

Fertilization Methods

Bill Goring

Bill was born in Higginsville, MO in 1944 and raised in the greater Kansas City, MO area. He was baptized in 1968 at the Winner Road congregation and attended the Kansas City School of Preaching from 1970-1973. He has also attended at Freed Hardeman College, Oklahoma Christian College and Ozark Bible College. While in Oklahoma he was an instructor at the 8th and Lee School of Biblical Studies in Lawton, Oklahoma. He has served as an instructor at the Midwest School of Biblical Studies here at 39th Street. Bill has spoken at various lectureships and gospel meetings throughout the Midwest and the Southern United States. He contributes articles for various brotherhood papers as well as tracts for the International Bible Studies series published by 39th Street. and also participates in the International Bible Studies lectures. Bill has preached for 33 years, 21 of which have been spent with the Chipman Road Church of Christ in Lee's Summit, Missouri. He and his wife, Nancy, have 4 children, 8 grandchildren and one more on the way!

Perhaps one of the greatest desires of every married couple is to have children. This is only right as the Bible tells us, "And God blessed them, and God said into them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it..."(Genesis 1:28a). When husband and wife come together as God has commanded (Genesis 2:24), it is a beautiful union. It was God's design from the very beginning that man should not be alone, so He created woman from man's own rib to be his helpmeet. From this union the first family went forth and God blessed them with children. The Psalmist tell us, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psalm 127:3). And again, in Psalm 127: 4-5 we read, "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth, Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them..."

We can see from these passages that children are truly a blessing from God. There are, however, occasions when couples who desire children find it difficult and sometimes impossible to conceive. For these folks, such a situation can be burdensome or even devastating. That is our topic for consideration: What can we do from a moral, ethical, and most importantly, biblical standpoint when a couple is infertile?

For years, the most common answer for couples who were unable to have children was adoption. This fulfills not only the desire of the couple to have children, but also allows an orphaned child to have a family, working to the advantage of all concerned. Adoption would be the most desirable solution to infertility, and although it is costly, it is no more costly than the alternative methods used in fertility clinics. There is always foster care, but again some individuals are not emotionally equipped having children come into the home, often to be uprooted from that home after a brief stay. These are two different ways that couples have been able to fulfill their desire for children and still be pleasing in the sight of God.

In the world we live in today, however, with all of the advanced technology, there are some new so-called "answers" for infertility. Everywhere we look, the fertility clinic advertisements are running rampant with claims that they can provide a child for those who have been unable to conceive, never giving a second thought to the moral or ethical concerns of their procedures. The three, most

frequently used methods that we will look at are: Artificial Insemination, In-Vitro Fertilization and Surrogate Mothers. First we need to define what each of these are.

Artificial Insemination or (AI) - Sperm are washed and concentrated and shuttled by a catheter directly into the uterus. This is divided into three categories:

AIH - Artificial insemination using only the husband's sperm

AID - Artificial insemination using only donor sperm

AIDH - Artificial insemination using sperm from both husband and donor

When **AI** occurs using the husband's sperm and the wife's egg, we have no quarrel. The child would still be from its own biological parents with the assistance of a technological procedure. Christians could be supportive of such a procedure when done to assist normal procreation (Thompson 16).

However, **AI** can also be used in such a way as to destroy the God-ordained biological basis for the human family and parenthood. It is now possible to mix sperm and egg from any two people, and is even possible to put the fertilized embryo into any normal womb and thus have any final set of parents (or for that matter, any single person) gain custody of what will be the newborn infant. In the end, parenthood may have nothing whatsoever to do with biological relationship. (Thompson 16,17)

Nancy Pearcy writes,

By using both abortion and artificial reproduction, we are building a technology of reproduction around the parents' wishes. To put it bluntly, if you don't want the child growing within you, you can destroy it through abortion - and if you do want a child you can get one to order through a trip to the laboratory. There is an erosion of respect for existing life as a gift of God wherever we find it. We can now hire life and death at the parents' wishes. (Percy 6)

Although we are sympathetic with couples who are unable to conceive, the use of donor eggs and donor sperm are in direct conflict with what God has ordained in His plan for the family! We now have women bearing children for unmarried men, for other couples (surrogate mothers), lesbians having children together, and a host of legal complications, too long to mention. That does not even begin to cover the emotional, psychological, and physiological problems that have arisen!

So what about **In Vitro Fertilization or IVF**? This involves harvesting several eggs, which are then combined with a sperm sample in a petri dish in a lab and allowed to divide for 2-3 days - the resulting zygote is then re-introduced into the uterus. Often, the woman is injected with hormones causing "super-ovulation," so when the eggs are harvested there are more, allowing for greater chance of fertilization. The trademark of this procedure is "many are called but few are chosen!" The "choicest" eggs are picked to be fertilized, not necessarily "all" of the eggs. Even those that are fertilized are often destroyed for one reason or the other. Let's see what Dr. Sherman J. Silber has to say in his book, How To Get Pregnant With The New Technology:

For some patients, day 5 transfer to the uterus may be a good option. The problem with extended culture to day 5 is that there may be a loss of embryos that might have “made it” if they had been transferred earlier. No “in vitro” culture system is as good as the fallopian tube itself.

And again, But only 20 percent to 50 percent of day 2 embryos can develop in vitro to day five no matter how perfect the in vitro culture system. There is a huge loss therefore of what could have been viable embryos, so selection is the only advantage of blastocyst culture, and this selection has nothing to do with the “quality” of the baby, but rather just whether the embryo “makes it” or not to becoming a baby.

I think we can see from Dr. Silber’s remarks that human lives are being destroyed and this is certainly not acceptable to God. Since God is the one who “gives life and breath and all things...” (Acts 17:25), how dare we, as mortal men, make any decision that would take life from one of His little ones!

Wayne Jackson addressed this very problem in the 1985 Fort Worth Lectures,

“In more recent times, a number of human eggs have been artificially fertilized in glass dishes, transferred to female bodies, and babies ultimately brought to term. In the process, however, numerous additional fertilized eggs were sacrificially destroyed (aborted) ...”(216)

By the way, the cost for most **IVF** is \$6,000.00 to \$15,000.00 with an 18% success rate, according to the majority of reports I have found published on the Fertility Clinics’ Websites. Some couples will return for two or three visits, despite the cost. These clinics can be found all over the nation espousing their special techniques, unconcerned with the moral ethics of these procedures which often result in a high rate of miscarriages and multiple births, and a very high incidence of low birth weight babies that present with problems. Again, we haven’t touched the hem of the garment regarding the psychological and emotional ramifications of mothers who become depressed after several miscarriages, still births, or multiple babies to care for with possible birth defects. Needless to say, this is not a method of fertilization that a Christian would choose, much less, anyone who has regard for human life.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not address the matter of surrogate mothers when discussing fertilization methods.

There are cases in the Bible where couples were unable to bear children (Rachel, Hannah, Rebekeh, Elizabeth, Sampson’s mother, et al). Their only legitimate hope was prayer. But some tried other means like surrogacy. Sarai was barren (Genesis 11:30;16:2). She said that the Lord had made her barren, so she told her husband, Abram, to impregnate the handmaid, Hagar. Sarai said, “it may be that I may obtain children by her.” Thus, Hagar was a surrogate mother. Among the problems associated with this surrogacy, five are clear. First, Sarai blamed the Lord. Second, her desperation for a child was out of control. Third, she told her husband to have illicit sexual relations with another woman. Fourth, he obliged her. Fifth, the results were bad. (Meyers)

Although today, we do not typically see surrogacy involving the actual adulterous union with the chosen surrogate mother and the biological father, it does sometimes occur. This is an obvious violation of God's law. There are other means of surrogacy, however, that one might ask, "Is it alright?"

With the advanced technology of our day, classic and traditional surrogacy generally involves a healthy young woman (usually under 35 years old), who agrees with an infertile couple to be artificially inseminated with the male's sperm, carry the baby to term, then turn the baby over to the couple after birth. The infertile couple usually provides the sperm and the surrogate mother provides the egg and womb. This is the most common method.

The less common method is that of the sperm and egg coming from the infertile couple and the womb only from the surrogate - here the surrogate is not genetically related to the child.

The rarest method is where the surrogate provides the egg and the infertile couple the sperm and womb. (Robertson)

Aside from the fact that this is not the way God commanded us to go forth and multiply, the list of legal, moral and ethical ramifications is so long we could fill libraries! Just to name a few:

1. Who are the real legal parents?
2. Who are the real biological parents?
3. What if the surrogate changes her mind-surrogacy contracts have been signed and large fees paid to the surrogate.
4. What about the stress on the marriage during and after the pregnancy?
5. What about the possibility of birth defects? Will anyone want the child then?
6. Will the child be confused, emotionally upset or disturbed when informed of his/her "parent?"
7. Will the surrogate mother become emotionally unstable after giving up a baby she has carried and bonded with for nine months?

These are only a random sampling of questions which face those people who become involved in surrogacy. So many problems occur when we take matters into our own hands without consulting with God's Holy Word!

God designed the family as a man, his wife, and the resulting children from that union. Luke tells us in Acts 17:28, "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also His offspring." Having been made in God's image (Genesis 1:26), and knowing what His divine plan for the family is, let us determine to follow after His will as we endeavor

to bring children into this world, being careful not to violate the laws of nature, or destroy any of His little ones.

Bert Thompson has rightfully said, Occasionally there are times when physical problems occur that are no one's "fault," resulting in a couple's inability to produce children. No one should be made to feel ashamed (Thompson 26). We are not unsympathetic and our prayers certainly go out to these couples. Unfortunate as it is, Christians should realize that resorting to unethical, immoral and unbiblical methods to solve the problem is not acceptable to God. Hopefully, these couples will work together in an attempt to find solutions that will benefit not only themselves, but other children in the world who are in need of a loving family; be it foster children, orphans, or any adoptable child. If unable to do that, one can dedicate his or her life to teaching children in Bible classes, or assisting others who are in need of help in the rearing of their children. There is always a place for those who would serve God's children. When we follow after His will, all will be blessed!

Perhaps Wayne Jackson put it best when he said, "Remember this: no matter how technologically advanced humanity may become, we will never out-grow our great need for the divine guidance of Jehovah's inspired Word, the Bible." (Jackson 223)

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