

“When we lost our baby unexpectedly, silence filled my soul. By the grace of God, Abbey does the impossible in *Held* by putting words to our pain in miscarriage while offering the hope of the gospel. She guides the broken hearted woman into the endless grace of God.”

Gretchen Saffles, Founder, Well-Watered Women

“It was no coincidence that Abbey was writing *Held* when we lost our second baby. The portions of it that she shared with me were a balm to my aching heart. This is a Word-saturated book, tenderly written by a woman who loves Jesus, trusts him, and wants to see many hurting moms do the same. I highly recommend it to you.”

Kristen Wetherell, Author, *Fight Your Fears* and *Hope When It Hurts*

“I will always keep a copy of *Held* on my bookshelf to share with mothers enduring the pain of miscarriage. I am abundantly grateful to have a resource that reassures grieving mothers of God’s presence, nearness, and purpose, even in the hardest days.”

Hunter Beless, Founder, The Journeywomen Podcast

“Abbey Wedgeworth wants her book to be a companion in a season of loss. That is what we need, and that is what she has written. As she gently works through the difficult loss of an unborn child, she introduces you to a compassionate God who knows how to walk with you as your ultimate Companion. If you are experiencing or have experienced any kind of loss, you will find comfort in this book.”

Dr. Timothy Lane, Founder, The Institute for Pastoral Care

“The pain of miscarriage is often hidden from view. It can be hard to articulate the many complex emotions that follow. Those struggling need hope! Written by people who have been there, *Held* offers just that. It’s real, it’s raw, but, most importantly, it helps individuals relate to Jesus and, even in the toughest of times, become more like him.”

**Helen Thorne, Director of Training and Resources,
Biblical Counselling UK**

“With the compassion of one who’s been there, Abbey Wedgeworth provides the space to grieve as well as the truth that will help heal. Through biblical teaching, vulnerable transparency, and honest reflection, *Held* will ultimately point you to the One who holds us all.”

Courtney Doctor, Coordinator of Women’s Initiatives, The Gospel Coalition; Visiting Instructor, Covenant Theological Seminary

“Insightful, Scripture-saturated, honest, helpful, this book will offer warm companionship to those who have faced the devastation of miscarriage.”

Nancy Guthrie, Author, *Hearing Jesus Speak Into Your Sorrow*

“I found myself nodding through each chapter and saying, “I didn’t know that other women felt this way too!” Abbey Wedgeworth feels like the best kind of friend to journey with. This wonderful devotional will be an invaluable companion for anyone who wants to find hope and help as they process their grief.”

Vaneetha Rendall Risner, Author, *The Scars That Have Shaped Me*

“Abbey Wedgeworth writes with the compassion and grace of someone who’s walked this uniquely painful road, journeying alongside the reader to acknowledge the isolating and often unspoken struggles of miscarriage, while gently pointing her to the riches of Christ’s comfort, hope, and truth. If you’ve walked through a miscarriage or know someone who has, this book will meet you where you are and offer you what you most need.”

Sarah Walton, Author, *Hope When It Hurts and Together Through the Storms*

“As a counselor I often look for resources to help my clients walk through various kinds of suffering. For anyone experiencing miscarriage, *Held* will be my go-to resource! Abbey and a collection of other voices speak so well to every angle of this painful experience. They hold the reader’s hand, walking them back to the Lord over and over.”

Hope Blanton LMSW, Co-author, *At His Feet Bible Studies*

“*Held* is a Word-saturated and hope-filled companion that casts the eye vertically to God and then horizontally to those who have suffered a miscarriage. It offers life-giving truths amid the life-taking impact of the fall to those suffering, as well as those who seek to come alongside them with compassionate empathy.”

Karen Hodge, Coordinator of Women’s Ministries, Presbyterian Church in America; Author, *Transformed: Life-taker to Life-giver*

“*Held* sheds light and hope on a subject that is often dealt with in the lonely and quiet places. This is a resource I will use time and time again to offer comfort to the many families who deal with the grief of loss and need to be pointed back to the hope found in Jesus.”

Jerrad Lopes, Author, *Dad Tired & Loving It*; Founder, DadTired

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CONTENTS

Introduction	9
1. The Character of God	13
2. Nothing Is Hidden	18
3. Man of Sorrows	23
4. Praying Through Grief	29
<i>Isobel Burden: John</i>	34
5. You Hem Me In	38
6. You Lay Your Hand Upon Me	43
7. Searching for Answers	48
<i>Eric Schumacher: Deceptive Voices</i>	53
8. Marriage After Miscarriage	58
9. The God of All Comfort	65
10. A Very Present Help	70
<i>Irene Sun: Carried and Cradled</i>	75
11. The Language of Lament	80



12. Praying Our Fears	85
13. He Will Hold Me Fast	90
<i>Lauren Washer: My Losses and My Gains</i>	96
14. Shame Over Grief	101
15. Fearfully and Wonderfully Made	106
16. Wonderful Are Your Works	107
<i>Kristie Anyabwile: The Puppeteer</i>	116
17. What Is My Good?	120
18. Nothing Is Wasted	125
19. Feeling Guilty or Responsible	130
<i>Jessalyn Hutto: The Staircase</i>	135
20. The Bigger Story	139
21. A Word for Difficult Dates	144
22. Weeping With Those Who Weep	150
<i>Courtney Reisig: Miscarriage and the Frowning Providence of God</i>	155
23. Rooting Ourselves in God's Word	160
24. A Cry for Justice	166
25. Blessed Are Those Who Mourn	171
26. What We Deserve	176

<i>Ruth Hatfield: God's Family</i>	181
27. Tethering Yourself to God's People	186
28. Rejoicing With Those Who Rejoice	191
29. Grace for Your Fumbling Neighbor	196
<i>Lore Ferguson Wilbert: Enough</i>	201
30. More than Motherhood	206
31. Moving Forward	211
About the Contributors	217
Recommended Reading	219
Acknowledgments	221



*To each woman who served as a reader for this
resource in the days that followed the loss of life
in her own womb.*

*This book is dedicated to you and to the lives
you carried—fearfully, wonderfully, and
purposefully made.*





Introduction

Were we together in person, and were you to entrust me with the news of the passing of your little one, I would probably just sit with you. I might ask questions and listen, or I might bring you a meal, fold your laundry, or clean your kitchen while you regain your strength. In my own experience of losing life in the womb, I found that these gestures were often more powerful than words.

It feels strange to offer you a book filled with words when I know both the pain they can cause and the comfort of service in silence. But this book is designed to serve you—to be a companion in the wake of your loss: one that sits with you in silence and gently asks some of the questions I would were we together, giving you space to process.

These pages are not filled with feel-good sentiments or fluffy ideas. Their contents are based on something you can cling to—something steady and unchanging: the character and word of God. This book will not shy away from the questions you have, the raw emotions you may be feeling, or the temptations you face in your grief.

But it will offer something concrete and eternal to hold onto at a time when perhaps it feels as if everything is slipping through your fingers.

Each of these 31 devotions hangs on a verse or verses from Psalm 139. At the end of each devotion, you will find a collection of Bible verses to *read*, a question or two to help you *reflect* and process what you've read, and a prompt or printed prayer with which you can *respond*. Use these, and the book as a whole, at your own pace, whenever you're ready.

You will find pieces of my own story within these pages. But just as every miscarried child is unique, so is each experience of miscarriage and each way of responding to it. For this reason, I have included testimonies from other voices who have known the sorrow of miscarriage and the goodness of God within it. I have found companionship and comfort in these stories. I hope you will too.

One of the women I asked to read and review these chapters as I wrote them was the mother of a stillborn baby girl. Though this book was written with early pregnancy loss in mind, she felt confident that it may also benefit mothers who have lost a baby they carried well beyond the first trimester. If this is you, I hold it out to you as well. Though I cannot fully understand your loss or trauma, I do know that the same God who walked with me and that reader now walks with you.

Whatever your story of loss, and however you feel about it as you read these lines, I am praying for you. I pray that as you journey through this book, you would come to

trust God more fully and treasure his word more deeply. I pray that you would become more aware of and more confident in his comfort and care, believing that even here, in the sorrow of miscarriage, you are held.

... even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. —Psalm 139 v 10



Abbey Wedgeworth

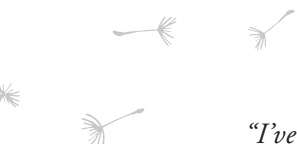
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DAY 1: PSALM 139 v 1-24

The Character of God



“I’ve never been this close to death. It’s literally inside of me. Where life should be.”

I journaled these words a few days after we learned that our baby’s heart had stopped beating in my womb. They called it a “missed miscarriage.” At our first appointment, we had rejoiced to hear the beating heart of a much-loved child; four weeks later there was only silence and a lifeless form that hadn’t grown at all. I couldn’t wrap my mind around it. The lifeless baby within my womb was still so small, but the burden of the questions that accompanied that child’s passing weighed me down and made it difficult to breathe at times.

Apart from dying ourselves, I’m not sure it’s possible to experience death more personally than to have it occur within us. When the experience of death is that personal, trite religious phrases and sympathy-card expressions become more difficult to utter and even more difficult to accept. The days and months that followed our miscarriage held moment after moment that forced me to

confront what I truly believed. *Where is God? How could he allow this to happen? If this could happen, what other kinds of suffering may be lurking around the corner for me? Does he see? Does he care? Is he punishing me? Is he trying to teach me a lesson? What did I do to deserve this?*

Psalm 139 is likely a familiar psalm for you. You've probably encountered its fourteenth verse on a hand-lettered coffee mug or sweatshirt, in some social-media post, or in some talk about loving your body. But if we read Psalm 139 in its entirety, we discover that this is not a psalm about us at all. It's a psalm about God. Within it we see that he is all-knowing, outside time, ever-present, incomprehensible, and all-powerful.

But observing all these attributes of God offers us no comfort at all in a time like this if we fail to truly understand his nature. Suffering tempts us to believe that God is absent, cruel, manipulative, or unconcerned, but the Bible offers us the truth. Through his word, God gives us more than an opportunity to learn *about* him. Because he is a God who wants to be known, because he is a God who wants a relationship with his people, he reveals himself to us. He declares that he is loving and good. He invites us to rest in that love and goodness, and to see that they underpin all of his attributes and actions.

Right now, at the outset of our journey together, in the wake of the tragic loss of the life you carried in your womb, I want to be honest about the choice that I think is before you. You can choose to allow your circumstances to shape your understanding of who God is, or you can

allow what the Bible says about who God is to inform how you respond to your grief. What you believe about God will shape your experience of walking through this trial. It will have everything to do with the way that you heal and move forward.

This choice is not an easy one. And it will confront you over and over as you walk through these days. But it is a choice that is made much easier as we consider the ultimate display of God's loving nature: this God gave up his own Son for us. When we remember this act of love and faithfulness, these other characteristics described in Psalm 139 become a comfort. At the cross, God too experienced the loss of a child. This was not only to redeem a world he loved, but also, if you are trusting him, specifically to bring comfort, assurance, protection, and purpose in the very sorrow that you are currently experiencing.

The experience of miscarriage is tragic and traumatic. If you are anything like me, in your quest for truth and footing, you will be tempted to turn inward, allowing your feelings to shape your thinking. You will be tempted to focus outward, basing your understanding on your circumstances. But I want to encourage you instead, friend, to look upward. Look upward and be encouraged that the God who is all-knowing is not only aware of every detail of what you are experiencing, thinking, and feeling, but is also deeply concerned.

This God who knows you intimately is able to care for you perfectly. The God who is always present is with you,

even *now*. He will never leave you (nor can you escape him!). The God who is incomprehensible offers relief to your tired and finite mind, sharing with you the knowledge you need and beckoning you to trust him with what you cannot bear. And this all-powerful God is sovereign even in this horrible experience, working it out for your good and his glory, just as he has always done.

You can trust him.



READ: Psalm 139; Psalm 34; Romans 8 v 26-32

REFLECT: How has this experience revealed or tested what you believe about God's character?

What do the verses above reveal about who God is? Which aspect is most comforting to you?

RESPOND: Confess the questions and doubts that you have out loud to God. Ask him to help you believe that he is who his word says he is.



JOURNAL

O LORD, you have searched me
and known me!
You know when I sit down
and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path
and my lying down
and are acquainted
with all my ways.

*Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD,
you know it altogether.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is
too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.*



DAY 2: PSALM 139 v 1-6

Nothing Is Hidden



Before I tucked the perfectly formed and fully intact sac and placenta into the tiny pink department-store jewelry box that would serve as our baby's tiny casket, I took a picture. As I put the lid on the box, I wondered why I'd snapped that photo. It seemed a strange thing to show someone, and I knew it would be equally strange to describe to anyone what I experienced in the hours before the "products of conception," as the doctors referred to them, left my body. It felt too private, too intimate, and perhaps too inappropriate to share.

The experience of miscarriage is a uniquely isolating grief because of the hidden nature of what is lost. The life you mourn never existed outside of you. Perhaps your eyes never beheld the form of your baby at all. Maybe you only saw a grainy image of your child on an ultrasound screen. Perhaps you held him or her when that tiny body left yours, or maybe he or she was carried away by a surgeon before you had the chance. Miscarried babies are seen by few eyes, and sometimes not even by those of their mothers.

Beyond a lingering, slightly rounded baby bump or an early ultrasound print-out, there's no tangible evidence that these babies were ever here. We've nothing to show for their lives. Our wombs are empty again, just as they were before. From the outside, no visible change seems to have taken place, and to anyone else, it's as if these babies never existed. No one but us felt their presence. Are we alone in missing them? Are we alone in remembering them?

This psalm makes it perfectly clear that the frame of your unborn child was not hidden from God. And just as he saw your baby's frame hidden within the darkness of your womb, he sees you now in the shadow of your experience with miscarriage.

In verses 1-6 of Psalm 139, the psalmist, David, sings of God's omniscience—his knowledge of everything. But he doesn't just recite this as a fact; he homes in on God's knowledge of us personally, particularly his full knowledge of our thoughts, our course, and our actions. From the time that you wake in the morning until the time that you lie down at night, and even as you sleep, David tells us, the eye of the Lord is upon you. Even as you struggle to articulate (or figure out) what you are thinking or feeling, God already knows it full well. As your lips fumble to form a prayer that you're not sure if it is appropriate to utter, he knows it completely.

He sees and knows *all* things.

As alone as you may have felt when you discovered the loss of your child, and however or wherever your

baby left your body, you were not unseen by God in those moments. Nothing is hidden from God: not your baby, not your sorrow, not the untellable details of your trauma; not the events of your life, nor the course of your future.

And he is not merely a distant observer. In the book of Genesis we see this proclaimed by a woman named Hagar, who fled after being treated harshly by her childless mistress, Sarai, for becoming pregnant by her master, Abram, at Sarai's suggestion. In the wilderness, Hagar encountered an angel who told her that God had seen her affliction. The angel counseled her to return home, giving her courage and hope in the form of a promise about her future and that of her baby boy. She named this God "El Roi"—the God of seeing—saying, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me" (Genesis 16 v 13).

The God who saw a hopeless and fearful Hagar in the desert, who showed up to offer her hope in the form of a promise, is the God who sees and shows up for you. This God is not simply a God who looks *upon* you, your trouble, or your thoughts, but—as Hagar proclaims—he is a God who looks *after* you. This God who is intimately acquainted with your ways, who searches and knows your heart and thoughts, is deeply involved in it all with his perfect care and his sovereign control.

The knowledge that God sees all things would bring terror to someone who had reason to fear his wrath and judgment; but for those who have peace with God through faith in Christ, who have been made daughters

through the work of the Son, it is the best news possible. For us, his unlimited sight and perfect knowledge cannot be divorced from his infinite presence and care. Because he knows you intimately, he is able to care for you perfectly. And he does.

Perhaps calls and texts filled with sympathy and concern are pouring in from friends and family who love you; or perhaps few people are even aware of your loss. Either way, there are likely aspects of your grief, story, or self that feel invisible right now. Know that you are seen. As lonely, isolated, overlooked, or forgotten as you may feel, God—El Roi, the God of seeing—sees you. He knows you, he loves you, and he is actively caring for you even now.



READ: Genesis 16; Proverbs 15 v 3

REFLECT: What thoughts or details from your miscarriage have you not felt able to share? Have you felt “unseen”?

What does it feel like to acknowledge that God knows you and your situation even better than you do?

RESPOND: Talk aloud or use a pen and paper to tell God about the things that feel too private, inappropriate, or irrelevant to share with others. Offer him thanks for some specific ways you have experienced his care in the wake of loss.