



Letters to a
Grieving Mom

A series to help women navigate significant milestones
("marker days") after miscarriage and pregnancy loss.

By Adriel Booker

To be read on your due date

Dear Grieving Mom,

This day. It was circled on the calendar and etched on your heart. It was the day you hoped to meet your baby – to hold her, to study him. You planned to take her to your breast. You anticipated smothering his toes with kisses.

You had begun to rearrange your life around this day. It was to be a “before and after” day, marking a huge and happy transition in your life and home. You had planned to organize your work around this day. You had counted months before and after this day as you imagined your crawler and Christmas or your newborn as you took your oldest to school for the first time.

This was the day you were to post the face of your little one on Instagram and watch the congratulations pour in as the world was introduced to this piece of your heart you had already known and loved for nine, long months.

And yet now this day has come and you're left with nothing to show but a broken heart. Friend, it's not fair that your baby isn't here. A mother should never have to face a due date without a baby in her arms.

You and I both know there are many reasons why a baby and mother aren't together on this sacred day, but today those reasons don't matter. They are crowded out by the one simple fact that your baby is not here.

And I am so sorry.

As you take time to think about how your heart feels and where your soul is in the grieving process, give yourself permission to feel the sadness, the injustice, the heartache.

Have you wanted to cry but couldn't find the tears? Watch a sad movie and let it help you tap in.

Have you been fine looking at other people's babies on social media but now the sight feels like a punch in gut? Go ahead and hide that friend for a little while.

Have you been on edge for the last few weeks, wondering why you've been so quick to anger? Quiet your soul and ask if sorrow might be the source (anger is often grief in disguise).

I want to be able to tell you that this day will get better as the years go on. And for me it has. Due dates are now a time of thoughtful reflection – days where I practice gratitude for how God has carried me, more so than reminders of how much I've lost.

But I won't make promises to you that can't be kept. I don't know how you'll feel on this day during the years to come. Time does not heal all wounds, but Jesus does. Jesus *will*. Therefore, we can grieve with hope.

So whether today has thrust you back into sorrow, has caused you to feel lonely, has brought you to your knees in surrender, to your feet in anger, or filled your mind with doubts and questions, please know this:

God is not intimidated by any of it. He can handle it all. Your humanity isn't a burden to Him – it is a gift that keeps you tethered to Him. God is with you. He is present. He can keep you in His peace.

You and I, we have different grief journeys, but I feel confident telling you that when you feel pulled back into grief, it doesn't mean you are going backwards. Grief is like a spiral – you can spiral up or spiral down. Just when we think life is feeling a little more normal, it can sneak up and hit us like a heat wave. And you may feel it today in great measure. Or you may not. Either way, know that you *can* continue to grow forward.

Maybe since you saw today coming you feel ready. You've talked to a loved one you trust, arranged a quiet moment in your day to pay tribute, or spent time journaling your collapsed hopes. Perhaps you've entered into prayer or have withdrawn to meditate on God's promises to never leave you or forsake you. But if you haven't, know that it's not too late. Take some time now and listen to your own heart – what is it trying to tell you? Then, take some time to listen to His heart – ask God to draw near.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4 NRSV) Friend, we are not blessed because we mourn – that's not the blessing. We are blessed because in our mourning we can experience God's comfort.

So may you feel the warm embrace of His comfort today. May you know God's blessing in the midst of your pain.

Love,

Adriel

To be read when your period returns

Dear Grieving Mom,

It's jarring, isn't it – that first period after your miscarriage or a hoped-for pregnancy? As if it was possible to forget what has only so recently happened, your body is giving you this fresh reminder that there is no baby there. Your womb is empty and it doesn't feel fair.

After each of my three miscarriages, my first period came with a sting. Not a physical sting of course, but one that can only be felt in your heart. You know the kind.

Though logically I knew my body was proceeding to do what it was designed to do, I couldn't help but feel it was mocking me. Seeing blood on the lining of my underwear was a visual reminder that I wouldn't get to hold the baby I had already loved. It reminded me of when I first saw the blood from my miscarriage. That's the kind of re-living of an event no mother wants to do.

I wonder if you felt similar when you first saw the blood return.

More than anything, I want to tell you that you're normal for experiencing some heartache on this day. I want to tell you that however you're feeling is okay and that grief takes many shapes. If a day like today brings you a fresh wave of grief that's okay, too.

Perhaps the pain is trying to summon you to lean in a little today – connect with your grief and your pain and remember that you are human. Being human is not something to be ashamed of. Being human is beautiful. Author Glennon Melton coined the term "brutiful" which I think encapsulates our humanity perfectly. Life can be brutal and beautiful at the same time. It reminds us that we are fully alive.

So, I wonder what it is that you actually feel today? Do you feel like your body has betrayed you? Do you feel ashamed for having miscarried, like even that term 'mis-carry' implies that you've done something wrong? Do you feel hopeless that, after trying and trying you still aren't pregnant? In all of my years of trying to understand my own miscarriages – what caused them and what my body was trying to tell me – I've learned that "doing something wrong" is rarely ever the reason a baby or pregnancy hasn't progressed.

Friend, I want to be really honest with you. What I'm sharing here with you today probably isn't going to do or say some magical thing that will make your pain go away.

Your pain is a process and it's there because something precious was lost – your baby and the future you imagined with him or her. That is no small thing.

But I do want to encourage you to take heart. The sting you feel today does change. It's okay that today – this day – you experience your sadness and your loss and your grief all over again. Don't worry how you felt yesterday and try not to worry about how you'll feel tomorrow. Focus on this moment – here, now, you and I together.

Your heart is trying to tell you something.

Your baby mattered.

He mattered.

She mattered.

You matter.

Your loss is real.

Your dreams for a baby are legitimate.

Your pain is justified.

Your tears are warranted.

As a mother you have made room in your life – in your very own body – for a child. Regardless of if the pregnancy was hard fought for, came as a surprise, frightened you, or has still yet to come. This experience changed you. Of course you will feel a sense of emptiness where that life seems to have vanished or that hope dissolves.

Nothing will take the place of your baby. No amount of positive talk, Bible verses, homemade chocolate chip cookies, or hugs. Not even another baby who may come later.

But you also need to know that you are stronger than you think you are. Your heart *will* survive this. Your body will remember what it's like to feel comfortable in your own skin again.

Make no mistake, your loss will change you. Your heart will expand a few sizes if you surrender to the process grief takes you on. But it *is* a process. This is not an event to be overcome or a challenge to conquer. Grief is a path to be walked. Some days your pace will quicken, while other days it will be slowed. You'll find unexpected corners and forks and surely a hill or two to scale. But you'll find your way forward. And I promise, if you haven't already, you will laugh again. Friend, there is so much hope.

Now, will you do me a favor? As you finish reading, don't rush off to the next thing. Give yourself a few minutes – some space to breathe. I want you to think about how to honor *yourself* in this process. You might have thought about how to honor your baby's life, but have you also spent time considering how to honor your own beautiful self in this process?

Perhaps you need to take some time today in prayer to ask God to show you how He thinks of you. Perhaps you need to list ways that your body has served you in the past. Perhaps you need to journal your feelings or treat yourself to the kind of tender care you would most enjoy right now – a bath. A massage. A coffee. A run. A walk on the beach. A house to yourself for a quiet nap.

This is not me telling you to "buck up" and do something to make you happy. This is me giving you permission to feel pain and then respond in a way that is comforting and wholesome. You are a whole person – mind, body, and spirit – and today your body is giving you a chance to recall that connection even as it reminds you of your amazing womanhood.

So lean in. Listen. Don't shush your pain or cover up your grief. Instead, let your pain and grief inform how you treat yourself today.

Let today be a day you respond with grace to the body and heart that makes up your wonderful you. Be kind to yourself. Give yourself permission to let the tears flow and to search for the light. This is not self-indulgence. It's stewardship of the most important thing God has given you: *your life*.

Love,

Adriel

To be read on a special occasion or holiday

Dear Grieving Mom,

Deep breaths.

I know – this is hard. Maybe you're reading this as you gear up for Thanksgiving or a birthday or Christmas. Maybe it's the "first day of school" photos on social media that serve as your trigger. Maybe it's the birth of your friend's baby who was supposed to be the same month as yours. Maybe it's the birth of your own child – a joyous occasion, but also one that brought it's own fresh wave of grief for the child you never held.

Sometimes we see these days coming and the lead up is harder than the day itself. Sometimes it's more sneaky and we didn't realize an even or occasion was even going to be a milestone day in our grief journey. Sometimes we're just plain blindsided.

These days aren't "safe" and there no way to prevent them from coming – the names ones or the unnamed ones. As hard as they are, they are a part of our way forward through grief. If you're like me, your temptation might be to distract or busy yourself through painful days. But let me gently encourage you to open your heart to the sting and invite deeper healing to come.

Just as salt water can cause a wound to sting further while also helping to heal it, so embracing grief can simultaneously hurt and heal.

So instead of distracting yourself or numbing the pain, I'm going to encourage you the same way I have in *Grace Like Scarlett* – go deep. Dive under those waves of grief. If you try to outrun them or conquer them, you'll likely be thrown for a loop, tossed under the force of them. But if you're willing to dive in, and specifically to dive into the presence of Jesus, I promise you He will meet you there under the surface. You will not drown. You won't be destroyed. In fact you can emerge on the other side of this wave a little more healed. More waves will come, of course, but you will never be abandoned or left without hope.

I remember a friend telling me she couldn't bear all the nativity scenes around Advent and Christmas time. Another described the heartache of seeing her family gathered around the Easter table, laughing as normal even though she felt like her world had been flipped upside down. Another faces every Mother's Day knowing it's also the birthday and anniversary of her unborn baby. There is no way to avoid these occasions, so these women are faced with no other choice than to find their way through them.

But mama, you are stronger and more resilient than you perhaps think. And even more importantly you are more loved than you think. God sees you. He sees your pain. He sees your heartbreak. He hears your cry for relief and recognition and He feels your tears even as they fall to your chest. You may feel like the whole damn world has forgotten but He never, ever will. He loves you with an everlasting love so thick and sure and mighty and pure that nothing can ever separate you from it. He doesn't despise your weakness, your humanity, your fragility. He doesn't wish you would "pull it together", and He's not worried about you being some kind of party pooper. There's so much more for you to be your wonderful self – grief and all.

Do what you need to do today in order to experience your grief and invite Jesus into it. Dive deep. You may need a day to let grief quietly work its way out or you may need a day to take a bucket of balls to the tennis court and pound out your anger through your most focused and forceful serves. You might find it cathartic to draw aside and try to imagine what it might look like to see your child in the presence of Jesus. You might need to talk it out with your husband or sister, or close down your social media feeds and practice centering prayer. However you need to experience and process your grief today, be intentional. If you are a Christian, welcome Jesus to be a part of it.

A Prayer for Hard Days

Heavenly Father,

We call on You today as the God Who Sees. [1]

*You've promised to draw near to the broken-hearted, so will You draw near today?
We confess our grief, not because it is a sin, but because confession gives us a chance
to exhale. Help us now to inhale grace.*

*As we cry our tears and feel our pain, would You mingle Your very self with our tears
and help us to heal a little deeper?*

*We remember our babies with longing and sorrow, but help us also to bear witness to
the miracle of life in Your presence.*

*Thank you that our babies aren't lost, but they are found within Your embrace. Help us
to find ourselves there today, too – wrapped in the arms of our God who sees and knows
and feels right along with us.*

Amen.

To be read on Mother's Day

Dear Grieving Mom,

Mother's Day. It's hard isn't it? I know.

Because I grew up in a healthy home with a mother I adored and a life relatively free of heartbreak, I never understood the pain many women experience on Mother's Day. When I had my own children, I quickly formed ideas about what I deserved when Mother's Day rolled around. I need a day off, a massage, and fresh flowers to remind me that my sleepless nights and repetitive days meant something. Of course, I knew my mothering mattered to my children. I knew it mattered to God and to my husband as well. But I sometimes still felt unrecognized in the sacrifice – the push and pull and demand and responsibility of it all.

A few years of motherhood taught me that it's pretty common to feel this way. But what of women who grew up without a mother or with a mother who left them? What of those who lost a beloved mom to disease? And what of those who longed to become a mother but were holding out for the right husband? Or the wife who endures charts and pokes and tests and every moth hopes for a result she's never seen before?

Mother's Day can be hard. Nothing has taught me this more than experiencing the loss of our babies. You may not have other little ones in your home to give you kisses and help daddy make you a card covered with X's and O's like I did. But regardless if you've ever had children in your home, losing a baby can turn Mother's Day on its head.

For me, when Mother's Day rolls around I always miss my babies again. I'm thankful for those I have (and realize many women don't share that same kind of joy), but as much as I love my three sons, they will never replace the three babies I've lost. I'll always miss them and miss what could've been.

I remember the Mother's Day after losing our first baby to miscarriage. I was six weeks fresh in my grief and I dreaded facing that day without our baby. It felt wrong to celebrate motherhood when mine had been so marred by loss. I felt alone and disappointed. I felt hesitant, vulnerable, disoriented.

That day came and went and of course I survived. My husband thoughtfully included our baby in his card to me and acknowledged our loss, validating all of my complicated emotions. But it doesn't mean it was easy.

Each year since, I've learned to adjust my expectations for Mother's Day and to do things that help me address the things within *my own heart* that no one else can see.

For me this means considering other moms who may be hurting. It means doing something to serve women in need, not because I can save them, but because I *am* them.

Sometimes it means buying myself flowers, or stealing away to get really honest in my journal. Mostly it means slowly learning to count my blessings, even in the midst of my pain, and knowing that neither cancels out the other.

Dear mama, how are you feeling this Mother's Day? Do you feel forgotten? Invisible? Lonely? Do you feel sad? Angry? Please know that there's room for all of you today so, you be you.

Some of you have not had any children other than the ones you've lost. You may even be wondering what this day means for you – do you count? Whether society sees you as a mother or not, let me speak this truth into your heart as clearly and directly as I can:

You count. You are a mother, too.

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding your fertility and pregnancy, your mother's heart cracked open when you got pregnant and lost your baby, or the day God planted the desire to be a mother in your heart.

You're in pain today.

You may feel let down by your husband or your friends or church or support network. They may not have recognized the significance or sensitivity of this day in the ways for which you had hoped. For that, I am sorry. It's okay that you're disappointed. In your disappointment, know this: God sees. He sees your pain and He cares how you feel. He will draw near to you in times of heartache – receive His comfort, surrender to His grace, ask for His healing, and look to the hope He offers.

You are not alone. You count. I see you. God sees You.

HE SEES YOU.

HE SEES YOU.

HE SEES YOU.

Love,

Adriel

To be read when you're invited to a baby shower

Dear Grieving Mom,

You knew it was coming and yet it kind of snuck up on you, too, didn't it? That first baby shower invitation since losing your baby.

It's hard—accepting the fact that the world spins onward when our own seems to have tipped right off its axis.

I don't know if you feel like you need permission or not, but I'm going to issue it just in case: You don't have to attend the baby shower. Really. This is your choice.

If you feel it will break you then think about how you can bless your friend without attending. Can you make a dish for the host to share? Send a card and a gift? Perhaps you can call your friend or write a letter explaining how you are so excited about celebrating her baby and yet don't feel capable of holding it together in front of all of her friends. Be honest and vulnerable and tell her you're afraid you'll burst into tears and ruin her shower, making everyone feel awkward for celebrating in the midst of your pain. She may be disappointed, and yes, it's possible she'll think you're over-reacting if empathy isn't high in her strengths. But it's more likely she'll respect your honesty. She'll think you're brave for sharing. She'll wish there was something she could do to ease your grief. Not all friends are this wonderful, but my hope is that you've found friends who are.

I managed to avoid most baby showers when I was feeling vulnerable after my miscarriages, but it helped that we were in a transition and I didn't have many friends in the childbearing stage at the time. When I was invited to my sister-in-law's baby shower, I knew I had to go. Not because she wouldn't be gracious or compassionate if I was to explain my hesitancy, but because I knew I would regret not deliberately stepping out of my comfort zone to celebrate the precious baby who would grow up calling me "Auntie."

I was pregnant at the time, close to the end of my first trimester, and yet I was living with a lot of anxiety about the pregnancy. You'd think having a baby in my own womb would give me courage to attend the shower with confidence but it didn't. I felt as vulnerable and alone as I ever had, biting my lip as I walked up the stairs and took a deep breath before entering into the party.

Here's the thing: I didn't enjoy the party. It was hard for me. I felt like any moment I might bust into tears. (Being super charged with pregnancy hormones surely didn't

help.) I engaged in small talk with women I had never met and I tried to tap into the joy I genuinely felt toward my sister-in-law and her baby. And yet it was hard. The whole thing was hard.

I'm telling you this little story because I think sometimes the brave thing is staying home from the shower. Other times the brave thing is going. Either way, it's going to be hard. So what is it your heart really wants for this specific time and invitation and relationship?

Will not attending cause a rift in an already fragile friendship? Perhaps you should consider going, but then have another appointment set up mid-party that you have to leave early for.

Will you feel resentful if you drag yourself there and grit your teeth through the whole thing? Will you regret not going? Perhaps if you feel you must go, you can consider having a trusted, mutual friend at the party who will cover for you should you need to leave abruptly.

No one can answer these questions for you, but my point is that there is grace for whatever hard call you need to make. Help yourself forward by setting up the support you need in advance. Decide what you want and then own it. If at all possible, invite your friend in to your process. I pray she'll respond with grace and that together—in whatever form feels right—you can celebrate the precious life that is her little one.

You've got this.

Love,

Adriel

To be read on the anniversary of your miscarriage or baby's birthday

Dear Grieving Mom,

You made it. It's been one year since you lost your baby. Did you have days where you wondered how life could go on as you once knew it? Did you ever wonder if you'd stop crying? Or how you would weather the storm? Me too.

But now, here you are. One year later and I wonder how you're feeling? Does it sting a little less? Have you been dreading this day, wondering if the grief will hit you like a freight train all over again?

Nearly a year after my first miscarriage I remember dreading my baby's birthday. I wanted the day to be perfect—to honor her life and tend to my own heart. I wondered if anyone would remember or if anyone still cared.

And then the day came and it wasn't at all how I imagined. I felt sad, yes, but I also felt a sense of relief—like, I made it. One year later and I made it. This grief didn't destroy me. It didn't wreck my family. It didn't ruin my faith. But it did change me.

A year after my loss it was easier for me to see how I had been undone and remade into a kinder, more compassionate, more empathetic person. My grief taught me that I matter—my body matters, my emotions matter, my dreams matter. And my grief helped me to enter into the pain of others without being so quick to try and swoop in to “fix” it. (I admit I still struggle with this—I still would much rather fix someone's pain than sit with them in the discomfort of it.) But I have grown. I am less uncomfortable with pain and less intimidated by the ways it finds its way out through our emotions.

I won't presume to know how you're feeling today. You may have a fresh wave of grief or a sense of joy or a tinge of nostalgia. You may feel tired or disappointed or lonely and isolated as you realize that to most people this is just another normal day. So even though I can only guess at how you might feel, I'd wager to say your grief journey has changed you, too. Would you agree?

I'd like to ask you to do something today, two things actually. First, would you take some time to think about your own grief journey over the last year? If you're willing, write your baby a letter and tell her all the ways her life has changed you. Tell him what you miss about him and also tell him how you feel toward him now. Ask her if she knows the impact her short life has had on yours; tell him the ways he's left a mark on the world.

And then—if you haven't already—do something to mark this day. Buy yourself flowers or a small piece of jewelry that has meaning to you and represents your baby's life. Perhaps release a balloon or a lantern. Share your thoughts with friends in a text or via social media.

However you feel today is your reality. At the risk of sounding too "Oprah-esk" (though, admittedly, I love Oprah), you need to "own your own truth" today. Be real with how you feel—the raw, authentic, messy, complicated, simple, beautiful compilation of emotions that mark you in this moment in time. But also know that how you feel doesn't define you. Instead, let it inform you.

So listen to your heart, listen to your body, and—if you can—quiet your spirit enough to even listen to God. Whether you're a person of faith or not, open your heart to the possibility that there really is a divine being out there who's essence is Love itself. Let yourself feel and receive that Love.

Because I'm a Christian, I believe Love's name is Jesus. I want to pray this blessing in His name over you now:

A Prayer of Blessing

Jesus, bless this grieving mama's heart today. May your grace be upon her to continue to heal. May she see who she is in light of Your love.

Where she has experienced confusion or doubt or anxiety, speak Your truth into her heart: She is loved. She is worthy. You have not abandoned her—not on the day she lost her baby, not today, and not tomorrow.

Scripture says You draw near to us in our broken heartedness—may she sense that nearness in this moment.

Today on the anniversary of losing her precious child, may she know peace, comfort, healing, and rest. May she know that it's okay for her to feel both sorrow and gratitude, grief and joy intermixed.

Bless her as she remembers her baby and honors his or her life. Bless her as she tends to her own soul. Bless her as the tears fall and as her heart swells.

Help her to dream again—new dreams, new hope for tomorrow.

Give her today what You've always promised: grace for the present, hope for the future, and love for always.

Amen.

Adriel Booker is an author, speaker, and advocate for women.

Read more on her website: <https://adrielbooker.com/>



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