

“I’M GLAD YOU ASKED!” (EIGHTEENTH IN A SERIES)

Pastors Answer Frequently-Asked Questions

Is It Permissible for a Christian to Use Birth Control?

This is something you should discuss with your pastor, because there are different types of birth control, different circumstances, different motives, and different preconceived ideas about the subject. When the Bible does not speak directly to specific situations, your pastor can help you identify the relevant biblical principles and how to apply them in a God-pleasing way. Some of those principles appear below.

For starters, children are a special gift from the Lord. This is true, whether it is one child or a dozen, whether they are birth children or adopted, whether gifted with health or special needs. *“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them”* (Psalm 127:3-5). **All children are God’s special gifts, planned or unplanned. Each is a miracle of its Creator and a precious soul for whom Jesus died.**

This is hardly news to a practicing Christian, but remember, it is countercultural to our fallen world. In our consumer-driven society, people want things on their terms and according to their timetable. Children are expected to arrive only within the parameters the parents set. While **planning is fine, trying to play God is not.** Only the Lord knows what the future holds. He alone knows how many children to give and exactly when to give them.

Does that mean that it’s wrong to practice birth control? Not necessarily. There are cases where Christian love requires it (the health of the mother, for one). Unfortunately, there are many more cases that are driven by selfishness or lack of faith. **Some methods of birth control are inherently evil because they destroy the fertilized egg, and thereby end a human life.** At times in history, people have argued that the only legitimate form of birth control is abstinence/self-control. Is that true? It depends on how we understand God’s purpose for sexual relations in marriage.

The Bible teaches that sexual intimacy is not only, or even primarily, for propagation (a common idea, once promulgated by Roman Catholicism). Prior to the Fall, God instituted marriage with the words *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24). The two becoming one flesh is part of the exclusive nature of the marriage bond. **Husband and wife are to be “one-flesh-close” to each other in a way that neither is close with any other person. The fact that this may result in conception and a child is a further blessing of the Lord.**

After the Fall, the intimacy between husband and wife would also function as a safeguard. Marriage itself remained sacred (Hebrews 13:4) even though its participants were now sinful. *“Because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her*

own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. . . . Do not deprive one another . . . so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:2ff).

Any decision about birth control should include an honest look at one's motives, a humble submission to God's Word, and prayers for sanctified judgment. Be cautious of the advice you receive. The fact that a friend or neighbor is a Christian does not guarantee that his counsel is biblical. Where mistakes have been made, be grateful that these sins, too, were paid for in full on Calvary's cross.

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