

- Last week we considered Principle #1 “Children are a Blessing.” If someone did not hear that message, I would urge you to go back and to listen for a proper backdrop to what I am going to say today.
- Now we come to a subject that is very controversial among the Christian church at large, that of birth control and family planning. Modern medicine and technology have brought in new issues and sparked debate about the legitimacy of birth control. Things that were not possible in the same way in biblical times are now possible.
- There are very strong opinions when it comes to this issue. I know of some churches (or some Christian families) where birth control of any sort is considered an issue of church discipline or blatantly called sin. In some cases (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church) certain forms are considered a mortal sin (one that, unrepented of, condemns a person to hell).
- For most if not all who hold to a strong view I have no doubt that their intentions are good, and they have an extremely high view of human life and the blessing of children from the Lord. This is to be commended.
- In dealing with the subject of birth control (pre-conception), we must remember that we are not dealing with existing children, but future potential. What is “human” life begins at conception; neither egg nor sperm is human. We would never wish to take any away who already exist (a very emotional argument).
- There is no Scripture that speaks directly to the issue of birth control unless it is an issue of murder. Remember an excellent definition of sin as defined by the Westminster Catechism: “Sin is any lack of conformity to or transgression of the law of God.” What is at stake here is the sufficiency of the Word of God. Does the Scripture speak directly to it? If not, and to treat the subject as if it does is to add to it.
- The primary argument of those who are strongly anti-birth control is God’s sovereignty over giving children. We have already seen that this is certainly true biblically. He is the one who opens and closes the womb.
- What follows from the argument is this: seeing that God is sovereign, we are disobedient toward God in taking any positive action to prevent what God intends to do. Whatever is a blessing should be received without seeking in any way to stop it.
- The first thing is to ask about the heart disposition of the person who is wrestling through this. What is one’s view of children? If it is less than the reality of their being a blessing, then one is already starting out on the wrong foot and from there things will be skewed. There are illegitimate reasons for exercising birth control.
- Some simply don’t want to have children, and seek to answer the question based on that. There are several underlying reasons one may think this way. They may be motivated by a woman not wanting to “ruin” her body with stretch marks and losing her girlish figure. Someone may be motivated because they want to live a certain kind of lifestyle or standard of living, or do certain things in their life which are self-centered and self-consumed. They may see children as limiting, and a road block to enjoying their hobbies, interests, career, etc. There is not an interest in seeking God’s blessing and the things that He would teach them, nor to propagate a godly seed for the glory of Christ in our generation.
- There are some who would want to use birth control because of a faithless fear. They lack to confidence that God will provide for them what they need (though not necessarily all they want). Such a person may envision a table full of children living in utter poverty.
- Whether it is self-centeredness, or lack of faith, these things are things that have to be addressed by the Word of God. That we should live for more than ourselves, that we should live in confidence of God’s promise for provision must be embraced.
- What is often assumed is that if a Christian decides to delay having children, or limit the number of children, the reason MUST be (though they may not admit it) selfishness of some sort.
- Now the question arises, “Are there legitimate reasons?” Some would say that since God is sovereign, there are no legitimate reasons. One thing it seems is forgotten by such an argument is that God is sovereign over everything, yet we are responsible to live in wisdom in everything. God’s sovereignty never negates human responsibility to apply other principles of God’s Word. God’s sovereignty never means our passivity.
- Simplistic, “one size fits all” answers will not do (especially where Scripture doesn’t directly speak). God calls us to wisdom, which means we have responsibility to apply God’s Word (which is universal and absolute) to particular circumstances (which are varying).
- One basic principle is “the prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3). We remember that we live in a fallen world, and things aren’t perfect. We don’t do all things as we should, and there are consequences to those decisions.
- What if a Christian man and woman prayerfully seek the Lord (which many don’t) and decide that there are circumstances that would lead them to believe that they should delay having children.
- Are there never “medical” circumstances that would call them in wisdom to wait or cease? (Most will admit this, but isn’t God in control of this as well?) Are there never “economic” circumstances that might call in wisdom to wait or to cease (finishing college to provide health insurance)? Are there never “cultural” circumstances that might call in wisdom to wait or to cease (1 child law in China)? Are there never “psychological” circumstances that might call in wisdom to wait or to cease (mental stability of parent)?

- Living in our culture, we must begin with the challenge of our views. Having done so, we are responsible in wisdom before the Lord to seek to do those things with a desire to honor Him while remembering the admonition in James 4:11-12.
- We come back to that principle of a desire for children for the glory of God. We'll address this in coming weeks.

For more, see www.desiringgod.org search on "birth control"