

A Time to Be Silent

by Tina Smith

Familiar carols and family gatherings usher in the most wonderful time of the year for most. Yet the joy of the holidays is often clouded for women who continue to be eluded by motherhood as they fight their way through month after infertile month.

Well-meaning relatives and acquaintances frequently deepen the pain for women without children, rambling on with suggestions and advice and even ignorant ideas. Author Dee Brestin, who is well acquainted with the loss of dreams as well as loved ones, shares her perspective about the struggle of being around those who haven't suffered deeply or who just can't relate:

"They can be like Job's friends, offering pat answers, misapplying God's truths, bumping up against the knife they do not see. They smile and quote scriptures to me. I cringe. They send a card with a platitude pointing out the silver lining to my pain. I close it quickly. I know they mean well. Proverbs 25:20 warns "Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to heavy heart."

From her very personal experience, this inspirational writer contrasts those failing to help with the few who do reach out in true empathy:

"But, oh, the comfort of being with those who have suffered. They see the invisible knife. They stay by my side when I am not pleasant and listen to me drone on. They've been there, so they know better than to tell me God is sovereign and all things will work together for our good. I know that's true, but I can't hear it right now. High-tide grief is not the time to speak solutions. (Women who have had miscarriages tell me the last thing they want to hear is "You can have another baby.") When one is grieving, it is the time for friends to be silent, to hug and to weep."

Consider these tangible ways that friends have been true beacons during Dee's darkest times:

- **Show up** – Whether it's at someone's house, a hospital room or the funeral home, a quiet presence speaks volumes in support.
- **Write notes** – Handwritten sentiments soothe the soul like nothing else. Avoid trying to "fix" the pain but rather focus on lessening it.
- **Be patient** – Grief is a process, and most don't recover from its devastation on a set timetable.
- **Intercede** – Find scriptures to recite as prayers, knowing that evil attacks those who are down but flees in the presence of a Higher Power.

You can make a positive difference to someone who is traveling the road of infertility, even if you've not walked that path. Encourage her to seek out resources – especially during festive times – that will help her cope, such as relaxation therapy, talking with a trained counselor, or joining a local or on-line support group. Offer to accompany her for a scheduled consultation with a reproductive specialist to explore solutions and alternative treatments. These simple expressions of friendship can give her hope and remind her that she's not alone.

Tina Smith is a communications specialist at the Fertility Center off Gunbarrel Road in Chattanooga and can be reached at 423.899.0500 or tina@myfertilitycenter.com. Tina speaks openly about her long struggle with infertility before the arrival of her miracles and hopes to encourage other women who've not yet become moms. Dee Brestin is the author of The Friendships of Women, We Are Sisters, Falling in Love with Jesus, Living in Love with Jesus, Forever in Love with Jesus and The God of All Comfort. Her husband, Steve, passed away in 2004. Go to deebrestin.com for more information on Dee Brestin Ministries.