

Within a month of conception, the new baby already has a discernible circulatory system; and within six weeks, an identifiable beating heart. About the time the average woman even becomes aware she is pregnant, the embryo has already exhibited all the qualifications of life outlined in the Bible—that baby is alive!

Life begins at conception

While testifying before a U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on abortion, Dr. Hymie Gordon, chairman of the Department of Genetics at Mayo Clinic, said, “By all criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of conception.”

That truth should cause us to look differently at birth control devices or methods that cause, or are suspected of causing, an embryo to be aborted. These devices or methods allow conception to occur (the beginning of a new life), but then they prevent the development of the embryonic human being.

Based on scriptural principle and modern medical science, we can conclude nothing other than that such methods are contrary to the biblical teaching against taking life. We do not believe these are methods a Christian can in good conscience use. We advise people to become fully informed about whatever method they choose to use.

What the Bible says about abstinence

Some people believe and strongly teach that abstinence is the godly way to practice birth control. Complete abstinence outside the bounds of marriage is scripturally commanded, because it is God’s intent that sexual relations only exist between a husband and his wife. But is abstinence the right way for a married couple to practice birth control?

The Bible counsels husbands and wives to express their love to each other through sexual intimacy (Hebrews 13:4). It is not acceptable for either mate to deprive the other of sexual relations—unless it is by agreement for

a short period that would allow for special spiritual focus (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

As pointed out above, all biblical instruction concerning sexual love is given to husbands and wives. Sex outside of marriage, although commonly called “making love,” is not an act of love at all. It is sin, and it is inherently harmful. God condemns sin, because sin always hurts us!

After their wedding, a husband and wife should have many years in which they can share the special sexual intimacy reserved only for each other.

We must conclude that abstinence as a method of birth control is not scripturally acceptable. It interferes with the normal, loving sexual expression a husband and wife should have with each other, a relationship that binds them mentally and emotionally together.

The balanced approach to family

At the end of Psalm 127 children are likened to arrows, and we are told, “Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them” (verse 5). Based on a couple’s financial and emotional resources, as well as time available, they have the freedom to decide how many “arrows” will make their quiver full.

So is birth control wrong? The Bible does not tell us that it is wrong or a sin to use birth control to limit the number of children conceived. Husband and wife together must responsibly decide when to have children and how many they can support and care for.

So long as the methods they choose are not destroying a new life, which would be murder, the Bible places no restrictions on the use of birth control within marriage.

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Is Birth Control Wrong?

To responsibly care for their families, many couples choose to limit how many children they have. But is birth control wrong? What does the Bible say?

The Bible teaches the importance of strong, godly families and tells us that God designed the sexual relationship to be a wonderful blessing for a husband and wife. Children are also a blessing from God, but does God say sexual relations are only for procreation? Is birth control wrong in God’s eyes?

The Bible doesn’t speak of birth control directly, but it does provide us with guiding principles by which we can make wise decisions. Let’s examine them here.

Planning and providing

God designed men and women to marry and have the wonderful ability to have children and create a family.



Is any form of birth control legitimate and acceptable?

Psalms 127 expresses it poetically: “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward” (verse 3).

On this basis some argue that it is the duty of a husband and a wife to produce as many children as possible, and they should not do anything that might prevent conception. But is this accurate? We must be careful not to read into the Bible something that really isn't there.

A preconceived notion or bias can cause us to read even passages of Scripture in a way that conforms to our belief or what we have been taught. This may cause one to believe this is the message from the psalmist. However, we must note that the subject is not birth control. All it says is that whatever children we may have are a blessing or heritage from God.

Common sense, as well as medical science, argues against an interpretation that a couple should do nothing to prevent conception, and therefore have as many children as possible. It is well known that the process of conceiving and bringing a child to the point of birth

Husbands and wives are responsible to use good judgment in deciding how many children to have.

puts a great deal of stress on a woman's body. Although some women could produce many healthy children throughout their childbearing years, wisdom dictates the need to allow their bodies to recover before becoming pregnant again.

Need for wisdom

A basic foundational scriptural principle is that God intends us to take responsibility for our health. We are told that we should view our bodies as the temple in which God dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). That means we should take good care of ourselves—including the way we approach producing children.

Furthermore, God intends that every family unit be able to provide for itself. Speaking of the responsibility of a husband, Paul wrote, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). Most couples are physically capable of producing quite a number of children. However, most would not be capable of financially supporting more than a few.

What was Onan's sin?

We need to consider another section of Scripture that some may cite as “proof” that practicing birth control is wrong. We read in Genesis 38:6-10 that God literally struck dead a man named Onan for taking action that prevented his wife from conceiving. When one first reads this passage, it certainly sounds as though God forbids the practice of birth control. But one must read the background to this story in order to understand the situation fully.

Onan's wife was the widow of his deceased brother. She and her first husband had had no children. The law at the time required a surviving brother to marry the widow and to produce an heir by her for the deceased brother's estate (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). The context of Genesis 38 reveals that Onan selfishly chose not to give an heir to his dead brother. Rather than object within what the law allowed, he pretended to comply while sabotaging the chance of pregnancy.

God, who can always read the hearts and minds of men, saw what was in Onan's heart. It was for his heart of deceit, rebellion and selfishness that God took Onan's life, not because he practiced a type of birth control.

Responsible planning

Based on fundamental biblical principles, we can understand that husbands and wives have a responsibility to use good judgment in deciding how many children to have and when. This is responsible family planning. And we do not find anything in Scripture that con-

demns the use of birth control as a means of family planning. It is a joint responsibility, not the responsibility of just the man or just the woman. Both should decide how many children they want and what type of birth control to use.

Is abortion an acceptable means of family planning?

Some family planning advocates believe that any form of birth control is legitimate and acceptable, including deliberate termination of a pregnancy in progress. Does the Bible support this?

“By all criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of conception.”

While the Bible doesn't tell us to use one method of birth control and not another, the same cannot be said of abortion. There is ample evidence that abortion has been used as a form of birth control from ancient times—but God certainly does not approve. A quick look at scriptural principles should give us God's mind on the matter.

The Sixth Commandment forbids murder (Exodus 20:13). The taking of a human life—whether the individual is born yet or not—is a sin and condemned by God.

Some question whether an unborn child is yet alive. What does the Bible say?

The Bible makes reference to the breath of life (Genesis 2:7) and says that life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). Within a few days of conception the embryo attaches to the uterine wall and begins receiving oxygen through the mother's blood supply. If cut off from the mother's blood supply and oxygen, the embryo would die within minutes.