

# Belonging in the Church through the Lens of Infertility

Dealing with infertility made me feel like I didn't have a place at church.

**By Jodi King**

I never felt like I didn't belong at church until my husband, Cameron, and I began struggling with infertility. The children and families who had typically brought me joy to see at church now started causing me grief and pain.

I felt barren without a child in my arms or a diaper bag in hand. In Relief Society, playgroups were announced, moms chatted, and it seemed every lesson tied back to motherhood.

I felt lost.

I didn't have a child to bring to playgroup. I didn't have personal stories to share about rearing my child in the gospel. I desperately wanted to be a part of the conversations about

motherhood and to make friends with the sisters in my ward, but I felt like there was no connection between us because I wasn't a mother.

The hardest Sunday was our first one in a new ward. Because we didn't have kids, we were asked if we were newlyweds and when we planned on starting a family. I had gotten pretty good at answering these questions without letting them affect me—I knew they weren't meant to be hurtful.

However, on this particular Sunday, answering those questions was especially hard. We had just found out, after being hopeful, that we were—yet again—not pregnant.

I walked into sacrament meeting feeling downtrodden, and





answering those typical “get to know you” questions was hard for me. During the sacrament, I scanned the congregation looking for other young couples without children whom my husband and I could relate to. We didn’t see anyone else.

But it was Sunday School that truly broke my heart. The lesson—intended to be about the divine role of mothers—quickly shifted gears and became a vent session. My heart sank and tears silently flowed down my cheeks as I heard women complain about a blessing I would give anything for.

I bolted out of church. At first, I didn’t want to go back. I didn’t want to experience that feeling of isolation again. But that night, after talking with my husband, we knew we would keep attending church not only because the Lord has asked us to but also because we both knew that the joy that comes from

renewing covenants and feeling the Spirit at church surpasses the sadness I felt that day.

### **We All Feel Like We Don’t Belong at Times**

That experience happened four years ago. Time has passed. And I still don’t have a baby in my arms or a diaper bag in my hand, but I know now more than ever that I do belong in church.

While processing my own grief, I’ve become more observant of those around me. I still scan the congregation, but now I try to notice those who might have come to church feeling like they don’t belong. And I’ve learned that we all feel like we don’t belong at times.

In the Church, there are widowed, divorced, and single members; those with family members who have fallen away from the gospel; people with chronic illnesses or financial struggles; members who experience same-sex attraction; members working to overcome addictions or doubts; recent converts; new move-ins; empty-nesters; and the list goes on and on.

Each of us may feel that our trials or circumstances prevent us from belonging, but the truth is that our unique lives and our individual adversities are actually what make us belong in Christ’s Church the most.

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## We Belong with Our Savior

The purpose of being a member of the Church is to follow Him. We belong with our Savior, and so we belong in His Church. He has told us, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

The Savior invites us to come unto Him—no matter our circumstances. We come to church to renew our covenants, to increase our faith, to find peace, and to do as He did perfectly in His life—minister to others who feel like they don’t belong.

There might be times when I’m the only one in Relief Society who doesn’t have children. And times when people still ask why we don’t have children. Those times may be difficult, but for as many difficult experiences, there are even more joyful ones.

Feeling the Spirit at church and showing my love for my Savior will always surpass any feeling of being alone. I know there is peace in Christ. I know there is healing in attending church. I know we’re blessed as we keep going. Our trials may be different from others’ at church, but our personal experiences can help us become more empathetic to others who may feel like they don’t belong. And as a result, those experiences can unite us.

I know that by sharing my testimony and opening my heart, I can help others come to understand that they—and each and every individual—belong in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ■



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