

**Group Study on Contraception and Family Planning**

*What you will need:*

* A print out of this document
* A Bible

*Read aloud the following excerpt and use your Bible to look up the passages cited in the text*

How might Christians approach the question of contraception and family planning? This may seem like a strange question, especially in today’s day and age where contraception is widespread and often assumed to be a normal part of married life.

Scripture affirms time and time again that children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord (Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 17:6). God also reveals children to be part of his vision for married life when he invites Adam and Eve, who had become “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), to *“be fruitful and multiply”* (Genesis 1:28).

Yet, marital sex is not just about having children, nor does every act of sexual intercourse bring about new life (Did you know a woman is not fertile every day of her cycle, but only on days around the time she is ovulating?). Marital sex is also an expression of love and unity (Ephesians 5:25) and helps both husband and wife to avoid sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7:2). These purposes are not in competition with each other, but work together.

Married couples may have good reasons to space or avoid having children at certain times – for example for the sake of the mother’s health or due to certain family circumstances. However, thought must be given as to how a Christian couple go about this. Each method of contraception works in its own way, and some forms of contraception may even be hostile to new life.

For example, some doctors report that certain forms of contraception (including oral contraception) may not work by preventing ovulation or even conception, but may instead change the lining of a woman’s uterus so that an embryo cannot implant to sustain the pregnancy. If this occurs, and conception has taken place, the newly formed embryo will die. A woman would have no way of knowing whether this occurred.

One family planning option that is perhaps not widely-known is natural family planning, or “NFP”. NFP involves a woman charting the signs and symptoms of her menstrual cycle in order to determine when she is fertile and infertile. Couples seeking to avoid pregnancy may choose to avoid having intercourse around the time the woman is fertile. There are several methods of NFP to choose from – the Sympto-Thermal Method, the Creighton Method of FertilityCare and the Billings Method. Thanks to modern science, all of these are highly effective (in fact, as effective as the pill), 100% safe and free from any adverse side-effects. Further, these methods may also be reversed in order to help achieve pregnancy.

*Discussion questions*

* Before contraception was common, large families were standard. How does a worldview where marriage produces many children conflict with the current worldview that children should only happen when planned?
* We read in the Bible many times that children are a blessing. Jesus says to bring the children to Him and not to hinder them. Does our culture treat children as blessings or burdens? Discuss.
* Do you think that chemical options for preventing children are a good thing? Why or why not?
* Do you think it is right to plan when to have children? Explain.
* Marital sex is a gift from God to grow a husband and wife together. Paul says that husband and wife belong to each other and should not deprive each other (1 Cor 7:1-6). In what ways is marital sex a blessing for a wedded couple?

*Close with prayer*

*Further information*

* You can read about the Oral Contraceptive Controversy at the following link: <http://www.aaplog.org/position-and-papers/oral-contraceptive-controversy/>
* You can investigate the three available methods of Natural Family Planning at the following links:
  + Sympto-Thermal Method of Natural Family Planning: <http://www.acnfp.com.au/home.php>
  + Creighton Method of FertilityCare: <http://www.fertilitycare.com.au>
  + The Billings Method: <http://www.billings.life/en/contactbillingslife/australian-teaching-centres-2.html>