

To Have Been a Midwife

If I could have one job to perform if I lived before the advent of modern society, what would it be? I think it would be the job of a midwife. Before the sparkling white conveniences of a modern hospital, the first pangs of birth heralded the arrival of the midwife to bring comfort and aid to apprehensive young wives and seasoned mothers alike. The midwives chose to go beyond their purpose as wives and mothers to serve other women in the precious capacity of delivering a child. The idea of helping to bring a human life into the world is entirely inspiring to me and honestly sounds like quite the adventure. My dream has always been to do something meaningful with my life, something that is truly beautiful in the eyes of God. As a midwife, I believe that dream would have been fulfilled.

A midnight call, a baby's first cry, a new mother's wonder, that is what I see in my mind's eye when I think of a midwife. Sweet, messy, lovely humanity in its fulfillment. Because of my faith, I believe that each new soul come into the world is precious. And I would have been glad to affirm that goodness as a midwife, by helping to deliver a baby. Before the time of hospitals and modern doctors, midwives knew just what to do. Before medical professionals even gave a passing thought to the idea of cleanliness, midwives were emphasizing the need for a clean workspace and a clean pair of hands. Before the medicines we know were introduced, midwives used the best kind of natural "home remedies" - everything from dried herbs to warm oil, some of which are still used today. The knowledge of experienced midwives brought many a child into the world and kept many a mother from leaving it early.

And midwives have been delivering babies for almost as long as newborns have been entering the world. Ancient Rome? There's a midwife. Middle Ages? There goes a midwife. Victorian Era? The midwife's still there. In times when women hardly ever worked outside of their homes, midwifery was a profession claimed by almost entirely by women. Doctors just didn't want to get into what they considered a feminine issue. Becoming a midwife would have been a rare opportunity for a woman to reach out and help other women in a unique way. The midwife would have been the one to stand by each woman in their labor to bring comfort and aid in time of need.

The life of a midwife would not have been one of comfort and ease, but it would have been one of great purpose, generosity, and passion. A midwife would have to be a very strong woman, especially if she had a family to care for. She might be woken at midnight for the birth of a neighbor's child and then wearily tramp home in the soft light of daybreak to be greeted by a day of chores and cooking for her own family. At a moment like that, I imagine that I would be offering a silent prayer for grace. As a midwife I would have to rely all the more on the strength of God through joys and sufferings, births and deaths. But I think I could have found my fulfillment in making a woman's labor easier, in welcoming a new baby, and in simply speaking a kind, reassuring word to someone experiencing those deeply personal, sweet, and sometimes terrifying moments of giving birth.

So, perhaps if I lived back in the day, I would have been a midwife. I would have had to become an avid learner, a hard worker, and a strong person of faith to lead the life of a midwife. I would have to have been ready to give my all to my work and my family both, ready to care for and support a person in need, and ready to live dependent on God. But then again, maybe that doesn't seem so far off from the way I want to live my modern life. Maybe I'll try to live like I would have wanted to live back in the day.