



Dear *Stepping Stones* Readers,

Christmas is a wonderful time! For those struggling with fertility issues, Christmas may also be a painful reminder of unfulfilled hopes. That's why, in addition to the regular issues of the *Stepping Stones* newsletter, we're sending you this *Stepping Stones Extra*!

A Christmas Prayer

By Martha Ann Diaz

Dear Lord,

This year, in order to celebrate Christmas to the fullest without the intense spiritual and emotional pain as in the past, and to celebrate it the way You would have me celebrate, I ask Your help and strength to make these changes:

When I see adorably adorned children in angel's wings, turn my vision from these earthly angels to the message of the Good News the angels brought.

Rather than focusing on toddlers kneeling in wonder before the manger, let me focus on the birth of our Lord and kneel in wonder at His feet.

Instead of the ache of my empty arms, let me feel the magnetism and strength of His open arms as He says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

When I see pictures of the baby Jesus, broaden my thinking beyond the maternal desire to feel the soft skin of that baby's tiny hands, and enable me to feel the nail prints in the rugged palms of my Savior.

When children's voices in chorus reach my ear, take away the lump that will have formed in my throat and enable me to join in singing Your praise.

And finally, when I watch children opening presents, please do not let thoughts of having no children diminish my gratitude for Your precious gift to me.

In the name of Christ, my Savior,

Amen

Christmas: Keeping the Holiday Without Getting Hurt

By John and Sylvia Van Regenmorter

There is no magical formula that can heal the hearts of couples who have no child to delight on Christmas morning. But by planning, you can be better prepared. You may even discover some creative, fun ways to celebrate Christmas-and other special days-in your own unique fashion.

If you're dreading Christmas, here are some suggestions for your "shopping" list.

1. **Remember what it's all about. Focus on the real meaning of the holiday, not on how difficult it may be for you.** As Dr. James Dobson has written regarding Christmas:

"Each family is allotted a finite number of holiday seasons in a lifetime, and each of them is priceless beyond measure. When those days are concluded, perhaps unexpectedly, no power on earth can reunite us for another time of fellowship and worship at the feet of the Christ-child. Don't let the opportunity of this season slip through your fingers as [this season] draws to a close." (Focus on the Family Newsletter, December 1998)

Remember that a family can have two members-and that "holidays" are meant to be "holy days."

2. **Be selective about the invitations you accept. If you choose not to attend all of the family gatherings, don't feel guilty.** Sometimes we have to concentrate on our needs and helping our spouses get through the holidays, rather than exposing ourselves to painful reminders of our empty arms.
3. **Recognize and accept your feelings of loss and grief over what might have been.** These are legitimate emotions. While it's okay to shed a tear and experience some sadness during the holidays, try not to dwell on those feelings. This may be a good time to commit yourself to the Twenty Minute Rule. When you feel sad, discouraged, or angry, allow yourself to deal with it for 20 minutes-but no more. Cry if you must, share your frustration with your spouse, or call a friend-but *only for 20 minutes*. Don't allow the burden of infertility to ruin your entire holiday season.
4. **Plan something special.** Take the advice of Naomi Angoff, who suggests the following:

"Spend time doing the things you like best-preparing a spectacular meal, taking long walks, going horseback riding, or curling up by the fire with an intriguing novel. Plan a special trip for just the two of you-a ski weekend, a resort vacation, a few nights at a cozy country inn. You may have to put up with comments like, "How can you be so selfish?" or "Christmas dinner just won't be the same without you," but those remarks may be easier to tolerate than a holiday table packed with happy children, none of them yours. Begin your own family traditions: a special ceremony or ritual which says the two of you are already a family and

you can rejoice in your love for each other, with or without children." (Resolve, December 1989)

5. **Lend a helping hand.** Follow the example of Jesus, who said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...." Mark 10:45a NIV.

Reach out to others in need. Visit an elderly relative. Help serve a meal at a rescue mission. Spend time at a nursing home. As Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" Acts 20:35b NIV. Often in giving-especially when we give of ourselves-we receive a blessing. Don't close the door to the positive feelings that come from helping others in Jesus' name.

-adapted from the book, *When the Cradle is Empty* (Tyndale House), 2004.

Thank You!

As we remember God's matchless gift to us at Christmas, we also want to acknowledge the gift support that Stepping Stones has received this year.

If you have regularly supported this ministry, we are incredibly grateful. If you have not yet made a year-end gift, we could really use your support. As this is being written, Stepping Stones is significantly behind our budget. If you have received Stepping Stones this past year, please help if you can!

To give to Stepping Stones, you may donate online through our [secure website](#), or send a check to:

Stepping Stones
901 Eastern Ave NE
PO Box 294
Grand Rapids, MI 49501

Again, thank you for your support! Have a blessed Christmas!

The Stepping Stones Staff



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901 Eastern NE Grand Rapids, MI 49503 USA
1.800.BETHANY