

What Infertility Has Taught Me about Multiplying and Replenishing the Earth

While waiting to have children, I learned that I could multiply and replenish the earth in other ways.

By Jean Yellowhorse

In the beginning God created man and woman and gave them a commandment: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28). My husband and I have been married for four and a half years, yet we have no children. There may be those reading who would respond (and I’ve heard it all before):

“Oh, but you’re still young!”

“Just enjoy this time without kids!”

“Take advantage of the freedom while it lasts!”

I’ve learned not to take offense and to simply let the comments pass because I know those speaking don’t mean to be hurtful. I realize that there are people who have been married longer who still do not have children. However, I do know that even though it’s been only four years, that still doesn’t mean it’s been easy.

There are *moments* that are easy. For the past two years, my husband and I have lived in Europe, traveling to places we never dreamed we’d get to go. We’ve eaten delicious food. And we’ve met tons of friends from around the globe who have enlarged

our ideas, opinions, and worldviews. In many ways it would be foolish not to be grateful for this time. My relationship with my husband has been strengthened, I’ve learned a ton, and we’ve had some amazing adventures.

But we’ve also spent many nights on the couch watching movies. We’ve created memories that our future children won’t be a part of. Our ward has only one young couple without children, and—spoiler alert—it’s us. And it seems like no matter what adventures we are having, the thought of children is always there.

During my ups and downs, I have found myself often reflecting on the commandment given to Adam and Eve. We believe that this commandment remains in full force today¹ and that we are expected to follow it. However, my husband and I haven’t yet been able to. But neither could Adam and Eve, at first. So what did they do? The only thing they knew how—they took care of the garden. While I don’t live in the Garden of Eden, I do live in the garden of the earth, the garden of the Netherlands, the garden of my family, and the garden of my ward. These are



my gardens that the Lord has asked me to *multiply* and *replenish*. These are the words that have been the focus of my pondering. These words have helped me to refocus my life on serving others and the Lord. I often think about:

How can I *multiply* the gifts that the Lord has given me and others?

How can I *multiply* love toward God's children?

How can I *multiply* my time and effort to serve others?

How can I *replenish* my own spiritual well?

How can I *replenish* what others have lost, whether temporal or spiritual?

How can I *replenish* hope and faith that seems to be lost for many in the world?

As I've focused more on these questions, I have been blessed with opportunities to answer them in powerful ways. I have had the opportunity to serve in the Young Women organization. I have had the flexibility to drop whatever I'm doing and help someone pack or care for friends' children. I've been able to teach theater to kids from all over the globe. I've spent more

time studying the gospel. I've been able to better bear the burdens of others and comfort those who stand in need of comfort. And most importantly, I have gained a greater knowledge, testimony, and spiritual understanding of the gospel and God's plan for me.

I'm not saying the commandment to "multiply and replenish" doesn't mean to have children. We are here to raise families up in righteousness, and that includes having children, if possible. But while waiting for the blessing of children, we can still fulfill that commandment *by taking care of the gardens around us*. So when I get sad, upset, bitter, jealous, angry, or scared because of my infertility, I always try to ask myself: what am I doing to take care of my gardens? And that makes all the difference. ■



Jean Yellowhorse is a drama teacher who loves socializing, playing games, and exploring the world, both real and fictional. Since the writing of this article, Jean and her husband have moved on to their next adventure (and garden) in New Mexico, USA.

NOTE

1. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.