

*“Strength from Grace: Faithful LDS Women  
Carrie Ann Rhodes, Dealing with Infertility”*

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This year our BYU Women’s Conference theme is from Psalm 84:11: “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” It’s hard to miss the promise: “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Is that true? Do good things always come if you do what is right?

If we all had our way, we would make sure that the good things come when we want them, both to ourselves and to those we love. Instead, we sometimes have to wait on the Lord’s timing. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has said, “We cannot have true faith in the Lord without also having complete trust in the Lord’s will and in the Lord’s timing” (“Timing,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 12).

When my daughter Carrie was born, we called her “Sunshine.” I had the feeling when she was a baby that the Lord was very reluctant to let her leave His presence because He would miss her charm and cheerfulness.

Carrie married her good friend Todd Rhodes in February 2000. They both graduated from college and began working. About four years into their marriage, they realized they were struggling with infertility. They both loved their jobs, were serving faithfully in Church callings, and loved helping out with their many nieces and nephews who were being born.

Carrie has said of this period in their lives, “We did not feel a lot of sadness or anguish over the issue because we felt that we were doing all we could within our powers at that time. We felt comfort in that. We knew that if we took care of our home and family and callings and jobs, the Lord would bless us in this trial. His grace is sufficient, and we felt great comfort in this.”

They went through two years of tests and procedures to discover the cause and found nothing to explain why they were not getting pregnant. They spent their entire savings to try in vitro fertilization, which was not successful. Carrie’s patriarchal blessing promised her that she would be “a mother in Zion,” and she wondered if it was being fulfilled by serving children in the

Church. Todd's blessing was a little more specific. They began to look into adoption, but that path didn't seem clear and never felt right. Receiving that answer was somewhat discouraging. By now, eight years had passed.

It was then that another of my daughters felt that money should not be a reason to not have a baby. She organized the family and friends of Carrie and Todd and invited everyone to think of ways they could earn money for the "Baby Rhodesbud Fund," using a play on words from Carrie and Todd's last name. The outpouring of love and support from family and friends was incredible. Garage sales were held, crafts were made and sold, and aunts, uncles, and cousins got involved to help earn money to make it possible to try the very expensive procedure of in vitro. As Carrie put it, this effort involved "love, forgiveness, humility, service, sacrifice, charity, generosity, and the kindnesses of complete strangers." In the end, they raised enough money to make it possible for Carrie and Todd to try one more round of in vitro. It was unsuccessful.

Carrie said: "This was a dark time, and we felt discouraged, yet we felt comforted again that we were doing all we could do. We felt the Lord's grace in this matter. I have realized since that the Lord's grace is not accessible only *after* we suffer. It is available to *prevent* suffering."

During this very dark period, the Lord sent them a blessing. They were able to sell the home they had been living in and move into a new home in a neighborhood they loved, right down the street from a temple. Because they were childless, they were able to be called as temple workers. They loved working in the temple and met in the celestial room of the temple after each of their shifts to talk quietly and pray. It was there the decision was made to try one more round of in vitro fertilization, made possible by the sale of their home.

In Carrie's words: "We approached the Lord and laid it all on the altar. We told Him that this was our offering. After all that had been done for us, this was all we had, and we were willing to lay it all before Him, because our desire for a family meant more than money or any other worldly thing.

"Our son, Oliver, was born in December 2011, and our daughter, Charlotte, was born in February 2014. We have been married for 14 years. We both turn 40 this year. And as we lament our age and our aches as we run after a toddler and care for a newborn, we do not regret the timing of our family. . . . We can look back on our long period of trial with assurance that the Lord was in charge of the plan and that He walked the path of longing, disappointment, pain, patience, and, ultimately, joy *with* us. His grace was sufficient."

Infertility can be a heartbreaking and devastating challenge, and everyone's path along this journey is individual and unique. What is right for one couple may not be the answer for another. The things my daughter learned from her experience are:

- They found comfort in doing all that they could.
- Grace doesn't necessarily kick in after you suffer; it prevents suffering.
- They found joy serving in the temple.
- They were willing to lay their all on the altar in order to receive the desired blessing.

I love the promise of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland when it comes to trusting in the Lord's grace and the Lord's timing: "Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don't come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come*" ("An High Priest of Good Things to Come," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 38; italics in original).

I bear testimony that this is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.