

Reproductive Technologies

By Evan Lenow

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Study the section **At Home: Nail It Down**. Prepare to give your group a brief overview of two ethical dilemmas: (1) destroying fertilized human eggs; (2) making people beyond the married couple a part of the conception and birth process.

Assignment Two

Find sonogram pictures from a family member, friend, or online. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What do you see in those pictures. What do those pictures reveal about the intricate and extraordinary development of human life in the womb?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Psalm 139:13–16 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What does God know about our lives before we are ever born? What does it mean for God to be omniscient?

Scripture to Memorize

“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.” Psalm 127:3

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand that children are a blessing from the Lord, and God is the One who gives life.

Evan Lenow is assistant professor of Ethics at Southwestern Seminary. He also serves as director of the Land Center for Cultural Engagement and the Center for Biblical Stewardship. He is the author of *Biblically Correct: Engaging Culture with Truth* and *Biblically Sound: Embracing Doctrine for Life*. You can follow him on Twitter @evanlenow and read his blog at www.evanlenow.com.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

After you get married, you try for several years to have children. However, the children never come. On the advice of some friends, you and your spouse go to a fertility clinic to see if they can help. The doctor suggests a number of treatments including in vitro fertilization with the use of a surrogate. The cost is more than you paid for your last car, and the thought of another woman bearing your child makes you uneasy. What should you do? Are there biblical principles that will help you make the right decision?

Children Are a Gift of the Lord

The Bible doesn't say anything directly about reproductive technologies. However, it speaks at great length about children and how we should view them. Scripture also speaks about God's role in the development of a child. Therefore, we can draw some ethical principles for how to think about reproductive technologies from what Scripture says about children.

Read Psalm 127:3–5 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 3. children are a heritage. These verses provide a biblical perspective on children. Solomon describes children as a gift or heritage. This means God has given children to parents as a blessing. They are not to be viewed as burdensome or difficult. While children certainly bring added responsibility, they must be viewed as a gift.

Verses 4. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior. Solomon provides a military analogy to describe children. They are like arrows. A warrior launches his arrows in front of him. Just like a warrior, parents launch their children into the future. The goal is to shape those arrows so they will fly straight and do exactly what the warrior intends for them to do.

Verse 5. He shall not be put to shame . . . in the gate. In an ancient city, the gate was where people went to do business. This was also where you would confront someone with legal or civil matters. If someone in your family had done something wrong, you would probably find out about it there. Solomon describes a proud father at the gate because he is not ashamed. The properly shaped and launched arrows bring blessing, not shame.

Discussion Question

How do most people in American society view children? Are they considered a blessing or a burden?

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now give the group a brief overview of two ethical dilemmas: (1) destroying fertilized human eggs; (2) involving people beyond the married couple as part of the conception and birth process.

Read Psalm 139:13–16 out loud.

Studying the Passage

As noted earlier, the Bible doesn't say anything directly about reproductive technologies. At the same time, Psalm 139 provides ethical principles that guide believers as they make decisions about reproductive technologies.

Verse 13. You formed my inward parts. David used figurative language in this psalm to describe the development of a child in the womb. God is directly involved in the creation of human life. **You knitted me together in my mother's womb.** Just as a person might weave a blanket or a piece of clothing, God weaves a human body. These words give a concrete image to the readers of this psalm. The one who is the weaver controls the design, size, and shape of the cloth he is weaving. In the same way, God controls the development and end result of a baby forming in the womb.

Verse 14. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Recognizing God's role in his life, David responded to what he had just written by describing how he was made. The body God creates is both fearful and wonderful. When David describes himself as "fearfully . . . made," he does not mean his body is scary or terrifying. The sense of the Hebrew word here is reverence or awe. Therefore, we could view this as David believing God created an awesome body. In fact, when we study biology and see all the intricacies of the human body, we truly recognize how awesome God's design is.

David also describes his body as "wonderfully made." He describes something extraordinary or distinguished. Human life is a unique part of God's creation. Only humans are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26–27). This is what sets us apart from the rest of creation.

Verse 15. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being made in secret. David continued to describe God's role in the creation of human life, but his focus moved to God's knowledge. In David's day, the development of a child in the womb was a mystery. They did not have sonogram technology to see a child developing, yet he understood that God saw the child even in the secrecy of the womb. Now that we have such technology, we still recognize the miraculous nature of the development of human life. Although the womb is not nearly as secret now, life is still "fearfully and wonderfully made" (v. 14).

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on what can be seen in sonogram pictures and relate that to the description in Psalm 139:13–15.

Verse 16. In Your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me. After David described God's role in the creation of life, he made a statement about God's knowledge of a person. God knew everything David would do before he was ever born.

God does not consider a baby in the womb to be any different from the full-grown adult. From God's perspective, King David and unborn David were the same. David could say this about God because one of God's characteristics is omniscience: God knows everything. Nothing happens without His knowledge. This is even true when fertilized eggs are created through reproductive technologies. Those tiny fertilized eggs are humans God knows.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to these questions: What does God know about our lives before we are ever born? What does it mean for God to be omniscient?

Discussion Question

Since God is so involved in the development of human life in the womb, what concerns should we have with reproductive technologies?

On Your Own

In the space below, write a prayer of thanksgiving for God's role in creating you.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the Real-Life Scenario near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: “In our last session I made a commitment to. . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . .”

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Many reproductive technologies bypass aspects of the natural reproductive process in order to bring about conception. Sometimes this is due to illness or an unknown factor that has left some people incapable of conceiving on their own. Reproductive technologies employed in ways consistent with Scripture can help many married believers have children who otherwise would not. However, some reproductive technologies cause serious ethical dilemmas. Here are two of the most troubling.

The first ethical dilemma relates to the formation of children who may not ever be given a chance to live. When human eggs are fertilized outside the womb in a lab setting, there are usually many more fertilized eggs than the couple wants to have injected into the woman's uterus. As a result, those eggs are frozen. Sometimes they are thawed out and injected into her uterus, but other times discarded. Since life begins at conception, those unused or frozen fertilized eggs are human beings. To discard them or treat them as just a lump of tissue is not worthy of someone who is fearfully and wonderfully made.

Another ethical dilemma for reproductive technologies relates to the marriage bond. Some technologies can employ the use of donors for eggs or sperm. Surrogacy can use a woman who is not the biological mother to carry the child and then give her back to the biological parents at birth. In these cases, a third (and even fourth or fifth) person has been brought into the relationship for the purpose of conceiving and/or giving birth to a child. Since God designed that conception and childbirth take place within the context of marriage (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:24), using donor sperm and eggs or a surrogate would seem to violate God's design for marriage.

We have a tendency to adopt technology simply because it is available, but we need to think about the ethical issues related to technology before we use it. In this case, any reproductive technology that results in life being destroyed or in violating God's design for marriage is not something Christ followers should participate in.

Follow up Question

What is God's role in the formation of human life?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.