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**TEACHING MIDWIFERY TO NURSING STUDENTS FROM A
BIBLICAL CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

by

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INTRODUCTION

For centuries evolutionists have debated the issue of man's origin. Many theories exist which have attempted to provide the answer to this age old question. Charles Darwin who is considered the father of the theory of evolution stated in his *Origin of Species*,¹ that small random changes in combination with random selection would over time enable simple organisms to evolve to more and more advanced forms, including human beings.

Evolutionists also believe that life began by chance and that humans through a long evolving process have emerged from the lower forms of life. Such an idea cannot be harmonized with the biblical record of the origin of human beings. Ellen White cautioned that the genealogy of the human race should not be traced to a line of developing germs, mollusks and quadrupeds but to the great Creator. It was not evolution from lower animals.²

The Bible states clearly that human beings are special creatures of God. When God created the other animals- fishes, birds, reptiles, insects, mammals, he created them "according to their kinds"³ Each species had a typical form of its own and the ability to reproduce its specific kind. But when God created human beings He made them "in His own image"⁴ There is therefore a fundamental difference between these two forms of created life and a clear discontinuity between human beings and the animal kingdom. Luke's genealogical entry describing the origin of the human race expresses this difference simply, but profoundly: "Adam, the son of God."⁵

Since the study of midwifery deals with human life from its inception and also involves the birth process, teaching midwifery in a Christian institution has an added dimension because, at its core, the subject of midwifery lends itself to promoting optimum health for women during the childbearing years, the prevention of disease, and mitigation of poor pregnancy outcomes. Therefore, midwifery, from a Christian perspective fulfills God's wish for humans, "Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers"⁶

Adventists have historically advocated a healthy lifestyle viewing the health message as the "right arm of the three angels' messages". Therefore, beginning with the preconception period the study of midwifery provides an opportunity for improved and successful human reproduction.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This essay examines the study of midwifery from a Biblical perspective. Christian education is one of the avenues through which students can have an encounter with Christ as teachers connect the study of the Bible to real life situations. Ellen White says, "The Bible must be made the foundation for all study"⁷ Also, "The Holy Scriptures are the perfect standard of truth and as such should be given the highest place in education."⁸

Several important biblical principles underlie the Christian approach to teaching midwifery. The ultimate goal is to help students develop a character that will enable them to provide nursing care to childbearing women that reflects compassion, love and altruism.

This essay will therefore serve as an example to nursing educators on how to approach the teaching of midwifery from a Christian worldview and thus integrate faith and learning in the classroom. Such integration will ensure that students, under the influence of Christian teachers,

will be able to internalize biblical values and principles which will enable them to develop and reflect the character of Christ.

THE BIBLICAL ORIGIN OF HUMAN

The study of midwifery requires a background knowledge of the structure and function of the human body. Therefore the study of human origin must be addressed in the study of Human Anatomy and Physiology. The sixth day of creation week was an eventful one. “After the earth with its teeming animal and vegetable life had been called into existence, man, the crowning work of the Creator and the one for whom the beautiful world had been fitted was brought upon the stage of action”⁹

And God said, “Let us make man in our image according to our likeness”¹⁰ When God formed Adam from the elements of the earth, all the organs were present: the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, spleen, brain, etc, all perfect, but lifeless. Then stooping down over this magnificent form the Creator, a personal self-existing God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being.”¹¹ When God changed the elements of earth into a living being, He “breathed” the breath of life into the nostrils of Adam’s lifeless body. The scriptural equation is straightforward: the dust of the ground (earth’s elements) + the breath of life = a living being or living soul.¹²

The Hebrew term for “living being “or” living soul” is *nephesh chayyah*. *Nepesh* translated “being or “soul” comes from *napash*, to breathe. This was designated only to man. Animals, on the other hand were described as living creatures.¹³

Similarly, a new soul comes into existence whenever a child is born; each ‘soul’ being a new unit of life uniquely different and separate from other similar units. This quality of individuality in each living being, which constitutes it a unique entity, seems to be the idea emphasized by the Hebrew term *nephesh*.¹⁴

While in the delivery room with her students the Christian midwifery teacher can explain to students the connection between God’s breath into Adam’s nostrils and the initiation of breathing in the newborn’s lungs. After a well formed baby is delivered he/she lays almost lifeless, without respiratory movements until stimulated to take the first breath. This breath is taken as the baby makes its first cry. When this cry is heard it’s like sweet music to the ears of everyone in the delivery room. It is received with joy, gladness and jubilation.

THE CHRISTIAN MIDWIFERY TEACHER: A MODEL OF CHRIST

Since God is the source of all true knowledge, the first objective of education is to direct the minds of the students to God Himself. “The teacher who cooperates with the divine purpose in imparting to the youth a knowledge of God and molding the character into harmony with His does a high and noble work.”¹⁵ In a knowledge of God all true knowledge and real development have their source and is revealed in the physical, mental, and spiritual realm.

Christian teachers play an important role in leading students to a true knowledge of God. He/she has the ability to inspire students with principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity,

principles that will make them positive forces for the stability and uplifting of society and above all to learn lessons of unselfish service.

The true motive of service must be constantly kept before nursing students by teachers who show them the example of a true, pure life. Such a teacher must draw constantly from the example of Jesus, who, as the Master teacher did more teaching than preaching during His earthly ministry.

Paul Kienel (1980) in his book, *The Philosophy of Christian School Education* outlines thirteen principles on the Christian Philosophy of Education. Principle five states: The Christian Philosophy of Education is based on a personal commitment to Jesus Christ on the part of all who are involved in the educational process. If one is not deeply committed to Jesus Christ the goals of the philosophy of education cannot be accomplished. He explains as follows:

The “blind” cannot lead the “blind.” The most serious kind of blindness is spiritual blindness due to a lack of commitment to Jesus Christ. The question then is, How can a teacher who is not devoted to Christ direct a student toward a commitment to Jesus? ¹⁶

The teacher cannot give to the student what he/she does not possess. Therefore Seventh-day Adventist schools must employ Christian teachers who are committed to the philosophy of Seventh-day Adventist education and midwifery teachers who are committed to the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of health. These teachers can then model their faith during their interaction with the students both inside and outside of the classroom.

To every teacher is given the sacred privilege of representing Christ. As teachers strive to do this, they may cherish the reassuring conviction that the Savior is close beside them, giving them words to speak for Him, pointing out ways in which they can show forth His excellence. ¹⁷ (Ibid).

PRECONCEPTION CARE

Preconception care encompasses all the women’s careful preparation before pregnancy and should be considered an essential part of health promotion. It is a set of interventions that aim to identify and modify biomedical, behavioral and social risks to a woman’s health or pregnancy outcome through prevention and management before conception.¹⁸ In other words, it is an organized and comprehensive program provided to all women of childbearing age that identifies and reduces a woman’s reproductive risks before conception.

The concept also serves to heighten the awareness of the public to the importance of maximum health prior to conception, at the time of fertilization and during the period of embryonic development. Such an approach can reduce the incidence of congenital malformations, the birth of preterm and growth retarded babies and birth hypoxia.¹⁹

A modern obstetric challenge, therefore, is to educate women who are not yet pregnant about the potential influences of their lifestyle and health status on the earliest embryonic cells. This education is included in preconception care which is not a new phenomenon. The Old Testament book of (Judges Chapter 13) provides one of the earliest references to preconception care:

An angel of God appeared to the wife of Manoah and said, “you are barren and have no child but from now on take great care, take no wine or strong drink and eat nothing unclean for you will conceive and have a son.” This child was Samson who later became renowned for his strength and stamina.

Ellen White states, "The message sent twice to this Hebrew mother shows it to be deserving of our most careful thought. These words speak to all mothers in every age. The well being of the child will be affected by the habits of the mother." She further warns that the expectant mother should be careful with her diet, exercise self-control, temperance, encourage a cheerful, contented disposition and maintain a peaceful, trustful attitude. If the expectant mother is self-indulgent, selfish, impatient and exacting these traits will be reflected in the disposition of the child. Thus many children have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil. Many children are born diseased due to gratification of appetite by the parents.²⁰

Medical science is now in agreement with Ellen White's publications on the importance of prenatal influence. Over the last ten years much research has been done by the United States Department of Health, March of Dimes and the Centers for Disease, Control and Prevention in the area of preconception care. Results were used to promote pre-pregnancy planning in an effort to reduce negative birth outcomes. These groups have now recommended that all women of childbearing age who are capable of becoming pregnant should consume 400mg of folic acid daily to prevent neural tube defects. Folic acid is a B vitamin which is also being added to many processed foods especially breakfast cereals. Advocates have also recommended that folic acid should be added to birth control pills and information included in premarital counseling. For maximum effectiveness it is important that folic acid regimen begin at least three to six months before pregnancy. Students should be encouraged to apply this to their own future childbearing.

According to Cefalo and Moos, (1995) programs of preconception health promotion should include three components: (1) the systematic and comprehensive identification of individual risks; (2) the provision of personalized, non-judgmental education; and (3) the ready access to complimentary services, such as in-depth genetic and nutritional counseling and behavioral modification programs. Routinely providing these services to all women of reproductive age can make childbearing a more fully informed process and, in so doing, improve opportunities for successful reproduction.²¹

From a Biblical perspective, the Christian teacher can introduce the student to God's word which says in 1 Cor. 10: 31, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."²² Also Paul reminds us that our bodies are the temple of God and we should be careful not to defile it.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The teaching of midwifery would not be complete without the study of marriage and the family. Interest in the family as a unit is today expressed by the term family-centered maternity care. This refers to nursing care that considers the health of the family as a unit in addition to the health of individual family members.

Pregnancy occurs in the context of a family setting so that when a pregnant woman reports for medical care she is usually accompanied by her husband, a partner or other family member. This shows that she is part of a family unit and midwives must consider the family's influence on the mother when providing care.

A family is defined as two or more persons who are related through marriage, blood, birth or adoption who share a common residence and assume reciprocal rights and obligations with

regards to each other. Major roles of the family include: protection and socialization of its members, providing emotional support and security through love, acceptance, concern, nurturing, physical protection and safety, health care services, and providing for basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter.

In addition to providing an environment conducive to physical growth and health, the family creates an atmosphere that influences the cognitive and psycho-social growth of its members. Therefore a child born into a healthy, functional family receives support, understanding and encouragement as he/she progresses through the developmental stages and eventually establish his/her family.²³

In today's society there are different family forms. The most common or ideal family structure is the nuclear family. The Christian midwife is likely to encounter families whose lifestyles are in conflict with her own. More recently traditional family forms are becoming unpopular in some societies as people adopt alternative lifestyles. Single parent households and same sex marriages are very common. Other trends in alternate family forms are blended families, cohabiting families and gay and lesbian families. The Christian midwifery teacher can assist students to provide care to all family forms with a non-judgmental and caring attitude.

With erosion of moral standards and the almost universality of premarital sex, young people often live together without entering into any form of permanent relationship and even when they do get married they do so with the thought that if their marriage does not work they can choose to divorce and try again.²⁴ From a Christian perspective the Bible says God created Adam and Eve as male and female, husband and wife and gave us an example of the first family model. They were intended to be companions for life.

God himself gave Adam a companion. Bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, Eve was Adam's other self. She was to be a "help meet for him" one who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from Adam's side signifying that she was to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. It also shows the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in the marriage relationship. "Husbands love your wives" and "wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord."²⁵

This love between husbands and wife is to be of the kind and degree manifested by Christ. Such self-effacing, self-sacrificing "love suffereth long and is kind;...doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked...beareth all things...hopeth all things, endureth all things, love never faileth"²⁶ Therefore shall a man leave his mother and father and cleave unto his wife and they twain shall be one flesh."²⁷

The Christian teacher must explain to students that God is the originator of the first marriage. It is honorable and they should enter it intelligently and with loving commitment. Ellen White said, "when the divine principles are recognized and obeyed marriage is a blessing. It guards the purity and happiness of the race; it provides for man's social needs; it elevates the physical, intellectual and moral nature. The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred of any on earth. However, Satan is determined to make marriage dishonorable, to weaken its obligations and lessen its sacredness. In so doing he can deface the image of God in man and rob him of the happiness God intended to provide for him."²⁸

CONCEPTION AND PRENATAL DEVELOPMENT

Then God blessed them and said to them," Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."²⁹ "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain."³⁰

Following this divine command man has continued to populate the world. This ability to reproduce another human being was given to man by God Himself. Human reproduction is an intricate and meticulously designed process that begins with the cohabiting of a man and a woman.

Human development is also a complicated process that depends on the systematic unraveling of instructions found in the genetic material of the egg and the sperm. Development from conception or fertilization to birth of a normal healthy baby occurs without incident in most cases and follows a specific time-table of events or stages.

Millions of male sex cells (sperm) are produced in the testicles and expelled from the male urethra during ejaculation. They then make their way through the uterus and out the fallopian tube where one of them will penetrate the ovum. This union of the ovum and sperm is called fertilization or conception and takes place in the ampulla which is the widest and longest part of the fallopian tube. This fertilized ovum is now called the zygote. If the ovum is not fertilized it slowly passes along the tube to the uterus where it disintegrates. Fertilization is a complex sequence of coordinated molecular events which is completed within 24 hours of ovulation.

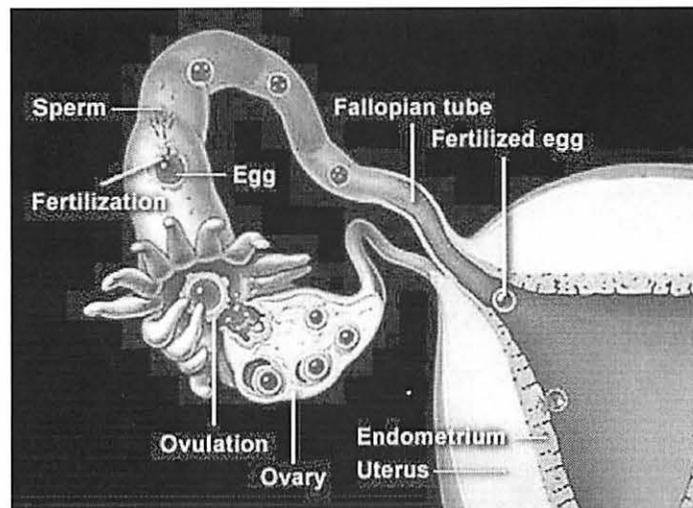


Figure 1: Conception and transport of the fertilized ovum

Human development is a process which continues even after birth. Structures that continue their development include the brain, teeth and the female breast. For the purpose of this paper, emphasis will be placed on prenatal development or events occurring before birth. Prenatal development also called the gestation period consists of the zygotic, the embryonic and the fetal periods.³¹

The zygotic period refers to the first two weeks after fertilization or conception. Each month one ovum or egg matures and is released from either the right or left ovary in a woman who experiences normal menstrual cycles. This is called ovulation. The mature egg is then taken up

into the fimbriated end of the fallopian tube and begins its travel towards the uterus where it will begin its development.

The embryonic period extends from the third to the eighth week of gestation. During this time the vital organs such as the heart and nervous system begin to function. The fetal period extends from the ninth week of gestation to term.³²

During prenatal development the fetus is more sensitive to teratogens (threats to the fetus, such as drugs or alcohol) during the embryonic period. The period of greatest environmental sensitivity for the developing fetus is between 17 and 56 days after fertilization. By the end of the eighth week after conception and certainly by the end of the first trimester, any major structural abnormalities in the fetus have already developed. Because many women do not have their pregnancies confirmed until this critical period of development is well under way or completed, the rapidly growing embryo is frequently subjected to potentially injurious stimuli during its most vulnerable developmental phase.³³

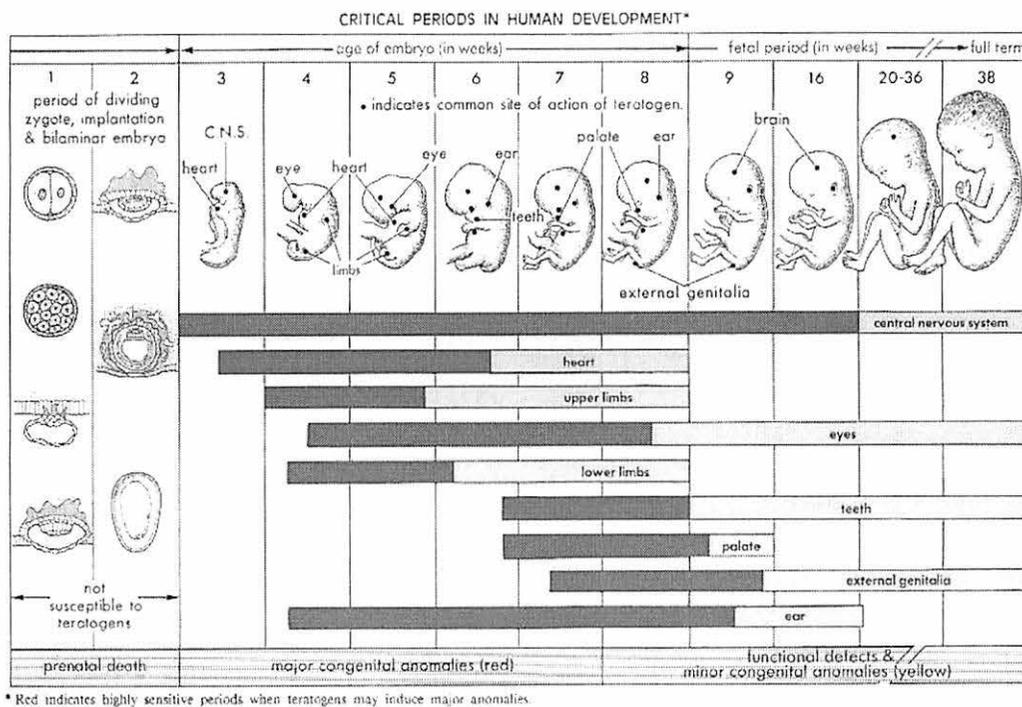


Figure 2: Critical period in Human Development

The Christian midwifery lecturer needs to keep in mind that many issues are not always understood in the same way by secular midwives. In some situations a couple may be unable to conceive and may require treatment for infertility. The Bible refers to this as being barren. If the couple is still unsuccessful in achieving a pregnancy after correcting medical problems they may be offered alternatives such as assisted human reproduction, surrogate motherhood, or in vitro fertilization. These alternatives along with elective abortion and use of contraceptives outside of marriage are incompatible with Biblical Christian tenets which are also upheld by Adventists.

The midwifery teacher can be a model to students when faced with ethical issues such as abortion. In the study of midwifery this topic cannot be over-looked. It has become a major

moral and ethical issue in today's society because mankind has flagrantly violated the Biblical principle which calls for abstention from sexual intercourse outside of marriage.³⁴

Midwifery instructors can seize this opportunity to address with students the issue of sexual irresponsibility which is the single most important factor contributing to abortion.

She was a beautiful teenager who came to the university campus during the yearly visit by area high schools. They were all dressed in colorful uniforms representing their schools. Along with her colleagues she was navigating from one department to another, asking questions about the programs being offered. As they entered the nursing department they were very eager to examine the models and organs of the human body.

This young lady lingered behind after her friends were gone and took the opportunity to explain her situation. She was pregnant and could not tell her parents because she said if she did her father would kill her. She looked frightened and confessed that she had come to ask if she can have an abortion.

I suggested how she can approach her parents, explained to her the medical risks and psychological scars that result from such a procedure and advised her to continue to carry the baby to term. With tears rolling down her cheeks she left the room. The Christian teacher can show loving care and compassion instead of an attitude of condemnation when providing alternatives bearing in mind that human beings are responsible for the moral choices they make.

Students need to know that life is sacred and God requires sexual fidelity. The Bible states, "Thou shalt not kill."³⁵ The Bible also refers to the fetus as a person and that God fashions us in the womb³⁶. In Isaiah 49: 1,5, it says, "God called me from the womb, and formed me in the womb to be His servant."³⁷ Jeremiah 1: 5 reads, "Even before I formed you in the womb, I knew my purposes for you. While you were in the womb I sanctified you and ordained you as my prophet."³⁸

Therefore, when a mother is confronted with the difficult decision to keep or abort the precious life within her, the Christian teacher can model to students how to provide biblical counsel. Ellen White says, "Children are an heritage of the Lord and we are answerable to Him for the management of His property."³⁹

PAIN DURING LABOR AND BIRTH FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Labor pain results from contractions of the uterine muscles caused by a lack of oxygen (anoxia) to the cells. It also results from the stretching of the cervix, pressure from the fetal parts especially the head on maternal tissues and stretching of the perineum.⁴⁰ Labor is a series of events by which the fetus and placenta are expelled from the woman's body. As the mother experiences pain during labor the Christian teacher can explain that labor pain has a biblical connection.

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command they experienced immediate and long term consequences. "To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception: In pain you shall bring forth children...."⁴¹

Since then each successive generation and in every race giving birth is a painful process. This shows that as humans this constitutes a genetic or genealogical unity. ⁴² Paul said, “From one man He (God) made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth.”⁴³

A variety of factors affect the intensity and amount of pain experienced by women in labor. Pain is influenced by psychological, biological, socio-cultural and economic factors. The Christian midwifery teacher can present to students many nursing interventions that can help reduce pain so that labor is a fulfilling and rewarding experience. Some examples are hydrotherapy, massage, position change, breathing exercises and childbirth education.

Pain in childbirth can be relieved, to some extent, when a woman is adequately prepared for labor and delivery. Research shows that doulas and other birth companions offer numerous benefits to the mother in labor. A woman should approach the end of her pregnancy with knowledge, understanding and confidence rather than apprehension and fear. Fear creates tension – tension leads to pain ⁴⁴.

A woman in labor needs to have a companion with her at all times. This may be her husband, partner, midwife or a doula. (a woman trained to provide support during childbirth) The presence of a support person reduces the need for analgesia and improves the birth experience of the mother. It also shortens the length of labor.

The Christian Midwifery instructor should teach her midwifery and nursing students to be God-fearing and not to compromise their God given integrity, “And when the King of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives of which the name of one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah and he said, and when you do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools, if it be a son, then you shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God and did not as the King of Egypt commanded them but saved the men children alive.” ⁴⁵

Moreover, the Christian midwife should inculcate the faith of God in the expectant mothers under her care. Faith based stories of how the Hebrew women gave birth with ease because they were strong and observed strict laws of health and hygiene. This will bolster faith in expectant mothers and also encourage them to follow prescribed health instructions and do everything to the honor and glory of God. Then during pregnancy, they will be confident that God will be on their side to enable them to have an uncomplicated delivery and a healthy baby. “And when the King of Egypt called for the midwives and said unto them, why have you done this thing and have saved the men children alive?” And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, “because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women: for they are lively and are delivered before ere the midwives come in unto them.” ⁴⁶

INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING

The philosophy of Seventh-day Adventist education is Christ-centered. Adventists believe that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God’s character and purposes can be understood as revealed in the Bible, in Jesus Christ, and in nature.

A key focus of a Christian university is the integration of faith with learning and living in its teaching and scholarship.

“The integration of faith and learning is a deliberate and systematic process of approaching the entire educational enterprise – both curricular and co-curricular – from a Christian perspective. In a Seventh-day Adventist setting, its aim is to ensure that students, by the time they leave school, will have freely internalized biblical values and a view of knowledge, life and destiny that is Bible-based, Christ-centered, service-oriented, and kingdom-directed.”⁴⁷

Faith is a prerequisite for spiritual growth to occur. Faith allows an individual to believe in a being who cannot be seen or heard. Seventh-day Adventists believe that “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”⁴⁸

James Fowler (1974) outlined seven stages of faith that an individual goes through in the light of psychosocial development. The young adult stage (18-30 years) is the stage of individuation-reflective faith. The young person experiences critical reflection of one’s beliefs and values, understanding of the self and others as part of a social system, and the assumption of responsibility for making choices of ideology and lifestyle which open the way for commitments in relationships and vocation⁴⁹.

Fowler continues to explain that faith is present in religious and non-religious persons. It is the quality that acknowledges life as meaningful and that gives individuals the ability to make and maintain meaning in their lives. For some it can be centered in a career, a country, an institution, a family, money, success, or even one’s self.

Young adults are in the stage of development where they critically examine their view of the world, the meaning of religious symbols, and religious beliefs in general. This examination results in an autonomous self that can be given to a supreme being.⁵⁰

From this we can see that young people in tertiary institutions are going through a very receptive period and Christian educators would miss a tremendous opportunity if they fail to point them to Christ. Also, if students do not integrate faith during their undergraduate years, then it may never occur.

As students are guided through the study of fetal development this presents a tremendous opportunity for nursing instructors to relate the Biblical account of man’s origin. The Bible states, God “formed” man. During fetal life the same term “formed” is used in relation to developing organs of the fetus in the mother’s body. One noteworthy difference is that Adam and Eve were formed outside the womb whereas fetal development takes place inside the womb. I believe God took time to form each and every organ when he made Adam.

During the second midwifery course students have an opportunity to follow a mother during labor and witness the miracle of birth. The Christian teacher can make a very appropriate analogy between this and the newborn at birth. Only God can give life and we are all dependent on him for our existence.

CONCLUSION

The teaching of midwifery has an important place in Adventist Christian education. The Bible gives clear explanation of the origin of the human race. Ellen White says that the divine record is so plainly stated that there is no occasion for erroneous conclusions. The creation of man in God’s image is no mystery or leaves no ground for the supposition that man evolved by slow degrees of development by lower forms of animal or vegetable life. Such teaching, she

continues, lowers the great work of creation to the level of man's narrow earthly conceptions. Evolutionists are so intent on excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe that they degrade man and defraud him of the dignity of his origin⁵¹

"The great principles of education are the principles of the character of God. The teacher's first effort and constant aim should be to aid the student in comprehending these principles and in entering into a relation with Christ which will make them a controlling power in their lives."⁵²

Midwifery deals with the beginning of human life and childbirth and can be taught from a biblical perspective to nursing students. Christian midwifery teachers have a unique opportunity to relate with and influence students. They are also in a strategic position to point students to the biblical origin of man while teaching the topics of preconception, conception, prenatal development and childbirth.

When Christian teachers effectively present Christ in the classroom while teaching midwifery, nursing students will be pointed to God as the Master Creator and that man is a product of God's handiwork. Not a product of "chance." Whenever nursing students provide care for a mother during pregnancy or in labor, it should cause them to reflect on the value and worth of human life and lead them to commit their lives to Jesus.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abortion: expulsion of the products of conception, spontaneously or deliberately from the uterus before the fetus is able to survive outside the mother's body.

Ampulla: The dilated end of the fallopian tube; next to the fimbriated section.

Artificial Insemination: The injection of semen into a woman's uterus (not through sexual intercourse) in order to make her pregnant.

Birth Hypoxia: Diminished oxygen to body tissues

Cohabiting Family: a man and woman living together in a sexual relationship without being married. There may also be children born in such family structure.

Conception: fusion or union of the male (sperm) and female (ovum) sex cells.

Congenital malformation: abnormalities or a defect present at birth.

Doula: a woman trained to provide emotional and other non-medical support to a woman who is giving birth.

Embryo: a fertilized human ovum (egg) between the third and eight week of development.

Fallopian Tube: two tubes located in the lower abdomen one on each side of the uterus.

Fimbria: The fringe-like end of the fallopian tube that receives the mature ovum after it is released from the ovary

Gestation: The period of carrying the developing fetus from conception to birth.

Infertility: inability to conceive after one year of regular sexual intercourse.

In Vitro Fertilization: artificial means of fertilization. Union of the ovum and sperm in the laboratory, after which the zygote is implanted in the uterus. The sperm can be obtained from the woman's husband (in vivo), or from a (sperm bank) donor.

Midwife: a licensed professional who provides obstetric care to well women, women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. The midwife also cares for the baby for the first six weeks after birth. The word means, "with women"

Neural tube defect: A congenital defect of the central nervous system, including the spinal cord, skull and brain, resulting from failure of the neural tube to properly close during fetal development. Defects may include absence of the skull, and protrusions of the brain or spinal cord. Most such defects can be detected before birth by determination of amniotic fluid or blood levels of alpha-fetoprotein and by ultrasonic scanning.

Nuclear family: a family comprising of mother, father, and their children.

Ovum: a female sex cell found in the ovaries.

Ovulation: the release of a mature ovum from the ovary,

Sperm: a male sex cell made in the testes.

Surrogate Mother: a woman who gives birth to a baby for another woman who is unable to conceive or carry a pregnancy. This is usually done by artificial insemination.

Teratogen: A teratogen is an agent that can disturb the development of the embryo or fetus. It may halt the pregnancy or produce a congenital malformation. Classes of teratogens include radiation, maternal infections, chemicals, and drugs.

Zygote: the fertilized ovum during the first two weeks after fertilization.

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