

Saying the Right Words

to Our Barren Sisters in Christ

by Katie Schuermann



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ost of us don't doubt that God can open wombs. What some of us seem to doubt, however, is that God also closes wombs or, at least, allows them to stay closed.

I know this full well, for I am barren; I have not been given the gift of a child. I receive a lot of correspondence from people who think my present barrenness is a direct result of my wanting prayer life. They conclude I must not have enough faith that God can open my womb or He would have, already.

That's tough correspondence for me to receive because, in fact, I do believe that God can open my womb. It's just that I know these two things: He has not promised me in His Word that He will do so, and it is idolatry to put my hope and trust in that which God has not promised. Frankly, it is also exhausting. I grow weary of playing the part of belligerent, spoiled brat with my Father in heaven, stomping my feet, shaking my fists, and demanding from Him the children I think I'm owed in this life. God is not a vending machine (as my husband often says). God is my Creator, Savior, and Comforter, and He in His wisdom — in spite of all of my huffing and puffing — has still not given me a child.

I'd much rather live today in the sweet, confident expectation of what God has promised me in His Word: that He works all things, even my childlessness, for my good (**Romans 8:28**). That is the promise in which I put my faith. That is the good gift for which I pray: "Lord, continue to give (and not give) me exactly what is best for me. Thy will be done. Amen."

Opening Prayer

O God, You promise us that after we have suffered a little while, You will restore us, strengthen us, and establish us. Comfort all who suffer, particularly our barren sisters in Christ, amidst their sadness. Strengthen them/us to stand firm against every assault of Satan. Be our salvation, our strength, and our song unto life everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Take a few moments to write down some false promises Christians mistakenly speak into the ears of the barren.

If ... _____, you will ...

What promises does God make to the barren — and to all baptized Christians — in His Word? **John 3:16; Romans 5:8**

Matthew 1:20–21; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3–14 _____

Galatians 3:26–4:7 _____

Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 18:20; Exodus 20:24b; John 1:1; Matthew 26:26–29 _____

Matthew 6:30–32 and 10:29–31; Colossians 1:17 _____

Psalm 34:4, 15, 17; Psalm 86:7 _____

Matthew 28:20b _____

We often refer to children as the world does, adopting cultural phrases like family planning, baby machine, reproduction, and fertility science in our conversations. By our language alone, we suggest to each other that children are something to be planned for and controlled. What does God actually say in His Word that children are to us?

Psalm 127:3 _____

Genesis 1:26–28 _____

Psalm 139:13–14 _____

We learn from the stories of Hannah, Rebekah, Sarah, Elizabeth, and others in the Bible that God, in His wisdom, opens and closes wombs according to His good and gracious will. Only God can know why He gives the gift of children to some and withholds the gift from others. But we can know with confidence from God's Word why some barren couples — and all Christians, for that matter — suffer from physical diseases in this world. Why is this?

Romans 8:20–23 _____

Is barrenness punishment for a Christian's individual sins? Is a person a bad Christian if God doesn't give the gift of a child? **Romans 8:1–2** _____

Read **1 Timothy 2:15**. The Apostle Paul writes that a woman will be saved through childbearing. This statement can be confusing, even convicting, for women who have not been given the gift of children. What does this Scripture passage mean to you? _____

Barrenness can be a heavy cross to bear for those desiring the gift of children. In fact, we do not have to look very far to find them: friends, sisters, aunts, cousins, daughters, and all those women we love so dearly who suffer from barrenness and miscarriages. How can we comfort them? What hope can we give them? What right words can we speak to them?

Romans 8:35–39 _____

Revelation 21:5 _____

John 16:33 _____

Lamentations 3:17–24 _____

Romans 8:28 _____

Sometimes, there are no right words to offer a barren sister in Christ who is in the thick of her suffering. Her grief may be too present and too powerful for talking. These times of lamentation call for compassion and patience in the Body of Christ as we bear with our grieving sister in love, sharing in her sorrow just as surely as we would in her joy. What are some specific ways we can care for her during her season of sorrow? _____

Closing Prayer

Most High, You bid us in Your Word to wait on You. As the days turn into weeks, the weeks into months, and the months into years, remind us that Your mercies are new every morning. Assure us of your abundant, steadfast love to us in Jesus, that we might rejoice in the waiting, knowing You to be our Portion, our Hope, and our Redeemer forever, no matter what it is You may speak to come to pass. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "What God Ordains Is Always Good" (LSB #760; LW #422; TLH #521)

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