

Contraception & Reproductive Technology

Normative View – What are the relevant biblical principles?

- Image of God
 - **Genesis 1:27** - So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
 - Differentiates us from other worldviews
 - Man is special, in God's image
 - If man is just another animal, our conclusions about many issues will be different
 - We bear God's image, so we are to render ourselves to God (Mark 12)
 - Our actions as humans should be motivated by a desire to reflect God
- Creation Mandate
 - **Genesis 1:28** - And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
- Does the mandate apply to all people in all situations?
 - **1 Corinthians 7:1-11** Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." ² But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. ³ The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵ Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. ⁷ I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. ⁸ To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. ⁹ But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. ¹⁰ To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹ (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

Contraception

- History – not a new issue
 - Egyptian papyri from 2nd millennium BC show physician prescriptions
 - Babylonian Talmud
 - *Canterbury Tales* – reference to herbs used

- 1965 – Supreme Court declares a law prohibiting the use of contraceptions as unconstitutional
- How has the RC Church handled it?
 - Roman Catholic understanding developed as a reaction to promiscuity and the decline of the family in the Greco-Roman culture
 - Influenced by Neo-Platonic ideas of body and soul
 - Clement of Alexandria (150-215) – sex in marriage other than to procreate children is to do injury to nature
 - Reacting against promiscuous libertine views and Christian Gnosticism
 - Augustine (354-430) – must have procreation in view in order to not be sinful
 - Assumed “realist” view of original sin
 - Referenced Genesis 38 – Onan
 - RC idea of the purpose of marriage is primarily to have children
 - 1981 – Pope John Paul II affirmed ban on artificial contraception, including voluntary sterilization
- How has Protestantism handled it?
 - Luther and Calvin – not much stated either way
 - Marriage was repudiated as a sacrament
 - Greater emphasis on companionship in marriage while also affirming procreation
 - 20th century – protestant churches began affirming artificial contraception as moral
 - Creation mandate viewed as a general human obligation
 - Does not apply to all people in the same way at all times (1 Corinthians 7)
- Are there situations in marriage where contraception should or should not be used? Discuss these scenarios.
- Are there situations where it would be immoral for a married couple who can have children to voluntarily prevent themselves from ever having children?

Reproductive Technologies

Normative Principle –

If we are mandated to fill the earth, why are some unable to do so?

- Curse of the Fall
 - **Genesis 3:17-19** - ¹⁷ And to Adam he said,
 “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
 and have eaten of the tree
 of which I commanded you,
 ‘You shall not eat of it,’
 cursed is the ground because of you;
 in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

- Is the use of doctors and medicinal practices biblical?
 - o **Proverbs 17:22** - A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.
 - o **Mark 2:17** - And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”
 - o **Colossians 4:14** - Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.
 - We do not need biblical affirmation for any specific vocation, but the vocation of doctors and the use of medicine are described positively

Is the use of physicians and medicine in reproductive technology biblical?

IVF – In Vitro Fertilization

- During in vitro fertilization (IVF), the ovaries are stimulated with medication and eggs are harvested from a woman’s ovaries, placed in a laboratory dish, inseminated with sperm, and then observed to see which eggs successfully fertilize and become embryos. Over the next few days, the resulting embryos are observed to see which have the best chance of resulting in pregnancy.
- One to five embryos are then placed back into the uterus. The number of embryos transferred depends on the woman’s age, prior IVF cycle outcomes if applicable, and embryo quality. If a woman has excess embryos, these may be frozen for future use.

Our story:

- 12 eggs were harvested and fertilized
- 9 survived into the next day
- By day 5, 7 embryos had survived and 2 were implanted
- The remaining surviving embryos were to be frozen the next day, none did

For Christians thinking about IVF, a guiding principle is to honor the image of God in every embryo and give each one an opportunity to be carried in pregnancy to full term

Questions:

- Should the doctor be allowed to harvest every egg they can or should there be a limit? Why?
- How many embryos should be implanted?
- How are we to treat frozen embryos?