

Early Pregnancy / Creation of Humans

Child 1: Do you know where babies come from? My sister says that mommies find them in the cabbage patch at night. But Tommy says that you buy them at the supermarket, because he saw his mum bring his baby brother home in a basket.

Child 2: No, that's not right. They grow from little seeds, and they live under ladies' dresses to keep warm. The lady in the next house kept hers there until she got too big, and then she put her in a basket.

Tammy: Don't kids get the funniest ideas! Welcome to *Women of Hope*. I'm Tammy.

Carol: And I'm Carol. We're so glad you can be with us too. Today we'll be talking about how you know if you're going to have a baby, and what happens in early pregnancy. This is going to be real 'women's business'!

Tammy: That's right, and we have Jenny with us to give us some medical information. She is a nurse who works with mothers and babies in her community. Welcome, Jenny.

JENNY: Thank you Tammy and Carol, I'm happy to be here with you. It's not only *little* children who get confused about where babies come from. Mothers need to tell their daughters the truth in simple words when they ask. We should make sure they are quite clear about it, well before they're interested in boys or think of getting married. The truth is that a baby can only start to grow when an egg from the mother and a sperm from the father join together inside the woman, and that only happens when they have sexual relations.

Carol: I remember at school, some girls used to think you could get pregnant from sitting on a seat after a boy, or from kissing. But my mother told me the truth, and how to behave modestly with boys.

JENNY: You know, the best thing for children is that they have a mother and father, parents who are committed to each other and their family in marriage. That's one reason that God's word, the Bible, teaches us that sex belongs only in marriage. Through history, most cultures have agreed with that.

Tammy: That is so true. Now Jenny, could you tell us how a woman would know she is pregnant? And how soon could she know?

JENNY: The first thing that most women notice is that their next menstrual period - the monthly bleeding - does not happen, or it's very light. Then within a week or two of missing the period, she may notice that her breasts feel tender when they are touched, and she may feel very tired, and sick in the stomach. She may vomit, or she may feel sick at the thought of food. Another early sign is the need to pass urine more often.

At this stage, about two weeks after missing the period, she could go to her health professional who can test her urine and tell her whether she *is* pregnant. In some places you can buy kits at the pharmacy so you can do this test yourself. You need to remember that a woman could have several of these signs and not be pregnant - they could be due to an infection, or malnutrition, for example.

Tammy: I remember feeling sick in the stomach, but let's be clear on this point. A baby is not an illness, is it?

JENNY: No, it's a normal healthy process. But the expectant mother *does* need to take care of herself. She may need extra rest, and it's best if she doesn't do really heavy work. She needs good food, but she may need to eat small amounts more often, rather than big meals.

I remember when I had a few weeks of nausea with my first baby, I found it was easier to keep down dry plain food, like toast or cracker biscuits, and hot drinks without milk. I didn't want spicy food that usually I love. It was better not to drink at the same time as eating, and I used to eat some dry food before I got out of bed. I would put a little plate of crackers there the night before, and hope a mouse didn't steal it while I slept!

Tammy: Do you need food supplements if you eat good, healthy food?

JENNY: The health worker or doctor will usually suggest some extra food supplements such as folate, iron and calcium, right from the beginning of the pregnancy, to help the baby grow. But otherwise, you should just eat good fresh vegetables and fruit and some protein if you can - like chicken, fish or red meat, and of course some grains - corn, rice, bread...and do your normal activities. You are not sick!

I should say something about taking medications. Whatever the mother takes, it will be passed on to the developing baby. Many medicines can harm the baby. This includes natural and cultural remedies as well as ones from the pharmacy. So it's very important to see your doctor or health worker as soon as possible. Check on what foods and medicines you can take, and have a proper physical examination. They need to know what your starting weight is, for instance, and check for any problems that need treatment. The first three months is actually the most dangerous time for the baby, and you really need to have medical care and advice if possible.

Tammy: Welcome back to Women of Hope. We're talking with Jenny about the lovely topic of 'babies'. Now Jenny, the first thing an expectant mother wants to know is, 'When is the baby going to be born?' How can you work it out?

JENNY: There are several ways. If your menstrual cycle has been regular you can work it out this way. Notice the date of the *beginning* of your last period. Then add 40 weeks. That is nine months plus 7 days. The average pregnancy is 40 weeks from the last period, but that is not an exact time - a baby can be born quite safely anywhere between 37 and 42 weeks. Of course, if your periods are not regular, it's a bit hard to use this method.

Tammy: So are there other ways to work it out?

JENNY: Yes, a traditional method is counting from the time you first feel the baby moving. This usually happens at about 17 weeks, but may be a little earlier or later. So a rough way of working out the due date is to add 23 weeks to the time you felt the first definite movements. Or your health worker will measure the size of the growing baby and will be able to tell you when *she* thinks it's due.

Tammy: I guess the next thing we wonder is 'Is it a boy or a girl?'

JENNY: Yes, and that is an important question in some cultures. I'm sad to say that there can be real pressure to have a boy in some places, and girls are less valued - though not by God - God loves girls! But societies work best when there are roughly equal numbers of boys and girls.

Tammy: Can a woman do anything to choose the sex of her baby?

JENNY: Actually, the sex of the baby depends completely on the sperm from the father, not the egg from the mother. There is no way to guarantee having a boy or girl. We need to be ready to welcome either one with just as much love. And care for him or her just as well.

Tammy: Thank you so much for that information, Jenny. Wasn't that good, to get our facts right about early pregnancy! Can you remember how long an average pregnancy takes? Yes, it's 40 weeks. And the early signs of pregnancy? Missing your periods, tender breasts, feeling tired or nauseated, and needing to pass urine often. And Jenny's advice? Go to your health clinic as soon as you think you are pregnant, for a check-up and health advice.

Carol: And next we're going to learn, not where babies come from, but where all of us humans came from.

Today I want to tell you the *first* story from the Bible, God's word. (Genesis 1) Here it is...

'In the beginning, there was only God. God made everything that is: the stars, moons and planets, and our planet earth. He made the land and the oceans and the clouds. He caused the plants to appear, then the fish and birds, and then all the animals. He saw that everything was good. He was pleased.

And when everything was ready, God said 'And now we will make human beings. They will be like us, and they will have power and responsibility over all the other creatures.' So God created the first humans, making them like God in many ways. He made them male and female, and his first words to them were a blessing.'

Let's stop and think about this first part of the story. Imagine the clean new world, the most perfect environment. God was pleased with it; he had made a wonderful world and a beautiful home for the people he would create. This is a good world, God's gift to us. In some ways we are *like the* animals - we need air, water, food, shelter...and God had it all ready for us. He loves it, and he has given us some special responsibilities. What do you think they are? Tammy what do you think?

Tammy: You said he put us in charge of the planet. *I'm sure that doesn't* mean we can use it all up to please ourselves. I think we have often done that - taken what we wanted and not cared for the earth or the animals.

Carol: We have, and in many places we can see that the earth has been damaged by people. People have dirtied the rivers and the air... cut down the trees that hold the soil together... grown crops year

after year without resting and replenishing the soil... cleared away the natural vegetation without caring about the animals who lived there.

We have often treated the world like a free sweet shop where we can take what we want. It is actually more like a farm, where we have to understand the cycles of nature and care for the land, the plants and the animals. If a farmer kills all the animals and eats them, the farm won't last long, will it?

When God gave us power he also gave us responsibility. Of course we need farms and mines, timber mills and power generators. But we also need to use the earth's resources wisely so that they will continue to provide for humans and the other creatures. We all have some part to play in caring for the environment.

Tammy: That could be as simple as composting your food scraps for the garden, or not wasting water.

Carol: or reusing things rather than just throwing them away and buying new things. What can you do to take better care of *your* environment?

Tammy: I wonder what it means that we are made 'like God'. Surely we don't *look* like God - he does not have arms and legs and a human body, because he is able to be present at all *times and in all* places.

Carol: That's right Tammy. The Bible says that God is Spirit. That's not less than us, it's *more* than us, because he is not limited and tied down as we are. But we are like God in some very important ways that are different to the animals. I noticed that the story says 'He created them like himself, he created them male and female'. That means that we are made for loving relationships. Like God, we are able to love, and to respect and value our differences.

Tammy: And I'm glad to hear that he made men *and* women...women are made *like God* just as much as men. This means he really understands us!

Carol: Did you realize that God has *feelings*? He loves, but he also gets angry when wrong things are done. He hates injustice... He becomes sad when he sees us suffer... He is happy when we are doing well; the Bible says he rejoices over his people. Imagine that! And he made us with this ability to feel all the emotions. We wouldn't be human without them.

Tammy: But sometimes they get us into trouble!

Carol: Yes, they do. But God is also *rational*; he thinks perfectly, and he makes logical decisions. We have a rational ability too, far more than the animals.

Tammy: I wonder if the ability to speak in words is part of being like God.

Carol: I think you're right. God is the great communicator. He speaks to us in different ways, and speech is a great gift that only humans have. It helps us to communicate, to think and to plan ahead.

There is another way we are like God. We have a sense of *morality*; we know that there is right and wrong. We may not always *choose* to do what is right - I know I don't - but we *do* have the ability to make thoughtful, moral choices.

Now this may be the most important thing... Like God, we are *spiritual* beings, not just animals. You have an essential part of you, the *real* you that can understand something of God and relate to him, and this part can live for ever with God. That *is* unique. That makes us quite *different* from the animals.

Tammy: It makes me feel very special to be created like God, even though I am not perfect like he is. What a privilege we have! Every human has great dignity - and a great responsibility. We don't live by instinct like the animals; God has trusted us with real choices...

Carol, you said that God's first words to the man and woman were a blessing. *Tell us what he said.*

Carol: Sure...let's go back to the story from God's word...

God said, 'Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their care and control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds and the animals, and I am providing plants of all sorts for you to eat, and for them too'. Then God placed them in a beautiful fertile garden, and he would come and speak with them. (Gen 2:8, 3:8) And God was very pleased and happy with the world he had made and especially the people he had created.

That's the end of this story.

Tammy: What a great beginning we had! God made us, and provided for all our needs. How he must have loved us. But what went wrong? We're not living like that now. We're not in harmony with God and nature, are we!

Carol: No Tammy...we're not! Humans chose to disobey God, and things have never been the same since then. But that is the next story. And don't forget there is *another* story. It tells how God sent Jesus to make things right again. Jesus is the only person who really showed us what it could mean to be a human like God. That is a story that gives us great hope.

Tammy: Thank you for sharing that with us, Carol. And keep listening for that story of hope, on *Women of Hope*. You're listening to *Women of Hope*. Carol, you have a letter there from a listener in India. Would you like to share it with us?

Carol: Yes Tammy... She said: 'Through your program I came to know that God has created people for fellowship with him. But people sinned by disobeying God. I belong to a family who are not believers in Jesus. After listening to your program I am now able to understand so many things that I didn't know about before...this has brought joy and peace to my life.'

And my friend, I hope that what we talk about on *Women of Hope* will help you too to understand more about God - who he is...how he made the world, and us...

Tammy: As we finish today I would like to read a beautiful poem from God's word, the Bible. These poems, or psalms, have been written to express how the writer is *feeling* about something. The writer of *this* poem in Psalm 104 has been thinking about God's creation. How do you think he is feeling?

(Psalm 104: 24 – 34)

'O Lord, what a variety of things you have made!

In wisdom you have made them all.

The earth is full of your creatures.

Here is the ocean, vast and wide...teeming with life of every kind - both large and small.

See the *huge sea creatures you made to play in the sea.

They all depend on you to give them food as they need it.

When you supply it, they gather it.

You open your hand to feed them and they are richly satisfied.

But if you turn away from them, they panic.

When you take away their breath they die and turn again to dust.

When you give them your breath, life is created and you renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the Lord continue forever!

The Lord takes pleasure in all he has made!

...I will sing to the Lord as long as I live.

I will praise my God to my last breath!

May all my thoughts be pleasing to him for I rejoice in the Lord.

Well Carol, how do you think the writer is feeling?

Carol: Amazed at God's creation I think. And not just about what God has made but how he takes care of them!

Did you notice that he said, 'the Lord takes pleasure in all he has made'? That's just what we heard before isn't it? That God was pleased with all he had made. And he is pleased that he has made us too.

Tammy: He made us to have a relationship with him - just like our listener said. You might like to say thank you to God in your heart today for creating you - and for wanting you to be his friend.

Carol: If you would like to contact us you can write to this email address:

TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. Our website address is TWRWomenofHope.org. Or you can visit us on Facebook.

Goodbye - and God bless you...

Tammy: Goodbye