

Hope for the Infertile Couple



by Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb

Infertile couples relate to Rachel's cry, **"Give me children, or I shall die!"** (Genesis 30:1). The desire for children is strong. Technologies offer hope, but can also be disappointing. However, that does not mean the Christian couple is without hope.

Assisted reproductive technology (ART) offers hope for dealing with infertility. But ART does not always work and may present moral and spiritual problems. Infertile couples need a hope that does not fail.

What God Does Not Promise

Such hope can be found only in Jesus and His promises. But first it is important to note what God does *not* promise. Nothing in Scripture promises that children are a right. Children are an "inheritance" from God (Psalm 127:3). The granting of an inheritance depends upon the will and goodness of the giver.

God gives life (Job 12:10) and opens and closes wombs (Genesis 20:18; 29:31) according to His purpose. God closed Sarai's womb to emphasize Isaac as a child of promise (Galatians 4:27-28), and Elizabeth's to show the importance of John the Baptist. Christian couples should never feel that infertility is punishment for sin. Christ took the curse of sin (Galatians 3:13) and suffered its punishment (Isaiah 53:5). Infertility results from sin in general that subjects our bodies to imperfections. Certainly infertility can be the consequence of bad choices, but most often it is due to circumstances over which couples have little control.

As painful as infertility is, there is no promise that couples are entitled to conceive and bear children. Nor are they free to pursue technologies outside the "one flesh" union of

husband and wife (Genesis 2:24) or those that involve the destruction of life. Sometimes Christians are called to accept their infertility as an opportunity to strengthen their faith and be a witness to others.

Hope that Does not Fail

The unfailing promises of God are so important! We turn frequently to Romans 8:28: **"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."** In spite of sin and imperfection, God carries out His plan for His people. God's plan for an infertile couple might be a child for them to parent through adoption.

Proverbs 3:5-6 gives another hope-filled promise: **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."** Childlessness is hard to deal with. Leaning too heavily on our own understanding can either lead to hopelessness or to remedies that may not please God.

Abram and Sarai, for example, tried to deal with infertility by having Abram impregnate Sarai's servant, Hagar. It only led to strife. Real hope comes from trusting that God directs our steps (Proverbs 16:9). I remember a childless couple God led to be "parents" and spiritual mentors to hundreds of children. They taught Sunday School for a total of 85 years!

A final and foundational promise: **"God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him."** (1 John 4:9). Infertile couples may have doubts and fears. But they need not doubt God's love or fear being forsaken. God assures us of His love, not by blessings that He gives or withholds, but by the cross where He "purchased and won" us. God assures us of His presence through the empty tomb. People loved by an ever present God are never without hope!