

Anxiously Engaged

Supplemental Lesson

Birth Control



Introduction

When should we start trying to have a family? How many children should we have? How far apart should we try to space our children? How do we feel about birth control? What are our birth control options? These and many other questions are ones that couples should discuss once they have decided to marry. This lesson includes recent council from our church leaders as well as links to information about different birth control options.

The Family Proclamation is very clear about the commandment to have children, “The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”¹ That said, our leaders have also been clear that the decision of when to have children and how many

children to have is a personal and private decision to be made by the couple and God. Let’s look at some of our recent prophetic council and then take some time to discuss the questions listed after the quotes.

When should we start trying to have a family? How many children should we have?

True to the Faith

“When married couples are physically able, they have the privilege of providing mortal bodies for Heavenly Father’s spirit children. They play a part in the great plan of happiness, which permits God’s children to receive physical bodies and experience mortality.

“If you are married, you and your spouse should discuss your sacred responsibility to bring children into the world and nurture them in righteousness. As you do so, consider the sanctity and meaning of life. Ponder the joy that comes when children are in the home. Consider the eternal blessings that come from having a good posterity. With a testimony of these principles, you and your spouse will be prepared to prayerfully decide how many children to have and when to have them. Such decisions are between the two of you and the Lord.



“As you discuss this sacred matter, remember that sexual relations within marriage are divinely approved. While one purpose of these relations is to provide physical bodies for God’s children, another purpose is to express love for one another—to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration, and common purpose.”²

Dallin H. Oaks

“How many children should a couple have? All they can care for! Of course, to care for children means more than simply giving them life. Children must be loved, nurtured, taught, fed, clothed, housed, and well started in their capacities to be good parents themselves. Exercising faith in God’s promises to bless them when they are keeping his commandments, many LDS parents have large families. Others seek but are not blessed with children or with the number of children they desire. In a matter as intimate as this, we should not judge one another.”³

Gordon B. Hinckley

“I am offended by the sophistry that the only lot of the Latter-day Saint woman is to be barefoot and pregnant. It’s a clever phrase, but it’s false. Of course we believe in children. The Lord has told us to multiply and replenish the earth that we might have joy in our posterity, and there is no greater joy than the joy that comes of happy children in good families. But he did not designate the number, nor has the Church. That is a sacred matter left to the couple and the Lord. The official statement of the Church includes this language: ‘Husbands must be considerate of their wives, who have the greater responsibility not only of bearing children but of caring for them through childhood, and should help them conserve their health and strength. Married couples should exercise self-control in all of their relationships. They should seek inspiration from the Lord in meeting their marital challenges and rearing their children according to the teachings of the gospel.’”⁴



Activity #1:

Discuss these questions together

1. How does this prophetic council impact us as a couple?
2. When do we want to start trying to have children?
3. What factors are important for us to consider as we decide how many children to have?

Which method of birth control?

If you decide that you want to use birth control, there are many options to consider. The following link compares the effectiveness, affordability, side effects, pros/cons and whether methods are over the counter or prescription for all of the different contraceptive options.

[Birth control comparison chart](#)

Activity #2:

As a couple, study this chart and use the following questions to help you narrow your decision on which methods to consider.

1. How does our age and health history impact our contraceptive options?
2. Are there certain side effects we most want to avoid?
3. How important is “ease of use”—having to remember to take it everyday versus a one-time insertion or injection?
4. Which method(s) will our insurance cover?
5. Which method(s) are most in line with our timeline for starting a family?

As you consider these issues, it is crucial that you counsel together and reach a decision about contraceptive use, when to have children, how many children to have, spacing, etc. Our church leaders have been very clear that these are couple decisions and husband and wife should be equal partners in these (and all) decisions.

L. Tom Perry

“The couple works together eternally for the good of the family. They are united together in word, in deed, and in action as they lead, guide, and direct their family unit. They are on equal footing. They plan and organize the affairs of the family jointly and unanimously as they move forward.”⁵



“Before marriage, each individual is quite free to go and come as he pleases, to organize and plan his life as it seems best, to make all decisions with self as the central point. Sweethearts should realize before they take the vows that each must accept literally and fully that the good of the little new family must always be superior to the good of either spouse. Each party must eliminate the ‘I’ and the ‘my’ and substitute therefore ‘we’ and ‘our.’ Every decision must take into consideration that there are two or more affected by it.”⁶

Neil L. Anderson said it nicely:

THE BOTTOM LINE

“We express deep gratitude for the enormous faith shown by husbands and wives (especially our wives) in their willingness to have children. When to have a child and how many children to have are private decisions to be made between a husband and wife and the Lord. These are sacred decisions—decisions that should be made with sincere prayer and acted on with great faith.”⁷

Additional Resources

[Birth control options: Things to consider, Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)

[Birth control comparison chart](#)

[Birth control: Gospel topics essay](#)

Endnotes

- 1 [The Family: A Proclamation to the World](#)
- 2 [True to the Faith](#)
- 3 [Dallin H. Oaks, “The great plan of happiness,” 1993](#)
- 4 [Gordon B. Hinkley, “Cornerstones of a happy home,” 1984](#)
- 5 [L. Tom Perry, “Fatherhood: An eternal calling,” 2004](#)
- 6 [Spencer W. Kimball, “Marriage and Divorce,” 1976](#)
- 7 [Neil L. Anderson, “Children,” 2011](#)