

Birth Control and Its Influence on Faith, Family and Fertility

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In his excellent book *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, author Scott B. Rae introduces the issue of birth control saying, “the consensus among most religious believers and the culture at large is that birth control is not only acceptable but desirable.”¹ This may be true in the majority of today’s western culture; however, there is a growing segment both in and outside the Church asking new questions about this issue, challenging certain birth control methods, their risks to women’s health and the unbiblical beliefs resulting from birth control. Richard R. Hammar, in his substantive book *Pastor, Church and Law* establishes the importance of the Church’s role in responding to cultural issues and avoiding liability. We will look at how historic cases including Roe v Wade have impacted this issue and how current court cases involving birth control mandates impact religious liberty. Now is an opportune time for the Church to take a fresh look at the issue of birth control and its widening impact on faith, family and fertility worldwide. In this paper we will address each of these areas in light of theology and hard and soft sciences, bringing new insights to an important topic.

What is Birth Control?

Birth control simply stated is any method to prevent pregnancy. There are many different methods of birth control including condoms, IUDs, birth control pills, the rhythm method, vasectomy, and tubal ligation.² Most of these methods are fairly common; however, the rhythm method is considered outdated and there is a successful method used in its place called NFP, or Natural Family Planning. To better understand the premise of birth control, it will be helpful to

¹ Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan Academics, 2018), 334.

² Web MD Birth Control Health Center, *Birth Control Overview*
<https://www.webmd.com/sex/birth-control/default.htm>

define a few words, beginning with the words *birth* and *control*. Words help us derive meaning and create a culture - a way of thinking. The word birth means the time when a baby comes out of its mother's body.³ Simple right? Currently the Merriam Webster dictionary actually uses the word *parent*, rather than *mother* as if to imply a father (transgender) can have a child. Words matter. The word control means to order, limit, or rule something, or someone's actions or behavior.⁴ Birth control means to prevent a pregnancy, so what system in our body is mainly involved in a pregnancy? The reproductive system! Reproductive health is a very popular phrase in today's culture, yet it too is misleading. Most often it is used to hide the deadly reality of abortion, which is another form of "birth control" used worldwide, even though abortion does not prevent a pregnancy. Every 30 seconds a baby is killed by abortion in the US and since Roe vs Wade was passed in 1973, 58.5 million babies' lives have been lost in the U.S.⁵ According to the World Health Organization, there are 40-50 million abortions worldwide every year. According to the National Institute of Health, the official definition of reproductive health is, "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. It refers to the condition of male and female reproductive systems during all life stages."⁶ According to science then, there are only two reproductive systems in the world: male and female. Pregnancy that doesn't require intervention involves the life-giving union, often called the one flesh union or sexual intercourse, then genetic fusion of these two reproductive systems

³ Cambridge Dictionary, s.v."birth," <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/birth>, accessed April 4th, 2020.

⁴ Cambridge Dictionary, s.v."control," <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/control?q=Control>, accessed April 4th, 2020.

⁵ "Abortion Stats," Life Issues Institute, last modified July 2015. <https://www.lifeissues.org/abortion-stats/>.

⁶ "Reproductive health," National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, accessed May 5th, 2020. <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/conditions/repro-health/index.cfm>

through their life-giving powers in the sperm and egg to create another unrepeatable soul who will live forever. Amazing and clarifying in this confused age. It is also important to note that when a pregnancy occurs, there is an absence of disease and complete physical, mental and social well-being. In other words, the systems are working as designed.

Let us continue with a few more helpful definitions. The word fertility is the ability to have babies or to reproduce; the state of being fertile. The Latin root word is fertilis, “bearing in abundance or fruitful,” from ferre, “to bear”.⁷ If someone has trouble becoming pregnant using their own reproductive system, we call it infertility. Fertile soil, for example, is necessary for any plant to thrive and if you remember George Washington Carver, one of my personal favorites, he helped save the south by insightfully managing crops so the soil would be life-giving. Fertility is key to human existence and yet, it was not until I had already given birth to five children that I really paid attention to the word. I also had miscarriages, yet even then, it was not a common term I used with my friends, family or pastors. I am a pro-life, Bible believing woman who was raised in a healthy, vibrant, missional church. I was lovingly trained starting in Sunday school, knew the key themes and theology of the Bible, studied apologetics with my senior pastor as I went through confirmation and was determined to go into ministry at 15 years of age. In other words, I had a positive experience with my faith that was wholistic and one of many reasons I love the church. Yet, I do not remember once hearing about human relationships or sexuality in terms of fertility and even in pre-marriage counseling with my husband, nor do I remember addressing fertility except to hear the pastor say, “well what are you going to do about children?”

⁷ Vocabulary.com, s.v. “fertility,” accessed May 5th, 2020, <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/fertility>

Most people use some sort of birth control and the Pill seems popular”. He advised us to check with our doctor which was how he was trained, so it made sense. He was, by the way, an amazing pastor.

I sensed the Lord leading me to consider allowing Him to providentially lead in the realm of procreation. I did think of Jesus’ mother Mary, (who gets too little press in the Evangelical world) and her willingness to receive life in what would be called a crisis pregnancy today. A decision of great cost and immense import. The key word that struck me in my processing with Him was control. Control? Did I really have control over life? Or if I had a choice, what did that mean? I understood I had free will, yet I wanted my will bent in submission and in union with my Lord. Meeting my one and only boyfriend, Greg Abbott, in Bible school in Europe was such a surprise and I was elated with God’s plan for my love life. I also trusted Him as the author of life so, after praying and seeking, I asked Greg to consider the idea, knowing this was a big decision for him as well. At the time we did not know anyone thinking this way and it was going to be a big leap of faith. Greg decided after prayer he too thought it was the Lord’s leading, and even though neither of us saw an angel (still asking), to this day we are grateful for God’s direction. This one key decision opened the door to a variety of pregnancy stories, miscarriages and faith building scenarios. If you ask how I managed all God has asked me to do in my life with family and ministry, I can say without a doubt this decision and having a lot of children trained me and stretched me beyond any other experience. Our five grown children and soon to be 10 grandchildren are our greatest joy and have been a key way God has taught us about living a life of faith like nothing else. We have seen God’s provision and grace only grow with each child. We have seen God reveal His view of children, family, and faith through our story and,

more importantly, through His Word. The Bible actually speaks about fertility a lot, so let's take a look.

For This Cause

Starting in Genesis chapters 1-2 we see the beginning, creation, where God creates beauty and order out of chaos and provides everything needed to sustain ongoing life. He designed a 100 percent life-giving environment from plant and animal life to people. The Kingdom of God is fruitful, not sterile, ever. There was no death, and everything designed had a reproduction plan. A glimpse of heaven revealed in Revelation 21:4 shows a place with no death, no sorrow, no loss. In the creation narrative, God places mankind, a male and a female person, at the center. In Genesis 1:26-28 it says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image according to our likeness; and let them rule over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. And God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" This first commission, as it is sometimes called, to rule and reign as vice regents on God's behalf is undisputed in the Church. The part that seems questioned in this mandate is the "be fruitful and multiply" section. What does the word fruit mean here? Is it merely a blessing or is it a commandment with a blessing? According to Jewish custom, this mitzvah (command) is considered the greatest. By having children, you increase the Divine presence, by not having children intentionally, one is called a murderer.⁸ Strong language for sure.

⁸ Anyeh Cirtron, "Be Fruitful and Multiply," Chabad.org, accessed May5th, 2020.
https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1005203/jewish/Be-Fruitful-and-Multiply.htm

The Hebrew word for fruit is the noun p'ri. The verb p'ru is be fruitful. Fruitful activity multiplies or adds to what already exists, producing more of something. Other derivatives from the word p'ri fruit are poriyoot -fertility, hafraya- fertilization and piron productivity.⁹ Think of productive as a person moving a project forward and think of reproduction as a way mankind moves the human project forward to accomplish His will. When God said be fruitful and multiply, His plan of a human family stewarding His earth and being part of His Kingdom plan necessitated a one flesh union between man and woman or the story is over. The first two created beings were handcrafted by God. Amazing! Then, through incredible design features fashioned by God, both men and women have a providential process called fertility that necessitates union (communion, wholeness, oneness) to be able to create, with God's help, other human beings made in God's image and in theirs as well! What a great idea! Other parts of creation include reproduction, but mankind is the only part of creation with an essence specifically linked to God's image and this is what makes us sacred and set apart from all the rest of creation. People are the centerpiece of His plan, not merely the last task of a work week of creating.

Another aspect of what makes us sacred is our unique ability to offer the gift of ourselves in the aforementioned union with another image bearer, sharing our life-giving ability and then the result is another life, another image! This is a picture of the Gospel and a depiction of the Trinity. Stanley Grenz in *The Moral Quest* says it this way, "Christians, repeatedly elevate love as representing the heart of the biblical vision of the human ethical ideal, an ideal which arises out of the dynamic of the divine life." He goes on to quote Gilbert Meilaender, "Our task is

⁹ Hebrew Word of the Day, Jerusalem Prayer Team 2020, accessed May 6th, 2020.
<https://hebrew.jerusalemprayerteam.org/be-fruitful-and-multiply/>

nothing less than this: to achieve within human life the love that is a dim reflection of the life of God. In the Triune God-Father as initiating ground, Son as co-equal respondent, and Spirit as the mutual bond which springs from their giving and receiving-we have a picture of love.”¹⁰ The one flesh union and resulting children are a picture on display of the Triune God and part of God’s bigger plan, or ‘cause’ for making people in the first place. In Genesis chapter 2, after God makes the first male, He fashions the first female, then He brings “the helper” to the man. The man shares a poem (bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh) and names the female, ‘woman’, and then it says this in vs 24, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” So, what is the cause? Jesus refers to this cause in Matthew 19:4-6 in response to the Pharisees asking about divorce. He reminds them of the original design in creation, “Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female. and he goes on to say, ‘For this cause, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh’? Consequently, they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” Jesus confirms and clarifies the cause, the reason God made a male and female, both equally valuable and both exhibiting natures as glimpses of God Himself as image bearers. The cause is marriage and family, where they will become one. Marriage, a picture of Christ and the Church on display and the natural and supernatural fruitful outworking of Christ and His bride the Church, offspring! New life, a picture of the Gospel at work! Having children and placing them in a family is a picture of the very focus of the Church which is sharing the Gospel and making disciples. God’s Kingdom is a Kingdom of life, not death. He gives us images and made us image-bearers to proclaim His truth, eternally. Sadly, His church, His bride, lives in a culture of

¹⁰ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pg 278.

death due to sin, where children are now not seen as a gift. Children are abused, discarded, abandoned and not cared for. Some would argue this is due to the wrong people having children. I contend it is due to an unbiblical view of children, which if rightly ordered would change the culture completely. It starts with our own views in the Church and how we value, or don't value, our ability to even procreate children! The person in the church who most values her fertility is the woman who cannot biologically have children. To her it is the most prized gift of all. What happened? Why do we not see the power of this gift? My goal here is not to insist every family have dozens of children by the way. My goal is not focused on numbers at all but on attitudes, beliefs and practices that have diminished our gift of being fruitful. Too easily Christians have adjusted our thinking based on the culture, not on divine insight or theology.

Most scholars and theologians agree our purpose in this life is to love God and love others by advancing God's Kingdom plan, which according to God's instructions necessitates being fruitful and multiplying. Can this include other acts besides the one flesh union? Yes, indeed, we are to be fruitful in all aspects of our being: physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual. We are designed to be whole and to grow into maturity in all aspects (Col. 1:29).

Partnership With God

Let us further our consideration of birth control by considering another popular term in the culture, "pro-choice", which really means pro-abortion in most cases. God is for choice, in fact He gave us free will, an extravagant and risky gift that God gives to all human beings. Free will means the freedom of humans to make choices that are not determined by prior causes or by divine intervention.¹¹ Synonyms include independence, self-determination or self-sufficiency.

¹¹ Merriam Webster Dictionary, s.v."free will," accessed April 4th, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/free%20will>

Fertility, the ability to procreate another unrepeatable soul with the union of another, is a gift from God that He gives us, and while it may be biological, we do have a choice about what to do with it. Some in the Church, by their actions, seem to conclude humans alone are responsible for fertility decisions now that God has given us this incredible gift of fertility and free will. They see it as an issue similar to other areas where liberty and knowledge bring freedom to choose what works for each person. For instance, when to go to college, or what job to take, who to love or when to marry.

Proverbs is replete with encouragements to pursue wisdom and to make good decisions. Yes, it is our responsibility to walk out our faith and to grow into maturity. In the previously mentioned milestones; however, one would hope that a mature believer would seek God's leading and guidance at each step knowing a man makes his plans, but the Lord directs his steps (Proverbs 16:9). In making life decisions, we seek wisdom, weigh the facts, prayerfully consider our own story and trust God to lead us. When scripture is clear about something like fornication or adultery, we do not have to even process this way because we know God is against it. It is almost easier to have the don't rather than the do, such as the beatitudes. When God placed man in the garden, He gave him thousands of "yes" options and one "no"; don't eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Pretty basic, pretty clear, but really difficult apparently. He also told man and woman, "be" what I made you to "be" - fruitful.

This positive directive does bring with it choice. We do get to partner with the God of all creation in pro-creation. I contend that the choices of when, with whom and how often we choose to engage in the one flesh union is more powerful and more important than any other choice outside of our decision to follow Christ. Why? Because another human being, an unrepeatable soul who will live forever, is the natural result. This is the most power we have as

humans. Yes, it is pleasurable by God's design and a very special aspect in marriage. Outside of marriage, however, the pleasure aspect is all that is focused on, and offspring (the natural life-giving fruit) are avoided and even killed making the act sterile, selfish and dangerous. In marriage, it is only one part of becoming one but we cannot forget it has the potential of being the most amazing miracle we are engaged in as human beings. Being in ministry is an amazing calling but is less profound than parenting as far as influence. For some, a corporate job is exciting but does not compare. Being in the Olympics, cool for sure. What is your bucket list of to-dos? Will any last for eternity? The only things we do here that will live on forever is loving others (love is the divine language spoken in heaven) and the human children we bring into the world physically and the spiritual children we love as a result of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The 'picture' or image of male and female, marriage, and children and the care and nurture of each aspect of the prescription called family is important for us to grasp as the first church and the place we should be the most fruitful and living out our beliefs, led by the fruit of the Spirit.

God's role in each aspect of this life-giving story never stops. Interestingly, in Acts 17:24-29 we gain some important insight. Paul is proclaiming to the men of Athens, who had on one of their man-made alters this inscription: An Unknown God. He says to them,

"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things. And He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him

we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.' Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold, or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man."

We learn from this passage that God maintains His role as the Author of life even after creation. If we can grasp this reality even in what seems to be under our control, it will help us humbly bring our choices before our Creator rather than assume they are our choices alone.

Fruitful and Life-Giving

As human beings, we are individually and collectively the image of God. What precious, powerful words and if we understand this includes being life-giving and life-bearing, we will not take lightly the gift of being fruitful and multiplying. In addition to these thoughts, one more story might be helpful before we look at how the Church historically viewed this gift. In Genesis chapter 8 God says to Noah in vs 17 after the flood and the earth was dry, "Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." As if to bring more clarity, in chapter 9:1 it says, "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply'" and adds "and fill the earth." Again, adding another key emphasis in vs 7 He says, "And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it." Sounds like He is serious about procreation. He then goes on to covenant with mankind to promise to never again flood the earth to destroy it and mankind. It seems clear God wanted Noah to understand being fruitful and multiplying was more than simply a positive idea, it was a necessary assignment as part of keeping His plans moving forward for life on earth, both in its present form and in the new earth that is to come. People, and lots of them, are part of His Kingdom plan. Author Rae, commenting on the original mandate to fill the earth states that "this

mandate has been filled many times over”.¹² I wonder how he knows this? By whose count? He also states that, “nowhere does the Bible prohibit the use of birth control. He gives as the only example of birth control in the Bible, the sin of Onan in Genesis 38:9-10 using coitus interruptus, refusing to fulfill his role as the kinsman redeemer.”¹³ This often-cited story does reveal how seriously God takes family formation, caring for widows, the power of procreation and more. However, is this one example of so-called birth control, a negative picture, to be the sole foundation for our theology about life, being fruitful and multiplying? Or, as I contend, should we consider the positive, proactive, and powerful nature of human beings acting life-giving and fruitful, like our God, to determine our theology? When we look at the context of biblical times, we can agree that children were always a form of blessing, a “wanted” part of every family, while the pain and heartache for women who were infertile is cited throughout scripture, revealing God’s heart towards life. The Jewish culture is not the only culture that traditionally valued children. Let us look at how the Church viewed both children and birth control historically.

Historical Perspectives

In her series of articles titled *Why Evangelicals Should Rethink Embrace of Contraception*, author Julie Roys says, “Historically, opposing birth control has not been a Catholic thing. It’s been a Christian thing.” As late as 1908, Anglican church leaders officially resolved that “the use of all artificial means” of birth control should be discouraged. They added that contraception corrupted character and was “hostile to national welfare.”¹⁴

¹² Rae, *Moral Choices*, 335.

¹³ Rae, *Moral Choices*, 334.

¹⁴ Julie Roys, “Why Evangelicals Should Rethink Embrace of Contraception, Part One,” Stream.org, July 25, 2018, <https://stream.org/why-evangelicals-should-rethink-their-embrace-of-contraception-part-one/>

Yet in 1930, Anglicans reversed course and became the first church to condone birth control. As author and scholar Allan C. Carlson said in an interview, the impetus for this change was not spiritual, but pragmatic. Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger had recruited Anglican pastors and convinced many to embrace eugenics, or “controlled breeding.” The American Eugenics Society even sponsored a “Eugenics Sermon Contest” with cash prizes for the best sermons.¹⁵ Roys makes the case that Evangelicals officially opposed birth control until Billy Graham, in 1959 commented, “he found nothing in the Bible which would forbid birth control.”¹⁶ At this same time, many Evangelicals were being influenced by concerns with overpopulation. Graham stated, “I do believe that some form of birth control is necessary in Asia, Japan, Africa, and other nations where population explosions are threatened.” Christianity Today led the way in reporting on the Draper Report, suggesting it was time to consider sex apart from pro-creation. Paul Ehrlich’s famous *Population Bomb*, the best-selling book predicting mass starvation and over population (which has been debunked by reality) impacted many in the Church and still does today.¹⁷ To be clear, Billy Graham is one of my heroes. He was an evangelist and not a scholar or theologian specifically on this topic. He led the way in building bridges in both race relations and with his Catholic brothers and sisters, who today would disagree with his views.

¹⁵ Julie Roys, and Allan Carlson, “Why Evangelicals Only Recently Came to Accept Contraception,” Julieroys.com, March 24, 2015. <https://julieroys.com/and-interview-with-allan-carlson-why-evangelicals-only-recently-came-to-accept-contraception/>

¹⁶ Google. “Dr. Graham’s View on Birth Control,” The Age Newspaper, page 4, December 15, 1959. <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1300&dat=19591216&id=qqUUAAAIBAJ&sjid=Sq8DAAAIBAJ&pg=2198,2609634>

¹⁷ Roys. “Rethink Embrace of Contraception.”

What did the Founding Fathers think? One author quotes Martin Luther's views and asks why Protestants so quickly follow him regarding Sola Fide and Sola Scriptura, but do not embrace his following comments about birth control:

This is a most disgraceful sin. It is far more atrocious than incest and adultery. We call it unchastity, yes a Sodomitic sin. For Onan goes into her; that is he lies with her and copulates, and when it comes to the point of insemination, spills the semen, lest the woman conceive. Surely at such a time the order of nature established by God in procreation should be followed. Accordingly, it was a most disgraceful crime to produce semen and excite the woman, and to frustrate her at that very moment.¹⁸

According to Roys, John Calvin had similar views.¹⁹ The early church held this position for thousands of years and Father St. Clement of Alexandria wrote similar comments. John Chrysostom lamented that some couples viewed children "as grievous and unwelcome" due to greed.²⁰

Cultural and Legal Influences

There are many more examples but for the sake of brevity, we can conclude it seems the Church followed the culture in some respects regarding their views about birth control and family formation. Along with overpopulation concerns, there were other issues and voices influencing the Church, but none as influential as Margaret Sanger. Sanger, founded the American Birth Control League, now called Planned Parenthood. She was a Eugenicist, who boldly proclaimed

¹⁸ Faith and Reason, "Martin Luther and Contraception: The Protestant Flip Flop," FathandReasonca.wordpress.com, March 15, 2012.

<https://faithandreasonca.wordpress.com/2012/03/15/martin-luther-and-contraception/>

¹⁹ Karen Edmisten, "Calvin's Contraception Contradiction," Catholic Answers, Sept 1, 2002,

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/calvins-contraception-contradiction>

²⁰ Roys. "Rethink Embrace of Contraception."

“more children for the fit, less for the unfit, that is the chief issue of birth control.” She was America’s leading proponent of limiting the number of children born to those she considered “irresponsible breeders, Slavs, Italians, Blacks, Latinos and Jews.”²¹

Sanger shaped the eugenics movement in America and beyond in the 1930s and 1940s. Her views and those of her peers in the movement contributed to compulsory sterilization laws in 30 U.S. states that resulted in more than 60,000 sterilizations of vulnerable people, including people she considered "feeble-minded", "idiots" and "morons".

In a letter to Clarence Gable in 1939, Sanger wrote: "We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population, and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members" (Margaret Sanger commenting on the 'Negro Project' in a letter to Gamble, Dec. 10, 1939). Here are just a few more of her outrageous comments:

“Birth control must lead ultimately to a cleaner race.” “Our failure to segregate morons who are increasing and multiplying ... demonstrates our foolhardy and extravagant sentimentalism “... “The undeniably feeble-minded should, indeed, not only be discouraged but prevented from propagating their kind.” “The third group [of society] are those irresponsible and reckless ones having little regard for the consequences of their acts, or whose religious scruples prevent their exercising control over their numbers. Many of this group are diseased, feeble-minded, and are of the pauper element dependent upon the normal and fit members of society for their support.

²¹ George J. Marlin, “Margaret Sanger: Abortion is Dangerous and Vicious,” The Catholic Thing, December 14, 2011. <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2011/12/14/margaret-sanger-abortion-is-dangerous-and-vicious/>

There is no doubt in the minds of all thinking people that the procreation of this group should be stopped.” “The marriage bed is the most degenerative influence in the social order...”²²

She is talking about some in the Church and God’s design for marriage and family in these last two quotes.

What else has taken place in the culture to influence the church? Let us look at the 1950’s and you can see what social scientists might describe as a healthy environment for family, fertility and faith. If you look at fertility- live birth rates in the U.S. were (3.5)²³, global rates were 4.7 live births (compared to 2.4 in 2017) and in the US today they are at a low of 1.79.²⁴ We need 2.1 for replacement levels. Marriage rates reveal 65% of women were married in 1950, the 2nd highest, only 1920 was higher at 92.3%, Sadly and not without consequences to the family itself, only 31% of women are married now, the lowest this rate has ever been. The very low divorce rates in the 50’s protected children (11% of kids in the 50’s parents divorced compared to close to 50% in the 70’s)²⁵. So, what changed? The 60’s sexual revolution played a major role, which we will address, along with other influences such as no-fault divorce. Fifty one years ago this summer in 1969, California Governor Ronald Reagan signed the first no-fault divorce statute into law. Since then, all states have enacted similar legislation. Despite early applause from lawmakers that these laws would serve couples, they have negatively altered the

²² Gerard M. Nadal, “Margaret Sanger In Her Own Words,” Coming Home, Dec 30, 2009.

<https://gerardnadal.com/2009/12/30/margaret-sanger-in-her-own-words/>

²³ Our World in Data, “Total fertility rate, including UN projections through 2100”, accessed May 7, 2020.

<https://ourworldindata.org/search?q=1950+fertility+rates+in+the+US>.

²⁴ Michael Nedelman, “Fertility Rates cut in half since 1950- but the population is still growing,” CNN Health, November 9, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/08/health/global-burden-disease-fertility-study/index.html>

²⁵ W. Bradford Wilcox, “The Evolution of Divorce,” National Affairs Spring 2020 Number 43.

<https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/the-evolution-of-divorce>

landscape of marriage and family in the United States and violated the U.S. Constitution.²⁶

There are many reasons why the sexual revolution took place. A strong case can be made that cultural affluence, materialism and increasing secularism over both the 1910-20s and 1960s-to-present fueled the loosening of our sexual values.²⁷ It was also made possible in part, by birth control made legal in 1965 when Planned Parenthood of Connecticut won the U.S. Supreme Court victory, *Griswold v. Connecticut*. This case completely rolled back state and local laws outlawing the use of contraception by married couples. Singles did find ways to access the Pill. Clinics required young single women to provide a note from their minister regarding the impending wedding date. If one thinks pragmatically, it makes sense the Pill would advance the revolution. It removed one of the biggest barriers to sex outside of marriage, a baby. Many people who did not follow the biblical teaching on marriage would happily take advantage of this so-called freedom. In the bigger picture, to be clear looking at the impact of the Pill, fertility going back to the 1800's shows a picture of falling birth rates. By 1850, the average was 7 births per woman, shrinking to 3.5 by 1900. Women were managing their fertility with natural means for spacing and not every woman was able to have a large family.²⁸ Rae makes this point when he says, "It appears that God has ordained limits on procreation that are biological in nature."²⁹ Many women still have large families, while some are not able to biologically have children at all. What is important to note about the Pill, the most popular form of birth control, is the attitude

²⁶ Beverly Willett, "What Fifty Years of No-Fault Divorce has Gotten Us," *Washington Examiner*, August 13, 2019. <https://freedomfaithandfamily.org/what-fifty-years-of-no-fault-divorce-has-gotten-us/>

²⁷ Glenn Stanton, "The Pill: Did It Cause the Sexual Revolution," July 6, 2010. <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/the-pill-did-it-cause-the-sexual-revolution>.

²⁸ Susan E. Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Woman, Fertility and Family Limitation in America*, 17601820, (U. of N.C. Press, 2009).

²⁹ Rae, *Moral Choices*, 335.

it helped create. Glenn Stanton, Vice President of Global Family Formation Studies for Focus on the Family writes,

“Even though women long knew how to limit their fertility, the Pill made (along with corresponding legal and cultural developments) the separation between sexuality and the possibility of babies nearly an inalienable right. The fact that a woman could be sexually active and virtually guaranteed (by medical science no less!) of *not* becoming pregnant had the effect of making her feel cheated when an unexpected pregnancy did happen”. He goes on to say about the pill that it had the “unintended consequence of dramatically boosting the rate of abortion, which spiked dramatically around 1968-70, well before 1973’s *Roe v Wade*. This was because of the growing sense of having a “right not to be pregnant” if a sexually active woman did not want to be. She could also face pressure toward abortion from her partner who did not want *his* sexual partner hampered by pregnancy. The Pill was expected to actually reduce abortion by reducing unwanted pregnancies.”³⁰

It was this pressure in the culture, created by this expectation that drove the zeal for *Roe v Wade*. In this landmark case, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Texas statute banning abortion, effectively legalizing the procedure across the United States. Prior to *Roe*, abortion had been illegal throughout much of the country since the 19th century. *Roe v Wade* changed the landscape forever in the United States and yet, most Bible believing churches still maintain that abortion is wrong, because it is ending a life. It does not matter what the court says, Christians still fight this law to this day and are making serious inroads in weakening the pro-choice position and tearing at the fabric of *Roe v Wade*, which many consider a weak ruling. We see in this brief history, women went from naturally accepting that the one flesh union would result in

³⁰ Stanton , “The Pill”.

children, to demanding that the one flesh union not produce children, and when it did, demanded the right to kill their children. This sounds like a story we might find in scripture where parents sacrificed their children to false gods. Isn't this horrific and unholy result something we need to push back on? It is clear the messaging began with birth control which created a need for abortion. Thankfully there are some Christians who are questioning the mindset behind the Pill or other forms of birth control today and even more are raising questions due to health concerns, now that we have decades of outcomes and research showing that birth control is not what it claims to be. Given that birth control has such a big impact on people's overall view of life, fertility, children, and family, surely theologians would have seriously grappled with such a big issue impacting the Church over the last decades. Sadly, that does not seem to be the case historically, but that may be changing. The Rev. R. Albert Mohler Jr. President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary responded to a growing unease over contraception recently,

“For evangelicals, everything changed with the advent of The Pill. And evangelical acceptance of the oral contraceptives (and, beyond that, other forms of birth control) also happened without any adequate theological reflection. Today's generation of evangelicals is indeed reconsidering birth control, and theological concerns are driving that reconsideration.”³¹

Industrious Image Bearers

I volunteered for a Pregnancy Resource Center when I was pregnant with our second child, so I began to learn about Margaret Sanger and many others who framed children as “a problem” or “unplanned”, or “unwanted”. In making their determination, many children were

³¹ R. Albert Mohler Jr., “The evangelical unease over contraception,” Religion News Service, January 8, 2014. , https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/al-mohler-responds-the-evangelical-unease-overcontraception/2014/01/08/8732aa26-78a9-11e3-a647-a19deaf575b3_story.html

killed by abortion. Children, even in the Church seemed to some, to be a problem, or an inconvenience. Even in the most innocent moment, some joked mistakenly that a certain child of theirs was an “accident”. First of all, if the one flesh union takes place and you get pregnant, things are working normal. Second, “an accident” is not a good designation for any child and I believe actually affects the child’s sense of self. And none of these designations comport with scripture. Even in the most desperate times in the narrative of scripture, children were always seen as a gift. God delighted to choose to bring forth life on planet earth for His Kingdom purposes for all of the Universe to see, and His chosen process includes: marital union between a man and a woman, conception, birth, childhood and adulthood - all pictures of Kingdom living and relationship with Him. He chose to send His one and only Son and utilized this process, dignifying and making it sacred. He tells us to become like children to enter His Kingdom and threatens anyone who harms a child with His wrath in Matt 18:1-14 ending with “Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.” Vs 3, “Truly I say to you unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as a child, he is the greatest in the kingdom.” Vs 5, “And whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.” I would love to hear a Gospel message using any of these verses!

Most Christians are familiar with the verses in Psalm 139 such as vs 13, “For Thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb, I will give thanks to Thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” This is a key verse revealing the value of all life, beginning at conception. Many verses declare the spiritual power envisioned in the first church called marriage and the outworking of two becoming one in every part of their life - children. Rather than triumphantly declaring the powerful and precious gift of life in children, the Church

has been too quiet responding to the message of the world as it trumpets the problem of too many children. All messages have outcomes. This reality can be seen in many aspects of our culture and one of the biggest examples is fertility rates. Countries worldwide have falling fertility rates. To some who believe we have too many people, this might sound like good news. If, however you understand economics, it is disastrous. Many countries are at the point their governments are actually paying people to have children. While at least ten wealthy countries have universal child benefit policies,³² some are specifically paying couples to have more children such as Sweden, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, Taiwan, Australia and others. Why? Well, who pays for pensions? Who supports Social Security for the elderly? Countries need birth rates at replacement level to sustain their economies and many are below that. Many have listened to a secular or materialist view of the world rather than a biblical view. If you study God's design for family, you realize immediately, children are not locusts who use up resources, they are in fact industrious additions to a healthy culture when they have freedom to become who God intended for their lifetime. Not only are countries missing out economically, many unique cultures and heritages are dying out due to the lack of children carrying on their legacy. With the overpopulation song played constantly for decades, people believed and complied. The problem is, we do not have an overpopulation problem. Let me ask a question: If you were assured you would have enough provision, grace and physical ability to have just the right amount of children for the story God is writing with you, would you choose differently? I have never heard anyone older say they wish they had less children, but continually hear the opposite.

³² Dylan Matthews, "Sweden pays parents for having kids- and it reaps huge benefits. Why doesn't the US?" Vox.com, May 23, 2016. <https://www.vox.com/2016/5/23/11440638/child-benefit-child-allowance>

It is not about numbers, it's about a posture of humility. I know many Christians who take their faith seriously and who indeed have submitted their family formation to the Lord and what a beautiful picture on display of faith, hope and love! Notice, I did not say how big their family is? It is not about numbers, it's about an attitude of humility and allowing God to lead and guide. I will point out that one of the most amazing voices of our time, Celine Dion, who was the youngest of 14 children. Imagine not having her voice. Many times, when traveling and speaking I have brought up this subject, to the surprise of some people. I often only mention it briefly in light of my story and invariably I have women come up to me and say something like, "I perked up when you mentioned birth control, I have been bothered by something and sense I need to pray about it, or I knew I needed to be more open to life", or many similar comments. I am surprised how many times I get that response, even when I have only made a simple statement. I have also met quite a few babies as a result years later! The overwhelming comment is, "I'm so glad you said something, I have felt alone or didn't know who I could talk to." In the Church, this topic should not cause isolation. Isolation is the one thing God said was not good in Genesis!

Journalist Ruth Graham, in her article regarding young Christian's discomfort with birth control, senses a backlash against the contraceptive culture growing for a few years. She tells the story of a young couple who both grew up in the church, understood physical sexual expression was reserved for marriage, and after marrying began having kids. They also noticed no one in their church ever questioned the idea of contraception. They began to question the culture's view that couples needed many years of freedom before having kids and then once they do, only have a couple kids and then should be done. They also sensed a contraceptive mindset and others in her article sensed the same attitude, which caused them to want to investigate birth control

further. The younger couples were also concerned about the health risks involved, especially in the hormonal contraceptives such as the Pill.³³

Health Risks

I also have heard from many women both in and out of the Church who have concerns about the health risks of some forms of birth control, and they should be concerned. Let us look at some of the data. According to the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute, there is a 6-9% chance of pregnancy over a year with all hormonal contraceptives whether delivered in patches, pills, injections, IUD's or vaginal rings.³⁴ 17% of women who have abortions were taking hormonal contraception the month they became pregnant.³⁵ There are major and minor side effects when taking the Pill. They include: Blood clots in a heart artery causing heart attacks, blood clots in a brain artery causing stroke, blood clots in leg veins causing deep venous thrombosis which can break off from the legs and go to the lungs causing a fatal pulmonary embolism. Women with no conventional risk factors using the Pill had twice the risk of heart attack regardless of the duration of use. Women with hypertension had 5 times the risk of heart attack. Women who smoked had over 12 times the risk of heart attack. Diabetes, 16 times and high cholesterol 23 times the risk of heart attack while using the Pill.³⁶ By meta-analysis of 16 studies, there is 3 times the risk of ischemic stroke in women using the Pill.³⁷ Women increase their risk of getting

³³ Ruth Graham, "Among young Christians, moral discomfort with birth control grows," Aljazeera America, Feb 4, 2015. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/2/4/some-young-evangelicals-forgo-birth-control.html>

³⁴ Effectiveness of family planning methods adapted from World Health Organization (WHO) Department of Reproductive Health and Research, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs (CCP). Knowledge for health project. Family planning: a global handbook for providers (2011 update). Baltimore, MD; Geneva, Switzerland: CCP and WHO; 2011; and Trussell J. Contraceptive failure in the United States. *Contraception* 2011;83:397-404.

³⁵ Guttmacher Institute. "Induced abortion in the United States," September 2019 Fact Sheet. https://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html.

³⁶ Tanis BC, et al. Oral contraceptives and the risk of myocardial infarction. *NEJM* 2001;345:1787-93.

³⁷ Gillum, LA. Ischemic stroke risk with oral contraceptives. *JAMA* July 5, 2000;284:72-78.

HIV infection by 60% compared to women not taking the pill.³⁸ Women taking the pill transmitted HIV to their partner twice as often and are twice as likely to get infected with HPV (which causes cervical cancer).³⁹ The Pill's link to breast cancer has been known for some time. Some of the major findings included in 2006 in a meta-analysis in the Mayo Clinic Proceedings showed a 44% increase risk of breast cancer in women who took the Pill before having a child.⁴⁰ I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Kahlenborn, whose work I just cited, when I first was introduced to the idea that contraception was not good for the overall health of women. It was around this same time I spoke to a nurse whose first patient was a young bride who had been rushed into the emergency room and had died from a heart attack. The only cause they determined in this otherwise very healthy young woman was the Pill she had been on for one month. The nurse was still devastated by this story and this is not the only story I have heard firsthand.

In 2009, a study showed a 320% increased risk of triple negative breast cancer in women on the Pill, which is the most difficult and deadly form of breast cancer to treat.⁴¹ Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death of women worldwide. North America has the highest incidence of breast cancer in the world with rates for non-invasive breast cancer (DCSIS) increasing 660 percent between 1973 and 2000.⁴² Remember what happened in 1973? *Roe v Wade*. Turns out that abortion is linked to breast cancer as well. With a complex array of causes

³⁸ Wang CC, et al. Risk of HIV infection in oral contraceptive pill users: a meta-analysis. *JAIDS* 1999; May 1 21(1):51-58.

³⁹ Franceschi S, et al. Genital warts and cervical neoplasia: an epidemiological study. *Br J Cancer* 1983;48:621-28.

⁴⁰ Kahlenborn C, et al. Oral contraceptive use as a risk factor for premenopausal breast cancer: A metaanalysis. 2006 *Mayo Clinic Proc* 2006;81(10):1290-1302.

⁴¹ Dolle J, et al. Risk factors for triple negative breast cancer in women under the age of 45. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* 2009;18(4):1157-65.

⁴² Breast Cancer Prevention Institute, "The Pill Kills,"2018. <https://www.bcpinstitute.org/brochure---the-pill-kills.html>.

of breast cancer for all women and the devastation it causes, we want to be careful to say all women are at risk in some way. It is important then to reduce risk whenever possible. One reason is the estrogen exposure for women and cancer vulnerable breast tissue being exposed for a longer duration.⁴³ This list can easily be added to, but the point should be clear, the Pill is dangerous for women.

You can find all the above risks on any package of birth control, or even if you pay attention to a TV commercial. What about minor effects? They include several things every bride dreams of: weight gain, headaches, mood changes, decreased libido, depression, hypertension, breast tenderness and more. So, what is happening? Toxins are going into a naturally healthy fertility system and diseasing it and confusing it. If the birth control does not prevent a pregnancy, some women choose to have an abortion. Many, more than one. Women face a number of possible physical complications as a result of abortion including hemorrhage requiring transfusion, perforation of the uterus, cardiac arrest, endotoxic shock, major unintended surgery, infection resulting in hospitalization, convulsions, undiagnosed ectopic (tubal) pregnancy, cervical laceration, uterine rupture, and death.⁴⁴ Women with multiple abortions have a higher incidence of miscarriage in later pregnancies and even with one abortion, there are many complications physically and the mental and emotional impact can last for decades.

Research published in the prestigious *Archives of General Psychiatry* acknowledges that many women experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after an abortion. In one of the longest-running studies conducted on women after abortion, researchers found over time, relief and positive emotions relating to the abortion declined and negative emotions increased. PTSD

⁴³ IBID

⁴⁴ Warren Hern, *Abortion Practice* (Bolder, Colorado: Alpenglo Graphics, 1990), 175-193.

symptoms include dreams or flashbacks to the abortion, a general numbing of responsiveness not present before the abortion, and difficulty falling asleep.⁴⁵ And again, why are we doing this? To prevent the live birth of a child already conceived, because of a view, a belief that this child will somehow make the life of the mother (or selfish boyfriend or upset parent) more difficult. I have experienced a front row seat to a family member who experienced a pregnancy and did not succumb to the pressure from the culture. Her baby has made her life, subsequent marriage, and adjusted view of the world better in every way. Why? By God's incredible design, a child is not the problem, but rather a blessing. Often, even in a challenging story, the child is the solution. Just look at Jesus. His conception, delivery and the beginning of His life brought challenge to reputations, but also brought redemption to the world. Ok, one normal child may not have this power, but he or she does have a special power.

Interestingly, when it comes to the leading cause of death for women, breast cancer, guess what is THE best prevention and ideal way to reduce a woman's risk? A full-term delivery of a baby and breast feeding! That's right. Having a baby saves a mother in a sense. After a full-term pregnancy, only fifteen per cent of her breast tissue remains susceptible to forming cancer.⁴⁶ It is the genetic changes that occur in the breast lobules during a full-term pregnancy that give lifelong protection.⁴⁷ I Timothy 2:15, "But women will be saved through childbearing" takes on a whole new meaning, doesn't it? For each pregnancy that she has after her first, her risk

⁴⁵ Brenda Major, PhD; Catherine Cozzarelli, PhD; M. Lynne Cooper, PhD; et al, *Psychological Responses of Women After First-Trimester Abortion*, Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2000;57(8):777-784. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.57.8.777.

⁴⁶ Russo J, Rivera R and Russo IH. Influence of age and parity on development of the human breast. *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment* 1992; 23: 211-8; Russo H, Yang, Russo. Chapter 1: developmental, cellular, and molecular basis of human breast cancer. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute Monograph* 2000; 27: 17-37.

⁴⁷ Russo J, Balogh GA and Russo IH. Full-term pregnancy induces a specific genomic signature in the human breast. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers, and Prevention* 2008 January; 17: 51-66; Verlinden I, Gungor N, Wouters K, Janssens J, Raus J and Michiels L. Parity-induced changes in global gene

of breast cancer will decrease another ten per cent!⁴⁸ The longer a woman delays childbearing, the higher her risk. For each year she delays pregnancy after age twenty, she has a five per cent increase in risk for premenopausal breast cancer and three per cent increase in risk for postmenopausal breast cancer.⁴⁹ It has been known for centuries that remaining childless increased a woman's risk for breast cancer. "In 1743, Ramazzini of Padua observed that there was an increased amount of breast cancer among nuns, and in 1842 Regioni Stern notes a threefold increase of breast cancer among nuns."⁵⁰ I am noticing a trend in Christian women deciding they do not want children. It concerns me for the above-mentioned outcomes as well as, in listening to their reasons, most include goals of freedom, traveling, career etc. which I can speak to personally, are going to disappoint in the end of her life. Some women cannot have a biological birth, and this is why adoption is such a redemptive option.

One other unusual risk from hormonal contraceptive needs a mention. A phenomenon highlighted in Psychology Today shows just how delicate and intertwined our reproductive design is. Most people in choosing a mate, show a preference for body odor that actually signals compatibility with potential mate's immune systems and even compatibility in child procreation and child rearing. Contraceptive pills apparently alter mate preferences so if a woman chooses a mate while on the Pill, and stops taking the Pill, according to several studies, she experiences

expression in the human mammary gland. *European Journal of Cancer Prevention* 2005 April; 14(2): 129-37.

⁴⁸ Lambe M, Hsieh C, Chan H, Ekblom A, Trichopoulos D and Adami H. Parity, age at first and last birth, and risk of breast cancer: a population study in Sweden. *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment* 1996 January; 38(3): 305-11.

⁴⁹ Clavel-Chapelon F and Gerber M. Reproductive factors and breast cancer risk: do they differ according to age at diagnosis? *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment* 2002 March; 72(2): 107-15.

⁵⁰ Angela Lanfranchi, M.D., *Breast Cancer Risks and Prevention 4th edition* (Piscataway, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Medical School), 110.

lower levels of sexual and relationship satisfaction and is more likely to get divorced. She may find herself attracted to the wrong guy on the Pill.⁵¹

If abortion and the Pill are so dangerous, why are they promoted so much even to young girls? How is it we cannot allow our kids to get an aspirin at school but most public schools will play a role in advocating for an abortion for underage girls? There are currently 2,000 school based clinics across the country and recently, five clinics in LA county celebrated a collaboration with Planned Parenthood. “Clinicians from PPLA will provide a range of sexual health services one day a week, including testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), emergency contraception and birth control counseling and provision, well-person exams, pregnancy testing, and pregnancy options counseling.” The Pill or other dangerous hormonal contraceptive will be pushed on girls, whose bodies are at the most risk for breast cancer if they start it before age 18, and who will be taken advantage of by men of all ages due to this fact.

Pregnancy options is code for abortion, and they will make sure she gets to a Planned Parenthood clinic with or without parental consent. The five clinics are expected to grow to 50 in the near future.

Recent research on girls taking oral contraceptives shows an increase in depression and other psychiatric symptoms and increased crying, eating problems and hypersomnia.⁵² The risk of breast cancer is serious and the longer a woman is on hormonal contraceptives, the greater the risk. Add this to depression and the increasing rates of teen suicide and this is not reproductive health in any way. I wonder, is it time for the Church to speak to these issues? How many girls in

⁵¹ Gurit E. Birnbaum, Ph.D., “Intimately Connected,” Psychology Today, Jan 5, 2019. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/intimately-connected/201901/do-contraceptive-pills-affect-attraction>

⁵² Pauline Anderson, “Oral Contraceptives Tied to Depressive, Psychiatric Symptoms in Teens ,” October 2019. <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/919328>.

youth groups are on the Pill? You might be surprised to know the percentage. I spoke recently with one regional leader in a denomination and he said it is very common to have several girls in each youth group. They know because all medications have to be turned in for camp and retreats even if it is due to other health issues such as acne. What legal liability, if any, will churches face when advising families on these issues? What ethical accountability should the Church assume?

The pressure to handout contraceptives in schools is only part of an agenda for so called family planning. The Affordable Care Act with its contraceptive mandate insists that various types of birth control be available to women through insurance. This was challenged in the *Burwell v Hobby Lobby* case. The Supreme Court granted a landmark victory for religious liberty on June 30, 2014, ruling that individuals do not lose their religious freedom when they open a family business. The court ruled 5-4 in favor of David and Barbara Green and their family business, Hobby Lobby, ruling they do not have to violate their faith or pay severe fines. At issue was the Health and Human Service (HHS) Mandate which would have required David and Barbara Green and their family business to provide and facilitate four potentially life terminating drugs and devices in their health insurance plan, against their religious convictions, or pay severe fines. The Greens argued that the mandate substantially burdened their religious beliefs in violation of a federal law, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.⁵³ It should be noted that Hobby Lobby covered many forms of birth control outside of the four that violated their religious beliefs. Not surprisingly, this case still infuriates people even today.⁵⁴ How dare anyone say no to contraceptives! It is strange and sad to see the shrill demonstrations of women

⁵³ Hobby Lobby Supreme Court Case Review and Frequently Asked Questions, accessed May 8, 2020. <https://newsroom.hobbylobby.com/hobby-lobby-case/>

⁵⁴ Linda Bill, "Protest at new Seattle Hobby Lobby State Lawmakers pledge to override this year's controversial Hobby Lobby ruling as a new store opens in North Seattle," King 5 TV, October 3, 2014. <https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/protest-at-new-seattle-hobby-lobby/281-246992020>

demanding the right to put toxins in their bodies, and yet you couldn't make them eat anything that wasn't clean, vegan or organic. I had the privilege of interviewing Steve Green about this case and he said the whole family (many generations) agreed together it was worth the financial risk to do the right thing. At one point that could have been \$475 million in fines annually according to the New York Times. The Green family has since taken the lead on building the Museum of the Bible, in record time, and it is fully paid for. They are a great example of the Church as a light on a hill. I wonder if the assignment to build this amazing museum was linked to their test of being willing to stand up for life?

There are many forms of hormonal birth control that are clearly dangerous. There is one natural method we need to mention briefly, as it is designed to work with our natural design and the knowledge it provides actually enhances relationships instead of putting them at risk: Natural Family Planning. As mentioned earlier, this is not the rhythm method. It is a method involving observation of biologic markers to identify fertile days in the woman's cycle and is at least 95% effective with proper use. It doesn't involve any unnatural toxins, improves communication between spouses, allows a woman to learn more about her overall health and has many other benefits.⁵⁵ New technology provides additional ways for women to use a phone app to track their ovulation, amazing when you think about it!⁵⁶ Technology used in the latest Ultrasound equipment has been a game changer for the Pro-life movement, freeing women to choose life. It is possible these new windows to the truth about our design may help make living in agreement

⁵⁵ Brian A. Smoley, "Natural Family Planning," American Family Physician, Nov 15, 2012. <https://www.aafp.org/afp/2012/1115/p924.html>.

⁵⁶ Sarah Bradley and Elizabeth Bacharach, "The 11 Best Period Tracker Apps, According to Ob-Gyns," Women's Health, Sept 20, 2019. <https://www.womenshealthmag.com/health/g26787041/best-period-tracking-apps/>

with our fertility easier, more exciting due to the knowledge we gain and make other forms of birth control unnecessary.

Healthy and Holy

This paper has attempted to address an important issue impacting both those inside and outside the Church: birth control. We have shown important connections between theology, science, legal issues and their impact on faith, family, and fertility. In every church there is someone needing guidance on the normal life issues that involve questions about marriage, family, children, parenting and so on. Pastors and leaders are in a unique position to help guide people to truth and in many cases prevent harm. A wholistic approach to teaching the truth about our life-giving ability – fertility, will result in healthier and holier choices by others. As leaders and teachers, the framing of issues is as important as the issues themselves. Birth control is an issue that must be carefully and theologically surmised. It is no longer possible to encourage young married couples to “just go on the Pill” given the dangers to them and potential liabilities it brings to pastors, leaders, and churches. There may not be lawsuits yet, but as new information comes to light, like everything else once deemed healthy that actually does damage, there may be. More importantly, it is vital we encourage a theologically balanced view of procreation in harmony with our King and His Kingdom and that is what is advocated for here.

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