
Sermon Guide

On
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
For
Christian Leaders

A Biblical response to WASH promotion
in Churches and Communities

Produced by

World Vision International, Ghana
and Partners

A
**A Biblical Response to WASH Promotion
in Churches and Communities**

Produced by
World Vision International, Ghana
And
Partners

© World Vision Ghana, 2017

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This project is an initiative of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) team of World Vision International in Ghana (WVG) to provide basic tools to Christian leaders as a faith response to the WASH challenges in communities. The main objective of the project is to catalyse Christian engagement in addressing community WASH challenges. In this project, the WVG WASH team provided technical information on nine WASH thematic issues around which the sermons were developed. Other aspects of the sermon guide are the results of Biblical and historical research undertaken by a Consultant, Lawrence Lerewanu, founder of Faith Alive Consult.

At various stages in the preparation of the guide, input was sought, obtained and incorporated from the WASH team and then from the Christian Commitments/Faith and Development Division of WVG headed by Rev. Seth John Acquaye. The final stage in the development of the Sermon Guide was a validation workshop involving the wider WASH stakeholders and Christian leadership/agencies which brought up comments, feedback and suggestions which were incorporated to finalise the Guide. A final proofreading and content organisation was conducted by Kings Hall Media Limited before printing.

The entire process has been supervised and coordinated by Mr. Attah Arhin, WASH Technical Coordinator of World Vision International, Ghana.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

World Vision Ghana wishes to express appreciation to the following organizations, Churches and Christian agencies for participating in the validation exercise to assess the contents of this manual and for the assistance offered through suggestions, comments and feedback. Suggestions and feedback offered have been most helpful in getting the contents to this state.

Participating organizations/churches in validation exercise

No.	Organization	Representative
1	Ministry of Water Resources Works and Housing (MWRWH)	Sethina Okonor (Assistant Director)
2	Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS)	Emily Hammond
3	Bible Society of Ghana (BSG)	William Owusu Ansere
4	The Bible League	Rev. Ahmed Quarshie
5		Ellena Dase
6	Scripture Union (SU)	Derek Koomson (MDMS)
7		Francis Ashietey (RM)
8	CWSA	Theophilus Adomako
9	Ghana Education Service (GES), SHEP	Ellen Gyekye
10	Hon. Patrick Baidoo	Assemblyman, New Gbawe
11	Assemblies of God, Ghana	Rev. Richard Cudjoe (Prog. Officer)
12	The Church of Pentecost (COP)	Thomas Richmond Anokye (Inst. Mgr)
13	Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT)	Arthur Otabil
14	Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG)	Rev. Yaw Boadu
15	Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF)	Rev. David Partey Olumadu
16	Ghana Fellowship of Evangelical Students (GHAFES)	Enoch Asmah
17		Smith Asante Yeboah
18	Church of Christ (RWDP)	Rev. Nathaniel Adams
19	Perez Chapel	Rev. Christian Sowah
20	Child Development Officer	Anna Cudjoe
21	Kings Hall Media Limited	Emmanuel Addai
22		Frank Ofosu-Appiah
23	Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA)	Theodora Adomako Adjei

DISCLAIMER

The validation exercise carried out however, does not in any way bind participating organizations or persons to any theological view point expressed in this sermon guide or inaccuracies that may be found therein. Theological deficiencies and other inaccuracies that may be found in this manual are the sole responsibility of the Consultant and World Vision.

FOREWORD

The *Sermon Guide on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene* (WASH) is yet another great innovation from World Vision International. Never has the WASH sector in Ghana and possibly many developing countries had access to one resource that directly links everything we want to do in WASH today to the foundations of creation and humankind as documented in the Bible.

You will simply be marvelled by the amount of information that links every aspect of WASH promotion to divine instructions contained in the Bible – instructions delivered directly by the Creator of the universe Himself to humankind. Fortunately, all these divine instructions to humankind have been confirmed by modern day science. In fact, you will realize that humankind's failure to adhere to these simple WASH instructions from God is the very reason why many countries are still in such a mess with their environmental and health conditions. You will also realize that respect for the environment and the practice of good sanitation and hygiene, both at personal and community levels, is a service to God.

Scientific discoveries through medicine, archaeology and sociology have confirmed all the wisdom contained in the divine instructions that God delivered to His people, mainly meant to ensure that they remained healthy to enjoy the fullness of life.

In those years, responsibility for water, sanitation, hygiene and health issues were all vested in religious leaders who gave out rules and regulations to both community and individuals to follow. They very much looked more of instructions that could not be flouted by any citizen and the whole community was involved in ensuring that the rules were followed by all. Today, water, sanitation, hygiene and health are seen as the responsibility of paid appointed professionals and state institutions. The most conspicuous omission, however, is the seemingly too limited responsibility of every individual—the very component that made it work in ancient and medieval societies.

World Vision has carefully searched and found the fundamental principles underlying God's plan for His children for which reason he gave out instructions about their environment and their health. This *Sermon Guide* carefully provides the Christian leader with key facts in today's world and also from the Bible to support the preparation and delivery of sermons on WASH. It also contains discussion questions and suggestions for individual, group and community action. This is, in fact, a big relief to preachers and religious leaders – time saved for intensive research and planning! Above all, there is a lot you will add to your personal knowledge about nature and health.

APOSTLE PROFESSOR OPOKU ONYINAH

Chairman, The Church of Pentecost

President, Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council

Chairman, Ghana Evangelism Committee

Table of contents

ABOUT THIS PROJECT	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/DISCLAIMER	4
FOREWORD	5
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	8
THE WASH CONCEPT	9
THE STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE GUIDE.....	12
INTRODUCTION: BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT IN WASH ISSUES.....	14
SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE SERMON GUIDE	18
SERMON 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF WASH.....	20
SERMON 2: PERSONAL HYGIENE	26
SERMON 3: HANDWASHING AT CRITICAL TIMES.....	32
SERMON 4: FOOD HYGEINE.....	38
SERMON 5: WATER SAFETY AT POINT OF USE: HWTS.....	44
SERMON 6: CHILD HEALTH	49
SERMON 7: SANITATION: HUMAN EXCRETA DISPOSAL	54
SERMON 8: CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT: ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE.....	58
SERMON 9: SUSTAINABILITY: COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMEN.....	65
REFERENCES	72
APPENDIX A – SERMON GUIDE METHODOLOGY	

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Area Development Programme
CC	Christian Commitments
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
CONIWAS	Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CWSA	Community Water and Sanitation Agency
DP	Development Partners
FBO	Faith-Based Organisation
KJV	King James Version
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIV	New International Version
PHAST	Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation
RWDP	Church of Christ Rural Water Development Programme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WVG	World Vision Ghana
WVI	World Vision International

THE WASH CONCEPT

Did You Know?

- 70% of the Earth's surface is covered with water;
- Only 3% of water on the earth is fresh, the remaining 97% is salted;
- Earth is the only planet not named after a god: Earth's name comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *erda* which means ground or soil;
- This planet Earth is the only place you do not have to pay for the air you breath!

Interventions in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for communities are usually carried out in an integrated manner. This is done to maximize the health benefits of each of them because the lack of or inadequacy in any one of them impacts negatively on the health benefits of the others. Addressing these deficiencies together can achieve a strong positive impact on public health.

The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) included improvement of WASH services in Target 7.C: "Reduce by half, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation." They have been replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where Target 6 includes "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."

Key Definitions of WASH

- **WASH** is the acronym for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- **Sanitation** is the hygienic means of promoting health through prevention of human contact with the hazards of wastes as well as the treatment and proper disposal of sewage or wastewater.
- **Hygiene** is a set of practices performed for the preservation of health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Hygiene refers to conditions and practices that help to maintain health and prevent the spread of diseases."

The need and call to action

The lack of access to adequate WASH facilities combined with bad WASH practices and behaviour is exacting a heavy price on many communities around the world including Ghana. The statistics tell the story:

- Diarrhoea kills about 3,600 under five children in Ghana annually and remains the third killer of children under five years of age;
- In 2014, Ghana reported more than 29,000 cholera cases with some 248 deaths;

- According to the country's 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) report by the Ghana Statistical Service, less than 8% of Ghanaians treat drinking water at the point of use.
- Ghana loses US\$290 million annually because of poor sanitation, US\$79 million of which is lost because of open defaecation alone;
- More than five million people living in Ghana practise open defaecation daily;
- It is believed that close to eight in every ten persons in Ghana do not practise effective handwashing with soap;
- Currently, unsafe drinking water, along with inadequate hygiene and sanitation, contributes to an estimated 1.9 million annual deaths globally, which includes children under-five years of age;
- Worldwide, 6.9 million children under the age of five died of WASH related diseases in 2011 alone;
- 40 billion hours per year are spent hauling water — by mostly women and girls — in Sub-Saharan Africa alone
- 443 million school days are lost by children to WASH related illnesses.

This state of affairs constitutes an urgent call for resolute action by Christians and all persons of goodwill to do everything possible to reduce the toll that adverse effects of bad WASH practices have on communities. This WASH Sermon Guide is one step in response to this call.

Goal

The goal of this Sermon Guide is to catalyse Christian engagement in redressing community WASH challenges.

Objectives

The Sermon Guide provides outlines:

- To equip the preacher or Christian leader, at different levels of the community, to deliver biblical sermons that address WASH related issues;
- To help community leaders and their people to understand that God cares about their WASH related challenges;
- To provide basic WASH information and facts; and
- To encourage concrete behaviour change actions that will lead to community transformation through improved WASH services and practices.

Approach and motivation

Approach: Engaging faith leaders and the faith community to act in addressing the community challenges on WASH through the lens of the scriptures.

Motivation: The Guide is motivated by the concept of “faith shown by deeds,” stated in James 2:18 – deeds that in this case enhance the health of communities.

Outcome

The expected outcome of engaging in this Sermon Guide capacity building is that: Christian and other faith based leaders are equipped to harness and leverage the power, authority, and influence of religious beliefs to encourage and promote good WASH practices in such a way as to empower communities to create sustainable conditions for improved child and community wellbeing.

The WASH Sermon Guide strategy

The WASH Sermon Guide seeks to increase the capacity of the key stakeholders (Christian leaders, FBOs) in the WASH Sector to realize their child and community wellbeing outcomes.

The *target group* is Christian leaders and other faith based leaders.

The *rationale* is that Christian and other faith based leaders have power and influence which can be leveraged to promote good WASH practices in the constituencies and communities they serve. The power and influence of Faith Leaders is based on three things which they possess:

- **Authority** by virtue of their position and responsibility.
- **Credibility** arising from personal and organic bonds with their constituencies.
- **Goodwill** arising from the fact of belonging to the same religious or faith tradition.

This Sermon Guide will produce leaders with *knowledge, awareness, and skills* to be:

- **Advocates for the Human Wellbeing**, able to highlight the necessity, urgency, and possibility of wellbeing for children and communities;
- **Defenders for WASH** who can provide Biblical/Theological (religious) justification for the necessity of good WASH practices as a condition for children and community wellbeing;
- **Exhorters of WASH** who provide prophetic voice and conscience to encourage and hold stakeholders accountable to their commitments to promote child wellbeing in communities;
- **Activists and Exemplars** of good WASH practices in their communities;
- **Visionaries for Community Transformation** who help others to envision a better future which good WASH practices can secure for their children and the community.

THE STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE GUIDE

The Guide contains Group Studies and Sermon Outlines on WASH topics for Communities and Preachers. Each lesson of study has been structured as:

- Sermon theme
- Did you know? (WASH Fact Sheet)
- Key Scripture(s)
- Key thought(s)
- Introduction
- Technical / applied Information
- Conclusion
- Take home messages(s)
- Discussion questions for congregational action
- My Actions: At the end of each Sermon, the participant would indicate what action they would take in the “My Actions” template.

Mode of delivery

The mode of delivery of the Sermon shall be: **Teaching**; rather than Preaching:

- Present the facts in each theme in a way that will enable the congregation to remember and apply action steps required to address the challenges under consideration;
- Emphasize the technical information over and over again for retention;
- Encourage group discussions.

Discussion questions for congregational action: This will comprise a series of questions to:

- Help the congregation / participants engage the text and apply it to WASH related issues and challenges;
- Help the congregation to evaluate the WASH needs, habits and behaviours of their community;
- Help the congregation to identify WASH related areas where behaviour change is needed.

NB: A topic is not complete if the discussion section for congregational action has not been done.

Behaviour change targets should be level-specific at any of the four levels:

- Personal level
- Family level
- Church level
- Community level

Main themes of the sermon guide

The WASH Sermon Guide is built on nine (9) transformative themes or sermons drawn from Scripture, Christian tradition, and history. These themes / sermons are creatively woven into the Guide in such a way as to strengthen and complement the known community mobilization tools like Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) and Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) which WV is already using in the WASH related programs. Thus, the series of studies on WASH topics in this manual are based on carefully selected biblical texts and the appropriate theological/doctrinal principles and considerations.

Outline of the themes:



INTRODUCTION: BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT IN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE ISSUES

Did You Know?

- God is the Source of Everything Good.
- God created the universe to reveal and share his love and riches; and he created human beings to manage, enjoy and celebrate what he created.

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness....31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (Gen. 1:1-4, 31)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James. 1:17)

The narratives of God's dealing with the redeemed Israelite community in the wilderness (the Pentateuch and elsewhere in the Bible) provide striking principles and a framework on sanitation and hygiene issues that augur well for individual and community health but which amazingly are scarcely talked about or not talked about in pulpits today. There may be several reasons for this oversight but two readily come to mind:

- Sanitation and hygiene commands of the Bible are now competently handled by health and sanitation professionals/agencies that are paid to do the work;
- We have sought to find 'spiritualized' applications of the issues prevalent in those days and to convince ourselves that commands on sanitation given those days over 3,000 years ago were given to deal with challenges of bygone millennia and surely not for this our modern era.

Unfortunately, countries in the developing world are paying a terrible price in preventable and unnecessary loss of life for not heeding to those simple commands.

Water in God's plan for human wellbeing

Water in God's plan for human wellbeing	Scriptures
1. Water as a symbol and metaphor of life	Psalms 1:1-3; Psalm 23:1-2
2. Water as agent of renewal and sign of new life	Isaiah 41:16-18; Revelation 22:1-2
3. Hagar's story: God cares about those deprived of water	Genesis 21:14-21

4. The Samaritan woman's story: meeting spiritual & physical needs	John 4:7-15
5. Marah story: solving water access & contamination problems	Exodus 15:22-27

Link between sanctification and sanitation in the Bible

We all agree as Christians that God's idea for the human race is 'fullness of life' (John 10:10) which implies wholeness and completeness. To enjoy this 'fullness of life' Jesus extends to us the invitation to participate in the Communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (John 14:20; 17:21). Acceptance into this divine invitation leads to the reconfiguration of life – a daily and progressive walk into SANCTIFICATION. Sanctification, a theological concept meaning "consecration," "dedication," "setting apart for God's use," is an all-embracing concept covering body, soul and spirit – not confined to the spirit alone. Among the synonyms of the word sanctify is **'to purify'** which comes closer in meaning to: "to cleanse," "to disinfect," "to sanitise" (all synonyms of purify).

An amazing discovery in the Bible is this: the first ever meeting between God and the redeemed nation of Israel in the wilderness took place with hygiene preparation: **"And the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people" (Exodus 19: 10, 11).**

God's message to the Israelite community in simple terms was **"sanctify them, let them wash their clothes for this meeting"** - a close (inseparable?) link between sanctification and hygiene/sanitation/cleanliness. To buttress this link between sanctification and hygiene/sanitation, we see clear instructions given to the priesthood to spearhead all investigation into, and monitoring of hygiene related diseases, what today is referred to as 'water washed diseases' – leprosy, skin infections, male and female discharges, moulds on walls of houses (Leviticus 12 – 15) etc. It fell on the priests, in addition to their worship and spiritual guidance duties, to investigate, monitor and institute remedial measures when cases as mentioned above appeared in the community: isolate and quarantine – so as to avoid spread to the rest of the community. Priests monitoring community health, sanitation and hygiene issues! According to God's scheme, hygiene and sanitation issues engaged the equal attention of men of God as did worship and other 'spiritual' duties: no dichotomy between 'sacred' duties and 'secular' duties!

Thus, we see that good health practices, including hygiene and sanitation issues, were part of the Divine conversation with the redeemed Israelite community in the wilderness. Woven into the worship instructions for the redeemed Israelite community in the first five books of the Old Testament (OT) are carefully crafted guidelines on health and hygiene practices which, if kept, would eliminate many health conditions that can plague individuals and communities. Thus, we encounter amazing health principles in the scriptures given over

3,000 years ago which are only now being discovered. For our purposes, it is safe to assume that it was only in the 19th century when the germ theory of disease was propounded by Louise Pasteur (between 1860 and 1864) that the health and hygiene principles of the scriptures have been seen to have unassailable scientific bases. This is great treasure hidden in plain view over the centuries which could have saved humanity countless millions of lives, before Pasteur's discovery. Lack of knowledge indeed has taken a toll on human lives as Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

Today, matters of health and hygiene are in the hands of Health Professionals and there seems to be nothing else for the clergy to do in terms of health and hygiene - or so it appears. In the larger part of the world where there are deficiencies in functioning of systems, it would be wrong for the church and its clergy to maintain that health and hygiene are the sole preserve of trained and paid professionals and the church's role is confined only to the "spiritual" upkeep of the community. When health disasters strike a community, the church is normally the first port of call for many communities. The role of the church in such times: comforting the afflicted and praying for divine intervention, though great, should not end the story. In the first place, why wait for such disasters to occur when the church provides such an excellent platform for the dissemination of life enhancing information for the well-being of the community?

There is no community leader who is more in touch with his people than the religious leader. In Ghana for example, where Christians form 71.2% of the population and Muslims, 17.6%¹, it can theoretically be stated that on weekly basis religious leaders are in touch with 88.8% of community members. Not the village chief, or the elected Member of Parliament (MP), neither the District Chief Executive (DCE) nor any opinion leader comes anywhere close to being in touch with their members so frequently as does the religious leader.

Religious leaders can rediscover their God given roles in calling the attention of their people to relevant everyday practices that can enhance life, by preaching life enhancing messages from their pulpits; and by creating space for meaningful action. Fullness of life as the scriptures prescribe includes living a healthy life which is attainable with the adoption of good hygiene and sanitation measures to eliminate diseases and infections. In areas where health systems are weak and fragile and sanitation systems are deteriorating, the fate of communities are increasingly hanging in a balance and the role of religious leaders in calling for redress using their God-assigned pulpits has become more than ever critical. The cholera outbreak of 2014 in Accra and elsewhere in the country was a preventable epidemic that took hundreds of lives; the June 3, 2015 disaster at the enclave of the Kwame Nkrumah interchange in Accra, blamed on sanitation failures of the city and which claimed over 150 lives, was also preventable. It is time for the church to rediscover its role in the health and sanitation sector to preserve life and minimize damage to humans and property, noting

¹Ghana Statistical Service (2010) Population and Housing Census, Summary report of final results, May 2012, pg. 40

carefully that, ***“The Maker of the Universe has established certain laws of nature for the planet in which we live, and the weal or woe of mankind depends upon the observance or the neglect of those laws.”***² – Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister of England (1855-1859/1859–1865) on calls by the Scottish clergy for the observance of a national day for fasting and prayer against a ravaging cholera outbreak (See Sermon 8 on Environmental Hygiene.)

There are numerous examples of men and women who had ardent desires to serve God and found true fulfilment in active engagement in secular community services. It is on record that St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, at some point desired nothing but to live a quiet monastic lifestyle, secluded from secular activities and living out there in the desert. When asked to be a priest in Hippo, Augustine was very reluctant and pleaded to be spared with many ardent tears. The cries of the congregation however won and Augustine reluctantly agreed to be ordained. He then gave of his time and talent in serving the spiritual AND temporal needs of his congregation, many of whom were simple and unlearned. He blossomed to become one of the finest and most influential theologians of the 4th Century, not by seclusion from secular activities, but by active engagement with the everyday questions baffling the Early Church.

Mother Theresa of blessed memory made her mark in serving the community needs of the poor and outcasts, the sick and the dying of Calcutta, India. She appropriately earned the accolade “Saint of the gutters of Calcutta.” Rev. Fr. Campbell in Accra is most celebrated not by preaching great sermons but by his singular dedicated service and advocacy for the downcast, and outcasts of our society, including inmates of the Weija Leprosarium and other leprosaria elsewhere in Ghana.

Religious leaders can, therefore, be of immense benefit to society by calling the attention of the health and sanitation needs of their congregants and communities and by preaching life enhancing messages from their pulpits as well as creating space for meaningful action.

²Ref: Lord Palmerston on Cholera and National Fasts; Article in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Monday 6 February 1854, page 3 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/dep/page/1504871?zoomLevel=1>

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE SERMON GUIDE

Delivery approach: Teaching rather than Preaching

Please note carefully that the approach best suited for delivering this 'Sermon Guide' should be teaching rather than preaching. As a Pastor, who employs teaching skills in sermon delivery, there is the need to present the facts in each theme in a way that will enable the congregation to remember and apply action steps required to address the challenges under consideration.

This Sermon Guide is a tool on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) covering nine (9) topical themes for the consideration of Pastors and church leaders. Each topic is addressed with scripture(s) bearing on the theme, followed by key thought(s) which capture the main ideas of the sermon. This is then followed by the main body of the sermon, made relevant by lessons and historical facts where available. The crucial aspect of the delivery then follows: what everybody should know and do, or not do, in the theme under discussion, also known as the technical section. Take your time here and emphasize over and over again for retention. A section on discussion questions for congregational action forms the last part and is best done after the sermon. Discussion of action steps from the groups are to be brought to the leadership for collation into the church's action plan for members or for community engagement as its social responsibility.

The sermons may be used as set out in the Guide or adapted in the way that is suitable for the leader or congregation, as long as the essential points and the technical sections are retained. The questions for congregational action may be used in group meetings: men's/women's/youth/children's meetings. For best results, an annual WASH week (8-day event or 8-week event to cover the topics on 8 Sundays) may be declared for the church. A topic is not complete if the discussion section for congregational action has not been done. Above all, wherever possible, the church should go out of its way to look for well-meaning health personnel in the specialized fields to lend a hand in giving more explanations.

Sermon Planning (Example)

Sermon Title	Planning for Hygiene
Text	Exodus 30:17-21
Main Idea	Good hygiene behaviour does not just happen, it is planned
Sermon Outline	1. It matters to God that as we approach him, both our bodies and our hearts are clean • We need to pay attention to our hygiene habits. • We also need to pay attention to our spiritual disciplines 2. We need to plan for our personal hygiene • We need to have in place whatever we need to be able to practice good hygiene.

Illustration	Hygiene Planning - Buying soap - Acquiring a handwashing facility - Separating Human/Animal living quarters - Separating food storage from human living quarters
Application	What behaviour change needs to happen—at the individual, family, and community levels—to ensure that the majority of people in our community adopt good hygiene practices?

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
- As an individual:
- As a family:
- As a community/ congregation:

SERMON 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF WASH

Did you know?

- Ghana has made significant progress providing access to improved water sources to 89% of the population and eliminating Guinea worm from the country.
- Over five million Ghanaians still drink water from unsafe sources.
- However, despite these successes, 3,600 Ghanaian children die each year from diarrhoea, even more die from pneumonia, and about 23% of Ghanaian children suffer from stunting (chronic malnutrition linked to poor water and sanitation)
- Improved water and sanitation can reduce deaths.

Scripture

3 John: 2 *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. (KJV)*

Key thoughts

- ✓ The first meeting that God had with the community of the redeemed took place with personal hygiene preparations.
- ✓ Good sanitation ensures a healthy life, long life and a healthy community.
- ✓ “A healthy outside starts from the inside” – Robert Urich.

Introduction

Good health promotes spiritual devotions. Except for the small proportion of humanity whose health conditions were affected by congenital or birth defects, the vast majority of humans can apply themselves to areas of their interest when they are healthy. The scripture above seems to suggest that good health could foster spiritual advancement: “I pray and wish above all things that you are enjoying good health and getting along spiritually as well.” Without good health, a person may not be able to engage in spiritual matters without divided attention. It is obvious that **time, effort and money** will be used to gain health at the expense of other life enhancing activities when a person is sick. It was the Apostle John’s prayer that his friend Gaius attained good health in addition to his spiritual advancement.

The Early Church Father, St Augustine, gives a pragmatic approach to the relationship between prayer and individual effort in every undertaking by advocating that, **“Pray as though everything depended on God and work as though everything depended on you.”** This dimension does not diminish the role of prayer but rather enhances it. Adopting this attitude will help us desist from expecting God to run errands for us, but rather help us adapt the right human responsibility and not blame God for our irresponsibility. God has put on us the responsibility of putting in place proper measures to maintain good health.

The book of life, the Bible, properly referred to as the Manufacturer's Manual, contains numerous instructions on healthy living including hygiene and sanitation measures for healthy personal and community life.

It is worth noting that the first recorded community meeting that God had in the Bible with the fledgling nation of Israel, the meeting on Mount Sinai, took place with a background of personal hygiene preparations: ***"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.*** (Exodus.19: 10, 11). This tells us the importance of hygiene and sanitation that God attaches to community life. Later instructions through Prophet Moses show further details on preventive measures for a healthy community life. The Creator of the Universe knows the havoc water, sanitation and hygiene related illnesses would cause the human race and gave adequate measures to forestall them.

Technical / applied information

Over the course of history, water and sanitation related illnesses have been known to account for a sizable proportion of illnesses which, with some effort could have been prevented. The effect of poor hygiene on children is most distressing, especially for parents. How many children in rural communities with poor water and sanitation systems have constant episodes of diarrhoea, colds, intestinal worms, and sores on skins, etc.? It is rather unfortunate that the burden of water, sanitation and hygiene related diseases are borne disproportionately by children in developing countries. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) reports that "About 4 billion cases of diarrhoea per year cause 1.8 million deaths, over 90 per cent of them (1.6 million) among children under five"³ and that "Repeated episodes of diarrhoeal disease make children more vulnerable to other diseases and malnutrition." This is just one water and sanitation issue.

God laments in the book of Hosea that, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). No matter which way one looks at this scripture, it is clear that lack of knowledge does indeed lead to catastrophic ends. God is in His heaven but the sight of children suffering from and dying from preventable sanitation related diseases must grieve Him sorely. God intended mankind to have dominion over the earth and disease control and prevention is one aspect of dominion that mankind ought to acquit itself of. Engaging in good sanitation and hygiene practices go a long way in ensuring longevity – long life. In the new order that God intends to bring about: ***"Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed"*** (Isaiah 65: 20 NIV).

³ Ref: http://www.unicef.org/wash/index_wes_related.html

Long life has been and continues to be God's intention for humans and responsible action steps on good hygiene and sanitation are needed on our part to bring this about. In this regard, we as humans and especially as a community of faith need to arise and work hard as if all depended on us to resolve this state of WASH affairs.

It is important for the community of faith to understand that not all illnesses are spiritual or have demonic origins. Many are caused by flouting basic hygiene and sanitation laws; for instance:

- ✓ By not cleaning our homes and environments and getting rid of flies, we are exposing our children to contracting diarrhoea;
- ✓ By not draining all gutters and ridding the environment of stagnant water, we are creating a good environment for mosquitoes to breed and spread malaria to us, especially the children;
- ✓ By not protecting our water sources from coming into contact with sewage, we are opening our communities to the ravages of cholera.

NOTE: Diarrhoea kills more young people in a year than HIV/AIDS, malaria and measles combined! It is the second leading killer of children worldwide and responsible for killing 760,000 children under-five years every year!⁴

Yes, it is possible to prevent little children from contracting diarrhoea and dysentery just by the simple habit of cleaning our homes and getting rid of flies;

It is possible to prevent children from contracting and dying of malaria by draining all gutters, ridding the environment of breeding places of mosquitoes, such as stagnant water, and ensuring children sleep under treated nets;

It is possible to prevent cholera from striking our communities by stopping open defaecation, adopting a habit of regularly washing our hands with soap, protecting drinking water sources from coming into contact with sewage, and avoiding cold foods and making sure that all foods are properly heated and eaten hot.

These are all inexpensive but very effective measures we can adopt and reap good dividends.

Behaviour change

In addition to the health gains from the measures to adopt and actions to take on hygiene and sanitation, the crucial outcome expected is behaviour change or change in attitude.

⁴<https://www.google.com.gh/search?q=health+and+sanitation+photos&tbn=isch&imgil>



"I must be growing up. I've caught myself washing my hands without being told to."

There is a cartoon of a little boy telling his friend: "I must be growing up. I've caught myself washing my hands without being told to."⁵

This illustration is typical of all that behaviour change is about. When we catch ourselves doing the right thing without being told to; when we stop open defaecation without being told; when we adopt the right sanitation measures at home, in schools and in the communities without compulsion, then many sanitation issues are on the way of being resolved.

Advantages of WASH

There are obvious advantages that good water and sanitation practices bring to us individually and corporately.

- **Increased life expectancy:** In the first place, there is increased life expectancy with reduced morbidity and child mortality. With this, life is enhanced; children can live long and enjoy the health aspect of life in all its fullness. Children will be healthy and in shape for school every day instead of being down with water and sanitation-related illnesses needing treatment.
- **Economic gains:** The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that for every one US dollar invested in improved drinking water and sanitation there is an economic return of four US dollars resulting from health and productivity gains⁶. At the family level, there are obvious economic gains for investing in good sanitation measures and this is not far-fetched. Medical bills will reduce and money could be directed to other life enhancing expenditures.

⁵ Ref: https://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/w/washing_hands.asp

⁶ Ref: <http://water.jhu.edu/magazine/P90>.

- **Reduced sick leave and higher productivity:** The adoption of good sanitation measures will pay off with increased health, reduced absenteeism from work emanating from sickness and a higher productivity. The man hours lost from guinea worm infestation, for example, runs into several man-weeks of no work done but severe agony.
- **Increased self-esteem, especially with girls:** Good sanitation practices will have an immediate telling effect on the general self-esteem on practitioners. Clean bodies in clean clothes; washed bodies in washed clothes; well-kept bodies without odour; well-kept homes without unsightly excreta – these are things that can generate self-confidence and self-esteem. Girls with proper sanitary ammunition and knowledge have no fears mingling with their colleagues, male or female, whether in the “flowers” or not (Leviticus 15: 24, 33 KJV).

Conclusion

Water and sanitation hygiene is an easy win situation if we will apply our hearts and minds to apply recently discovered knowledge to address WASH issues that confront us. As adults, we have a great role in enabling children experience the fullness of life that God intended for them. It falls on us to adopt good hygiene practices and instilling those practices in our children. God has a great plan for us and our children, which is fullness of life (Jn. 10:10). Fullness of life begins with a healthy life and healthy life begins at home. Let us not frustrate those plans by our negligence but rather act promptly to redress long standing failures in hygiene and sanitation. The overall benefits of adopting right sanitation and hygiene approaches individually, for the family and the community at large far outweigh the efforts invested in it. But the starting point is from the inside out, as Robert Urich found out from struggles with his health life with the statement: “A healthy outside starts from the inside”. It is a matter of changing our attitude from within; it will then reflect on the outside.

Take home message

- *God blessed humanity, male and female, and gave them both a stewardship commission to tend and develop the Earth (Gen. 1:28-31).*
- *God has willed the wellbeing of human beings and has provided guidance and instructions for human wellbeing.*
- *Taking care of hygiene and sanitation issues in the home and in the community, provides a level ground for children’s healthy growth.*

Discussion questions for congregational action

1. How do we assess ourselves as being responsible in adopting right water, sanitation and hygiene behaviours in our homes and communities?
2. “Ridding the environment of filth and unseemly garbage is the duty of ‘those paid to do the work.’” How does subscribing to this attitude hinder offering ourselves to being answers to environmental hygiene challenges?

3. What can we, as a church or community of faith, do to show the way towards a new generation?
4. What slogan on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) can we as a church come up with and work assiduously towards to make a difference for ourselves, our families and our community?

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
- As an individual:
- As a family:
- As a community/ congregation:

SERMON 2: PERSONAL HYGIENE

- **Did You Know?**
- 3.4 million people in the world die each year from a water-related disease.
- 2.5 billion people in the world lack access to improved sanitation.
- 1.1 billion people in the world still practice open defaecation.
- 10% of the global disease burden could be reduced through improved water supply, sanitation, hygiene, and water resource management.

Scripture

Exodus 19: 10-11: *¹⁰And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, ¹¹And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.*

Key thoughts

- God requires us to keep our bodies in the best possible condition physically and spiritually- Grace Olubukunmi Adeoye⁷
- The health, sanitation and well-being of a community is a sacred duty, not just a secular concern.

Hygiene could be defined as

- Conditions or practices conducive to maintaining health and preventing diseases, especially through cleanliness.
- The practice of keeping yourself and your living and working areas clean in order to maintain health and prevent illness and disease.

Personal Hygiene is, therefore, a set of personal practices that contribute to good health.

Introduction: The command to keep clean

In the scripture above, God commanded the Israelites in the wilderness to prepare themselves for a meeting with Him. Moses was asked to SANCTIFY the people. The word 'sanctify' has a theological meaning but it has holistic applications as well. Among the many meanings of the word sanctify is: "to dedicate, consecrate and set apart for God's use," but the word also means "to purify" which comes closer in meaning to: "to cleanse," "to disinfect" and "to sanitise." To make the meaning clearer, God broke it down for Moses: "let

⁷**Grace Olubukunmi Adeoye**, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria; Write up titled: Water Supply, Environmental Hygiene and Health; Prepared for the 28th International Faith and Learning Seminar held at Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria June 17 - 29, 2001. Source: http://ict.aiias.edu/vol_28/28cc_001-017.htm

them wash their clothes” in preparation for this historic meeting. This will get rid of the filth of many days’ journey. They were given a 3-day advance notice for this vital preparation.

Personal hygiene, even under the extreme urgency of the exodus, was an imperative command on the people in the desert. For the fledgling nation under construction, basic laws of hygiene needed to be woven into the fabric of their societal lives. Hygiene practices were in fact made part of their religious observances and became a prelude to worship acceptable to God. There seemed to be little distinction between the everyday required practices of hygiene and the sacred duties of serving God. “Wash your clothes in preparation to meeting God face to face”, was the command.

No.	SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN GOD’S PLAN FOR HUMAN WELLBEING	SCRIPTURES
1.	Our bodies in God’s design	1 Corinthians 6: 19-20
2.	Human waste management	Deuteronomy 23:10-14
3.	Cleanliness and life	Exodus 19:10-11
4.	Personal hygiene	Numbers 8:5-7
5.	Food laws and hygiene	Leviticus 11:1-47
6.	Planning for hygiene	Exodus 30:17-21

Health and sanitation laws

Reading through the book of Leviticus, from chapter 12 through 15, we come across detailed health principles and sanitary laws that God had passed on through Moses to the Israelites. The health of the nation rested on the aggregate of individual personal hygiene efforts. Distinctions were made between the clean and the unclean, what makes a person defiled and unclean and regulations on treatment of persons tested positive of contracting contagious diseases. Thorough procedures were required to deal with persons, articles, clothes and houses showing signs and symptoms of contamination, including symptoms for skin infections or mould. Detailed isolation measures were put in place to prevent the transmission of contagious skin infections. Persons suspected to have infectious skin diseases were put in isolation camps for observation for a period. Before a person, healed of any skin infection could be allowed back into the community, rigorous tests were performed and if found cleansed, sacrifices of thanksgiving were made to receive the person back into society.

Among the rigorous procedures commanded as a standard hygienic practice was bathing. The NIV Bible mentions bathing 23 times from the book of Exodus to Deuteronomy, mostly covering sanitary procedures for persons with various sanitary conditions needing attention. It is also worth noting that washing of clothes is mentioned over 20 times in the book of Leviticus covering different sanitary situations being monitored and observed.

Technical / applied information

Disease control experts tell us that regular bathing and washing of clothes can eliminate a group of diseases referred to as water washed diseases⁸. These are diseases caused by poor personal hygiene, worsened by insufficiency of water. They comprise various skin diseases like scabies, lice, yaws, leprosy, skin rashes, and skin diseases from unwashed bodies and eye infections like conjunctivitis and trachoma.

The scriptures' emphasis on personal hygiene stems from its fore-knowledge of the misery these diseases will cause us and offers us the preventive, responsible personal hygiene practices.

Signs of poor domestic hygiene include:

- not cleaning the toilet
- not getting rid of rubbish
- not washing clothes and beddings frequently
- not storing food properly

Signs of poor personal hygiene include:

- not washing hands regularly with soap
- not bathing regularly
- not washing hair
- Not cleaning the teeth regularly

A comprehensive list of personal hygiene practices for our times will include the following:

- ✓ bathing regularly
- ✓ cleaning teeth at least twice daily
- ✓ keeping hair clean
- ✓ keeping fingernails clean
- ✓ always wearing clean clothes
- ✓ always using footwear
- ✓ washing hands at critical times
- ✓ washing underwear after one use
- ✓ changing bed sheets weekly
- ✓ washing towel frequently

⁸ Peter H. Gleick: *Dirty Water: Estimated Deaths from Water-Related Disease 2000-2020*, Pacific Institute Research Report, Peter H. Gleick August 15, 2002 Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security • www.pacinst.org •

- ✓ hanging clothes in the sun to dry. The sun's rays will kill some disease-causing germs and parasites
- ✓ covering your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze
- ✓ not sharing razors, towels, or makeup with other people
- ✓ changing your sanitary pads regularly (this is for women and girls!)

Gender based hygiene practices

Did you know?

- In Africa women and girls are the main providers of household water supply and sanitation, and also have the primary responsibility for maintaining a clean home environment.
- Girls often have to walk long distances to fetch water and firewood in the early morning causing them to arrive late and tired at school.
- Lack of separate and decent sanitation and washing facilities discourages girls who are menstruating from attending school full time.

The scriptures are not shy of gender related hygiene practices and we must not shy from it either. The book of Leviticus details practices that God put in place for us as male and female based on natural cycles inherent in our gender. These are practices we should celebrate and not be ashamed of or denigrate. Chapter 15 of the book of Leviticus specifies that a man or woman having a discharge contaminates all linen, when the discharge comes into contact with bed sheets, clothing, etc., and must undergo some cleansing rituals including washing of all contaminated sheets, bathing and restricted contact with others. The discharges include semen for males (vs 16-18, 32) and menstrual fluids for females (vs 19-30). These hygienic practices are meant to forestall the spread of diseases found in human fluids through contact and in no way condemnatory of sexual organs and their God ordained use in the proper context.

The Bible indeed celebrates womanhood and the natural cyclical processes involved in being female. The New King James version uses the term customary (vs 33) in referring to the menstrual period of women, and the King James version is even more celebratory of the event, describing it as a time when a woman is in “her flowers” (vs 24, 33).

Technical / applied information

There are hygienic implications of this natural, customary cyclical event for the girl child and the responsibility lies with both parents and the girl-child to prevent the latter from experiencing a let-down resulting from neglect.

There are many instances of girl children absenting themselves from school during this period because of lack of sanitary pads or lack of convenient places for changing pads in

school. Some girls are known to have abandoned school altogether because their parents had not provided them with pads.

In both urban and rural contexts, girls and women regularly face harassment when going to the toilet, and may delay drinking and eating in order to wait until nightfall to relieve themselves. Given the taboos around defaecation and menstruation and the frequent lack of privacy, women and girls, may prefer to go to the toilet or use bathing units under the cover of darkness. Women, girls and boys may have to walk long distances to collect water or to find water to do their laundry. Walking to remote locations or using WASH facilities in darkness puts especially women girls at risk of harassment, sexual assault and rape. This can result in unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, being accused of being unfaithful by husbands, being disowned by families, or mocked by other community members; and mental health challenges such as increased fear and stress. Additional challenges include situations in which women and children have to queue for extended time periods at water points facing fights with other service users, or face punishment for their late return home. In conflict situations, men may be vulnerable to abduction or death when accessing water points outside the boundaries of a camp.

Early teenage girls need a lot of support at this stage; these include:

- Coaching on detecting signs of impending menstruation and how to manage themselves hygienically with dignity and self-confidence;
- Provision of enough sanitary pads for timely changes;
- Enough privacy at home and in school to effect changes of pads and adequately disposing of them;
- Need to ensure adequate supply of water for bathing at home and for handwashing at home and in school.

Teenage boys also go through different challenges at this stage, experiencing 'wet dreams' at night. They need to be assured that this is a natural thing associated with growth development and in no way 'demonic,' as some might take it. Teenage boys at this stage need to be taught and encouraged to bath more regularly, change/wash their underwear and wash/change their bed linen more regularly. Especially, they need the assurance that they will not get mad if they do not have sex, as is dangerously held among their peers in the African scene.

Conclusion

It is informative to note that health checks in Old Testament times were in the domain of priestly services. Health and sanitary laws were enforced by the priests. The overall well-being of the community, including health and sanitation, was under the monitoring and supervisory role of priests. Declaration of infected persons and articles as clean or unclean, i.e. as safe and unsafe rested with the priests. Today, these functions have been taken over by the medical, nursing and other professional bodies. However, the church has not lost its

relevance as an avenue for informing people about what they should know and do, i.e. a place for information sharing on health issues and a place for mobilization for community action for the welfare of all.

Just as Moses the prophet of God heeded the advice of Jethro his father-in-law to look for 'able men' (Ex. 18: 21NLT) to help with judging cases and only refer difficult matters to him, so has the Church, over the centuries also made space for 'able men and women' - health professionals to take up the matters of health and sanitation. But this does not mean she should abandon her holistic role in hygiene and sanitation matters.

Take home message

- ✓ ***Your health depends on your personal hygiene. Make it your choice to adopt good hygienic practices for your children and family. It will save you money and offer you a healthy life.***

Discussion questions for congregational action

1. *Are there any matters of health and hygiene in the community that could best be addressed by partnership between relevant professional agencies and churches?*
2. *How ready is your church to take on 'non-sacred' engagements with health and hygiene issues for personal and community well-being?*
3. *What community personal hygiene issues, including worm infestations, skin infections and ring worms especially among children need immediate action: who do we engage for intervention; how do we engage with the relevant bodies, when do we do it; what other planning tools do we put in place?*
4. *Can the church develop action plans for follow ups by departmental/sector heads on issues identified?*
5. *What programme does your church have for training mothers and parents on hygiene practices for boys and girls in relation to natural emissions e.g. night emissions for boys and menstrual periods for girls?*
6. *How can the church partner with the community school in providing a decent and convenient changing room for girls in their menstrual period?*

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
- As an individual:
- As a family:
- As a community/ congregation:

SERMON 3: HANDWASHING AT CRITICAL TIMES

- **Did You Know?**
- Approximately 70% of health care workers and 50% of surgical teams do not routinely practice hand hygiene.
- Handwashing with soap at critical times (before eating, after using the latrine or urinal, etc.) would save more lives than any single vaccine or medical intervention.
- Diseases like flu, diarrhoea, dysentery, bilharzia, cholera, typhoid, etc., can be greatly prevented or managed through a simple practice like handwashing with soap.
- Handwashing can reduce diarrhoea and pneumonia by up to 50%, yet only 21% of Ghanaian households have designated handwashing facilities with soap and water.

Scripture

1 Corinthians 3:16-17: Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

Key thought

God delights in the purity of our bodies that He might dwell in us by His Spirit.

Introduction

God is Holy and pure and He requires His children to strive to be like Him. Every use of the body that ends up defiling the body brings sorrow to our loving Father. As humans, if we see our children picking dirt to eat, we become very angry with them but this anger is borne out of the love we have for them: for their well-being and good health. Out of the unwholesome food the children eat, they will get ill, lose sleep and require medical attention and it is we the parents that finally bear the brunt of the children's thoughtless acts. Our God has the best designs for our lives and wants us to take good care of our bodies and avoid things that defile our bodies and cause us trouble. Anytime we fall sick, our first reaction is to call on God to heal us.

Scriptures are clear with warnings against some activities that defile the body. The scripture above refers to sexual promiscuity which defiles the body and the spirit. But there are other things we do as humans that can defile our bodies that God is not happy about. Therefore, things we do that bring sicknesses to our bodies are things we must guard against. In many cases, the body becomes sick when its internal and or external system becomes defiled and is unwholesome. Disease germs from outside the body are responsible for compromising

the state of physical purity of the body and causing sicknesses. We must do everything we can to keep these disease germs outside the body.

There are a lot of germs that can gain entry to the body through our hands getting contaminated with them from the many places we have been to, and surfaces we have touched. If we do not get rid of these germs before handling the food we eat, they gain entry into our system and cause trouble. We need to prevent germs from gaining access to our bodies by making sure that our hands are clean before we handle food that goes into our mouths. We, as humans, need to take responsible steps to avoid contaminating our bodies and getting sick and calling on God to heal us. In the same way that we do not do everything for our growing children, so must we not expect God to do everything for us. God is not our errand boy: He is not at our beck and call, we are at His; and His laws must be respected, for our own good.

Lack of knowledge

With regret, God chastises His people: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). It is especially sad if knowledge within our reach and action is left untapped; it could result in much grief. Simple doable actions can save lives; and inexpensive DIY (do-it-yourself) actions at home can save the family lots of money that can be used for the children’s needs. By neglecting these acts, we end up paying huge medical bills, not to mention the inconvenience of confinement in hospitals.

Technical / applied information

Handwashing as a life saver

It has been documented that in the early days of modern medical practice, a lot of deaths were recorded in hospital wards for which the causes were unknown and the medical authorities were baffled. The breakthrough came in 1847 when Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis, a Hungarian doctor, introduced compulsory handwashing with chlorinated water – a disinfectant – for everyone entering a maternal ward he was observing. He was rewarded with a dramatic drop in the maternal and foetal deaths that were occurring for which he was monitoring.⁹ Apparently, hospital workers, including doctors and trainee-doctors, were part of the chain in transmitting germs from infected persons and corpses to patients. The chain in transmission was broken just by the simple rule of handwashing with disinfectant. Since then, the practice of compulsory handwashing in the medical field has been perfected and the benefits accruing to this practice is now being extended to the general population.

To prevent unwanted germs entering our bodies through things we handle, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, after much research, have recommended that there are five critical times when hands should be washed with soap. Proper handwashing

⁹Ref. : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_surgery; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz_Semmelweis

then means washing hands with soap under running water. Ash can be used in the absence of soap. The five (5) critical times for proper handwashing are:

- Before preparing food
- Before eating
- Before breastfeeding/feeding a baby
- After defecating or visiting the toilet
- After cleaning a child's bottom

We might also add that for us in West Africa, handwashing with soap must be done immediately we return from social functions like funerals and other social functions where there is a lot of hand-shaking. This should be done before handling any item in the home. Children must also be taught to wash hands as soon as they come home from playing or from school before touching their food.

The five critical times for handwashing with soap shows that a lot of handwashing is required for the safety of all family members at home. We are told that handwashing should be under running water, not in a basin with stagnant water, for group washing. In fact, in the book of Leviticus, where a number of items meant for sacrificial use had to be washed, the instruction was for the washing to be done with fresh water.

The New American Standard Bible (NASB) Updated version uses the term 'running water' five times in Leviticus 14. It is interesting to note that Leviticus 15: 13 specifies bathing in 'fresh spring water' (NLT) – a clear example of running water – as part of sanitary purification rites for persons with genital discharges. The concept of use of running water for handwashing, therefore, has Biblical precedence and needs to be taken seriously. Use of stagnant water for group handwashing will only be recirculating or redistributing germs to other users. Handwashing with soap under running water can be considered as a home extension of the standard medical practice by the medical profession that saves lives.

In homes with non-regular running tap water and in homes with no taps, there is the need to introduce low cost technologies like tippy taps, a version of which is the Veronica bucket: a bucket with tap at the bottom and a lid covering it. Filled with clean water and a bar of soap within easy reach, the regular use of this device could help prevent the family from contracting many harmful diseases from toilets and the surroundings.

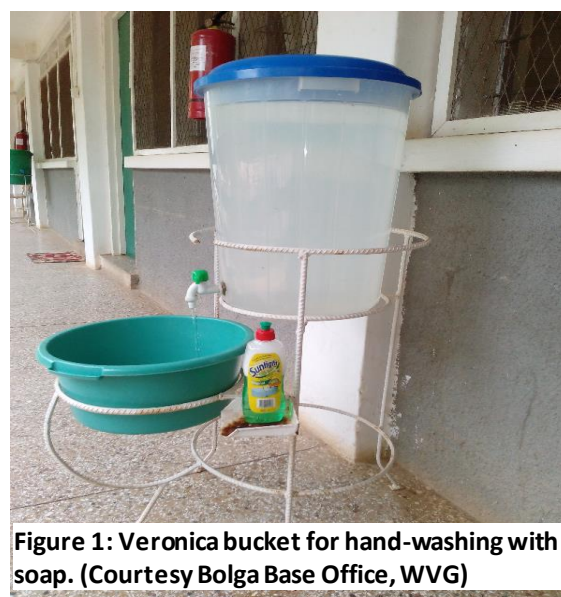


Figure 1: Veronica bucket for hand-washing with soap. (Courtesy Bolga Base Office, WVG)

With the increasing cost of medical care, time spent in long queues waiting for treatment with its stresses and frustrations, and loss in productivity, the family will rather be saving a lot investing in purchasing a Veronica bucket.

“Health care-associated infection is such a big problem, we need to focus the world on something that is truly actionable and can save many, many lives. This action is hand hygiene, a flagship element of WHO's patient safety work.” (Dr Edward Kelley, Director, Service Delivery and Safety, WHO)¹⁰

Hand hygiene is not a luxury

Infection prevention and control (IPC), which includes hand hygiene, is fundamental to safe and effective health care systems. Hand hygiene is relevant to all health workers, patients and their families at every single health care encounter. It contributes to quality universal health coverage, meeting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.8 and also strongly supports the water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and health and global antimicrobial resistance (AMR) agendas.¹¹

Jesus' words in Mark 7: 1 – 8 must not be seen as an excuse for not washing hands before meals. The Pharisees had taken the elaborate ceremonial handwashing before meals as a religious duty earning them favour with God but Jesus sharply rebuked their hypocrisy: “These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.” It is the pretence to godliness, the pompous show of religiosity and the laying of unnecessary burdens on folks that Jesus attacked; not washing off germs from hands that could cause diarrhoea, dysentery or cholera and death, especially among children.

¹⁰WHO's Global Annual Campaign, http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may_advocacy-toolkit.pdf

¹¹WHO's Global Annual Campaign, http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may_advocacy-toolkit.pdf



Conclusion

In the light of knowledge that simple washing of hands at the five critical times can help eliminate the contraction of lurking germs, everybody, especially the church should be championing the campaign that will help everybody gain a healthy body. With healthy bodies, we become fit dwelling places for God who indeed desires to indwell us by His Spirit and use us as His instruments for His own glory.

NB: If the church has the facility, conclude the sermon with a practical demonstration of proper handwashing with soap for the observation of various church groups, with a special focus on the children. This may be done by a Community Health Nurse, or Community Health Surveillance personnel.

Take home message

- ✓ *Take precautions not to pass on infections; it is a demonstration of love and care for your neighbour.*
- ✓ *Make it a habit to wash your hands with soap under running water.*
- ✓ *SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands! (WHO).*

Would you want to engage in a week-long Handwashing challenge? For each time you wash your hand, give a prayer of thanksgiving to God:

"God thank you for the gift of my body. I now honour you through washing my hands."

Discussion questions for congregational action

1. *What are the gaps in handwashing promotion within the church? Is it awareness, adoption or sustenance or a combination of these? How can we rectify these?*
2. *Is your church adequately provided/equipped with toilets and urinals? Are there any provisions for washing hands after use of such places? If there is none, what can you do to rectify this anomaly after gaining knowledge in hygiene and handwashing?*
3. *How can the church encourage members who do not have running water in their homes to acquire low cost technologies like tippy taps and Veronica buckets for use in homes?*
4. *Knowing the amount of play that our children engage in during school hours, what can we do about schools in our community that do not have running water as a safeguard to our children contracting diseases?*
5. *How can parents instil in themselves, their family and especially the children, the practice of handwashing at critical times so it becomes a habit?*

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
 - As an individual:
 - As a family:
 - As a community/ congregation:

SERMON 4: FOOD HYGEINE

Did You Know?

Poor sanitation and lack of water and hygiene can lead to:

- Dysentery – spread by person-to-person contact and contaminated water and food.
- Cholera - water or food of the cholera victim contaminated by human faeces.
- Typhoid – spread by a *Salmonella bacillus* found in human faeces.
- Trachoma – a leading cause of preventable blindness in the world caused by poor sanitation and hygiene

Scripture

Leviticus 11:29-38: *“²⁹ Of the animals that move about on the ground, these are unclean for you: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, ³⁰ the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink and the chameleon. ³¹ Of all those that move along the ground, these are unclean for you. Whoever touches them when they are dead will be unclean till evening. ³² When one of them dies and falls on something, that article, whatever its use, will be unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, hide or sackcloth. Put it in water; it will be unclean till evening, and then it will be clean. ³³ If one of them falls into a clay pot, everything in it will be unclean, and you must break the pot. ³⁴ Any food that could be eaten but has water on it from such a pot is unclean, and any liquid that could be drunk from it is unclear. ³⁵ Anything that one of their carcasses falls on becomes unclean; an oven or cooking pot must be broken up. They are unclean, and you are to regard them as unclean. ³⁶ A spring, however, or a cistern for collecting water remains clean, but anyone who touches one of these carcasses is unclean. ³⁷ If a carcass falls on any seeds that are to be planted, they remain clean. ³⁸ But if water has been put on the seed and a carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.”*

Key thought

- ✓ House-keeping, including proper care taken in preparing wholesome food by avoiding unwholesome contact with defiling environments, was as much a sacred application as temple services.
- ✓ By preventing the defilement of household members through contact with disease-defiling environments, the community as a collective entity was kept whole, not unwholesome, sickly, weak and unfit for the advancement of their service to God.

Introduction

The Pentateuch, the first five (5) books of the law given by God through Moses contains diverse instructions on practical day to day affairs of life. It is to be noted here that teaching the dietary and the sanitary conditions of food vessels was part and parcel of the priestly

duties of those ordained to that high office. Sermons of clean and unclean foods were not just for the listening pleasure of congregants but enjoined congregants to take practical points back home to put into action. Congregants, as responsible community members, were to ensure their households were not defiled by contact with animals with defiling habits; e.g. rats, lizards, etc. Measures were instituted to deal with cases of such defilement when they occurred. Certain living things had been declared unwholesome or unfit to be eaten. These included lizards, wall geckos, skunks, etc. We can safely presume that the list was representative and not an exhaustive one. Cockroaches, for example, did not make it on this list, but we are careful to avoid its contact with food, with its health consequences, knowing its habits and choice of places. In the light of the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa which cited bats as likely candidate for the transfer of the disease from animals to humans, we get an understanding of the need to take seriously food hygiene practices and exercise great care in the preparation of meals.

The scripture tells us that the carcass of such animals must not be allowed to get into contact with vessels used for storing water or cooking food. Vessels so contaminated were to be destroyed, especially baked clay pots. Other less porous and more durable vessels were to undergo a special purification treatment (vs 32). Modern day food cooking vessels and receptacles like enamel bowls, plasticware and chinaware, are likely to have qualified for special treatment since they are not as porous as the fire baked pots of those days. The principle then seems to be the prevention of fluids of unwholesome animals from entering the human body/system through receptacles used for drinking or cooking/baking. The key point is the prevention of the transfer of diseases from lower organisms to humans and from other animals to humans.

Numbers 19:22 (NIV) says: "Anything that an unclean person touches becomes unclean..." God is telling us what science much later came to discover that we need to be careful about transferring uncleanness to others. For our purposes, this declaration could safely be extended to mean: a germ-infested person or object can easily transmit the germ infection to another person or object. For our generation, this seems ridiculously obvious but it was only around 1860 that Louis Pasteur first discovered the germ world. Facts and principles the Bible had taught for over 3,000 years were only discovered in less than 200 years ago. This is very crucial for every person in the food preparation business, both at household level and food vendors, to note. Everything about food preparation must be thoroughly clean so that unsuspecting customers do not end up unwittingly paying for illnesses when their intentions were simply to pay for food to take care of their hunger and for their nourishment.

House-keeping, including proper care in preparing wholesome food by avoiding unwholesome contact with defiling environments was as much a sacred application as other temple services. By preventing the defilement of household members through contact with

disease-defiling environments, the community as a collective entity was kept whole, not unwholesome, sickly, weak and unfit for the advancement of their service to God.

Technical / applied information

Food hygiene involves the conditions and measures necessary to ensure the safety of food from production to consumption.

Food can become contaminated at any point during slaughtering or harvesting, processing, storage, distribution, transportation and preparation. Lack of adequate food hygiene can lead to foodborne diseases and death of the consumer.

Food from natural environments comes into contact with germs that can cause diseases. The chain of events that food items, including fruits and vegetables, go through before they end up in our hands for eating have a large open window for contamination with several varieties of disease causing agents. Some of these include animal and human open defaecation practices, contact with burrowing animals like rats and mice when ripe food products are left on the farm, filthy market environments and unhygienic transport services.

What can be done to render food wholesome for eating?

Simple household discipline can eliminate or minimize contact of food meant for eating with disease agents. These include the following actions:

- ✓ Wash all fruits and vegetables properly with vinegar or salt water before using them to prepare food or eating raw.
- ✓ Cooked food should always be covered.
- ✓ Serve food in clean bowls.
- ✓ Serve and eat food hot.
- ✓ Wash cooking utensils and bowls immediately after cooking and eating and store them dry, preferably air-dry. Don't keep cooking utensils and bowls on the floor.



Figure 2: Food vendors should, as much as possible, avoid bodily contact with food being sold to customers¹²

¹² Picture: Courtesy Rev. Seth Acquaye, WVG F&D Manager

Food vendors must be careful to note these important rules for the welfare of their customers.

- ✓ Use only water safe for drinking for the preparation of food for sale to the public.
- ✓ Maintain good personal hygiene and ensure a clean environment for your business.
- ✓ Serve food with spoons/ladles and keep them out of reach of flies and other insects, or dirt.
- ✓ Avoid bodily contact with food being sold even with hands. Cover hand with clean polythene. For roasted food, e.g. roasted corn, yam, plantain, etc., use clean pincers/tongs to turn them when roasting, not bare hand.
- ✓ Food should always be kept in a sieve or properly covered to prevent flies from having access to it.
- ✓ In areas or conditions of sudden draughts of wind that causes circulation of dust, use of mere sieve is not advisable but a glass covered receptacle.
- ✓ Avoid preparing and selling food near gutters, choked or un-choked and open drains.
- ✓ Food vendors should dress appropriately; including covering hair, and wearing clean apron when preparing or serving/selling food; keep the apron cleanly washed after each day's work.
- ✓ Use only running water for washing used dishes or at least change the dish water frequently. Rinse washed dishes with clean water, preferably hot water. Adopt the system of using a coal pot with fire to dry washed dishes before serving next customers.

What can be done to render food wholesome for eating?

Cleaning dishes

- ✓ Wash and rinse dishes. Wash with soapy water; warm soapy water is best
- ✓ Rinse with hot water-as hot as your hands can take it
- ✓ Dry with clean towel, or in sun
- ✓ Stuck dishes to dry so that water runs out of them
- ✓ Do not store dishes on the ground

Storing food

- ✓ Remember you cannot see germs grow
- ✓ Do not store foods for very long
- ✓ Room temperature encourages fast bacteria growth!
- ✓ Reheating - get it hot again

Five keys to safer foods (WHO)¹³

- ✓ Keep clean
- ✓ Separate Raw and Cooked Foods
- ✓ Cook Thoroughly
- ✓ Keep food at safe temperatures
- ✓ Use safe water and raw materials

Conclusion

Eating healthy food is essential for the well-being and survival of each human being. Eating 'contaminated' food (also known as 'food poisoning') can be a significant source of illnesses. Often, there is no way of telling if food is contaminated because it might not look, taste or smell any different from normal. Good food hygiene is not just something for restaurants to worry about. It is important to know how to store and prepare food safely and hygienically in the home too.

The Old Testament is full of food rules prescribing both what to eat and how to prepare it. Many Christians have traditionally interpreted Jesus' statements that, "What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them" (Matthew. 15:11; Mark. 7:15), "kill and eat" a variety of unclean animals and "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:9-22) to mean that we can eat whatever we like. In Matthew 15:10-11 and Mark 7: 14-23, Jesus declared all foods clean, but this is to be understood in context. Jesus was making the point that true defilement that concerned God had less to do with what goes in and out of a person and more with heart attitudes and evil tendencies such as sexual immoralities, theft, murder, deceit and all other evil desires. Jesus' declaration of all foods being clean is no licence for eating unwholesome disease filled food or a call to lower our guard in consuming unhygienically prepared food. Therefore, not only are good food decisions a matter of good citizenship, they are central to good discipleship too.

Take home message

- ✓ ***Food is a blessing meant to make us strong and healthy and allow us grow, especially children.***
- ✓ ***Food that brings sickness to the family is a curse and originates from unhygienic preparation.***

Discussion questions for congregational action

1. *What will be your reaction to food vendors using the same dish water for washing dishes over and over again for serving customers in local restaurants?*

¹³ "Five Keys to Safer Foods", http://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/consumer/en/5keys_en.pdf?ua=1

2. *Are there any practices of serving food by food vendors that break simple rules of hygiene and need to be addressed in your community?*

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
- As an individual:
- As a family:
- As a community/congregation:

SERMON 5: WATER SAFETY AT POINT OF USE: HWTS (HOUSEHOLD WATER TREATMENT AND SAFE STORAGE)

Did you know?

- Water is vital to all known forms of life, and is essential to living a healthy lifestyle.
- Your body uses water to hydrate, lubricate, and cleanse.
- A person should drink 2 – 4 litres of water every day.
- Half of the hospital beds in the world are occupied by patients suffering from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.
- It is estimated that nearly 10% of the global disease burden could be reduced through improved water supply, sanitation, hygiene, and water resource management.
- 88% of global cases of diarrhoea are estimated to be attributable to unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation, and poor hygiene.
- 90% of the deaths due to diarrheal diseases are children under 5 years old, mostly in developing countries.

Scriptures

2 Kings 2:19-22: *The men of the city (Jericho) said to Elisha, "Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive." "Bring me a new bowl," he said, "and put salt in it." So, they brought it to him. Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, "This is what the Lord says: 'I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.'" And the water has remained wholesome to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.*

Exodus 15:22-25: *²² Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days, they travelled in the desert without finding water. ²³ When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) ²⁴ So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.*

Key thought

- ✓ Pure water is one of heaven's choicest blessings – Ellen G. White¹⁴
- ✓ Purity of water is a community asset that must be protected at all cost.

¹⁴ Quoted from Write up by Grace Olubukunmi Adeoye, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria; Write up titled: WATER SUPPLY, ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE AND HEALTH; Prepared for the 28th International Faith and Learning Seminar held at Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria June 17 - 29, 2001. Source: http://ict.aiias.edu/vol_28/28cc_001-017.htm

- ✓ We owe it as a duty as Christians not to pollute our water bodies through illegal mining (galamsey), littering, etc., and to oppose all who are involved in such activities
- ✓ We need to voice our opposition to water pollution.

Introduction

All of life requires water, it is something we take for granted, but shouldn't. To protect life, we must have pure water. Dirty water in our lakes, streams and headwaters remains a constant threat and we must work to ensure that kind of pollution does not harm our children and loved ones. The Bible recognizes how profound our need for water is by using it to illustrate the most important thing we need to know about God: His steadfast love (Psalm 137:1). And clean water is used by Christians to perform one of our most important sacraments: baptism, which symbolizes the cleansing of our sins. No one would want a child to be baptized in dirty water.

The two scriptures above show instances in the Bible where we encounter water meant for community use that is polluted, impure or poisoned. The causes of the impurity or poison are not disclosed but the effects were so severe as to cause death, unproductivity of the land or pronounced bitterness in taste. In both cases the water was unusable by the communities and required urgent interventions. In both instances, God's prophets, under divine direction, brought healing and purification of the water, rendering them safe for use.

A repeat of the Jericho unsafe water situation is constantly playing out in many communities today. When the cholera germ infects a water source, as happens in many cities and communities over and over again in the West Africa sub region, it results in very grievous loss of human lives. Though we do not know the source of the poisoning in the Biblical accounts, for cholera attacks, we know that traceable human activities bring them about. Given the present level of knowledge, we know that collective action can prevent the pollution and poisoning of water sources. One thing we cannot do is to keep on asking prophets to intervene for us, since God has allowed knowledge to increase about preventive measures in many of these cases.

Purity of water is a community asset that must be protected by all at all cost. A healthy population thrives on safe water to maintain its state of health. The nature of water makes it easily contaminated and so it easily loses its purity. Water is known as a universal solvent because it dissolves more substances than any other liquid known to man. We must make it a point to prevent water that is taken for domestic use from coming into contact with elements that can defile, pollute and render the water unsafe for drinking.

Discuss the Scriptures on the following issues and the implications for household and community water needs/usage:

- **Scarcity of water:** Genesis 21:14-21; Isaiah 41:18-20
- **Pollution of water:** Exodus 15:22-27; 2Kings 2:19-22

- **Careless treatment and storage of water:** 2 Samuel 14:14; Rev. 16:3-5

Technical / applied information

Today in Ghana, many communities have lost their sources of potable water due to illegal gold winning activities, popularly referred to as 'galamsey'. Community sources of potable water have been totally desecrated and rendered unusable due to mercury used in the mining process. It would not take divine measures to reverse this human activity, but bold, firm human action initiated by voices of reason and leadership, of which the church can and must provide. Indeed, appealing to God will fall on deaf ears, since we encourage the menace by our silence; or because we benefit from it one way or the other – our sons and daughters and relatives bring in proceeds from these activities and we accept it without raising objections. We owe it as a duty as Christians not to pollute our water bodies through 'galamsey,' littering etc. There is the need to voice our opposition to all water pollution activities in our communities. We need to do it through trumpeting it from the pulpits, actively engaging in radio discussions, engaging with other community leaders and people of other religions. If there is the need to engage with land owners or the District or Municipal Assemblies, we would have to take the necessary steps.

Other human activities that pollute our bodies include: Dumping of refuse into water bodies; defecating and urinating into water bodies; fishing with poisonous chemicals; animals drinking directly from and defecating into drinking water sources.

Apart from these activities that poison our sources of community water, researchers have found out that there are a variety of water related diseases which can cause severe havoc to humans both at the point of use in our homes or at the point of collection. These include diseases such as cholera, typhoid, diarrhoea and dysentery which are caused by faeces infected water gaining entrance into our stomachs.

Other diseases such as guinea worm, bilharzia, and tape worm are caused by infected persons stepping into sources of water and helping the eggs of the causing agents to complete their lifecycle.

A third set of diseases such as eye infections e.g. trachoma, skin rashes, scabies and other skin diseases from unwashed bodies are caused by insufficiency of water.

The final set of diseases caused by water is river blindness and sleeping sickness which are caused by the bites of some types of flies.

Appropriate community measures are necessary to eliminate all forms of water related diseases.

One word that sums up all the things we do that encourage WASH related diseases is: CARELESSNESS at the point of use or at the point of collection of water. There is the need for change in attitudinal behaviour at the point of collection and at the point of use of water. We need to avoid the following things that can render water unsafe for use:

- ✓ Contamination of water sources by careless human activity: e.g., disease infected water draining back into water source. This may be caused by humans or animals defecating into or around water bodies; an infected person stepping into the water body.
- ✓ Use of dirty receptacle in conveying water.
- ✓ Exposure of collected water to the atmosphere where it becomes susceptible to flies and gusts of air dust.
- ✓ Use of single cup for dipping into water for drinking by multiple users.
- ✓ Multiple cups dipped into a single source of water for drinking.
- ✓ Refusal to treat water from open sources e.g. dams, dug-outs, rivers, streams, uncovered wells before drinking.

By applying knowledge, we can keep the water in our communities safe for use at household levels. The government and NGOs and other agencies in the districts have provided several water points for community use: boreholes, wells public standpipes etc. which have been declared safe for use.

However, the handling of water from the point of collection to the final end user is critical for the purity of water. A little carelessness introduced along the way can render water unsafe for drinking. Care must therefore be taken in the way water is transported from its source to homes, the receptacles used in conveying the water, as well as safe practices in the use of water at home.

Responsible actions

- ✓ Transport and store water in clean and narrow mouth containers.
- ✓ Always transport and store water covered.
- ✓ Do not use multiple cups to fetch water from pots or water storage containers for drinking.
- ✓ Avoid dipping cups into drinking water – rather pour the water into receptacles.
- ✓ Treat water from open sources (such as dams, dug-outs, rivers, streams, uncovered wells) by boiling, filtering or chlorinating before drinking. Expert advice must be sought for domestic chlorination of water.
- ✓ Avoid contamination of dams, dug outs and streams by humans and animals.
- ✓ Water storage containers should be cleaned regularly.
- ✓ Teach children the right ways of handling water.

Conclusion

It is particularly important to be watchful of our activities with water both at the point of collection and point of use because water is very vulnerable to pollution. A host of disease causing agents are waiting to pollute water and render it unsafe for use. These disease-causing agents ride on the back of water to wreak havoc to society by causing water borne

diseases such as cholera, hepatitis and polio and therefore need careful monitoring. Water as a resource is second only to air and is the most used by all communities around the world. Water has no substitute and the human body testifies to it by its make-up of 75% water. The human body never fares well without water, safe water. For the safety of the family, especially children, let us make sure that the conveyance of water from sources of collection, transportation and point of use in the home is safe.

Take home message:

✓ ***Water is life! Keep it safe***

Discussion questions for congregational action

In view of prevailing knowledge on the need for cleanliness of water both at the source of collection and at home:

1. *What are the types of water pollution activities taking place in your community?*
2. *What steps should you take to protect the sources of water that your community uses?*
3. *Are there pressing water issues that will require bold steps to redress for which the church need to initiate action or be a part of a larger network to redress the situation?*
4. *What advocacy steps would be needed to deal with the issue of animals having unchecked access to water points that your community uses?*
5. *Do you see community members going on free range or open defaecation on slopes that will eventually seep back into the community source of water? What can you do about this?*
6. *What linkage can you work out with people of other religions to protect the community's sources of water?*
7. *Which of the water related diseases listed above are prevalent in your community? If there is need for further information on these, which agencies in your District can you fall on for more education or intervention?*

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
- As an individual:
- As a family:
- As a community/ congregation:

SERMON 6: CHILD HEALTH

Did You Know?

- 38.2% (male 5,164,505/female 5,113,185) of Ghanaians are children 0-14 years
- Degree of risk of major infectious diseases (including food or waterborne diseases, and animal contact diseases) is rated very high
(http://www.indexmundi.com/ghana/demographics_profile.html)
- Child death rate is highest where clean water access is lowest.
- Every year 1.8 million children die from diarrhoea, far more than armed conflict and terrorism combined.
- 85% of people who become Christians do so between the ages of 4 and 14.
- Being child friendly is a prime mark of a Kingdom of God-focused church.

Scripture

Isaiah 65:20: "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed."

Also read 1 Kings 17: 17-24 and 2 Kings 4: 18-37.



Figure 3: Prophet Elisha gives resurrected child back to his mother, the widow of Zarephath¹⁵

Key thought

- ✓ Children are a gift from God (Ps.127:3-5), but it is our responsibility to let them experience the fullness of life.
- ✓ Parents and leaders have a role to play in order to have a child friendly church.

¹⁵ Picture from website: <http://ministry-to-children.com/lesson-elijah-heals-the-widows-son/>

Introduction

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6: 10). Jesus' love for children has been powerfully captured by several of His statements about children, one of the most notable being, "Let the children come unto me and do not hinder them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). Knowing therefore that Jesus taught us to pray for the Father's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, we can assuredly say that child longevity is the will of God. All the healings that were performed in scripture had been to prolong life and give meaning to the fullness of life (John.10:10). Instances of resurrecting persons from death, especially of children, go to prove God's will for both long life and full life for children. Not only are we to pray for the Father's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven concerning child health, but we must bind ourselves to undertake all necessary measures to prevent children contracting diseases from the environment.

The Prophet Isaiah has captured for us God's ideal for life when He restores all things: "Never again will there be in it (God's kingdom) an infant who lives but a few days..." This state of being has been before. The patriarchs of the Old Testament lived several hundreds of years as seen in the book of Genesis, so it is not far-fetched for the restoration to such an order by the Creator.

Responsible behaviour by parents and guardians/care-givers of children to ensure child health is of the greatest essence. This is so especially with the increasing knowledge and access to health care that the world is witnessing. Prompt preventive and restorative measures have to be adopted for children's health. The Shunnamite woman's actions on the death of her son are quite informative. Though this is a case of miraculous intervention, the woman resorted to practical action: REFERRAL to the one person she knew could bring back the child to life – in this case prophet Elisha. She could have sent servants to go to Elisha, but she felt it wise to go herself and unfolding events proved her decision the best. Her child's health issues could not be delegated to others. What the child meant to her may not have meant the same to the servant, a non-parent. She put into action the highest order of response she knew to restore her son's life.

- She went with dispatch, neglecting her comfort, asking her servant not to slow the donkey ride on her account.
- She disregarded religious ceremonial observances of the new moon on account of the emergency of her child's life.
- The emergency response given by Elisha to his servant could be summarised as: hurry, waste no time greeting people on the way so you apply my remedy to the dead child.
- The woman adamantly stayed on and will not leave Elisha until the answer to her request was given. Elisha's presence was required and that was what she had come for. She had risked everything: risked the consequences of disregarding the new moon regulations, risked hurting herself during the rough ride and risked, possibly, being

manhandled by the prophet's bodyguards. She would not accede to second hand remedies. This speaks of persistence and retaining the best resource for her child's life. Elisha's presence was what finally saved the day.

The Shunnamite woman's attitude of prompt action, persistence and staying on for the best care should inform our treatment of child health issues. We see the same response from parents of children afflicted by various conditions in the New Testament: the nobleman's son in Capernaum (John 4: 46-54); Jairus' daughter (Luke 8: 40- 56), etc. In the case of Jairus' daughter, the mother remained at home with the sick child while the father went looking for help. In all the cases, we see persistence from the parents and referral to the highest authority for redress. The involvement of both parents in the health issues of children is a non-negotiable commitment. These should inform us not to take children's health lightly.

We can learn further positive parental attitudes from the Bible passages of Mathew 7:11; and 2 Corinthians 12:14. These include:

- ✓ Parental responsibilities over their children include both physical and fiscal planning.
- ✓ Good parents give gifts to their children.
- ✓ It is parents who should save and sacrifice for the children not the other way round.
- ✓ Saving and sacrificing presuppose vision, foresight, planning, deliberation, and tough choices.

Technical / applied information

If parents will go these lengths to secure the life, health and well-being of their children, are there measures needed to protect children's health that are too much to be adopted? Creating safe environments for children's lives through sustainable WASH practices should no longer be an option, but a necessity placed on all parents. In Ghana, it is on record that diarrhoea, a water and sanitation related disease, is the second leading cause of death among children, killing an estimated 3,600 children annually. This is the equivalence of a hundred and two (102) 50-seater busloads of children having accidents with no survivors annually, or two such accidents every week. And this is only one WASH related disease; other childhood killer diseases, including malaria, are not counted. Yet this calamity goes unreported; it is not news worthy; after all, the victims are 'only children.' Should these precious little ones be treated this way?

With the increase in knowledge of what keeps children healthy, parents have to apply several preventive actions, in addition to good and balanced diets.

We are told that adopting the following WASH measures will drastically curtail childhood illnesses caused by sanitation and hygiene.

- Bath children regularly and properly (twice daily – morning and evening).
- Brush child's teeth twice daily.

- Ensure that child washes hands properly before eating (particularly, fruits and vegetables), after playing and defaecation.
- Fingernails and hair are regularly checked and cut/cleaned.
- Children should wear footwear and clean dresses at all times.
- Ensure that cold food is heated before children eat it.
- And while you are at this, ensure your children sleep under treated mosquito nets always.

Creating safe environments for children's lives through sustainable WASH practices should no longer be an option, but a necessity placed on all parents.

Conclusion

Matthew 18:10 gives us an insight into God's concern for children in the highest place:

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (KJV). To despise a person is to assign a lower value on that person and Jesus is warning us to desist from that attitude with children. Many times, we make reckless statements like: "It's only a child" and neglect to make adequate provisions for children's needs or take necessary actions that would have benefitted children. We need to underscore the fact that just as we understand that, "We are fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139: 14) so are our children. God places the same care and value on children as on adults. Therefore, the well-being of children, including their health ought to engage our highest attention, just like the Shunnamite woman portrayed in the life and death struggle she engaged in concerning her son.

Take home message

- ***Jesus' Response to Children is: "let the children come."***
- ***Jesus loves Children. He is interested in their wellbeing.***

Discussion questions for congregational action

We live in communities where malaria, diarrhoea, dysentery and other diseases are killing children at an alarming rate. It is our joint responsibility to end this.

1. *What can we do to ensure that necessary remedies for children against these killer diseases are available? How can we ensure that the remedies are used in the recommended way?*
2. *What can we do to ensure that there is proper sensitization of parents on the application of first aid remedies for fevers and diarrhoeas and other childhood illness symptoms and also that these first aid remedies are available in homes and designated places within easy reach by community members?*

3. *What can we do as a church to ensure that children's health issues are not the sole preserve of women but that men assume proper responsible fatherhood? What will be the measure or indicator that fathers are assuming their proper roles in the health affairs of their children?*
4. *Are there health authorities, doctors, child nutritionists and paediatricians that we can engage to give health talks to our congregations?*
5. *Will it be lowering of pulpit standards to give a non-pastor but qualified medical professional the pulpit on Sunday to bring a life enhancing message that will benefit the congregation, and especially increase knowledge on children's health issues?*
6. *What can we do at home and in schools in our community to prevent children from easily contracting preventable diseases?*

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
 - As an individual:
 - As a family:
 - As a community/ congregation:

SERMON 7: SANITATION: HUMAN EXCRETA DISPOSAL

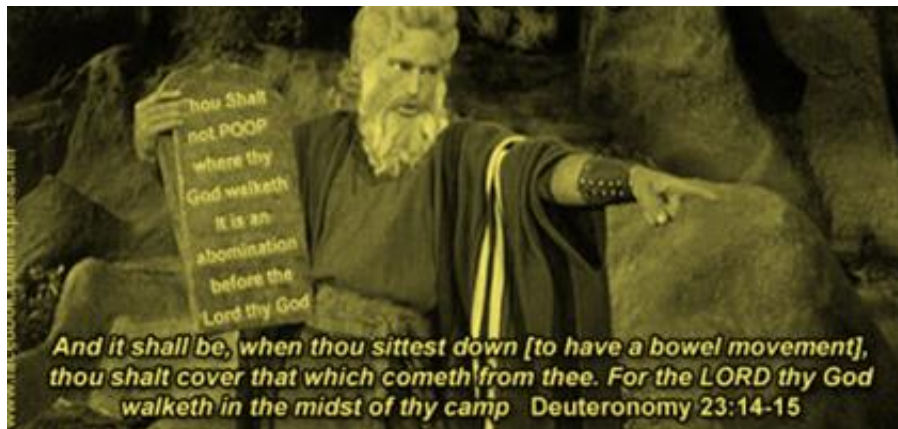


Figure 4: Moses declaring statute about Excreta disposal¹⁶

Did You Know?

- Improved sanitation can reduce diarrhoea rates by 36%, but only 15% of Ghanaians have access to improved sanitation, well short of the 2015 goal of 54%.
- One in five Ghanaians have no access to a toilet and defecate in the open, with open defaecation rates over 70% in parts of northern Ghana, reflecting significant national inequalities.

Scripture

Deuteronomy 23:12-14: *23¹² Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. ¹³ As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. ¹⁴ For the Lord your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.*

Key thoughts

- God has set a basic or minimum requirement for dealing with human excreta: avoid contact with it.
- The sign pointing to a decent community: see no excrement; touch no excrement; smell no excrement.
- Keeping the community clean of excreta is a sign of respect for God.
- "Civilisation is the distance that man has placed between himself and his own excreta." — Brian W. Aldiss, *The Dark Light Years*

¹⁶Ref: <https://robertcargill.com/2013/05/02/still-one-of-the-oddest-biblical-commands-cover-your-poo-because-god-might-step-in-it/>

Introduction

The scripture above indicates that filth, in this case the indiscriminate exposure of human excrement, known as open defaecation, is an offence to God and measures need to be put in place for its proper disposal. Out there in the wilderness, the nation of Israel, with a rough population estimate of over 2 million, (Numbers 11: 21 points to 600,000 men; children and women not countered) needed a way of managing excreta for it to be a decent community. If everybody was allowed to do their own thing, imagine the extent of mess, nuisance, smell and contamination that would prevail in the community. What a lousy, careless and slothful community that would result.

Open defecation-free communities

Looking carefully at the scripture, we see that principles of “Open Defaecation Free” (ODF) communities had amazingly been given over 3,000 years ago. Four guidelines had been given to be strictly adhered to by the community in its management of excrement. These are contained in four key words: designate, cover, indecent, protect.

1. **DESIGNATE** a place for relieving yourselves: set apart a special place for defaecation, not a random, anywhere-would-do selection of site by anybody when the need arises. Relieving of self is a private matter and must be done out of sight of everybody else. Setting apart a place for relieving self is useful also because it can be declared off limits for children’s playground. This would help prevent children contaminating themselves easily.
2. **COVER** excrement: prevent any contact/potential source of contact with excrement. This keeps away flies and other disease carriers from getting into contact with it. It also prevents accidental stepping in excreta by unsuspecting members of the community. When covered, natural decomposition processes are hastened for recycling for the excrement to be turned into humus and be beneficial for human use. Note that this instruction to cover excrement was for a constantly moving population out there in the desert. It was an appropriate measure for their context. Today, we are a sedentary (fixed) population not living in desert conditions but environments where there are occasions of seasonal down pouring of rain. These rains could wash buried faeces into sources of drinking water. But the principle of excrement out of sight, met in those days by covering is still applicable today and must engage our attention through modern toilets. The principle of decomposition is also still applicable. There are modern methods of extracting gas from faeces that are used for household cooking and these can be investigated.
3. **INDECENT** exposure - defiles the environment and is unsightly, smelly, messy and a nuisance. Filth is bad and offensive to our senses and does not augur well for our health. A decent community is a clean one. The saying: “cleanliness is next to godliness” though not a scriptural verse, can be implied from scripture and must therefore be inferred as prompted by scripture. A community cannot have any sense

of beauty value if it is not intentional in the way it disposes of its faeces. The sorry state of beaches in Ghana as well as other potential places of resort and relaxation, made so by indiscriminate relieving of self tells a lot about us as a people.

4. **PROTECTION:** It is for your protection against potential sources of diseases. Several diseases are communicable from faeces, the most common ones being typhoid fever, cholera, hepatitis, diarrhoea and dysentery. These are very deadly diseases that have rampaged communities, leaving countless dead. God intends that His people be kept from diseases that can be communicated from faeces. With the present level of knowledge now at our disposal, contracting these diseases is a matter of avoidable carelessness.

Technical / applied information

It must be noted that the problem of open defaecation is very entrenched in many communities to the extent that people refer to it as 'free range' and prefer it to using public toilets. It has thus become an unhealthy culture against which we need to launch a crusade. The remedy to this is to embark on attitudinal change involving the entire community.

Actionable points

- ✓ Stop open defaecation. Do not defecate in the bush or drains or leave faeces uncovered.
- ✓ Use improved household latrines (a good latrine should be free from odour, provide privacy, prevent flies from having access to faeces, safe)
- ✓ Anal cleansing materials should be properly disposed of to prevent flies having access to them.
- ✓ Dispose of baby diapers properly; never throw used diapers on nearby rubbish dumps. Treat used diapers with the same caution as you would anal cleansing material.
- ✓ Keep latrines clean at all times.



Figure 5: A simple mud brick household toilet in Zebilla, a town in Northern Ghana

Conclusion

God had said: "Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you." The sign of God's presence in those days was the Ark of the Covenant. Today, for the Christian, God dwells in our hearts and our bodies are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). We need therefore to take measures to keep our

communities and dwelling places clean of human excrement. These measures will prevent our bodies from coming into contact with faeces which will defile us and make us sick unnecessarily. If we neglect the guidelines He has given and thereby through our carelessness contact diseases, we should not expect God to heal us. Indeed, our prayers will fall on deaf ears, until we retrace our steps and do the right thing.

Take home message

- ✓ ***If God were visiting your home and community today, will He turn His back because of improperly disposed human excreta?***
- ✓ ***A measure of your civilization is the distance you have placed between you and your excreta.***
- ✓ ***“Do all the good you can; by all the means you can; in all the ways you can; in all the places you can; at all the times you can; to all the people you can” (John Wesley).***

Discussion questions for congregational action

Deuteronomy 23: 12-14 is the framework for what is now known as “Open Defaecation Free” (ODF) community.

1. *What measures can we as a church be involved in to promote ODF in our communities, noting that the concept of ODF is only communally achieved?*
2. *What engagements can the church be involved in with the District Assembly or district governing authorities and people of other faiths to make sure that the construction of household toilets is a non- negotiable requirement during the construction of houses, whether using mud bricks or with cement bricks?*
3. *How do we make sure that communities put in place measures that will ensure that children inculcate ODF habits?*
4. *What level of engagement ought the church to have with traditional authorities in instituting community attitudinal change on open defaecation?*
5. *How can the church champion the construction of toilets in schools and public places like markets as a step towards achieving the ODF goal?*
6. *What measures can we suggest to make sure existing public toilets are in a good and safe state to be used?*

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
- As an individual:
- As a family:
- As a community/ congregation:

SERMON 8: CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT: ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE

Did You Know?

- Approximately 3.5 million people die each year globally due to inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene.
- The major sources of water pollution are from human settlements and industrial and agricultural activities.
- 80% of sewage in developing countries is discharged untreated directly into water bodies.
- 844 million people still lacked even a **basic** drinking water service
- One in three persons lacked access to basic sanitation service as at 2015
- More than 800 million people in the world still practised open defaecation as at 2015
- About 1.5 million Ghanaians still drank from untreated surface water sources as at 2015
- One in every five Ghanaians still practised open defaecation as at 2015.

Scriptures

Genesis 1:26-27. *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* (NKJV)

Genesis 2:15: *The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it* (NLT).

Psalms 24:1: *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it* (NIV).

Key thoughts

- ✓ Every human being has been given the authority and responsibility to care for the environment and manage it as God Himself would. Prof Gordon Wenham¹⁷
- ✓ "The Maker of the Universe has established certain laws of nature for the planet in which we live, and the weal or woe of mankind depends upon the observance or the neglect of those laws." Lord Palmerston, Premier of England in 1855 – 1858 and 1859- 1865 on averting a national cholera outbreak¹⁸.

¹⁷ Prof Gordon Wenham: The Bible and the Environment: text of the 1st Annual JRI Lecture, given by Professor Gordon Wenham as part of the University of Gloucestershire Environment Week http://www.jri.org.uk/resource/bible_wenham.pdf

¹⁸ Lord Palmerston on Cholera and National Fasts; Article in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Monday 6 February 1854, page 3 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/1504871?zoomLevel=1>

- ✓ Environmental clean-up campaigns should not just be seen as a government order; God expects it and that settles it.

Introduction

The sequence of creation as seen in Genesis reveals that the creation of man was God's crowning act of creation. Everything had been put in place for sustainable life on this planet. God created a realm with the material, environmental, and spiritual resources to facilitate human wellbeing in every dimension. God created human beings with the unique nature and capacity – the *imago dei* – to be both the agent for the realization of human wellbeing, and the chief beneficiary of that wellbeing. God has provided guidance and instructions for human wellbeing through the *Book of Scripture* and through the *book of nature*. All human beings have an original calling and equipment, by virtue of creation, to participate in God's plan for human wellbeing to the glory of God. That original calling involves:

- Duty to God
- Duty to self and family
- Duty to other – Community, Church, Nation

Man was, thus, created and given the mandate to tend and care for the earth, and the Garden of Eden became man's first home environment. This mandate meant that a sacred responsibility to manage the environment had been entrusted to man. Man had been given the charge to "tend and care for" the environment. The Psalmist boldly declares and reminds humans that, "The earth is the Lord's, including everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). We are, therefore, stewards, caretakers of God's earth with all its resources. This implies a conscious effort on the part of man to make sure that the state of the environment at any given time would be in a good shape as is expected of every good steward. The livelihood and eventual fate of man depends to a large extent on how well we keep the environment. Therefore, there ought to be a special relationship between man and his environment.

Environmental cleanliness is just one aspect of the many environmental management issues about which we as humans must concern ourselves and apply ourselves to. Our wholeness as humans on this earth cannot be divorced from how clean we keep our environment. There are a multitude of organisms which compete with man for the same environmental space and many of these organisms, called germs, are quite dangerous to the health of man.

The way we keep our environment can either create good conditions for the thriving of these germs or eliminate those conditions necessary for their growth. Creating good conditions for the growth of germs in our environment is at a detriment to us and always leads to catastrophic consequences for us. Diseases and deaths are some of the immediate results of unhealthy environments. It is therefore an urgent requirement for humans to take measures to eliminate the conditions that allow disease germs to thrive and one of the surest ways of doing this is by keeping the environment clean. Individual and collective

action is required for sustainable environmental cleanliness, knowing that disease germs never ask questions before infecting anybody. They traverse or transcend borders.

As a community of faith, it is even more urgent for us to understand that environmental cleanliness is our God-given responsibility. Whilst it is true that the government employs and pays people to clean and maintain the environment, we must not forget that failure on the part of those whose duty it is to do so brings consequences on everybody in the community. It is a neighbourly duty for us to show by example that we are taking God's mandate seriously and are obeying His commands by cleanly attitudes and behaviours.

During the 14th Century, the bubonic plague, known as the Black Death ravaged Europe, Asia and North Africa, killing an estimated 60 million people, about a quarter of the population of Europe at the time. A Jewish Physician, Balavignus who was also a scholar of the Old Testament and familiar with the sanitary laws of the Old Testament, after observing the unsanitary conditions of Europe at the time, called on the Jewish section of Strasburg, where he lived to undertake a clean-up of their community and burn up all refuse. This action caused rats, the carrier of the plague, to migrate to the non-Jewish areas where they could thrive on the prevailing filth. We are told that the simple clean up exercise including burning the refuse caused a dramatic drop in the ravages of the Black Death on the Jewish population of Strasburg to as low as 5% of the prevailing rate elsewhere. Unfortunately, the stark difference between Jewish and non-Jewish death rates generated suspicion on Balavignus and his associates as those responsible for the plague. They were persecuted, tortured and forced to confess to that effect.¹⁹

In this case, we see that resorting to the sanitary laws as given to Moses thousands of years later enabled the survival of the community that took God's decrees about environmental hygiene seriously. Indeed, God had made a solemn declaration to His redeemed people: ***"If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to His commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you"*** (Exodus 15:26).

Though this promise was given to cover the wider spectrum of life, it is worth noting that it was given under a water crisis context and situation-the bitter waters of Marah (Exodus 15:22-26).

At least, three of the plagues on the Egyptians were water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) related-the plague on the Nile river turning to blood, stinky and undrinkable (Exodus 7:17-18); the plague of frogs on the Nile river spreading to the entire country causing the land to reek of their carcasses (Exodus 8:1-14); and the plague of dense swarms of flies which flourish in unkempt environments (Exodus 8:20-24). The promise to avert diseases from the Israelite community hung on their keeping the decrees of the Lord, including especially the health and sanitation decrees which would later be enumerated in the book of Leviticus.

¹⁹ Source: <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balavignus>

Disposal of waste/contaminated articles in biblical times

Information on the subject of waste disposal in Biblical times is scanty, but Leviticus 14: 40-45 gives a clue as to how waste may have been disposed of. An “unclean place outside the town” (Leviticus 14: 40 and 45) was designated for disposing of contaminated articles including plaster of walls and wall stones causing mildew in infected houses. In Biblical Jerusalem times, this designated unclean site was the Kidron Valley (2 Chronicles 29: 16-17). Other sample references of Kidron Valley being a disposal site of waste include Jeremiah 31: 38-40 and 2 Kings 11:16. It is believed that there was an elaborate system of conveyance of all filth to the site using donkey carts.

Recent archaeological discoveries give credence to this garbage disposal site. *“Israeli archaeologists have stumbled upon the mother of all garbage dumps: a massive landfill from early Roman times that may have been the result of the most sophisticated trash collection system in antiquity. Layer upon layer of waste that was efficiently collected, piled up and buried some 2,000 years ago has been dug up on the slopes of the Kidron Valley, just outside the Roman-era walls of Jerusalem.”*²⁰

Commenting on this find, Yuval Gadot, a Tel Aviv University Archaeologist who led the excavation in 2013-14 says: “It could be that it became a norm in Jerusalem that you have to take out the garbage, because it is impure and has to be brought outside the city.” He further suggests: “It’s not the municipality saying so: God says so, and that makes it easier.”²¹

Balavignus in the C14th must have taken cues from commands in Leviticus and elsewhere in the scriptures to call for the clean-up of the Jewish community in Strasburg for which the outcome became plainly visible.

It is important for us to keep our environments clean rather than resorting to “spiritual interventions” or “divine interventions” when our criminal negligence of environmental cleanliness visits epidemics on our communities as the Bubonic plague did. Lord Palmerston (1784-1865), Premier of England was, during his time, petitioned by the Scottish clergy to appoint a day of fasting and prayer for divine intervention to avert an impending cholera outbreak.

This is the preface to the reply he gave to the clergy: *“The Maker of the Universe has established certain laws of nature for the planet in which we live, and the weal or woe of mankind depends upon the observance or the neglect of those laws. One of those laws connects health with the absence of those [gases from exhalation] which proceed from overcrowded human beings, or from decomposed substances, whether animal or vegetable; and these same laws render sickness the almost inevitable consequence of exposure to those*

²⁰ Ref: <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/archaeology/.premium-I.727585>

²¹ Ref: <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/archaeology/.premium-I.727585>

noxious influences."²² He then went on to give practical measures needed to avoid the outbreak: *"Cleanse and disinfect your streets and houses, promote cleanliness and health among the poor, and see that they are plentifully supplied with good food and raiment, and employ right sanitary measures generally, and you will have no occasion to fast and pray. Nor will the Lord hear your prayers while these, His preventatives, remain unheeded."*²³

In effect, Lord Palmerston was kindly referring the clergy to do their homework by putting into practice concrete actions of sanitation laid down in the scriptures and to avoid 'spiritualizing' issues. God will indeed not hear our prayers while His preventives remain unheeded. We are told the clergy were not happy with the response of Lord Palmerston in not declaring the national day of fasting and prayer but we know he was right and the clergy needed to re-evaluate their attitude.

The Christians' calling through creation and Christ is to a holistic ministry. This is the ministry to help humanity and creation experience abundant life through the gospel (John 10:10; Romans 8:19-20; Isaiah 62:1-3). By our calling, we can take care of ourselves and our environment because God values what He has created.



Figure 6: Picture - community shame and disgust²⁴

Technical / applied information

Practical measures to keep the environment clean must be seen; thus:

- Weed around houses and bushy surroundings regularly.
- Construct soak pits and drainage systems to properly drain waste water from bathhouses and kitchen.

²² Lord Palmerston on Cholera and National Fasts; Article in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Monday 6 February 1854, page 3 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/1504871?zoomLevel=1>

²³ Article by Ellen G White on Cleanliness should mark the life of a Christian, Christ Triumphant, pg. 113, manuscript 58, 1890.

<http://egwtext.whiteestate.org/publication.php?pubtype=Book&bookCode=CTr&lang=en&collection=2§ion=all&pagenumber=113&m=1>

²⁴ Picture by courtesy of Christian Witness & Citizenship, WARO pilot project, 2013; Report on cleaning cities in West Africa).

- Sweep/clean houses or compounds daily.
- Properly dispose of refuse at designated sites. Burn or bury as appropriate.
- Clean gutters and drains (if any).
- Control movement of domestic animals (keep them in enclosed locations).
- Keep water point/sites/source clean at all times.
- Drain all potential places for mosquito breeding.
- Properly dispose of dead animals – burn or bury in deep hole.
- Proper disposal of placenta of deliveries by traditional birth attendants.



Figure 7: Need for community action to rid our environments of engulfing filth²⁵.

Conclusion

Our expanding cities are increasingly becoming polluted, filthy and dirty; urban filth is engulfing entire communities and our water bodies are becoming increasingly unusable due to contamination with urban waste and industrial and agricultural chemicals. It is time for collective action to reverse our own human activities that are causing this pollution. While there is yet time, let us heed the divine preventives and avoid the need to implore divine intervention, which will remain unheeded so long as we disobey divine sanitation laws and principles.

Take home message

- ***Environmental cleanliness is not just a government order. God demands it from His children! Cleanliness is next to godliness.***
- ***We demonstrate that we fear God and honour him with our bodies, what we eat, and our clean environment.***

Discussion questions for congregational action

1. *In addition to the above household measures, what can we do as a church to keep our environments clean?*

²⁵ Picture by courtesy of Christian Witness & Citizenship, WARO pilot project, 2013; Report on cleaning cities in West Africa.

2. *What can we do as a church to hold public officers employed and paid by government to clean the community accountable if they are failing to carry out their responsibility?*
3. *Can we adopt a godly attitude in cleaning our environment with a new motivation that says: "It is not the government telling us to clean our environment; God expects it and that settles it!"*
4. *Can we join hands with people who do not share the same faith with us to embark on clean up campaigns?*
5. *What is the best time to start doing something positive about environmental cleanliness?*
6. *Who can we appoint from our congregation to form an action group to plan and execute clean ups in our community?*
7. *Can we extend this action to public places of interest: market, clinics/health centres, etc.?*
8. *What should be the role of the church to make the National Sanitation Day a sustainable movement?*
9. *How would you grade the public slaughter houses in your town or community? What tough measures would you suggest to be embarked upon to ensure the hygiene of the community abattoir or slaughter house?*

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
- As an individual:
- As a family:
- As a community/ congregation:

SERMON 9: SUSTAINABILITY: COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT FOR IMPROVED WASH SERVICES

Did You Know?

- Health and wholeness is God's idea. He created us as wholesome human beings and intends that everyone is healthy and productive.
- Christian and other faith-based leaders need to harness and leverage the power, authority, and influence of religious faith to encourage and promote good WASH practices in such a way as to empower communities to create sustainable conditions for improved child wellbeing.
- Children learn by observing the behaviours of others.
- Child-friendly church and community and WASH in Schools are very important for sustainable WASH services.

Scripture

John 1: 14. "The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (NIV)

Matthew 5:14-16: ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (NIV)

Read also Matthew 25: 14-30.

Key thoughts

- ✓ Through the incarnation, we learn that God in all His Holiness did not disdain the human race but dwelt among us and actively participated in human affairs in order to teach us His ways and uplift us. The responsible Christian must therefore engage with his/her community in ways that would uplift the community.
- ✓ The Christian doctrine of incarnation, referring to the Word of God taking on flesh and dwelling among humans is a powerful indicator for the Christian's engagement in community services. It definitely is not in favour of Christians isolating themselves from community engagements.

Introduction

The African story is told of a young man who determined to live a life of holiness and godly meditation in his community. He however realized that members of his community were very quarrelsome, nasty and cruel and did not give him the peace he needed for such an undertaking. He therefore decided to move up to a very high mountain where it was

believed God resided so he could have undisturbed peace to serve God. On the way up the mountain, he met this nondescript fellow going the other way to the community he was leaving. Further up the mountain, he met an old man sitting in his hut doing his chores and asked him where he could meet God. The old man in perplexity asked the young man: "Did you not meet anyone going down as you came up? That was God going to the community down the valley to live among the people." "What!" Exclaimed the young man! "Does He know the kind of people living there? How quarrelsome, nasty and cruel they are?" "Exactly," replied the old man. "That is exactly why God has gone down to live with them. They need him most and he has gone down to respond to their need." Upon hearing this, the young man hurriedly went back to his community and with a new determination, began to serve his community and do acts of kindness to everybody he met, having had a fresh understanding that he could be doing a kind deed to God without knowing it.²⁶

If Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, did not show contempt for, or put the human community at arm's length, but totally immersed himself in community redemptive acts and services, Christians ought to take a cue from His examples to engage in community services for the glory of God. The scriptures are full of examples of Jesus Christ healing many people afflicted with all manner of diseases and illnesses, some spiritual and others from natural causes. Some of the diseases Christ healed could be diseases picked from the environment; some could have been WASH related. Mark 8: 14 onwards tell of Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law of fever. The Apostle Paul in Acts 28:8 healed a case of fever and dysentery, a definite WASH related disease. A fever, simply put, is a case of running a temperature from an infection or disease.

If Christ and the apostles would heal diseases caused by germs found in the environment, it stands to reason that engagements in the community **TO PREVENT** WASH related and other preventable diseases should be a prime duty of the Christian. It is therefore wrong to expect other members of the community to be the ones responsible for the ownership and management of WASH services and assets in the community while the Christian busies himself "serving" his God. WASH services and other services to mankind should also be seen as serving God; for Jesus says, "...Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40).

Many Christians quote 2 Corinthians 6:17, "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord," as a command from God for separating themselves from the wider community in order to live the Christian life faithfully. This stance is however a misrepresentation of scripture. The Scripture rather admonishes Christians not to compromise with evil deeds and to refrain from doing evil. The Good Samaritan story (Luke 10: 30-37) shows what neighbourly behaviour ought to entail. In fact, the attitudes of a priest and a Levite in the story contrasted poorly with that of the despised Samaritan. The

²⁶ Ewald van Rensburg, God Bless Africa book (Stories, prayers and wise sayings), 2010; Chapter on God Among the People [paraphrased], pg. 237)

priest and Levite would today stand for Pastor and worship leader and the despised Samaritan – maybe a lowly cola-nut seller with his wares on a donkey to the village market. The church workers in the story portrayed the bad example of “non-involvement” not to be followed and the despised secular person’s surprising act of mercy commended by Jesus.

Instead of isolation from community engagements, the Christian is enjoined to ‘let his/her light shine before men, that they may see their good deeds and praise their Father in heaven.’ (Matthew 5:16). The Christian’s good deeds would include community engagements in projects and the active involvement in the management of community assets and services, including WASH and health related services.

Technical / applied information

Sustainability of wash services

It is important to realize that development agencies and Not-for-profit agencies like World Vision and others in the communities are God’s gifts of love to the entire community. World Vision’s presence is to be seen as a time bound gift to the community. For a profitable engagement with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), communities ought to put in place measures to sustain the gains of the joint work with NGOs initiated in all programs, WASH inclusive. There is the need, therefore, for the active involvement of the faith community in Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMT) set up to manage the WASH initiatives of communities.

The time is now! For the active involvement of the church in addressing community challenges and health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) issues should be prominent, in the face of its value in the overall health of the community.

Ways in which faith communities can be involved in community ownership and management of WASH services:

- ✓ Volunteer members of high standing (both male and female) to serve on the community WSMT.
- ✓ Help in the mobilization of funds regularly for the operation and maintenance of community water facilities: boreholes, public latrines, etc.
- ✓ Be part of regular interaction between the community/WSMT and partners such as MMDAs and NGOs.
- ✓ Support and monitor proper records keeping of funds and other activities by WSMTs.
- ✓ Advocate or demand regular accountability of WSMTs to communities.
- ✓ Mobilise strong involvement of chiefs and other opinion leaders in WASH services delivery in the community.
- ✓ Intentionally preaching WASH sermons in churches, including children/ youth services.

Children and WASH in schools

A sustainable WASH strategy by the faith community should include creating child-friendly communities and churches; and having strategies for health and school sanitation programmes.

Becoming a child-friendly church

Being child-friendly is a prime indicator of whether a community or church is Kingdom of God-focused or not. Parents and leaders have a role to play in order to have child-friendly churches and communities. We need to know and understand that God loves and treasures children. We need to know and appreciate the qualities that make children exemplars of Kingdom faith. We should also understand that child friendliness is a mark of Kingdom-focused community or church; and commit to help our churches and communities become child-friendly zones.

A child-friendly church is one that:

- Welcomes and includes children.
- Listens to children (to their wisdom and spirituality).
- Brings healing to children and family.
- Blesses children (faith nurturing and providing age-level program participation).
- Includes children in the mission of the church.

The marks of a child-friendly church include:

- Sustainable, safe water supply points, handwashing stands and sanitation facilities.
- Fully integrated life skills education, focusing on key hygiene behaviours for Sunday School children and using participatory teaching techniques.
- Outreach to families and the wider community.

WASH in Schools

The church should be interested and involved in the WASH status and plans of schools in their communities. This would ensure sustainable health care for school children and accountability of schools' management or authorities in WASH in the schools.

A functional WASH in school plan should include:

1. Healthy school environment
2. Hygiene education
3. Management by the school community

Key hygiene behaviours for schoolchildren

- **Safe use of toilets and urinals:** Diarrhoea and worm infections are two main health concerns that affect people on a large scale and can be improved through appropriate toilet and urinal use.

- **Personal hygiene:** Many diseases can be attributed to poor personal hygiene.
- **Handwashing with soap:** Handwashing at critical moments reduces the risk of diarrhoeal diseases by 42-48 per cent and significantly reduces the incidence of acute respiratory diseases.
- **Female and male hygiene (for adolescents):** Genital and menstrual hygiene is important for the health condition of women and reproductive health in general.
- **Waste management and water drainage:** Appropriate handling of solid waste and stagnant water helps in pest control and limits breeding mosquitoes and flies.
- **Food hygiene:** Eating healthy food is essential for the well-being and survival of each human being. Eating 'contaminated' food (also known as 'food poisoning') can be a significant source of diarrhoeal diseases.

Conclusion

We all have talents given by our Creator. It is important to understand that these talents are not ours to keep or use at our discretion, as the third servant did in Matthew chapter 25. Furthermore, it is not our duty to judge who is worthy to receive the benefit of our talents. The Good Samaritan did not stop to rationalize that the man lying almost dead is of a different breed, has a different skin colour, follows a different political party, and subscribes to different doctrines and beliefs about God or even of the hated racial / ethnic background than mine. He only saw a fellow created being in need and simply deployed the small talents in his pocket with a big heart and won God's approval. The talents we are blessed with are meant to be used to bring dividends to the one who gave them to us.

A good steward does the bidding of his/her Master who created us to live in communities, not in isolation. It is in communities that our talents are required. Could our talent be in the area of organizational skill, good record keeping, financial management, generosity, or strength for community service? Even a donkey in our possession could be of immense use. Let no one say, there is nothing for me to offer, for that is the devil's lie. Let us, therefore, bring our talents to bear on community services that will help uplift the entire community, bringing health and prosperity to all, especially the well-being of our dearly beloved children for whom we toil.

Take home message

- ✓ ***The measure of my engagement in community affairs is a measure of the light of God in me that I am willing the community to experience.***
 - ***Good deeds are not done by walking into church. They are done when you walk out of church and help others*** [Anonymous]

Discussion questions for congregational action

1. *Behaviour change is the key to comprehensive sustainability of WASH systems. How can we as a church be involved in empowering the community for behaviour change on*

WASH issues so that long after NGO and government interventions, the gains made from such collaborations will still be rolling on? Consider this in terms of:

- i. *Safe hygiene practices*
- ii. *Environmental hygiene and sanitation*
- iii. *Training of Trainer needs of WSMT*
- iv. *Setting environmental hygiene targets (indicators) for the community and monitoring measures to ensure achievement of targets*
- v. *Revenue mobilisation through tariff systems for borehole maintenance and system expansion*

2. *What can you do to start or encourage a movement for making WASH issues an integral part of our personal and community lives?*

Consider the following suggestions:

- ✓ More education or sensitisation on health and sanitation through preaching WASH messages.
- ✓ Incorporate WASH issues in ministry programmes – such as Children, Youth and Women’s ministries.
- ✓ Make handwashing a church practice every Sunday before and after service. Facility for this practice should be provided; hand-wash basin, veronica bucket, etc.
- ✓ WASH sermon leaflets could be part of house to house evangelism materials.
- ✓ Mass community engagement / durbar on WASH using the open-air evangelism style.
- ✓ Annual WASH Sports tournaments facilitated by faith groups.
- ✓ WASH messages preached at other social activities e.g. child-naming, wedding, funerals, etc.
- ✓ WASH messages incorporated when administering the sacraments of Baptism and Communion.
- ✓ Engaging faith-based student unions in schools.
- ✓ Share WASH issues with community / opinion leaders and get their buy-in for community action.
- ✓ Place simple and concise WASH messages on church social media platforms.

3. *What role can you play in any of these suggestions? Start a social media campaign? Can you add more suggestions to build up the list?*

4. *What can you as an individual/family and as a church do to create a more child-friendly community?*

My Actions

- This is what I have learned today
.....
- This is what I will do from now on:
- As an individual:
- As a family:
- As a community/ congregation:

REFERENCES

Introduction

Ref: 2010 Population and Housing Census, Summary report of final results, Ghana Statistical Service, May 2012, pg. 40.

Ref: Lord Palmerston on Cholera and National Fasts; Article in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Monday 6 February 1854, page 3
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/1504871?zoomLevel=1>

SERMON 1: Importance of WASH

Ref: http://www.unicef.org/wash/index_wes_related.html

<https://www.google.com.gh/search?q=health+and+sanitation+photos&tbm=isch&imgil>

Ref: https://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/w/washing_hands.asp

Ref: <http://water.jhu.edu/magazine/P90>

SERMON 2: Personal hygiene

Ref: **Grace Olubukunmi Adeoye**, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria; Write up titled: WATER SUPPLY, ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE AND HEALTH; Prepared for the 28th International Faith and Learning Seminar held at Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria June 17 - 29, 2001.

Source: http://ict.aiias.edu/vol_28/28cc_001-017.htm

Ref: Peter H. Gleick: *Dirty Water: Estimated Deaths from Water-Related Disease 2000-2020*, Pacific Institute Research Report, Peter H. Gleick August 15, 2002 Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security • www.pacinst.org •

SERMON 3: Handwashing at critical times

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_surgery

“WHO’s Global Annual Campaign”, http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may_advocacy-toolkit.pdf

Ref:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_surgery; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz_Semmelweis

SERMON 4: Food hygiene

Picture: Courtesy Rev. Seth Acquaye, WVG CC/ F&D Manager

SERMON 5: Water safety at point of use (HWTS)

Ref: Quoted from Write up by Grace Olubukunmi Adeoye, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria; Write up titled: Water supply, environmental hygiene and health; Prepared for the 28th International Faith and Learning Seminar held at Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria June 17 - 29, 2001. Source: http://ict.aiias.edu/vol_28/28cc_001-017.htm

SERMON 6: Child health

Ref: Picture from website: <http://ministry-to-children.com/lesson-elijah-heals-the-widows-son/>

SERMON 7: SANITATION: Human excreta disposal

¹² Ref: <https://robertcargill.com/2013/05/02/still-one-of-the-oddest-biblical-commands-cover-your-poo-because-god-might-step-in-it/>

SERMON 8: Care for the environment: Environmental hygiene

Ref: Prof Gordon Wenham: The Bible and the environment: text of the 1st Annual JRI Lecture, given by Professor Gordon Wenham as part of the University of Gloucestershire Environment Week http://www.jri.org.uk/resource/bible_wenham.pdf

Ref: Lord Palmerston on Cholera and National Fasts; Article in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Monday 6 February 1854, page 3
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/1504871?zoomLevel=1>

Ref. Source: <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balavignus>

Ref: <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/archaeology/.premium-1.727585>

Ref: <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/archaeology/.premium-1.727585>

Ref: Lord Palmerston on Cholera and National Fasts; Article in The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Monday 6 February 1854, page 3
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/1504871?zoomLevel=1>

Ref: Article by Ellen G White on Cleanliness should mark the life of a Christian, Christ Triumphant, pg. 113, manuscript 58, 1890.
<http://egwtext.whiteestate.org/publication.php?pubtype=Book&bookCode=CTr&lang=en&collection=2§ion=all&pagenumber=113&m=1>

Picture by courtesy of Christian Witness & Citizenship, WARO pilot project, 2013; Report on cleaning cities in West Africa).

Picture by courtesy of Christian Witness & Citizenship, WARO pilot project, 2013; Report on cleaning cities in West Africa.

SERMON 9: SUSTAINABILITY: COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT FOR IMPROVED WASH SERVICES

Ref: Ewald van Rensburg, God Bless Africa book (Stories, prayers and wise sayings), 2010; Chapter on God Among the People [paraphrased], pg. 237).