

# Don't Shut Down if You Struggle with Infertility

To the couple struggling with infertility this Mother's Day: You are not alone.

As another struggler along the journey - someone who lived through nine failed fertility procedures and two failed adoptions in our family's journey to become parents - I know how much this season of the year brings out ache.

And even though I do have a daughter now, there's a part of me that still carries that pain.

To live in a very fertile world and to have the desire to parent (which is a natural God-given desire) and then not be able to without a road of intense hardship is difficult.

It is very easy to feel like God has abandoned you or forgot you. Or loves your pregnant friends more than you.

Don't beat yourself up about these feelings. Be honest about them.

And on top of this pain, church folks, even well-meaning ones, can often say unhelpful things to you like this: "Everything happens for a reason" or "If you just pray harder" or "In God's time."

I know these clichés are often of little help to you or anyone going through a time of intense suffering for that matter.

But, here's my advice: Don't shut down. Don't isolate yourself from everyone. Share your faith struggles with somebody who can handle them (and not everybody can).

Stay close to people who are dealing with pain, especially older women or men. Let them be your teachers even if they have never been through infertility or child loss themselves. Talk about suffering with them. Read the book of Job, even together.

Let God be with you in the pain to the degree that this is possible for you.

Because this will be your way out.

And, if you can't attend church on Mother's Day, it's OK. Churches can feel like land mines on days like this - days when women who are mothers are given a rose and you are not, days when your pastor may not acknowledge your grief, and days when you're surrounded by cute families posing for pictures after church.

I need to tell you that several years ago in our family's darkest season of grief, I stayed home from church on Mother's Day.

Instead, I went to the gym. I lunched with a friend and bought myself a present. Who said I wasn't worthy of a Mother's Day gift, though I didn't have any biological children in my house to show for it?

I felt all the better for taking good care of myself. You will too in whatever that means for your circumstances.

My dear sisters and brothers, this path you're on might be one of the most difficult seasons of your lives. But, it doesn't mean that God has left you or loves you any less. Seek out wisdom that reminds you of this truth.

Some reads that have been spiritual guideposts for me along our infertility journey have been:

"Learning to Walk in the Dark" by Barbara Brown Taylor - a pastor and teacher who has a lot of powerful things to say about how the "dark" times of life aren't necessarily bad or full of God's judgment on us, but rather an opportunity to more fully understand who God is.

"Stations of the Heart" by Richard Lischer - a divinity school professor who lost his son to cancer while his wife was pregnant with her first child. It's one of the most real books I've ever read on grief and the forms it takes.

"Stitches: A Handbook of Meaning, Hope and Repair" by Anne Lamott - one of the best books I've read about what it means to walk with another person through suffering.

If these books don't work for you, find yours. Infertility begs for deep wells of spiritual encouragement.

One parting word: Mother's Day (and Father's Day, for that matter) are hard days.

But remember they're each just one day. One day that will come and go. Keep walking. Grace will find you as you keep putting one foot in front of the other. It did for our family.

*[Elizabeth Hagan](#) is the author of "Birthed: Finding Grace Through Infertility" and lives in the Washington, D.C., area. Other hats she wears are as a preacher, blogger and executive director of [Our Courageous Kids](#), a foundation dedicated to orphan care. Her writings can also be found on her [website](#), and you can follow her on Twitter [@elizabethagan](#).*

*Editor's note: This article is part of a series for Mothers' Day 2017 (May 14):*

*Previous articles in the series are:*

*[A Mother's Day Prayer to Relieve Church-Service Angst](#)*

*[Is Your Church Building Authentic Community for Women?](#)*