

## I. Foundations – The Family

### A. The Biblical Definition of Family

Gen. 2:21-25 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

What we have here is God's definition of the family: A monogamous, heterosexual marriage. We'll see shortly that this family *can be expanded*—it can grow in size within the original boundaries of monogamy and heterosexuality. We see:

1) The family is created & *bounded* by God – 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

2) The family is a self-sufficient, stand-alone covenant unit – 23 The man said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

3) This initial, foundational understanding is confirmed by the rest of Scripture: Gen 4:1 (wife); 1 Sam 5:1; 19:12 (bone & flesh); Pro 5:18-19 (wife & exclusive sexual relationship); Mal 2:14 (covenant); Mat 19:3-9 (marriage & divorce); Eph 5:22-33 (Christ & the Church); Rev 21:9 (bride, the wife of the Lamb); etc.

## B. *Exceptions* to the Biblical Definition

In one sense, there are no exceptions.

In another sense, we need to recognize that the family can be *reduced* in different ways: 1) death of a spouse or child (e.g., death of spouse before children versus after children); 2) the marriage of a child (a new family is created, yet there is still a connection to the old family); 3) divorce (the children); etc.

Perversions of the family (gay marriage & cohabitation, heterosexual cohabitation, etc.) – However, as Christians, we need to deal graciously with these folks, *especially the children of these relationships*.

**A note concerning marriage** (with sensitivity to those who are single):

Book recommendation (this book brings all the information together): Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher (2000), *The Case for Marriage*, NY: Broadway Books.

Married people are: healthier, happier, they live longer, they are wealthier, have more & *better* sex, and are better parents (i.e., better for children) than singles and those who cohabit. In addition, contrary to what you probably hear in the media, there is less physical violence in marriage than in boyfriend/girlfriend or cohabitating relationships.

### C. The Expanded Family: Children – How many?

Gen. 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Ideally or by *default*, married people are going to have children, but . . .

1. Must you have as many children as possible? Is Birth Control (*in principle*) un-biblical?

#### *Anti-Birth Control or Family Planning Arguments*

- 1) Gen 1:28 (2:20-25) – procreation is *essential* (i.e., definitional) to marriage and you must have as many children as possible

This is not what the Creation Ordinance says at all. For at least four reasons:

- (1) This is a corporate command given to humanity in general via its covenant head—it has individual implications (see below).
- (2) Jesus speaks of exceptions to this rule (Mat 19:12), *in fact, He was an exception to this rule and He fulfilled the law perfectly.*
- (3) If each couple only had one child, this would fulfill the command to “be fruitful and multiply”—i.e., it still would not logically lead to, “have as many children as possible.” [cf. 1 Cor 7:7; 7:5]
- (4) There may be very good reason for not having children (see below)

2) Gen 38 – Onan was killed for practicing birth control

Onan (son of Judah, son of Jacob) was killed for unfaithfulness and not fulfilling his levirate duty (older brother Er married Tamar, he was evil and, “so the LORD took his life”)—yet he still partook of the “goods.”

3) 1 Timothy 2:15 – Childbearing is essential to womanhood

The context of 1 Tim 2 follows closely the pattern of Gen 1-2 and has reference to Eve (Gen 3:15).

4) Psalm 127 – Children are a blessing

There are many possible blessing; we can't pursue them all. The Song of Solomon speaks of sex as a marital blessing and does not mention children throughout the entire account.

5) Barrenness was considered a curse in the Bible

E.g., Gen 16 (Sarah & Hagar); Jud 13 (Samson's mother); 1 Sam 1 (Hannah, Samuel's mom); Luke 1:25 (Elizabeth, John the Baptists mom). These women are all types of “the woman” (cf. Gen 3:15); see exegesis of 1 Tim 2:15 above.

6) Dan 4:34; Psa 135:6 – God is sovereign and we must not usurp His authority

This is a misunderstanding of God's sovereignty

(1) We cannot usurp God's sovereignty or authority—this is impossible.

(2) God uses secondary causes to accomplish his goals—i.e., in the mysterious power of God, human responsibility and His sovereignty go hand-in-hand.

(3) We “interfere” in many other areas without this critique—e.g., medicine, seatbelts, etc.

2. Must you have any children (this question assumes the context of marriage)?

I think the answer to this question is trickier—harder to answer. If you recall, back when we were discussing foundational issues for ethics—the Creation Ordinances—I argued that biblically, we have been designed to want to have children. *That's the default setting.*

Thus, when I encounter a young married couple that says they don't want children, *it raises a red flag*—especially in today's anti-children context (which has, *sadly*, crept into the Church). Note, in addition, the blessing of children (Ps 127:3; 128:3) and God's desire of a godly offspring (Mal 2:15).

However, one *cannot* exegetically argue that while the Creation Ordinance *does not demand* that we have as many children as possible, it *does demand*

that we *all*—*each and everyone one of us*—have children (remember the exception of Jesus already noted). Certainly, humanity as a whole must procreate (the *creational* [default] setting).

There are some reasons that some couples will decide not to have children:

- 1) Genetic Issues – it is possible to know that any child born to a particular couple will have genetic issues—some very serious.
- 2) Missionary Endeavors – God has called this particular couple to a dangerous mission field. So they either forgo children altogether or for a while.
- 3) Occupational Issues – One of the spouses (usually the husband) has an extremely dangerous occupation—Special Forces, law enforcement, etc.—so, they either forgo children altogether or for a while.
- 4) Etc. - ?

This is one of those issues that demonstrate *motive* matters. There are some very bad/sinful reasons to decide not to have children:

- 1) Career advancement (see discussion on fertility next week)
- 2) Selfishness – \$, more toys without children
- 3) Fear
- 4) Avoid obligation – children are hard work, too much trouble!

3. Is family planning biblical? Is Birth Control (*in principle*) biblical?

Yes.

However, John Jefferson Davis, in his book, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, writes:

It would appear there is no explicit endorsement of artificial contraception in either Testament. The Old Testament is clearly pro-natalist in its general outlook. The New Testament, though allowing for voluntary celibacy, does not envision permanent childlessness as a matter of choice for married couples. . . . There is, however, no explicit condemnation of contraception in Scripture (40).

Reasons for this 'Yes' conclusion:

- 1) The entirety of the above argument—it is generally sinful to hold people to standards not found in Scripture (exceptions would be totally voluntary agreements).
- 2) The concept of Biblical stewardship—affordability, health issues (some wives get deathly sick or must have Cesarean sections), temporary conditions/issues, etc.
- 3) Biblical responsibility – Gen 1:28

Gen. 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

## II. Birth Control

There are four basic kinds of birth control (increasing in controversy): Natural Family Planning, Barrier, Hormonal and Sterilization.

Note – Not every method has been noted or will be discussed

### A. Natural Family Planning – NFP (not controversial)

- Also known as the Fertility Awareness Method
- Does not rely on devices or medication to prevent pregnancy
- Uses the natural functions of the body and the female cycle to calculate ovulation (e.g., tracking days, body temperature, cervical mucus)—periodic abstinence required (approximately 7 to 10 days)

### Morally Permissible

### B. Barrier (usually not controversial)

- Male/Female condom
- **Spermicides**
  - Chemicals designed to kill sperm
  - Available as foam, jelly, foaming tablets, vaginal suppositories
  - **There is a possible link between spermicides and higher than normal incidents of birth defects** – 2.2% with spermicides verses 1% non user (Davis, 22).

- Diaphragm
  - Soft rubber dome
  - Usually used in conjunction with **spermicides**
- Cervical Cap (**spermicides** used)
- Contraceptive Sponge (**spermicides** used)

Apart from spermicides (?) – Morally Permissible

### C. Hormonal (controversial)

- Intrauterine Device – IUD
  - A small plastic device containing copper or hormones
  - Inserted into the uterus by a medical professional
  - It changes cervical mucus thus compromising the ability of sperm to travel to the fallopian tubes, decreasing the chances of fertilization
  - **It changes the lining of the uterus preventing implantation**
- Birth Control Pill (Depo-Provera – injection lasts 3 months; Lunelle – injection lasts 1 month; Nuva or Vaginal Ring – inserted into the vagina for 3 weeks, removed for 1, then replaced; Ortho Evra or Birth Control Patch – weekly, x3, applied to the hip)
  - Ongoing controversy concerning adverse side effects. Usually viewed as having no serious risk for healthy women under 35 who do not smoke (Davis, 19)—research for over 40 years.

- 93-97% effective
- Use synthetic hormones to prevent pregnancy (two types: progesterone only & combined - estrogen and progesterone)
- Designed to prevent pregnancy in one of three ways:
  - 1) Prevent ovulation
  - 2) Produce less and thinner cervical mucus so that sperm cannot easily move through the uterus
  - 3) **Change the lining of the uterus preventing implantation** (read Pill inserts)—an abortifacient

Morally Impermissible

- Note concerning Accutane

D. Sterilization

- Tubal Ligation (Female)
  - Severe and tie off the fallopian tubes
  - Surgical risks involved (Laparotomy – abdominal incision; mini-laparotomy – smaller incision; Laparoscopy – fiber optics system, electric cautery, plastic or metal clips, 15 min. / local anesthesia / out-patient / tiny incision below naval)
  - Risk of hemorrhage and infection
  - 1 to 3 percent failure rate (i.e., high success rate)
  - Menstrual abnormalities (e.g., profuse, painful flow)

- Depression (at the thought of being sterile)
- Procedure is reversible (not 100%)
  
- Vasectomy (Male)
  - Severe and tie off/cauterize the vas deference (sperm duct)
  - Generally safe and effective
  - Immune reactions to own sperm (50,000 produced/min.)
  - Increase in prostate and lung cancer (20 years later)
  - Psychological problems
  - Sexual dysfunction anxieties and tensions
  - Reversible (not 100%; have grown back naturally)

Morally Permissible

However, one should consider the following:

- This is a permanent procedure (reversibility is not 100%)
- Age
- Possible death of a spouse and remarriage
- Divorce and remarriage
- Death of a child
- Change of mind
- **Proceed slowly and with extreme caution**

Questions

*Supplemental Material*

Larimore, W. L. & Stanford J. B. (Feb 2000). "Postfertilization Effects of Oral Contraceptives and their Relation to Informed Consent." *Archives of Family Medicine*.

Larimore, W. L. (Jan 2000). "The Abortifacient Effect of the Birth Control Pill and the Principle of Double Effect." *Ethics and Medicine*.

Two lines of evidence that the birth control pill is an abortifacient:

1. A large number of medical studies document that the uterine lining . . . is dramatically changed by the Pill (Alcorn, *Using*, 180).

"Secular researchers consistently point out the abortifacient effect of the Pill. To date no published studies have refused these findings (*Using*, 180).

"The minimal endometrial thickness required to maintain a pregnancy ranges from 5 to 13 mm, whereas the average endometrial thickness in women on the Pill is only 1.1 mm" (*Using*, 181-182).

2. An increase in the extrauterine/intrauterine pregnancy ratio for women taking the Pill (*Using*, 83).

I.e., ectopic pregnancies exceed uterine pregnancies in women on the Pill.

DeCook, J. L., et al. (1999). "Hormone Contraceptives: Controversies and Clarifications." Available from: <http://www.aaplog.org/position-and-papers/oral-contraceptive-controversy/hormone-contraceptives-controversies-and-clarifications/>

"The Pill is used by about fourteen million American women each year and sixty million women internationally . . . (*Using*, 184).

Using these numbers, if only one-hundredth of one percent ended with abortifacient results:

$780,000,000 \text{ (pill cycles/year)} * 0.0001 = 78,000 \text{ abortions}$

$(365 / 28 = 13 * 60,000,000 = 782,142,858)$

The Creighton method of Natural Family Planning:

<http://www.creightonmodel.com/index.html>

Keown, J. (1999). "'Double effect' and Palliative Care: A Legal and Ethical Outline." *Ethics and Medicine*, 15, no. 2: 53-54.

“In 1976, the word ‘contraceptive’ was redefined by the American college of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) to include agents which prevent implantation” (*Using*, 186).

“Conception, as defined by Dorland’s Illustrated Medical Dictionary (27<sup>th</sup> Edition), became ‘the onset of pregnancy marked by implantation of the blastocyst’” (Alcorn, quoting *Physician magazine, Pill*, 10).

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Hormone contraceptives include combined oral contraceptives (COCs), injectables (DepoProvera), progestin-only pills (mini-pill, POPs), and the implant (Norplant)” (Crockett, et al, *Using*, 192).

“This supposed abortifacient action is purely theoretical” (*Using*, 193).

See p. 195

“The currently available technology is *not sufficient to allow final and definitive scientific resolution of this controversy*. However, abundant data are available for evaluation” (emphasis mine; *Using*, 201).

“So, how are we as a pro-life community to respond to potentially divisive questions regarding the mechanisms of hormone contraception *in the face of limited scientific evidence*” (emphasis mine; *Using*, 201)?

### **Suggested Reading**

Alcorn, Randy. (2004). *Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?* 7<sup>th</sup> ed.

Gresham, OR: Eternal Perspective Ministries.

Kilner, John F., Cunningham, Paige C. and Hager, W. David (eds). (2000). *The  
Reproduction Revolution: A Christian Appraisal of Sexuality, Reproductive  
Technologies and the Family*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.