

When Mother's Day Hurts

By Cindy Beers

WHEN MY GREAT-AUNT "TOOTSIE" (Agnes) died in her 80's, a surprising comment left me questioning what I knew about her:

"Did you know, Agnes never attended church on Mother's Day?"

I scoured my memory of the dear aunt who had given me my first Bible. Aunt Tootsie and Uncle J.D. had always been faithful Christians who attended church whenever the light was on. They had no children of their own. I had always assumed they were childless by choice. I suddenly realized that Aunt Tootsie must have carried a secret grief for years that she never mentioned to any of us.

Mother's Day is a joyful Sunday when families honor the women who gave them birth and raised them. The congregation applauds, the children's choir sings, husbands give their wives corsages and take them out to dinner. Yet for some women in our church, Mother's Day can be a painful reminder of loss. I know something of that heartache.

During the early years of our marriage, I suffered four miscarriages. After the second loss, my husband and I sought medical intervention. Four surgeries and many tests and drugs later, we lost two more babies. By this time, friends in our Young Couples Sunday School class were enjoying their growing families. We gradually withdrew from the class but kept our pain private. "Is this what happened to Aunt Tootsie?" I wondered. Like her, I avoided church on Mother's Day.

Mother's Day may be a reminder of loss due to infertility, miscarriage, abortion, stillbirth, SIDS, disease, or fatal accidents. Mothers of disabled children know the pain of chronic loss, when each anniversary is a setback. Some mothers may think of teenagers who have fallen prey to substance abuse and rebellion, dashing their parents' hopes. Older mothers may remember a son or daughter who perished at war.

The losses my husband and I experienced challenged our faith. We realized we had no control and no answers. We dug into the scriptures to find comfort. Caring family and friends supported us, too. We learned that God is sovereign, and He is also love. God is our hope beyond this life; He is our hope for the children we lost. We came to understand that nothing touches our lives without first filtering through God's loving hands.

For those women to whom this Mother's Day brings sorrow, may the love of Christ carry you. May you find comfort in Jesus, who "took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:16). He loves our children far more than we know. We can trust them to His arms.