

We're on the 14th message in our Marriage & Family Series, and the title of this morning's sermon is, *"Be Fruitful and Multiply – Part I: Children & Barrenness."*

Last week I discussed **Gen 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**

This morning we're going to be discussing the next verse, verse **28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."**

This is a Marriage & Family Series. I'm not sure how you can have a series like this and NOT talk about children. So that's what we're going to be doing this morning and w/ Part II.

I probably don't have to tell you children are a very sensitive issue in the church for a number of reasons:

1. First, you have some people who haven't been able to have any children, and they feel judged or misunderstood by others.
2. Then, you have some people who have a lot of children and they feel judged or misunderstood by others.
3. Finally, you have some people who only have a few children and they feel judged or misunderstood by others.

I think this might even be even more pronounced at our church where there's a perception we have large families, lots of kids, big white vans...unless you're rebellious like the Donalds and you get a brown one. The other day I went to Walmart and when I pulled into the parking lot I saw a big white van and immediately I thought: *"Oh, great, I'll get to see someone from church!"*

When the Connells were staying with us, I met a woman at the high school and when I introduced myself as the pastor of WCC, b/c she had seen so many kids running around, she said – and I'm not kidding, and she wasn't kidding when she said it – *"Oh wonderful, so you're that church that's running an orphanage."*

At first I thought, *"Of course she's saying this b/c there are so many kids running around outside"* but then I thought, *"Maybe she's saying that b/c the LaPierre and Connell kids look like orphans."*

Jessica shared an article on Facebook about the low birthrate in our nation – it's an article I'll be quoting later – and Pastor Tim Elliot wrote, *"I think your church is taking care of that!"*

So I know there's this perception of our church having lots of kids, large families – it's a perception I have and plenty of other people have too, inside and outside our church – and b/c of what God's Word says about children:

- It's a perception I love...
- It's a perception we shouldn't be ashamed of...

- But it's also a perception that shouldn't do two things...
 - a. First, it shouldn't make people feel like THEY have to have a lot of kids.
 - b. Second, it shouldn't make people feel like they have to have a lot of kids to fit in or be part of WCC.

If you didn't know this, the leadership hired me when we had three kids and that was all we were going to have and they knew that!

When we were in CA, I remember sitting at the table telling Katie, you're not going to believe this, but two of the guys in leadership have 12 kids...each! Katie said, *"I don't want to go there. They're going to make us feel condemned. They're going to judge us."* But nobody ever made us feel that way.

Now I feel like I need to bring a little closure to this since you're obviously saying, *"Okay, you were done at three kids...and you just had your 5th??"* I'll briefly say this...

- Part of it was the example of the other families here: it was attractive to us. Katie said for the first time it made her feel like she could do it.
- Part of it was the support of the leadership. They said if we decided to have more children they'd do whatever they could to help us. We didn't have that support in CA. Instead Katie was largely criticized for thinking of having more children b/c of how sick she was during pregnancies.
- The other part of it relates to our personal convictions, which I don't want to share b/c...they're our personal convictions.
 - When I preach my responsibility is to tell you what God's Word says as opposed to tell you my personal feelings and thoughts.
 - But w/ that said, you're more than welcome to e-mail me or ask me about our convictions and I'll be more than happy to share them w/ you.

Now as your pastor let me briefly tell you my desires for this sermon...

First, I want to share what God's Word says about children. I want all of us – everyone who attends WCC – to have a biblical view of:

- Marriage...
- Families...
- Husbands...
- Wives...
- And children...

As opposed to having a worldly or secular view of these, which unfortunately is the view many Christians and many churches have.

My desire is that if you have no children, 12 children, or any number in between, by the end of the sermon you'll see children – whether they're your children or other people's children – as they're described in God's Word. My desire is to help us develop a biblical view of children.

And just to let you know I'm not going to talk about how many children you should have. If any of you are at all worried about that, I hope your mind can be put at ease. But I do want us to know what God's Word says about children, and this applies to all of us:

- It applies to people right now thinking about having children.
- It applies to young people who in the future will have to make decisions about having children.
- It applies to older people who might no longer be able to have children, but are in the position to teach and counsel younger people about children.

So there's application for everyone regarding understanding what God's Word say about children.

And here's my second desire for this sermon and for Part II where I'll elaborate on this even more...

Katie and I both have been told - including by a number of people in this church - that they wish they would've had more children:

- A wife told me just last Sunday that she wishes she would've had more children.
- Another woman told Katie this past week she wishes she would've had more children.
- When we were in CA, there was a point where three older women were talking w/ us, and all three of them said one-after-the-other that they wish they would've had more children.
- I can't tell you how sad I am to think that we almost didn't have Charis, Chloe and any other children the Lord might bless us with.

So not having more children is a regret we regularly hear of people having, and as your pastor, I want to do my best to try to prevent people from feeling this way. I want people to know what God's Word says so they can take that into consideration when they make decisions about children, and so they can possibly avoid any regrets they might have in the future.

Now w/ all this said, I have one request before we move on:

My desire is not to condemn anyone...

- I'm not trying to make anyone feel bad.
- I don't have an ax to grind.

We're covering this topic b/c we're in a Marriage & Family Series and last week we were at Gen 1:27 and now we're at Gen 1:28.

But if I say anything that upsets you, or offends you, or more importantly if I say anything that you believe is unbiblical, please be sure to let me know...b/c there can definitely be a difference between something that offends people and something that is unbiblical. Often people are offended when something is biblical.

Now w/ all that out of the way, we're ready to begin by looking at the first two commands God gave man...

Please turn to **Gen 2:16**. This is the first and most famous command: **16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall**

surely die.” Please make sure you notice it says **the LORD God commanded the man**. Eve didn’t receive this command, b/c she hadn’t been created yet. She isn’t created until verse 22.

Now please look at **Gen 1:28** to see the second command God gave man: **Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”** Please notice it says, **“God said to them.”** God gave this command to both man and woman, as opposed to the command about the tree that God only gave to Adam.

I know it seems odd the two commands are out of order, so let me briefly explain that...

Gen 1 is an elevated view of all 6 days of creation, and then Gen 2 zooms in to the creation of man and woman on the 6th day, b/c man and woman are the crowning achievement of God’s creation.

After creating man, but before creating woman, in **Gen 2:16** God first gave the command to not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Then after God created man and woman, He gave the second command in **Gen 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply**.

So here’s the question...

Why did God give the first command to Adam, but the second command to Adam and Eve? Why didn’t God give both commands to Adam, or why didn’t He give both commands to both of them?

We’ll talk more about this when we look at Gen 2, but God gave the command about the Tree to Adam alone, b/c He was establishing Adam’s headship. Adam got the command and he was responsible w/ passing it to Eve. There’s a lot in Gen 2 that reveals God establishing Adam’s headship and this was part of it.

But why did God give both of them the command to **“Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it”**?

We’re not told specifically, so I admit I’m being a little speculative, but my suspicion is b/c of Eve’s involvement in this command being obeyed:

- Guess who’s going to have a lot of involvement in producing the children that should rule over the earth and subdue it?
- Guess who’s going to experience way more pain than Adam in the process of obeying this command?

Katie gave birth to Chloe last Saturday and acting as though my amount of involvement approaches Katie’s amount of involvement would offend my wife...and more than likely the rest of the women in here too ☺. For that reason I suspect God made sure Eve heard this command too.

This brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: PART OF GOD’S SECOND COMMAND IS TO, “BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY.”

Let's look at the command itself...

The command takes place right after God created man and woman:

- He created them in verse 27.
- Then He gave them this command in verse 28.

The command itself is for people to have children.

Some people say this command was only given to Adam and Eve, but in **Gen 3:16** when God said, **“I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children”** was He only speaking to Eve, or was He speaking to all women? Any women in here who have given birth know God was speaking to all women.

Some people say, *“The earth is filled and subdued now, so there's no reason for people to feel like this is a continuing command.”*

- There's nothing in Scripture to support that...
- There's nothing in Scripture to support that this command would ever cease...
- There's nothing in the NT to make believers think they shouldn't have children.

We've all heard about overpopulation...let's briefly talk about that...

Has anyone driven through Montana? North Dakota? Most of Nevada? Some weeks back during SS Vicki shared how when they were driving to Jason and Tannis' wedding in Canada they drove through hours and hours and hours of land w/o seeing any houses, so there are definitely plenty of un-subdued areas 😊.

It amazes me that anyone mentions overpopulation considering the real threat is low birthrates. Please listen to this...

The Washington Times – so a secular, non-Christian organization – posted an article titled: *“U.S. Fertility plummets to record low.”*¹ It said, *“America's total fertility rate fell to just 1.86 births per woman, [which] puts the U.S. on the same course with many Western European nations and Japan, where the birth rate has fallen below the ‘replacement rate,’ [which is] usually around 2.1 births per woman, [and which] is needed to keep a country's population from falling.”*

With 1.86 births per woman this puts the US behind countries like:

- The United Kingdom 1.9
- Sweden 1.91
- Australia 1.92
- France 2.01

¹ <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/may/28/us-birthrate-plummets-to-record-low/?page=all>

The sad part is since the United States is supposed to be the world's leading Christian nation, you'd expect us to be the most obedient to God's command.

Pro 14:28 In a multitude of people is a king's honor, But in the lack of people is the downfall of a prince.

This verse is describing the problem it is for a nation to survive with a declining birth rate.

This past Thursday, December 11, 2014 CNBC – another secular, non-Christian organization - posted an article titled, *“We need more babies! Seriously, this is a problem.”*² Here's a quote from the article...

“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 goes on to discuss why the low birth rates are bad for each of these areas.

God's commands are always for our benefit. When we as a society disobey God's commands there are consequences, and that article went on to discuss a number of those consequences.

Now even though Americans aren't having children, other cultures, like Muslims and some African nations seem to value children more than most Christians do as their birth rates continue to climb.

Please listen to this...

- As of 2011 it's predicted the world's Muslim population will grow twice as fast as the rest of the world over the next 20 yrs.³
- An article on CNN from January 2011 said, *“The [growth] will primarily [take place] because of their relatively high birth rate... Conversion will play relatively little part in the increase.”*⁴
- According to the World Christian Database in 2007:
 - Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, w/ a growth rate of 1.84%.
 - Christianity isn't 2nd ...or 3rd ...or 4th ...or 5th. Christianity is 6th w/ a growth rate of 1.32% behind religions like Hinduism, making it almost one-third slower than Islam.
 - And from the same article, I quote: *“High birth rates were cited as the reason for the growth.”*⁵

It's obvious the Muslims can see the benefit from obeying the command to, **“Be fruitful and multiply.”** My hope is Christians will see that benefit too!

Now let's think for a moment:

² <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/more-babies-seriously-problem-120000448.html>

³ <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/>

⁴ <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/01/27/world-muslim-population-doubling-report-projects/?hpt=C1>

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_population_growth#cite_note-25

- Who would the devil want having children? Muslims, non-Christians, anyone hostile to Christianity.
- Who would the devil NOT want having children? Christians.

Please listen to this quote from Nancy Leigh DeMoss: *“Anything that hinders or discourages women from fulfilling their God-given calling to be bearers and nurturers of life furthers Satan’s schemes and aids his efforts. One of the purposes of marriage is to produce ‘godly offspring.’ Childbearing is a basic, God-given role for women. Children are to be received as a blessing from God.”*

This sermon is also going to help serve as a foundation for when we look at **Gen 2**, and in **Gen 2:18** **God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”**

There are a few reasons it’s **not good for man to be alone**, and we’ll talk about those reasons in more detail when we look at Gen 2, but let me tell you one of the reasons now that it’s not good for man to be alone: he wouldn’t be able to fulfill God’s command in verse 28.

Now please hear me on this...

If you combine these two verses:

- **Gen 1:28 be fruitful and multiply.**
- **Gen 2:18 it’s not good for man to be alone.**

You see two of the reasons we know that w/ the exception of a small number of people, God wants people to get married and have children:

- Getting married and having children is the only way for God’s command in Gen 1:28 to be obeyed.
- Getting married and having children is the only way for God’s mandate in Gen 1:28 about filling and subduing the world to be fulfilled.

Like I said earlier, I want us to have a biblical view of marriage, family and children, and we should understand that biblically getting married and having children is the normal, expected pattern God wants for almost everyone. There are only two exceptions to this:

1. The first exception are the people discussed in 1 Cor 7 who have the gift of singleness, but I would say there seem to be very few people w/ this calling.
2. The second exception is people who are unable to have children, which I’ll discuss later.

Now even though I shared those statistics w/ you about birthrates, here’s the truth...

- I don’t want anyone wanting to have children, b/c of the statistics I shared....
- I don’t want anyone wanting to have children, b/c a low birthrate is bad for the economy...
- I don’t want anyone wanting to have children, so we can pull ahead of Muslims...

I want people to want to have children b/c of what the Bible says about children. I want people to want to have children b/c they believe what God says about children.

So let’s discuss what God says about children...

LESSON 2: CHILDREN ARE A GIFT, REWARD AND BLESSING.

Whenever the Bible discusses children they're always presented very positively...

Please turn to **Psalm 127:3**...

Psa 127:3 Behold, children *are* a heritage (some translations say, “**inheritance**” or “**gift**”) **from the LORD, The fruit of the womb *is* a reward.**

This is what God's Word says about children, so if we want to be biblical in our understanding of children, this is how we want to strive to see children...

- Especially when the world is striving to make us think they're more of a curse than blessing...
- And especially when it seems like children themselves are sometimes striving to make us see them as something other than a blessing.

**Psa 127:4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So *are* the children of one's youth.**

⁵ **Blessed *is* the man who has his quiver full of them;
They shall not be ashamed,
But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.**

Before I tell you what this verse is saying, let me be clear about what it's not saying: it is not putting down, or condemning or criticizing anyone w/ fewer children or no children...and that's exactly why we don't want to put down, or condemn, or criticize anyone w/ fewer children or no children.

But w/ that said the verse is clearly saying the more children you have, the more blessed you are.

Now b/c the verse doesn't say how many children make a **full quiver**, I'm not going to say how many children make a **full quiver**. But I am going to ask you this, and then I'm going to move on...

When people go to battle, how many arrows do they want to take w/ them? How many people say, “*No, no, don't give me anymore arrows. I don't want to have TOO many of them!*”

Please look at the next psalm, **Psa 128**...

If your Bibles have a title for this psalm, it probably says something like, “*Blessings for Those Who Fear the LORD.*” This psalm describes some of the blessings for those who fear the Lord, and the main blessing in the psalm is children...

**Psa 128:1 Blessed *is* every one who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways...**

Now it goes on to discuss those blessings. Please skip to verse 3...

³ **Your wife *shall be* like a fruitful vine** (this means your wife will produce children like a vine produces fruit)

**In the very heart of your house,
Your children like olive plants
All around your table.**

The idea is children will shoot up around your table the way olive shoots shoot up around an olive plant...

⁴ **Behold, thus shall the man be blessed** (or this is how the man will be blessed...)
Who fears the LORD. He'll be blessed w/ children!

In Scripture it was always a sign of blessing when God multiplied someone's children. Children and descendants were one of the most common and one of the greatest blessings God offered to His people...

- **Deut 7** records the blessings for obedience under the Old Covenant, and **verse 13 says: He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb.**
- The blessings for obedience under the Old Covenant are again repeated in **Deut 28**, and in **verse 4 it says, "Blessed *shall be* the fruit of your body."**

The idea is, children were one of the primary ways for God to bless His people's obedience.

Now please turn to **Gen 33**. I want to show you my favorite verse in Scripture about children.

Let me give you a little context for this chapter...

Jacob found out Esau wants to meet him. He hasn't seen him for 20 yrs. The last time they saw each other, Jacob received Esau's birthright, and Esau swore he would murder him. That's when Jacob fled. They haven't seen each other since then, and Jacob is still under the impression Esau hates him. How do you think Jacob feels at this moment when he's about to see Esau?

Look at verse 1...

1 Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men (probably 400 men that he thought were part of Esau's army to kill him). **So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants.** ² **And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last.** ³ **Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.**

Now remember at this moment, Jacob thinks Esau wants to kill him...

⁴ **But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.**

This would've been a really beautiful, wonderful moment to see...

^{5a} **And he** (this is Esau) **lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, “Who are these with you?”**

And the words Jacob says here in response are my favorite words in Scripture regarding children...

^{5b} **So he said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.”**

Jacob said, *“These are the children God has graciously given me.”* Jacob had a great view of children. He saw them as being graciously given to him by God, and this is exactly how we should see our children...whether we have 1 or 15. Each of our children is one of the greatest examples of God's grace in our lives after only our salvation.

If anyone ever comments to you on your children, you could say Jacob's exact words back to the person: *“These are the children whom God has graciously given me.”*

There are other verses I could give you too, but I just want you to see two things:

- Children are a gift, reward and blessing.
- Children are both one of the most common and one of the greatest blessings God has for us on this side of heaven.

Now there's obviously a group of people that are unable to obey God's command in Gen 1:28, and that's people who are unable to have children, or to use the biblical word we would say people who are barren. In a sermon like this, we obviously need to discuss barrenness, and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: BARRENNESS (PART I) IS A THEME IN SCRIPTURE...

Barrenness is a common themes in Scripture. Six – and possibly seven women – experienced barrenness. Interestingly, we've discussed three of these women in recent sermons...

- When we were in **1 Peter 3** we read about Sarah who was barren until she was 90: **Gen 11:30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child.**
- A few weeks ago when we talked about how husbands should dwell with their wives with understanding and treat them as the weaker vessel, we read about Rachel and Hanna b/c their husbands – Jacob and Elkanah – responded to their barrenness very poorly:
 - **Gen 29:31 Rachel was barren.**
 - **1 Sam 1:5 The LORD had closed [Hannah's] womb.**
- The other three women who suffered w/ barrenness were:
 - Rebekah – **Gen 25:21 [Rebekah] was barren.**
 - Samson's mother - we're never told her name: **Judges 13:2 Manoah** (this is Samson's father); **his wife was barren and had no children.**

- John the Baptist's mother Elizabeth: **Luke 1:7 They had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.**

What you obviously notice about these examples is the barrenness was temporary. As much as it's a theme for women to suffer w/ barrenness, it's equally a theme for God to graciously remove that barrenness and open the women's womb. While I'm sure there were women in Scripture who remained barren throughout their lives and were never able to have children, there's no mention of one of those women in Scripture.

I did say there's possibly a seventh woman who struggled w/ barrenness, b/c we can't tell if this woman was actually barren or if her husband simply didn't have any relations w/ her and that's David's wife Michal. We actually read about her on Oct 5th in the sermon, "*How Wives Ought to Respect Their Husbands.*" We looked at Michal as an example of how a wife shouldn't treat her husband.

After Michal disrespected David the way she did, **2 Sam 6:23** says **Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.** This is very unique: it's so unique Michal is the only woman in Scripture said to never have any children:

- Again, I'm sure there were other women who didn't have children, but Michal is the only woman w/ a verse saying so.
- And again, we don't know if God prevented her from having children or David simply had no relations w/ her.

But if God did prevent Michal from having children, then another unique distinction that belongs to her is she is the only woman in Scripture whose barrenness actually related to her actions.

The reality is – w/ the possible exception of Michal – the women who struggled w/ barrenness were actually some of the godliest women in Scripture.

I mention this b/c sometimes women – especially Christian women who see God as the author of life – can be particularly hurt when they can't have children. They say...

- *Why me?*
- *Did I do something wrong?*
- *Why wouldn't God want me to have children?*
- *Why does God let other people have children, but not me?*

The reason I mention this is I hope if any women are struggling to have children, that it has nothing to do w/ their actions.

Now before we finish this part, I have to share something that was really on my heart as I worked on the sermon this week, and I want to pass that along to you...

As I was thinking about barrenness this week and the reality of some women struggling w/ it, it made me very thankful to be able to have children.

We naturally take things for granted, so sometimes we have to be reminded of God's grace in our lives. Since barrenness is a real struggle some people have, if you've been able to have children, don't take that for granted! Be thankful! You have a gift from the Lord that many people would give almost anything to have!

And this leads us to Lesson 3, Part II...

LESSON 3: BARRENNESS:

- (PART I) IS A THEME IN SCRIPTURE.
- (PART II) SHOULDN'T BE CHOSEN.

Since children are a gift, reward and blessing, and since it's such a manifestation of God's grace to have children, barrenness shouldn't be chosen.

First let's understand what's meant by the word *barrenness*: barrenness means, "*unable to or incapable of having children.*"

Second, let me be clear about what I'm not addressing in this lesson...

I'm not addressing whether people should or shouldn't endeavor to space out their children. The reason I don't want to address that from the pulpit is I don't think it can be addressed w/o the opportunity to talk w/ people, and hear their motivations, and their reasons behind their thoughts.

But w/ that said, here's what I am comfortable addressing in this lesson...

Don't deliberately choose barrenness, and again, by barrenness, I mean putting yourself in a situation where you become unable to or incapable of having children. And there are two reasons why I'm saying this...

The first reason I'm saying this is very simple: you might change your mind later. Believe me...I know!!!

And for the second reason let's go back to the Word and consider what it says so it can guide us and direct us...

How is barrenness always presented in Scripture? It's always presented very, very negatively. I don't mean the barren person is presented negatively – as I said earlier, some of the godliest women in Scripture struggled w/ barrenness – I mean being barren, or being unable to have children is presented very negatively: it's presented as one of the worst and most painful situations for people to have to endure.

I can't think of anything else in the bible that is presented negatively that is so common amongst Christians today. Why would we choose something the bible presents in such a painful light?

So here's what's very ironic and sad...

People will deliberately put themselves in this situation:

- People will deliberately introduce barrenness into their lives.
- People will deliberately introduce into their lives the circumstances the Bible describes as being terrible for people to have to experience.

Let me ask you this:

- Why would we take something the Bible presents negatively and painfully and introduce it into our lives?
- Why would we reject what God calls a gift, reward and blessing?
- Why would we deny one of the greatest manifestations of God's grace on this side of heaven?

Now I don't know what type of emotions might be stirred up in you when I say all this, but let me just reiterate, I'm your pastor, my desire isn't to condemn you or upset you. My hope is you know I love you and I want the best for you. If you're upset or if you're sad, please give me the opportunity to speak w/ you and pray w/ you.

Now there are two other themes in Scripture related to barrenness that I want to make sure to point out...

First, when women were barren, God would graciously open their wombs so they could conceive. Like I said, every instance of barrenness was temporary. And the rest of the theme is that God regularly opened the womb of barren women as a result of prayer, and this brings us to the rest of Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: BARRENNESS:

- (PART I) IS A THEME IN SCRIPTURE.
- (PART II) SHOULDN'T BE CHOSEN.
- (PART III) IS WORTHY OF PRAYER.

The theme often looks like this...

Women were barren, prayer took place, and God opened the womb. Please listen to these examples...

- With **Rebekah** in **Gen 25:21** **Now ISAAC PLEADED WITH THE LORD FOR HIS WIFE, because she *was* barren; and the LORD GRANTED HIS PLEA, and Rebekah his wife conceived.**
- With **Rachel** in **Gen 30:22** **Then God remembered Rachel, and GOD LISTENED TO HER [PRAYER] AND OPENED HER WOMB.**
- With **Hannah**, **1 Sam 1:20** **So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, "Because I have asked for him from the LORD." Samuel's name means, "*Heard by God*." It's referring to the prayers that had been offered for her to conceive.**

- With Elizabeth, **Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for YOUR PRAYER IS HEARD; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.**

Now let me be clear about what I’m saying and what I’m not saying...

I’m not saying God will open any womb just b/c there’s enough prayer. Sadly there will be some people unable to have children regardless of the amount of prayer.

But here’s what I am saying...

It’s a common enough theme in Scripture for women to be barren, receive prayer, and for God to open the womb that we should be encouraged to pray for that to happen!

Again, I’m not guaranteeing it will happen, but I believe we should pray for it for two reasons:

1. First, b/c it is such a theme; b/c it happens so frequently in Scripture.
2. And second, let me ask you this: since barrenness is presented as such a terrible situation for women to experience, shouldn’t it be a common prayer request for people who find themselves in this situation?

And I would say there are two groups of people I’m trying to encourage:

- I would say this to couples who have been UNABLE to have any children.
- I would say this to couples who have been ABLE to have children, but are now experiencing difficulty having children.

Now unfortunately, b/c of the sensitive nature of not being able to have children, people will often keep this private, and let me please say I completely understand why this is the case.

BUT...

As your pastor, if you find yourself in this situation, I’m asking on behalf of the congregation for the privilege it would be as your church family to pray for you.

And as an exhortation to the church, if we ever find ourselves in this situation - being able to pray for a couple regarding this intimate of a request - we really want to make sure we’re diligent in praying for them!

It’s wonderful any time we can announce a woman’s pregnancy, but how much more joyful would it be to announce the pregnancy of people unable to have children, who we prayed for, and then they became pregnant? I’d love for us to be able to celebrate that sort of answer to prayer at WCC should the Lord choose. We would be able to rejoice w/ the couple and really feel like part of God’s gracious gift to them.

And this is how I would like to end the sermon, and the service...

Pastor Doug, Jim, myself, and our wives are going to be up front after the closing song to pray for any couples or individuals who might want prayer in any of these areas:

1. First, some of you might be on the fence about whether to have more children. Can you think of a bigger decision to make? Can you think of a bigger decision to pray about w/ your elders? Please allow us to pray w/ you.
2. Second, some of you might be struggling w/ being able to see your children as the blessing they're described as in God's Word. There are plenty of struggles associated w/ parenting. Please allow us to pray w/ you.
3. Finally, like I said earlier, some people might be struggling w/ being able to have children. If so, please allow us to pray w/ you.

LET'S REVIEW THESE LESSONS:

LESSON 1: PART OF GOD'S SECOND COMMAND IS TO, "BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY."

LESSON 2: CHILDREN ARE A GIFT, REWARD AND BLESSING.

LESSON 3: BARRENNESS...

- (PART I) IS A THEME IN SCRIPTURE.
- (PART II) SHOULDN'T BE CHOSEN.
- (PART III) IS WORTHY OF PRAYER.