



**CCIH**  
Christian Connections  
for International Health



ADVANCING PARTNERS  
& COMMUNITIES



# FAITH MATTERS

International Family Planning From A Christian Perspective



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.



THE SCIENCE OF IMPROVING LIVES

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Advancing Partners & Communities (APC) is implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., in collaboration with FHI 360. The project focuses on advancing and supporting community programs that seek to improve the overall health of communities and achieve other health-related impacts, especially in relationship to family planning. APC provides global leadership for community-based programming, executes and manages small- and medium-sized sub-awards, supports procurement reform by preparing awards for execution by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and builds technical capacity of organizations to implement effective programs. Learn more about APC at [advancingpartners.org](http://advancingpartners.org).

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A Note from the Planning Committee:  
The information in this document was compiled from input and suggestions during the Faith Matters: International Family Planning from a Christian Perspective meeting in December 2014. This source is by no means exhaustive and we hope readers will continue seeking out other resources not mentioned here.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Key Words and Acronyms	3
Introduction	4
A Biblical Perspective	5
The Importance of Family Planning in Public Health	6
Themes and Resources	8
Healthy Gender Roles	10
Sexual Intercourse and Personal Responsibility	12
Community Relationships	15
Policy Influencers	17
Bibliography	19

## KEY WORDS AND ACRONYMS

**Advancing Partners & Communities (APC):** is implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., in collaboration with FHI 360. The project focuses on advancing and supporting community programs that seek to improve the overall health of communities and achieve other health-related impacts, especially in relationship to family planning. APC provides global leadership for community-based programming, executes and manages small- and medium-sized sub-awards, supports procurement reform by preparing awards for execution by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and builds technical capacity of organizations to implement effective programs. Learn more about APC at [advancingpartners.org](http://advancingpartners.org).



**Contraception:** This term encompasses all methods used to prevent pregnancy, including: withdrawal, fertility awareness methods (such as the Standard Days Method®), oral contraceptives, implants, injectables, intrauterine devices (IUDs), condoms, sterilization, the lactational amenorrhea method (LAM), and emergency contraception (WHO, 2013).

**Family Planning (FP):** enables couples to determine the number and timing of pregnancies, including the voluntary use of methods for preventing pregnancy – not including abortion – that are harmonious with their values and beliefs.

**Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy (HTSP):** an approach to family planning that helps women and families delay, space, or limit their pregnancies to achieve the healthiest outcomes for women, newborns, infants, and children. HTSP works within the context of free and informed contraceptive choice and takes into account fertility intentions and desired family size (WHO, 2013).

**United States Agency for International Development (USAID):** USAID is the lead U.S. Government agency that works to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realize their potential.

**Unmet Need for Family Planning:** percentage of women who are fecund and sexually active but are not using any method of contraception, and report not wanting any more children or wanting to delay the next child (WHO, 2013).



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# INTRODUCTION

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## JOHN 10:10

*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

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On December 3-4, 2014, Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH), Salvation Army World Service Office (SAWSO), USAID's Advancing Partners & Communities (APC) project, and the United Nation Foundation's (UNF) Universal Access Project (UAP) co-hosted a technical meeting entitled "Faith Matters: International Family Planning from a Christian Perspective". The meeting was held at the Salvation Army National Headquarters in Alexandria, VA and was attended by 48 representatives from 26 international health organizations, various Christian denominations, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Overall, participants agreed that family planning programs should focus on locally sustainable efforts; prioritizing cultural competency; and emphasizing the voluntary, informed choice of reproductive health services. In addition, programs should incorporate messages on the following: biblical teachings; culture-specific gender roles; local leadership involvement; economic-driven reasoning; male and female involvement in education and programming; the dangers of early child marriage;

the importance of waiting until at least age 18 to conceive children; and the benefits of promoting healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies for women and their families.

As you review these themes, please keep in mind CCIH's definition of family planning (also in the Key Words section):

Enabling couples to determine the number and timing of pregnancies, including the voluntary use of methods for preventing pregnancy – not including abortion – that are harmonious with their values and beliefs.

Based on information gathered from the aforementioned meeting and reviews by other Christians working in global health, this document offers effective family planning messaging for all groups of people within a Christian community, including youth,

married couples, their extended family members, community opinion leaders, teachers, government officials, and religious leaders. The messages are arranged by broad themes, with suggested target populations listed with each section.

The evidence is clear that using family planning to space and limit births improves the health of mothers and children, and CCIH recognizes the harm to women and children by mistimed, unintended and unwanted pregnancies. However, CCIH also affirms that family planning programs must stress voluntary and informed decision making. Programs should be culturally appropriate, developed with strong collaboration from local communities, respect their beliefs, and support the potential for all community members to live an abundant life.

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## A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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As Christians, we have both the responsibility and the opportunity to turn to the Bible regarding the role of family planning in public health. Both the Old and New Testaments are rich with scripture supporting family planning. There are several key themes throughout the Bible that relate to this topic, including social justice, being responsible stewards of God's estate, and how sex is a gift given to increase intimacy between spouses.

In his presentation on December 3, 2014 at the Faith Matters meeting, Reverend Jackson Day, of the United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society said, "In the ancient world, to name something was to identify its worth, importance, value. The author of Genesis gave this role, intrinsic to creation, to Adam. Thus it's appropriate to call Adam, and by extension, all of humanity, co-creators with God. Naming is an independent role; Genesis does not tell us that God told Adam to name this creature "bird" and that creature "cow"; Genesis tells us that it was Adam who made the decision. If you accept the full implication of this passage, God has undertaken some things and left other things to humanity. Surely that includes the number and spacing of our children (Day, 2014)." He referred to the following bible verse:

*So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field  
and every bird of the air,  
and brought them to the man to see what he would call them;  
and whatever the man called every living creature,  
that was its name. (Genesis 2:19 NRSV)*

On the role of sex in marital relationships, note that for the author of Genesis, the purpose of creating the second human was companionship because "it is not good that the man should be alone." If you look at the rest of this passage, it is companionship for which a man and woman become one flesh. Of course, pregnancy often results, but the Genesis passage establishes that pregnancy is not the first, let alone the sole, purpose of sex. First is companionship (Day, 2014).

*Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone.  
I will make him a helper as his partner.  
Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother  
and clings to his wife and they become one flesh. (Genesis 2:18, 24 NRSV)*

Finally, we acknowledge the importance of taking into account the entire framework in which all scriptural passages occur, as many passages are often interpreted out of context. The most well-known of these is Genesis 9:1: "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." This passage has often been interpreted as a mandate to individual couples. Consider that this command is a shared responsibility for all mankind.

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY PLANNING IN PUBLIC HEALTH

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**Family Planning (FP):**

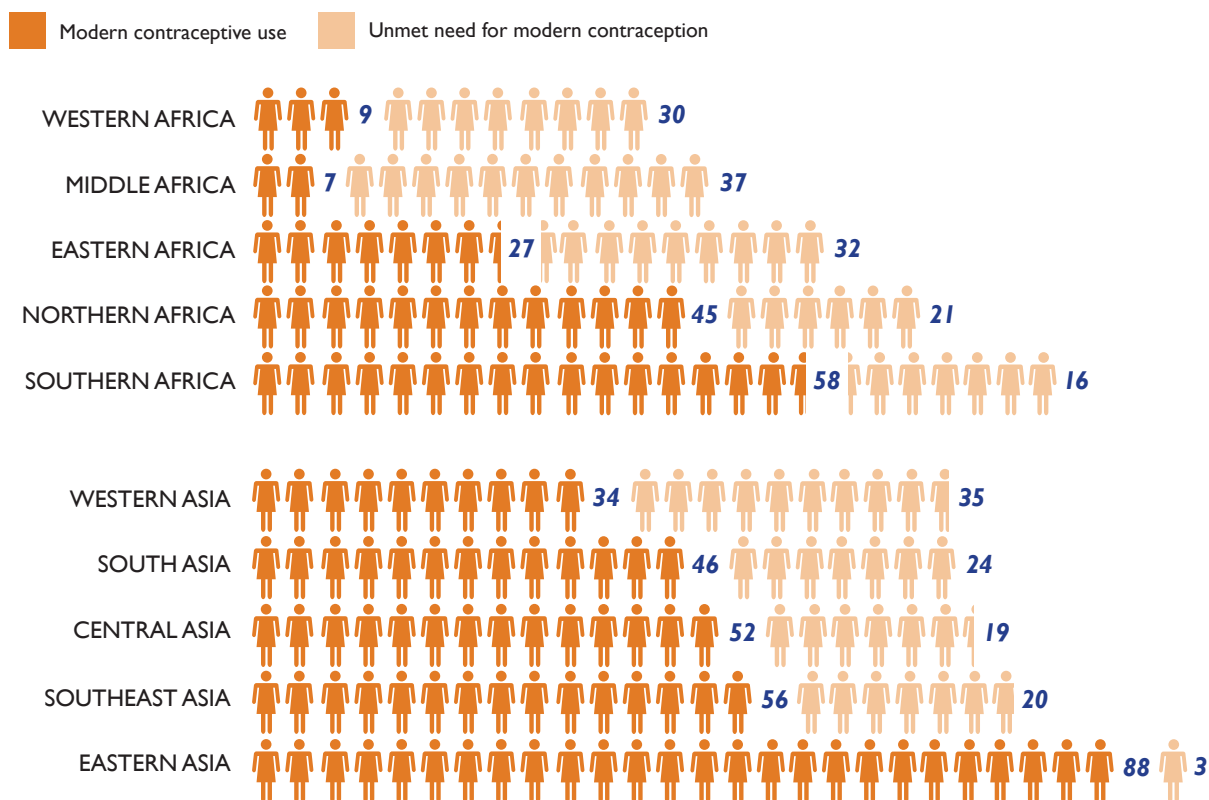
enables couples to determine the number and timing of pregnancies, including the voluntary use of methods for preventing pregnancy – not including abortion – that are harmonious with their values and beliefs.

Family planning is important from a global health perspective because it has been strongly associated with reduced maternal and child mortality. Additionally, women who space their pregnancies at three-year intervals (as opposed to less than two-year intervals) are up to three times less likely to experience their infant's death. Finally, of the estimated 80 million unintended pregnancies that occur every year worldwide, up to 40 million of these result in an induced abortion (Singh and Darrock, 2012).

The majority of these maternal and child deaths and abortions occur in countries where there is an unmet need for family planning. Unmet need is defined as the percentage of women who are not currently using a method of contraception, including traditional methods, and want to stop or delay childbearing (WHO, 2013). This statistic is calculated based on country-wide surveys. There are an estimated 222 million women in less-developed countries who experience this unmet need. If these women have access to family planning methods and unmet need is addressed, it would prevent 26 million abortions, 79,000 maternal deaths and 1.1 million infant deaths (Singh and Darrock, 2012).



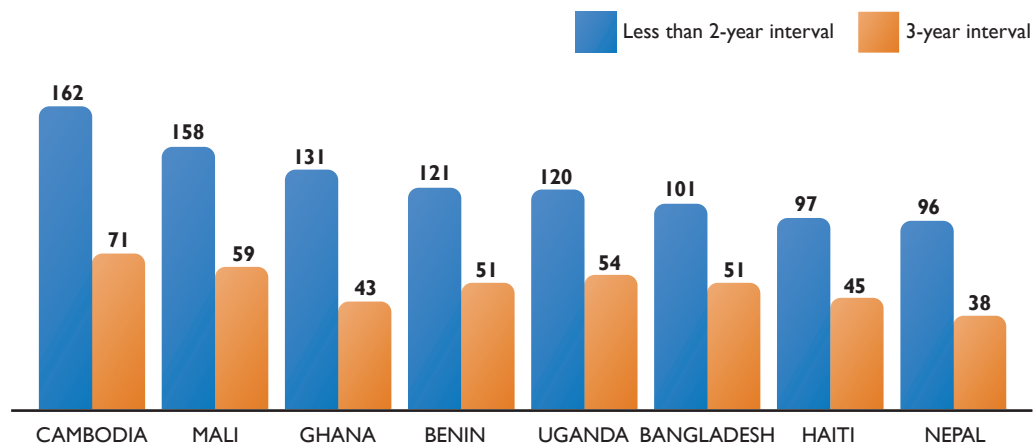
### Percentage of married women using contraception and with unmet need in Africa and Asia



Source: Singh and Darroch 2012

### Women with short intervals between births have higher deaths among their infants

Deaths per 1,000 infants under age 1



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## THEMES AND RESOURCES

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The following discussion themes emerged during the course of the meeting: Bible-Based Concepts; Healthy Gender Roles; Sexual Intercourse and Personal Responsibility; Community Relationships; and Policy Influencers.

### BIBLE-BASED CONCEPTS

Messages based on our relationship with God center around four main ideas:



#### **We are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).**

- a. To be made in God's image is to be a co-creator with God; God's creation is intentional and considered, not forced or haphazard. To be made in God's image is to have dignity, value, and agency – all of which mean that women's bodies should be respected, by themselves and by men.
- b. You have the authority to dream and plan, including the family and children you will have. Share your vision; talk with your family and friends; create spaces where it is safe for women to share their dreams and allow them to do so.



**Our bodies are sacred vessels (1 Corinthians 6:19-20):** Although important for all people to know, this idea is especially important for youth thinking about having sex early, or disempowered women who have been taken advantage of in their marriages or previous relationships.

An example is: You are of infinite value. Therefore, value yourself and expect others to value you.



**Marital sex is a gift from God to experience and express His love:** Communities that may vilify sex or view its only purpose as procreation may need to hear these messages. On the other hand, communities that have “commoditized” sex may need to hear these as well. Examples include:

- a. “Every great and perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17). Sex is healthy and natural and a gift. Sex should be given freely and not be forced.
- b. The bible affirms the goodness of sexuality of God's gift. The Song of Solomon is an extended love poem with erotic imagery and language. Sex is affirmed as a source of pleasure and shared intimacy between a husband and a wife. Sexual pleasure is not an accident, but a gift. The shared joy of physical union is a vital part of the marital bond.
- c. Sex is powerful. It can have many consequences, emotional and physical. Handle with care. We have an obligation to use it responsibly.
- d. Know the difference between love and lust, and refuse to settle for less than love.



## 4

**God values children and gives them special worth in scripture:** “but Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.’” (Matthew 19:14). This message is particularly important for communities where girls are married at very young ages. Examples include:

- a. Women and girls are children of God, created in the divine image, and have sacred worth. They shall be treated with equal value in families and communities. The Old Testament commands us to care for orphans and widows, the marginalized and disempowered (Deuteronomy 24:17-22).
- b. You have a sacred responsibility to protect single unmarried girls and boys and empower them to remain sexually pure until marriage. Provide girls with the knowledge and skills to respect themselves and refuse sex. Delaying pregnancies past age 18 is valuing a girl’s health.
  1. If working with youth who are sexually active, remind them that this does not make them less loved by God, but should motivate them to question their potentially harmful behavior and embrace Christ’s message (John 8:1-8).
- c. Children are a gift from God. God has “entrusted” them to your care and you have a responsibility to inform/instruct and protect them. You must share with them about responsible decision-making. “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.” (Proverbs 22:6)

## RELATED RESOURCES:

1. *IMA World Health: Christian Sermon Guide to Save the Lives of Mothers and Newborns: A Toolkit for Religious Leaders (2009)*: This document helps pastors guide their congregants through safe and healthy practices that save mother and infant lives. It addresses common issues through the context of sermons and Biblical citations. Access this resource at: [http://imaworldhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Christian\\_Sermon\\_Guide.pdf](http://imaworldhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Christian_Sermon_Guide.pdf).
2. *The National Association of Evangelicals: Support for Celebrating Life Pastoral Resource Packet (2012)*: This packet includes practical advice on family planning and contraception, and how they reduce abortions. Access this resource at: [www.nae.net/support-for-celebrating-life](http://www.nae.net/support-for-celebrating-life).

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## HEALTHY GENDER ROLES

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There is often confusion regarding how scripture addresses gender roles. Passages in the Book of Ephesians address mutual love and respect between a husband and wife, such as “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25); and “Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord” (Eph 5:22). These passages speak of love and mutual respect, not of domination or fear. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21) is the context in which Paul goes on to describe men’s and women’s responsibilities in marriage. Husbands should honor and cherish their wives, and that includes placing a high value on her health. Messages incorporating gender roles in each community center on the following concepts:



**Empowering women and girls leads to better outcomes for themselves, their families, and their communities:** While these ideas are important for disempowered women and girls to assert, all members of a community – particularly community and faith leaders – need to understand the link between empowered women, family planning, and healthier communities. Examples include:

- a. Enable women to contribute to the economy by allowing them to become educated and balance family with income-producing activities.
- b. Educate Girls. Investing in girls so that they will complete the next level of education would lead to lifetime earnings of today’s girls that is equivalent to up to 68 percent of annual gross domestic product (Chaaban and Cunningham, 2011).
- c. Girls should be able to say: “I am special and want to get an education”; “I want to get an education, so help me to say no to sex, and protect me from predators (such as older men).”
- d. Girls are just as important as boys. Recognize their contributions to communities.
- e. A woman is wise, selfless, and has inner strength from her relationship with God that compels her to be kind, helpful and hard-working, and become educated and trained in skills to be the best mother, wife, and community member she can (Proverbs 31:10-31).



**The Idea of Masculinity:** All men and boys should learn that being “a man” in God’s eyes is respecting, caring for, and nurturing women and children. This should begin to be taught in childhood by parents and faith leaders, be strengthened in adolescence, and continued prior to and into marriage. Examples include:

- a. Keep your wife healthy and your children healthy by taking responsibility to space childbirths.
- b. True men cherish and protect women. One does not conquer or abuse/use women.
- c. True Manhood is not measured by the number of women slept with, but by keeping the same woman satisfied, safe and blessed for a lifetime. Freedom and strength are not found in a multiplicity of partners but in commitment and self-mastery.



**Marital Relationships:** As a nucleus of all Christian families, the relationship between a husband and wife is critical to promoting mutual respect between genders. Some examples of effective messaging and questions for discussion include:

- a. You both have rights and responsibilities when deciding if/when to have children.

- b. How do you express your love for your wife/husband/children?
- c. It is “right” to talk with your spouse and decide on the number of children to have, and how to use family planning to achieve desired family size.
- d. Spacing and timing can help fulfill a woman’s role as child bearer, help keep the children you have healthier, and fosters health and prosperity for the entire family.

## RELATED RESOURCES:

1. *A Call to Christian Common Ground on Family Planning, and Maternal, and Children’s Health (2012)*. This report by The New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good links family planning to issues such as healthy family formation, maternal and child health, and abortion reduction. This framework is used to initiate widespread conversation and deliberation among United States and international evangelicals and others regarding family planning: <http://faithtoactionnetwork.org/resources/a-call-to-christian-common-ground-on-family-planning-and-maternal-and-childrens-health-2/>.
2. “Engaging Men in Family Planning Services Delivery: Experiences Introducing the Standard Days Method® (SDM) in Four Countries” (2012). *The World Health & Population Journal*. Rebecka Lundgren, Jeannette Cachan and Victoria Jennings of the Institute for Reproductive Health discuss the impact of male involvement in family planning programs in four countries, and especially the role that the Standard Days Method® plays in requiring cooperation of the male partner. Family planning is often regarded as the woman’s responsibility, but there is growing recognition of the need to involve men in family planning programs. The Standard Days Method® has provided an opportunity to test innovative strategies to engage couples in family planning. This resource can be accessed here: <http://www.longwoods.com/content/23097>.
3. *Love, Children and Family Planning (2013)*. This book was produced by Georgetown University’s Institute for Reproductive Health and Christian Connections for International Health in collaboration with Judith Brown, PhD. This Bible discussion guide is meant to be used by small groups – in churches, in neighborhoods and in Christian nursing schools and health centers. It is meant to be discussed and debated by Christians in all walks of life. This was a cooperative effort of Christian health workers, pastors, church leaders, youth, and members of churches in DR Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and the United States. This guide is currently being used in Kenya. We encourage you to test it in your own program and tailor it to the local context. Your feedback on the tool is welcome.
  - A printed version of this resource: <http://ccih.org/BibleStudy-Printer%20Spread.pdf>.
  - An electronic version of this resource: <http://www.ccih.org/Love-Children-Family-Planning.pdf>.
4. *Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: The Girl Effect Dividend (2011)*. This World Bank report shows that investing in girls so that they would complete the next level of education would lead to lifetime earnings of today’s girls that is equivalent to up to 68 percent of annual gross domestic product. The report can be accessed at: <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-5753>.
5. *Untying the Knot: Exploring Early Marriage in Fragile States (2013)*. Report by World Vision on “the ways in which current interventions by governments and the international community...could be strengthened to ensure that the cycle of poverty and inequality created by early marriage is broken for future generations of girls.” This resource can be accessed at: [http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/press-reports/\\$file/Untying-the-Knot\\_report.pdf](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/press-reports/$file/Untying-the-Knot_report.pdf).

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## SEXUAL INTERCOURSE AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Successful family planning includes each individual's understanding of and ability to control how they engage in sexual intercourse. A strong Christian family planning program should explore both the holiness of sexual interactions, but also the responsibilities God has given humankind through this gift. As explored in previous sections, women should be valued and equal partners in loving relationships. Decisions to engage in sexual intercourse should always be mutual among husband and wife.

*You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride;  
you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes,  
With one jewel of your necklace.  
How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!  
How much better is your love than wine,  
And the fragrance of your oils than any spice!  
Your lips distill nectar, my bride;  
honey and milk are under your tongue;  
The scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon.  
(Song of Solomon 4:9-11)*

The Song of Solomon evokes the imagery of sex without pregnancy. It is a poem purely dedicated to romance, sex, and passion. This passage is a love poem; it doesn't mention God. And it doesn't mention family planning. It doesn't mention children. It is simply an unbridled expression of the theology that God is good, life is good, love is good – and sex is intended to be good because it brings people together (Day, 2014).

Successful messaging can be divided into the following categories:

1

**Decision making:** Decisions to engage in sexual intercourse should be mutual among husband and wife. As referenced in the “Healthy Gender Roles” section, the Book of Ephesians addresses the mutual love and respect that must occur between a husband and wife. Holy marital sex is mutual and consensual, and we demonstrate our love by never degrading sexual relations via hostile, forced one-sided sex (1 Cor 7:3-5).

2

**Identifying motivators:** Particularly for young populations, programs should address the motivators behind wanting to engage in sexual intercourse. Possible discussion topics can include:

- Asking individuals to answer the question: Are you engaging in sexual activity? If so, why am I having sex? Why might I choose not to have sex? It is necessary to identify the root causes (e.g. loneliness, boredom, fear, etc.) and address those, not just the act of sex.
- Asking young people: Are they ready to be engaging in sex? What if they get pregnant or contract a sexually-transmitted disease? Do they feel comfortable asking questions about sex, and why or why not?



## 3

**Bringing generations together:** Those with authoritative positions in the community – parents, headmasters, church leaders, etc. – should engage in frank discussions with youth about the joys and responsibilities of safe sex in a monogamous relationship when they reach adulthood, as well as the repercussions of irresponsible sexual behavior. Discussion topics can include:

- a. How can parents/teachers/churches guide the healthy sexuality of their youth? The role of teachers and headmasters must be emphasized in this conversation, as children can spend over 20 percent of their formative years in school.
- b. There is a time for everything (Ecc 3:11). Let's talk and focus on today, tomorrow, and what we need to do before engaging in a sexual relationship (e.g. decision-making skills, focusing on the value of a person, etc). And if you are engaging in sex, let's talk and find the best way not to harm your body.
- c. Sex is more than mechanics. When sexual intercourse focuses on strengthening a couple's marital intimacy – not just physical pleasure – the impact is more full and satisfying. Ultimately, sex finds its fullest and healthiest expression in a monogamous committed marriage between adults, not a man and a young girl.
- d. Know your HIV status and your partner's status; seek immediate care if HIV+; and use condoms to prevent transmission.



## RELATED RESOURCES:

1. *American Catholics in Transition*. Co-written by Dr. William D'Antonio and Dr. Michele Dillon, this book explores the various topics facing American Catholics today and the wide diversity of those who self-identify as Catholic. Although this focuses on those living in the United States, it is an important resource for anyone working with American Catholics.  
Access portions of this book here: <http://www.ccih.org/Faith-Matters-American-Catholics.pdf>  
The book is available for purchase here: <http://www.amazon.com/American-Catholics-Transition-William-DAntonio/dp/1442219920>.
2. *Family Life Education: A Handbook for Adults Working with Youth from a Christian Perspective (2013)*. Compiled by FHI 360, this handbook is an introductory resource for adults working with youth in a Christian context. It is adapted from the participant handbook used in a training course with six workshops. It is an easy-to-use resource, providing basic information and guidance without a formal training curriculum. Access this resource at: <https://www.iywg.org/resources/family-life-education-handbook-adults-working-youth-christian-perspective>.
3. *Family Life Education: Teaching Youth about Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS from a Christian Perspective (2006)*. Compiled by FHI 360, this manual contains 12 short workshops designed for working with youth in a Christian faith community. It provides basic information on communication, development, sexuality, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and related issues. Access this resource at: <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/family-life-education-teaching-youth-about-reproductive-health-and-hiv-aids-christian>.
4. *Investing in very young adolescents' sexual and reproductive health (2014)*. This article published by Global Public Health stresses the importance of sexual and reproductive health programs targeting very young adolescents, ages 10 to 14. It states, "Since early adolescence marks a critical transition between childhood and older adolescence and adulthood setting the stage for future SRH and gender attitudes and behaviors, targeted investment in VYAs is imperative to lay foundations for healthy future relationships and positive SRH [sexual reproductive health]." Access this resource at: [http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17441692.2014.908230#.VL\\_muEfF-L4](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17441692.2014.908230#.VL_muEfF-L4).
5. *My Changing Body: Body Literacy & Fertility Awareness for Young People (2nd Edition) (2011)*. Developed by the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University, this manual has important information about changes that take place during puberty. It has content targeted toward both young adolescents and their parents, in an effort to initiate informed conversations and support between the two generations. Find the manual in different languages at: <http://irh.org/resource-library/my-changing-body-body-literacy-fertility-awareness-for-young-people-2nd-edition>.
6. *Resources on Natural Family Planning from the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University (IRH)*. IRH provides evidence-based materials and publications for program managers, healthcare providers, technical experts, researchers and policy makers on fertility awareness-based methods (FAM) of family planning [i.e. Standard Days Method®, TwoDay Method®, Lactational Amenorrhea Method®]. IRH publishes a wide range of materials, including FAM integration tools, training curricula, provider job aids, client brochures, advocacy briefs, scientific journal articles and instructional videos. Access these resources at: [http://irh.org/focus-areas/family\\_planning](http://irh.org/focus-areas/family_planning).

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## COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

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The Bible encourages us as a Christian community to weigh the economic implications of our decisions. The passage in Luke 14:28-30, often referred to as “Counting the Cost,” goes the closest to the heart of family planning. It depicts someone doing a financial calculation before making a decision to undertake a course of action. If it is a good thing to do prior to building a tower, how much more is it a good thing to undertake before creating a child (Day, 2014). In Luke’s gospel, Jesus states,

*For which of you, intending to build a tower,  
does not first sit down and estimate the cost,  
to see whether he has enough to complete it?  
Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish,  
all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying,  
“This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” Luke 14:28-30.*

*Clearly, Christians are meant to care for each other and to take responsibility for each other. That means we as a community should be helping each other to create and support the kinds of relationships and families that are the best for all of us (Acts 2:44-47).*

Messages harnessing the importance of extended family and community dynamics include the following:

**1 Healthy Families and Happy Communities:** In general, communities that demonstrate the highest unmet need for family planning also place a high value on support from extended families and trusted figures in the community. A successful program will harness the influence these individuals have over a married couple’s decisions about healthy timing and spacing. Above all, a healthy family ultimately contributes to the overall health and happiness of an entire community, not just the nuclear family. For these families to flourish and communities to thrive, extended families and community leaders should accept responsibility for everyone’s security and development. This includes protecting young girls from child marriage and forced pregnancy at an early age.

**2 Economic Stability:** Smaller, healthier families are associated with higher economic stability and growth. Messages centered on the economic benefits of family planning seem to resonate well with adult men and boys, community opinion leaders, and even extended family members of married couples considering family planning. Here are some examples:

- a. Teen pregnancy creates financial and social problems that will be your responsibility. Postponing sex until adulthood prevents these problems.
- b. Men who support their wives in family planning report seeing the economic advantages it brings to their families.

- c. Families who engage in the healthy timing and spacing of children are able to contribute more to their communities and are less of a burden on a community's resources and safety net system.
- d. The following verse can help emphasize the idea that we are responsible for the children we bring into the world. I Timothy 5:8 "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Many Christians use this verse to justify the need for families to be able to economically care for their families – can you afford to feed your child? To clothe your child? To send your child to school? To spend time with your child nurturing and loving him/ her?

## RELATED RESOURCES:

1. *Achieving a Demographic Dividend (2012)*. A report written by James N. Gribble and Jason Bremner of the Population Reference Bureau, which "explains the demographic dividend in terms of demographic changes, investments in human capital and economic and governance policies." The report highlights experiences of Asian and Latin American countries, and "considers the prospects for African nations." It can be accessed here: <http://www.prb.org/pdf/12/achieving-demographic-dividend.pdf>.
2. *CCIH Infographic (2014)*: While CCIH and our members work on a wide variety of global health issues, we have answered the calling to advocate from a Christian perspective for access to family planning services to protect the health of mothers and children. CCIH produced this infographic to help further an open and productive dialogue on why family planning is consistent with Christian values. Access this resource here: <http://www.ccih.org/Christian-Values-Support-FP-Infographic.pdf>.
3. *Family Planning Integration for Health Impact (2012)*. Created by the CORE Group, this graphic shows how family planning strengthens other primary health priorities. It is from the Better Together: Linking Family Planning and Community Health for Equity and Impact document released by the CORE Group. Access this image here: [http://ccih.org/images/stories/FP\\_Integration\\_Graphic.jpg](http://ccih.org/images/stories/FP_Integration_Graphic.jpg) Or at: <http://www.coregroup.org/storage/SMRH/FamilyPlanningReport/FPIreportRevised-online.pdf>.
4. *Initiating the Demographic Dividend by Achieving a Fertility Decline (2013)*. This policy brief focuses on influential factors of the "demographic dividend" in African countries. It was jointly sponsored by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Union Commission (AUC), with support from USAID and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation through the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Packard Foundation. Technical research material was provided by David Bloom, David Canning, Andrew Mason, Ronald Lee, and the Population Reference Bureau. It can be accessed here: [http://advancefamilyplanning.org/sites/default/files/resources/5%20Policy%20Briefs%20on%20the%20Demographic%20Dividend\\_English.pdf](http://advancefamilyplanning.org/sites/default/files/resources/5%20Policy%20Briefs%20on%20the%20Demographic%20Dividend_English.pdf).
5. *Why wait? The effect of marriage and childbearing on the wages of men and women (2009)*. A working paper from the RAND Corporation, which suggests that early childbearing may "lead to substantial decreases in lifetime earnings." This article can be accessed at: [http://www.rand.org/pubs/working\\_papers/WR482-1.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/WR482-1.html).



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## POLICY INFLUENCERS

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Messages expressing or revealing the importance of faith-based organizations in provision of health care services are vital to share with key people of influence who create and vote on policies. In the Gospels, Jesus was compassionate to all people, especially the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the hungry, the poor, and the infirm—the most vulnerable in society. Jesus loved all people—rich and poor—and actively cared for people in need. He urged his disciples to do the same. As followers of Christ, we express and embody God’s reconciling love at all times and in all places. Throughout the Scriptures, God speaks of our purpose to rebuild, restore, and renew all that is broken (Isaiah 61). We are called to work to end the brokenness of hunger and poverty in our communities, in our country, and in other countries (Bread for the World, 2014). Scripture addressing this concept include:

*“Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8-9)*

*“We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.” (1 John 3:16)*

Throughout the Scriptures, God calls people into community and sets the expectation that leaders (whether they are kings, pharaohs, or governments) should care for their people. “May he judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice.” (Psalm 72:2).

- 1 Help policymakers recognize the importance of faith-based organizations in providing international health services and how important it is to support funding of faith-based organizations at a level consistent with their overall contribution to health services and to strengthen health care, including family planning in their communities.
- 2 Help policymakers recognize the link between the faith-based sector and the capacity to influence beliefs, attitudes and practices in communities. This capacity is augmented by the nearly universal presence of this sector already integrated within the community.
- 3 Help policymakers understand the importance of supporting funding for international family planning for public, private, and faith-based organizations in order to reduce the unmet need of women who seek access to family planning, but do not have it. Funding international family planning services reduces unintended pregnancies and abortion in the poorest countries with the greatest need.

## RELATED RESOURCES:

1. *Advocacy Day Capitol Hill Briefing: FBOs and Maternal and Child Health (2014)*. Healthy mothers and children are the foundation for strong families and communities. Yet, in some parts of the world, a mother is more likely to die in childbirth than she is to finish secondary school. Each year, 6.6 million children under five lose their lives, most of them to preventable causes. Faith-based organizations are taking a leadership role and working across the globe to prevent the deaths of mothers and children. <http://www.ccih.org/a-advocacy/advocacy-stories.html>.
2. *Capitol Hill Panel Session on Christians and Family Planning (2013)*. This panel session of maternal and child health experts explained why family planning is critical to improving child survival rates and why the current perception that Christians do not support family planning is inaccurate. <http://www.ccih.org/family-planning-a-reproductive-health/362-advocacy-a-policy-resources.html>.
3. *Faith to Action Network “Interfaith declaration to improve family health and well being”*. Faith to Action is a global interfaith network of faith organizations, committed to improve family health and well-being. It also has over 250 organizations that have endorsed the Interfaith Declaration referenced as evidence of support by faith organizations for family health and well-being. <http://www.faithtoactionnetwork.org/about-us/the-interfaith-declaration/>.
4. *Meeting Demand for Family Planning (2013)*. This Population Facts publication is produced by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations. It provides key facts about unmet need and highlights the areas of the world where family planning is most needed. Access the document here: [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/popfacts\\_2013-6.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/popfacts_2013-6.pdf).
5. *Revised Unmet Need for Family Planning: DHS Analytical Studies 25 (2012)*. Per its executive summary, “this report presents a new standard definition of unmet need that can be consistently applied over time and across countries, and shows the impact of revising the definition on estimated levels of unmet need. The analyses use data from 169 DHS surveys conducted in 70 countries over the last 20 years.” Access the information here: [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNADY130.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADY130.pdf).
6. *Think you know where Christians stand on FP? Think again! (2013)*. CCIH produced this simple fact sheet to share information on Christians working in family planning and what family planning means to Christians. <http://www.ccih.org/Hill-Fact-Sheet-FP.pdf>.
7. *The role of faith-inspired health care providers and public-private partnerships: Strengthening the evidence for faith-inspired health engagement in Africa. (2012)* <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/docsearch/report/76223>.
8. USAID Family Planning Resources include USAID’s Family Planning Guiding Principles, U.S. Legislative and Policy Requirements, USAID’s Family Planning Strategy, and success stories with tools for saving lives and protecting health through family planning. These resources can be found at: <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/global-health/family-planning/information-center>.
9. *What Is the Role of Family Planning in Improving Health? A Christian Perspective (2014)*. Dr. Henry Mosley explores the need for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies (HTSP) in the world’s most impoverished nations by drawing strong links between HTSP and decreases in maternal and child mortality. The presentation can be found here: <http://www.ccih.org/Faith-Matters-Henry-Mosley-Presentation-Dec-2014.pdf>.
10. World Faiths Development Dialogue Document: <http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/events/faith-and-international-family-planning-report-launch>.

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### PHOTO CREDITS:

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p.3 - A mother and child attend a family planning counseling session in Chaibasa, India. © 2012 Jennifer Applegate, Courtesy of Photoshare

p.6 - A community health worker in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh, India gives a talk on family planning. Adrienne Allison/World Vision

p.13 - A couple attend a family planning counseling session with a service provider at the Igboro health facility in Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria. © 2012 Akintunde Akinleye/NURHI, Courtesy of Photoshare

