

# Love, Children ~ and ~ Family Planning

Seven discussion guides for Christian small groups

**Institute for Reproductive Health  
Christian Connections for International Health**

**Revised January 2013**



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# INTRODUCTION

## Why this book?

Family planning is not often discussed in churches in Africa. Why not? Some are afraid their ideas will cause controversy or will not be accepted by other Christians. Some have heard a lot of talk about abortions, and they wonder if any family planning methods do cause abortions. Others have heard someone say that family planning is against the teachings of the Bible. And other Christians have simply been so busy with HIV/AIDS in their communities that family planning has been almost forgotten.

Meanwhile, a whole new generation of young people has come of age, married and started having children. They have probably learned a lot about health topics -- child immunizations, good nutrition, the importance of ante-natal visits, and HIV testing. But they may not have heard much about healthy timing of pregnancies and family planning.

Churches can help their members, both older and younger, to understand why couples should make good plans for having children, and why spacing children is best for the health of the mother, baby, and the family. Pastors, lay leaders and Christian health workers will find much strength and help in the Bible, in its many stories and passages about couples, families and children. That is why we have written this book.

This book was a cooperative effort of Christian health workers, pastors, church leaders, youth, and members of churches. Contributions and comments came from DR Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and the United States. We are grateful for their interest and willingness to share their ideas and their experiences.

## **Our dream for families in Africa**

- That family planning will become a right for every woman and family
- That family planning will cease to be restricted to hospitals (where it is offered as medical treatment), but instead will be transformed into an opportunity for family centered health care
- That family planning education and options will become easily accessible through a community-based system

*~ Dr. Samuel Mwenda, General Secretary  
Africa Christian Health Associations Platform*



## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The book has two sections. The first contains Bible passages and suggestions for discussing them in small groups. The second section gives information about the many different family planning methods available from health providers.

This book is meant to be used by small groups – in churches, in neighborhoods and in Christian nursing schools and health centers. It is meant to be discussed and debated by Christians in all walks of life.

In this kind of Bible study, no one is a “total expert”. Of course, some people will be able to share their knowledge about when the Bible passage was written, what the situation was then, and what certain words originally meant. Others will be able to speak from their personal experiences living in couples, in families, and in communities. Other group members will have knowledge about the human body and will be able to explain some of the health subjects. No one person is an expert in all those areas, and everyone will have something to say and something to learn.

The group organizer has just three tasks:

- **Begin with prayer, and ask someone to read the Bible passage,**
- **Divide people into small groups (each with 5-8 members) and be sure each group has a copy of the Bible passage and the questions to be discussed.**
- **Keep track of the time, and call the groups back together for the last few minutes.**

We suggest that you begin with Bible study 1 (“The love between husband and wife”). After that, the other Bible studies can be done in any order you like.

## **A word about different Bible translations:**

The many books of the Bible were originally written about 2000-3000 years ago, some in Hebrew and some in Greek. The first translations into the English language were done about 500 years ago. Since then, many other English translations have been done.

The Bible passages quoted in this book are from the *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*, Second Edition, American Bible Society, 1992. The preface to the *Good News Bible* says: "This translation seeks to state clearly and accurately the meaning of the original texts, in words and forms that are widely accepted by all people who use English as a means of communication... It was translated and published by the United Bible Societies for use throughout the world."

Some members of your own group will have different English translations of the Bible. Some will have Bibles in other languages. Encourage them to bring their different Bibles, so the group can compare the words and phrases in the passages as you talk together.

# Section One

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## Seven Bible studies for small groups

- 1** The love between husband and wife .....6  
I Samuel 1: 1-8
- 2** Be my disciple...count the cost .....9  
Luke 14:25-29
- 3** Wives & husbands, children & parents .....13  
Ephesians 5:21-33, Ephesians 6: 1-4
- 4** Do not deny yourselves to each other.....17  
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- 7** Two psalms .....27  
Psalms 127 & 128

# Bible Study 1

## *The love between husband and wife*

### **I Samuel 1:1-8**

- 1 There was a man named Elkanah....
- 2 Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah; Peninnah had children but Hannah did not.
- 3 Every year Elkanah went from Ramah to worship and offer sacrifices to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh....
- 4 Each time Elkanah offered his sacrifice, he would give one share of the meat to Peninnah and one share to each of her children.
- 5 And even though he loved Hannah very much he would give her only one share, because the Lord had kept her from having children.
- 6 Peninnah, her rival, would torment and humiliate her, because the Lord had kept her childless.
- 7 This went on year after year; whenever they went to the house of the Lord, Peninnah would upset Hannah so much that she would cry and refuse to eat anything. Her husband Elkanah would ask her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why won't you eat? Why are you always so sad? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

*~ from the Good News Bible*

### **Part 1.**

#### **Begin with the whole group together (10 minutes)**

Begin by praying for wisdom, learning, and a helpful discussion.

#### **Hear the story**

Ask a person with a strong voice to read aloud slowly I Samuel 1: 1-8.

#### **Ask these questions to make the story clear:**

- *Who are the three main characters?*
- *For each person, what is the situation?*
- *What did each person do?*

---

## Part 2.

### Break into small groups (10-20 minutes)

(Note: Each group should have 4-6 people. Group members should make sure everyone in the group has a chance to say something, at least once, during their time together.)

### Read the Bible passage out loud again.

### Questions for discussion and reflection

- *For Peninnah, who counted more — her husband or her children?*
- *For Hannah, who counted more — her husband or having some children?*
- *And for Elkanah, who counted more — his wives, his daughters or his sons?*
- *What title would you give to this story?*  
Some ideas = “A love story”  
“Children don’t matter”  
“Can a man love two wives?”

### Here are some real comments about this Bible passage. If someone said these things to you, how would you reply?

**A man:** *“A couple can love each other and stay together without having children. Love is not dependent on the presence of children.”*

**A man:** *“For us Africans, the objective of any marriage is to engender children. A marriage without children is hardly accepted by the society and it is inconceivable.”*

**A pastor:** *“Marriage has for its base the love between a man and his wife. As long as this love persists between the couple, a marriage can exist and continue even if they have no children.”*

**A woman:** *“Children are a blessing for the parents.”*

**A young person:**

*“More and more couples live harmoniously without children and especially now when survival is becoming harder and harder.”*

**If you still have some time left, turn to Annex A of this book, and read some of the interesting E-mails about Hannah and Elkanah – and couples today.**

---

### **Part 3.**

**When just 5-10 minutes remain, call everyone together again.**

Each small group can share the key points of their discussions. Or someone can simply read the passage aloud one more time.

**End with prayer.**

# Bible Study 2

*Be my disciple...count the cost*

## Luke 14:25-29

- 25 Once when large crowds of people were going along with Jesus, he turned and said to them,
- 26 “Those who come to me cannot be my disciples unless they love me more than they love father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and themselves as well.
- 27 “Those who do not carry their own cross and come after me cannot be my disciples.
- 28 “If one of you is planning to build a tower, you sit down first and figure out what it will cost, to see if you have enough money to finish the job.
- 29 “If you don’t, you will not be able to finish the tower after laying the foundation; and all who see what happened will make fun of you.”

*~ from the Good News Bible*

**Suggestion:** Invite a community health worker or a nurse, with knowledge of family planning methods, to be ready to answer questions during Part 3 of this discussion.

## Part 1.

**Begin with the whole group together (10 minutes)**

Pray for wisdom, learning, and a helpful discussion.

**Hear the scripture**

Ask someone with a strong voice to read aloud slowly the Bible verses above from the Gospel of Luke.

## Part 2.

**Break into small groups (10-20 minutes)**

(Note: Each group should have 4-6 people. Group members should make sure everyone in the group has a chance to say something, at least

once. You may want to ask someone to take notes or write ideas on a chalkboard.)

### Questions for reflection and discussion

- *In today's reading (Luke 14: 25-29), what is Jesus saying about family ties?*
- *To follow Jesus, must you hate your family?*
- *Whom or what must you renounce?*
- *What was Jesus' example of lack of planning?*
- *Let's think about planning within families. Can you give examples of poor planning?*
- *What kind of planning is necessary for a young married couple?  
What about a middle-aged couple?  
What planning do older members of a family need to do?*

**Here are real comments some people had about this Bible passage. If someone said these things to you, how would you reply?**

**A woman:** *"Building a house, building a family — both take planning."*

**A pastor:** *"God is the greatest planner."*



**A man:** *"The act of giving birth is given by God and should be well thought out. You have to take responsibility for raising the children all the way to the end. Otherwise, it's a sin. You have to plan births according to the resources that will be needed."*

**A woman:** *"When my husband and I were first married, we planned to have six children. But later, we decided to stop with two. Why? To raise our two children properly, and also so that we could give our time to our work, which is to help poor and needy children."*



**A man:** *"Like any project which needs a plan and an organization to be successful, a family also requires a plan, an organization and methods to succeed in the education of the children."*

**A pastor:** *"Get married, and the God of all comfort will provide the rest in his immense love."*



**A woman:** *“You should not burden yourself with children you will not be able to educate and raise correctly. It is necessary to choose a number of children related to the means your family possesses.”*

---

### **Part 3.**

**When you have about 10-20 minutes left, call the whole group together.**

**Ask the community health worker or nurse to talk about a special kind of planning – “family planning”.**

Here is a list of 13 contraceptive methods, arranged according to how much planning is necessary to use each method:

Methods that require planning & constant cooperation between husband and wife:

- Withdrawal method (*see page 41*)
- Standard Days Method®, with CycleBeads® (*page 40*)
- Male condoms (*page 42*)
- Female condoms (*page 43*)

Methods that require careful planning by the wife :

- Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM), while she is breastfeeding a baby less than 6 months old, **and** her menstrual bleeding has not returned, **and** she is not giving any other foods or liquids (*page 45*)
- Mini-pills that she must take every day -- if she is breastfeeding a baby 6 weeks to 6 months old (*page 35*)
- Regular contraceptive pills that she must take every day -- if she is not breastfeeding a baby (*page 34*)
- Injections - she must get one every 2 or 3 months (*page 37*)

Methods that do not require constant planning by the wife or the husband:

- Implants (*page 38*)
- IUD (*page 39*)
- Male sterilization (vasectomy) (*page 47*)
- Female sterilization (*page 46*)

What if a couple forgets? What if they have been praying & planning carefully, but someone forgets to use the contraceptive method. What can they do?

- Emergency contraceptive pills – that the wife must take within 5 days (*page 36*)

**Some people may want to ask questions about the Bible or about contraceptive methods.**

**End with prayer.**

# Bible Study 3

## *Wives & husbands, children & parents*

### **Ephesians 5:21-33**

- 21 Submit yourselves to one another because of your reverence for Christ.
- 22 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as to the Lord.
- 23 For a husband has authority over his wife just as Christ has authority over the church, and Christ is himself the Savior of the church, his body.
- 24 And so wives must submit themselves completely to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ.
- 25 Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it.
- 26 He did this to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water,
- 27 in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty – pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection.
- 28 Men ought to love their wives just as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself.
- 29-30 (None of us ever hate our own bodies. Instead, we feed them, and take care of them, just as Christ does the church; for we are members of his body.)
- 31 As the scripture says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.”
- 32 There is a deep secret truth revealed in the scripture, which I understand as applying to Christ and the church.
- 33 But it also applies to you: every husband must love his wife as himself, and every wife must respect her husband.

*~ from the Good News Bible*

## Ephesians 6:1-4

- 1 Children, it is your Christian duty to obey your parents, for it is the right thing to do.
- 2 “Respect your father and mother” is the first commandment that has a promise added:
- 3 “So that all may go well with you, and you may live a long time in the land.”
- 4 Parents, do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry. Instead, raise them with Christian discipline and instruction.

~ from the Good News Bible

### Part 1.

#### Begin with the whole group together (10 minutes)

Pray for wisdom, learning, and a loving discussion.

#### Hear the scripture

The session leader can say;

*“Today we will be reading parts of a very old letter. It was written by the apostle Paul to the new church in the city of Ephesus (which still exists, in the modern country of Turkey). Paul had some advice for wives, husbands, children and parents. Listen carefully for the action words – what he told each group to DO (obey, love, etc.).”*

Ask two people with strong voices to read aloud the two Bible passages from Ephesians.

### Part 2.

#### Break into small groups (10-20 minutes)

(Note: Each group should have 4-6 people. Group members should make sure everyone in the group has a chance to say something. The group may ask someone to take notes.)

#### Questions for reflection

*What did Paul actually say?*

- *What did Paul advise wives to do? (Ephesians 5)*
- *What did he advise husbands?*

- *Did Paul say that the husband must love his wife, only if she submits to him?*
- *Did he say the wife must respect the husband, only if he loves her?*
- *What did Paul advise children to do? (Ephesians 6)*
- *What did he advise parents not to do? What did he advise them to do?*

**What do these ideas mean to us?**

- *Do Paul's words of advice apply in today's world?*
- *What do people think today about the roles of men and women? How does that influence the roles of husbands and wives?*
- *Which is more difficult – respecting or loving?*
- *Do the actions depend on what the other person does?*
- *What if the children are rebellious?*
- *Do these verses speak of “responsible parenthood”?*

**Here are real comments some people had about this Bible passage. If someone said these things to you, how would you reply?**

- A man:** *The love of the husband for his wife and her submission to him make the foundation of the marriage union.*
- A man:** *Our children should obey us, and we have the responsibility to raise them well. When there are too many children, raising them often is a failure. You run more risk of losing them — in a physical sense, and also morally, intellectually, and spiritually.*
- A woman teacher:**  
*Responsible parenthood doesn't mean only having money and using it to satisfy the children's needs. It also means having enough time to take care of their training within the family.*
- A man:** *All parents have the duty and the responsibility of raising and educating the children God has given them.*
- A pastor:** *Children owe obedience to their parents; that is God's law.*
- A deacon:** *But a child abandoned in the street cannot think of obeying his irresponsible parents.*

**A woman:** *Children should honor their parents, in order to be happy and have a long life on earth.*

**A young person:**

*These verses speak about a responsible motherhood and about raising children well in a couple.*



- *What is the theme of these verses?*
- *Look in several translations and in different languages for the verbs that are used in these verses. What words in each language seem to be the best? Why?*

**English**

**Other languages**

**fear**

**respect**

**be subject**

**submit**

**obey**

**love**

**nourish**

**cherish**

---

### **Part 3**

**When you have 5-10 minutes left, call the whole group together:**

If you wish, each small group can share the key points of the discussions.

Or someone can simply read the scripture aloud one more time.

**End with prayer.**

# Bible Study 4

*Do not deny yourselves to each other*

## I Corinthians 7: 1-6

- 1 Now, to deal with the matters you wrote about. [You say that] a man does well not to marry.
- 2 But because there is so much immorality, every man should have his own wife, and every woman should have her own husband.
- 3 A man should fulfill his duty as a husband, and a woman should fulfill her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's needs.
- 4 A wife is not the master of her own body, but her husband is; in the same way a husband is not the master of his own body, but his wife is.
- 5 Do not deny yourselves to each other, unless you first agree to do so for a while in order to spend your time in prayer; but then resume normal marital relations. In this way you will be kept from giving in to Satan's temptation because of your lack of self-control.
- 6 I tell you this not as an order, but simply as a permission.

*~ from the Good News Bible*

**Suggestion:** Invite a community health worker or a nurse, with knowledge of family planning methods, to be ready to answer questions during Part 3 of this discussion.

## Part 1.

**Begin with the whole group together (10 minutes)**

Pray for wisdom, learning, and a respectful discussion.

**Hear the scripture from I Corinthians**

Remind your group that the apostle Paul wrote this letter almost 2000 years ago to Christians in the city of Corinth. They seemed to be having some marital problems.

Ask someone with a strong voice to read aloud 1 Cor. 7:1-6.

---

## Part 2.

### Break into small groups (10-20 minutes)

(Note: Each group should have 4-6 people. Group members should make sure everyone in the group has a chance to say something, at least once. Someone may want to take notes or write ideas on a chalkboard.)

### Questions for reflection

- *Paul said that sexual abstinence is appropriate and recommended when? If he was writing to your church today, do you think Paul would recommend sexual abstinence? For whom? When?*
- *Many African societies had traditional ways of ensuring a space between children. (An example: While a wife was breastfeeding, she and her husband did not have sexual relations.) What were the advantages and disadvantages of those practices? Do women today continue to observe those practices? What about their husbands?*

### Here are real comments some people had about this Bible passage. If someone said these things to you, how would you reply?

- A man:** *The couple owes each other mutual fidelity, and they should have sexual relations regularly. To avoid sexual abstinence, and also to avoid unwanted pregnancies, they should use a contraceptive method.*
- A pastor:** *Prayer has to be the cornerstone for good family planning. It helps a couple plan their pregnancies.*
- An elder:** *God himself, who gave the law, will also plan the births at the right time.*
- A man:** *A man and woman should not deprive each other. They should have regular sexual intercourse to strengthen their love and avoid the temptations of the devil.*
- A woman:** *But, during certain fertile periods, they can use means to prevent a non-wished pregnancy.*

### Q & A: Questions & answers about specific family planning methods

(For more details, see Section 2 of this book, beginning on page 31)

- Q 1:** **Which methods help a couple know which days the wife can become pregnant so they can abstain or use a condom?**



**A:** *Standard Days Method (SDM) – The SDM identifies the days (days 8-19) of every cycle when the woman can potentially become pregnant. To avoid pregnancy, the couple either uses a condom on those days or does not have sex on those days. Cooperation between the husband and wife helps them use the SDM successfully.*

**Q 2: Which contraceptive methods allow a couple to have sexual relations at any time, without ever having to “deny each other”?**

**A:** *All the other methods allow sexual relations any time, but some methods have to be remembered and used every time, or every day. Here are the details:*

Methods that must be used correctly, every time a couple has sex:

- withdrawal by the man
- condoms used by the man or the woman

Methods that the wife must remember every day:

- mini-pills
- combined pills

Method that the wife must remember every 2 or 3 months:

- contraceptive injections

Method that works only while the wife is breastfeeding a baby less than 6 months old, **and** her menstrual bleeding has not returned, **and** she is not giving any other foods or liquids:

- Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM)

Methods that last for several years:

- implant (3-5 years)
- intra-uterine device - IUD (up to 12 years)

Methods that are permanent (they last forever):

- vasectomy (male sterilization)
- tubal ligation (female sterilization)

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## Part 3

**When you have 5-10 minutes left, call the small groups back together:**

If you wish, the groups can share key points of their discussions. Or someone can simply read the scripture aloud one more time.

**End with prayer.**

# Bible Study 5

## *At the creation*

**Note:** The creation stories in the book of Genesis in the Bible are very familiar to 21st century Christians. They were written many centuries ago, in the Hebrew language. Here are two translations of the verses. Both translations are good and are accurate.

### **GENESIS 1:26-28 (Two translations)**

26 Then God said, “And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals. domestic and wild, large and small.

27 So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female,

28 blessed them, and said, “Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.”

*~ from the Good News Bible*

26 God said “Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that creep along the ground.

27 God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, saying to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that move on earth.”

*~ from the New Jerusalem Bible*

### **Part 1.**

**Begin with the whole group together (10 minutes)**

Begin by praying for wisdom, learning, and a loving discussion.

## Hear the story

Tell the group members that they will hear the same verses from Genesis, in two different translations, both of them accurate.

Ask someone with a strong voice to read aloud slowly the verses above from the Good News Bible.

Ask someone else to read the same verses from the New Jerusalem Bible.

---

## Part 2.

### Break into small groups (10-20 minutes)

(Note: Each group should have 4-6 people. Group members should make sure everyone in the group has a chance to say something, at least once. Have one group member take notes or write ideas on a chalkboard.)

### Questions for discussion and reflection

- (1) As a group, talk about some key phrases in the two different translations.

#### Good News Bible

#### New Jerusalem Bible

|   |   |                           |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| “like himself”  | = | “in the image of himself” |
| “have many children”                                    | = | “be fruitful, multiply”   |
| “so that your descendants will live all over the earth” | = | “fill the earth”          |
| “and bring it under their control”                      | = | “and subdue it”           |

- (2) After your group has talked about the words, think together about these ideas:

- *To whom did God give these instructions?*
- *Were they given to the first human beings long ago, or to us also in our day?*
- *Were they given to every individual person who ever lives, or to mankind in general?*
- *Do these verses say anything on the subject of family planning?*
- *Do they forbid the use of contraceptive methods?*

**Here are some real comments about this Bible passage. If someone said these things to you, how would you reply?**

**About “the image of God”**

**A woman:** *The image of God means a being who acts with love, wisdom, intelligence, and reasoning.*

**A theologian:**

*One translation says “like Himself”, while the other says “in the image of God”. That idea is the foundation of human dignity. Thus it is with dignity that the human being must be conceived and born. We must take human dignity into account when we “fill the earth”.*

**A man:** *The image of God in man is the capacity that God put in man to distinguish good from evil.*

**A woman:** *The breath which God put in the man -- that is His image in the man.*

**A minister:**

*The image of God in the man is the Spirit of God in the man, the soul. The man who has no Holy Spirit has no image of God in him. He is similar to an animal.*

**About “many children”**

**A man:** *Children? Yes, you should have them, but not in a disorderly way. “Be fruitful” and “multiply” — those are not synonyms for disorder.*

**A pastor:** *Yes, these verses say something about family planning. God gave the couple the ability to have children and to reason, in order to plan a birth in an orderly way, with wisdom.*

**A young person:**

*God’s spirit in man helps him to choose what is good and what is bad; and to choose the number of children he wants to have in his home.*

**A man:** *The world is what it is today because people want to interpret God’s word in their own ways. Be fruitful and multiply means what it means and nothing else.*

## About “fill the earth” and “subdue it”

**A deacon:** *God does not change; His commands are unchanging and they never change. The command to fill the earth is addressed also to us in this generation.*

**A pastor:** *This commandment to “fill the earth” is probably the only one we have obeyed !*

**A woman:** *The thought of God is not the thought of the human being. We have to obey God rather than the selfish thought of men. So, without discussion, we must fill the earth.*

**An elder:** *Where the Bible speaks we have to speak and where it keeps quiet, we have to keep quiet. We should multiply and fill the earth according to God’s recommendation.*

**A young person:**

*“Subdue the earth” includes the notion of organization, method, planning and in addition the notion of family planning.*

**A woman:** *God is sovereign. He has no adviser and let us not try to help him.*

**A pastor:** *The command from God, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it”, means that after multiplying and filling the earth, we should subdue our reproduction.*

**A pastor:** *It is filling the earth, not filling the house. Because if you are filling the house, it means you have many children in one house and cannot afford to maintain them. But if you are filling the earth, it means you plus other people—it is not solely your duty to fill it.*

---

## **Part 3**

**When you have 5-10 minutes left, call the small groups back together:**

If you wish, the groups can share key points of their discussions. Or someone can simply read the scripture aloud one more time.

**End with prayer.**

# Bible Study 6

## *The story of Onan*

### Genesis 38: 6-10

- 6 For his first son Er, Judah got a wife whose name was Tamar.
- 7 Er's conduct was evil, and it displeased the LORD, so the LORD killed him.
- 8 Then Judah said to Er's brother Onan, "Go and sleep with your brother's widow. Fulfill your obligation to her as her husband's brother, so that our brother may have descendants."
- 9 But Onan knew that the children would not belong to him, so when he had intercourse with his brother's widow, he let the semen spill on the ground, so that there would be no children for his brother.
- 10 What he did displeased the LORD, and the LORD killed him also.

*~ from the Good News Bible*

**Suggestion:** Invite a community health worker or a nurse, with knowledge of family planning methods, to be ready to answer questions during Part 3 of this discussion.

### Part 1.

**Begin with the whole group together (10 minutes)**

Pray for wisdom, learning, and a respectful discussion.

**Hear the scripture**

Ask someone with a strong voice to read aloud slowly the story of Onan. Tell the listeners to pay close attention to what Onan did, what he did not do, and exactly what displeased the Lord.

### Part 2.

**Break into small groups (10-20 minutes)**

(Note: Each group should have 4-6 people. Group members should let everyone in the group have a chance to say something, at least once. You may want to ask someone to take notes or write ideas on a chalkboard.)

### **A question for discussion**

- Exactly why did God punish Onan?

(Better read the passage again before you try to answer!)

### **Here's what some people have said:**

**A man:** *God punished Onan because he wasted his semen on the ground.*

**A woman:** *God punished Onan because he did not obey his father's request.*

#### **A young person:**

*God punished Onan because he had no love for his brother.*

**An elder:** *Onan was punished by God for his selfishness, for disobeying his father and for throwing (spilling) his semen on the ground, which looks like an abortion or a murder.*

**A deacon:** *In God's eyes, by casting his semen on the ground, Onan was a murderer like Cain who killed his brother Abel.*

**A pastor:** *It is the action to put the semen on the ground when he was sleeping with the wife of his dead brother Er, so that he would not give his brother any offspring. That is what displeased God who then caused his death.*

### **Summary: People seem to answer the question "Why did God punish Onan?" in two different ways:**

- Some talk about his thoughts -- his selfish intentions.
- Others talk about the specific way he prevented a pregnancy (The Bible calls it "spilling his semen". Health workers now call it "the withdrawal method.")

Many Christians nowadays feel that a husband and wife together should decide when to prevent or postpone pregnancies, and how to do that.

Do you agree?

Three contraceptive methods depend upon the husband to do something:

- **Withdrawal method** – effective if he does it quickly and completely, before he ejaculates (sends out his semen liquid) *See page 41*
- **Male condom** – the man's many small sperm cannot reach the woman's egg to fertilize it. *See page 42*
- **Male vasectomy** – a small operation that allows the man to produce semen liquid, but no sperm. *See page 47.*

**Story from a Christian health educator:**

*I remember one pastor who would not let me talk about sexuality or condoms in his parish. Even after a long conversation about the story of Onan, he wasn't convinced. Finally he asked me, "Have you ever used condoms yourself?" I answered, "Of course, many times." Then he said, "Okay, fine. Go ahead and talk about them to our church people.*

---

**Part 3.**

**When 5-10 minutes are left, call the whole group together:**

If you wish, each small group can share the key points of the discussions (2 min.each). Or someone can simply read the scripture aloud one more time.

**Then end with prayer.**



# Bible Study 7

## *Two psalms*

### **Psalm 127**

- 1 If the Lord does not build a house, the work of the builders is useless; if the Lord does not protect the city, it does no good for the sentries to stand guard.
- 2 It is useless to work so hard for a living, getting up early and going to bed late. For the Lord provides for those he loves, while they are asleep.
- 3 Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a real blessing.
- 4 The sons a man has when he is young are like arrows in a soldier's hand.
- 5 Happy is the man who has many such arrows. He will never be defeated when he meets his enemies in the place of judgment.

### **Psalm 128**

- 1 Happy are those who obey the Lord, who live by his commands.
- 2 Your work will provide for your needs; you will be happy and prosperous.
- 3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in your home, and your children will be like young olive trees around your table.
- 4 A man who obeys the Lord will surely be blessed like this.
- 5 May the Lord bless you from Zion! May you see Jerusalem prosper all the days of your life!
- 6 May you live to see your grandchildren!

*~ from the Good News Bible*

### **Part 1.**

**Begin with the whole group together (10 minutes)**

Begin by praying for wisdom, learning, and a respectful discussion.

## Hear the Psalms

Ask two people with strong voices to read aloud slowly Psalm 127 & Psalm 128.

Tell the listeners to pay attention to the words and images, to picture them in their minds, and maybe write them down.

---

## Part 2.

### Break into small groups (10-20 minutes)

(Note: Each group should have 4-6 people. Group members should make sure everyone in the group has a chance to say something, at least once. You may want to ask someone to take notes or write ideas on a chalkboard.)

### Look at Psalm 127 (or read it out loud again)

- Reflect on the different pictures and images, for example: house, working hard, arrows, etc.
- How many children do you think the Psalm is talking about? Girls or boys or both?

### Then look at Psalm 128 (or read it aloud)

- What new images and pictures do you hear?
- Are these images still relevant in our day? Why? Why not?

### Think about the present and the past

- What images of children and families do we hear and see in our neighborhoods, on television, and in films today?
- How are our times different from Bible times? How are they alike?
- How are our times different from our grandparents' time? How are they alike?
- Ask members of your group if they have stories to share (from their own families or friends) about numbers of children, too many children, or too few children? Did the parents actually make the decisions?
- What do these Psalms say to us who are living today?

## What can Christian health workers offer to couples who feel that they probably should not have more children?

Four good contraceptive methods are available. Not every health center can provide all of them, but health workers can tell couples where to get each one.

**Long-term, non-permanent methods** – for couples who feel they should not have more children in the next few years, but are not sure about later.

- **intra-uterine device (IUD).** A nurse places a small “T” in the woman’s womb. *See page 39 for more details.*
- **implant.** A nurse places small plastic rods in the woman’s arm. *See page 38 for more details.*

**Permanent methods** – for couples who are very sure that they should not have any more children, and they are sure they will not change their minds later. Either the wife or the husband can have a small operation.

- **female sterilization.** *See page 46 for more details.*
- **male vasectomy.** *See page 47 for more details.*

## If you still have time in your small group, here are real comments about these two psalms. If someone said these things to you, how would you reply?

**A father:** *Any family has to have as many children as God gives them, because He is the one who gives and who takes away.*

**A mother:** *Children are a right and God’s benediction. Any couple has to engender them and have them.*

**A father:** *Procreation is a blessing and a reward of God to the faithful. But we shouldn’t abuse it.*



**A grandmother:**

*Some children become enemies of their parents, selfish....*

**A father:** *Some children are a support and a protection for their parents.*



**A mother:** *Without children, the old days of the parents are not guaranteed.*

**A mother:** *My children are my jewels, my best dresses, my treasures.*



**A mother:** *In Bible times, a man needed a lot of sons to defend him in war. That is no longer the case nowadays.*

**A young person:**

*It is always necessary to have many children, because one does not know which of them will be blessed and will become the support of all the family.*

**A mother:** *The children are and will remain God's blessing, because the future is not known to anybody.*

---

### **Part 3.**

**When you have 5-10 minutes left, call the whole group together:**

If you wish, each small group can share the key points of the discussions.  
Or someone can simply read the psalms aloud one more time.

**End with prayer.**

# Section Two

---

## Family Planning Methods to ensure good timing and spacing of pregnancies

|   |    |
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This section is adapted from the draft flip chart, *A Guide to Family Planning for Community Health Workers and their Clients*, World Health Organization, 2011.


[http://www.irh.org/sites/default/files/WHO\\_FP\\_Provider\\_Flipchart-CHAKversion.pdf](http://www.irh.org/sites/default/files/WHO_FP_Provider_Flipchart-CHAKversion.pdf)



# Comparing Family Planning Methods

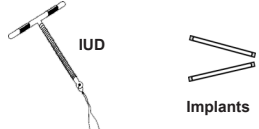
**Most effective in preventing pregnancy and easiest to use**

*Fewer side-effects, permanent:*



Female sterilization      Vasectomy


*More side-effects--most are normal:*



IUD      Implants

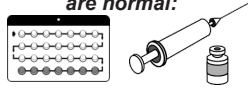
**Very effective in preventing pregnancy, but must be carefully used**

*Fewer side-effects:*



Breastfeeding method


*More side-effects--most are normal:*



Pills      Injectables

**Effective in preventing pregnancy, but must be carefully used**

*Fewer side-effects:*



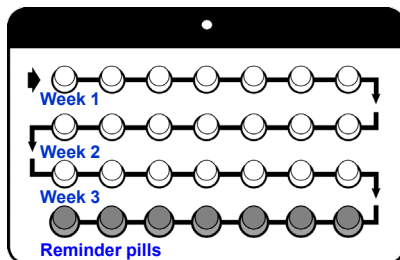
Male and female condom      Fertility awareness-based methods

**IMPORTANT!**  
Only condoms protect against both pregnancy and STIs/HIV/AIDS



## 1. Combined pills

### The Pill



- Safe
- Effective when a pill is taken every day
- Less monthly bleeding and cramps

### The Pill

#### What it is

- A pill with hormones in it that is taken every day.
- Prevents release of egg, and blocks sperm from meeting egg.

#### How to use

- Take one pill every day.
- When you finish a pack of pills, start a new pack the next day.

#### If you miss a pill:

- Take missed pill as soon as possible.
- Okay to take 2 pills at the same time.
- If you miss more than 2 days of pills in a row, use condoms for 7 days and keep taking pills. If you miss these pills in week 3, ALSO skip the reminder pills and start a new pack.

#### What to expect

- Sometimes irregular bleeding at first, then followed by lighter monthly bleeding with less cramping.
- Some women have stomach upset or mild headaches that go away after first few months.

#### Key points

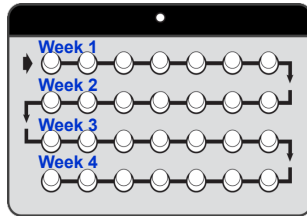
- Take a pill every day.
- Be sure you have enough pills. Get more before you run out.
- Use condoms if you need protection from STIs or HIV/AIDS.





## 2. Mini-pills

### Minipill



- Safe
- Most effective when used while breastfeeding
- Start at 6 weeks during breastfeeding—up to 6 month.
- Best to switch to Combined pills (COCs) after 6 month

### Minipill

#### What it is

- A pill with a hormone in it that you take every day.
- Blocks sperm from reaching the egg.

#### How to use

- If breastfeeding, can start 6 weeks after childbirth.
- Take one pill at the same time every day.
- When you finish a pack of pills, start a new pack the next day.

#### Late taking pill, for women who are breastfeeding:

- Take a pill as soon as you remember, and continue taking pills.

#### Late taking pill, for women who are not breastfeeding:

- If you take a pill more than three hours late, use condoms for the next 2 days and keep taking pills.

#### What to expect, if not breastfeeding

- Changes in monthly bleeding including irregular bleeding, spotting, heavier bleeding or no monthly bleeding, are common and safe.
- Fewer ectopic pregnancies with COCs than POPs (can be life-threatening)

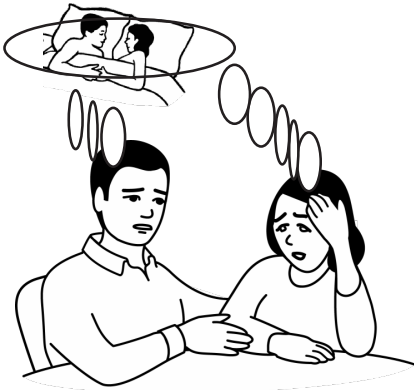
#### Key points

- Take a pill at the same time every day, if not breastfeeding.
- Be sure you have enough pills. Get more before you run out.
- Consider what method to use when you stop breastfeeding.
- Use condoms if you need protection from STIs or HIV/AIDS.



### 3. Emergency contraceptive pills

#### Emergency contraceptive pills



- Prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex
- Work best when taken as soon as possible, up to 5 days after unprotected sex
- Do not cause abortion \*

#### Emergency contraceptive pills

##### What it is

- Pills taken after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy.
- Prevents or delays release of egg.
- Does not cause abortion.

##### How to use

- Can take up to 5 days after unprotected sex.
- Works best when taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

##### What to expect

- Sometimes cause nausea, vomiting, vaginal spotting or bleeding for a few days.

##### Key points

- Does not prevent pregnancy the next time you have sex. do not protect against future acts of sexual intercourse.
- Regular methods are more effective, consider if there is a method you would like to use.
- Seek treatment if you may have been exposed to STIs or HIV/AIDS.

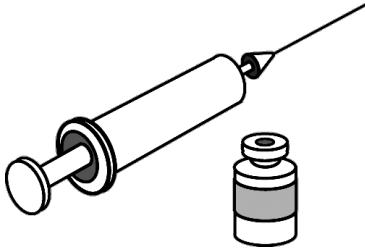
**Get** emergency contraceptive pills at \_\_\_\_\_.



\* [http://www.figo.org/files/figo-corp/MOA\\_FINAL\\_2011\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.figo.org/files/figo-corp/MOA_FINAL_2011_ENG.pdf)

## 4. Injection

### Injection



- Safe
- Hormone injection given every 2 months or 3 months
- Very effective when injections are on time
- Use can be kept private

### Injection

#### What it is

- Hormone injection.
- Prevents release of egg.

#### How to use

- Get an injection every 2 months (NET-EN) or 3 months (DMPA).
- If breastfeeding, can start 6 weeks after childbirth.
- Works best if you get your injections on time.

#### If late for an injection:

- DMPA: Can still get an injection up to 4 weeks late.
- NET-EN: Can still get an injection up to 2 weeks late.

If later, use condoms and return for an injection as soon as possible.

#### What to expect

- Irregular bleeding at first, then spotting or no monthly bleeding. This is common and safe.
- Possible slight weight change.
- After stopping injections, it can take several months to become pregnant.

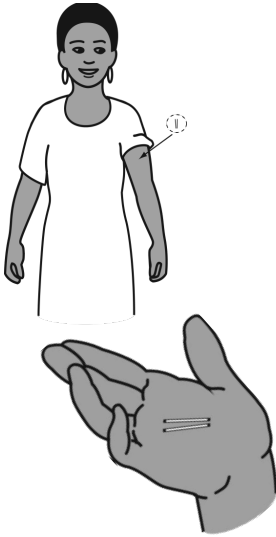
#### Key points

- Does not cause infertility.
- Be sure to get next injection on time.
- Use condoms if you need protection from STIs or HIV/AIDS.



## 5. Implants

### Implants



- Safe to use
- One of the most effective methods
- Lasts for 3-5 years
- Can be removed any time if you want to get pregnant

### Implants

#### What it is

- Small tubes placed under the skin of arm
- Hormone (similar to one naturally found in the woman's body) in the tubes blocks sperm from reaching egg

#### How to use

- Inserted and removed by specially trained provider
- Nothing to remember to do

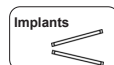
#### What to expect

- Irregular bleeding at first, then spotting or no monthly bleeding – these changes are normal and safe

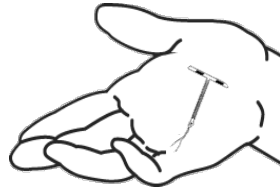
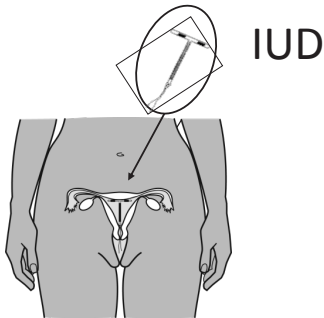
#### Key points

- Need to use another method while waiting for appointment
- Does not protect against STIs or HIV/AIDS

Where to go: \_\_\_\_\_



## 6. Intra-uterine device (IUD)



- Safe to use
- One of the most effective methods
- Can be used for up to 12 years
- Can be removed any time if you want to get pregnant

### IUD

#### What it is

- Small, flexible, plastic "T" wrapped in copper wire that is placed in the womb.
- Primarily, prevents sperm from meeting the egg.

#### How to use

- Specially trained provider inserts and removes IUD.
- Can be put in right after you have a baby as well as at other times.
- Nothing to remember to do after insertion.

#### What to expect

- Some cramping and heavier bleeding during monthly bleeding in the first few months of use.

#### Key points

- Use another method if waiting for appointment.
- Use condoms if you need protection from STIs or HIV/AIDS.

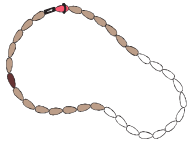
Where to go: \_\_\_\_\_



## 7. Standard Days Method<sup>®</sup> with CycleBeads<sup>®</sup>

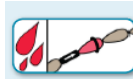
### Standard Days Method with Cycle Beads

#### What it is



- Helps you know what days during the month you could get pregnant.
- To prevent pregnancy, don't have sex or use condoms on white bead days
- Works well for women with regular monthly bleeding

#### How to use



- Move ring to RED bead when period starts



- Move ring to next bead every day. Move ring even on bleeding days



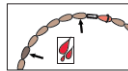
- Use condoms or abstain when ring is on WHITE beads



- BROWN beads are safe days of no pregnancy



- When period starts again move ring to red bead to begin again.



- Always check your period comes between dark brown bead and last brown bead.

### Standard Days Method with CycleBeads

#### What it is

- Helps women track their cycle to know when they are most fertile
- Prevents sperm from meeting egg by avoiding unprotected sex on fertile days.

#### How to use

- Using CycleBeads, move a ring daily to know if on fertile or infertile day
- Use condoms or not have sex on 12 fertile days marked by white beads
- Monitor period comes monthly between darker brown bead and last brown bead

#### When to start using CycleBeads

- Women who know when their last period started can use the SDM right away.
- Women who do not know can begin the SDM when their next period starts.
- Postpartum or breastfeeding women should wait until their periods are regular again.

#### What to expect

- No side effects. It is natural.
- Woman and partner must agree on how to prevent pregnancy on 12 fertile days
- If monthly bleeding becomes less regular may need to choose another method.

#### Key points

- Move the ring daily even on days you are having your monthly bleeding
- If you forget whether you moved the ring, check your calendar for date your period started, count how many days have passed and place ring on the bead for today.
- Agree with partner in advance about using condoms or abstinence on fertile days.
- Use condoms if you need protection from STIs or HIV/AIDS.



## 8. Withdrawal method

### Withdrawal



- No supplies
- No side-effects
- Can be used at any time
- Not as effective as other methods

### Withdrawal

#### What it is

- The man withdraws his penis from his partner's vagina and ejaculates outside the vagina.
- Works by keeping sperm out of the woman's body.

#### How to use

- When the man feels he is close to ejaculation he withdraws his penis from the woman's vagina.

#### What to expect

- Learning to do this correctly can take time.
- May not be good for men who ejaculate quickly.

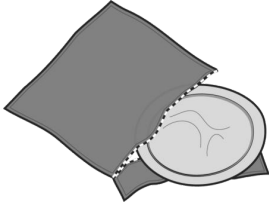
#### Key points

- Other methods provide greater protection from pregnancy for most people.
- Emergency contraceptive pills can be used if ejaculation occurs before withdrawal.
- Use condoms if you need protection from STIs or HIV/AIDS.



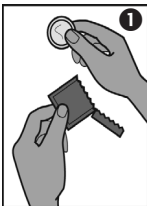
## 9. Male condom

### Male Condom



- Prevents pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS
- Effective when used correctly every time you have sex
- Easy to get and use

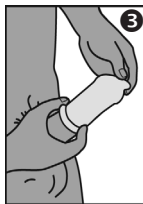
### How to use a male condom



Use a **new condom** for each sex act



Before any contact, place condom on tip of erect penis **with rolled side out**



**Unroll condom all the way** to base of penis



**After ejaculation**, hold rim of condom in place, and withdraw penis while it is still hard



**Use only once**  
Throw away used condom safely



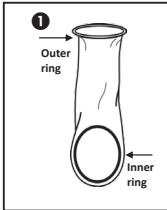
# 10. Female condom

## Female Condom

- A plastic covering that is inserted into the vagina before sex
- Prevents both pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS
- Effective when used every time you have sex
- Side effects are rare
- Partners must agree to use
- Can be used with other family planning methods



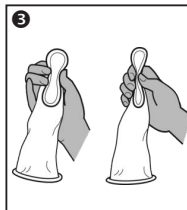
### How to use a female condom



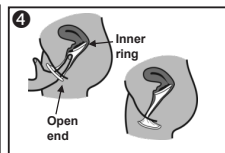
- Open package carefully .
- Make sure the condom is well-lubricated inside.



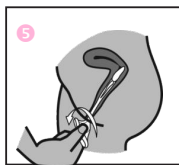
- Choose a comfortable position.



- Squeeze the inner ring, at the closed end.



- Gently insert inner ring into the vagina.
- Place index finger inside condom, and push inner ring up as far as it will go.
- Make sure outer ring is outside the vagina and the condom is not twisted.
- **Be sure the penis enters inside the condom and stays inside it during intercourse.**



- To remove twist outer ring and pull gently.
- Insert new female condom into vagina every time you have sex
- Throw away condom safely.

## Condoms – for men and women

### Condoms – for men and women

#### What they are

- Thin rubber sacks. A man's condom fits over his erect penis. A woman's condom fits inside her vagina.
- Condoms prevent a man's sperm from meeting the woman's egg.
- Condoms also protect the man and the woman from STIs or HIV/AIDS.

#### How to use

- Use a new condom every time you have sex.
- Dispose of properly in a latrine, or bury it.

#### What to expect

- No side effects.

#### Key points

Can be used with other family planning methods.

Must be used correctly every time you have sex.

Be careful not to tear condom when opening package or putting on.

Both partners must agree to using condoms.

If condom breaks or is forgotten, woman can use emergency contraceptive pills.

## Condoms

**are the only contraceptive  
that also help protect  
against HIV/AIDS.**

**Condoms protect the  
woman and the man.**

## 11. Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM)

### Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM) (For breastfeeding mothers)

- Safe with no side-effects
- Effective if:
  - you are breastfeeding often, day and night, and giving no other food or liquids
  - your baby is less than 6 months old, and
  - your monthly bleeding has not returned



### Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM) (For breastfeeding mothers)

#### What it is

- Breastfeeding in a way that prevents pregnancy.
- Prevents release of egg.
- Does not protect against STIs or HIV/AIDS – for protection against STIs or HIV/AIDS, use condoms.

#### How to use:

- LAM requires three conditions that must be met:
  1. You are exclusively breastfeeding (no other food or liquids).
  2. Your menstrual periods have not returned.
  3. Your infant is less than 6 months old

#### What to expect

- No monthly bleeding.
- No side effects.

#### Misconceptions

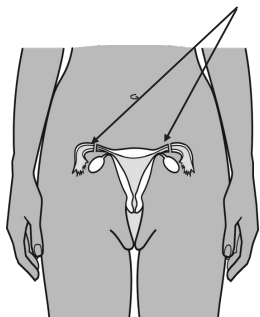
- Breastfeeding alone will not protect from pregnancy; have to meet all three criteria.

LAM



## 12. Female sterilization

### Female Sterilization



- Safe and permanent method – for women or couples who will not want more children
- One of the most effective methods
- Simple operation

### Female Sterilization

#### What it is

- Specially trained provider makes one or two small cuts to reach the tubes that carry eggs to the womb.
- Cuts or blocks the tubes. The womb is not removed.
- Can be done right after you have a baby as well as other times.

#### What to expect

- After procedure, nothing to remember and no side effects.
- Do not need to be put to sleep during procedure.
- Usually you can go home a few hours after procedure.
- May have soreness for a few days after procedure.
- Monthly bleeding will continue as usual for you.

#### Key points

- Permanent method.
- Use condoms if you need protection from STIs or HIV/AIDS.

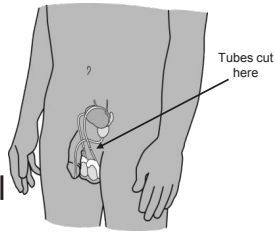
Where to go: \_\_\_\_\_

Female  
Sterilization



## 13. Male sterilization (vasectomy)

### Vasectomy



- Safe and permanent method – for men or couples who will not want more children
- One of the most effective methods
- Simple operation
- After operation must use back-up method for first 3 months

### Vasectomy

#### What it is

- Specially trained provider makes two small cuts to reach the tubes that carry sperm.
- Cuts tubes. Testicles are not removed.
- Works by keeping sperm out of semen.

#### How to use

- 3-month delay in taking effect. Couple must use another method until then.
- After 3 months, nothing to remember.

#### What to expect

- Do not need to be put to sleep during procedure.
- Usually you can go home a few hours after procedure.
- May have bruising and soreness for a few days after procedure.

#### Key points

- Does not decrease sex drive, erection or ejaculation.
- Permanent method.
- Use condoms if you need protection from STIs or HIV/AIDS.

Where to go: \_\_\_\_\_

Vasectomy





# Annexes

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## Annex A

### E-mails from Malawi: A couple's love

A young couples group of Christians in Malawi meets weekly for Bible study. After one meeting, an interesting email exchange occurred among the group members.

**W wrote first:** “We had a very fruitful meeting last Friday discussing I Samuel 1: 1-8, and I think it will assist in shaping the group and individual and couple life. What we learned :

- As young couples our mandate is to promote our marriage - the two of us - the love that we had despite the financial gains, children or any other things that God has blessed us with.....This should be evident in the way we talk, behave, present ourselves to our fellow members and the community at large.
- We also have to know how to nurture the relationship in marriage and also with our friends.
- Never at any time try to offend others, knowingly or unknowingly.....
- In a marriage, know that the husband or the wife is the one that counts more to the spouse....Kids and other possessions come second.
- Despite the cultural set up of our communities, we should be promoting oneness in the marriages, despite their financial status, and whether we have kids or not.
- **Great Lesson is: A couple's love is not dependent on their possessions or having children. In our Young Couples Ministry, we should be promoting LOVE to our colleagues, as we may not know exactly what they are going through.**



**Then E sent a message:** It was indeed a nice discussion. We focused on Hannah who didn't have a child, and her co-wife Peninnah who mocked her a lot. But to Hannah, her husband mattered most.

Another lesson was that, in our different circles, we might have people who are barren or are failing to have children because of different reasons. Especially in our culture where we all value children, let us support such friends in a positive way. Sometimes people do not come out in the open to say why they don't have kids. Let us watch what we



say to such people; sometimes our jokes might offend them. So let us mainly put the focus on our oneness as a couple and not as a family.

We even went further to discuss the problems that people face when they have children of one sex only. We heard different experiences.



**P wrote next:** Yes, we agreed that it is the responsibility of the couple themselves to support each other, if they do not have children. Most often we see that one member of the couple tries to “prove” that he or she is not “the problem”.

We see relatives and friends asking the new couple, “It’s been six months since you wed. What’s happening?” We as young couples should not be putting these pressures on our friends. Also we noted another way of exerting pressure is by “talking proudly about our kids”. This also causes problems and as a result breaks marriages.

It’s interesting what even one of the church leaders commented to me after we were married for about 7 months. My wife was expecting, and he said to me, “That’s a man!” Now I am wondering what his comment would have been if she had not been pregnant! All along I never thought about this, but it just occurred to me during our Bible discussion about Hannah. It’s a cultural thing, and there is a big problem out there.



**Z then wrote:** We couldn’t be at Friday meeting, and we knew we had missed a lot. Thanks, W, for the glimpse of what you discussed.

My question is this: At officiations, bridal showers, send offs, and marriage seminars, the fact is always made clear that love should not be dependent on possessions or children. But why do the challenges easily and secretly creep in and take us by surprise? Why does it seem like an ambush to many couples? What are the safeguards and check points which can keep us on our toes, always on watch for these long-range laser-guided missiles? Shalom.



**Finally, W reminded the group:** The aims of our Young Couples Ministry are

1. To strengthen love life in our families
2. To strengthen our family spiritual lives
3. To be role models unto those that look forward to getting married
4. To help ministering in other areas of the church

# Annex B

## How Does Family Planning Prevent Abortions and What Can Christians Do?

Sections from Christian Connections for International Health documents

### 1. How do the family planning methods work ?

Family planning methods can work in 5 primary ways:

- 1) block the man's sperm from reaching the woman's egg;
- 2) change the sperm so they cannot fertilize the egg;
- 3) prevent the woman's eggs from being released;
- 4) thicken mucus in the woman's cervix, preventing sperm from passing through; and
- 5) alter the lining of the uterus (womb) so the fertilized egg does not attach or implant.

There is no universally accepted definition of precisely what constitutes abortion; however, according to most legal, regulatory and medical authorities "abortion" is the termination of an established pregnancy after implantation of a fertilized egg in the uterus (womb). Implantation occurs at 5-7 days after ovulation (release of the egg) and fertilization (which typically occurs within the first 12 hours after ovulation). Actions before implantation that prevent pregnancy are "contraceptive".

Some faith communities and some individuals consider any action that prevents implantation of a fertilized egg to be a very early abortion. For some in these communities, if a contraceptive method's primary mechanism of action is to prevent fertilization, it is acceptable. For others, any possibility of a post-fertilization effect that would prevent implantation is problematic.

All the family planning methods mentioned in this booklet work primarily or exclusively by preventing fertilization of a woman's egg (before conception).\*

\* World Health Organization Department of Reproductive Health and Research (WHO/RHR) and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs (CCP), Knowledge for Health Project. Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers (2011 update). Baltimore and Geneva: CCP and WHO, 2011. <http://www.fphandbook.org/>

Decisions regarding family planning methods are based on several factors -- the mechanisms of action, effectiveness of the method, safety, convenience, the family situation, and religious perspectives. CCIH respects the different approaches by faith communities to enable couples to voluntarily achieve their desired number and timing of pregnancies, consistent with the communities' religious teachings and values. We urge all faith-based groups and secular organizations to do the same.

The need for family planning methods is greatest in the poorest countries, where current lack of family planning results in many women seeking unsafe abortions. Family planning is a powerful way to prevent abortion. Reducing unintended pregnancies and the need for abortion produces health benefits that are strongly embraced by both Christian and secular health organizations. A maternal death from any cause is a tragedy—but when a woman dies from a pregnancy she did not want, it is a double tragedy.

As Christians we have an obligation to weigh all the health consequences for those we serve when deciding to recommend, provide or omit any family planning method, since all the methods do reduce unintended pregnancies and abortions. CCIH welcomes others to join us in faithfully and respectfully discussing issues of reproduction, in light of our common desire to advance health and wholeness from a Christian perspective.

**For more details about each family planning method, see the full CCIH publication “Family planning methods: How do they work and why does it matter?”**

[www.ccih.org/FP-Methods-how-do-they-work-why-does-it-matter.pdf](http://www.ccih.org/FP-Methods-how-do-they-work-why-does-it-matter.pdf)



## 2. How do family planning methods prevent abortions?

Every year **210,000,000** women in the world get **pregnant**

**80,000,000** of those **did not want to be pregnant**

**42,000,000** pregnant women end their pregnancies by **induced abortion** (one fifth of all pregnancies)

**20,000,000** of the induced abortions (nearly half) are **unsafe** – performed by people lacking the necessary skills, or where minimal medical standards are lacking

**67,000** women **die** because of unsafe abortions – and millions more suffer complications & long-term injuries

These abortions and deaths occur primarily because effective and safe family planning methods are not available. If all these women could get effective family planning, up to 90% of those unintended pregnancies and abortions could be prevented. Good family planning programs could potentially prevent 72 million unintended pregnancies and 38 million abortions every year.



### **3. What can Christians do about abortions?**

#### **Know and understand the facts**

- Family planning prevents unintended pregnancy & abortion.

#### **Help to make abortions unnecessary**

- Provide education to adults and young people about sexuality, pregnancy, abortion, & family planning– based on good science & good scripture study.
- Inform people about family planning and make sure family planning methods, in accordance with faith beliefs, are available in faith-based health services.

“Preventing abortions is the most compelling reason for family planning. It really is time for us Christians to speak out strongly!”

*- Nancy Harris, Vice-President, John Snow International*

#### **Help women who have just had abortions**

- Every woman who has just had a spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) or an induced abortion should get complete counseling and care, including voluntary family planning.

“If the woman we treat for post abortion complications is there because she could not get contraception, we have failed her. If she leaves without family planning, we have failed her twice.”

*- International consensus statement of doctors, midwives and nurses*

From “*Family planning reduces abortions – and faith based groups can help*”. Full text available at: [http://www.ccih.org/FP%20Reduces%20Abortion%2012\\_13\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ccih.org/FP%20Reduces%20Abortion%2012_13_2011.pdf)

## Annex C

### Resources

#### A. Methods of Bible study

- *Doing Contextual Bible Study: A Manual*. Pietermaritzburg: Ujamaa Center, 2011.  
[http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/Ujamaa\\_CBS\\_Manual\\_part\\_1\\_2.sflb.ashx](http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/Ujamaa_CBS_Manual_part_1_2.sflb.ashx)  
See examples at: <http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za>
- *Call to Me: How the Bible speaks in the age of AIDS*. Oxford: Strategies for Hope Trust, 2010.  
<http://stratshope.org/b-cc-07-me.htm>
- *Bible studies for family planning*. Christian Connections for International Health, 2007.  
<http://www.ccih.org/Bible-studies-help-revitalize-family-planning-case-study.pdf>

#### B. Other Bible studies on family planning

- *Christians and Muslims Promoting Maternal and Infant Health: A Sermon Guide Based on the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an*. IMA World Health, Rwanda Faith-Based Organizations Network Against HIV, and USAID, 2009.  
Chapter 3 is titled “Family Planning”

English:

[https://www.imaworldhealth.org/images/stories/technical-publications/Rwanda\\_Christian\\_Sermon\\_Guide\\_-\\_English.pdf](https://www.imaworldhealth.org/images/stories/technical-publications/Rwanda_Christian_Sermon_Guide_-_English.pdf)

Kinyarwanda:

[https://www.imaworldhealth.org/images/stories/technical-publications/Rwanda\\_Christian\\_Sermon\\_Guide\\_-\\_Kinyarwanda.pdf](https://www.imaworldhealth.org/images/stories/technical-publications/Rwanda_Christian_Sermon_Guide_-_Kinyarwanda.pdf)

- *Biblical reflections on a call to action for RH/FP*, 2006. Presentation by Dr. Gloria Ekpo, [http://www.ccih.org/presentations/2006/Biblical\\_%20Reflections\\_%20RH-FP\\_Ekpo\\_CCIH2006.ppt](http://www.ccih.org/presentations/2006/Biblical_%20Reflections_%20RH-FP_Ekpo_CCIH2006.ppt)

- ***Be fruitful and multiply: Bible studies on responsible parenthood.*** Chogoria, Kenya, 1999. [http://www.ccih.org/doclibrary/bible\\_studies\\_on\\_fam\\_plan-eng-be\\_fruitful.doc](http://www.ccih.org/doclibrary/bible_studies_on_fam_plan-eng-be_fruitful.doc)

Available also in French: *Soyez féconds : Etudes bibliques au sujet de la parenté responsable.* Kinshasa, DRC, 1997. [http://www.ccih.org/doclibrary/bible\\_studies\\_on\\_fam\\_plan-fr-soyez\\_fconds.doc](http://www.ccih.org/doclibrary/bible_studies_on_fam_plan-fr-soyez_fconds.doc)

### C. Family planning methods and activities

- ***Family Planning Methods: How do they work and why does it matter?*** 2010. Christian Connections for International Health with support from Georgetown University Institute for Reproductive Health. The decision about which family planning methods are acceptable varies widely among Christian organizations and individuals, and is influenced for some by the whether the method acts to prevent conception or is thought to act as an abortifacient (capable of causing an abortion). This paper explains and clarifies what is currently known with respect to the specific methods. <http://www.ccih.org/Family-Planning-Methods-CCIH-November2010.pdf>
- ***Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers.*** 2011. World Health Organization, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and USAID. An essential resource for health-care professionals. Experts from around the world contributed to the development of the handbook, and many major international organizations and professional organizations have endorsed and adopted it. Free download available in 8 languages: [http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/family\\_planning/9780978856304/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/family_planning/9780978856304/en/index.html)
- ***Resources on Natural Family Planning from the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University (IRH).*** Evidence-based materials and publications for program managers, healthcare providers, technical experts, researchers and policy makers on fertility awareness-based methods (FAM) of family planning. A wide range of materials, including FAM integration tools, training curricula, provider job aids, client brochures, advocacy briefs, scientific journal articles and instructional videos.



**Standard Days Method (SDM):**

Overview: <http://www.irh.org/?q=content/standard-days-method-sdm>

Resources: <http://www.irh.org/?q=content/standard-days-method-sdm-resources>

**Two Day Method (TDM):**

Overview: <http://www.irh.org/?q=content/twoday-method>

Resources: [http://www.irh.org/?q=tdm\\_resources](http://www.irh.org/?q=tdm_resources)

**Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM):**

Overview: <http://www.irh.org/?q=content/lactational-amenorrhea-method>

Resources: <http://www.irh.org/?q=content/lactational-amenorrhea-method-resources>

- **Family Planning: A Key Component of Post Abortion Care.** 2009. This consensus applies to 10 million health professionals in 113 countries. It establishes the need and importance of a standard of practice to provide access to family planning for women following abortion, either induced or spontaneous (miscarriage). It recognizes that post abortion family planning services can contribute to a reduction in subsequent induced abortions, as well as improving child health outcomes among women who want to be pregnant again after a miscarriage.  
[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/pop/techareas/pac/fp\\_component.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/pop/techareas/pac/fp_component.pdf)
- **Family Planning Saves Lives.** 4th ed. 2009. Population Reference Bureau. Well-documented evidence for reduced abortions with increased contraceptive use; reduced child mortality with longer birth intervals; the unmet need for family planning; and the benefits of integrating family planning and HIV/AIDS services.  
[www.prb.org/pdf09/familyplanningsaveslives.pdf](http://www.prb.org/pdf09/familyplanningsaveslives.pdf)

**D. Family planning programs of faith-based groups**

- **Family Planning: Another way faith groups can help prevent HIV infections.** Christian Connections for International Health  
Family planning helps prevent HIV infection in men and women. What can faith groups do to help? This fact-sheet provides faith-based information to program managers and decision makers

on how family planning programs can be integrated into existing HIV/AIDS activities. Faith-based advice for couples and churches on adding family planning activities into HIV programs is also provided.

[http://www.ccih.org/FP\\_reduces\\_HIV\\_May\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ccih.org/FP_reduces_HIV_May_2011.pdf)

- ***Family Planning Reduces Abortion – and faith-based groups can help.*** Christian Connections for International Health  
Many Christians around the world are concerned about abortion. But the facts linking the availability of family planning with a reduction in abortions are little understood. This CCIH publication provides information on the connections between family planning and abortion, and what the faith community can do to mitigate abortions worldwide.

[http://www.ccih.org/FP\\_Reduces\\_Abortion\\_April\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ccih.org/FP_Reduces_Abortion_April_2011.pdf)

- ***Advancing Reproductive Health and Family Planning through Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations.*** By Mary K. Burket, Pathfinder International, 2006.

[http://www.pathfind.org/site/DocServer/FBO\\_final\\_reference.pdf?docID=6901](http://www.pathfind.org/site/DocServer/FBO_final_reference.pdf?docID=6901)

- ***Culture Matters: Working with Communities and Faith-based Organizations.*** UNFPA, 2004.

[http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2004/CultureMatters\\_2004.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2004/CultureMatters_2004.pdf)

## **E. Bible studies on other health topics**

- ***Christian Sermon Guide to Save the Lives of Mothers and Newborns: A Toolkit for Religious Leaders.*** IMA World Health & USAID, 2009. 58 pages.

**English:**

[http://www.imaworldhealth.org/images/stories/technical-publications/Christian\\_Sermon\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.imaworldhealth.org/images/stories/technical-publications/Christian_Sermon_Guide.pdf)

**French:**

[https://www.imaworldhealth.org/images/stories/technical-publications/christian\\_sermon\\_guide\\_-\\_french.pdf](https://www.imaworldhealth.org/images/stories/technical-publications/christian_sermon_guide_-_french.pdf)



