

Lesson 5: Bioethics: Reproductive Technology

Introduction: Scott Rae, “Brave New Families: Reproductive & Genetic Technologies” (March 21, 2006)

Near future possibilities at that time:

- (1) Cloned humans.
- (2) Artificial wombs.
- (3) Selecting the gender of children (without abortion).
- (4) Selecting traits (diseases are already screened).
- (5) Infertile couple adopting embryos (left over from in vitro fertilization).
- (6) Posthumous recreation.
- (7) Post-menopausal pregnancies.

Question: Do we want to go there? Should commerce be involved? (cf. 1 Timothy 6:10).

“Reproduction” vs. “Procreation” – Oliver O’Donovan, *Begotten or Made?*

Transgression and Trespass

Illus. Noah’s Day – the angels that did not “keep their own domain” (Jude 6) – probably Genesis 6:1-4

Future: As with food, so “genetically-modified humans” and Hitler’s dream of youth with no conscience?

Gene Edward Veith – likened the modern movement of “transhuman” evolution to earlier eugenics

Lessons from the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11):

While nothing is impossible for organized mankind, not all things possible are right.

Modern Culture

1. Fifteen percent of couples are infertile (higher than past, perhaps in part due to waiting longer).
The Bible has ample testimony to the difficulty of infertility (“barrenness” – e.g. Mother’s Day).
2. Technology:
 - (1) Fertility Pills – McCaughey septuplets (Iowa, 1997)
 - (2) Intra-Uterine Insemination (IUI) – sperm bank (donor)
 - (3) In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) – test-tube babies (first – Louise Brown on July 25, 1978)
Harvest eggs and sperm in a Petri dish – some embryos implanted, some frozen
Of those frozen, some are implanted (“snowflake babies”), some are experiments.
 - (4) Surrogate mothers – example: rent-a-womb, IVF implants (remember Hagar).
3. Fertility treatments are expensive, but couples are often desperate.
4. Scripture: God opens and closes the womb (e.g. Genesis 20:18; 25:21).

Bioethical Issues

1. Adultery – sperm banks and egg donations ignore the lines of marriage, even if done anonymously
WORLD magazine reported one man with 400 children, with many searching for him
2. Murder – IVF creates extra embryos later discarded or used for stem cell research (a rationalization)
Nadya Suleman (“[Octomom](#)”) – a single mom birthed eight babies who survived a week (Jan. 2009)
3. Human cloning – manufactured identical twins
If we can do something, does that mean we should do something?
4. Genetic modification – the so-called “designer baby” all on a genetic menu
In seeking to cure one thing, we may inadvertently damage another (cf. fetal alcohol syndrome).
Human fickleness in selectivity—from Roman “exposure” of babies to Down’s Syndrome today.
The strong need to the weak, who passively teach them the graces of care and compassion.

Counseling Couples

Infertile couples should be loved in the church and given comfort and counsel through a large view of God:

1. The expensive IVF procedures risk murder and (perhaps) adultery.
2. Are there physiological causes to the infertility (e.g. malnutrition, stress)?
Illus. How many times have you heard of a couple choosing to adopt and then conceive?
3. Without making assumptions, are there spiritual causes to the unanswered prayer (e.g. 1 Peter 3:7)?
4. Perhaps the will of God involves adopting needing children or an exclusive focus on ministry.

Illus. Luke 1:12, 25 – the larger agenda of redemptive history involved individual attention to prayer
The sovereignty of God often uses tragedy for salvation (e.g. Genesis 50:20; the cross of Christ).

Instead of answering every prayer for strength, His power is “perfected” in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).