

## **The Biblical View on Mandatory Vaccines**

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The question whether to vaccinate or not vaccinate should be left to the freedom of every individual and the parent of a child. This is an extremely important biblical principle; a principle to be protected. Vaccines may never be mandated. This is what this article will set out to prove.

What is the standard by which we should answer ethical questions? The standard is God's Word. Yes, it must be answered by the objective standard, the standard outside of us. It is the only standard to determine good ethical laws (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If the answer depends on man, the answer will be subjective – the answer will change depending on the circumstance and the time we live in. Therefore, we must use God's Word when we try to answer the question whether vaccines may be mandated or not.

Whether vaccines are beneficial to the health of people is a medical question that needs to be weighed up by medical evidence. This principle is grounded in the ninth commandment which states that one should not lie, but always tell the truth. If the truth is that vaccines will help, and the evidence has been truthfully weighed up, God can be praised for His goodness in giving human beings the ability to discover cures for diseases – diseases which are sadly the result of the fall of mankind from moral uprightness into sin. We are indeed indebted to God for His undeserved goodness in all spheres of life, and the advancements in medical science.

But importantly, regardless of whether vaccines are beneficial or not, people should still determine whether the use and manufacture of specific vaccines are morally right. Is it right that aborted babies' cell lines are used in vaccines? Is it right that vaccines are tested in aborted human beings cell lines? These are truly relevant questions, and every vaccine should be put to scrutiny. The ethical basis for the use or manufacturing of vaccines will not be addressed in this article though.

Now, if it has been determined (as far as possible) that specific vaccines are beneficial and are morally justified, then we still sit with the question whether individuals may be mandated to take the vaccine. This is the question addressed here.

Should people be able to have the freedom to decide for themselves whether to take a vaccine, or not? May a government, a doctor, a company, or any other person force another human being to take medicine for a disease or illness? The following question may be helpful in addressing the issue: May a government, or a doctor, force someone to take medicine for their diabetes/hypertension/common cold?

Most people will probably answer the last question with a resounding “no”. Should our answer differ with regards to vaccines?

The eighth commandment (“you shall not steal”) and the sixth commandment (“you shall not murder”) will help us answer the question whether people should be able to decide for themselves whether to take a vaccine, or not.

The eighth commandment assumes that a person may have possessions that belongs to him/her. When the commandment prohibits a person to steal something, it assumes that another person has possession of an object and no-one may unlawfully take that object from the person who possesses it. Furthermore, by extension of the sixth commandment the person in possession of the object has the liberty to do what he wants with the object, as long as the object is not used to murder or hurt someone or damage someone else’s possession.

It is important to note that God, and not the government, is the judge in the case where someone doesn’t use his possession responsibly with regards to himself (e.g., when he breaks his possession or hurts his own body). Only when a person mishandles another person or another person’s possessions may he be prosecuted by a human law-enforcing institution (Rom. 13:4).

Now, a person’s body belongs to himself. It is his possession. Consequently, a person is lawfully justified to do anything with his body. Again, he can do anything with his body (and his possessions) as long as it does not hurt someone or damage someone else’s possession – again, he will be accountable to God for the mistreatment of his own body and possessions. For example, if someone wants to go for a dangerous hike on Mount Everest, he may do it; if he doesn’t want to take certain prescribed medicine, he does not have to take it. In these cases, the slogan “my body my choice” is accurate. On the contrary, if a woman wants to undergo an abortion, it will be in violation of the sixth commandment because the procedure hurts another person. The abortion-procedure not

only hurts the mother but also the baby in the mother's womb – the procedure hurts another person's possession (the baby's body). The mother is lawfully justified to hurt herself (with accountability to God of course), but she is not justified to unlawfully hurt someone else (including her baby). Yes, the slogan "my body my choice" may not be misapplied to hurt someone else's body purposefully and unlawfully.

But what about children? Can parents decide on the medical treatment of their children? Yes, God has given parents the responsibility to care for their children (Ps. 127:3). That means that the parent may not purposefully hurt their children. God requires parents to teach their children the fear of the Lord (Eph. 6:4) and to care for their sustenance, like food and shelter. The parents are only accountable to God with regards to their responsibility to care for their children's sustenance. The government can't prosecute a parent with regards to the level of sustenance. The government may only get involved when the parent purposefully injures the child – there must be a demonstrable crime against the child. Now, withholding a vaccine from a child doesn't constitute purposefully injuring a child because it can't be proven by a biblical judicial process. Therefore, the parents (who are accountable before God for the sustenance of their children) must be able to decide whether their children may or may not get a vaccine.

Someone might argue that if you have the potential to hurt someone else with a potential disease in the potential future, then you have the obligation to take a vaccination to reduce the potential of hurting someone else. Here it must be made clear that person A can only be accused of hurting person B if, and only if, there is evidence of person A actually committing the crime – there must be two or three witnesses of the crime (Deut. 17:2-6; 19:15-21; Matt. 18:15-16). If person A can't be proven guilty by this biblical judicial process, person A must be assumed innocent. Yes, the biblical principle of innocent until proven guilty is of tantamount importance when working in the sphere of justice. What does this have to do with vaccinations? A lot. Someone may not be judged as being hateful of their neighbour if he doesn't want to take the vaccine - as it cannot be proven that he is hateful. There is no evidence that he is trying to hurt his neighbour. Obviously, if a person is sick and it can be shown (by two or three witnesses) that he tries to infect (and hurt) other people on purpose, he can be judged as guilty of trying to hurt someone else.

In conclusion. The eighth and sixth commandments give us the simple answer that nobody may be forced to vaccinate themselves or their children. But everybody has the freedom to vaccinate themselves.

Further notes relating to the issue of mandatory vaccines might be helpful though.

First note. God is God of the Christian's conscience. This means that Christians must do everything in good faith. We must be convinced that when we make decisions related to our health (or anything else), we are making morally right decisions before God. If a Christian has an objection against a vaccine and doesn't want to take it because of whatever reasonable biblical defensible reason (e.g., the use of aborted babies' cell lines in vaccines), then that Christian shouldn't take the vaccine and should not be forced to take the vaccine. If a vaccine is not taken in good faith and in a clear conscience, then it is sin for that Christian (Rom. 14:23). Christians must be given that freedom of choice on the basis of maintaining a clear conscience before God.

Second note. It is true that everything on this earth (including human beings' bodies) belong to the Lord (Ps. 24:1). The Lord decides what should happen to His possessions. For this reason, it is important to follow His commandments (i.e., the eighth commandment) with regards to His possessions he has entrusted to human beings (e.g., their bodies). But it is also true that Christians belong in a special way to God. He has paid with His own blood for our sins – He has taken the just punishment for our sins. He has purchased us, and we belong to Christ now (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The implication of this is that we do not belong to ourselves, and that further implies that we can't do with our bodies what we want (or what the government wants). We should think differently than unbelievers about our bodies and the decisions we make about our bodies. Our consciences are now obedient to Christ and His Word. We may not follow the world blindly in health decisions but must measure everything against the Word of God to determine whether our actions are sinful or not sinful.

A last note. We should never do evil for good to come. In other words, we should never do something morally wrong with the purpose that a general wellbeing of society will be the result. If someone argues that everybody should take a vaccine (even if it goes against their consciences or even if it hurts some people) because it will be for the greater good of humanity, then it should be rejected as a sinful reason to do good. God forbids someone to do evil with the purpose of doing good: "And why not do evil that good may come?-- as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just." (Rom. 3:8 ESV)