



*What the Bible Says about*

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**BIRTH CONTROL,  
INFERTILITY,  
REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY,  
AND ADOPTION**



*Wayne Grudem*

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“As a physician and medical educator, I’ve seen patients and medical students struggle with the issues addressed in this book. Wayne Grudem’s work presents a perfect blend of ethical, moral, technical, and biblical approaches to these critical topics. It will provide understandable guidance for health-care professionals as well as the general public.”

**Jacqueline Chadwick, MD**, family physician; medical educator

“Psalm 119:105 reminds us that God’s word is a ‘lamp to my feet and a light to my path.’ In characteristic fashion, Wayne Grudem has thoroughly applied the word of God to many of the reproductive technologies available today. This book can be a lamp that brightens the path of many couples struggling with the physical and emotional pain of infertility. At the same time, it will illuminate an ethical pathway through the maze of reproductive-technological choices that health-care providers face every day as we counsel our patients.”

**M. Lance Holemon, MD**, board certified  
obstetrician-gynecologist



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Birth Control, Infertility,  
Reproductive Technology,  
and Adoption

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# What the Bible Says about Birth Control, Infertility, Reproductive Technology, and Adoption

Wayne Grudem

*What the Bible Says about Birth Control, Infertility, Reproductive Technology, and Adoption*

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## INTRODUCTION

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*Should we think that birth control is morally acceptable?*

*If so, are there types of birth control that are morally wrong?*

*What birth-control methods are morally acceptable?*

*How do biblical principles help us evaluate modern reproductive technologies, particularly artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, embryo adoption, and surrogate motherhood?*

*Why does the Bible view adoption so positively?*

This book discusses topics that are related to the conception of children. According to the teachings of the Bible, is it ever right to prevent a woman from conceiving a child? (This is the question of birth control.) On the other hand, what does the Bible teach about couples who are apparently unable to have children? (This is the question of infertility.) And is it right to use modern medical means such as in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, and even surrogate motherhood to enable a couple to have a baby? (This is the question of modern reproductive technology.)

Finally, what are the teachings of the Bible about a different method of welcoming a child into a family—namely, adoption? As we shall see, there are important principles in Scripture relating to each of these questions.

## PART 1: BIRTH CONTROL

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Every married couple must face the question of birth control today, and modern society presents a wide variety of viewpoints. On the one hand, many in modern society find no moral problem with birth control, and use condoms and/or birth-control pills commonly in order to have sex while avoiding the fear of unwanted pregnancy.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church considers all forms of birth control to be morally wrong except periodically abstaining from intercourse during a woman's fertile period each month (which is a "natural" as opposed to "artificial" form of birth control).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says:

Unity, indissolubility, and *openness to fertility* are essential to marriage. . . . The refusal of fertility turns married life away from its "supreme gift," the child.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary that each and every marriage act remain ordered *per se* to the procreation of human life.<sup>2</sup>

Every action which . . . proposes to render procreation impossible is intrinsically evil.<sup>3</sup>

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1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1997), para. 1664 (463), emphasis added.

2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 2366 (628).

3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 2370 (629).

Sacred Scripture and the Church's traditional practice see in *large families* a sign of God's blessing and the parents' generosity.<sup>4</sup>

Among evangelical Protestants, a few support essentially the Roman Catholic position and oppose all forms of "artificial" birth control, but most believe that birth control is a personal decision for each family and that couples should be free to decide how many children they will have.

What does the Bible actually teach about birth control? That is the subject discussed in this section.

## **A. SCRIPTURE VIEWS CHILDREN NOT AS A BURDEN BUT AS A GREAT BLESSING**

Some in contemporary society view children mostly as a burden, a huge expense, and an inconvenience that interferes with the happiness of a married couple. From time to time there are news stories that make the task of raising children seem frightfully expensive! In 2013, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that the cost of raising a child from birth to high school graduation was \$245,340. In more expensive areas, such as the Northeast United States, that figure reaches \$455,000.

That does not include the costs for the college years, which were conservatively estimated by the College Board for 2016–2017 to be \$20,090 (in-state) per year for tuition

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4. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 2373 (630), emphasis in original.

and housing at four-year public colleges and universities, and \$45,370 for four-year private colleges and universities.<sup>5</sup>

But the Bible does not view raising children as a burden or as something that is financially or emotionally impossible to do. It consistently views children as a blessing from God. This positive perspective begins at the earliest point of human history, for the first command that God ever gave to human beings was a mandate to bear children:

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “*Be fruitful and multiply* and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Gen. 1:28)

To “multiply” implies having more than two children, because a couple with only two children will simply replace themselves on the earth, without multiplying the population.<sup>6</sup>

Other passages in the Old Testament continue promoting a positive view of children, even after Adam and Eve sinned:

Behold, *children are a heritage from the LORD,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.*

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior

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5. “Expenditures on Children by Families, 2015,” United States Department of Agriculture, revised March 2017, 20, [https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/crc2015\\_March2017.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/crc2015_March2017.pdf). The exact figures are \$9,650 per year for in-state public college and university tuition, plus \$10,440 for room and board; for private colleges and universities, it is \$33,480 for tuition, plus \$11,890 for room and board.

6. See below, pp. 17–20, on the question of overpopulation today.

are the children of one's youth.  
Blessed is the man  
who fills his quiver with them!  
He shall not be put to shame  
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.  
(Ps. 127:3–5)

Your wife will be *like a fruitful vine*  
within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots  
around your table.  
Behold, *thus shall the man be blessed*  
who fears the LORD. (Ps. 128:3–4)

Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit  
in their union? *And what was the one God seeking?*  
*Godly offspring.* So guard yourselves in your spirit, and  
let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.  
(Mal. 2:15)

In the New Testament, Jesus demonstrated a remarkably positive attitude toward children:

Then children were brought to him that he might lay  
his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the  
people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to  
me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the  
kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them  
and went away. (Matt. 19:13–15)

In addition, Paul's directions to Timothy about how he should teach churches included this statement about widows:

So I would have younger widows marry, *bear children*, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. (1 Tim. 5:14)

These passages indicate that the first question couples should ask themselves when considering birth control is this: *Do we agree in our hearts with the Bible's positive view of children as a blessing from God*, or do we agree with a modern secular view that children are an inconvenience and a burden?

This question is important because the Bible is unquestionably prochild in its perspective. The scriptural emphasis on children as a blessing leads me to think that married couples should, in almost all cases, plan to have children sometime in their marriages.<sup>7</sup> In fact, my personal encouragement to most young couples would be to plan to have several children and to enjoy their large families for their entire lifetimes. (I have seldom if ever met couples who told me, "We had too many children.")

Having several children is also a way of expanding the church. Although God's kingdom on earth in the new covenant age is primarily expanded by having spiritual children (people who are born again), not simply through physical

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7. The rare exceptions would be cases in which the wife has a medical condition, such as a disability that would make pregnancy prohibitively dangerous, or in which couples are past childbearing age when they marry.



procreation, it remains true that the pattern we see in Scripture is that the children of believers ordinarily become believers themselves.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, having several children is also a way for couples to expand the population of God's people in the world, people who will ultimately glorify him for all eternity.

These biblical truths remind us that our primary emphasis in any discussion of birth control should be on the wonderful privilege, joy, and blessing of having children, in many cases having several of them. Children will usually continue to be a blessing and a joy to parents throughout their lives.

However, Scripture also recognizes that sometimes children can be a cause of great sorrow for their parents. Absalom was a source of tremendous grief to David, from his rebellious attempt to usurp David's throne to his death at the hands of David's general Joab (2 Sam. 13–18). The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) tells of a son who must have caused immense grief to his father. And some verses from Proverbs show an awareness of similar tragedies with rebellious children:

A wise son makes a glad father,  
but *a foolish son* is a sorrow to his mother.  
(Prov. 10:1)

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8. See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, and Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 500.

*A foolish son* is a grief to his father  
and bitterness to her who bore him. (Prov. 17:25;  
see also 19:13; 29:3; Deut. 21:18–21)

Nevertheless, these verses show the exceptions rather than the general case, and the overall perspective of Scripture remains very positive toward children. In addition, we may hope that the prophetic promise of Malachi would yet find a partial or even greater fulfillment in our own lifetimes, so that before the day when the Lord comes in judgment, prodigal sons and daughters will be reconciled with their parents:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn *the hearts of fathers to their children* and *the hearts of children to their fathers*, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction. (Mal. 4:5–6)

## **B. OBJECTION: “THE WORLD ALREADY HAS TOO MANY PEOPLE”**

One objection that may be brought against this positive biblical perspective on having children is the idea that the world already has too many people. Someone might argue that in the time of the Bible, there were not very many people on earth and the encouragement to have more children made sense, but today the world already has so many people that there is a danger of overpopulation.

Advances in technology offer couples wanting to have children more options than ever before—fertility treatment methods; prefertilization genetic screening; and embryo adoption. With all of these options available, plus the blessing of adoption, it can be difficult for Christian couples to determine which to consider when the Bible doesn't give explicit direction. Wayne Grudem applies biblical truth and ethical reasoning to help Christians navigate these questions as they seek to live out God's word in an ever-changing society.

### TOPICS INCLUDE:

- *The moral acceptability of birth control*
- *A Christian perspective on infertility and reproductive technology*

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*"As a physician and medical educator, I've seen patients and medical students struggle with the issues addressed in this book. Wayne Grudem's work presents a perfect blend of ethical, moral, technical, and biblical approaches to these critical topics."*

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**M. LANCE HOLEMON, MD**

board certified obstetrician-gynecologist

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The What the Bible Says About series was adapted from Wayne Grudem's *Christian Ethics* in order to equip Christians with biblical answers to common ethical dilemmas.

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