

BIRTH CONTROL

Chapter 29

- I. A controversial topic today
 - A. Roman Catholic teaching:
 1. Sexual activity should always be “open to the possibility of new life” therefore only “natural” forms of family planning are acceptable, not “artificial” forms.
 - B. Evangelical Protestants:
 1. Few: oppose all forms of birth control – it’s not “natural” – see large families as a blessing from God.
 2. Most: birth control is a personal decision for each family; couples are free to decide how many children to have.
 3. Few: plan to never have children.
 - C. Overall perspective: The Bible presents a very positive view of children.
 1. Genesis 1:28: 28; Malachi 2:15:15; 1 Timothy 5:14:14; Psalm 127:3-5
 - a. Therefore, on this topic, the first questions for married couples is these:
Do you agree in your hearts with this positive view of children as a blessing from God?
Do you want to have some children sometime in your marriage?
 - b. These suggest that married couples should, in almost all cases, plan to have children sometime.
 - c. We should primarily emphasize the wonderful privilege and joy and blessing of having children, in many cases several children! (They will usually continue to be a blessing and a joy throughout life.)
 - d. A note to husbands: be careful not to deny your wife the privilege and joy of having children for too long in your marriage.
-- 1 Samuel 1:4-11; Psalm 113:9; Isaiah 54:1
 2. But what if a couple is unable to have children?
 - a. This can happen even when a couple is “blameless” in God’s sight: Luke 1:5-7: 5
 - b. It is important to continue to seek to delight in God and trust him for what is best: Psalm 37:3-5: 3
 - c. Adoption is often a good choice, if possible, and if that is your

desire.

- d. Both Jesus and Paul were single, and had no physical children, but fulfilled the ministries that God had given to them.
- e. The NT also has a positive emphasis on spiritual children: 1 Corinthians 4:14-15; Galatians 4:19-20; 1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4
- f. Yet there can still be deep grief that couples feel when they want to have children and cannot (Scripture recognizes this several times).

A. The argument that birth control is sometimes morally right.

- 1. Deciding to have children is a weighty responsibility.
- 2. All of life consists of deciding not to do some good things in order to be able to do other good things.
- 3. There comes a point in life for every couple where one or both spouses will have a sense, “We should not have more children.” Or: “We cannot do a good job of raising any more children.”

B. Some people argue that all birth control is wrong: two main arguments.

- 1. The argument that we should maximize something that is good:
 - (1) It is good to have children.
 - (2) Therefore Christians should have all they can!
- 2. The argument that birth control is “contrary to nature”

C. Reasons why birth control is not always wrong

- 1. Not prohibited: birth control is never forbidden in Scripture, and we should not prohibit something the Bible does not prohibit (either explicitly or by implication)
- 2. A general principle: It’s OK to place less emphasis on some good activities
 - a. Seek to know God’s will for your own life, what he is calling you to emphasize.
 - b. The Bible does not command us simply to follow what is “natural,” but to follow his commands in the Bible (we differ with Roman Catholic view of “natural law” here)
- 3. Sexual intercourse itself: we are not just to do what is “natural. Because

activities

God's commands limit sex to within marriage.

4. Procreation is not the only purpose for which God created sex: also companionship, pleasure, expressing "one flesh" union within marriage (Gen. 2:24). (Sex is also good after menopause, or at non-fertile times of month)
5. God changed the order of the natural world at the Fall and therefore our ideal is not to let "untouched nature" take its course.
6. Where God gives us ordinary physical means to bring about results in this world, he does not want us just to "trust his sovereignty" (or else our fields would be overgrown with weeds!)
7. Gen. 3:16 changed the effects of childbirth on a woman's body.
8. It is possible that Gen. 3:16 also shows an increase in a woman's fertility, more than her body was suited to bear – at least in her fallen state: This is a possible alternative translation:

KJV: Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception;

NKJV: To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;

9. Then how can we know how many children to have (or, in general how much time and effort to give to various good activities)?
 - a. There is no one right answer for everybody
 - b. We should allow for a wide variety of different answers because of different individual callings from God.
 - c. Need to pray individually for God's wisdom, and seek the counsel of others: James 1:5-6:
 - d. It is not wrong to "count the cost": decide how many children you believe God will enable you to raise well. But there is also a matter of doing what is right and trusting God to provide what is needed.
10. Two errors to avoid:
 - a. basing decisions on fear and failing to obey God's calling
 - b. basing decision on reckless, irresponsible supposed "faith" that is not from God.
11. Christians need to respect the decisions of others and allow each other much freedom for personal differences in this regard.

D. Methods of birth control?

1. Avoid methods that allow conception to occur and then cause the death of a newly-conceived child (abortifacients).
 - E. Various methods that prevent conception are acceptable
- II. Raising children is ordinarily one of the most rewarding and the most time-consuming activities of your life