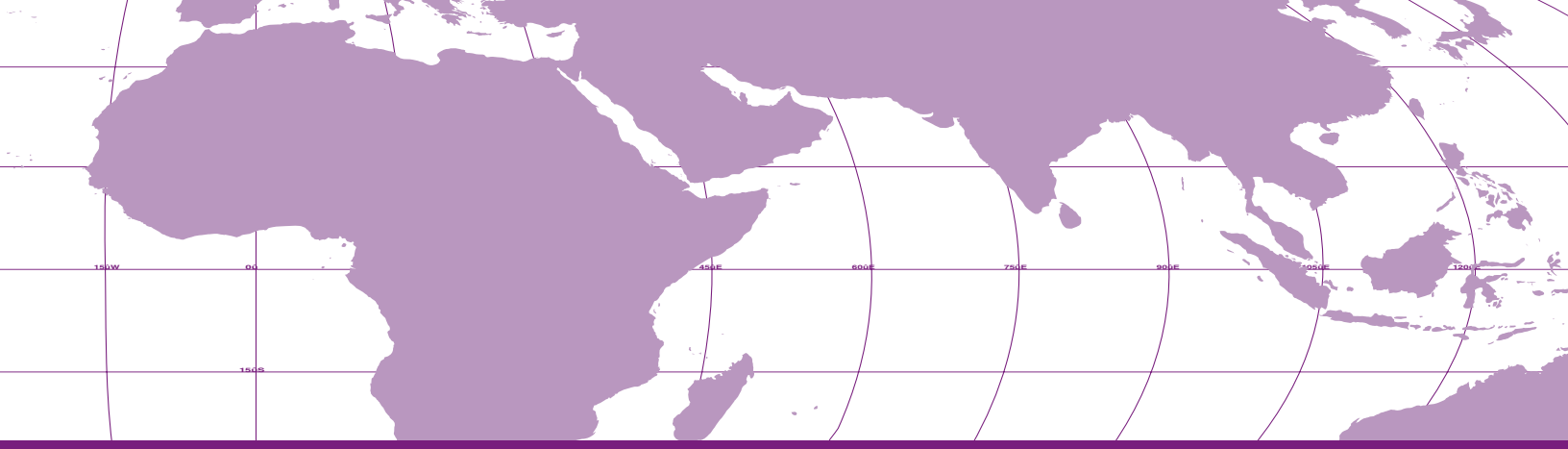
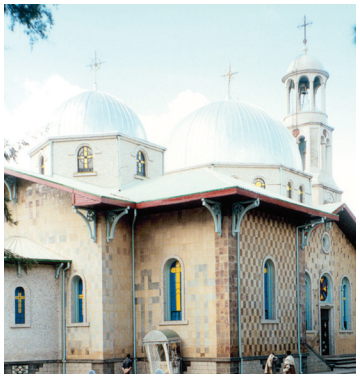


Christian Sermon Guide to Save the Lives of Mothers and Newborns

A Toolkit for Religious Leaders



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The authors gratefully acknowledge the valuable assistance of Erika Pearl and other colleagues who have contributed their knowledge and expertise to this publication. Special thanks go to Franklin Baer for the use of sketches from the SANRU Program, Democratic Republic of Congo.

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This publication is made possible through support provided by the Maternal and Child Health Division, Office of Health, Infectious Diseases and Nutrition, Bureau for Global Health, U.S. Agency for International Development, under the terms of the Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement GHS-A-00-04-00002-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

May 2009

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Sermon Guide for Christian Leaders

God's Precious Gifts: How You Can Support Healthy Mothers and Babies

New life is one of God's most precious gifts. Having a baby should be one of the happiest times for a woman and her family. Unfortunately, for many women it can be the most dangerous time of their lives. More than half a million women die each year as a result of pregnancy or childbirth. In Africa, childbirth is so dangerous that when women become pregnant many of them tell their families they are going on a long journey and do not know if they will return.

The good news is that most of these deaths are preventable and there is much we can do to save the lives of women and their babies. As a religious leader, you can play an important role in saving the lives of women and babies by educating families about how to protect themselves.

Dr. Mahmoud Fathalla, former Dean of the Medical School of Assiut University in Cairo, Egypt, described the situation by saying, "Women are not dying because of diseases we cannot treat… . They are dying because societies have yet to make the decision that their lives are worth saving."

You may find Dr. Fathalla's statement disturbing. One might claim that no one would knowingly allow one's wife, sister, mother or daughter to die. However, if, as educated leaders, we have lifesaving information, and we do not share it and help convince people to change harmful habits and traditions, then we are in a way allowing mothers and babies to die.

Jesus tells us with the Parable of the Lost Sheep that each life is precious. Like the shepherd who searches high and low for that one lost sheep, God holds each of His children as dear—each one is a life worth saving. Like the good shepherd, you too can play a role in protecting your congregation. You can help families protect their health by giving them vital information so that they can make the right choices.

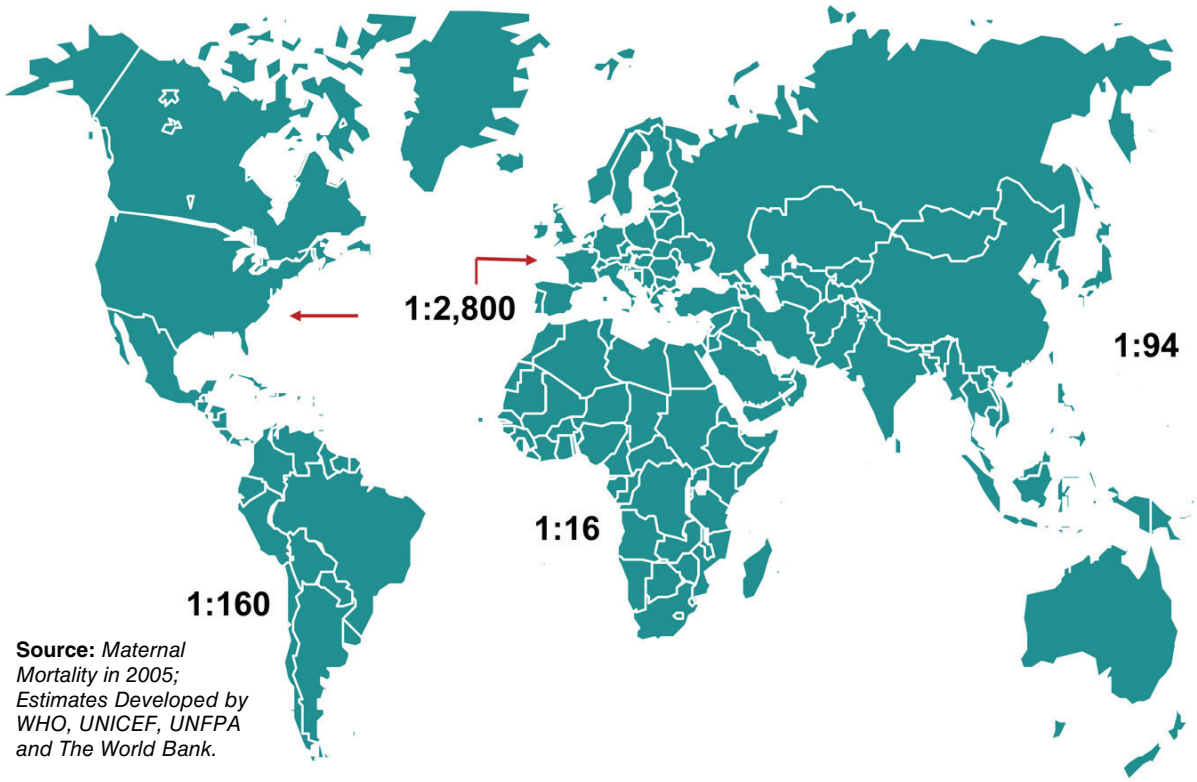
Each one of God's children is special, with unique talents, skills and personality. Each mother and child is a gift from God. As Psalm 139 tells us, ***"For You formed my inward parts, You covered me in the mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."*** We can and must work together to stop preventable maternal and newborn deaths.

The Problem: Mothers and Newborns Are Dying from Preventable Causes

Every minute of every day, somewhere in the world, a woman dies as a result of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. As mentioned earlier, each year, more than half a million women die of pregnancy-related causes and another 20 million suffer serious and long-lasting illnesses or disabilities. Of the 130 million babies born every year, about four million die in the first four weeks. Especially alarming is that the majority of these deaths are preventable.

Where in the World Do Mothers Die More Frequently?

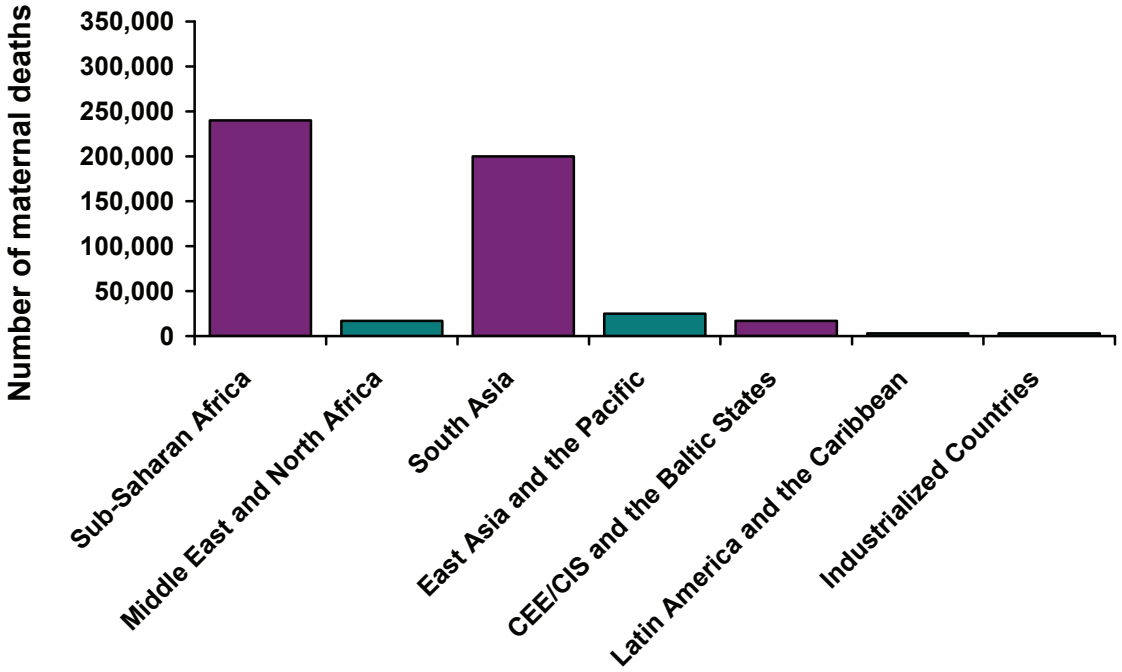
Mothers die as a result of pregnancy and childbirth complications much more frequently in the developing world, especially in Africa. The fact that much of the world has a lower rate of death for mothers, and that we know what is causing these deaths, is evidence that the number of deaths can be reduced through care in the home and proper health care.



Source: *Maternal Mortality in 2005; Estimates Developed by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and The World Bank.*

The map above shows a woman's chance of dying of a pregnancy-related cause in various parts of the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, the chance of a woman dying as a result of pregnancy is 1 in 16, which is 175 times greater than in the United States.

Number of Maternal Deaths Each Year



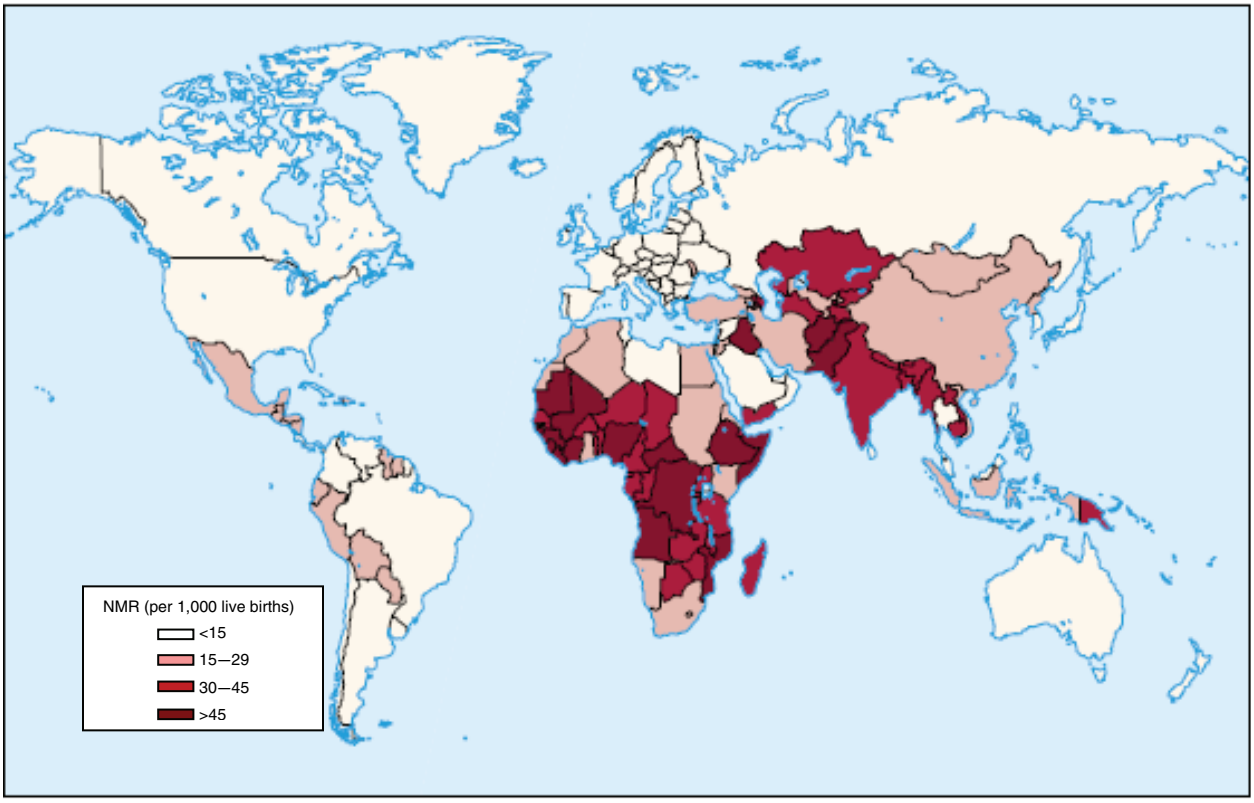
Babies Are Dying of Preventable Causes

Four million newborns die every year, with a large portion of these deaths due to preventable causes, including infections that could be treated with medicines. Many other babies die because their mothers have not received proper nutrition and health care during pregnancy.

Where Are Babies Dying More Frequently?

About half of the four million newborn deaths each year occur in Africa.

The map on the following page shows the number of newborn deaths per 1,000 live births worldwide, highlighting the large difference between the number of babies who die each year in much of Africa and the number who die in other nations. As with preventable maternal deaths, there is much we can do to reduce newborn deaths in Africa.



How You Can Help: Educating Your Congregation and Community on Safe Motherhood Messages

Women and children often suffer and die because they do not have access to basic health care services or do not seek them even when they are available. This is where religious leaders can help! You can educate your congregation and community about the importance of health care for women during pregnancy and care for the mother and baby in the period just after birth.

This guide will help you understand the dangers faced by mothers and babies and learn what you can do as a religious leader to help save lives. It includes descriptions of problems encountered by mothers, solutions for those problems and sermon starters to help you educate your congregation on safe motherhood practices.

Sermon 1: God's Tools for a Safe Pregnancy and Delivery

Message: The Importance of Regular (at least four) Visits to a Health Care Worker during Pregnancy and Delivery with a Skilled Attendant

Although pregnancy and childbirth are a beautiful and natural part of life, there are many possible complications that can arise and threaten the life of the mother and baby. About eight in 10 maternal deaths are the direct result of complications during pregnancy and delivery or within 42 days of delivery.

Causes of Death and Injury for the Mother

Listed below are the five main causes of a mother's death, including excessive bleeding, infection, eclampsia (also known as convulsions), labor that lasts much longer than normal and complications of unsafe abortions or incorrect treatment.

Excessive bleeding (hemorrhage): Blood loss during labor can very rapidly lead to death without prompt and appropriate lifesaving care such as medicines to control bleeding, massage of the uterus to stimulate contractions or blood transfusion.

Sepsis (resulting from infections): Sepsis, which accounts for 15% of maternal deaths, is often the result of poor hygiene during delivery or untreated sexually transmitted diseases. Infections can be prevented by proper hygiene practices during delivery and detection and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases during pregnancy.

Eclampsia (convulsions): Eclampsia is the cause of approximately 12% of maternal deaths and is a hypertensive (high blood pressure) disorder. These deaths can be prevented through careful monitoring during pregnancy and treatment with anticonvulsant drugs such as magnesium sulfate.

Prolonged labor: Labor that lasts much longer than normal accounts for about 8% of maternal deaths, and can occur when the baby's head cannot pass through the mother's pelvis or when the baby is in the wrong position to pass through the birth canal. When mothers are unusually small, either from a poor diet or because they are very young and not yet fully grown, they are at an increased risk for prolonged labor.

Unsafe abortions: Complications of unsafe abortions are responsible for 13% of maternal deaths. These deaths can be prevented if women have access to family planning information and services, and proper health care for abortion-related complications.

Causes of Death for the Baby

The four major causes of newborn deaths worldwide, along with the percentages, are:

Infections (36%): Sepsis/pneumonia (26%), tetanus (7%) and diarrhea (3%)

Pre-term birth (babies born too early)/low birth weight (28%): Babies weighing less than normal are either born too early or are born on time, but smaller than normal. Small babies are unable to maintain their body temperature, fight infection or feed normally.

Asphyxia (28%): Birth asphyxia occurs when a baby does not receive enough oxygen before, during or just after birth. There are many reasons that birth asphyxia may occur.

Birth defects, also known as congenital abnormalities (14%): The causes of most birth defects are unknown, but some are preventable.

What Can We Do?

Safe Motherhood Message: At Least Four Regular Pregnancy Health Care Visits

Encouraging women to have regular health care visits during pregnancy can dramatically reduce the number of maternal and newborn deaths. As soon as a woman thinks she is pregnant, she should see a health care worker to get a checkup and learn how to protect her health. She should have at least four health care visits during her pregnancy to prevent problems, such as anemia and malaria, and to identify and treat conditions, including high blood pressure and infections, which can lead to the main causes of death.

HIV Counseling and Testing: Health care professionals recommend that all women be tested for HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) during pregnancy. You should explain that HIV counseling and testing is confidential and private. A woman has the right not to be tested if she chooses; however, not being tested puts her unborn child at unnecessary risk. In your discussions with women and their families, you can explain that the virus is transmitted through unprotected sex (intercourse without a condom) and reusing needles, and can also be transmitted to the unborn child during childbirth. However, there are simple things that a woman can do to avoid transmitting the virus to her child if she is aware of her status during pregnancy. You should refer families to get further counseling from a health care worker.

Safe Motherhood Message: Birth at a Health Care Facility or with a Skilled Attendant (Doctor, Midwife or Nurse): Women should give birth at a health care facility that is equipped to handle the delivery of babies or they should have a skilled birth attendant with them if they give birth at home. A skilled attendant is an accredited health professional, such as a midwife, doctor or nurse, who has been educated and trained in the skills needed to manage normal (uncomplicated) pregnancies, childbirth and the immediate postnatal period, and in the identification, management and referral of complications in women and newborns. A skilled attendant trained to deliver babies can help prevent and manage complications such as prolonged labor or excessive bleeding during and after delivery. She or he also has access to crucial medications and properly sterilized instruments and equipment. The skilled attendant is trained to handle emergencies that families are not likely to be able to manage on their own.

Communicating with Your Congregation

The following sermon starter provides an example of how you can address safe motherhood messages in your sermons.

Scripture Used in Sermon

Psalm 127:3

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward."

The Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 38:1–15

"Hold the physician in honor, for he is essential to you,
and God it was who established his profession.
From God the doctor has his wisdom, and the king provides for his sustenance.
His knowledge makes the doctor distinguished, and gives him access to those in authority.
God makes the earth yield healing herbs, which the prudent man should not neglect;
Was not the water sweetened by a twig that men might learn his power?
He endows men with the knowledge to glory in his mighty works,
Through which the doctor eases pain and the druggist prepares his medicines;
Thus God's creative work continues without cease in its efficacy on the surface of the earth.
My son, when you are ill, delay not, but pray to God, who will heal you:
Flee wickedness; let your hands be just, cleanse your heart of every sin;
Offer your sweet-smelling oblation and petition, a rich offering according to your means.
Then give the doctor his place lest he leave; for you need him too.
There are times that give him an advantage, and he too beseeches God that his diagnosis may be correct and his treatment bring about a cure.
He who is a sinner toward his Maker will be defiant toward the doctor."

Colossians 4:14

"Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you."

Suggestions for Sermon: God's Tools for a Safe Pregnancy and Delivery

We know that our children are a gift from God. We are told in Psalm 127 verse 3, ***"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward."*** Does this reward come easily? No, we must be careful to ensure that these precious gifts are delivered to us safely.

Although we turn to God as our ultimate healer and protector, we must remember that God uses people and tools to do His good work. He has provided us with plants to make medicines. He has given his children the skills and desire to become knowledgeable and educated caregivers. In His wisdom, He has enabled us to build health facilities where these precious children can be born in a clean and safe environment.

How do we make use of these gifts from God? One of our first steps is for the expectant mother to visit a health care facility as early as possible to make sure that she and her baby are doing well. When it is time for the baby to be born, we should plan for the expectant mother to deliver at a health center or at home with a skilled attendant, such as a midwife, doctor or nurse.

The role of knowledgeable healers was valued in the Bible and in biblical times. The wise man Ben Sira, who lived in Jerusalem right before the birth of Jesus Christ, was educated in the wisdom of the Hebrew Scriptures. He was a teacher and shared his knowledge with young men, and wrote his

teachings in books that we now call the Book of Sirach, which appears in the Catholic Bible. Although other versions of the Bible may not include the Book of Sirach as sacred text, it is considered to be wise and important advice by many of the Jewish and Christian faiths and is included in the Apocrypha.

What does Ben Sira say about taking care of our bodies? In Sermon 38 of the Book of Sirach, he says, ***"Hold the physician in honor, for he is essential to you, and God it was who established his profession. From God the doctor has his wisdom and the king provides for his sustenance."*** (Book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus 38:1–2) What does he mean by this? This wise man is telling us that God created the physician to take care of us. We should not reject or ignore this gift from God.

Ben Sira goes on to tell us, ***"God makes the earth yield healing herbs which the prudent man should not neglect; Was not the water sweetened by a twig that men might learn his power?"*** (Book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus 38:4–5) Here he is referring to how Moses was able to provide drinkable water to the Israelites in the desert as they fled from Egypt by putting a twig in the water the way God instructed him. Ben Sira reminds us that God created plants that can be used to help us. This wise Hebrew scholar tells us that ***"God endows men with the knowledge to glory in his mighty works, Through which the doctor eases pain and the druggist prepares his medicines."*** (Book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus 38:6–7) Ben Sira instructs us to pray to God as our ultimate healer, but also ***"to give the doctor his place."***

We follow this important wisdom by seeking the advice and knowledge of people trained and experienced in caring for expectant mothers and delivering babies. We must seek advice early—as soon as we know the baby is coming—to make sure our precious gift from God is healthy and protected while he or she develops in the womb. The expectant mother should have at least four health care visits during her pregnancy so that the health care worker can identify problems that may require care. During these visits, the woman will receive medicines to protect herself and the baby, especially from malaria. Pregnant women have a much greater risk of getting severe malaria or malaria-related anemia, both of which can cause maternal death, spontaneous abortion and death of the newborn infant.

When it is time for the baby to be born, a skilled attendant should deliver the baby. A skilled attendant is an accredited health professional, such as a midwife, doctor or nurse, who has been educated and trained to proficiency in the skills needed to manage pregnancies, childbirth and the time after childbirth.

In Colossians Sermon 4 verse 14, the Apostle Paul refers to Luke as a beloved physician who traveled with Paul on his missionary journeys. Paul mentioned Luke's profession because it was important—the doctor was seen as providing healing to the body in the way God can provide healing to our souls.

As God created the earth, He blessed us with people who have the drive and intelligence to become healers. He populated the earth with plants that can be used to make medicines to heal us. Let us not reject these gifts but embrace them and use them to protect our precious families. Remember,

"Children are a heritage from the Lord." (Psalm 127:3) Let us rejoice in our families and be grateful for the children the Lord has sent to us.

Sermon 2: Protecting the Temple

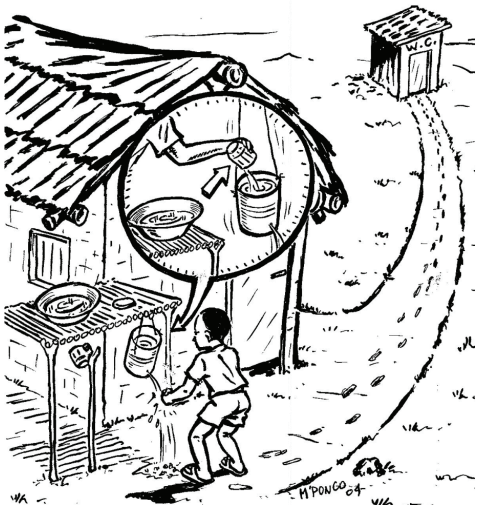
Message: The Importance of Nutrition, Vitamins and Tetanus Vaccine during Pregnancy to Promote the Healthy Growth of Unborn Babies

Pregnancy and childbirth are very taxing on a woman's body. A malnourished woman faces greater risks of complications during pregnancy and delivery. She is more likely to suffer from anemia, which is known to contribute to maternal infections and excessive bleeding after childbirth and result in developmental problems for the baby. Severe anemia can lead to heart failure or circulatory shock at the time of labor and delivery.

According to the World Health Organization, anemia in pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa is often believed to be the result of nutritional deficiencies, especially iron deficiency. In addition, a malnourished mother is more likely to have a low birth weight baby, who will have trouble maintaining body temperature, fighting infection or feeding normally. *(See Appendix I on Major Causes of Death and Injury for Mothers and Their Babies.)*

A baby born to a woman who has not received enough of a vitamin called folate before and during pregnancy is at an increased risk of major defects of the brain and spine. To prevent these defects, a woman must take enough folate before conception and in the first six weeks of pregnancy. Iron and folate are also important during the pregnancy to reduce anemia. Women who do not get enough vitamin A in pregnancy are more vulnerable to miscarriage and even death.

To help ensure a healthy pregnancy, a woman should get proper nutrition and take a supplement of iron and folate as prescribed by a health care worker. Women should also eat a balanced diet consisting of protein, fruits, vegetables and dairy products. Women should be eating as much as their husbands during this time of increased nutritional demands on their bodies. Expectant mothers should be eating three meals and two snacks every day. *(See Appendix II on Nutrition in Pregnancy for Healthy Moms and Babies.)*



Infections in newborns are the main cause of death and the easiest to prevent and treat. Although tetanus is one of the easiest conditions to prevent, it still kills tens of thousands of babies in Africa each year. In countries that have higher newborn mortality rates, around half of these deaths are due to infections, including tetanus. Fortunately, these deaths are very easily prevented when women receive tetanus toxoid vaccinations during their pregnancy.

Cleanliness and good hygiene are also important in protecting against infection. Proper handwashing with soap after using the toilet, and before eating, drinking and preparing food can help reduce the spread of many diseases. Safe water should be used for drinking to avoid infections and diarrhea.

A pregnant woman also needs additional rest. In early pregnancy, the woman will feel tired as her body becomes accustomed to being pregnant. In the later stages of pregnancy, the growing baby uses more of the woman's energy and causes greater strains on her body. You can communicate to your congregation the importance of rest and that the mother may need to reduce her workload during pregnancy because her body is doing the important work of growing a baby.

In summary, here are four simple things that a family and community can do to support a pregnant woman and help her nurture and protect the unborn child:

- Encourage the mother to eat regularly (at least three meals and two snacks per day) and to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains and foods high in protein such as meat, eggs, milk, spinach, lentils and nuts, as explained in Appendix II.
- Help ensure that the pregnant woman gets tetanus toxoid vaccinations from a health care worker.
- Encourage the pregnant woman to take extra rest during the day.
- Recommend that all family members wash their hands regularly with soap.

Scripture Used in Sermon

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?
For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

1 Timothy 5:8

"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."

Genesis 1:29–30

"And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.
Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food;' and it was so."

Psalm 127:3

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward."

Psalm 139:13–14

"For You formed my inward parts:
You covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Suggestions for Sermon: Protecting the Temple

As humans, we are among God's most amazing creations. With our minds and bodies we can do wonderful things. We may have talents in music, art or storytelling or we may be skilled craftsmen or farmers. We are all different, and some of us have strengths or weaknesses that others may not have. However, we all need to nourish and protect our bodies.

One of the most remarkable feats we can accomplish as God's children is to produce a child. However, this gift comes with responsibility. The Apostle Paul says, ***"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."*** (Corinthians 6:19–20)

What does Paul mean by this? He is telling us that our body is a temple, which is to be treated with respect and cared for properly. When we take good care of ourselves, we are glorifying God and celebrating His creation. One of the most important ways we can take care of our bodies is to nourish ourselves with nutritious foods.

During pregnancy, we are feeding two bodies instead of one. Those of you who are mothers to be must try to take care of the temple that is your body and eat a healthy diet. Fathers, you must take an active role in seeing that the mother of your child is getting the nourishment she needs during pregnancy to give birth to a strong baby.

Whenever possible, an expectant mother should eat a balanced diet of foods from God's creation. Eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains and protein will help keep a mother and growing baby well. God said, ***"See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food."*** (Genesis 1:29) God created us and He created the food we should use to feed our bodies and treat them like the temples they are intended to be.

Women who do not eat enough foods rich in iron such as meat, liver, eggs, lentils or spinach may suffer from anemia, which is dangerous during pregnancy and can put a woman at risk for excessive bleeding after delivery. Without good food to keep them strong and healthy, pregnant women will have a difficult time during delivery, and their babies are often born very small and sick.

Women who do not get enough vitamin A in pregnancy are more vulnerable to miscarriage and even death. Vitamin A can be found in many foods such as eggs, milk, cheese, papaya, carrots, mangos, yellow sweet potatoes and more. *(See Appendix II for lists to share with your congregation.)*

Fathers and family members should help the expectant mother whenever they can. The Apostle Paul tells us how important it is to provide for the people in our own household. He says, ***"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 Timothy 5:8) It is your role as a father to help provide for the members of your household. Actually, a pregnant woman should be eating as much or more than her husband. Other family members can also help and join in the effort to ensure a healthy baby.

Perhaps as a church and a community we can look for ways to work together to help ensure that expectant mothers are getting healthy meals.

The life of the baby in a woman's body depends on her good health. It is essential for husbands to provide their wives a variety of healthy foods as well as the opportunity to rest during pregnancy. A woman may need to reduce her workload to get adequate rest during pregnancy. If the men in the family smoke, they should refrain from smoking in her presence since the smoke affects the baby when the mother breathes it.

In addition to eating a proper diet, the expectant mother can take mineral and vitamin supplements as recommended by a trained health care worker. Doctors know that folate can help prevent major defects of the baby's brain and spine when taken early in pregnancy, and can prevent anemia when taken in combination with iron throughout the pregnancy. A mother can take a supplement during her pregnancy to make sure she is getting enough of these important substances.

We also have a responsibility to protect our babies from harmful illnesses resulting from infection. One of these illnesses is tetanus. Fortunately, we have a vaccine called tetanus toxoid that can protect the mother and baby from this serious illness. All adults should be vaccinated. If a woman who is expecting a baby has not had the vaccine, she should get it to protect her newborn child from contracting the infection at birth.

Our bodies are temples that we must protect and treat with respect, and the children we bring into the world are gifts from God. As we read in Psalm 127 verse 3, ***"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward."*** (Psalm 127:3) There are many examples of men and women in the Bible struggling to have children and we must realize children are special blessings from God. In the book of Genesis, Abraham and Sarah waited many years for the gift of a child. They prayed to God and were finally blessed with a son.

Another example is the birth of Samuel, one of the great prophets and leaders of Israel. Samuel's mother, Hannah, had been trying to have a child for years and had become very distraught. She prayed to God that if He would bless her with a son, she would devote the life of the child to serving the Lord. Hannah was blessed with a son she named Samuel, who did indeed serve God tremendously during his lifetime.

This remarkable ability we have to bring a child into the world should not be taken lightly. Yes, it is a joyous and proud occasion, but there are important responsibilities we must not ignore. There is much we can do to protect the health of the mother and help her treat her body like the temple that it is. Eating a balanced diet, along with receiving vitamins and vaccines that are recommended by health care workers, will help protect the baby she carries. In Psalm 139 we read, ***"For You formed my inward parts: You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."*** (Psalm 139:13–14)

Let us rejoice in our children and glorify God as we strive to protect these precious gifts that have been entrusted to us. Let us respect our bodies and our children, and give our babies the greatest opportunity for good health.

Sermon 3: God's Armor

Message: Sleep Under an Insecticide-Treated Bed Net to Avoid Malaria in Pregnancy

Take at Least Two Doses of Malaria Medicine or as Recommended by the Doctor/Midwife or Health Care Worker

Malaria is the number one killer in Africa. It is especially dangerous to a pregnant woman, her growing baby and children under five years old. Expectant mothers are particularly vulnerable to this illness because pregnancy reduces a woman's defenses to the disease. A baby may not develop properly because of malarial infection in the mother. Malaria is also responsible for many of the premature births and low birth weight in babies who are born in Africa.

Babies who are born prematurely (born before 37 weeks of gestation), and babies who weigh less than normal when born, account for 24% of newborn deaths in Africa. Premature and low birth weight babies are vulnerable to breathing difficulties, bleeding and jaundice, among other complications. They have a risk of death that is approximately 13 times higher than full-term and normal weight babies.

Fortunately, we can dramatically reduce the cases of malaria by encouraging women to sleep under an insecticide-treated bed net. In addition, we have medicine, known as sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP), which can protect a woman from malaria. These two strategies—using bed nets treated with an insecticide and malaria prevention medicine—can help protect a pregnant woman from this dangerous illness. Sharing these strategies with your congregation will help give them the armor they need to protect the new mothers and babies in their families.

Scripture Used in Sermon

Ephesians 6:10–18
The Whole Armor of God
"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked

one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.…"

John 8:31–32

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples, indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'"

Psalm 1:1–2

"Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night."

Romans 5:8–9

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

Psalm 18:30

"As for God, His way is perfect;
The word of the Lord is proven;
He is a shield to all who trust in Him."

John 10:27–29

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.
And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.
My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."

Hebrews 4:12

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Proverbs 17:22

"A merry heart does good, like medicine,
But a broken spirit dries the bones."

Suggestions for Sermon: God's Armor

What is God's will for us? Does He leave his children unprotected? We may go through difficult times and pain. We may have enemies who want to do us harm. We may face many temptations in

our lives that can lead us to sin. But God is with us and has given us spiritual truths to serve as protection. We call this God's Armor. The Apostle Paul explains to us how God has provided us with armor to shield ourselves.

We have the same duty to our children. We must guard them from harmful diseases as they develop in their mothers' wombs. Just as God has given us armor to shelter us, we must use the tools we have available to protect the babies that have been given to us as gifts from God.

As we read verses in Ephesians, we learn how God has given us the means to defend ourselves from evil. Paul tells us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. He urges us to ***"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*** (Ephesians 6:11)

There are many temptations in our world, and we will need the strength of the Lord to resist them. To help us construct armor against sin and evil, Paul writes, ***"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints…."*** (Ephesians 6:13–18)

Truth

What has God given us for armor against evil, sin and temptation that will bring us down? Paul says to have our waist girded with truth. We should know the truth of God's teachings, and be committed to them. As Jesus said, ***"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples, indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*** (John 8:31–32) Jesus was telling the disciples to listen and believe in His teachings and they will be free.

Righteousness

We have a breastplate of righteousness to help us do what is right. ***"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night."*** (Psalm 1:1–2) Following God's commandments will lead us to righteousness.

Gospel of Peace

Our feet are ***"shod with the gospel of peace." Through Christ, we are at peace with God because of Jesus' sacrifice for us. Paul writes, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."*** (Romans 5:8–9) We can be at peace because His love was so great He died for us.

Shield of Faith

The shield of faith is our trust in God. Our trust in God is necessary to shield us from the temptations of sin, which happen when we reject the better choice of obedience and thankfulness. We must trust that God knows what's best for us and has given us the commandments we should follow for a joyful and productive life. ***"As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him."*** (Psalm 18:30)

Helmet of Salvation

The helmet of salvation is the shelter we have when we have accepted Christ as our savior. Doubt and despair may plague us, but our knowledge of salvation protects us. Jesus tells us, ***"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."*** (John 10:27–29)

Sword of the Spirit

Finally, we have the sword of the Spirit. Just like the sword was the only weapon the soldiers had in biblical times, God's word is the only weapon we need. It is much more powerful than any weapon of Satan or his temptations. ***"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*** (Hebrews 4:12)

Vigilance

At the end of his description of God's armor, Paul urges us to remain vigilant and continue to pray, telling us we should be ***"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.…"*** (Ephesians 6:18)

Armor for Our Children: Protection against Disease

Just as God has prepared armor for us as His children, we must provide protection or armor against threats, such as diseases, to our children as they grow in their mothers' wombs. Paul reminds us to be grateful for our blessings and not to take them for granted. We may become complacent and forget to shield our health and our loved ones if we do. It is often the times we do not feel ill that we do not think about disease and forget to shelter ourselves and our families.

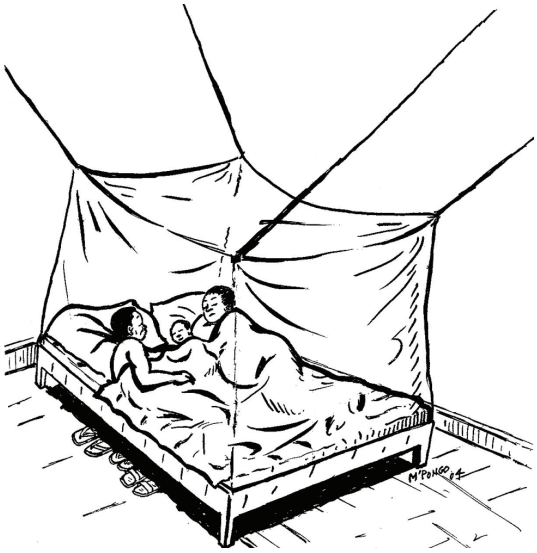
The blessing of children is an especially important one. Fortunately, we have methods to defend expectant mothers and their babies against diseases. A very dangerous illness we must be vigilant about is malaria, which is carried and passed on to us by mosquitoes. Expectant mothers are particularly vulnerable to this illness because pregnancy reduces a woman's defenses to the disease, which is very dangerous for her developing baby. A mother suffering from malaria may experience miscarriage, stillbirth or give birth to a premature or underweight baby.

But again we see where our loving Father in Heaven has provided us with the tools to build protective armor against the threat of malaria. In Paul's description of God's Armor, he explains how

God has outfitted us to shield ourselves against the temptations of sin and evil. We also have resources to build a shield for our developing children against diseases such as malaria.

Medicine: Sulphadoxine-Pyrimethamine

God has given us the ability to create helpful medicines to fight malaria. Doctors, midwives and health care workers have a medicine called sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine, or SP, to help prevent malaria during a woman's pregnancy. Taking this medicine, provided by a health care worker, will guard our babies against the risks of this dangerous disease.



Words of wisdom contained in the Book of Proverbs tell us ***"A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones."*** (Proverbs 17:22) Yes, a merry heart does us good, but there is also a place for medicine in defending our bodies.

Insecticide-Treated Bed Nets

An important shield in our armor against malaria is an insecticide-treated bed net. Sleeping under a net treated with a substance to deter mosquitoes will help the mother and baby avoid the bites of this disease-carrying insect. If we dramatically reduce our exposure to the bites of mosquitoes, we greatly decrease our risk of contracting malaria. Let us strive to guard ourselves and our developing children from this dangerous illness.

Protecting Our Blessings

Paul reminds us to be vigilant and remain prayerful. He tells us to defend ourselves from the temptations of sin. We must not become complacent and take our blessings, such as home and family, for granted. When we do, we may become vulnerable to temptations. Just as God has outfitted us with spiritual armor, in His wisdom He has provided us with physical armor to protect against disease. Let us remember the joy of family and children, and remain vigilant and defensive of these blessings.

Taking medicine recommended by health care workers to prevent malaria and sleeping under insecticide-treated nets to prevent mosquito bites will guard our physical bodies against harmful disease. God has provided us with armor to help us remain physically and spiritually healthy. It is our duty to put on our armor and serve Him faithfully.

Sermon 4: The Ark, the Giant and the Gift: Preparing for Baby

Message: Birth Preparedness: Plans for Birth and Emergency Transport

Many things can go wrong during the birth of a baby, turning what should be a joyous event into a tragedy. Every woman and newborn is at risk of developing a complication, and most of these cannot be predicted. Even strong women who have given birth easily to other children are at risk. Preparing for the birth and possible complications can help avoid tragedy and save the life of the mother and baby. *(See Appendix I on the Major Causes of Death and Injury for Mothers and Their Babies.)*

You should encourage the mother and her family to work with a health care worker to develop a birth plan that includes all the arrangements for a normal birth and a plan for how to identify and handle complications. *(Appendix III includes a checklist, which families can use to ensure they are prepared for the birth and possible complications.)*

Plan for Normal Birth

The plan should include where the woman will deliver the baby, which skilled attendant will help her with the delivery and how she will get to the facility when it is time. Family and community members should assist the woman in having funds available when needed to pay for care during a normal birth. For example, the family can put aside a small amount on a weekly basis. The family will also want to make arrangements for someone to stay with the mother during labor and childbirth and someone to care for her house and children during her absence.

Prepare for Complications

The family should assist the woman in choosing emergency transportation to an appropriate health care facility in case danger signs appear. They should also discuss emergency funds that may be available through the community and/or health care facility if danger signs arise and emergency care is needed. An appropriate blood donor who would be available in case of emergency must be identified.

Although there are many potential problems that may arise during pregnancy and childbirth, complications can be better managed with preparation. Your role as a religious leader is to encourage the family to be prepared physically and spiritually for the birth of the child.

Scripture Used in Sermon

Hebrews 11:7

"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."

1 Samuel 17:37–39

"Moreover, David said, 'The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.' And Saul said to David, 'Go, and the Lord be with you!'

So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail.

David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, 'I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them.' So David took them off."

Suggestions for Sermon: The Ark, the Giant and the Gift: Preparing for Baby

What do great men in the Bible like Noah and David have in common? They were prepared for the dramatic and life-changing events they experienced. Noah built an ark exactly as God instructed and saved his family from the great flood. David went to battle against the giant Goliath and won because he was ready and used only weapons he knew and had tested.

And what does a family expecting a baby have in common with these men from the Bible? Those of you expecting a baby are also going to face an extraordinary event for which you must plan. The birth of a child requires planning and preparation, just like the great flood or the battle between David and Goliath.

Noah's construction of the ark is one of the greatest examples in the Bible of the wisdom of planning and preparation. ***"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household."*** (Hebrews 11:7) Noah had not seen the flood. He had not even seen any rain, but he was warned by God that it was coming. He took God's message seriously and, being a faithful servant, he moved as quickly as he could to prepare for the flood. He built an ark that would save the people in his household.

We need to prepare for the major events of our lives. One of the most important blessings that we may receive is a child. This blessing is not to be taken lightly. The family should plan for the birth of a child, and develop a birth plan with the advice of a trained health care worker. Noah did not build his ark without planning or advice.

God advised Noah very specifically on how to build the ark. He told Noah what kind of wood to use and the exact dimensions it should be. Noah received direction on how many decks the ark should have. God described the flood that was coming, and although Noah did not see any rain, he heeded God's warning and started constructing the ark. When the rains came, all other people living at the time were killed, but Noah and his family and all the animals they brought on the ark were spared.

A family expecting a baby should plan for the upcoming birth in the same manner as Noah prepared for the flood. Childbirth can be dangerous for a woman, especially if she and her family are not prepared. Women may experience severe bleeding, infection and complications from high blood pressure or obstruction during labor. The mother should see a trained health care worker for health care visits during her pregnancy. If at all possible, it is advised that the mother give birth at a health

care facility with the assistance of a skilled attendant, such as a trained midwife, doctor or nurse. If she must have the baby at home, she should still have a skilled attendant deliver the baby.

Family members and others in the household should know the signs of labor and be ready to react when labor begins. Families should develop a birth plan that includes arrangements for emergency transportation to a hospital if it becomes necessary. If a particular car is to be used, where will that car be kept and how can it be made accessible at all times?

Preparedness does not reflect a lack of faith in God. God encourages preparation. It was David's experience as a shepherd that helped him in his battle with Goliath. Think back to the story of David and Goliath. David may have seemed overly brave or foolish to think he could fight the giant man when he announced his intentions to be the one to battle Goliath and defend Israel. However, David was skilled and experienced in using his slingshot, the weapon that he used to bring down the giant. He had practiced using his slingshot many times when protecting his sheep from lions and bears. In Samuel, David says, ***"The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."*** (1 Samuel 17:37)

Yes, the Lord did deliver David from the hands of Goliath and led him to victory. However, God did not lead him into battle with Goliath unprepared. David did not fight Goliath before ever having used his slingshot. He knew how to use the equipment with which he had experience.

As we read in the Book of Samuel, we see that Saul tried to give David armor and a large sword. These were difficult for David to handle and he said, ***"I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them."*** So he took them off. David knew the value of experience and preparation. When he went out to challenge Goliath, David defeated the mighty giant with a stone launched from his trusted slingshot. He was victorious in his battle against Goliath because he was ready and experienced.

When we are faced with a difficult challenge in life, we must do what we can to prepare for it. Yes, it is true that God will be with us and we must rely on the power of prayer, but we must also take action to ready ourselves like Noah and David. The birth of a child is no different, and a healthy baby and mother should not be taken for granted.

There are things we can do to prepare for the birth of a child, such as developing a plan for the birth and arranging for emergency transportation. We pray that there will be no emergencies, but we are warned that things can and do go wrong in childbirth, and we are wise to be ready for them. The gift of a child is a wonderful blessing. Let us be grateful to God for the opportunity to bring new life into this world and meet our responsibilities and prepare to receive this gift.

Sermon 5: To Be Wise and Watchful

Message: Danger Signs in Pregnancy: Bleeding, Swelling, Severe Headache, Convulsions and Severe Fatigue

Complications can happen at any point during pregnancy. Although such complications may arise quickly, the family will often see some danger signs to warn them of these problems. One of the most dangerous complications in pregnancy is eclampsia (or convulsions), which is a high blood pressure disorder. Eclampsia is the cause of approximately 12% of maternal deaths. Women with high blood pressure may experience headaches, fatigue or excessive swelling in the face, ankles and hands. A pregnant woman experiencing these symptoms should be taken to a health care facility for treatment.

Another potential problem in pregnancy is anemia, which is a low red blood cell count. Extreme fatigue is a symptom of anemia. Women who are anemic may not be able to withstand even the normal blood loss of childbirth.

A family should go to the nearest health care facility if the pregnant mother experiences any of the following danger signs:

Vaginal bleeding
Difficulty breathing
Fever
Severe abdominal pain
Severe or persistent vomiting, or any vomiting accompanied by pain or fever
Severe headache or any headache with blurred vision, slurred speech or numbness
Swelling of the hands and face
Convulsions/loss of consciousness
Leaking of greenish/brownish fluid from vagina
Foul-smelling fluid from vagina
Decrease in or absence of movement of the baby
Unusual fatigue
Pain when urinating

Awareness of these danger signs and quick action can save the life of a mother and her baby. As you educate your congregation, you will be giving them the knowledge they need to help save a life.

Scripture Used in Sermon

Proverbs 1:5

"A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel."

Mark 13:32–37

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.
It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.
Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning; lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.
And what I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

John 10:11–14

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.
But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.
I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own."

Matthew 18:12–14

"If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?
And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.
Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

Suggestions for Sermon: To Be Wise and Watchful

There are often signs when danger is coming. Some signs may be powerful and loud like thunder when a strong storm is brewing. Some may be quiet like the soft sounds a lion makes quietly stalking its prey. If we learn the meaning of warnings and remain watchful and alert, we are more likely to recognize the signs of impending danger.

An expectant mother often displays symptoms or experiences danger signs that something is wrong and may be threatening her health and her baby. She must be aware of what these signs are and seek help if she encounters them during pregnancy. The mother to be should be vigilant, always protecting her health. We must remember that her life is sacred, and the baby she will deliver is a blessing from God. The father and other members of the household must also learn these danger signs and know what to do if they encounter them.

Family members expecting a baby cannot watch for danger signs if they do not know what those signs are. We must seek out knowledge about symptoms of problems in pregnancy and accept the wise counsel of those who are trained in matters of health. In the Book of Proverbs, we read, ***"A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel."*** *(Proverbs 1:5)*

God has given us the ability to learn and study the earth and ourselves. He has blessed many among us with the talent and energy to become midwives, doctors, nurses, health care workers and scientists to help us live healthy and productive lives. These skilled attendants and health care workers have knowledge to teach us about how to take care of our bodies and recognize symptoms that something may be wrong when we are expecting a baby. The wise expectant mother and father will learn these symptoms and what to do about them.

Common danger signs in pregnancy include bleeding, swelling, excessive pain and fatigue. Any bleeding is a danger sign that something could be wrong and should be taken seriously. Headaches and convulsions can be caused by high blood pressure during pregnancy, a serious condition that can threaten the life of the mother. Women with high blood pressure may experience headaches, fatigue or excessive swelling in the face, ankles and hands. Fatigue is also caused by anemia, which is a low red blood cell count. An expectant mother should see a health care worker if she shows any of these danger signs.

Once we know these signs, we must remain watchful and vigilant. God expects us to be watchful at all times and Jesus warns many times in scripture to remain alert. In the Gospel of Mark, we find Jesus preaching to His disciples on the Mount of Olives. The disciples wanted to know when they could expect the second coming—when Jesus would return to earth and how they would know He was coming. Jesus warned them of the importance of remaining attentive and looking for signs.

In Sermon 13 of the Gospel According to Mark, Jesus tells His disciples, ***"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning, lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"*** (Mark 13:32–37)

When Jesus commands, ***"Watch!"*** it is a call to stay awake and be aware. In Jesus' time, the doorkeeper guarded the outer gate of the house, always ready to let the master in when he returned. Jesus asks His disciples to act as doorkeepers, always remaining alert and ready for their Master's return. And just like Jesus expects His disciples to be attentive and watch for signs, a family expecting a baby must remain on guard for possible danger signs.

The health of every one of us is precious to God and should be cherished. Jesus values each one of His flock equally. He shows us this with the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Jesus says, ***"If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."*** (Matthew 18:12–14)

A shepherd has great responsibility. Not only must he lead his sheep to find food and water, he must shelter them from predators. A shepherd is able to guard his sheep because he knows them, and the sheep know him and even respond to his voice. We must be like shepherds protecting our family

from threats, including the dangers an expectant mother faces during her pregnancy. In order to protect the health of the mothers and babies in our families, we must know what those dangers are and recognize their signs. Once we have learned these signs, we must stay on guard and watch for them, just as a shepherd listens for threats to his flock.

Jesus explains His role as the Good Shepherd standing guard over His sheep in the Gospel of John. Families should be watchful like a good shepherd over their developing baby. Jesus says, ***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own."*** (John 10:11–14)

Jesus tells us that each one of us is precious and valuable, and deserves to be watched over carefully. As Jesus shelters His flock, we are all responsible for watching over ourselves and our families, guarding our health against possible harm. To do that we must seek out learning and knowledge of the dangers we face. Only when we are educated and aware of threats to our health, are we prepared to stand guard over our own health and our growing baby.

First, accept that all of us are precious to God and should value our own health and the health of our families. Next, we must learn the danger signs of bleeding, swelling and fatigue in expectant mothers. Finally, we must act on these signs and seek help from a health care worker. We are like a trusted shepherd charged with defending our flock. Let's be like the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep and does not leave them unprotected.

Sermon 6: Accepting the Gift with Care

Message: Postnatal Care within 24 Hours, at Three Days and at Seven Days after Birth

The period just after birth can be very hazardous for a new mother and her baby. Four million newborns die each year in the first four weeks of life. They are vulnerable to infection and other illnesses, and may not be getting the nutrients they need. More than two-thirds of newborn deaths occur by the end of the first week after delivery, and up to one-half of all newborn deaths occur in the first 24 hours. Approximately two-thirds of all maternal deaths occur in the postnatal period. In light of these dangers, postnatal health care visits are recommended within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after birth.

The newborn will need much care, and should be kept warm and clean. If at all possible, the mother should give the baby only breast milk, and should not feed the baby water, porridge or any sort of potion. The mother may need assistance learning how to breastfeed correctly.

A woman is also vulnerable in the period just after childbirth and should be watched for danger signs. She is at risk for excessive blood loss and infection as her body heals. Both mother and baby should see a health care worker within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after birth to make sure that she and her baby are healthy.

It is also important for the woman and her family to be aware of danger signs that may require additional medical attention such as pain, fever and excessive bleeding. *(See Appendix IV on Care for the New Mother and Baby after Birth.)*

The knowledge you share with your congregation can help keep them and their new babies healthy, avoiding preventable tragedy.

Scripture Used in Sermon

Epistle of James 1:17

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

Ezekiel 16:4

"As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths."

Ezekiel 16:9

"Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil."

Book of Sirach, Ecclesiasticus 38:1–3

"Hold the physician in honor, for he is essential to you, and God it was who established his profession.
From God the doctor has his wisdom, and the king provides for his sustenance.
His knowledge makes the doctor distinguished, and gives him access to those in authority."

Proverbs 23:24–25

"The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice,
And he who begets a wise child will delight in him.
Let your father and your mother be glad,
And let her who bore you rejoice."

Ephesians 5:28

"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself."

James 1:22–24

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was."

Suggestions for Sermon: Accepting the Gift with Care

The birth of a child is a tremendous event in our lives. It is one of life's greatest blessings and gifts from God. After receiving this gift, we have some important responsibilities we must fulfill. It is not simply enough to accept the gift and give thanks; we must care for the baby and mother during this vulnerable time.

How we treat this gift is tremendously important. As we read in the Epistle of James, ***"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."*** (Epistle of James 1:17) God has "no variation or shadow of turning." He does not turn like the planets and celestial bodies, which change through day and night. He is constant and attentive to the needs of His children.

When we receive the blessing of a new baby, our attention to the health of the mother and child must be constant, like the attention of God. We cannot turn away and return to our everyday lives. Immediately following the birth, caring for the health of the mother and newborn is critical. The family should see a health care worker within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after the birth to ensure that both mother and baby are healthy and doing well. This vigilance is our duty when we are entrusted with this special gift of a new child.

The people of Biblical times did not have the same medicines, equipment or health care procedures we have today. Thanks to God's grace and the work of talented doctors and researchers, we have the ability to provide special care for a mother and baby in the vulnerable days immediately following the birth.

God did not intend for a newborn child to be left without proper attention. He refers to the importance of care as he likens the nation of Israel to a newborn baby. He speaks through the prophet Ezekiel about the birth of that nation and He compares Israel to an abandoned child before He entered into a loving covenant with the people of Israel. God said, ***"As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths."*** (Ezekiel 16:4)

After God entered into a loving covenant with the people of Israel, He proclaimed, ***"Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil."*** (Ezekiel

16:9) Although we must do much more than simply wash off a new baby and anoint him or her with oil, God uses this image because the proper care of a newborn baby is vital to the child's survival and symbolizes deep love and commitment. Today we are able to offer our children much greater newborn care. We must seek out health care in the crucial period within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days following a birth.

The new mother also needs important care during this same period after the birth of a child. Her body has been through an amazing and exhausting event. She is vulnerable to illness and complications from loss of blood or other dangers that occur after a baby is born. The new mother can benefit greatly from the guidance of a trained health care worker during this time. The wisdom and importance of health care workers was recognized during Biblical times. Ben Sira tells us, ***"Hold the physician in honor, for he is essential to you, and God it was who established his profession. From God the doctor has his wisdom, and the king provides for his sustenance. His knowledge makes the doctor distinguished, and gives him access to those in authority."*** (Book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus 38:1–3)

The Book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus is included in the Bible in some versions and in the Apocrypha in others. Encouraging us to seek the treatment of a physician when we are ill is very wise counsel. Just like an illness, the days following the birth of a child are a very vulnerable time, and the mother and baby are especially in need of the knowledge and training of a health care worker. Families should ensure that the mother and baby see a health care worker within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after birth.

Our children bring us great joy. We must give them the best opportunity we can to grow and fulfill their potential. Each child is capable of becoming righteous and wise, but we have to provide a healthy start in life. As we read in Proverbs, ***"The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her who bore you rejoice."*** (Proverbs 23:24–25) Parents can give their children a greater chance to grow and serve the Lord as He intended if they receive proper health care in these first few days after birth.

And remember the mother, the one who carried this special child in her womb. She also needs attention and proper health care. Men, you should ensure that your wives see a health care worker within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after birth. Your wife's body is as sacred as your own. Paul tells us, ***"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself."*** (Ephesians 5:28) You can demonstrate this love and commitment to your wife by ensuring she receives what she needs to recover and be healthy.

Let us be **"doers"** and **"not hearers only."** James tells us, ***"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was."*** (James 1:22–24) Do not store this information away as advice that sounds good, but act on it when the time comes and give your new babies and mothers the best chance at a healthy and fulfilling life.

Sermon 7: Worth the Wait

Message: Pregnancy Spacing to Protect the Lives of Mother and Baby: Wait at least two years after a birth before becoming pregnant again

The demands on a woman's body during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding are great. She needs adequate rest and nutrition during these challenging times. Taking care of children the mother already has is also taxing on her physically. Properly spacing the births of children can help give the woman time to recover and become strong again, and will enable her to properly care for an infant before she faces the demands of another pregnancy. Doctors and other health care professionals recommend waiting at least two years before becoming pregnant again since the evidence tells us that mothers and babies are more likely to survive using this interval.

In order to space pregnancies properly, a woman and her partner will need to use appropriate birth spacing techniques. There are a variety of birth spacing methods a woman can discuss with a health care worker. In your role as a religious leader, you can encourage her and her partner to seek advice on the method that is best for them.

Scripture Used in Sermon

Galatians 5:22–23

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

Proverbs 25:28

"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls."

2 Timothy 1:7

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of self-discipline."

Suggestions for Sermon: Worth the Wait

Sometimes life catches us by surprise. Many times these surprises are a good thing. When a loved one gives us an unexpected gift or performs a kind deed, it makes us happy. A rainbow after a

rainstorm may surprise and delight us. Beautiful flowers growing in a place we would not expect, like a patch of weeds, can bring us joy.

But some things in life are better when they are planned. Bringing children into the world is one of those times. Children are a precious gift from God, but we must be prepared for their arrival. It is especially important to plan the addition of a child to our family if we already have one or more children. If a woman becomes pregnant after she has just had a child, it can be dangerous to the health of the mother and the baby she carries.

In order to plan our families, we must exercise self-discipline and control. We should try to plan our families so that when we have a new baby, we do not conceive another child for at least two years. Waiting to conceive another child gives the mother time for her body to recover. It also gives her time to properly nourish her first child, and for the parents to concentrate on the health of that child. In this stage where we wish to delay conceiving another child, we should use a birth spacing technique during marital relations to avoid pregnancy. This is where we must show discipline and exercise self control.

The Apostle Paul tells us that self control is one of the fruits of the spirit. To truly walk with the Holy Spirit, we must have nine characteristics, which Paul explains in the Epistle to the Galatians. ***"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such there is no law."*** (Galatians 5:22–23) When Paul encourages us to exercise self control, he is referring to controlling our passions and appetite. We may enjoy the beauty of marital relations as God intended to demonstrate love in our marriage, but we must be in control of the consequences. If it is not a healthy time in the woman's life to conceive a child, we must be responsible about another pregnancy.

The Book of Proverbs that tells us, ***"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls."*** (Proverbs 25:28) While it is true that God is in control of our lives and what may happen to us, we are in control of our own actions. We have been given the right to make choices and we must exercise good judgment and be in command of our actions. Children come into our lives by the goodness and generosity of God, but we can and must control the timing of pregnancies in order to keep those children and their mothers healthy. Doctors and other health care workers have seen that having children very close in age can raise the risk of health problems for the mother and child.

Paul affirms the importance of self-discipline. When he was imprisoned for the second time in Rome, he was arrested because the Emperor Nero was persecuting Christians. Paul was kept in a cell with chains and had little hope of freedom. As he faced execution, he also felt abandoned by those close to him because they were afraid of being persecuted themselves if they supported him. Paul wrote to Timothy and asked him to come to Rome for one last visit with him.

In his letter, Paul encouraged Timothy to continue Paul's own work in ministry. He expresses his concern that Timothy may be weakening because of persecution that the Christians were facing. Paul

urges Timothy to be strong and to continue preaching the Word of God. He tells him, ***"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of self-discipline."*** (2 Timothy 1:7)

All three of these God-given characteristics of power, love and self-discipline are important in our discussion of birth spacing. First is power. God has given us the power to decide when we shall have a child. If we have marital relations without pregnancy spacing techniques, we may be conceiving a child. This is where we need to exercise power over our situation. We should remember the health advice of two years between birth and another pregnancy, and plan accordingly.

The second important gift is love. Exercising care and planning for when a child is brought into the world is a demonstration of the love God has put in our spirit. Planning our families to space a pregnancy two years or more after a birth is done out of concern for the health of the mother and the children. There is no greater demonstration of love than protecting the health of our families. The third gift to our spirit of self-discipline is also needed for birth spacing. God has given us a spirit that is capable of controlling our impulses and exercising self-discipline. It will take discipline to either abstain from marital relations or make sure we have the proper birth spacing tools to prevent a pregnancy when we are not ready for another child.

Paul knew what could be accomplished with a spirit blessed with power, love and self-discipline. Each of us possesses these characteristics and gifts from God. There are many aspects of our lives where these traits will serve us well, but they will not help us if we do not exercise them. It is our duty to call on these characteristics and strengths to do what is right to protect our health and the health of our families.

Bringing a child into the world is a great responsibility. We must not take it lightly. Although the birth of a child is one of God's greatest gifts, there can be serious health consequences for the mother and the child. One of the greatest gifts we can give to our children and families is good health. By demonstrating love, power over our situations and the self-discipline needed to safely space the births of our children, we are giving them and ourselves the greatest gift of all—a chance at a healthy life.

Sermon 8: The Guardian

Message: The Man of the Family Should Take Responsibility for the Health of the Woman during Pregnancy and during Birth and after Birth, and of the Newborn Baby

The birth of a baby should be a joyous event for a family. However, as you have read throughout this guide, there is much that can go wrong during pregnancy and childbirth, and this happy occasion can quickly turn into tragedy.

Although there is a great deal a woman can do to protect herself and the health of her baby, she will need support to achieve these health-seeking behaviors. Ensuring the woman visits a health care worker as soon as she thinks she may be pregnant and again throughout her pregnancy for at least

four visits, should be one of the first priorities of the man of the family. In addition to checkups to look for any problems, there are supplements such as iron and folate, and medicines to prevent malaria that the health care worker can provide.

The birth of the baby is an especially hazardous time. The mother should deliver the baby in a health care facility with the help of a skilled attendant trained to deliver babies. The father should take responsibility to see that this is arranged ahead of time. *(See Appendix I on Major Causes of Death and Injury for Mothers and Their Babies.)*

Proper nutrition and rest are also crucial to the pregnant woman and her growing baby. *(See Appendix II on Nutrition in Pregnancy for Healthy Moms and Babies.)* You can convey to the father his role in seeing that the woman eats enough of the right foods and gets adequate rest. The woman may need to reduce her workload in order to get adequate rest.

Like Noah protecting his family by preparing for the great flood, a father must also be sure his family is prepared for the birth and has made appropriate plans. The father should be heavily involved in developing a plan for the birth and potential emergency complications. *(See Appendix III on Birth Preparedness.)*

The proper care of the new baby and of the recovering mother after the birth are critical to their health and survival. *(See Appendix IV on Care for the New Mother and Baby after Birth.)* The father has an important role as head of the household to see that they receive the care they need. As a religious leader, you can provide valuable guidance to the men in your congregation and help them understand this role.

Scripture Used in Sermon

1 Corinthians 13:11–13

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.
For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.
And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Matthew 1:24

"When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary home as his wife."

Ephesians 5:28–29

"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."

1 Timothy 5:8

"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."

Genesis 2:24

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Suggestions for Sermon: The Guardian

What is the most important role of a man in his family? We do not need to look far to find the answer to this question. Scripture tells us what the man of the family must do. He has been given a very important role. The father is the guardian and protector of his family, and in this task he should be guided by love.

Love for one another is one of God's most precious gifts and should become stronger and better understood as we grow older. As Paul writes, ***"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things…. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*** (1 Corinthians 13:11–13) As a boy grows up, he must lovingly accept his responsibilities as a man.

One of the most critical times for a man to step up and fulfill his responsibility to his family is when a new baby is expected. The birth of a child is a wonderful blessing and a joyous time. However, pregnancy can be dangerous for the woman and there are many risks the new mother and baby face in the vulnerable period after birth. Fortunately, there is much we can do to help a woman have a healthy pregnancy and delivery, and this is where the man of the family can help the woman get the care she needs.

First, a woman should see a health care worker for at least four antenatal care visits starting early on in her pregnancy. The advice of the health care worker on proper nutrition, vitamins and avoiding health risks during pregnancy should be followed. As the pregnancy progresses, the family should be prepared for the birth and have a plan for how the delivery will be managed. After the birth, the new mother and baby should be seen by a health care worker within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after delivery to make sure they are healthy and have not developed any problems. The father should be involved in these important actions to protect the health of the mother and baby.

Parents have been entrusted with the wonderful blessing of children, but there is much responsibility that goes along with this gift. At Christmas time we often hear the story of Joseph, Mary and Baby Jesus. The focus is usually not on Jesus' earthly father but on the Messiah himself. However, Joseph's role in the miraculous birth of Christ was very important. Although Mary was with child through a miracle that did not involve an earthly father, God made sure she had Joseph to serve in the role as

supporter, protector and helper as she carried and delivered His Son. Imagine how different the story would be if Joseph had not accepted his role the way he did.

Joseph accepted the great responsibilities of a father lovingly. When he found out that his betrothed was expecting a child he knew could not be his, Joseph quietly planned to cancel the marriage while also trying to save Mary from scorn. An angel appeared to him as he slept and told him the truth and what his role should be. The Gospel according to Matthew tells us, ***"When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary home as his wife."*** (Matthew 1:24) Mary needed support and assistance during her pregnancy. After the baby was born, Joseph's job was not finished. He continued to care for Jesus and protect Him, providing for His needs. That is the important role Joseph was to play, just like all fathers must do.

Scripture gives us more direction on how the man of the house should behave and care for his family. The Apostle Paul explains how a husband should treat his wife. ***"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."*** (Ephesians 5:28–29)

While it is always important to think of the needs of our families and be concerned for a family member who is sick, it is especially critical during a woman's pregnancy. As the Apostle Paul commands, a husband should think of the woman's needs as strongly as his own. He should see that she gets the preventive health care and nutrition she needs, and he should react to any pain or symptom of a problem as if it were his own.

Paul tells us that a Christian is bound to provide for the needs of his family. He writes, ***"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 Timothy 5:8) God commands us to love our family members. There is no greater expression of love than caring for and providing for our family.

When a boy becomes a man, he has new tasks and responsibilities in the world around him. When he takes on a wife and begins a family, he must leave the ways of a boy behind, and act as the guardian and protector of his new family. God tells us in scripture how the relationship between man and wife should be. He commands, ***"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*** (Genesis 2:24) The man and woman must act as a team as they go through life together. A man must think of his wife's needs as much as his own, especially during and after pregnancy. Pregnancy and childbirth can be a difficult and dangerous time for a woman and her baby, and they need the protection, guidance and support of the man of the family. Guiding a woman and baby through this trying time is one of the most important roles a man can fill.

Sermon 9: As God Intended

Message: Harmful Practices of Female Genital Cutting, Violence against Women, Forced Marriage and Very Young Motherhood Harm Women, Families and Communities

There are practices in our societies that are harmful to women and their families such as female genital cutting, violence against women, forced marriage and very young motherhood.

Cutting the genitals of a girl or woman (also called female circumcision) is a tradition that has been part of many societies for generations. It is the partial or total removal of the external genitals when there is no medical reason for it. Parents and other relatives may feel it is in the best interest of the girl so that she may find a suitable husband and be accepted as part of her society. However, it is a very dangerous practice and is extremely painful and traumatic for the girl and can even result in death.

Girls who have had their genitals cut are vulnerable to infections and severe bleeding. Over the long term, women can suffer from chronic pain, decreased or nonexistent sexual enjoyment, and psychological problems. Female genital cutting has been internationally recognized as a violation of human rights and many countries have policies and laws to ban it. There is some evidence that the practice is decreasing, but the decline has been slow. There is also a disturbing trend of health care professionals performing the practice.

Women who have had their genitals cut often have difficulty during childbirth, which can endanger the lives of their babies. The vaginal tissue has difficulty stretching properly due to scarring, and the women have a higher incidence of obstructed labor and of birth by caesarian section (where the baby must be removed through an incision in the abdomen). Women with altered genitals are also more vulnerable to severe bleeding after childbirth.

In your role as a spiritual leader, you can educate your congregation and community about the dangers of female genital cutting and discourage this harmful practice. Families will need your support to stop the practice. Although the practice is not encouraged by Christianity, societal pressures to continue it are strong. Families and their daughters may fear rejection if the girls have not undergone genital cutting. Traditions of giving gifts and having celebrations after genital cutting have further encouraged this dangerous practice.

Another disturbing practice in our society is violence in any form against a woman, including violence in the home. A study by the World Health Organization of 10 countries in various parts of the world showed the percentage of women who had ever been in an intimate relationship and had been abused ranged from 13% to as high as 61%.

Violence in the home is often ignored by others in the community and viewed as a private matter between husband and wife. Husbands may feel it is acceptable to use violence against a wife. Women

themselves may believe abuse from their husbands is normal and must be tolerated. This attitude is not only detrimental to women, but also to the children who witness the violence and to the community as a whole.

Women who are abused by a husband or partner can suffer a variety of physical injuries—from bruises and abrasions to disfigurement or death. Violence to a pregnant woman is extremely harmful to the baby she carries. According to the World Health Organization, women who have experienced violence from a husband or intimate partner are more likely to suffer miscarriages than women who are not abused.

Another custom that is common in some societies, but is dangerous to the physical and emotional health of women, is marriage at a very young age. This practice puts girls at risk of becoming pregnant before it is healthy for their growing bodies. If a girl has a baby before she is fully developed, she is at a greater risk for labor that lasts much longer than normal because the baby is not able to pass through her underdeveloped birth canal. It is recommended for health reasons that a girl wait until she is at least 18 years old to have a baby. In addition to the potential physical harm of young marriage and motherhood, a girl who gives up an education for marriage and motherhood is missing opportunities to fulfill her potential and use the talents and skills bestowed on her by God.

The overall status of women in a society contributes greatly to their ability to protect themselves from abusive relationships. The attitude that women are inferior or that their contributions are not as important as those of men is not only incorrect, it is detrimental to the community as a whole. The community is deprived of the God-given talents and skills of a woman if society restricts or harms her ability to share them. You can influence attitudes among your congregation and discourage destructive behaviors that hurt women with your sermons and the wisdom you share in counseling.

Scripture Used in Sermon

Genesis 1:27

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Genesis 1:31

"Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

Psalm 139:14

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works…."

1 Corinthians 7:3

"Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband."

Genesis 2:18
"And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

Ephesians 5:28–29
"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."

Luke 8:1–3
"Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance."

Suggestions for Sermon: As God Intended

God created man and woman. He created husband and wife to become one flesh when they are linked by the bond of a loving marriage. In Genesis we learn how God created mankind in His image. It was not just man, but woman too who was created in God's own image. Genesis tells us, *"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."* (Genesis 1:27) It was the male *and* female who were created in God's image. We must be very careful when we alter or harm God's creation and interfere with his intentions.

When God created man and woman He had a plan for every part of their bodies. He designed the woman's form to bear children, and to give and receive sexual pleasure during relations with her husband. He designed the man's form to father children, and also to give and receive pleasure to his wife in the same manner. God is pleased with what He has created. We read in scripture, ***"Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day."*** (Genesis 1:31)

Unfortunately, over the years, a practice has developed in many societies that is harmful to girls and women, and interferes with God's intentions. The practice of cutting the genitals of young girls or women has become a tradition in many societies, and many of us probably do not question whether it is right or wrong. We do not intend to harm our daughters, we are performing a custom that our elders taught us was the right thing to do.

However, we now know that there are many dangers and no benefits from this practice. Cutting the genitals of our daughters and other young girls in our families harms them in many ways. The cutting is traumatic and painful. The girl or woman may have severe bleeding and will be vulnerable to infections. If the cutting is severe, the result can even be fatal.

Doctors and other health care experts have found that when a girl becomes a woman, she is more likely to have problems and dangerous complications when she gives birth to her own baby if she has had her genitals cut. A recent study by the World Health Organization showed that babies born to

mothers who have experienced genital cutting are more likely to die shortly after birth than babies born to mothers who have not had their genitals altered. Women with altered genitals are also more vulnerable to severe bleeding after childbirth.

God designed the woman's body to deliver babies, and it is not our place to change that design and hinder what He has created. The Psalmist praises God and claims, ***"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works…."*** (Psalm 139:14) We should investigate the reasons behind this practice and seriously consider if we are meeting God's intentions. When the genitals of a woman have been altered or removed, her sexual enjoyment is likely diminished or nonexistent, which interferes with God's plan for a healthy relationship between husband and wife. Paul tells us of the importance of the loving relationship between husband and wife. ***"Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband."*** (1 Corinthians 7:3) Affection between husband and wife is necessary for a healthy marriage in God's eyes, and it should be expressed both emotionally and physically.

The affectionate marriage Paul refers to should be peaceful and loving. There is no room for any sort of violence between a man and woman. In Genesis we read that after God created man, He realized that man needed a partner. ***"And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*** (Genesis 2:18) He says, ***"I will make him a helper comparable to him."*** What does that mean? God says the woman is "comparable" to man. She is an equal partner to a man and should be treated with love and respect.

A husband may believe it is permissible to hit his wife or discipline her in some physical way when he is angry or when he believes she deserves some form of punishment. A woman may believe she must endure the physical and emotional abuse from her husband because she has come to expect it. However, this attitude is harmful to both partners in the relationship.

First, and most importantly, violence is dangerous to the woman. Violent acts, such as striking a woman, can result in severe emotional damage, physical injuries or even death. The damaging effects of abuse touch the entire family and can even extend to the community. Children are harmed by witnessing acts of violence in their home. In addition to the harm done to women and their children, the community is damaged by the loss of a productive member when a woman is plagued by emotional distress resulting from the abuse.

The Apostle Paul wrote that a man must be kind and loving toward his wife, and treat her with the same respect he expects for himself. ***"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."*** (Ephesians 5:28–29) Causing physical or emotional pain to a wife is disobeying this command.

Becoming a wife is a very important step in a woman's life. When is a woman ready to take that step and become a wife? To fulfill God's commandment that husbands and wives live in love and partnership, they both must be physically and emotionally mature. Remember, God created woman to be a helper and partner who is "comparable" to man.

In many cases in our communities, young girls are married before they are ready. This practice is physically and emotionally damaging to girls. Becoming pregnant before her growing body has developed is dangerous. During childbirth she will be vulnerable to an especially long labor because her underdeveloped body is not ready for childbirth. The baby may not be able to pass through the birth canal, and both the mother and baby are at risk of death or serious injury.

A young girl is still developing in many ways. She is expanding her knowledge and growing spiritually. Jesus himself shows us that women are equal to men in the area of learning and teaching. In the Gospel according to Luke, we read that Jesus had women among his disciples. ***"Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance."*** (Luke 8:1–3)

It was not common during Jesus' time for rabbis to have women as disciples. However, Jesus knew that women have the same intelligence and hunger for learning as men have. These gifts should not be wasted by prohibiting women from learning and making use of their wisdom and talents. Young girls should be educated before they have babies too early and endanger their health. Their minds should grow while their bodies are still developing. When they do become wives, they will be better prepared not only physically, but also spiritually and emotionally. A young, underdeveloped girl can not fulfill the role God intended of a partner for her husband.

God intended a woman to be an equal partner to her husband—joined in a loving and affectionate marriage. The marriage should be fulfilling spiritually and physically. Altering the woman's genitals, forcing her to marry too young or subjecting her to any form of violence in the home is not what God intended. We should turn to scripture and the Word of God to guide us in creating the loving, peaceful home He intended for His children.

Sermon 10: The First Food—From the Hand of God

Message: Breastfeeding for a Healthy Start

Doctors and scientists know that breast milk provides the best nutrition possible for newborns and infants. It gives babies all the nutrients they need for a healthy start in life. Breast milk contains antibodies to help protect babies from dangerous illnesses such as diarrhea and pneumonia, which kill more than four million children annually worldwide.

Breastfeeding is especially important for families who lack access to clean water. Powdered formula mixed with unclean water puts babies at risk for water-borne diseases. Furthermore, breast milk does not cost the family money, which helps to ensure that infants get adequate nutrition. If families use formula and then are unable to obtain it, the mother's milk supply is likely to have diminished or may be completely gone.

Breastfeeding is also helpful to mothers. It reduces the risks of breast and ovarian cancer later in life and helps the new mother return to her pre-pregnancy weight. In the six months following birth, breastfeeding is an excellent method of pregnancy spacing as long as the mother is exclusively breastfeeding (not feeding the baby any other substance) and her menses have not returned. If the mother does not exclusively breastfeed, her menses return and the baby is older than six months, she will need to use another method of pregnancy spacing.

The World Health Organization recommends that mothers breastfeed their babies within the first hour of life if possible. The initial fluid is called colostrum and it contains important antibodies the baby needs. The baby should be fed as often as he or she is hungry, which will help increase the mother's milk supply and ensure that the baby is getting enough nutrients. Mothers should try to feed babies only breast milk for the first six months of life. She should continue to breastfeed after six months while introducing other foods as a health care worker advises.

Women may need support from others to learn proper breastfeeding techniques. A new mother will likely need other nursing women or trained health care workers to teach her how to breastfeed comfortably. You should encourage the women in your congregation to reach out for help if they need it. Health clinics should be able to provide assistance to new mothers. The whole family, especially the father, should be supportive and help the mother in any way she needs so that she can continue breastfeeding.

Sharing the benefits of breastfeeding and encouraging it among families in your congregation can help give the children in your community a healthy start in life.

Scripture Used in Sermon

Epistle of James 1:17

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

Luke 11:27

"And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!'"

Isaiah 66:10–11

"'Rejoice with Jerusalem, And be glad with her, all you who love her;
Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her;
That you may feed and be satisfied
With the consolation of her bosom,
That you may drink deeply and be delighted
With the abundance of her glory.'"

Psalm 22:9

"But You are He who took Me out of the womb;

You made Me trust while I was on My mother's breasts."

1 Timothy 5:8

"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."

Numbers 11:12

"Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers?"

Psalm 139:14

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works…."

Suggestions for Sermon: The First Food—From the Hand of God

God does not leave His creations incomplete. You may not know God's plan for you. It may take years to truly develop the skills and talents God has in mind for you, but He has given you the foundation to be the person you will become. It was all there when you were born. Live your life as God commands, listen for His words of guidance and turn to Him to quench your spiritual thirst.

It is the same for newborn babies and their mothers. A mother has all of the nutrients in her breast milk that her baby needs to survive and thrive. As we read in the Epistle of James, ***"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."*** (Epistle of James 1:17)

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above..." What could be a more perfect gift for a new baby than the nourishment designed especially for that child? Doctors and scientists know that breast milk provides the best nutrition possible for newborns and infants. It gives babies all the nutrients they need for a healthy start in life. Breast milk contains substances to help protect babies from dangerous illnesses such as diarrhea and pneumonia, which are responsible for the deaths of more than four million children annually worldwide. Breastfeeding should begin as soon as possible after birth. The initial liquid that appears before the mother's milk comes in is called colostrum and contains antibodies that help fight diseases.

The mother should continue breastfeeding her baby as long as possible, and breast milk should be the only substance given to the child for the first six months. After six months, other substances can be introduced as health care workers advise. Breastfeeding is also safer than formula feeding, especially when powdered formula is used and mixed with unsafe water. The baby can become sick from contaminated water and suffer serious diarrhea.

Luke speaks of the importance of breastfeeding a child and tells of a time when Jesus was speaking to a crowd. He writes, ***"And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!'"*** (Luke 11:27)

Scripture has moving references to a mother nursing her newborn infant. The prophet Isaiah tells us the word of the Lord on many such matters. He speaks of the joy of Jerusalem and compares Jerusalem to a nursing mother. ***"'Rejoice with Jerusalem, And be glad with her, all you who love her; Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; That you may feed and be satisfied With the consolation of her bosom, That you may drink deeply and be delighted With the abundance of her glory."*** (Isaiah 66:10–11) The abundance and glory of Jerusalem are being compared to breast milk. It is the ultimate nourishment God created.

Breastfeeding benefits the child both physically and emotionally. Nursing an infant helps to build a bond between mother and child. The psalmist wrote of the trust that is fostered by a mother breastfeeding her child when he speaks of God instilling trust in him. ***"But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while I was on My mother's breasts."*** (Psalm 22:9)

Breastfeeding is also helpful to mothers. It reduces the risks of breast and ovarian cancer later in life and helps the new mother return to her pre-pregnancy weight. In the six months following birth, breastfeeding is an excellent method of birth spacing as long as the mother is exclusively breastfeeding, meaning she is not feeding the baby any other substances including water, porridge or potions, and her menses have not returned. If the mother does not exclusively breastfeed, her menses return and the baby is older than six months, she will need to use another method of birth spacing.

Another advantage of breastfeeding is that there is no cost for the milk. The mother can provide the ultimate nutrition for her baby from her own body. She needs to eat a healthy diet and take in more calories than she normally consumes. However, the benefits of the breast milk are well worth it. We are reminded that God expects a family, especially the father in the family, to provide for his wife and children. ***"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 Timothy 5:8)

Parents are responsible for their children and for providing for them. The responsibility of seeing that the child is given every chance to successfully breastfeed does not depend only on the mother. The father has an important role to play in providing necessary support for the baby and mother to ensure that the child is properly nurtured and nourished with breast milk.

When Moses struggled to lead the Israelites as they wandered for years in the wilderness, he expressed his frustration to God. Moses asks, ***"Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers?"*** (Numbers 11:12) Moses speaks of a guardian carrying the nursing child. The mother is not the only one who should be holding and supporting the child. The father as guardian of the family should be helping the mother and working with her to support the baby.

Mothers, you may need help in learning how to breastfeed. Please ask for the help you need. Other women in your community who have breastfed can help. You can also ask at your heath clinic for help from the health care workers. They should be able to help or to tell you where you can get help

learning the proper techniques to make breastfeeding comfortable and effective for you and your baby.

God has given us the ultimate nourishment for our souls and bodies. We need to turn to His words in scripture to feed our souls. We turn to our brothers and sisters in Christ for help at times in interpreting His word, and we help those who turn to us. Likewise, God has given us breast milk, the ultimate nourishment for our children. We should also turn to our families and brothers and sisters in Christ for help in seeing that we provide this nourishment to our children. It is our responsibility to support our families and the mothers of our children as they give the gift of breast milk, the perfect nutrition for a baby. As the psalmist wrote, ***"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works…"*** (Psalm 139:14) Marvelous are the works of God, let us rejoice in them.

Appendix I: Major Causes of Death and Injury for Mothers and Their Babies

Each year, more than half a million women die of pregnancy-related causes and another 20 million suffer serious and long-lasting illnesses or disabilities. Of the 130 million babies born every year, about four million die in the first four weeks of life. Most of these deaths are from preventable causes and could be avoided with proper health care.

Causes of Death and Injury for the Mother

The five main causes of a mother's death are excessive bleeding, infection, eclampsia (sometimes known as convulsions), labor that lasts much longer than normal and complications of unsafe abortions or incorrect treatment.

Excessive bleeding (hemorrhage): Blood loss during labor can very rapidly lead to death without prompt and appropriate lifesaving care such as medicines to control bleeding, massage of the uterus to stimulate contractions or blood transfusion.

Sepsis (resulting from infections): Sepsis, which accounts for 15% of maternal deaths, is often the result of poor hygiene during delivery or untreated sexually transmitted diseases. Infections can be prevented by proper hygiene practices during delivery and detection and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases during pregnancy.

Eclampsia (convulsions): Eclampsia is the cause of approximately 12% of maternal deaths and is a hypertensive (high blood pressure) disorder. These deaths can be prevented through careful monitoring during pregnancy and treatment with anticonvulsant drugs such as magnesium sulfate.

Prolonged labor: Labor that lasts much longer than normal accounts for about 8% of maternal deaths, and can occur when the baby's head cannot pass through the mother's pelvis or when the baby is in the wrong position to pass through the birth canal. When mothers are unusually small, either from a poor diet or because they are very young and not yet fully grown, they are at an increased risk for prolonged labor.

Unsafe abortions: Complications of unsafe abortions are responsible for 13% of maternal deaths. These deaths can be prevented if women have access to family planning information and services, and proper health care for abortion-related complications.

Causes of Death for the Baby

The major causes of newborn death across the globe are:
Infections: 36% of all newborn deaths are caused by infections, including sepsis/pneumonia (26%), tetanus (7%) and diarrhea (3%).

Pre-term birth/low birth weight: 28% of all newborn deaths are caused by pre-term birth or low birth weight. Babies weighing less than normal are either born too early, or born on time but smaller

than normal. Small babies are unable to maintain their body temperature, fight infection or feed normally.

Asphyxia: 23% of all newborn deaths are caused by asphyxia, which occurs when a baby does not receive enough oxygen before, during or just after birth. There are many reasons that birth asphyxia may occur.

Birth defects (also known as congenital abnormalities): 14% of all newborn deaths are caused by birth defects. The causes of most birth defects are unknown, but some are preventable.

Solutions to Save the Lives of Mothers and Babies

The following strategies have been proven to reduce the number of maternal and newborn deaths.

1. Seek help of health care workers and skilled attendants:

- At least four visits to a health care worker beginning in early pregnancy
- Baby should be delivered by a skilled attendant, such as a midwife, doctor or nurse

2. Mother should follow healthy behaviors during pregnancy:

- The mother should eat a healthy diet, take iron and vitamin supplements as prescribed by the health care worker, and be vaccinated against tetanus

3. Malaria prevention:

- Sleep under an insecticide-treated bed net
- Take medicine to prevent malaria (sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine) as prescribed by health care worker

4. Be prepared for the unexpected:

- Develop a plan for the birth including emergency transport if need arises

5. Recognize these danger signs and take immediate action:

- Bleeding, swelling, severe headache, convulsions and severe fatigue

6. Mother and baby must go for a checkup as soon as possible after birth:

- Within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after birth

7. Birth spacing:

- Wait at least two years after a birth before becoming pregnant again

8. Man of the family should take responsibility for:

- The health of the woman during pregnancy, birth and after birth
- The health of the new baby

9. Advocate against these practices that harm women, families and communities:

- Female genital cutting
- Violence against women
- Forced marriage
- Very young motherhood

10. Promote breastfeeding for a healthy start

Appendix II: Nutrition in Pregnancy for Healthy Moms and Babies*

A pregnant woman needs to get the right nutrients to support her growing baby. During pregnancy a woman should:

- Eat a balanced diet of beans and nuts, starchy foods (e.g., potatoes, cassava, maize, cereals, rice), animal products (meat, milk, eggs, fish, yogurt, cheese), and fruits and vegetables.
- Eat a variety of foods each day, including foods rich in:
  - Iron: red meat, liver, eggs, peanuts, lentils, dark green leafy vegetables and shellfish. Substances that inhibit iron absorption, such as coffee or tea and calcium supplements, should be avoided or taken two hours after meal.
  - Vitamin A: liver, milk products, eggs, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, carrots, papaya, palm oil, mangos, tomatoes, avocado, pumpkins, okra, spinach and amaranths.
  - Calcium: milk, dark green leafy vegetables, shrimp, dried fish, beans, lentils, whole grain millets and oil seeds.
  - Magnesium: cereals, dark green leafy vegetables, seafood, nuts, legumes and groundnuts.
  - Vitamin C: oranges or other citrus fruits, tomatoes, leafy greens and potatoes.
  - Vitamin E: avocado, groundnuts, cashew nuts, corn oil, spinach, liver, eggs and mango.
  - Thiamine (vitamin B1): whole grain cereals; wheat germ; maize; millet and sorghum; lean meat, especially pork, liver and poultry; eggs; fish; dried beans; peas; and soybeans.
  - Riboflavin (vitamin B2): whole grain cereals, wheat germ, maize, millet, sorghum, fish, lean meats, eggs, legumes, nuts (groundnuts, cashew nuts, oyster nuts), pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, green leafy vegetables, dairy products and milk.
  - Niacin (vitamin B3): whole grain cereals, wheat germ, maize, millet, sorghum, dairy products, milk, poultry, fish, lean meats, nuts (especially groundnuts), legumes, mushroom, avocado, baobab fruits and eggs.

* The information in this appendix was compiled from Nutrition and Pregnancy resources of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 409 12th St., S.W., PO Box 96920, Washington, D.C. 20090-6920; and the Food and Nutrition Information Center of the National Agriculture Library USDA, 10301 Baltimore Ave., Room 105 Beltsville, MD 201705-2351.

- Vitamin B6: nuts, legumes, eggs, meats, fish, whole grains, sweet potatoes, avocado and cabbage.
- Vitamin B12: eggs, meat, poultry, shellfish, milk, milk products and fermented foods, such as yogurt and togwa.
- Folic acid: beans and legumes, oranges, tangerines, tamarind, limes, lemons, guava, baobab fruits, grape fruits, grapes, passion fruit, mabungo, strawberries, whole grains cereals, dark green leafy vegetables, meat, poultry, shellfish, fish, liver and avocado.

Pregnant women should also:

- Eat at least one additional serving of staple food per day.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals if unable to consume larger amounts in fewer meals.
- Take supplements (iron and vitamins) as advised by a health care worker.

It is recommended that women and families use locally available foods that will provide pregnant women with essential nutrients.

Appendix III: Are You Ready for Baby? A Birth Preparedness Plan

Every woman and baby is at risk of developing a life-threatening complication. Most of these complications cannot be predicted. However, with advanced planning they can be managed. Preparing for the birth and possible complications can help avoid tragedy and save the life of the mother and baby.

Birth Preparedness Checklist:

Before a mother gives birth, the family should work with a health care worker to plan the following:

- Where the baby will be delivered
- Which skilled attendant (midwife, doctor or nurse) will help her with the delivery
- How you will contact the skilled attendant
- Family knows which supplies are needed for birth and has them ready
- How the mother will get to the facility when it is time
- How to pay for the cost of care
- Who will take care of the family's children while the mother is away
- Entire family/household knows the plan

Prepare for the Unexpected: Checklist to Manage Complications:

Early in the woman's pregnancy, the family should work with a health care worker to answer the following questions:

- Are all members in the household able to recognize danger signs in pregnancy?

- Who will make the decision that emergency care is needed? Who can make the decision if that person is not home?
- Which health care facility will be used if danger signs appear?
- Which supplies are needed and are they ready?
- How will the mother be transported to the facility?
- Who will stay with the family's children in case emergency care is needed?
- Who will donate blood if it becomes necessary?
- How will the cost of emergency care be paid for?

Danger Signs during Pregnancy:

A family should go to the nearest health facility if the pregnant mother experiences any of the following danger signs:

- Vaginal bleeding or foul-smelling/fluid from vagina
- Breathing difficulty
- Fever
- Decrease/absence of fetal movements
- Severe headache
- Severe abdominal pain
- Swelling of face and hands
- Convulsions/loss of consciousness
- Leaking of greenish/brownish fluid from vagina
- Unusual fatigue

Items Needed for Clean and Safe Birth and Newborn Care:

Families should make sure the following items are available for the birth and for the baby immediately following birth.

BIRTH	Perineal pads/cloths, soap, clean bed clothes, placenta receptacle, clean, unused razor blade, waterproof/plastic cover, clean cord ties
NEWBORN	Blankets, diapers/napkins, hat, clothes, etc. that have been washed and dried in the sun

Appendix IV: Care for the New Mother and Baby after Birth

The mother and baby should be seen by a health care worker for checkups within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after birth. In addition, it is recommended that small or low birth weight babies (weighing less than 2500g) receive an extra visit from a health care worker five days after birth.

In addition to the checkups, the family should seek medical attention if any of the following danger signs are seen in the mother or baby.

Danger Signs in Mother	Danger Signs in Baby
Vaginal bleeding (heavy or sudden increase) Breathing difficulty Fever Severe abdominal pain Severe headache/blurred vision Convulsion/loss of consciousness Foul-smelling discharge from vagina or tears/incision Pain in calf, with or without swelling Verbalization/behavior that indicates she may hurt the baby or herself, or hallucinations	Breathing difficulty Blueness Cold to touch Yellowness (jaundice) Diarrhea Persistent vomiting or abdominal distention Not feeding or poor suckling Swollen limb or joint Lethargy (moving only when stimulated) Convulsions, spasms, loss of consciousness or back arching Hot to touch/fever (temperature above 37.5°C) Temperature below 35.5°C Rapid breathing (respiratory rate faster than 60 breaths per minute) Chest indrawing (inward movement of lower chest while breathing) Bleeding Pallor Pus or redness of the skin Floppiness

Feeding the Baby

Breastfeeding has many **benefits** for the woman and newborn, including:

- Provides the best nutrition for the newborn:
  - Is easily digested and efficiently used by the baby's body
  - Protects against infection and other illnesses
  - Offers some protection against allergies
- Is cost-effective/affordable
- Promotes mother-baby bonding
- Provides the woman with some level of contraceptive protection until menses return (as long as she is exclusively breastfeeding and the baby is under six months old)

General principles of early and exclusive breastfeeding:

- Babies should begin breastfeeding as soon as possible after birth (preferably within the first hour) and continue for the first six months of life.
- Colostrum, the first milk, should be given to the baby, not thrown away.
- The baby should be breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life. This means that nothing else should be given to the baby to drink or eat during that time.

- The baby should be breastfed whenever s/he wants, day and night (on demand), which stimulates the breasts to produce an adequate supply of breast milk.

Maintaining Warmth

- The woman and baby should be kept in skin-to-skin contact, covered with a clean, dry blanket/ covering, as much as possible for the first six hours after birth.
  - If the baby cannot be in skin-to-skin contact with the woman (or after six hours), dress her/him in an extra layer or two (in addition to what is comfortable for adults) of clothing or blankets/covering.
- Do not bathe the baby for at least the first 24 hours, and not until the baby's temperature is stable.
- Avoid dressing the baby in tight, restrictive clothing or blanket/coverings because they reduce the retention of heat.
- Cover the baby's head with hat.
- Keep the room warm (25°C or more) and free from drafts.
- Check the newborn's feet at least every four hours for the first 24 hours or until his/her temperature is stable.
  - If the feet feel cold in comparison to normal adult skin, extra warmth is required immediately; add a layer of clothing and blanket/coverings.
  - If the feet feel hot in comparison to normal adult skin, remove a layer of clothing and blankets/coverings.
  - If the feet remain cold or hot for one hour after the above changes are made, enact the complication readiness plan.

Prevention of Infection

The following practices are especially important in the first months of life because the baby's immune system (protection against infections) is still developing and may be more susceptible to infections:

- In general, the woman and other people should wash their hands before touching or caring for the baby. They should also wash their hands after cleaning the baby or changing her/his diaper/napkin.
- The mother should care for her own baby as much as possible.
- Sharing of baby equipment and supplies with other babies and children should be avoided.
- Sick children and adults should be kept away from the baby because of the risk of cross-infection (from one person to another).
- The baby should be protected from smoke, which can result in respiratory problems.
- The mother should remain vigilant for signs of infection and other newborn danger signs. If any of these signs are seen, she should immediately enact the complication readiness plan.

- Other practices that help protect the baby from infection include the following:
  - Breastfeeding
  - Proper cord care
  - Getting the recommended immunizations
  - Sleeping under an insecticide-treated (bed) net in malaria-endemic areas

Washing and Bathing

- The baby should not be bathed for the first 24 hours, and not until the baby's temperature is stable.
- Soap is not necessary and should never be used on a baby's face; mild soap can be used on the rest of the baby's body.
- While bathing the newborn, the family should remain vigilant for signs of infection and other danger signs, especially in skin fold areas around neck and groin.
- It is not necessary to bathe the newborn daily, especially if it is difficult to ensure a warm environment for the bath; however, the baby's groin/genitals and buttocks should be washed and dried each time the diaper/napkin is soiled/wet.

Vaccines/Immunizations

The baby should be immunized according to the schedule below.

VACCINE	DUE
BCG to protect against tuberculosis	After birth
OPV-0 to protect against poliomyelitis	After birth
HB-1 to protect against hepatitis B	After birth

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The ACCESS Program is the U.S. Agency for International Development's global program to improve maternal and newborn health. The ACCESS Program works to expand coverage, access and use of key maternal and newborn health services across a continuum of care from the household to the hospital—with the aim of making quality health services accessible as close to the home as possible. Jhpiego implements the program in partnership with Save the Children, Constella Futures, the Academy for Educational Development, the American College of Nurse-Midwives and IMA World Health.