

What does the Bible teach about birth control?

Scripture: 1 Timothy 5:14; Psalm 127:3–5; Exodus 21:22; Psalm 139:13–16

Code: QA114

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To begin with, we know God looks approvingly on the bearing of children. That is evident from Titus 2:3-5 and Paul's exhortation to young widows in 1 Timothy 5:14. Psalm 127:3-5 says children are gifts from God and the man who has many of them is blessed. A large family involves increased responsibility, but children raised in a godly way will influence the world for good and for God's glory.

Nevertheless, nothing in Scripture prohibits married couples from practicing birth control, either for a limited time to delay childbearing, or permanently when they have borne children and determine that their family is complete.

However, not all methods of birth control are acceptable. Abortion, perhaps the most widely used "birth control" method today, is tantamount to murder (cf. Exodus 21:22, where the killing of an unborn fetus is punishable by death). Psalm 139:13-16 clearly indicates fetal life is human life. Any form of birth control that destroys the fetus or fertilized ovum rather than preventing conception is therefore wrong.

Other methods of birth control, including non-abortive forms of the pill, condoms, and the common surgical procedures of tubal ligation or vasectomy, do not pose a problem biblically. If both spouses are persuaded in their consciences before God that they should have no more children, no Scripture prohibits them from carrying through with that decision.

In our viewpoint, birth control is biblically permissible. At the same time, couples should not practice birth control if it violates their consciences (Romans 14:23)--not because birth control is inherently sinful, but because it is always wrong to violate the conscience. The answer to a wrongly informed conscience is not to violate it, but rather to correct and rightly inform one's conscience with biblical truth.

For further study we recommend the following books:

- Franklin E. Payne, *Biblical and Medical Ethics* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1985).
 - Franklin E. Payne, *Making Biblical Decisions: Birth Control, Artificial Reproduction and Genetic Engineering* (Escondido, CA: Hosanna, 1989).
 - John and Paul Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1993).
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