

## **Trad Wife or Cat Lady**

July 30, 2024

There is a new war in recent headlines. This conflict has overshadowed the battles in Ukraine or Israel. The new conflagration is between two epithets, and for the first time in human history, all the foot-soldiers are women. It is the battle between “trad wife” and “cat lady.”

The opening salvo was fired by The Times on July 20<sup>th</sup> with the article, “Meet the Queen of the ‘Trad Wives’ (and Her Eight Children).” This piece covers the ‘battle’ at Ballerina Farm (a social media site with 9 million followers). The author asks, “Is this an empowering new model of womanhood — or a hammer blow for feminism?” For those unfamiliar with the term “trad wives” the reporter offers this definition, “Women who have rejected modern gender roles for the more traditional existence of wife, mother and homemaker.” A behavioral scientist from the University of Colorado opines, “Trad wives are seen as a counterculture against the ‘rot’ of low birth rates.”

In no-man’s land between the opposing forces of “trad wife” and “cat lady” was a piece in the July 25<sup>th</sup> edition of the New York Times which used neither epithet. The piece seemed oblivious of the conflict with its title, “Kids? A Growing Number of Americans Say, ‘No, Thanks.’” The article cites a recent Pew Research study which found, “47 percent of those younger than 50 without children said they were unlikely ever to have children, an increase of 10 percentage points since 2018.” Women were 14 percentage points more likely than men to make this determination. The reasons not to have progeny were, “The desire to focus on . . . career or interests; concerns about . . . the world . . . the costs involved in raising a child . . . climate change . . . and not having found the right partner.”

The other side of the epithet war is represented by The Wildest, a pet owners web site, which featured on July 29<sup>th</sup>, “I Am a “Cat Lady” and I’m Not Miserable at All, Thank You Very Much.” The article is a response to a recent re-release of a politician’s 2021 statement that the U.S. government is in thrall to, “. . . a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices they’ve made.” The article quotes a young cat lady who said, “I’m tired of men thinking that my only worth is to have babies.” Like most recent articles from the cat lady side of the epithet war, the author points out that infertility makes some women involuntary cat ladies.

While there are no “cat ladies” in the Bible, barren women (meaning women unable to have children with their husband) feature prominently throughout Old and New Testaments. Their anguish is always part of the narrative. The earliest example is Rachel, the wife of Jacob. At one point she cried out to her husband, “Give me children, or I’ll die!” (Gen 30:1). Hannah, who eventually became the mother of the prophet Samuel, was grief stricken by her inability to have children. After one of her bouts of depression, her husband asked her, “Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don’t you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don’t I mean more to you than ten sons?” (1 Sam 1:8). The pain of barrenness is most poignantly captured in Proverbs 30, “There are three things which are never full, even four which never say, Enough: The underworld, and the

woman without a child; the earth which never has enough water, and the fire which always seeks more fuel” (v. 15-16).

The war between the epithets “trad wives” and “cat ladies” is **NOT** centered on infertility. The conflict is focused on whether fertile women choosing not to give birth is a valid option. God’s statement on this subject is, “A wife will be saved through childbearing, if she continues in faith, love, and holiness, with good judgment” (1 Tim 2:15).