

- **Husbands:** Show leadership, and take charge of the health and wellbeing of your wives and children including their sexual/reproductive health and CBSIFP issues. (Eph. 5:25,28; Provo 25:28).
 - Become educated on issues pertaining to reproductive health, safe motherhood and Childbirth Spacing/Family Planning.
 - Accompany your wives to the clinic for ante natal, childbirth and post-delivery care and services; including adequate provision of resources and plans for any emergency thereof; *"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies"* (Ephesians 5 :28a). *"He who loves his wife loves himself"* (Proverbs 25 :28).
 - Live out exemplary chaste lifestyle in the family (Malachi 2: 10-14; 1Cor. 6: 18-20; 1 Cor. 3:16-20).
- **Wives:** Take care of your life and health by embracing CBS/FP as a virtuous woman. This means that you should take personal responsibility to ensure you are healthy to be able to take care of the family.
 - Acquire basic knowledge and skills to maintain personal health and manage your reproductive functions including knowing early warning signs and where to seek help (Prov. 31: 10-31).
 - Live out exemplary chaste lifestyle in the family (Malachi 2: 10-14; 1Cor. 6: 18-20; 1 Cor. 3: 16-20).
- **Youth & Unmarried Adults:** Learn about your sexuality; and adopt chaste, healthy and holy lifestyle.
 - Know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6: 18-20);
 - Marriage is honourable and bed undefiled (Heb. 13:4; Eph. 5: 1-3).
- **Children & Teenagers:** Learn age-appropriate messages on reproductive health and chaste lifestyle;
 - Develop refusal skills to avoid peer pressure and risky sexual, social behaviours; and
 - Grow in spirituality. Provo 4:20-22; 2Timothy 2:22; and 1 Cor. 6: 18-20.

Conclusion

God is the master family planner from creation. It is thus imperative for husband and wife to follow God's example in procreation by prayerfully planning the timing and spacing of the children they want. (1 Tim. 3:4; 1Cor. 14:40). Every member of the family stands to benefit from Childbirth Spacing/Family planning based on faith and factual information. Choose life, choose health. Visit your health care provider for family planning needs.

CHRISTIAN SERMON NOTE ON FAMILY PLANNING/ CHILDBIRTH SPACING



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Preamble

Christian Sermon Note on Childbirth Spacing/Family Planning (CBS/FP) is to assist faith leaders in the task of helping their congregations to understand the benefits, of childbirth spacing/family planning; to become philosophical acceptors of the goodness of Childbirth Spacing/Family Planning (CBS/FP) as well as users/witness of one or some of the methods thereof.

Definition

God is the first family planner. Although he asked the first man to multiply and replenish the earth, he did not expect him to do it alone. Consequently He gave the first man three children. God also blessed and promised Abraham to be the father of nations and, that He will make his children *'as many as the dust of the earth'* (Genesis 13: 16). God began by giving him Isaac, He gave Isaac two children and so on; thereby fulfilling his promise.

According to Christian Connections for International Health (CCHC), family planning means enabling couples to determine the number and timing of pregnancies, including the voluntary use of methods for preventing pregnancy, which is harmonious with their values and religious beliefs. This excludes abortion which is not a family planning method.

The World Health Organization defines family planning as *"A way of thinking and living that is adopted voluntarily upon the basis of knowledge, attitudes and responsible decisions by individuals and couples in order to promote health and welfare of the family and thus contribute effectively to the social development of the country"*.

Basis for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies in Christianity

Childbirth spacing/Family planning allows married couples (Husband and wife) to anticipate and attain their desired number of children and the spacing and timing of their births. This does not contradict the word of God that says, *"Then God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply. fill the earth and subdue it ..."* (Genesis 1 :28). This strengthens it because the Bible says as such; *"but if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever"* (1 Tim. 5:8). A Christian therefore who has

children that he cannot cater for, is referred to as being worse than an unbeliever in this context. Planning for the family is therefore very important for responsible parenthood.

Planning is very critical to every human endeavour, more so to the family. It is important that the Church advises and guides intending and married couples to discuss and plan for the size of the family they hope to have taking into consideration their available resources and capacity to bring up children. Luke 14: 28-30 teaches on the need for effective planning: *"For which of you intending to build a tower; does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it, lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish."* This corroborates with St. Paul's advice: *"Let all things be done decently and in order"* (1 Cor. 14:40).

Benefits of Spacing Pregnancies

1. Childbirth spacing/Family planning promotes the survival of the mother, child and the husband.
2. God wants us to have good health; and this includes safe pregnancy, childbirth and healthy children. "Behold children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is His reward" (Psalm 127:3; Gen. 33:5).
3. It saves lives; for when a mother in pregnancy or childbirth dies, the family literally dies as well.
4. It reduces the painful task of raising motherless children in our communities.
5. Childbirth spacing/Family planning helps the domestic economy as resources are deployed more equitably amongst family members.
6. It promotes discipline and mutual respect which strengthen marriages and uphold human dignity and growth in spirituality.
7. The health and wellbeing of the husband is assured as he is not overwhelmed by the unmet needs of his household.
8. It prevents unplanned pregnancies.
9. It reduces abortions, which significantly account for maternal deaths in Nigeria.
10. Childbirth spacing/Family planning can be integrated with preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

Consequences and Adverse Effects of Not Spacing Pregnancies and Childbirths

- Frequent deaths of wives and mothers during high risk pregnancies.
- Poor health and suboptimal quality of life for the family members.
- Reduced child survival, poor educability and compromised competitiveness amongst their peers.
- The man suffers avoidable physical and spiritual health challenges due to heavy family burden which can lead to high blood pressure and low self-esteem.
- The family may be trapped in intergenerational poverty.

Acceptable Methods of CBS/FP

A. The Scientific Natural Family Planning (NFP) methods:

1. Billings Ovulation Method: This method is based on the accurate observation tracking, interpretation and use of the cervical mucus to recognize the presumptive period of a woman's fertility (Ovulation).
2. Sympto-thermal Method: This method is based on the daily checking, recording and application of the waking (basal temperature of the woman before she gets out of bed). The changes of the pre and post ovulation temperatures are due to the effects of the hormone progesterone.
3. Creighton Model System/NaPro Technology: This is a new women health science which works cooperatively with the natural physiological and endocrine events in the woman's reproductive biology
4. Lactational Amenorrhoeal Method (during exclusive breastfeeding).

B. Othe Modern Contraceptive Methods

1. Barrier Methods: These are mechanical barriers that are placed to prevent the sperm from entering the cervix. They include the condoms (male and female) and diaphragms.
2. Spermicides: Chemical substances used to block the cervix and prevent penetration of the sperm. Examples include the foaming tables, creams and jellies.
3. Intra-uterine Device (IUD): A plastic and copper object inserted into the uterus by a trained health worker to prevent pregnancy. Types include the Lippers' Loop (coil), the Copper-T, etc.
4. Hormonal methods: These methods involve administering the hormones estrogen or progesterone or both, to the woman and to temporarily prevent pregnancy in various ways. They include the following:
 - Oral Pills: One tablet is taken daily by the woman throughout the month to prevent pregnancy within that month
 - Injectable: Short-acting hormones given by injection to prevent pregnancy over two or three months depending on the type given.
 - Implants: A long-acting preparation of progesterone in the form of an elastic capsule implanted in the inner aspect of the upper arm of a woman to prevent pregnancy for 2-5years.
 - Surgical methods (permanent): These are minor surgical procedures performed on either the woman or the man to permanently prevent pregnancy. They include tubal ligation for the woman and vasectomy for the man.

Targeted Call to Action for Different Groups

- **Parents:** Avail every opportunity to learn about your health, including reproductive health and Childbirth Spacing/Family planning.
- Know how and when to initiate reproductive health information to your children, using teachable moments in their daily family life experience. (Proverbs 22:6)