

Menopause, children and regrets

There is something final about the menopause – when it comes to childbearing at least. Yes, there are – of course – those headlines in the newspaper about women in their 60s having children - and, indeed, stories in Bible of people like Sarah having a child in her 90s - but such stories are not the norm. For most of us, that moment of menopause is the end of a journey.

Different women will have had different journeys. Not all will face regrets – but some will. Some will have had the privilege of bearing many children but, at menopause, may still reflect, “I wish I had had one more”. Some will have had one child, and might begin to think “did I miss out on something special in terms of having a larger family?” Some will have chosen not to have any children, but now that path is no longer a choice, it’s an inevitability and that can feel unexpectedly hard. Some will have faced the heartbreak of infertility though secretly hoped a surprise might happen one day – menopause is the moment you are confronted with the biological reality it won’t. Many different paths but one single ending: after years of declining fertility, there is a day when all women have to face the potentially painful reality there are no more biological children to be had.

Regrets are a type of loss. Not a loss of something that was but a loss of something that might have been – could have been – if things had been different. It’s a loss of a dream – loss of a possibility – loss of a future that you imagined could have been good. If regrets take hold, they can dominate our thoughts. They have the potential to derail our joy and nudge us to believe the lie that we have somehow missed out on God’s best.

Talking to the Lord about our losses is a source of great comfort and hope, but it can be difficult to know what to say. Here are some areas you might like to pray through with a friend:

- Lord, hear my cry for mercy (Psalm 28:2)
- Lord, be with me in my grief (Psalm 23:4)
- Lord, give me comfort, let me comfort others too (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

- Lord, grow in me confidence that your sovereignty is good (Psalm 103:19)
- Lord, please develop deep contentment in my soul (Philippians 4:11-13)
- Lord, please guard my heart from envy (Proverbs 14:30)
- Lord, help me cast my anxieties on you (1 Peter 5:7)
- Lord, help me submit to your will for my life knowing that is good (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- Lord, give me wisdom to know to how live well in this season (James 1:5)
- Lord, I am sorry for the ways I have doubted or accused you (Proverbs 28:13)
- Lord, help me to know I am still your loved, precious child (1 John 3:1)
- Lord, fill me with joy (Romans 15:13)
- Lord, help me to know there is still so much to look forward to (1 Peter 1:4)

Different verses may be more apt on different days, but all stand true every day. We can pray these things through tears, and yet with confidence, knowing that the Lord is close, and he always hears. Will that take the pain away? Not instantly, not necessarily this side of heaven. But it will bring the pain to the Lord for comfort and change and enable us to keep trusting and keep growing in the knowledge that, however many children we do or don't have, we are living a life of deep blessing and are profoundly loved.