



EPISODE 9 | HOPE GUIDE

Anchored by the Gospel after Losing My Baby
to Cancer with Jess McClenahan

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EPISODE 9 HOPE GUIDE

Welcome!

Hello sweet momma. Oh, how I wish you didn't need to be listening to a podcast on finding hope after pregnancy or infant loss. My heart breaks for you that you've experienced the loss of a baby.

I am so incredibly sorry for your loss.

I wish I could give you a big hug right now and tell you that you're not alone in your grief. I am here to walk this heartbreaking journey with you. I know firsthand how devastating, life-changing, and sorrowful it is to lose a baby.

My sweet daughter, Bridget Faith, was born into Heaven at 24 weeks into my first pregnancy in 2014. In my deep grief and sadness, I questioned how a good God could allow this to happen to me. As I wrestled with my faith, I came to a place of absolute surrender.

It's a long story (one you'll hear throughout our podcast episodes), but I learned to trust God and allow Him to heal my heart. In doing so, He led me to start a nonprofit ministry called Bridget's Cradles.

You can read more about what we do on our website (and in this Hope Guide), but our mission is to provide comfort, hope, and healing to families grieving the loss of a baby in Heaven. The Cradled in Hope Podcast is an extension of our ministry with the same mission.

We firmly believe that surrendering our suffering to God will allow us to find joy again. He can heal our hearts and use our grief for good. And most importantly, through faith in His son, Jesus, we have the hope to see our babies again in Heaven. Jesus has defeated death and He promises us eternal life with Him and our babies. Though we may grieve, we do not grieve without hope.

With Hope,

Ashley Opliger



Show Notes



EPISODE 9 WITH JESS MCCLENAHAN

Join us for a conversation with Jess McClenahan about how the Gospel anchored her to hope after the loss of her 11-month-old daughter, Cora. Jess shares Cora's story of being diagnosed with neuroblastoma cancer and how she clung to her faith after Cora's passing to Heaven.

In her heartbreak, Jess discovered God's character and learned to trust Him in a new and deeper way. Jess shares how she found abundant life in Christ and redefined what blessing looked like. She encourages grieving mothers to study God's Word and anchor their hearts to the hope of Jesus.

In this episode, we discussed:

- How can you trust God with the death of your child?
- What does abundant life look like as a believer?
- Why God's wrath and our sin matters in the story of the Gospel
- Salvation and why it's our greatest need
- Jesus is the only way to Heaven and to see our babies again
- Why does God allow suffering?
- Putting God in a box and why that affects our ability to trust Him
- An analogy of an Earthly vs. Heavenly perspective
- Symbolic traditions in memory of your baby to bring healing
- The power of God's Word as a lifeline to survive grief
- Why sharing your story matters and can plant seeds of faith for others

Find the full episode transcript [here](#).



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Show Notes



KEY VERSES FROM THE EPISODE

- For God has said, "I will never leave you; I will never abandon you." **-Hebrews 13:5 GNT**
- Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. **-Acts 4:12 NIV**
- "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." **-Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV**
- Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. **-2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV**
- The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. **-Lamentations 3:22-23 NIV**
- The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. **-Psalm 34:18 NIV**
- You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord Himself, is the Rock eternal. **-Isaiah 26:3-4 NIV**



BLESS GRIEVING MOMS WITH A REVIEW

If you've been encouraged by our podcast, would you [write a quick review on iTunes](#)? Think of it as spending two minutes of your time to invite a grieving mom to listen in on the message of hope you've just heard. We would be so grateful for your review and 5-star rating. Click [here](#) for instructions/videos on how to leave a review in case you haven't left one before. Thank you so much!

LEAVE A REVIEW

Show Notes



+ OUR GUEST | JESS MCCLENAHAN



Jess McClenahan is an unlikely farmer's wife and mama to five. Her 11-month-old daughter, Cora, went home to Jesus after being diagnosed with cancer.

Since that day, Jess has experienced that God is truly close to the brokenhearted and has faithfully anchored her through the biggest storm of her life. Through writing and speaking, Jess seeks to authentically share her journey through grief and live abundantly in all circumstances.

Connect with Jess

Web: www.jessmcclenahan.com

Instagram: [@jessmcclenahan](https://www.instagram.com/jessmcclenahan)

+ OUR HOST | ASHLEY OPLIGER



Ashley is the Executive Director of Bridget's Cradles, a nonprofit organization based in Wichita, Kansas that donates cradles to over 1,100 hospitals in all 50 states and comforts over 26,000 bereaved families a year.

Ashley is married to Matt and they have three children: Bridget (in Heaven), and two sons. She is a follower of Christ who desires to share the hope of Heaven with families grieving the loss of a baby.

Connect with Ashley

Web: www.ashleyopliger.com
www.bridgetscradles.com

Facebook: [/ashleyopliger](https://www.facebook.com/ashleyopliger)
Instagram: [@ashleyopliger](https://www.instagram.com/ashleyopliger)

Show Notes

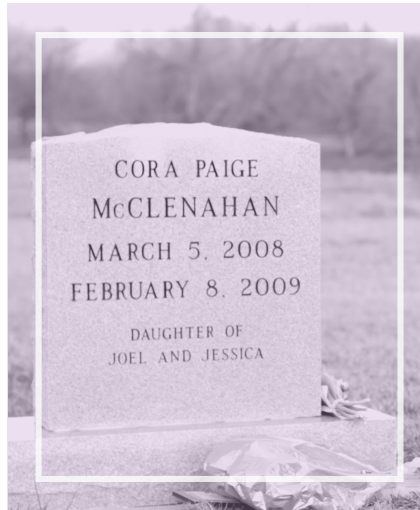


JESS'S BLOG | RECOMMENDED ARTICLES



Happy Heart Rocks

OPEN
POST



Missing Milestones

OPEN
POST



I Was Looking for a Miracle

OPEN
POST



Seven.

OPEN
POST



Wind Storms & Rock Piles

OPEN
POST



Nine Years of Letting Go

OPEN
POST

Show Notes



DISCUSSION / APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- After losing her baby to cancer, Jess realized that God's blessings and an abundant life in Christ looked very different than what she expected. She realized that salvation was her greatest need and that the Gospel was the anchor that gave her hope. How did Jess' testimony impact your view of the Gospel or life as a Christian, especially through suffering?

- In this episode, Jess shares that the Bible became her lifeline in the middle of her deepest grief. And, we talk about the importance of studying Scripture in its entirety to understand the full context of the Gospel. Are you in His Word daily? What is God teaching you through your time with Him? If not, brainstorm some ways you can make Bible-reading a daily habit.

- Jess reads Isaiah 26:3-4 which says that God keeps us in perfect peace when our minds are steadfast and trust in the Lord. He is our Rock eternal. How does this verse change the way you face your day to day? How can it impact your grief journey? List some ways you can keep your mind fixed on Jesus.



Pinnable Graphics

Bridget's Cradles
Cradled in Hope




Losing Cora was the beginning of the journey for God to show me that His blessing on my life is so much more than God giving me just the things that I want or God answering my prayers in the way that I want Him to.

Jess McClenahan

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 **Jess McClenahan**
@jessmcclenahan

In Romans 5, that God shows and proves His love for me by the fact that while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me. So the only reason that I am standing under God's blessing is because He sent His precious Son to stand under the cursing that I deserved, in my place. And He sent Jesus to die a horrible, painful death in my place because He longs for me, He longs for us to be standing under the stream of His blessing now and for all eternity.

Bridget's Cradles

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"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."

-Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV

Bridget's Cradles

Episode 1

“

It was nothing within me or within my own strength, but just choosing to put my hope and trust in Jesus, and to keep walking and trust Him that even though I didn't know how I was going to get out of bed the next day and face whatever that day held, that I was going to trust that He was going to give me what I needed each day.

Jess McClenahan

CRADLED IN HOPE PODCAST



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“

The Bible felt like a lifeline to me to God's voice as I was searching for answers and trying to find comfort. And He truly brought hope to what felt really hopeless in my life. And I think that just speaks to the physical power of Scripture.

JESS MCCLENAHAN

”

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If my greatest need is salvation and He had already met that need in Jesus, then He was going to continue to meet any other needs that I had. So I think just coming to a place where I could say, "God is worthy of my trust because of His death on the cross.

Jess McClenahan

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View and pin episode graphics from our Pinterest board [here](#).

More Resources



CATCH UP ON PAST EPISODES



EPISODE 1:

Welcome to Cradled in Hope

with Ashley Opliger

Ashley shares her heart behind starting the Cradled in Hope podcast and reads the first chapter of her book.

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EPISODE 2:

Finding Peace After Miscarriage

with Alisha Illian

Alisha discusses how she learned to rely on God, surrender her plans for her life, and find peace after miscarriage.

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EPISODE 3:

Navigating Pregnancy Loss

with Sarah Philpott

Sarah shares how she grieved with hope and found joy in the perfection of Heaven, even after experiencing multiple miscarriages.

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EPISODE 4:

Grieving a Life-Limiting Diagnosis

with Amy Valentine

Amy shares her journey of receiving a life-limiting diagnosis for her son, Simon. She discusses how grieving Simon and her other three babies shaped her faith journey.

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More Resources



CATCH UP ON PAST EPISODES



EPISODE 5:

Wrestling Well with God through Recurrent Loss

with Kristin Hernandez

Kristin shares her story of losing five babies and how she turned to her faith in God and embraced the suffering.

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EPISODE 6:

Raising a Rainbow Baby to Remember Their Sibling in Heaven

with Ashley & Branton Opliger

Ashley shares four practical ways you can help your living children honor their sibling in Heaven.

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EPISODE 7:

Improving Hospital Experiences for Grieving Families

with Lori Beth Blaney

Lori Beth shares her story of losing her daughter, Rachel, choosing forgiveness, and why she started a nonprofit to support grieving families and train hospital staff on bereavement care.

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EPISODE 8:

How to Nurture a Grieving Mother's Heart

Johanna Mutz & Denise Wolfe

Johanna and Denise share their story of starting a company to offer beautiful gifts for women who have experienced loss.

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More Resources



✚ FIND HOPE + HEALING

Please visit www.bridgetscradles.com to find resources for hope and healing after the loss of a baby. We pray that something there will be helpful to you and provide hope as you grieve and remember your precious baby in Heaven.



Memorial Ideas

Ways to honor your baby in Heaven by remembering them in your home and daily life.

✚ ✚ ✚
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TO READ
MORE ✚ ✚



Important Dates & Holidays

How to face difficult milestones and holidays in ways that bring peace and remembrance.

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Grieving & Healing

Ashley shares practical ideas that she found helpful in her grieving and healing journey.

✚ ✚ ✚
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TO READ
MORE ✚ ✚

More Resources



✝ FIND HOPE + HEALING



Recommended Books

Christ-centered books that provide hope and healing after the loss of a baby

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Quotes & Bible Verses

A list of quotes and Bible verses to offer hope and healing for families who have experienced pregnancy or infant loss

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Helpful Resources

A list of organizations and websites focused on providing healing to families grieving the loss of a baby

CLICK HERE
TO READ
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More Resources



HOPE GATHERINGS ONLINE



Join our Christ-centered monthly online support group led by Ashley Opliger, Bridget's mom and Executive Director of Bridget's Cradles. The group is focused on finding hope and healing through God in community with each other and is open to any mom in the United States who has lost a baby due to miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss. For upcoming dates, please visit

www.bridgetscradles.com/hopeonline.



JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP

Join our Cradled in Hope community of Grieving Moms:



Our Organization



with
**ASHLEY
OPLIGER**



ABOUT BRIDGET'S CRADLES



Bridget's Cradles is a 501c3 nonprofit organization based in Wichita, Kansas. It was founded after Matt and Ashley Opliger's daughter, Bridget Faith, was born into Heaven on October 22, 2014. Ashley's mom, Teresa, had knit a small cradle for Bridget, and it allowed them to hold her in a special and dignified way.

Since then, Ashley and a team of amazing volunteers have been passionate about comforting bereaved families across the country. Bridget's Cradles now donates cradles to over 1,100 hospitals in all 50 states, hosts support groups & remembrance events, and provides hope-filled resources online.



WHAT WE DO



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& RAISE AWARENESS**



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**HOPE GATHERINGS
SUPPORT GROUPS**



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**WAVE OF LIGHT
OCTOBER 15TH EVENT**



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GIVE HOPE

Together, we can provide comfort and hope to more grieving families. Your support will allow us to carry out critical program services so that together we can comfort bereaved families now and in the future. Visit www.bridgetscradles.com/givehope.



Let's Connect

CONTACT

If you'd like to be in touch, please email us directly at:

info@bridgetscradles.com

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