delay in child bearing.**

Medical advancement has made the issue of Age of less concern, as an option for fertility preservation is now available.

Fertility Preservation is the freezing of reproductive tissues such as eggs in female, Semen in men and Embryos (fertilized eggs) with the use of nitrogen and stored in a specially designed tank. When the patient is ready to start a family, the tissues will be thawed and used for IUI or IVF/ICSI to enable carry pregnancy.

It is now advisable for female aged from 25 years and above to consider egg preservation or freezing while still waiting for “Mr. Right” to come. Some may have to wait till above 40years and by then the eggs would have been old to fertilize and achieve pregnancy.

Why Female should freeze eggs:

- **Social reason** - To store fertile eggs for future use (late marriage)
- **Medical issues** - To store eggs before treatment that can affect fertility such as breast cancer, severe endometriosis, life threatening fibroid, sickle cell patients etc. comes up.

Why Men should freeze sperm:

- Social reason – To store active sperm for future use while waiting
- Medical – treatment like Leukemia and radiotherapy can affect sperm production.
- Declining sperm count without known reason, erection and ejaculation problems.
- Risky Job – Risk of injuries that can affect the testes; such as in construction and chemical hazards.

Lifestyle – Smoking, Alcohol, obesity is all part of lifestyle that may affect fertility status of a woman.

The Science of Stress and Fertility

The effects of stress may be different for each woman, says the experts;

"Stress may cause one set of reactions in one woman, and something else in another, so ultimately the reasons behind how or why stress impacts fertility may also be very individual," says Pisarska.

While doctors may not know the exact links between stress and fertility, a series of studies shows the impact is hard to ignore as in the authorities quoted below;

"In research published in the journal Human Reproduction, doctors compared pregnancy rates in couples that reported being stressed and those who were not. What they found: Pregnancy was much more likely to occur during months when couples reported feeling "good" --happy and relaxed. It was less likely to occur during the months they reported feeling tense or anxious.

But it's not just natural (unassisted) pregnancies that are affected. In a research published in Fertility and Sterility in 2005, experts at the University of California at San Diego reported that stress may play a role in the success of infertility treatments, including in vitro fertilization (IVF). After administering a series of questionnaires designed to measure patients' stress levels, the researchers found that women who scored highest -- indicating the highest levels of stress -- had ovulated 20% fewer eggs compared with women who were less stressed.

Moreover, of those who were able to produce eggs, those who were most stressed were 20% less likely to achieve fertilization success.

Top causes of Male infertility

- Low sperm count – Normal count is between 15-20million
- Slow sperm motility (movement)
- Abnormal morphology (shape and size of sperm)
- Problems with semen

Specialists usually know the causes of male infertility and there are many factors attributable to it such as lifestyle, genetics, physiology (which might explain low sperm count, slow sperm mobility, abnormal sperm shape, and so on). Recent developments in treatment have made fertility possible for many men. But before undergoing any complicated procedures, there are some simple lifestyle changes that can better the chances of a successful conception.

- ***Stop smoking cigarettes or marijuana:*** Smoking tobacco has been linked to low sperm counts and sluggish motility. Long-term use of marijuana can result in low sperm count and abnormally developed sperm.
 - ***Decrease your drinking:*** Alcohol can reduce the production of normally formed sperm needed for a successful pregnancy.
 - ***Watch your weight:*** Both overweight and underweight men can have fertility problems. With too much weight, there can be hormonal disturbances, and when a man's too lean, he can have decreased sperm count and functionality.
 - ***Exercise in moderation:*** Excessive exercise could lower your sperm count indirectly by lowering the amount of testosterone in your body. And as you might have guessed, stay off the steroids -- they can cause testicular shrinkage, resulting in infertility.
- Value your vitamins:*** Low levels of vitamin C and zinc can cause sperm to clump together, so keep your numbers up. Vitamin E can counteract excess free-oxygen radicals, which can also affect sperm quality.
- ***Turn your back on toxins:*** Landscapers, contractors, manufacturing workers, and men who have regular contact with environmental toxins or poisons (pesticides, insecticides, lead, radiation, or heavy metals) are all at risk of infertility.

Have you ever been privy to the debate about whether men should wear boxers or briefs? If not, it is that some argued that briefs are tighter, so it's possible that they can raise temperature

beyond the expected temperature for sperm to survive. So if a man really wants to be fertile, boxers are the way to go. But the truth is that there has not been a scientific proof. At any rate, there's no harm in wearing loose clothing and staying out of hot tubs and saunas if you're trying to conceive. Since infertility affects one in 25 men these days, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and a positive attitude is the way to go if you're considering becoming a father.

Additional factors that may inhibit Men's Fertility

- Certain antibiotics
- Narcotics (cocaine, speed, etc.)
- Abstinence from sex (for more than a few days)
- Varicoceles (varicose veins in the testicles)
- Untreated infections (sexually transmitted and otherwise)
- Radiation and chemotherapy treatments
- Excessive stress
- Testosterone deficiency
- Exposure to Chemicals

Although some people still think of fertility as a "woman's problem", in 20% of infertile couples, the problem is solely with the male partner. Infertility in a man may be the only reason that a couple can't conceive, or it may simply add to the difficulties caused by infertility in his partner. So it's crucial that men get tested for fertility as well as women. It's also important that men do it early. Though some men may want to put off being tested possibly to avoid embarrassment, early testing can spare their partners a great deal of unnecessary discomfort and expenses. It's also a good way to quickly narrow down potential problems.

Getting tested for infertility

A semen ordered by your Doctor will help check the quality and quantity of the sperm in the semen. Note that a semen analysis is a common test and the results could save you months of worry and stress. The said analysis is capable of detecting:

- **Azoospermia** – This is when there is no sperm produced, or the sperm aren't appearing in the semen.
- **Oligospermia** – A situation where few sperm are produced.

- **Problems with sperm motility** - A situation where sperm aren't moving normally, they are less likely to be capable of fertilizing an egg.
- **Problems with sperm morphology** – this is when sperm is shapeless and the structure may be the cause infertility.

But while these conditions may be the direct reason for male infertility, they themselves may be caused by an underlying medical condition which your doctor will probably probe.

Reasons for Male infertility

There are a wide number of reasons for male infertility. Some are caused by physical problems that prevents the sperm from being ejaculated normally in the semen or that affects the quality and production of the sperm itself.

Possible Male Fertility Problems

- **Sexually transmitted diseases or other infections** - Genital infections such as chlamydia and gonorrhea can cause infertility in men. The infertility can often be resolved by treating the infection.
- **Blockages, birth defects, or physical damage** - In some cases, men are born with blockages in parts of the testicle or other abnormalities that prevent sperm from getting into the semen. Physical trauma to the testicles, prostate, and urethra can also result in fertility problems. Surgery can sometimes correct the problem.
- **Retrograde ejaculation** - In this disorder, semen does not come out of the penis during ejaculation, but instead enters the bladder. It can be caused by diabetes, certain medications, and surgery to the bladder, prostate, or urethra.
- **Genetic diseases** - Although it's rare, genetic illnesses such as cystic fibrosis or chromosomal disorders can cause infertility.

- **Autoimmune problems** - In some cases, the immune system can mistakenly target sperm cells and treat them as if they were a foreign virus. The sperm can become damaged as a result.
- **Hormonal problems** - Certain hormonal imbalances -- in the pituitary and thyroid glands, for instance -- can cause infertility. Your doctor may suggest treatment with medication.
- **Sexual problems** - Erectile dysfunction (impotence) and premature ejaculation can obviously have an effect on fertility. Erectile dysfunction can be caused by psychological problems such as anxiety, guilt, or low self-esteem. It is also caused by physical problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and heart disease. In addition, impotence may be a side effect of certain medications such as antidepressants. Talk to your doctor about ways of treating any sexual problems.
- **Varicoceles** - Varicoceles are enlarged varicose veins that develop in the scrotum and prevent blood from flowing properly. Varicoceles are found in 15% of all men and in up to 40% of men being evaluated for infertility. Although they may be a factor in male infertility, recent studies question whether surgery to correct varicoceles has any beneficial effect.

Options available for infertility treatment

Ovulation Induction - Your doctor might recommend that you try stimulation of the ovaries for the female with fertility drugs and advice timing of intercourse. If induction fails, couple may be advised to try IUI

IUI (Intrauterine Insemination) –This is used to treat unexplained infertility with super ovulation drug. It is less stressful compare to IVF/ICSI. The fallopian tubes must be patent and sperm are collected and concentrated to increase the number of healthy sperm for insemination. Sperm count ejaculations must not be lower than 10Million motile sperm. IUI fertilization takes place in the natural environment of the fallopian tubes. Success of 15-50% may be achieved if attempted about 4 times.

When initial treatments fails

Many couples who have problems getting pregnant after trying Ovulation Induction and IUI should arrive at a common point which is if they want to try assisted reproductive technology (ART).

In vitro fertilization (IVF) is the most common type of **ART (Assisted Reproductive Technique)**. In this form of treatment, blastocysts (a fertilized egg or eggs) are allowed for 5 days before implantation, this increases the success rate. The embryo is then transferred into the woman's uterus through the cervix.

IVF is mostly recommended for the treatment of tubal blockage, endometriosis and unexplained infertility.

ICSI - Intracytoplasmic sperm injection, or ICSI (call it "ICK-see") - Your doctor injects one sperm into one egg in a laboratory, if fertilization occurs, the Doctor puts the embryo into the woman's uterus. The use of ICSI in the treatment of infertility is mostly used in the case of men with low sperm count and azoospermia (Lack of Sperm). ICSI success rate is higher than IVF.

Sperm/Egg Donation – This is used as a result of low egg reserves, quality of egg, Age or menopause and low sperm count. Your doctor may advise the use of egg and/or sperm donor if the outcome might not get the desired result.

Surrogacy – This is a technique where another woman carries the pregnancy using the husband sperm through IVF/ICSI. This option is taken where the woman's womb cannot carry pregnancy to term.

Adoption/Fostering - If you haven't already thought about adoption, this might be a time to think about it. Some couples decide at this point to spend their resources on adoption instead of IVF. Other couples see IVF as the best option.

IMSI - The Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection selected, better known as **IMSI** (Intracytoplasmic morphologically-selected sperm injection) is a laboratory technique used in IVF treatments (IVF) and involves inserting sperm into the egg.

IMSI is a real-time method where sperm is selected before the microinjection takes place. This is done using an inverted microscope that is able to provide much greater magnifying power than that of ICSI.

With this microscope, Biologists can see the internal morphology of sperm and discard those with abnormalities. Being able to select sperm without morphology problems, this can increase the chances of successful implantation of the pre-embryo and decrease the likelihood of miscarriage.

This technique is not as widely used presently and still requires more study to demonstrate its efficacy and validity to be used routinely in the assisted reproduction laboratory and to be recommended with sufficient scientific evidence.

IMSI may improve the chances of fertilization in vitro and can be used in cases of several unsuccessful IVF attempts

Fertility Treatment Clinics

Fertility treatment clinics aren't widely available in some parts of the country, especially in rural areas. You may need to travel for treatment. In your review of clinic success rates, be aware that clinics treating more severe fertility problems may have lower success rates. It's possible for a clinic with a lower success rate to have greater overall expertise than clinics with higher success rates. The success rate of a clinic is influenced by many things, including the Doctors' skills and experience and the cause or causes of your fertility problem. Also consider that miscarriages are common factor among all women, but more likely in women with risk factors such as older age or a poorly controlled chronic health condition.

Stress and Infertility

A few Doctors had offered far reaching insights on how daily stress can be a disruptive factor in fertility and how relaxation can be helpful as well. So, it is not uncommon to hear them admonish infertile women, especially the stressed ones with statements as "You're too stressed. Just relax and it will happen." Or "You've got to calm down and let nature take its course".

If you've been trying for a couple of months or more to get pregnant, you probably can no longer recall how many times you've been offered same or similar advice by caring friends and or family members. Of course the one thing experts say probably won't help reduce stress in your life is hearing people tell you to relax. In fact, experts say it could even generate more stress.

While Doctors say that right now there aren't enough data to draw a clear and obvious link, many believe it's only a matter of time before we connect all the dots and see the bigger picture of the link between stress and infertility. "What we do know now is that when stress-reduction techniques are employed, something happens in some women that allows them to pregnant when they couldn't get pregnant before", says Allen Morgan, MD, Director of Shore Institute for Reproductive Medicine in Lakewood, N.J.

While the exact pathways between fertility and stress remain a mystery, Morgan believes hormones like cortisol or epinephrine -- which rise and often remain high during times of chronic stress play a key role.

It's also opined by some that reducing stress may help enhance proteins within the uterine lining that are involved in implantation and that stress reduction may increase blood flow to the uterus, which also affects conception.

Myths and Facts about Men's Infertility

Whenever a couple is diagnosed of infertility, the first thought often runs to the woman as the source of the problem. People say, 'she's barren, she can't conceive, she's not a "complete" woman, all simply because she can't get pregnant. As nature would have it, problems with infertility are equally due to male and female conditions. Infertility is referred to as the inability to get pregnant after one year of unprotected sexual intercourse. 'Statistics suggest that 35 to 40 percent of the problems are caused by male conditions, another 35 to 40 percent by female conditions, and the last 20 to 30 percent a combination of the two, plus a small percentage of unknown causes'.

The role of men in fertilization is quite significant. 'About 200 million sperm are mixed with semen to form an ejaculation. In most men, 15 to 45 million of these sperm are healthy enough to fertilize an egg, although only 400 survive after a man ejaculates. Only 40 of those 400 reach the vicinity of the egg, surviving the toxic environment of the semen and the hostile environment of the vagina. After another process called capacitation (an explosion that allows the remaining sperm to drill a hole through the tough outer layer of the egg), only one lone sperm reaches the egg for fertilization and conception.

Fertility and Diet: Eat Right to Get Pregnant

- The sooner you start eating well, the more likely you are to get pregnant. For both men and women, food and fertility are linked. You need to stick to a balanced diet to boost your chances of conceiving and of having a healthy baby.
- Eat several servings of fruit, vegetables, grains such as whole wheat bread, and calcium-rich foods such as yogurt, cheese, and milk every day. Certain vitamins and nutrients such as vitamins C and E, zinc, and folic acid are important for making healthy sperm. Not getting enough nutrients can affect your periods, making it difficult to predict when you ovulate. And you may not ovulate at all if you've lost a drastic amount of weight or are obese.

- **Folic acid:** Get lots of folic acid at least 400 micrograms a day. This vitamin has been proven to reduce a baby's risk of neural-tube birth defects such as spina bifida, and it is linked to a lower incidence of heart attacks, strokes, cancer and diabetes. Folic acid may be obtained naturally through dark green leafy vegetables (i.e. spinach), citrus fruits, nuts, legumes, whole grains, fortified breads and cereals.
- **Calcium:** It is recommended that women get at least 1000mgs of calcium a day if they are considering getting pregnant. Calcium may be obtained from natural sources such as cottage cheese, low-fat yogurt, canned salmon, sardines, rice and cheese.
- **Supplements & Vitamins:** In addition to a healthy diet, many healthcare providers will encourage supplements to increase the probability that you get all the nutrients you need. There are a number of such vitamins and supplements offered to help you get the nutrients you need to help achieve conception.

What to Avoid

- If your eating habit is unhealthy, you'll have to make some adjustments. It is advisable to cut out or occasionally drink alcohol, stop using recreational drugs, artificial sweeteners, alcohol and cigarettes, all of these can have effect on conception and harm a developing foetus.
- **Caffeine:** It is important to wean yourself off caffeine (including chocolate), because research has shown that more than 200-300 milligrams of caffeine per day may reduce fertility by 27 percent. Caffeine also impedes upon the body's ability to absorb iron and calcium.
- **Mercury Intake:** Although fish is generally very healthy, certain types are high in mercury, which can be dangerous to your unborn baby. Because mercury can accumulate in your body and linger there for more than a year, it's best to avoid high-mercury fish such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. While you're trying to conceive instead, eat lower-mercury fish such as salmon and canned light tuna (not albacore, which is higher in mercury) once or twice a week.
- **Meats:** Processed meats should be consumed in small amounts and smoked or raw meats should be avoided entirely during pregnancy. Even hot dogs should be heated until they are steaming before you eat them if you are pregnant.

- **Weight check:** Shedding some weight or gaining a few if you're underweight, while you're attempting to get pregnant is a good idea, since you want to be as close as possible to your recommended weight when you conceive. Being over or underweight can make it harder to get pregnant. Also, obese women have more pregnancy and birth complications and underweight women are more likely to have a low-birth-weight baby.
- **Exercise:** While you're following a smart eating plan with low-fat, high-fiber foods, start or increase an exercise routine. If you're overweight, aim to lose one to two kilograms a week, a safe rate of weight loss. Extreme weight loss from crash dieting can deplete your body's nutritional stores, which isn't a good way to start a pregnancy.

Medical Tips - Lifestyle and Diet

Improve your lifestyle and review your health fitness and diet. Diet plays a role in our general health and specific foods can enhance our chances of getting pregnant.

1. There are healing fruits available from nature; Pear has the shape of the womb and it has been confirmed to be good nutrition for waiting mothers while cucumber shaped like the male organ is good for the spermatozoa.
2. White bread & excess oil is not good, so reduce your intake or take good alternatives like whole wheat or cotton seed / flax oil respectively.
3. Eat food rich in antioxidant, lots of fresh / raw vegetable, fruits & nuts.
4. Determine whether you ovulate by using the ovulation calendar test and plan to have sex around this time. Ovulation predictor kits can be purchased from the pharmacy. Have sufficient intercourse to get pregnant, couples are only fertile for at most 5 days during the menstrual cycle which are the dates leading to ovulation, including the day of ovulation.
5. Enjoy long period of foreplay and sexual excitement prior to sex. Have sex in the morning. Scientist & Studies have shown that ejaculation after peaceful relaxed sleep produces more energetic spermatozoa which are more likely to make their way to the uterus.
6. Use sexual position that encourage the natural tilt of the vagina towards the uterus opening (Cervix) & that assist gravity e.g. doggy style position or lying on one's side.
7. Avoid douching (washing of the vagina) at any time. Douching destroys essential vaginal flora so no douching for any lady especially the expectant mothers.

8. Waiting fathers should avoid warm or tight under wears, boxers are better for keeping the area cool to preserve the life of the spermatozoa.
9. Occasional tour or change of environment can also help in getting pregnant and is one of the most sought out tips for couples trying to get pregnant.
10. Both husband & wife must adopt a healthy life style. Have at least 8 hours of sleep per day, reduce stress and exercise regularly at least 1 hour daily.

TEN THINGS TO AVOID WHEN TRYING TO GET PREGNANT

1. Lubricant
2. Large amount of caffeine
3. Mercury in Fish
4. Alcohol
5. Smoking
6. Certain chemicals dangerous to our health
7. Stress
8. Hot tubs
9. Certain medications based on Doctors advise
10. Obesity

CHAPTER 3

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY TO FRUITFULNESS

When my husband and I got married, like every other normal married people, we were confident that our first baby would come within a few months after our marriage.

From the very first month of our trying to get pregnant, I became worried when pregnancy did not occur. Each time I saw my menstrual period, I would cry so much and become sorrowful. One year passed, another year passed and that was how we joined the league of married people looking up to God for the fruit of the womb.

As an expectant couple, we sought the face of God prayerfully and medically, amidst several counsels from people, some which are in line with the word of God and others which we knew are totally against our Christian faith. We thank God for the grace to hold steadfast to His promises and not go the other way, having known that whatever Satan gives does not last and comes with so much sorrow.

We went on the mountain, went for several deliverance programs and consulted with several prophets. There was a particular prophet that told us that God showed him we would give birth to twin boys but that we need to buy him a Toyota Sienna car in order for him to pray so that the babies would come. He even showed us the particular model of Sienna car he wanted. Honestly, if I had the money then, I would have bought him the car out of desperation. As if he is the one that makes children. Isn't that funny! That encounter was one out of several that time and space will not permit me to write here.

For the medical, we went to several hospitals and saw several doctors. I was so impatient that after being with a doctor for 2 months and no result, I would move to another hospital. I was desperate to get pregnant and wanted a quick fix. I later got to realize that it was a mistake and that it was counterproductive.

We went through several IUI procedures and did IVF once. After the IVF failed, we lost hope in medical solution and continued in our prayers.

Along the line, we joined Parah Family Foundation and thank God for the vision of Parah. It is a refreshing atmosphere where waiting couples meet and are able to express themselves without fear or shame. We got the strength, encouragement and support we needed from being part of Parah family. We were able to know that marriage is not only about having children but also for other meaningful purposes according to God's plan. This helped us to reshape our thinking and know that a balanced home is a foundation for raising Godly children. Our relationship as husband and wife got better and we were able to channel our efforts in trying for babies better.

After some time, we were encouraged to try another IVF. We went in for the procedure and to the glory of God, I was confirmed pregnant. Throughout the pregnancy, God gave me an unbelievable strength. Although I experienced miscarriage threats, but we kept confessing the word of God in **Exodus 23:26**. To the glory of God, we gave birth to our twin baby boys after 9 years and 5 months of waiting for His promise.

For the first time in our walk with God, **Psalms 126:1** came so alive and made so much meaning to us.

We encourage every couple waiting on God for children to hold unto God and His promises especially in **Deuteronomy 7:17**. God's plan and purpose is for His children to be fruitful and he can choose to do this through any way. He is always faithful to His promises!

The testimony above shows that our God is ever faithful to His word.

Biola

Wait for the Lord

The story of Adam and Eve is a story of rebellion against God. Once they believed that God didn't have their best interests in mind, they decided to go ahead without God and do what they wanted. They became, in effect, their own god. Too often, this is exactly what we do today. When God tells us to wait, we don't trust him, but go ahead and find ways to accomplish what we want to happen.

This tendency to push God to the side-line goes against his plan for us. It creates distance in our relationship with him. It causes us to get into trouble and brings pain. What good is it to gain the whole world now — whatever it is we think we want — and forfeit our souls' intimacy with God (Mark 8:36)?

God wants us to learn how to follow him and put down our demanding selves — to calm that screaming child in us. One way he helps us do this is to say, "Wait." That miserable, uncomfortable, sometimes painful state of silence is one of God's most powerful tools to set us free. That is if we are willing.

How to Stay calm while the waiting last

❖ Believe that God hears your cries (Micah 7:7)

Have you ever felt like your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling? Perhaps, like me, you have prayed for years about a concern, but God has seemed silent. That's where God demonstrated his love and mercy towards us when we were still his enemies. He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

In other words, the cross is our guarantee that God is for us and is committed to give us everything we would ask for if we knew everything he knew. We can be content with that and wait patiently for his answers.

❖ Watch with expectancy but be prepared for unexpected answers (Psalm 5:3)

I know God has been faithful to answer many of your prayers, but you'll agree with me that it's often been in far different ways than you would have anticipated! God knows that the only way to do what you and I both desire will at times; involve varying degrees of discomfort in our lives. Growing impatience inevitably involves some form of waiting, whether in a long line at the ATM or waiting for a loved one to come to Christ. When we lay our requests before him, it is by faith that we wait and watch in anticipation of God's good work in us.

❖ Put your hope in his Word (Psalm 130:5-6)

We can be tempted to put our hope in things that may disappoint us in the end. We may think a doctor will heal us, a prophet will deliver us, or a friend will help us, but it is only when we put our hope in Christ that we can wait with confidence and know we will not be put to shame. "There is only one place to go to for reassurance during hard times, and that is to the Cross."

It seems that God allows us to experience disappointments in life to teach us that nothing else will truly satisfy or provide us with a firm foundation to stand upon. God's Word alone is unshakable. We can wait for the Lord knowing that, no matter how dark the night is, His light will break through in our lives, bringing abundant joy through a more intimate relationship with Christ.

❖ **Trust in the Lord, not in your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6)**

Why is it so tempting for us to depend on our own wisdom rather than the wisdom of our all-wise God? What makes us think we know what is best for us better than He does? Scripture speaks clearly about how to live life abundantly forever with Christ yet, all too easily, we justify our sin and do what is right in our own eyes. Seasons of waiting reveal where we put our trust.

❖ **Resist fretting, refrain from anger, be still and choose patience (Psalm 37:7-8)**

It's easy to say we trust God, but our response to delays, frustrations and difficult situations exposes where we are actually placing our hope. Are we convinced God is listening?

❖ **Be strong and take courage (Psalm 27:13-14; 31:24)**

If you're honest enough, you'll agree with me that one of the biggest battles in long seasons of waiting is fighting fear and all of its friends like anxiety, doubt and worry. A voice in your head may ask 'what if this happens'? What if God doesn't answer your prayers? Enduring strength and courage will never be found in self but in Christ. You're empowered to be courageous. Jesus said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." Ever! He is Emmanuel, God with us. That's a promise that will sustain us while we wait for answers to prayer.

❖ **See it as an opportunity to experience God's goodness (Psalm 27:13; Lamentations 3:25)**

When my focus is on my problems and what God has or has not given me, I am prone to grumbling, complaining, discontentment, bitterness and selfishness. When I define goodness by what brings me the most comfort, happiness and gratification in this life, then anything that threatens these things will tempt me to question God's love and goodness. Seasons of waiting offer countless opportunities to experience God at work in and through us for our eternal good and his glory.

❖ **Wait for God's promise instead of going your own way (Acts 1:4)**

Scripture offers plenty of examples of saints who got weary of waiting for God and chose to do things their way. A lot of people had given way to that temptation as well. God's goodness is

promised for those who wait patiently for him! No matter how long, regardless of how hopeless things appear to us, even when it seems to cost us everything, wait on him. “God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to his power at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20). When we wait for him, we will never be disappointed.

❖ **Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful with thanksgiving (Colossians 4:2)**

Another temptation we face when God does not seem to be answering our prayers is to stop praying, stop expecting him to act, while giving way to a spirit of pessimism, rather than thanking God for who he is and all he has done for us. While God may not answer in our timing or in the way we expect, he will accomplish his good purposes in our lives when we wait for him and persevere in prayer.

You will not be ashamed

Have confidence in Him who has said, “They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me”.

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land; But for you, O Lord, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer”. Christ is the answer! He is your rest and the treasure you seek.

Build intimacy and dependence upon God

The reason we were able to read about the great men and women of the Bible is because they all had one thing in common. They were all people who learnt that their success in life was directly proportionate to their intimacy and dependency upon God. For them, a relationship with God wasn't a get rich quick scheme. For many of them, it was a matter of life and death.

Waiting during the difficult times developed their relationship with God. Some of the most intimate relationships we have in our lives are because a friend stood in the 'valley' with us during the heat of the battle. Maybe this is what the scripture means when it says we have a friend that sticks closer than a brother (**Proverbs 18:24**). The reason we get to read the stories of these great men and women is because they went through the difficulties of life with God. In the end, they enjoyed the process with God and the promises of God.

I've always believed God is just as interested in the journey as he is in the destination. If not, all the biblical accounts would only include the feel-good parts and not the good, the bad and the ugly of the times of waiting. We may not always understand why we must wait, but the good news is that God never asks us to wait without Him.

Chapter 4

WHY ME?

Life can be very funny playing on our emotion and intelligence, testing our responses and reactions, testing our level of faith or fear, our confidence or lack of it, checking our beliefs and doubts, endurance and breaking point, life is full of ups and downs, good and bad, great and small.

Life becomes beautiful when we make effort to understand that we are never alone in whatever the situation we find ourselves, if we are patient and at rest with ourselves we will understand that whatever happens to us in life always turns around for our good.

God made man in His image and after His likeness, whatever may be your present state is not hidden, neither is it beyond His capacity to handle. However, our attitude is very important! Life is really very simple, but we insist on making it complicated because of anxiety, ignorance and lack of patience. The most important thing in life is to enjoy life and be happy, to be happy is all that matters, life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it. Therefore, learn to enjoy every minute of your life.

Infertility can be experienced by anyone irrespective of faith, status, colour or race, it is not limited to a certain class of people, life is so funny that the people who are least expected to have children have them without any problem while the reverse is the case with those that are expected to have them effortlessly. When they ask the 'why me' question, most people who suffer infertility have about the same expression like;

- I married as a virgin.
- We do have unprotected sex regularly.
- I have never had any abortion.
- I was faithful to my spouse.
- I do have regular menstruation.
- I am careful of where and what I eat.
- I exercise regularly.

- Doctors said nothing is wrong with us, therefore we shouldn't have problem getting pregnant.
- As a man I do have regular erection and ejaculates.
- As a bachelor, I was a tough guy amongst ladies.
- All my siblings have children.
- I am a devoted and committed Christian.
- I never wished evil to anyone.
- I pray and fast constantly.

This and many more are the regular answers infertile couple gives whenever they question 'Why Me'? The scripture is replete with people who had experienced infertility and eventually became parents thus giving us the assurance that we are not alone in this journey, all we need to do is relax and make use of the available resources at our disposal.

The first step towards victory is taken when you refuse to be a captive to infertility in which you find yourself, being conscious of your status and making effort to find solution is the attitude needed to free your mind and set yourself free from pity-party, failure to do this will not only prolong the situation but make you become a slave to it. Many have become a shadow of their bubbly self because they fail to move forward and therefore remain infertile, some have refused to do anything meaningful in life because they have been living in self-denial of their situation, some are afraid of what people will say about their infertility because they pass all the approval rating stated above.

You only fail in life when you refuse to get up! When you experience infertility, see it as a message and call to help others overcome. Infertility is a challenge, not a prison life sentence. In the end it is not how long that counts, but how well you handle your life to the end. Wearing a long face is not the solution but wearing a happy face. Believe that life is worth living and live it well because overburdening yourself with life will reduce your life.

When you ask the question 'why me', my response often is, 'if not you, who else'? By nature, man do not want anything that will affect their plans, forgetting that the creator has better thoughts and plan for man as His creature – **Jeremiah 29:11**. Abraham waited for 25 years (**Gen.21:1-3**) and in trying to also answer the question 'why me', he did a self-help that has continued to create unrest for humanity, Rachael the wife of Jacob in (**Genesis 30:1-3, 37:19-28**) answered 'why me', by giving her maid to Jacob to bear children, these same children sold Joseph her biological son into slavery.

Psalms 24:1-2, The Earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof expressly tells us that God is in charge and in control of everything going on in the world including you, and He neither slumbers nor sleeps, your set time **SHALL SURELY COME!**

Every couple experiencing infertility should understand clearly that God is not unaware of your situation, but He has allowed you to pass through this because you are fitted with the needed ability to be victorious, you are like gold passing through the fire and coming out with greater value.

When you say 'Why me'?

It is saying God is partial, hateful and incompetent. It is wishing that other people should be in your shoes (which is evil) and you in theirs; this is an act of ingratitude and contrary to His commands, which says in all situation give thanks for that is the will of God concerning you. It amounts to doubting the claim of God as the Omnipotent (the All Powerful - **Number 23:19**). It is calling God a liar (**Titus 1:2**) You may be thinking that it's taking a long time for the promises to be fulfilled and for God to intervene but remember that God is not slack concerning His promises. God's timetable is different from yours and He's not bound to work with yours, otherwise He will lose His honour, glory and authority (**1 Chronicles 29:11**)

What steps should I take when conception is delayed;

- ❖ Do not keep quite
- ❖ Seek counsel – Spiritual and Medical
- ❖ Demystify myths around fertility
- ❖ Educate yourself
- ❖ Explore available solutions
- ❖ Relax and pursue other Interests
- ❖ Continue in prayers and in trusting God

A positive and happy mood, a can-do spirit, a confident and never give up attitude are ingredients required to overcome infertility, whenever you are tempted to ask God why me, put a hand across your mouth and cover it up, by doing so you will avoid falling into temptation, it may seem impossible, but it can be done. Lighten up, laugh more, enjoy life and smile more, this helps to create an environment that is conducive for conception. Many people have overcome infertility, your case shall not be different, learn to encourage each other and keep hope alive.

Your testimony is *Next!*

CHAPTER 5

QUIT THE BLAME GAME

A man's perspective

Someone said, and I quote: If you don't know where you are going everywhere that you find yourself will look like you're there. 'Most ignorance is invincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know'- Aldous Huxley.

I got married on the 19th of March 2011, and today whenever I remember the days of ignorance during our waiting period, I laugh all by myself, but I've learnt to forgive myself.

Ignorance is Ignorance!

We waited for the fruit of the womb for almost four years and it was as if we had waited for four hundred years. During the waiting period, my wife had gone for all medical examinations, but I did not do anything, fooling myself that I am a man of faith. This continued for years without doing anything except praying, fasting and blaming each other for the delay.

Along the line we came in contact with PARAH FAMILY FOUNDATION in 2013 by divine direction, and for the first time it dawned on me that I needed to go for a medical check. I went for the check and it was confirmed by the Doctor that I had a very low sperm count and that I won't be able to impregnate my wife. After the medical examination, I availed myself with all treatments and God confirmed His word. We had our first baby in the May 2015 and the second baby came in March 2017.

God is awesome!

Michael

Are you in a blame game?

Quit the blame game! It is not unusual to find couples blaming each other for their present situation.

The women do say;

“I married you as a virgin”.

“I have not aborted in the past”.

“I menstruate and ovulate monthly”.

“You do not last long during sex (2mins man)”.

Among many other things, men also do say;

“Nothing is wrong with me”.

“I had impregnated someone in the past before I married you”.

“I married as a virgin”.

“I had never been diagnosed with any sexually transmitted disease before”.

“I come from a family where everyone is fruitful”.

“I never lived a wayward and careless life” among others.

Psychology has adduced some reasons as to why we play the blame game, but rarely win. These reasons are also applicable to the blame game in infertility.

Things happen to us, the food was left to burn on the stove, the wrongly placed coffee mug falls off and breaks, your car breaks down on the way to work, the zip of your trousers failed when you're already dressed and running late for church. When the unexpected incidences like this occur to you, what's your first thought? Do you immediately figure out who was at fault, other than you? Or you do resign yourself to accepting responsibility for such common mishaps that were under your control?

Not everyone is equally likely to engage in the blame game, but there is a little scientific research to advise us on who is most likely to do so. On the extreme blame side, you would find people who can always find something else to blame. You could attribute the burnt meal to your partner who doesn't help enough around the house, forcing you to multitask and forget the pot going up in smoke. You do not blame your mug for breaking, but you might blame your partner who placed it there. The zip failed due to your bad handling in your moment of haste, definitely not so. The zip was not properly made; someone should make good zippers around here!

At the other end of the spectrum are people who blame themselves for everything, even when they've had nothing to do with an unfortunate outcome. This isn't just false modesty or fishing for reassurance; some people do believe that they cause every bad thing all or most of the time. It's also possible, of course, to blame fate or a higher power, especially when there's no one else who could conceivably have caused the outcome. You certainly wouldn't be able to blame your partner, or yourself, for the devastating effect of a tree crashing on your parked car in a storm (although maybe you'd blame your partner for not getting the tree cut down). And if you're quite religious you may attribute such events to a higher power that is either testing your faith or punishing you for your misdeeds.

Blaming yourself when something goes wrong might relate to a sense of having someone to 'hang', someone to attribute the failure to, in this case yourself, where you see yourself as inept, foolish or irresponsible. That tendency might motivate you to attribute your successes to external factors, such as fate, chance or luck, as well.

And there's always the reverse angle to it where people excuse themselves for the same negative behavior that they blame others for. With this background in mind, here are some reasons we play the blame game.

- Blame is an excellent defense mechanism. Whether you call it projection, denial, or displacement, blame helps you preserve your sense of self-esteem by avoiding awareness of your own flaws or failings.
- Blame is a tool we use when we're in attack mode. Falling into the category of a destructive conflict resolution method, blame is a way to try to hurt our partners.
- It's easier to blame someone else than to accept responsibility.
- There's less effort involved in recognizing your contributions to a bad situation than in accepting the fact that you're actually at fault and changing so you don't do it again.

Unlike other games, the more often you play the blame game, the more you lose. Learning to tell when you need to own up to your role in a bad situation will help you grow from your experiences, and ultimately help you achieve more fulfilling relationships.

We should be conscious of the fact that change is the only constant thing. Couples will achieve better and faster results in overcoming infertility if they work together as one and if they stop the habit of apportioning blame to each other. Can two walk together where there is no agreement? Not at all! JESUS said you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free! True freedom can only be experienced when concerted effort is made by those who value and appreciate it. If life is not a bed of roses, efforts must be put in to ensure it turns out in your favour. No one goes to war with the intention of winning and is preoccupied with other thoughts and distractions, says the good book.

The journey to fruitfulness could be a dash and not long distance when the affected couples realizes that it takes two to tango and therefore unite their thoughts and give it all that is required.

Fertility issue in Africa from the stand point of culture is always considered as a woman's inability to become pregnant after marriage, it shields the men and heaps all the blame on the woman, this misconception unfortunately has resulted in couples waiting for several years to conceive, resulting in the men not giving the needed assistance and cooperation which leads to frustration for the women.

In some cases, the men will refuse blatantly to submit themselves for medical examinations with a plethora of excuses part of which were stated earlier. Some women also follow this path of shifting blame with their own counter excuses as stated earlier too. This cultural belief has made men to have a very wrong notion and believe that since they have regular erection and penetration during sex they are as fit as a fiddle and should be able to impregnate their partner without any hitch.

Medical research has however proven this cultural and ignorant believe to be untrue. Research has shown that in infertility treatment, women are responsible for 40% and men 40% while the remaining 20% is ascribed to unknown causes. With the type of lifestyle prevalent amongst men of this age, many factors have been discovered to be responsible for men's infertility and until there is a deliberate effort on the part of men to correct these trends, the percentage will definitely increase in the very near future.

Some of the causes of Male infertility are listed below;

1. Stress
2. Untreated sexually transmitted diseases
3. Inadequately treated sexually transmitted diseases
4. Smoking

5. Excessive Alcoholic consumption
6. Low sperm count
7. No sperm - Azoospermia
8. Substance abuse
9. Professional job hazards (exposure to chemicals)

The above listed causes show that men need to watch and pay great attention to self-care, because the era of blame game is over.

There should be no name calling, abuses and apportioning of blames when it comes to infertility amongst couples, what is needed is to collectively join hands to tackle the issue. Efforts must be made to get treatment together and where possible all medical appointments must be attended together. The husbands must protect their wives from external ridicule most especially from in-laws and this gesture must be replicated by the wives too.

When the external negative interference is eliminated especially from either or both in-laws, it helps couples to concentrate on finding the best solution to their infertility. Couples must ensure they find and join a support group that understands their predicament and will be willing to walk the journey with them. The saying that the journey of a thousand miles starts with a step is very applicable to couples who are making efforts to find solutions, because one will chase a thousand while two will chase ten thousand. Wherever there is unity, progress is inevitable, couples need to encourage and cheer each other up and by so doing, the tension in the home will be reduced and eventually eliminated.

From the benefits of hindsight, my interactions and experience in counseling, I will like to emphasize here that it is the desire and expectations of all women to experience child birth, while the men are the happiest because it is an ego booster for them when they eventually become parents. A change of attitude is therefore very important and necessary if couples desire to find solution to their infertility. Blaming each other is not right and acceptable. The blame game must stop, and all efforts must be channeled towards jointly and collectively finding the needed solution.

How beautiful it is for couples to live together in unity, this should be your goal and aspirations always.

It is important to note that during this period especially when couples are engaged in this blame game, the level of pressure on either or both sides rises to the heavens. Such stress might include but not limited to:

- Sexual stress
- Conflict on when and from who or where to seek help
- When to inform others
- Fears of divorce
- Suspicion of infidelity
- Financial strain
- Inability to have a unified opinion.

But with benefit of acquired wisdom, such stress can be reduced through:

- Qualitative and effective communication.
- Having a balanced life (Work, Play and Worship)
- Devising of appropriate coping mechanisms, one of which is speaking out, or better still, counseling.
- Making plans together (projects, finance, travels, children welfare and upbringing etc.)

Rather than being immersed in the game of controversy that births stress, it should be a time to win, a time to win alone as individuals and a time to win together as a couple.

Winning together!

I got married 15 years ago as a virgin, few months after I completed my NYSC service in Abuja and soon settled down to married life, hoping to have my children in quick succession. I deliberately mentioned my virgin status at the time of marriage because I thought it was my license to automatic conception. It therefore came as a rude shock when my husband and I had to undergo painful and humiliating tests to ascertain the cause of the delay in conception after our first year in marriage. I didn't give it much thought when I didn't conceive in my first year of marriage but started getting worried when the second year went by without any confirmed pregnancy from the tests.

At that point my husband and I went beyond regular Doctors and started consulting Fertility Specialists and Doctors. Further tests revealed that my husband had **Low Sperm Count**, while I had **Uterine Fibroid**. The diagnostic treatment and procedures offered afterwards all failed which further dampened our hope. Afterwards, I embarked on several spiritual exercises for the fruit of the womb, while also indulging in personal fervent prayers. The prayers helped me find succor as I continued to anchor my faith in God. Several years down the line, I was introduced to the Parah Family Foundation - PFF envisioned by Princess Dayo Odukoya.

I especially loved the fact that the foundation anchored on the key aspects of fruitfulness with focus on the Family, Spiritual and Medical. I learnt it was important to maintain a peaceful home front, maintain a healthy life style while also praying and seeking children. My hope came alive as I saw several other women in the foundation who conceived naturally and others who conceived and delivered healthy children through Assisted Reproductive Techniques. My husband and I decided to opt for IVF -Invitro fertilization. We had over five failed attempts before we finally met a Doctor in one of Parah's recommended hospitals where I finally conceived and delivered healthy twin baby girls to the glory of God, thereby putting an end to over a decade of barrenness.

I will encourage every couple seeking children whether biological or through adoption to visit the Parah Family Foundation for counseling. The three main strategies of PFF of focusing on the Family, Spiritual and Medical really proved true in my life. I recall how the President of PFF, Mrs. Jumoke Airuoyo availed herself and led me to Papa Adeboye's monumental old place of abode (Open Heaven) at the RCCG camp for prayers before I embarked on this final procedure that turned out positive. I also seized every available opportunity to serve and to visit orphanages adopted by Parah, which is one of PFF's core mission. Once the opportunity arose to visit the Ijamido's Children Home, I embarked on that trip as a point of contact for the fruit of the womb. In all, these prophetic actions plus the medical intervention culminated into this wonderful testimony and bundles of joy we have today.

My gratitude goes to Parah Family Foundation Visioner and her amazing spouse for their relentless support over the years. She kept encouraging my husband and I to seek medical help during the moments when our hope and finances had failed us. Thank you for availing yourselves to be used by God to restore families. I also want to use this medium to express my gratitude to my employer who started this journey with us over a decade ago. May the Almighty God be your eternal defense and comfort you on all sides! And to his wife, a spiritual model and mentor who took over the baton as soon as I conceived to ensure a smooth pregnancy phase and delivery, I say thank you.

Indeed, the testimonies in Parah since inception are proofs that living one's life to make impact is of utmost importance. I am grateful to God for our first Parah baby IniOluwa Odukoya through which the vision for PFF was birthed. - **Ify**

From the above testimony, patience, trust in God with a winning attitude from both couple gave them victory!

In winning alone, make it a time to discover self and find purpose, find the reason God created you. Then evolve and keep evolving till you become the best version of yourself. Be involved in

giving, find a need and fill it. And lastly, remain connected to the source or sources of your joy, laughter, wholeness and peace.

In winning together as a couple on the other hand, you need to deliberately strengthen your marital bonds by identifying a common purpose. Learn to communicate boundaries with open mindedness. You should also find a cause and pursue it, engage in mind engaging exercises, eat healthily and maintain a reasonable weight. Do your best to attend and be a part of a support group meeting such as Parah Family Foundation. And most importantly, learn to take responsibility.

CHAPTER 6

Wait for it, it is Possible!

And they waited!

God is faithful! On the 20th of November 2017, he blessed us with a set of triplets. **All boys!**

We got married about 10 years ago, precisely July 5th, 2008 and like every other couple, we were expecting to get pregnant. However, all through that year and the following year, nothing happened. In 2010, I eventually got pregnant but lost it at about the 23rd week. The following year, I got pregnant again, but it was ectopic.

We kept on trusting God that one day He'll answer our prayers and bless us with the fruit of the womb. When you see those who got married at about the same time as you, having not just one or two but three children, you begin to wonder if you would have yours. However, in all of these we kept hope alive. We kept confessing that we were going to have triplets and in fact went ahead to name them even before they were conceived.

One day, a mutual friend of ours invited us to Parah Family Foundation where we joined others who were also waiting on God for the fruit of the womb in prayers, teachings and supporting one another. The support system of the foundation was so strong and the testimonies we were getting of those who got their miracles so encouraging that they kept us going.

My husband was not a member initially and so only attended when I invited him for special programmes, nonetheless he would make sure that he woke me up on the day of our meetings to ensure I attended and whenever he saw that I didn't go for the meeting, he asked why. He felt the meetings would help me to keep hope alive and afford me the opportunity to pray corporately with those who were also waiting.

On the foundation's Thanksgiving Day in 2016, I won a competition which saw me being given a free all-expense paid fertility treatment. We were asked to recite the foundation's confession by heart and I decided to give it a shot. I didn't have a clue what the reward would be, I am just competitive by nature and thought to do it. In fact, I thought the prize would be a book maybe

on fertility or some fertility related products or a comprehensive fertility analysis because I had been given one that I didn't follow up on. When I told my husband about the competition, he encouraged me to participate and helped me memorize the confession. My husband thought the prize for winning the competition might be a trip to Dubai. Funny!

Wow! My husband and I were excited when I won the competition and learnt I would be having a free IVF procedure. Somehow, we knew our time had come. Hitherto, I had undergone the procedure three times and all three failed. I remember whilst praying before I had the procedure, I was always telling God that this time around, it must end in praise because Parah's money must not go to waste.

I went for the treatment where God used an amazing Doctor and a God-fearing man who would pray first before doing the procedure (which is one thing I like about him), and by the grace of God, here we are with our bundles of joy. We got exactly what we asked for; a set of triplets, all of them boys. God is indeed faithful and makes all things beautiful in his time. Glory!

For those of us who are members of Parah Family Foundation and still trying for a child, I would like to encourage us to keep trusting and believing in God because like the sun that rises every day, He is ever faithful. In His time, He makes all things beautiful. This is your time for a testimony. Say your confession like your whole life depends on it, preferably at midnight and meditate on every single word because those words are powerful and please do not cancel everything with doubts. God is faithful and will show himself strong and mighty. He is the Almighty.

Make yourself available at meetings, avail yourself of advice from medical personnel that are invited, learn from people's experiences and most importantly, pray without ceasing. It will end in praise! - **Ngozi**

Wait a minute!

It's obvious that most parents would agree that their children don't want to wait for anything. The last thing children want to hear is Mom saying, "Not now". It can prompt anger, frustration, even hopelessness. This "disease" of waiting follows most of us into our adult years. We may not respond with the same emotional outbursts as children, but most of us still hate waiting for what we want. And our modern society just makes it worse. We want everything done quickly, such is our dilemma as Christians. While society makes every attempt to make our life easier and faster, God works on a very different timetable. In His mind, nothing is wrong with waiting. In fact, waiting can actually be a positive good that He often uses to make us more like his Son.

Apart from children, I don't know anyone for that matter who likes to wait. Do you? (I don't think so). Waiting is hard work and at times can even test our faith. It's especially difficult when there are no guarantees that our waiting will ever end in this lifetime. Desires we long for, prayers we've been praying, and news we're waiting to hear can tempt us to be impatient, discouraged, worry and even wonder if God cares.

Waiting for God requires the patience of faith. Isaiah says; "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength". (**Isaiah 30:15**). "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily". (**Isaiah 28:16**).

Saul lost a kingdom because he could not wait. Moses did not enter the Promised Land because he became impatient with the murmuring of Israel. These things were written so we might learn from the mistakes of the pioneers of our faith.

Perhaps this is why the Bible talks so much about waiting. God wants us to know that waiting is far from a passive activity in which we do nothing. In fact, Scripture teaches us that God wants us to actively participate in the work He desires to accomplish. Waiting strategically can cultivate good fruit in our lives such as patience, perseverance and endurance. It also draws us closer to our Saviour and points those who are watching us to the gospel.

God told Noah there would be flood, but it only came after 120 years. He promised Abraham a child but took 25 years to bring it to pass. He told him his descendants would inherit the Promised Land, but they had to wait for 430 years. Nevertheless, God is never late and He is never early, He is always just on time. Since the righteous live by our faith in God, then the righteous must wait for God. So, don't be in a hurry. When you commit something into the hands of God, wait for Him to bring it to pass. Remember this: "He has made everything beautiful in its time." (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**).

Choosing at the Crossroads

Simply because we don't start out willing to wait, our natural response to waiting is often anger or doubt. Fortunately, God is gracious and merciful in His understanding of our tendencies. Simply feeling deep complex emotions in waiting especially for significant things, like a pregnancy is not necessarily sinful itself, but we can decide where those emotions take us.

We can decide to exalt these feelings. We might act on them by taking matters into our own hands. Or perhaps we will not act, but we'll make an idol out of the good for which we are waiting. Every passing day is another piece of wood in the fire of bitterness, impatience, ingratitude, perhaps even resentment against the God who won't give us what we want.

By God's grace, we can choose to wait as He intends. "Waiting on the Lord is the opposite of running ahead of the Lord, and it's the opposite of bailing out on the Lord", writes John Piper. It's staying at your appointed place while He says stay at His. We have the choice then to take a

deep breath, loosen our clenched fists and let God be God as we continue hoping in His greatness.

Blessing of waiting in Faith

Some of the greatest Bible characters such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David and others had to wait for many years for God's promises. Everything that happened in the meantime was used to prepare them inwardly as well as outwardly, just as He's doing with you now. When the time of their promise was come, they were blessed beyond measure. God invites us to trust in His goodness today and His faithfulness tomorrow. Surrendering control to Him is the main route to experience His love and peace. This is the process that unites our hearts with His, creating a level of maturity and character in us capable of taking us into the future. And it's this same maturity and character built in the '**school of waiting**' that enables us to enjoy His future blessings all the more.

Why will God make us wait?

Waiting on God can be frustrating, but it can also be transforming. Perhaps you must wait for your phone to charge, that feeling of waiting when there's an important call to make or a message to respond to. Although your battery is flat, you've plugged the phone in and now there's nothing to do but sit and wait, even if it's only a matter of minutes (and even though it's nothing more than a phone), you start to feel tense and anxious, wondering how long this could possibly take.

As established earlier in this chapter, most people don't like to wait. We often get frustrated waiting in a queue or waiting behind the slow car in the fast lane. We are always in a rush to get to the next place or the next thing. This mindset often carries over into our spiritual lives with us rushing to the next big thing. But while most of us are in a hurry, it seems God is usually not in a hurry. It seems He always has a plan and a purpose for everything. However, the problem with waiting is not having all the details. Looking from our perspective, we have everything figured out and we just want God to move within our timeframe.

It is a rare occurrence to have God do things according to our timetable, and because of this experience we can easily get discouraged. If we are not careful, we could even think He's a forgetful God who has forgotten us. In the Gospels we see this happening to Mary and Martha while they were waiting on Jesus to come and heal their brother, Lazarus. When Jesus finally

shows up, He is accused of taking too long. God always has good reasons for making us wait. Waiting is a part of life and one of God's tools for developing people. The Bible is full of stories of people having to wait on God, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, Daniel, Jesus, Paul and countless others.

In looking at the lives of some of the great people who had to wait on God in the Bible, some of the following are identifiable as the reasons God makes us wait.

Waiting reveals our true motives

Waiting has a way of bringing out the best and worst in people. People who don't have good motives won't wait long because they're not interested in the commitment it takes to see something through. They're too interested in short-term gains or success. Most of us have good intentions, but a lot of what we want to accomplish is an attempt to make a name for ourselves or for our own ego. It hurts to say this, but it's often true.

Waiting builds Patience in our Lives

Patience in waiting for small things leads to having patience in the bigger things. If we can't wait for God to do a small thing, we certainly can't wait for something bigger. Most times our problem is that our perspective is usually wrong, and it is in waiting that he helps us to build an unwavering trust in Him. More like resigning into his loving hands.

Waiting builds anticipation

Why do children get so excited around Christmas? They've been waiting for it since the last Christmas and the wait has produced anticipation. We tend to appreciate things the longer we have to wait for them. Just compare the reaction of a woman with a child after several years to that of a woman who had them without waiting and you'll understand their different levels of appreciation. She had been waiting, though it took a few years to see it happen, but when the day finally comes, she would hardly contain herself. Because of having to wait so long, she'll tend to cherish and take care of it more than others might. People tend to treasure the things they had to wait for.

Waiting transforms our character

Waiting has a way of rubbing off the rough edges of our lives. Most of us know the story of Moses delivering the Israelites from the Egyptians. It's a grand story of God doing great miracles.

But we don't often talk about Moses having to wait in the desert for 40 years before God came to him. God used this time of waiting to transform his character. We know this because when he was a young man he was brash and impatient. In his hastiness he killed a man and hid the

body. When his sin was made public, he ran for his life and was exiled to the desert. When he was given a second chance he opted to do it God's way and in God's time. In the end, the Israelites were delivered from slavery and Moses became a great leader. Waiting transformed the life of Moses and it does the same for you and me.

I must also say here that it's worth the while to wait on God with patience knowing fully well that He makes all things beautiful in His own time.

If you're trying to get pregnant and you are having difficulty, you know just how much of an emotional roller coaster it can be. The joy of planning a pregnancy, starting or growing your family, and all the wonderful emotions that goes with it can leave you excited at times. But it's also very easy to get discouraged when the pregnancy test comes back negative *again* — or if your doctor discovers *yet another* road block.

Staying positive and keeping your spirits up are important steps for the health of your journey. But I know this is often easier said than done, so I've compiled 20 of my favourite quotes that help keep me inspired when it seems like my dream of becoming a mom will never become a reality. I hope they inspire you, too!

1. Worth the Wait "The longer you wait for something, the more you'll appreciate it when you get it because anything worth having is definitely worth waiting for".

— Anonymous

2. Battle On "We must try not to sink beneath our anguish, but battle on".

— JK Rowling

3. Hope Whispers "When the world says, 'Give up,' Hope whispers, 'Try one more time'".

— Anonymous

4. One Bloom "All it takes is one bloom of hope to make a spiritual garden".

— Tern Guillemets

5. Tomorrow "What isn't today might be tomorrow".

— Anonymous

6. Finding Focus "Sometimes in tragedy we find out life's purpose the eye sheds a tear to find its focus".

— Robert Brault

7. Always Remember "Promise me you'll always remember that you're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you know".

— Christopher Robin to Winnie the Pooh

8. Get Up “Fall seven times, get up eight”.

— Japanese Proverb

9. Last Key “Don’t be discouraged. It’s often the last key in the bunch that opens the lock”.

— Anonymous

10. Okay “It’s going to be okay in the end. If it’s not okay, it’s not the end”.

— Anonymous

11. Leap “The jump is so frightening between where I am and where I want to be. Because of all I may become, I will close my eyes and leap”.

— Mary Anne Rudmacher

12. Change “Change your thoughts and you change your world”.

— Norman Vincent Pearle

13. Chasing the Dream “There’s no telling how many miles you have to run while chasing a dream”.

— Anonymous

14. Courage “Courage is going from failure to failure without ever losing enthusiasm”.

— Winston Churchill

15. The Stars “When it’s dark enough, you can see the stars”.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

16. Know Yourself “When you’re feeling your worst, that’s when you get to know yourself the best”.

— Leslie Grossman

17. Grow Strong “Perhaps strength doesn’t reside in having never been broken but in the courage required to grow strong in the broken places”.

— Anonymous

18. Little Voice “Hope is the little voice you hear whisper ‘maybe’ when it seems the world is shouting no”.

— Anonymous

19. Start Over “Hope is a renewable option: If you run out of it at the end of the day, you get to start over in the morning”.

— Anonymous

20. Try “Courage is the discovery that you may not win and trying when you know you can lose”. — Tom Krause

CHAPTER 7

Your Testimony is Next!

The Parah Experience – First Triplets

In Parah, we don't just rest when you have conceived; we get restful when the result is evident. The accompanying testimonies allude to that.

(Events of the D-Day) – Experience of a man at delivery:

What would we have been able to do without the wonderful PARAH family? We were in a panic state at the early hours of 20th of November 2017, but God used PARAH to make all things easy.

The President called all the relevant professionals, the Visioner and a board member were also very much on ground and all we were asked to do was to wait for a Doctor. Hmm, what would we and how could we have kept these boys in perfect state without PARAH? We left the hospital where my wife had been over the weekend and drove over to the Island Maternity.

We got there at about 6:35am. The traffic was light and every other thing we needed was on ground. The President didn't waste time in informing anyone that cares to listen that my wife was her daughter, and everything went smoothly. They stood by us throughout the event of the D-Day! I have never experienced this kind of love before in my life.

When they asked me at the hospital who I was and what I wanted, I always tell them that I am the husband to the daughter of the retired matron (President) and just like that, favour and swiftness of service are opened immediately. My wife was rolled in some minutes later and fear came upon me. It is good to pray and have a huge deposit in your prayer bank. Well, it is not my power that came through, It was the powerful God that came through for us. As all of these were happening, The Visioner and her team were still praying.

I borrowed from their strength just by seeing them pray, I became bolder to receive more of God's promises. The truth is that there is nothing as powerful as praying women. So true that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Fear came upon me when I saw the almost lifeless body of my wife on the stretcher after the CS. Then I understood better that all the talk about "I am a real man" is but some wishful thinking.

I stood some distance to be sure she was breathing because all of a sudden, the presence of the same woman I loved so much was beginning to scare me. No doubt, sweat beads must have gathered on my face and tears associated with some deep fear were cascading down from my eyes. Typical of the Doctors, no consolation, no soothing words, all I heard from the one that cared a bit among them was 'don't worry, she is fine', another Doctor passed and gave me some relieve. The last Doctor must be a mind reader because carelessly he uttered the word, 'she is not dead, and she will be ok'. I looked at him expecting more soothing words, but he was gone.

May be my wife was breathing after all, but my mind was confused at that moment. Thank God for Parah and all those who prayed. By 7:56am, Jesse came out and was rushed to the neonatal ward. All these while, the President was everywhere, climbing the stairs and avoiding the lift if possible. I am still wondering where that entire stair climbing energy came from. Prayers were still going on the floor where the theatre was. Then came Joel and Joshua and the Doctor that accompanied us from the Fertility Specialist Hospital was happy that the CS was successful.

With the Parah team and all the praying partners of Parah, the angel of death was severely rebuked and chased away.

My wife made it and it was such a relief to see her breathing. Initially I was bothered about the heat from the place where my wife was kept but I didn't know that God was working everything out for her good. I later realize that though the heat from the air conditioner was high, but it helped accelerate her recovery. By this time, it was just about 8:35a.m. The President sure knows how to plug the right socket! She was already making arrangement for my wife to be wheeled into the right bed and positioned for her quick recovery. I was running helter-skelter, but she was precise, don't blame me, I wanted to be sure everything was okay but she knows better than to panic and before I was ready to think of the easy way out, my wife was already at the right bed under great care.

I went to the hospital on the 20th of Nov 2017 without any clothes for the babies and was in another panic mode when our children were brought forth. How do I go back home, what's the way forward for the clothes? Still on my downward spiral thought, a hand tapped me and congratulated me and asked for clothes for the children. I gave my reasons for not coming with them to the hospital. She smiled and said okay and in about 2 hours later, all the necessary baby things came courtesy of Parah Family.

If you are going through any challenge in life at the moment, I want to pray and ask the God of PARAH to stand up tall for you in Jesus name.

No matter the delay, no matter how long, there is always a final destination to any journey. **Isaiah 60:22b “The Lord will hasten it in its time”**. There is always an appointed time for every man and for everything under the sun.

Great is the LORD! GOD BLESS PARAH and all its members in Jesus name!

Magi (Ngozi's Husband)

The stories are many; some have gone from 1 year to 25 years in marriage and are still looking for the fruit of the womb. It can indeed be a journey that can make or break a couple.

It can be from any angle, family, friends, even individuals. I have seen and read many stories on the difficulties of having kids after marriage. I have experienced this also. I can tell my story as it is.

My Story – A man's perspective

My wife and I would have been married for 15 years come December 6th, 2018. It was a very special wedding and all the blessings and excitement of a fresh union was displayed at the wedding ceremony. We traveled out of the country the next day for our honeymoon. Note: three months after the wedding, I observed the beginning of a sad Journey.

We made love and upon ejaculation, I saw for the first time that my semen was not the normal creamy rich fluid. It was all watery. I had never observed this before, so on the same day I hurriedly went to the clinic. I was given an appointment to abstain for a couple of days and return for a lab test. I did and the result I got was still poor. History will tell us that in this case, it becomes hard to tell your partner this. What could be the cause? I pondered. I opened on the infertility issue to my wife and ensured that there was no blame whatsoever on her all through the years of the delay in conception and the journey for a cure started.

We tried both herbal remedies, modern medical interventions, prayers, and all you can ever imagine excluding ritual or *babalawo*. We went for IVF at the big fertility clinics in Lagos, very popular ones at that. I took series of injections that I didn't bother to enquire about their medical components or side effects, all in my desperation for a cure. My wife and I watched as the years ran by without any hope for a cure. In our broken and vulnerable state, I watched as my wife became a full-time prayer warrior and went seeking almost every man of God who had a revelation on the fruit of the womb. I became uninterested in going to church. I made a pact with God and a personal decision not to attend church for a year. This will not be agreeable to many, but that's fine.

Few years ago, at the second attempt of trying out a failed IVF procedure with another fertility Doctor, it was a very sad day for both of us. I can't tell who was more sad. But since 'men don't cry', it may underscore our emotional score card. But thanks to my very dear friend who came all the way to the house and took it upon herself to ride in the journey with us. She only remembers this when I reminded her of her visit to the house, many years ago. Out of her love for those who are in search for the beautiful gift of children, she came up with the Parah Family Foundation. And of course, my wife was an active member; she would do anything as far as God is there.

The Visioner and her spouse embraced many couples with similar issues and many testified to their bundles of Joy. I laid in wait for the slogan that always says, "My testimony is next!". When will my testimony come? I asked as the years kept rolling by. We did the IVF procedure again, not once but repeatedly. You can sum that up in naira. And I told the Visioner in her office that I was not going to embark on any more procedures. I had given up and I would rather remain the way I am with my wife than lose her life. She encouraged me and even offered to grant a loan for the procedure. In her words, "the success and testimony is more than the money". I was encouraged.

This time, we went to a new specialist. The first transfer was not successful as I had to build my sperm count. I had stumbled on a supplement on the pages of a magazine and decided to invest in the supplement for 4 months from December 2017 to March 2018. In April 2018, we embarked on our last IVF cycle that culminated into the testimony of the bundles of joy that we have today. With the support of my employer and his amazing and God sent wife, our beautiful Zoe and Karis have joined us to complete the blessings of our marriage. Our sincere thanks go to Parah Family Foundation for the good work they are doing, and we believe it will go a long way in reaching out to those who are seeking for the fruit of the womb.

My advice, pray and listen to God, with the right attitude and obedience, you will achieve the miracle you seek. God has given each of us the gift of life, let us open our mind's eye to see and use them. - **Willy**

Your testimony is *NEXT!*

Confession for Conception

I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. Gen 17:6

- ❖ Heavenly father, we thank you for your word that is settled in heaven and your faithfulness that endures to all generations (**Ps119:89**). You have blessed and commanded that we should be fruitful and multiply (**Gen1: 28**). Your word assures us that you will bless the fruit of our body and none shall be barren (**Deut. 7:13-14**). You have said Lord that all sicknesses will be taken away from us. (**Deut. 7:15**)
- ❖ Thank you, Lord, for taking away our reproach (**Gen. 30:23**). We rejoice because our children will surround our table. (**Ps 128:3**). We shall not cast our young nor be barren in the land (Ex 23:26). Children are the heritage of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is His reward (**Ps 127:3**); thank you Lord because we shall not be left out of your reward.
- ❖ We know Lord that without faith; it is impossible to please you (**Heb. 11:6**). Even as Abraham and Sarah by faith received strength to conceive, we also receive that strength by faith in Jesus name and we judge you faithful who has promised (**Heb. 11:11**).

We bless your holy name Lord, for You have promised that they shall not be ashamed who wait for You (**Is.49:23**) so we hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for we know that He who promised is faithful (**Heb. 10:23**).

- ❖ Thank you, Father God, that we are joyful parents of children (**Ps 113:9**); we are indeed fruitful. Lord you have said in your word that whatever we ask in prayer believing we will receive (**Matt 21:22**); and like Hannah Lord, we can declare that for these children we prayed, and the Lord has granted us our petition which we asked of Him. (**1 Sam 1: 27**).
- ❖ Body, we speak to you in Jesus name. You will come in line and agreement with the Word of God. Every organ and tissue in our bodies will function according to God's original plan and we forbid any malfunction in the name of Jesus (**Gal.3:13; Rom.8:11**). We confess and declare that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, redeemed, cleansed and sanctified by the blood of Jesus Christ.

- ❖ This is the confidence that we have in You, that if we ask anything according to Your will, You hear us; and if You hear us, we know we have the petition we desire of You. We have it now, we declare we are fruitful. Thank You, Father, in Jesus name.

My Testimony is NEXT!

Scriptures: Ps 127:3, Gen 1:28, Ps 139:14 Gal 3:13; Heb.11:11

Confession during pregnancy & safe delivery

1. Father, I thank you for filling my womb with life.
2. I thank you for this miracle growing inside me, in the secret place of my womb and we thank you for blessing us with the fruit of our bodies.
3. I break myself loose from the bondage of fear in childbirth.
4. I speak to each part of my body and command it to line up according to God's perfect working order.
5. I command my body to come in line with good health.
6. I thank the Lord for this child(ren) shall be great and shall do exploits in your name.
7. I decree that no sickness or plague shall come over my child(ren) in the name of Jesus.
8. I forbid this child(ren) from inheriting any evil from past generations in Jesus name.
9. I speak wholeness, soundness and perfection into the heart, eyes, skin, bones, and teeth of my child(ren) in the name of Jesus.
10. I disallow my child(ren) from having, accepting any form of infirmity in the name of Jesus. The respiratory, digestive and circulatory systems of my child(ren) shall be normal, strong and healthy in the name of Jesus.
11. You my child(ren), hear the word of the Lord, your position must be head down at birth in the name of Jesus.
12. The cord shall be in perfect length and position, not around the child's neck in the name of Jesus.

13. O Lord Let my child(ren) be saved at an early age

14. O Lord let my child(ren) be filled with the Holy Spirit even from the womb.

15. I will not have morning sickness during pregnancy, Jesus Christ has borne all my sicknesses.

Exo. 23:25

16. I shall carry my child(ren)/baby to the appointed time in Jesus name. **Isaiah 46:3**

17. I will not have a miscarriage of any form or abnormal child(ren). **Exo 23:26**

18. I will not experience backache, cramps, varicose vein throughout pregnancy period in Jesus name. **Ps.38:8, Ps 4:13, Ps 27:1, Ps 103:5**

19. I receive strength throughout my pregnancy stage in Jesus name. **Isaiah 40:29-31**

20. I will not be tired or weak throughout my pregnancy because God is the strength of my life and I can do all things through Christ that gives me strength. **Ex. 15:2**

21. At the appointed time, I will deliver my child(ren) in peace in Jesus name. **Luke 1:57**

22. My labor will come at God's own time and like the Hebrew women, I will deliver quickly, even before the calculation of the mid-wives or doctors in Jesus name. **Isaiah 66:8b**

23. My child(ren) will be perfectly normal and complete. There will be no deformities or defeat.

Ps. 139:3-4

24. In child bearing and in pregnancy, I shall not die but live to declare the works of the Lord

Ps. 91:16, Ps 118:17

25. Father Lord, provide for all the needs of the family in Jesus name. **Phil. 4:19**

26. I shall live to testify about the goodness and glory of God in my life and family in Jesus name.

27. Confessions: **Luke 1:41, Palms 139:13, Isaiah 44:2, Gal.1:15, Jer. 1:5**

FERTILITY TERMINOLOGY AND ACRONYMS – (*Parah Dictionary*)

GLOSSARY

A

Amenorrhea: Absent menstruation, diagnosed when a woman doesn't have a period for 3 months.

Anovulation: A condition in which a woman doesn't ovulate or ovulates rarely.

Anti-Müllerian hormone (AMH): A hormone produced by ovarian follicles that can be tested to indicate the ovarian reserve.

Artificial insemination: A procedure in which sperm are inserted directly into a woman's cervix, fallopian tubes, or uterus.

Assisted Reproduction Technology (ART): A term for infertility treatments involving both egg and sperm, such as IVF, GIFT, ZIFT, and ICSI.

Azoospermia: A condition where a man has minimal or no sperm in his semen.

B

Basal Body Temperature (BBT): Your temperature when you first wake up; used as part of Fertility Awareness Method charting.

Blastocyst: Five to six days after a zygote is fertilized, it enters the uterus and is now called a blastocyst.

C

Cervical mucus (CM): Fluid secreted from the cervix which increases as you near ovulation and makes it easier for sperm to reach the egg.

Clomiphene citrate / Clomid: A fertility drug used to trigger follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH), which can jump-start the ovulation process.

Corpus luteum: After an egg is released during ovulation, the structure it leaves behind is called the corpus luteum. It produces progesterone, which helps sustain a new pregnancy.

Cryopreservation: The process of freezing extra eggs or embryos from a couple's ART cycle for potential future use.

Cycle Day (CD): Can refer to natural or ART cycles; e.g. CD1 is the start of the cycle (the first day of menstruation).

D

Days Post 3-Day Transfer (DP3DT): Refers to IVF transfer of embryos and is used to provide comparison to Days Past Ovulation; e.g. 6dp3dt is equivalent to 9dpo from a cycle perspective.

Diminished ovarian reserve: A diagnosis which means the ability of the ovary to produce eggs is reduced.

E

Ectopic pregnancy: A pregnancy in which the fertilized egg implants somewhere other than the uterus.

Egg: A female reproductive cell, also called an oocyte or ovum.

Egg Retrieval (ER): Part of IVF treatment in which eggs are surgically removed from ovaries for use or storage. .

Embryo: Ten to twelve days after fertilization, the amniotic sac forms and the blastocyst is now considered an embryo for the next eight weeks.

Embryo transfer: The procedure of placing an embryo into a woman's uterus during in vitro fertilization (IVF).

Endometriosis (ENDO): A painful condition where the endometrium grows in other places besides the uterus. This can cause bleeding, scarring, pain, and infertility.

Endometrium: The tissue lining the inside of the uterus.

Oestrogen: A female sex hormone that makes a woman's eggs mature and causes her endometrium to start thickening to prepare for pregnancy each month.

F

Fallopian Tubes: Two hollow tubes on either side of the uterus where the egg and sperm meet to begin the process of fertilization.

Fertilization: The penetration of the egg by the sperm and the combining of genetic material which results in pregnancy.

Foetus: The embryo is called a foetus from the eighth week after conception to the moment of birth.

Follicle: A structure in the ovaries that contains a developing egg.

Follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH): A reproductive hormone. In men, it stimulates sperm production. In women, it matures egg follicles. High levels of FSH (over 10 to 15mIU/mL) could mean you have few eggs left.

Frozen Embryo Transfer (FET): IVF treatment in which cryogenically frozen embryos are thawed and transferred into the uterus for gestation.

G

Gamete: A reproductive cell, either a sperm or an egg.

Gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT): This ART procedure extracts a woman's eggs, mixes them with sperm and immediately uses a catheter to place them into her fallopian tube to fertilize. This is a rarely used alternative to traditional IVF.

Gestational carrier: A surrogate who carries a baby not genetically related to her; another couple's embryo has been transferred inside her to carry.

Gestational sac: A fluid-filled structure that develops within the uterus early in pregnancy.

Gonadotropin Releasing Hormone (Gn-RH): A hormone that is involved in triggering ovulation.

H

Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG): A hormone released when a woman is pregnant. Home pregnancy tests are designed to recognize its presence in urine.

Hysterosalpinogram (HSG): An X-ray which involves injecting dye through the cervix into the uterus to determine if the fallopian tubes are open and the uterine cavity is normal.

Hysteroscopy (HSC): A procedure in which a thin, telescope-like instrument is inserted through the cervix into the uterus, allowing the doctor to see and photograph the area.

I

Implantation: Within 6 to 12 days after an egg becomes fertilized, it attaches (or implants) to the lining of the uterus.

In vitro fertilization (IVF): An ART procedure in which a woman's eggs are removed from her ovaries and fertilized outside her body in a lab. The resulting embryos are then transferred back into the woman's uterus.

Infertility: Medically, if a woman is under 34, she and her partner are experiencing infertility if they haven't conceived after having 12 months of unprotected sex. If she's over 35, they are experiencing infertility after six months of trying. .

Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI): In this IVF procedure, which takes place in a lab, a single sperm is injected directly into an egg. The fertilized egg is then implanted into a woman's uterus.

Intrauterine insemination (IUI): A procedure involving placing sperm directly into a woman's uterus to facilitate fertilization.

L

Laparoscopy: A procedure that involves insertion of a narrow, telescope-like instrument called a laparoscope through a small incision in the abdomen, allowing doctors to inspect various reproductive organs.

LH surge: A surge of Luteinizing Hormone helps a woman's egg to break through the follicle at ovulation. You can use an ovulation predictor kit to detect this surge in your urine and know that ovulation is likely within the next 12 to 24 hours.

Luteal Phase: The second half of the menstrual cycle.

Luteal Phase Defect (LPD): disorder characterized by low progesterone in the luteal phase, inadequate lining, and/or shorter periods.

Luteinizing hormone (LH): A reproductive hormone that, in women, is responsible for the monthly release of an egg. In men, LH is responsible for initiating the production of testosterone.

M

Male Factor Infertility: When the cause of a couple's infertility is due to problems in the man or when it contributes to existing fertility problems in the woman.

Miscarriage (also called spontaneous abortion): A pregnancy ending in the spontaneous loss of the embryo or foetus before 20 weeks of gestation.

Morphology: The size and shape of sperm.

Motility: Sperm's ability to move.

O

Oligozoospermia (Also oligospermia): A condition where a man has very few sperm, causing male factor infertility.

Oocyte: Another term for the female reproductive cell, also called an egg.

Ovarian Hyper stimulation Syndrome (OHSS): potentially serious complication of some types of ART, as a result of the medication used.

Ovarian reserve: The capacity of a woman's ovaries to produce healthy eggs.

Ovarian stimulation: The use of medications to stimulate the ovaries to develop eggs.

Ovulation: When an ovary releases a mature egg; a monthly occurrence that happens midway through the menstrual cycle in most women.

Ovulation Predictor Kit or Test: used to refer to the home test strips used to determine date of predicted ovulation.

Ovum: Another term for the female reproductive cell, also called an egg.

P

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID): Inflammation of the uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries due to infection.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS): A common hormonal condition which causes menstrual abnormalities, skin/hair changes, infertility and other health problems. The name comes from the multiple small cysts which line the ovaries of most women with the disorder. Learn more about PCOS.

Postcoital Test: A fertility test in which a sample of cervical mucus is taken after intercourse to check the number and behaviour of the sperm.

Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD): A procedure following the IVF process that extracts one or two cells from the embryos to screen for diseases and disorders. Learn more about PGD.

Premature Ovarian Failure: A condition in which a woman enters menopause before age 40 as a result of the ovaries ceasing to produce eggs.

Progesterone: A hormone that readies the uterine lining to accept implantation of a blastocyst.

R

Recurrent Pregnancy Loss (RPL): umbrella term for loss of three or more consecutive intrauterine pregnancies for any known or unknown reasons.

Reproductive endocrinologist (RE): An OBGYN who has taken additional years of training to specialize in reproductive endocrine disorders and infertility.

Retrograde Ejaculation: A condition in which semen enters the bladder during ejaculation instead of leaving the penis.

Round Spermatid Nucleus Injection (RSNI): An experimental fertilization technique in which immature sperm cells are removed from the testicle and the genetic material is injected into an egg.

S

Semen analysis (SA): An examination that assesses a man's sperm count, morphology, and motility. Learn more about semen analysis.

Sonohysterogram: ultrasound test used to evaluate uterus.

Sperm: The male reproductive cell, produced in the testes and found in semen.

T

Testicular sperm extraction (TESE): This minor surgical procedure involves the removal of a small sample of testicular tissue in order to retrieve sperm for use in an IVF cycle.

Testosterone: A male sex hormone produced in the testicles which aids in the production of sperm.

Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH): An important hormone in the human reproductive cycle and therefore of particular interest during ART treatments.

Tubal factor infertility: Tubal factor infertility is either a complete or partial blockage and/or scarring of the fallopian tubes, causing infertility (since sperm are unable to meet the egg, or the egg is unable to move to the uterus).

U

Unexplained infertility: A diagnostic category used when infertility is present, but no cause of it is found in either the woman or the man. Learn about unexplained infertility.

Uterus: The womb, the main female reproductive organ.

V

Varicocele: A swollen vein in the scrotum that may affect the quality and the production of sperm. Learn more about varicoceles.

Z

Zygote: The fertilized egg in the fallopian tube.

Zygote intrafallopian transfer (ZIFT): A rarely used ART procedure in which eggs are collected from a woman's ovary and fertilized outside her body. A laparoscope is then used to place the resulting zygote (fertilized egg) into the woman's fallopian tube through a small incision in her abdomen.

2-Week Wait (2WW): the time between ovulation and the usual onset of menstruation, when pregnancy tests are usually taken.

The journey to parenthood can be surprising. For individuals and couples, the decision to build your family may require the help of an egg donor, sperm donor and/or gestational surrogate. For couples or individuals who require fertility treatments to have a baby, the process can seem downright overwhelming at times, involving questions like, ***“Is this the right treatment plan for me?” or “Should I pursue another round of IVF?”***

I encourage those who have begun the discussion of fertility or have begun the fertility journey, to seek support when needed. Remember, you are certainly not alone on this journey. Your friends and family will be there to support you as much as you open up to them, also thousands of other couples and individuals are facing the same choices. This is where a group like Parah Family Foundation and other fertility support group can be of assistance in making the right decision through counselling and guidance.

QUOTES

Getting pregnant isn't always easy. The entire fertility process is an emotional roller coaster and it's very easy to get discouraged. One moment you're daydreaming about starting or growing your family and then suddenly, a roadblock dashes your hopes.

Trying to get pregnant is a journey that requires hope, determination and a number of pregnancy tests. Even with an entire community support, I understand that you'll still have good days and bad days. For those days that are tougher than others, here are some inspiring quotes from famous writers, mothers and anonymous sources to help motivate you along the way and guide your fertility journey.

"Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat". **F. Scott Fitzgerald**

"I was taught the way of progress is neither swift nor easy". **Marie Curie**

"We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope". **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

"Fall seven times and stand up eight". **Japanese Proverb**

"Let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future". **Robert H. Schuller**

"As I look back on my life, I realize that every time I thought I was being rejected from something good, I was actually being redirected to something better". **Steve Maraboli**

"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it". **Margaret Thatcher**

"Every day begins with an act of courage and hope: getting out of bed". **Mason Cooley**

"It always seems impossible until it's done". **Nelson Mandela**

"A strong woman looks a challenge dead in the eye and gives it a wink". **Gina Carey**

"Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will". **Suzy Kassem**

"Even miracles take a little time". **Cinderella's Fairy Godmother**

"Above all, be the heroine of your life, not the victim". **Nora Ephron**

"There is purpose in your season of waiting". **Megan Smalley**

"The most alluring thing a woman can have is confidence". **Beyoncé**

"Parenting begins the moment you make any conscious effort to care for your own health in preparation for enhancing your child's conception". **Carista Luminare-Rosen**

"Life is tough, my darling, but so are you". **Stephanie Bennett-Henry**

"Let your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears". **Nelson Mandela**

"I am learning to trust the journey even when I do not understand it". **Mila Bron**

"Hope" is the thing with feathers

That perches in the soul

And sings the tune without the words

And never stops - at all ". **Emily Dickinson**

"What feels like the end is often the beginning". **Anonymous**

"Hope is the only thing stronger than fear". ***The Hunger Games***

"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it". **Margaret Thatcher**

"Just keep swimming." Even if it has not been your habit throughout your life so far, I recommend that you learn to think positively about your body". **Ina May Gaskin**

"I'm not telling you it's going to be easy, I'm telling you it's going to be worth it". **Anonymous**

"Here's to strong women. May we know them, may we be them, may we raise them".

Anonymous

"If you obey all the rules you miss all the fun". **Katharine Hepburn**

"A little progress each day adds up to big results". **Anonymous**

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step". **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

"A goal without a plan is just a wish". **Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**

"Making the decision to have a child—it's momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body". **Elizabeth Stone**

“Creating a family in this turbulent world is an act of faith, a wager that against all odds there will be a future that love can last, that the heart can triumph against all adversities and even against the grinding wheel of time”. **Dean Koontz**

“Sometimes the struggle is what makes success even sweeter”. **Anonymous**

“A baby fills a place in your heart that you never knew was empty”. **Anonymous**

Parah is a non-profit organization that believes, in putting smiles on families faces by supporting those who are waiting on God for the fruit of womb through spiritual and medical assistance. This foundation goes further to help strengthen & build family bond in organizing seminars, prayer, using professional and spiritual leaders in training, counseling, encouraging families trusting God for their own Children.

The impacts made by this organization cannot be over emphasized. The status of several women has been changed, from a barren woman to the mother of children. I can personally testify of women I introduced to Parah that today, are carrying their children. Glory to God! Parah Organization consists of people who believe in the God of possibilities. With God on our side, there is no type of marital problem that cannot be brought down. This is why God keeps showing His supremacy, in Parah every time. We return all glory to Him. Shalom.

Pastor Mrs. F. Adeoti