

We're on the 15th message in our Marriage & Family Series, and the title of this morning's sermon is, *"Be Fruitful and Multiply – Part II."*

Because this sermon continues from Part I, and b/c Part I was two weeks ago instead of last week, I want to briefly review what we discussed in Part I...

- We looked at God's command in **Gen 1:28** for man to **"Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it."** That's actually God's second – and lesser-known command – after commanding man not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- We also looked at Jacob and how he had a wonderful view of children. When his brother Esau asked him about all his children, in **Gen 33:5** he said, **"These are the children God has graciously given me."** I think Jacob's response is a great example of how we should view children as being graciously given to us by God.
- We also spent quite a bit of time discussing barrenness:
 - We discussed how barrenness is a theme in the Old Testament...
 - We discussed how barrenness was one of the worst trials for women to endure, and how as a result people should never deliberately choose barrenness...
 - We discussed how as much as barrenness is a theme in the Old Testament, it's also a theme for God to graciously open the womb of barren women, usually after prayer.
 - So we also discussed how even though there's no guarantee God will provide people w/ children, barrenness is worthy of our prayer.

Now we're going to continue right where we left off from Part I, and this brings us to Lesson 1, Part II...

LESSON 1: CHILDREN ARE:

- (PART I) A GIFT, REWARD AND BLESSING (FROM "BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY PART I ON 12/14/14)
- (PART II) EXAMPLES FOR ADULTS.

We probably all know the disciples made a number of mistakes. If you're ever wondering whether God can use you, think about the Twelve Men Jesus chose and you should feel encouraged.

In two of the disciples' low points:

- Jesus actually used children to rebuke them.
- He used children as examples for them to learn from.

In the first situation, the disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of God. You've got Jesus regularly teaching on humility and service, and these guys want to talk about who's the greatest. It wouldn't be too much to say they couldn't have been acting further from the instruction Jesus had given them.

During their argument, in **Matt 18:2** it says Jesus rebuked them by, **"bringing a little child [into] the midst of them, ³ and saying, "Assuredly...unless you are converted and BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN, YOU WILL BY NO MEANS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**

⁴ THEREFORE WHOEVER HUMBLER HIMSELF AS THIS LITTLE CHILD IS THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.”

Picture the scene and how humbling – and embarrassing – this really would’ve been...

They’re talking about who’s greatest – and we can assume more than likely they each thought they were the greatest - and Jesus brings a child in front of them and says, “*Be like this child!*” I’m sure this would’ve shocked them and made them feel very convicted.

And please don’t miss what Jesus said:

- He said, “*Become like little children or you won’t make it into heaven!*”
- Then He said, “*Whoever is like a child will be the greatest in Heaven!*”

That’s pretty serious!

The second situation – again another low point for the disciples – is probably the most famous story in Scripture regarding children...

Parents were bringing their children to Jesus so He could lay His hands on them. Amazingly, the disciples rebuked the parents and told them to keep their children away. But when Jesus saw this in **Mark 10:14** it says “**He was GREATLY DISPLEASED and [He] said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD. ¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’**”

You’ve got Jesus using children as an example - not just of what to be like - but as an example of who gets to go to heaven! And He even warns that anyone who isn’t like a **little child** won’t **enter** heaven! Again, that’s pretty serious!

So here’s the question: what is it about children that makes them examples for adults?

First, they’re an example of the faith Christ wants us to have, which is a faith that’s pure, unassuming, and unquestioning. It’s a faith that allows us to believe unshakably in God.

Second, children are an example of the humility and dependence God wants us to have. Like children depend on their parents for their needs, God wants us to have a humility that’s dependent on our Heavenly Father for our needs.

So as we’re talking about children, it’s important to understand that in an interesting way that’s very rarely mentioned, one of the other benefits associated w/ having children or being around children, is they help us learn what God wants us to be like as Christians.

LESSON 1: CHILDREN ARE:

- **(PART I) A GIFT, REWARD AND BLESSING (FROM “BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY PART I ON 12/14/14)**

- (PART II) EXAMPLES FOR ADULTS.
- (PART III) GREAT CAUSES OF MATURITY.

One time Vicki said something – and she gave me permission to share this – about how surprised she was when the hospital let her drive away w/ their first child. She said it's such a huge responsibility to take care of a child it's almost surprising the hospital simply gives you the child, allows you to leave w/ it, and expects you to be able to take care of it. The more I thought about what she said, the truer it seemed!

The fact is there's nothing else in life that teaches you responsibility, sacrifice and maturity like having children:

- If you're going to school, you take classes, but you get breaks between classes, during summer, weekends, holidays. When you finish your schoolwork you relax.
- If you have a job, you clock in and clock out. Even if you work a lot of overtime, you're still not working around the clock...and maybe best of all at least you're getting paid 😊.
- Even when you get married, while there's sacrifice involved, and while marriage really helps our sanctification, I would say even marriage pales in comparison to the maturity caused by having children:
 - Your spouse doesn't depend on you around the clock...
 - Your spouse isn't completely helpless w/o you...I hope 😊

But when you have children you are introducing something into your life that has very little break and demands a commitment that's unparalleled in the rest of life:

- There's nothing in life that purges selfishness like having children.
- You become responsible w/ completely taking care of another human being that can do almost nothing for itself.
- Once you have children, your life that used to revolve around you and your spouse and what you two wanted, now revolves around your child.
- Basically – unless you are an unbelievably selfish person – you have no choice except to:
 - Make sacrifices...
 - Give of yourself...
 - Basically you have no choice except to grow up!

And all of this is very, very good. I believe it's part of God's plan for children to:

- Help us mature...
- Become more giving...
- Become less selfish.

Please listen to this...

Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. This verse is commanding fathers not to anger or exasperate our children:

- What that's really telling fathers is to be patient and gentle.
- Learning to be patient and gentle is very sanctifying.

- For most of us, myself included, becoming a father really means learning to be someone we might not be naturally.

For wives, **1 Tim 2:15** says women **“will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.”** We know from the rest of Scripture that this doesn’t mean women are saved by having children, but here’s what it does mean...

First, it means raising children is the primary sphere of ministry in which a woman serves the Lord and works out her salvation. While we’re not saved by works, works are evidence of being saved, and childbearing is where the works – or fruit – of a woman’s salvation will be most commonly exercised. For women, the fruit that’s evidence of salvation is most commonly produced while raising children.

Second, it means women will be made holy or sanctified through having children. I like the way Jessica explained it when I was talking to her about it. She said, *“Children cause a woman to be sanctified over time.”*

- If you’re a mother, are there many more sanctifying influences on you than your children?
- Are there many things that teach you to be patient, gentle, longsuffering, sacrificial – and thankful – more than having children?
- One of the things Katie pointed out to me is:
 - *Are there any other things in your life that cause you to cling to the Lord and trust Him more than having children?*
 - *Is there anything in life that’s scarier and causes you to depend on the Lord more than having children?*

And again – whether you’re a father or a mother - all of this is very good for us. One of the reasons children are a gift, reward and blessing relates to how God uses them in our lives.

And even the secular world recognizes how children are great causes of maturity...

In Part I mentioned a December 11, 2014 CNBC article titled, *“[We need more babies! Seriously, this is a problem.](#)”* The article said, *“We just learned that the US birthrate fell for the 6th straight year in 2013 to an all-time low. Pardon me for sounding a bit alarmist, but this is really bad news for our economy, our society, and all of civilization.”* Then the author discussed why low birth rates are bad for each of these areas.

Interestingly, the article also said one of the specific problems associated w/ not having children is people don’t mature. Listen to this quote...

“There’s a societal price we’re paying in this country for having fewer children later in life. Just about every parent I know will tell you that the moment their first child was born was the moment they truly accepted the responsibility of their own adulthood to the fullest... When we start seeing more 25-to-45-year-olds who clearly haven’t grown up yet [because they’ve delayed having children] I get concerned. Our growth as a society is stunted when fewer children are around to

induce maturity and better behavior. Fewer children means more aimless and purposeless young adults.”

So even the secular world recognizes how important it is to have children, and how those children help us mature.

LESSON 1: CHILDREN ARE:

- (PART I) A GIFT, REWARD AND BLESSING (FROM “BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY PART I ON 12/14/14)
- (PART II) EXAMPLES FOR ADULTS.
- (PART III) GREAT CAUSES OF MATURITY.
- (PART IV) NEVER AN ACCIDENT

Sometimes people talk about children being “an accident”:

- You’ll hear married people say this:
 - When they weren’t expecting to have a child...
 - Or when they were hoping not to have a child...
 - Or when they were possibly even trying not to have a child.
- You’ll hear unmarried people say this when they have a child out of wedlock.
- You’ll also hear children called an accident when a woman becomes pregnant through very difficult or painful circumstances, like possibly rape.

But regardless of the circumstances under which a child is born, this is what I can tell you for sure: no child is ever an accident, and we should never refer to any children as accidents.

The reason I feel so strongly about this is the Bible presents God as the author of life and His presence and sovereignty is clearly shown in the birth and creation of every child regardless of the circumstances. Although there are a number of verses I could give you supporting this, in my opinion the most beautiful description is in **Psalm 139:13-16**

13 For You formed my inward parts;

You covered me in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴ I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;

Marvelous are Your works,

And *that* my soul knows very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You,

When I was made in secret,

***And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.**

The point is God clearly forms and creates every child under any circumstances.

Now in the next verse, in **Psa 139:16**, God backs up even further than creating people in the womb. You say, “*What’s further back than that? What’s further back than God creating us in the womb?*”

Further back than that is God knowing us and having plans for us even before He began forming us in the womb...

**¹⁶ Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When *as yet there were* none of them.**

Let me read this verse again in the NLT: **You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.**

David is saying God saw him before he was born and every day of his life had already been recorded. Every moment of his life was already determined before a single day began.

This is what God told Jeremiah in **Jer 1:5** “**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.**”

God already knew Jeremiah and had already decided to make him a prophet before He began forming him in the womb.

The reason I’m mentioning all this is when you consider God’s involvement in the creation of every child in the womb, it demands that you never refer to a child as an accident:

- To call a child an accident is to say God made a mistake.
- To call a child an accident is at best incorrect and at worst sinful.

This past week I read that “unplanned pregnancies” are the [leading causes of abortion](#). Now let me tell you what’s tragic about that:

- You’ve got people having abortions, b/c they believe their pregnancy was unplanned...but if you see God as the author of all life, He is also the author of lives resulting from pregnancies that were unplanned.
- While you might be able to say a pregnancy was unplanned from man’s perspective, you can never say a pregnancy is unplanned from God’s perspective.

And just as a note, this is why even if a pregnancy occurred as a result sinful circumstances, like fornication, adultery or rape, our commitment is still the same, we want to see that child just like it’s described in God’s Word: as a gift, reward or blessing.

Now please bear w/ me as I try to strike a very difficult balance here...

- I’m not denying the sinfulness of fornication or adultery...
- I’m not denying the seriousness of it...
- I’m not denying the consequences or the problems it causes.

But w/ that said...

There's often a negative stigma even in the world when women are pregnant outside of wedlock. So how much worse do you think that stigma is in the church? While unplanned pregnancies might be the leading cause of abortions in the world, I can tell you one of the main causes of abortion in the church is young ladies getting pregnant and not wanting to deal w/ the shame and disgrace.

So assuming a young lady gets pregnant in the church outside of wedlock and is repentant regarding her fornication – and I mention that b/c it would be a different scenario if she wasn't repentant – and she has the courage to have the child:

- Knowing the stigma associated w/ her pregnancy...
- Knowing that she's being constantly tempted by Satan to have an abortion and bring her pregnancy to an end, and thereby bring plenty of other trials associated w/ the pregnancy to an end...
 - Preventing the stigma of being pregnant outside of wedlock...
 - Preventing becoming a single mother...and possibly a single mother at a young age...

What should the response of the church be to a woman in this situation who has the courage to have the child? I'm not saying we condone or approve of the sin that was involved, but we:

- Recognize God knit this child together in the womb...
- We support the child...
- And we support the mother...

And before I move on, one final point I want to make, which is really an acknowledgement of the hypocrisy that can be in the church or in our own hearts, is many times when we look down on young ladies who became pregnant outside of wedlock, we should realize many of us were guilty of fornication ourselves...it just didn't result in a pregnancy.

For many people in the church who didn't get pregnant outside of marriage, just b/c there wasn't a pregnancy, doesn't mean there was any less sin.

So again...

- I'm not excusing the sin of fornication...
- I'm not excusing the seriousness of it...
- I'm not excusing the problems it causes...

But to prevent pride or judgment on our parts, it's worth keeping in mind that it's a sin many of us have engaged in.

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- (PART II) EXAMPLES FOR ADULTS.
- (PART III) GREAT CAUSES OF MATURITY.
- (PART IV) NEVER AN ACCIDENT (PART V) BECAUSE GOD HAS A PLAN FOR EACH ONE.

Now regarding unplanned or disgraceful circumstances under which children came in to the world I want to ask you to consider something...

There are a number of important people in Scripture who came from unplanned - or worse disgraceful or sinful circumstances - where it would've been very tempting:

- To not want the child...
- To view the child as an accident...
- And I'm sure if it happened today – to desire an abortion...

But God did great things w/ many of these children. If anything, it's almost a theme for God to take people from these circumstances and use them for His glory...

I put blanks on your inserts in case you want to read about these people later...

First, think of **Perez**...

Perez was the child Judah - one of the heads of the 12 tribes - had when he visited Tamar a prostitute. If you want to talk about a dishonorable situation, think about a child born from a man visiting a prostitute, and that's Perez. But God took Perez and put him in the lineage of His Son. According to Jesus' genealogy **Matt 1:3 Judah begot Perez...by Tamar**. God could've put one of Judah's other sons in the line of the Messiah – one that didn't come from a prostitute - but this is who He chose.

Second, think of Ruth's husband **Boaz**...

Boaz is one of the most honorable men in Scripture. So if you happen to come from dishonorable circumstances in your life, I hope Boaz can serve as an encouragement to you.

Anyone know who was Boaz's mother? Boaz's mother was Rahab the prostitute, the woman who was saved when Jericho was destroyed.

God took this man whose mother was a prostitute, and made him the great grandfather of David, putting him in the line of the Messiah: **Matt 1:5-6 Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse begot David the king.**

Third, think of **Jephthah**...

Jephthah was a great judge. He's mentioned 24 times in Judges. Decades later when Samuel the prophet was speaking to the nation he reminded the people how God had powerfully used Jephthah to save them: in **1 Sam 12:11** he said, "**The LORD sent...Jephthah...and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety.**" He's also listed in the hall of faith, in **Heb 11:32** b/c of what God did through him.

But does anyone know how Jephthah's life began? Listen to this, **Judges 11:1-3 Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot.** ² [Jephthah's brothers]

drove [him] out, and said to him, “You shall have no inheritance in our father’s house, for you are the son of another woman.”³ Then Jephthah fled from his brothers.

Talk about a way for your life to start: he’s born from a prostitute, and then his own family kicks him out. But God chose to use him powerfully.

As a sidenote:

- Regardless of your upbringing...
- Regardless of your past...
- Regardless of how your family feels toward you or has treated you...

God has a plan for you, and He can do great things through you.

Fourth, think of **Solomon**...

Solomon was easily born from one of the darkest relationships in the entire Old Testament: David committed adultery w/ Bathsheba, she became pregnant, and David had her husband Uriah murdered to try to cover his sin. God took that child from David after they were married.

They had another child, and that child was Solomon. Solomon came from a marriage that had one of the most despicable beginnings in Scripture. But then, in terms of power, wealth and fame, God allowed Solomon to become the greatest king in the Old Testament and probably the greatest picture or type of Christ when He rules during the Millennium.

And here’s what’s amazing:

- David had lots of sons God could’ve chosen to be the next king...
- David had lots of sons God could’ve put in the lineage of the Messiah...

But **Matt 1:6b David the king begot Solomon by her *who had been the wife of Uriah*** (referring to Bathsheba). God chose Solomon to be in the line of the Messiah.

So here are two questions:

1. First, Perez, Boaz, Jephthah, Solomon: were they accidents? No. Three out of four of them are in the lineage of the Messiah, making up the line to bring the King of Kings into the world.
2. Second, was God able to use them even though the world would’ve said they were mistakes? He used them greatly.

I’ve mentioned Jesus’ genealogy so much, let me get you to think of others people’s genealogies...

When a woman has an abortion, she’s not just not having that child, she’s not having any of the children that child might have...and any of the children those children might have:

- In other words, there are generations that are being aborted.
- Those are entire genealogies that are being removed.

We have a friend in CA and she recently told Katie, and she gave us permission to share this: *“My mother is an addict, was pregnant her senior year of high school with me and came from a home full*

of abuse. She was the perfect example of a girl who should have an abortion. But I am so thankful that she chose to see past what she was struggling with that day to give me a chance. I will never be the girl who came from a good family, but my life still counts, it's still valid. And now I have a family of my own that would not be here if [my mother] would have listened to the advice her family was giving her.” Just to let you know, this friend of ours has five children of her own now.

Now you want to know the fifth Person who really allowed Himself to come from what looked like a disgraceful, dishonorable birth? I'll give you a hint: we celebrated His birth last Sunday...

Think of **Jesus**.

If there was ever an “unplanned pregnancy.” I'll tell you beyond the shadow-of-a-doubt there's never been a more “unplanned pregnancy” than Mary's! How could you have a more unplanned pregnancy than that?

- Mary was very confused. In **Luke 1:34 she said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?”**
- Confused probably isn't the best word for how Joseph felt; he probably felt hurt, betrayed, angry. He needed an angel to explain things to him too.

You had a poor, young peasant girl who was betrothed and she becomes pregnant. When people learned Mary was pregnant out of wedlock it was going to be a horrible scandal, ruining her reputation and bringing shame on her and her family. It was even common in Mary's day for the girl's family to throw her out on the street where she would make her living as a prostitute b/c that's how everyone would view her, and b/c that's what she'd be forced to do since her family wouldn't have her and no man would have her.

Even though Joseph and Mary weren't married yet, a betrothal was legally binding and serious enough that Mary was going to be labeled an adulteress, an offense that was punishable by death according to OT law, and an accusation that would follow her for the rest of her life.

One of the main reasons betrothals lasted more than nine months was to make sure the young woman wasn't pregnant. The reason Joseph wanted to divorce Mary is he knew there was no way he could marry her under this sort of scandal.

You say, “*Well, couldn't Mary just explain everything?*” What would she say?

- *An angel came and told me that I'm going to give birth to the Son of God.*
- *This is actually a Virgin Conception. I haven't done anything wrong.*
- *I'm pregnant by the Holy Spirit.*
- *God is the Father of this Child.*

The religious leaders and many of the Jews thought it was blasphemous when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. How do you think everyone would respond when Mary tried to tell people she was giving birth to the Son of God? Plus, she was a poor peasant girl. She was about as ordinary as a woman could be, so even if her story was true, who would really believe she'd be the one chosen?

If you think I'm being at all dramatic and exaggerating how bad it really was, listen to this...

Over 30 yrs later when Jesus began His ministry, the circumstances regarding His birth had been so dishonorable and disgraceful that it was never forgotten. Over 30 years later when the religious leaders wanted to criticize Jesus, in **John 8:41** they said, **"We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God."** They were talking about Jesus being the illegitimate Son of Mary and Joseph!

So we think Mary got this news, and we think of it as a time of real celebration – and it was from a spiritual perspective, but from an earthly, worldly perspective – it was embracing one of the most difficult situations any young lady ever could've been expected to face.

In **Luke 1:38** when Mary got the news, she told the angel, **"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."** The reason she said this is it took a servant to embrace this situation!

So here's the point I'm trying to make...

A number of children in the Bible came into the world under seemingly dishonorable or difficult circumstances, and God did great things w/ many of them. We don't know the plans God has for each child, but here's what we do know: He does have a plan. He has a plan for each child regardless of the circumstances under which that child came into the world.

LESSON 2: APPLY WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS ABOUT CHILDREN.

If the Bible speaks so positively of children, we want to think positively of them. If the Bible says they're a blessing and a gift, we want to see them as a blessing as a gift.

Remember, whenever we come to God's Word we have two choices:

- We can let God's Word shape our beliefs.
- Or we can let our beliefs shape God's Word...and usually that means shaping God's Word to agree w/ what we've learned from the world.

The world definitely doesn't describe children the way we're discussing: the world describes them as a burden, nuisance, annoyance, and the list goes on. But this is what we should expect: if the Bible speaks well of children, we should expect the world to speak poorly of children.

A quote I heard that I thought was surprisingly accurate is, *"The world acts like debt is a blessing and children are a curse"*...which is the exact opposite of what God's Word teaches.

So it's easy to walk away from a sermon like this saying, *"Oh yes, children are a blessing."*

But the question is, "What does it look like practically to see children as a blessing?" I want to discuss what this looks like for our church, and what it looks like for us individually.

As a church, we should be happy about having children around.

I'll be the first to say I know children often make environments louder, messier, and more difficult, but that shouldn't change wanting them around. **Pro 14:4** says **Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; But much increase comes by the strength of an ox.** Here's another way to read it: **"Without oxen a stable stays clean, but you need a strong ox for a large harvest"** (NLT).

The idea is if you don't have any oxen in the barn, you won't have any messes to clean up...BUT you also won't have any harvest.

That's kind of the same w/ children: no children means no messes, but it also mean no spiritual harvest. We want to raise up the next generation of followers of Christ, and that means Christian families having children and that means having those children around.

I love pastoring a church that loves children and loves having them around. It saddens me when Christians and churches say, *"Oh yeah, we think children are a blessing. But let's make sure we can't really hear them or see them."*

I understand there are situations where it's not appropriate to have children around, like for example counseling or discussing situations of a mature or private nature, but when appropriate we should strive to involve children in our activities and events.

Now before I make the next point, I want to first say I'm all for disciplining children and teaching them to behave. But w/ that said, part of applying what we've learned from God's Word about children means extending grace and patience to parents:

- We would rather have children around and take the noisiness and messiness that comes w/ them, than not have children around just so it can be a little quieter and neater.
- We're saying the opposite of what the world says, and even the opposite of what some churches say: we actually want to see and hear your children ☺.

You can take the best parents in the world and their children will still misbehave and make noise sometimes. And here are 3 things to remember when someone else's child is annoying you:

1. First, remember how the Bible describes children; remember how God feels about this child.
2. Second, if you're an older parent, remember your children probably annoyed people sometimes too...and maybe they still do ☺.
3. Third, remember you used to be a kid, and you annoyed people at times...and maybe you still do too ☺.

Now, let's discuss how this applies to us individually...

When a couple is expecting a child, there are good and bad ways to respond:

- A good response would be: *"Praise God! We're so happy for you! The Lord is giving you another blessing."*

- A bad response – and unfortunately this is the response you can receive even from some Christians and even in the church:
 - *Wow, you're having another child?*
 - *When are you going to stop?*
 - *Haven't you had enough?*

Bonnie Ailshie told me a story – and she told me I could share it. Here's what she said, *"I walked in to a different church one day and the greeters said here comes the baby making machine. And then another lady commented to me that with a family our size we should go to that Woodland Christian Church where there were other families like us. I don't believe their intent was mean though, they acted like they were joking around."* Whether they were joking or not, Bonnie apparently took their advice seriously and came to WCC...which I'm thankful for!

[Christianity Today](#) wrote an article titled, *"The One Thing to Tell Pregnant Moms: 'Congratulations.'*" Here's part of the article...

"Moms shouldn't have to try to convince people they're happy to have another baby...But in a country where more women are delaying childbirth and having fewer children, 'big' families are bound to face pushback. Parents are told that it's not financially responsible, or that it's bad for the environment. One of the foundational elements of a Christian worldview declares that humans are made in the image of God, and because of this truth, all life is precious, worth saving, worth dying for, worth celebrating. Sadly, our society, even members of the church can forget that."

So let's tie all this together...

When you hear of an unplanned pregnancy, how are you going to respond?

- *This child is precious to the Lord.*
- *God has a plan for this child.*
- *There are a number of people in Scripture who came from unplanned pregnancies. God did some great things through them. May I tell you their stories?*

Picture this scenario...

A woman is on the fence about going to church. She has a number of small children. She's exhausted. Just thinking about giving them breakfast, getting them ready, putting them in the car makes her feel even more exhausted.

Maybe she's never even really gone to church before, but:

- She's recently been invited to go...
- She feels convicted about going...
- She wants her growing up in the church...
- She doesn't even know it, but there have been some people praying for her to go...

If she's never really been to church before:

- She's nervous b/c she doesn't know anyone...
- She's nervous b/c she keeps thinking:
 - *What if my baby makes noise?*
 - *How am I going to control my kids?*
 - *What if our 4yo has trouble sitting still?*

But she decides to go to church anyway and her baby starts crying, another toddler starts pulling on her arm.

And then picture this: she sees people glare at her. She knows what they're thinking:

- *Why did she have so many children?*
- *Can't she get her kids to be quiet?*

Think that mother is going to want to go back to church?

Now imagine this scenario: same woman, baby starts crying, another toddler pulling on her arm...

Someone smiles at her and says:

- *Wow, those are some really beautiful children.*
- *God has really blessed you!*
- *You've got your hands full. Is there anything I can do to help?*

What responses do you think will encourage a young mother...encourage a young mother who's probably already discouraged and already thinking about not coming back to church w/ her small children?

So in conclusion, my hope is we can demonstrate:

- Through our lives...
- Through the way we treat children...
- Through the way we treat young mothers...
- Through the way we respond to pregnancies...

That we view children as God views them, which is to say as a gift, reward and blessing.

LET'S REVIEW THESE LESSONS:

LESSON 1: CHILDREN ARE:

- (PART I) A GIFT, REWARD AND BLESSING (FROM *BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY*" – PART I ON 12/14/14).
- (PART II) EXAMPLES FOR ADULTS.
- (PART III) GREAT CAUSES OF MATURITY.
- (PART IV) NEVER AN ACCIDENT (PART V) BECAUSE GOD HAS A PLAN FOR EACH ONE.

LESSON 2: APPLY WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS ABOUT CHILDREN.