



By Dr. Richard Youngblood

Question: As Mother's Day approaches, I become even more aware of the emotional pain of a friend who has been unable to have a baby but who longs to be a mother. I wish I knew how to help and encourage her. What would Jesus do?

Often our happy celebrations on Mother's Day can be unhappy reminders to some very dear people like your friend. We need to be sensitive to these people without taking away from the justly-deserved recognition of mothers who have made sacrifices to have and to care for their children.

While the Bible does honor motherhood, we are also told of women who suffered from infertility for long periods of their lives. One of the best known is a lady named Hannah. Hannah knew what it was to face a sense of being alone in her suffering as well as being belittled in her childlessness (1 Samuel 1:1-20). Her husband may have intended good, but his reaction seems to downplay what she was experiencing. He said, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?" (1 Samuel 1:8). Even Eli the priest misunderstood Hannah's whispering in prayer at the temple as an indication of drunkenness. I believe Jesus would want us to learn from Hannah's experience so that we do not make the same mistakes as those people who "consoled" Hannah.

Perhaps a better approach to this problem is to enter into your friend's experience so far as you can by giving her a friend with whom she can openly share her feelings. Follow the model of Jesus who left heaven and came to be one of us to show God's love and understanding. I suspect that your friend needs someone who is willing to talk with her about her problem of infertility. Don't force the topic upon her, but be understanding when she is uncomfortable with talking about baby showers and pregnancy or birth announcements. However, don't avoid the topic. Just allow her to talk about what is happening without trying to offer advice and solve the problem. The biblical advice to be "quick to listen" and "slow to speak" (James 1:19) is very applicable in this situation. In addition, help your friend by being with her in situations that will remind her of her disappointments. Help her to rejoice with others without seeing herself as less of a person. God continues to value her, and he has a place of service for her in his kingdom.

Above all, Jesus would suggest that you become a prayer-partner with your friend. Jesus taught his followers to pray. He also prayed with them and modeled a life of prayer before them. We cannot be assured that this will mean your friend will have a child, but some surprising things have happened when good people have prayed. Both of you may benefit from studying the simple yet honest and heartfelt prayer of Hannah as she prayed for a child (1 Samuel 1:11). As a result of that prayer, God gave Hannah a son who became the prophet Samuel; and it might be that at the right time he may choose to give your friend a child who will serve God as did Samuel. Hannah knew what your friend needs to know; God our Father is ultimately the only one who can fully understand her deep longing for a child. No matter what the Father in heaven sees as best, he will not abandon those who come to him with sincere and open hearts.

I believe the above are at least some things that Jesus would do. Keep reading the Bible. You will find other stories of women who suffered from childlessness—women like Sarah the wife of Abraham, Rachel the wife of Jacob, the un-named wife of Manoah who became the mother of Samson, and Elizabeth who became the mother of John the Baptist. Keep learning about Jesus and God the Eternal and Majestic Father, and you will find even more you can do to help people like your friend.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: universitychurchmurray.com] 2016/05/06