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## BIRTH CONTROL

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### Part 1 of Religion Saves

Pastor Mark Driscoll | January 06, 2008

You're listening to Religion Saves and Nine Other Misconceptions, a sermon series in which Pastor Mark Driscoll answers nine controversial questions about Jesus and Christianity. The following is a presentation of Mars Hill Church in Seattle. For more audio and video content, please visit [marshillchurch.org](http://marshillchurch.org).

Well, howdy Mars Hill. You ready to get to work. This one will be wonderful. Tell you what we're gonna do tonight. We're gonna start our series, Religion Saves and Nine Other Misconceptions. Before we get to work, I – in addition to welcoming you, my name is Mark, welcome to Mars Hill. I want to give you some good news, we ended last year with some bad news, we're half a million dollars behind budget going into December. Pastor Jamie wanted to communicate an update to you, so here it is. It's all really good news, actually. The total giving for December was approximately \$450,000 over budget. Between December giving, year-end gifts, and reducing our expenses, we finished the year with an actual surplus, and no deficit, for the eleventh year in a row. So, we praise God for that.

This was a swing, he says, of roughly \$650,000 in four weeks. Our weekly budget for 2008 is about \$210,000 a week, and so we'd encourage you all to continue to giving faithfully. He wants to communicate on behalf of all the elders, and staff, and leaders here, thankfulness for your purse, your contributions, your faithfulness, and your generosity. And we will have a full financial report on the Pastors Blog, that's actually a new blog online at [marshillchurch.org](http://marshillchurch.org), in about a week. Our staff comes back to work this week. We'll have a full financial audit and summary report, for 2007, and that'll be available in about a week. But, just the good news is for the eleventh years in a row we beat budget and we're back on top. Mars Hill took a big shot, but it's got a good chance. So, we're just fine.

Here's where we're at with this series. Some time ago, I was preaching in 1 Corinthians, and that letter is a series of answers to questions that the people in the church at Corinth asked their Pastor Paul. And I thought, while preaching the book, it'll be interesting to get questions and answer them. So, we opened up a section of the [marshillchurch.org](http://marshillchurch.org) Website and we got 893 questions, over five-and-a-half thousand comments, and 343,000 votes. We narrowed the list down to the top nine questions, and they comprise the series that I will start this evening talking about the issue of birth control.

We will also hit humor next week. That's gonna be awesome. I'm bidding for a Mormon sacred undergarment on eBay; pray I win, so I can wear it. Additionally – you think I'm kidding – Predestination, What I Struggle with Christianity Most, What I Struggle with Christianity Most, How Do You Get Out of Sexual Sin, Faith Versus Works, Dating and Courtship, The Emergent Church, and then Issues Regarding Worship. So, those are the next nine weeks. If you'd like to know more about where it's going, you can go to [marshillchurch.org](http://marshillchurch.org).

So, I'll go ahead and pray and we'll get to work on birth control tonight. This is a sermon I am really excited to teach, because I must give an account before God for the people in this church and their view of God and marriage and gender and sexuality and children and life and parenting. We have hundreds of young couples. People getting married continually, thinking through this issue of birth control and family planning and contraception. And so, this is really a practical matter for us. I've read thousands and thousands and thousands of pages on this issue. And furthermore, I have for you tonight, literally, a 29-point sermon. So, we're going to cover a lot of ground, and then have a lovely breakfast buffet. So, I'll pray and it is good to have you and I'm glad to have you all with us this evening.

Father God, I thank you that you are a father, that the church is a family and that through Jesus we can be adopted by you into your family. Lord God, I thank you that you are the living God, that you are the author of life. I thank you that you made us male and female. You made marriage. You made sexuality. You made pleasure. You give children, and you give us wisdom, so that we might live our lives in a way that honor you and give us joy. So, God, as we examine what your word has to say tonight, we're asking you, Father, to instruct us as your children. We ask that you would send the Spirit to inform, and instruct, and convict, and regenerate us. And we ask, Lord Jesus, that all of this would be connected to you, because we love you. We love you, because you first loved us. And for that, we're glad, in your name. Amen.

I'll start by reading the question. Question Number 9 is this; there's no doubt the Bible says children are a blessing, but the Bible doesn't seem to address the specific topic of birth control. Is this a black and white topic, or does it fall under liberties? That is the question. I'll start with a story about me and my five children. I met my wife Grace at the age of 17, coming up on March 12; it will be the twentieth anniversary of our first date to my high school sweetheart. We have now, five children on the Earth. We had a miscarriage, so there's also one in heaven that we deeply miss. I have a two-year-old son; I have a four-year-old daughter, a six-year-old-son, an eight-year-old son, and a ten-year-old daughter. And I was with my children, maybe about a year ago at the store, and some woman in Seattle started counting my kids – it's weird how people do that – "One, two, three, four." I'm like, "There's five." And so, she starts counting my children, and then she started rebuking me in front of my children, for having my children.

And she's like, "Did you need to have all of those children," she just sort of launches in, "That's a lot of children." And I was like, "Hey, they're ears are little, but functional, you know. They know what you're saying. That's kind of mean." She says, "Well, I think the world is overpopulated." And I read a little bit, so I tried to reason with her. I said, "Well, you could fit everyone on the earth in the State of Texas, and everyone would have 1,700 square feet. There's room for more people. Have you been to Wyoming? There's only three guys there." You know, I think I'm cute, and she doesn't. And so, she says, "Well, people are starving to death and, you know, and they don't have enough resources." And I said, "You know actually there's enough food to feed everyone, its distribution that is the problem; wars and natural disasters, and evil dictators. That's our problem. I agree people need to get fed, but its distribution, not population, that really is the source of our trouble."

She keeps pushing, pushing, pushing. Eventually she says, "Don't you know what causes this," meaning the children. And I said, "Yes. You'll never need to worry about it though." She didn't think that was very nice. It wasn't my most Pastoral moment. So finally, she says, "Well, I just think there's too many people on this planet. We don't need any more." I said, "Then you're gonna need to find a new planet, because this one is ours." So, eventually she gave up and we left the store. And we got in the car and my kids are asking questions, like "Why do they hate kids in this city?" I said, "Because there's more dogs than children, and if I put tails on you guys, I'm sure they would love you." You know, that's the city we live in. That's just the way that it is.

So, when it comes to this issue of marriage, and sex, and children, and birth control, and all of that, I'm assuming that there is a wide divergence of opinion and lots of misunderstanding. And when it comes to Scripture, the Bible doesn't use words like birth control, contraception, or family planning. But, it does in principle; speak to those issues with a Christian worldview. It speaks of God, and life, and creation and gender, and marriage, and sexuality, and children. And principally, it establishes a worldview in which we can then come to particular decisions on bio, medical, ethical, issues, like birth control, by reasoning principally, to them. So, I have 16 truth statements that comprise a biblical worldview on this issue. I will move through them fairly quickly for the sake of brevity, and that will establish our biblical worldview, that we can proceed to then answer the question about birth control.

Truth Number 1; God is the creator and author of human life. We see this in Genesis. There were no people 'till God made them. God makes people and he is the author of life; he is the living God.

Truth Number 2; God made humanity in his image and likeness, which makes human life unique and sacred. God said, "Let us make man in our image," and then it goes on to say, "Male and female," he created them. And it says that he created us in his image and likeness. So, we're image bearers of God, that means human life is sacred. We have particular dignity, value, and worth. And human life is to be treated sacredly, because it bears the image of God.

Truth Number 3; God intends for human being to fill the earth. Genesis 1:28, God tells our first parents, "Be fruitful, multiply, increase in number; fill the earth." So, having people fill the earth is God's intent.

Additionally, truth Number 4; God authored that human life begins at conception, and declares that an unborn baby is a sacred life. We see this in places like Exodus 21 and such, but the Bible repeatedly says that a baby in the mother's womb, is an image bearer of God that is a human life, and it is worthy of protection. And we'll get into this further, near the end of the sermon, when we talk about the issue of abortion.

Additionally, truth Number 5; God knows us from our mother's womb. Jeremiah says that God chose him from his mother's womb. Job talks about being known from his mother's womb. The Psalmist says that we are fearfully and wonderfully knit together in our mother's womb; that God knows us from our mother's womb.

Truth Number 6; God declares that when human life has been taken without just cause, and by just cause I mean capital punishment, war, self-defense, those kind of things; the sin of murder has committed. That is one of the Ten Commandments. The killing of innocent life is a sin.

Additionally, God made humanity – truth Number 7 – to exercise dominion by ruling over creation. We see that in Genesis 1:26, God said to them be fruitful, multiply, increase in number; fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea," it's an issue of dominion. We're gonna have dominion over creation, our bodies, our fertility, our sexuality. We are to rule, as it were.

Truth Number 8; God made humanity to steward creation, by exercising discernment based upon natural revelation, conscience, the Holy Spirit, counsel, and most authoritatively, Scripture. So, we are stewards. We take our bodies, and our resources, and our finances, and our gifts, and talents, and treasures, and abilities, and we are to be stewards maximizing God's purposes on the earth with wisdom.

Truth Number 9; God made humanity male and female. Again, it says that in Genesis 1. "In the image of God, he created the male and female. He created them." Men and women are equal, but they're different.

Truth Number 10; God created marriage as a covenant for one man, one woman. We see again, in Genesis, God tells Adam, "It's not good for you to be alone," he makes Eve. He brings them together. He creates life. He creates a male and female. He brings a male and a female together to be married. Proverbs Chapter 2, Malachi Chapter 2, speak of marriage as a covenant. Matthew 19 and elsewhere, Jesus refers back to Genesis 1 and 2 saying, "That from the beginning, God wanted us to be married; one man to one woman," that is by definition, marriage.

It goes on. Number 11; God created sex as a gift only for married couples. If you are single you don't need birth control, you need self-control, right? You do. Some of you say, "But I can't stop." "You're not doing it now. Just keep that going."

Truth Number 12 – I’ll deal with that in a further sermon in this series, actually. God is sovereign over the womb and can ultimately open and close it as he wills. There are many examples in scripture where God opens and closes the womb. He allows barren elderly women, like Sarah, to have babies, and virgins like Mary – well, one virgin – Mary to have a baby. God can rule over the womb. He’s sovereign.

Truth Number 13; children are a blessing from God. Psalm 127 says, “Children are a blessing, and they are to be provided for,” and this burden falls primarily on the man as the head of the home. 1 Timothy 5:8, “Any man that does not provide for the needs of his family is denied the faith, and he’s worse than an unbeliever.” So, dead-beat dads who don’t feed their kids and avoid their responsibilities, they are wicked men, and if they claim to be Christians, they’re hypocrites.

Additionally, that would include the caring of children who are adopted. Christians are pro-adoption. Jesus was adopted by Joseph. To be a Christian means that God is your father, and he has adopted you into his family, the church. Christians are absolutely pro-adoption.

Truth Number 14; God desires that Christians raise up Godly offspring. It says this in Malachi 2:15, if you’re a Christian couple and you have a baby; God wants you to tell that kid about Jesus, and study the Bible with and pray with that child, so that your children would love Jesus, and their children, your grandchildren, would love Jesus, and that’s God’s intent.

Truth Number 15; God commands that his people lovingly help to care for widows and orphans. James 1:27 says that true religion is to care for widows, orphans, and those in need. So, foster care kids; Christians should be concerned about them and involved in serving them. Single moms, widows, as well, are people who God would command that Christians who love Jesus love them, and tell them that Jesus is loving them through us.

And Truth Number 16; God expects single people who are not parents to also help raise children, in addition to their parents and grandparents. Jesus was a single man. Children were brought to him, he loved them, he blessed them, he counseled them, and though he was single, he helped to raise children. And some of you are not parents, but you’re still actively involved and very important in the raising of children. You work in the nursery. You’re a nanny. You’re a schoolteacher. You’re a nurse, or a doctor, or a coach. You’re a big brother, big sister, an aunt, an uncle. You’re involved with relationships that include families that have children, and by being involved in their life, you love those children and help to speak into their life.

So, even if you are single, children, by virtue of being part of a church family, are additionally your responsibility. Not to the same degree as the parents, but you have a wonderful opportunity to help to raise the children as well, to some degree. This is the culmination of what I will call a Biblical worldview about God and life and creation and gender and marriage and sex and children. The specific question then is, is it okay for a Christian to use birth control? And if so, what forms of birth control are acceptable and unacceptable. And I will show them to you on a sliding scale, of levels 1 to 5, from contraceptive – preventing conception, to abortion – terminating a conceived life. And so, what I will do is I will start with the first category. I’ll show it to you.

Category Number 1, Level Number 1: No birth control. That is this position. We got married. We love each other. We’re intimate. We don’t worry about it. If and when God gives us kids, we’ll take every kid God gives us, and we’ll praise God. And whatever he wants, we’re cool with that. Is that an acceptable Christian position? It’s not that hard of a question, Mars Hill. Yeah, it’s okay. You can get married, make love, and if you have babies, raise them. That’s totally fine. There’s no problem there. You’re not doing anything to prevent birth. No contraception, no birth control, just we love each other, and if a baby shows up, great. We’ll name it and raise it. That sounds great.

Now, I’ll tell you what it looks like practically, and I’ll give you an illustration of what I think is a Godly example of this position. In college, my wife and I were mentored by a great couple; they love Jesus. And they recently came to visit us. We hadn’t seen them in many years, and they hold this position and have 13 children, 11 daughters and 2 sons, okay. And honestly, money is a little tight. I mean, you could imagine raising 11 daughters. It’s expensive. But I’ll tell you what about this family, they came and stayed overnight at our house and hung out with us, and you know what, they’re wonderful. I mean, he’s a leader in his church, and they are an amazing couple. And physically, she’s been able to birth 13 children. Not all women could do that.

Emotionally, they’ve not had a breakdown. They still love each other. You know, they have a loving marriage. I mean obviously, they keep making babies. I mean they get along. They’re kids are well educated. They’re doing well in school. They love Jesus. Their older kids are actively involved as leaders in ministry. And they’re a beautiful family. To be honest with you, we thoroughly loved having them in our home, and despite the fact we got 5 kids and they’ve got 13, and there’s 18 kids in my house, it was just super fun. It was wonderful. They’re a great family.

And I sat down with them, and I said, “Okay. I’m gonna ask you the question I’m sure no one has ever asked. What is your position on birth control?” And they answered very maturely. They said, “We do not believe that birth control is a sin. We don’t judge people who use it. We’re not legalistic in that way, but our personal conscience convictions, that we both agreed to after fasting and prayer, is that God would not have us do anything to prevent the birth of any child, and so we’ll have as many children as God would give us.” That is a very mature expression of that position. Non-legalistic. Non-judgmental. Non-self-righteous. Operating out of conscience, and very good parents with a beautiful family.

And so, in that regard, we would say that this is absolutely an acceptable position for a Christian couple, absolutely. My problem is when it becomes legalistically imposed as the only option for all Christian families. Legalism is where you bind everyone with your conscience, as opposed to allowing them to operate according to their own conscience. There are organizations like Quiverfull, Vision Forum. Magazines like Above Rubies, which some of you who are – particularly mothers – are probably familiar with. Not everything that they say is bad. But, what they tend to promote is this position, exclusively, declaring that anyone who doesn’t hold this position is demonically inspired and a feminist.

Okay, I don’t hold this position. And if you’re new and not aware of this, I am not a feminist, okay. I’ve been called everything but that. If you don’t

believe me, when the feminists come around, like they occasionally do to picket and protest; ask them if I am a feminist, and they will say, "No, that's why we're picketing him." I am not a feminist, and I don't work with Satan. So, it's not fair to say that everyone who doesn't hold this position is working for Satan, and is a pro-abortionist feminist.

But, I'll give you some examples. Nancy Campbell, she runs Above Rubies Magazine, says this, "Contraception, sterilization, and abortion, each one is masterminded in Hell." Contraception and abortion are different. I'll explain to you why as we proceed forward.

Nancy Lee DeMoss, she is a woman who has a national radio show, writes a number of books. She speaks very strongly on issues regarding marriage and children, though she's single without kids. You notice all the moms chuckle. Now, her book, Lies Women Believe, has been read by a lot of women in this church. It sold over 300,000 copies, so it's popular. Not everything in it is bad. She has a lot that I think is very good. But, on this issue, she becomes very legalistic, very judgmental.

She says this, "So, anything that hinders or discourages women from fulfilling their God-given calling to be bearers and nurturers of life, furthers Satan's efforts. The Christian world has been unwittingly influenced by this way of thinking." – speaking of feminism – "leading to the legitimization and promotion of such practices as contraception, sterilization, and family planning. As a result, unwittingly, millions of Christian women and couples have helped to further Satan's efforts to limit human reproduction, and thereby destroy more life."

The point is, you either do nothing to prevent conception – you use no birth control – or you are working for Satan. Furthermore, in her book she quotes this woman named Mary Pride, who was a former feminist, that I believe has over-reacted to her background. She is now a major home schooling advocate. I'm not against home schooling, but I will tell you that sometimes, home schooling networks are Petri dishes for legalism, and self-righteousness, and judgmentalism, and sectarianism, and all kinds of other -isms, right?

I'm not against home schooling, but I'm against religious, self-righteous, judgmental legalism. And Nancy Lee DeMoss quotes Mary Pride saying this – "Family planning is the mother of abortion. Abortion is, first of all, a heart attitude. Me first. My career first. My reputation first. My convenience first. My financial needs first. And these same choices are what family planning, which churches have endorsed for three decades, is all about."

And I would say, "You know what. Some people are really selfish." Some guys don't want kids because they don't want to grow up, shut-up, and get a job. That's a problem. Some women don't want a child because they're selfish, and feminist in orientation, and children to them are a burden and not a blessing. And there are tons of people who postpone childbearing way too long, because they want to have the big house, and the vacation home, and the brand new car with rims, and they're greedy. And there are lots of reasons why people don't want to have children. But, to say that everyone who uses birth control is selfish, is in itself very legalist and judgmental, because in addition to selfishness, some people use birth control for issues of stewardship.

As a pastor, having done this job now for eleven years, tons of marital counseling, premarital counseling, I can tell you that life is easy on paper, but in a fallen world, it's very difficult. I'll give you lots of examples. A woman comes to me, says, "I was raped recently. I'm a mother. I think I would like to postpone fertility for a while, so that I can get help and work this through. I'm really traumatized. Is that okay?" Well, yes.

A man comes to me and says, "I married a single mother. She's got teen-age kids who are very rebellious and difficult. I think the daughters are sexually active. I've only got a few years to try and turn things around and introduce these kids to Jesus before they leave the home. We want to have kids, but we're feeling like it would be wise to wait a few years, use birth control, so I could connect with these kids and try and help them first." I would say, "Well, there's wisdom in that, isn't there."

A friend of mine, he provided for his family – he's a tradesman – went to bed and woke up with debilitating arthritis. He was literally paralyzed. Would it be okay for he and his wife to use birth control, because he is in a dire medical condition and now she needs to stop being a stay at home mom and go get a job to feed the family? Well, of course.

I know a woman who had such difficulty birthing her children, and she tore so badly that organs were falling out of her. She said, "Pastor Mark, do you think it's okay if I wait awhile to have kids? I'm healing up. It's really scary. And I'd like to, you know, recover." Well, yeah. It's okay to use contraception. I mean, you're not being selfish; you're being a steward.

And it's a sick thing to just make a rule and say everyone who disagrees with it has a wicked heart, because mine is pure and so I'm in the best position to judge their intentions, even though I've never met them and know nothing of the circumstances of their life.

I had a woman come to me, "Pastor Mark, I have cancer. Do you think I should postpone having children, and maybe use contraception until I see what happens with my health?" Well, yeah, because you're probably gonna end up with chemotherapy. I'm sorry about that. I love you. Let me pray for you. What you need right now is a little love, not a lot of legalism. People can be heartless, and cruel, and stupid. They can sit back and make commands that other people try to follow in the name of trying to be faithful to God, but without wisdom, they end up getting themselves into much trouble.

Those who argue for this legalistic position that all birth control is a sin, and there's no good reason for God's people to ever use it, they tend to use eight lines of reasoning, at least in the thousands of pages that I have read. So, let me give those to you, blow them all up, and then we'll proceed forward. The first is they try to discount all forms of birth control by connecting it with Thomas Malthus and Margaret Sanger. And in so doing, they commit an ad-hominem fallacy, where they attack someone's character. They try to attach an issue to a person, and if you can identify the issue with a horrible person, then you can, by inference, declare it to be a horrible thing.

Thomas Malthus was a horrible man. He's a racist. You may have heard of Malthusian Eugenics, if you studied philosophy in college. He believed that

certain races were more fit than others, so we should sterilize certain races so they can't breed, and then we could have a super-race. This led to Nazi Germany. Margaret Sanger was influenced by this man. Came to the United States of America to implement the same philosophy to eradicate the world of Christianity and "the feeble-minded" she said, and she created something called Planned Parenthood. You can read the Grand Illusions: The legacy of Planned Parenthood, by George Grant, and it sort of outlines this historically. It's a fascinating read.

And she said that certain races were unworthy of reproduction, so she put birth control clinics, abortion clinics in poor neighborhoods with first generation immigrants and people who were non-white. We believe that is Godless, sinful, wicked, deplorable, and inexcusable. But, birth control started long before the 1930, or whenever it was that Sanger opened Planned Parenthood. In fact, historically, John Newman, who's the leading historian on the history of contraception, says that we can go back to 2000 years BC, into ancient Egypt. That birth control predates Planned Parenthood by four, five, six millennia.

Additionally, just because someone uses something for evil doesn't mean that the thing is in and of itself evil. Something could be neutral and used for a good or a bad purpose. I'll give you an example. What is propelling many of the technological advancements for Hi-Definition cheap video, cameras, and filmmaking, as well as high-speed Internet download of said films, is the Porn industry. But, that doesn't make cheap digital filmmaking and high-speed Internet access evil. It depends on who uses it. We use it to promulgate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You could use such technology to share the Bible or Porn. Things in and of themselves can be used in a wicked or a worshipful way.

Secondly, they will say that there was no Christian body that promoted birth control until 1930, when the Anglicans gathered at something called the Lambeth Conference, and they voted that birth control was permissible for Christians if used in non-abortive ways, and if used without selfish motive. But the truth is again, Newman, this historian, would say that Christians used birth control for thousands of years. And the Jews used various forms of birth control for thousands of years before the birth of Jesus. And so, it's historically inaccurate to say that all Christians agreed until 1930, and this is a new modern, worldly invention.

Number 3; they will say that children are commanded by God, in Genesis 1:28. The verse literally says, "God blessed them, said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply and increase in number." They will say, "See. There it is. God gave a command. We have to make babies." God did not give a command. God gave a blessing. There's a difference. A command is something you must do. A blessing is something God does for you. Legalists tend to get confused, and they take delights and they make them into duties.

If it were true that God commands us all to be fruitful and multiply, that would mean that, anyone who didn't have a baby was in sin. That would mean that, infertile women would be sinful. That would mean that women who miscarry repeatedly and can't carry to term are sinful. Furthermore, that would mean that everyone who is unmarried is sinful. Furthermore, that would mean that Jesus was sinful, because he didn't have any children. Children are a blessing. They're not a command. God's people who get married should aspire and desire to be parents, and they are blessed if they do. But, they're not in sin if they are unable to conceive.

Furthermore, we are told by some – Point Number 4 – that since children are a blessing, we should have as many as we possibly can. The first thing I would say, is just because something is a blessing, doesn't necessarily mean you're in sin if you don't have it. The Bible says in Proverb, that he who finds a wife finds what is good, and receives favor or a blessing from the Lord. A wife is a blessing, but you're not sin if you don't have a wife.

Furthermore, just because something is a blessing, doesn't mean you should have as many of them as possible, because in that verse, "Be fruitful, multiply and increase the number; fill the earth and subdue it," two things are given. One, have children, and two, subdue the earth. What every person knows is, "Well, I can't subdue the whole earth. That's a lot of grass to mow. I need to figure out what portion of the plant is mine to subdue." Likewise, every family needs to decide; how many children can we feed, raise, birth, care for? How big is our proverbial quiver?

Additionally, theologians, like Wayne Grudem say, "In this world, there are multiple things that are good, and they're a blessing. And sometimes, we have to pursue less of one to pursue more of another, or to wait to pursue one so that we could pursue another." I'll give you an example. I knew a married couple. They wanted to have kids, but they also felt called to the mission field – they had a medical background – to go a war torn impoverished, dangerous area for a few year stint to serve. They decided to use birth control during that season, because they were in a deadly circumstance, and if they lived through their missionary term and returned to the States, then they would stop using birth control, and they would seek to have children. They said, "Children are a blessing and so is this call that God has on our life to go help the dying. And so, we'll postpone this blessing to go be this blessing." And so, simply because something is a blessing doesn't mean that we should have as many as possible.

Furthermore, some will argue – Point Number 5 – that God is sovereign, but if we use any form of birth control, we're negating God's sovereignty, which is weird, because the definition of sovereignty is that you can't negate his will. If God is sovereign, you're gonna have a baby if he really wants you to have a baby. And statistically, a large percentage of you were conceived while your parents were using birth control, and God was in heaven chuckling, okay. And it's not like God's in Heaven going, "I was gonna have my will, but there's latex. I lose. I can't believe it." You know, God is not like that. God can give you a baby.

Number 6; others will argue you need to have as many kids as possible, because sometimes it's those latter children that changed the world. And they will say, "Charles Wesley was the 13th child. George Whitfield was the 7th. George Washington was the 5th." And I would say, "Yes. And Adolph was the 6th, and his parents were Catholic. And I wish they would've found a box of condoms right after five." You got my point.

Point Number 7; the seventh point is more theological in nature. They will say that birth control is the sin of Onanism from Genesis 38:10. Some of you are probably not familiar with Onan. Here's the story. There was a guy named Er, who was Godless, so God killed him. All you guys, who are wicked, make note of that. He's a wicked guy. God kills him. Now, he has a wife named Tamar. And now, Tamar is in this vulnerable position socially, because

without a husband, as a non-virgin, she's in the dangerous position. Not having children means when she grows older, there no one to look after her.

And so, in Deuteronomy 25:5-6, there's something called the Levite Obligation, where the closest living male relative of the brother is obligated to marry the widow, love her, care for her, have children with her, bless her, and to follow through on caring for a member of his own family. That responsibility fell to a man named Onan. Now, he slept with Tamar, and at the moment of climax, he pulled out of her – that's what the high school kids call it; the classic term is coitus interruptus – dumped his seed on the ground, and so God killed him, too.

Okay, now in that, they will say, "See. He used birth control, so God killed him." And this comes from Augustine, the early church father who lived from 354 to 430. A brilliant man who's contributed much to even my own theology, but on this point we would part company. He says this, "Intercourse, even with one's legitimate wife, is unlawful and wicked, where the conception of the offspring is prevented. Onan, the son of Judah, and the Lord killed him for it." Now, to be fair, Augustine was a man who, until his conversion at age 29, was part of a cult called Manichaeism. They used lots of birth control, even abortion. They believed that life was not sacred, and they really didn't honor children, as they should. When he became a Christian, I think he overreacted.

Secondly, I do not believe that the sin in Genesis 38 is birth control. In Genesis 38:8, it says that he was to fulfill his obligation, and he didn't do that. What he did do, is he was willing to sleep with a woman that he didn't want to be obligated to. It's not unlike a guy who's sleeping with his girlfriend saying, "I love you," when he has no intention of marrying her. He wants all of the pleasure from her; wants to give no love and covenant to her. So, the sin of Onan is treating Tamar like a booty-call instead of a bride. That's the issue. For those of you men who are sleeping with your girlfriends, you are guilty of the sin of Onanism. You want the benefits of marriage, without any of the mature obligations that come to a married man, in relationship with a woman.

And lastly, Number 8; they argue that all forms of birth control are a sin in the most bizarre way, declaring that all sex is to be procreative in function and purpose, and potential, and unless there is the possibility of a baby, all sex is sinful. Some of you have heard this. I find this most common among Christian women. Among Christian women. It's a lie that gets promulgated. "If you have pleasure, if it feels good, if you enjoy your husband, you must be a dirty woman. That's a gross thing. Your body's not for pleasure, it's just for making babies." It's a lie. It's a lie.

But, it started with the early church fathers who were deeply influenced by stoic philosophy. And we may look at them and say, "Well, that's crazy." But, they would look at us and say, "But, you guys are messing around with your girlfriends, and people are downloading Porn and committing adultery, and have friends with benefits." And they would say that our culture is just as corrupt in the opposite direction, and we are equally blind. But, Clement of Alexandria, in 150 to 215 – that was the duration of his life – says this, "Intercourse performed licitly is an occasion of sin, unless done purely to beget children." The only point of intimacy between a husband and a wife is to make children.

Mary Pride, again the home schooling advocate, she says that, "Anyone who has sex with their spouse for pleasure is committing 'sexual gluttony'." She goes on to say, "The Bible teaches us that sex is only legitimate within marriage," – which we agree with – "it further teaches, as we have seen, that the natural purpose of marital sex is one, physical oneness, and two, fruitfulness. Nowhere does the Bible say that the purpose of marital sex is climax, much less climax at the expense of fruitfulness and oneness."

Take it to its logical conclusion; this is the end result: If you are married but barren, you are not allowed to have sex. If you are married and infertile, you are not allowed to have sex. If you are married and it is not during your season of the month where you are fertile, you are committing sin if you have any sexual activity during that period which you are not fertile. If you are a menopausal woman, it is a sin for you to have sex with your husband. That's an evil thing to say, because the Bible does say in 1 Corinthians 7:5, "Do not deprive one another, but by mutual consent and for a time, or Satan will come in and tempt you both and destroy your marriage."

God's people are to have free and frequent sexual pleasure together; otherwise, Satan will get in there. Bitterness, temptation all comes if trouble happens when a married couple doesn't have enough sex. Furthermore, the Song of Solomon is all about married sexual pleasure. It just is. I've read and studied the Book. If the elders let me, I'll preach it this fall. We'll see what they say. But it's a great book. And the whole book is about pleasure. It is all about pleasure, and not once in that book are children ever mentioned. And I would tell you that sex in the Bible is for multiple purposes; oneness, comfort, protection, procreation, pleasure. There are multiple reasons why a married couple should have sex.

Furthermore, why would God make a woman multi-orgasmic, and why in the world would God put certain parts on a woman – that I won't necessarily get in to now – that have nothing but pleasure as their purpose, and serve no procreative function. Why? Because God loves us, and he wants us to have pleasure, and if he didn't it was cruel to put nerve endings, in such concentrated doses, in particular places, all right.

So, here's my point. Level 1 is acceptable for Christians, if you're not a legalist imposing it on others, but there are good reasons why some people would want to use birth control. I'll tell you why I'm really hammering this point. Here's an illustration that is tragic. These kids, you may have heard of, their last name is Yates. Remember Andrea Yates, Christian home school mom, murdered every one of her children. They didn't believe in contraception. She had some mental troubles and depression issues. I'm not trying to speak ill of her. I don't know her.

But, what she did do is at the birth of her fifth, she snapped, and she drowned each child in the tub, from the youngest to the oldest. The oldest, the seven-year-old son – he's roughly the age of my son, Buddy Zach – he saw what was going on and ran. Mom tackled him in the living room under a poster of Jesus, before dragging him back in the bathroom and holding him under the water and drowning him. And she murdered all five of her kids. Here's my point. Not speaking specifically of her husband, because I don't know him, but there's enough of you who listen to me, and there's tens of thousands more online who listen to me, and though I am exceedingly pro-life, and I make no apology about that, because God is, I also want to

hammer idiotic, imbecilic, legalistic husbands.

There is a certain kind of guy who really just needs to be taken to the woodshed by a good elder. And these idiots are dangerous. These idiots are guys who don't really connect with a church, because no church is good enough for them. They have such legalistic-tight expectations, that no church really has good doctrine, like they demand. They're neat-nicks, they're nit-picks, they're legalists, they're religious guys. These are guys who tend not to make enough money, so their house is inadequate, and their car is inadequate, and their medical is inadequate, and the food is hard to come by, and they can't afford a school for their children, so what they do is they lay all of this exceeding burden on their wife: "You need to be amorous, sexually available. The Bible says not to deny your husband. We shouldn't use birth control because after all, we trust God. And I'm gonna get you pregnant, but I'm not gonna get you any babysitter or a decent home; I'm not gonna take care of your health or afford school. So, you gotta birth the kids at home without medical coverage, and in addition to that, you got to look after them all the time, and you got to run the home school for as many as we have, because I'm a legalistic idiot with a low income and a low IQ."

And these imbeciles that tell your wife, "Well, shut-up. You're supposed to submit. I'm the head of the home." Never asking questions like, "What can we handle emotionally? How are you doing Sweetheart? What can we handle physically? Honey, how are you doing? What can we handle financially? Can we afford to feed and educate these kids?" And if you're one of those women married to one of those idiots, I'm glad you're at Mars Hill, all right. Give us a call. This is our specialty. We specialize in male idiots. That is our niche. And there is authority above your husband, like church elders and the Bible and God. And it'll be really important for someone to remind him that he's not God. He's not in that level of authority.

And some idiots tend to think that somehow having children is like scoring points in an athletic event. And if they could just score and make more babies, somehow, they're winning and they're really holy guys. And some of these guys absolutely, emotionally, physically, spiritually, financially destroy their wife, and oftentimes in the process of isolating them, because they're not even connected to a decent church where the woman can get love and support.

As much as I am pro-life, and I am – as much as I am pro-family, and I am. As much as I love being a daddy, and I got five kids on earth and one in Heaven, and every one is a blessing, and I'm all about being a dad, I know that there are men who will hear this sermon that are pushing their wives into mental and/or physical, and/or spiritual breakage. And you need to look at your woman and not just see a womb, but see a wife. She doesn't exist just to make babies, but to be loved as Christ loves the church. And to be a good husband and head means to love her, and to serve her, and to consider her, and to help her, and to comfort her, and to nourish her, and to speak with her, and to listen to her, and to come to agreement with her, and not to abuse her, because those verses you have are out of context.

I want to state this plainly, because I have seen the damage first hand, that idiots do to otherwise Godly women, who thinking that they are obeying and trusting the Lord, continue pressing forward until they break. That's not what we want. That's not what we want at all. I hope I've made my point. And if you're a guy here who's saying, "Are you talking about me?" Yes. You are the idiot of which I speak. And repent, and don't be an idiot, and love your wife, and ask her how she's doing. And if it's not good, love her well. Serve her well. Don't destroy her. Don't destroy her in the name of blessing, because you are a curse.

Moving along, Natural Birth Control. Second category. Natural birth control could be summarized as this; a woman is fertile during a certain number of days over the course of a month, the average woman. And if you could figure out what those days are and avoid sexual intercourse, then you won't have a baby. Simple enough okay. Catholics practice this. I was raised Catholic. It was called Papal roulette, that's what we'd call it, okay. Now, today there are some new technologies that even help a woman with an irregular cycle to track her fertility, and to abstain or to use such things as a condom during her fertile times. Here are the benefits. Both the husband and the wife are involved. No surgery. No chemicals. No devices. No drugs. No cost. No side effects. It's safe. It's reversible, and you can use it with other methods, like a condom during certain days. The downside tends to be you need a lot of discipline and planning, and few days a month, you're on the bench. But, is that an acceptable practice for Christians? Yeah, totally is. Totally is.

Number 3; Non-abortive birth control. We call these barrier methods, because a woman contributes an egg. A man contributes the sperm. They come together. The sperm fertilizes the egg, and that's how you get a baby. A barrier method comes between the egg and the sperm to prevent fertilization, all right. Now, for men and women both, there are temporary and permanent methods. Temporary methods tend to be for the women. There is one that is for the man, and that is a condom. For women this would include a female condom, a diaphragm, a sponge, a cervical cap, and spermicides.

Now the problems could be it's not so good to be spontaneous, because you got to stop and get something. Some people philosophically say, "Well, in my moment of greatest intimacy, do I want to barrier between me and my spouse?" Those things need to be considered. Husbands will say, "I don't want to use a condom. They kind of diminish pleasure." Those are things to consider.

There are also permanent methods for men and women both, these are surgeries. A vasectomy for a man or a tubal ligation, or getting your tubes tied, for a woman. These should be considered permanent. You can reverse them, but it's very difficult.

And when it comes to such permanent methods, I would say such things as consider your heart. Is it that you're immature, lazy; you don't want to take responsibility? You don't have a Biblical view of children. You've been listening to Tom Leykis and he told you to get a vasectomy, so you could sleep with a lot of women and not have any obligations. Maybe get married someday, but get a divorce and not have to pay child support. If those are the kinds of motives, repent. All right, don't have that kind of motive driving your fertility decisions, with something as permanent as surgery. But, if you have searched your heart and you do love children, and your motives are pure, and you have a good reason, it is not a sin.

I would say however, don't make this decision too prematurely in life, there are a lot of couples that have three or four kids, say, "That's it. We're done." And then five, ten years later, say, "We wish we had more kids. Why did we ever get that surgery? We should have waited." Emotionally, too,

some men and women go into deep depression, feeling they've lost part of their masculinity or femininity, depending on their gender, following the surgery. And it is an emotional issue as well. But, I would say it is legalistic to say that no one ever has a good reason. I'll give you one example.

A buddy of mine loves God. Godly guy. Great guy. Totally love this guy. He's got an amazing wife. She's a total keeper, an absolute gem and a joy. They love Jesus. They love each other. They love kids. They wanted to have a huge family. She's had 18 miscarriages. My wife and I had one. It was devastating. Eighteen miscarriages. You say, "What? Are they – are they feminist?" No. "Do they hate kids?" Well, obviously not. "Are they not trusting the Lord?" They really do trust – I mean, they trusted the Lord with 18 miscarriages.

And they finally decided, physically and emotionally, we can't handle any more. He got a vasectomy. Should we judge him and say, "Oh, you're Godless. You're working with Satan. You don't trust the Lord." No, he doesn't need legalism. He needs love. "I'm so sorry you've had 18 miscarriages. I can't imagine the hope, and then the disappointment and grief, 18 times." And now, they're pursuing adoption. Should we judge them? No, we should pray for them and love them and help pay for the adoptions, because they really do want to have a lot of kids. There are a lot of reasons why a permanent barrier method is not a sin. Just check your heart, and don't do it too quickly.

Here's the difficult one, potentially abortive birth control. Level 4. Levels 1 through 3, fine for Christians. No problem. Level 4, a little more complicated. Potentially – that's where it gets complicated – abortive birth control. Contraception means contra – against – conception. Barrier methods and such, prevent an egg from being fertilized by a sperm. But, when the egg is fertilized by the sperm, that is conception, that's when human life begins. And as a result, to terminate that is to commit murder. It's abortive murder, but it is murder nonetheless.

And what we're talking about at this level is chemical birth control. We'll call it the pill, which is a category that includes 40-plus types of oral medication, pills taken by women that include progesterone, estrogen – various combinations thereof. Fifty to sixty million women today on the earth are taking the pill. It's the number one most prescribed drug, universally. Fourteen million women in America take the pill every day. And if you read the Physician's Desk Reference Guide, which is what all doctors and nurses use to look at various kinds of prescriptions and its effects and its intents, you will see that it includes birth control, and three ways that it prevents birth. The problem is, the first two are contraceptive – preventive, and the third is potentially abortive – terminating a life.

The first is to inhibit ovulation. Sort of tricking the woman's body or brain as it were, that she's already pregnant, thereby inhibiting ovulation. The second is, to thicken the cervical mucus, with the effect that it becomes more difficult for sperm to travel to the egg. Both of those are contraceptive. Now, the problem is what if they fail and an egg is fertilized by a sperm? What happens then? Well, the third function is where it becomes potentially abortive, because the pill thins and shrivels the lining of the uterus, so that it is unable, or less able, to facilitate the implantation of the newly fertilized egg. One and two, those functions of the pill are contraceptive. The third is not guaranteed abortive, but potentially abortive, if the first two fail.

James Dobson, pro-life advocate, and pro-life doctors working for him, with Focus on the Family, researched this for two years, and said it's inconclusive as to whether or not the birth control pill clearly causes abortion. The Christian Medical and Dental Association likewise issued a statement saying, "We're not sure. It's inconclusive. The doctors, who love Jesus and are pro-life, are divided on the issue. Randy Alcorn has written a whole book titled, Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortion? You can grab it for further study.

So, we would not say that it is a sin for a Christian couple to use the birth control pill, but what we would say is that too many Christian couples simply take the pill, not knowing about that third potentially abortive function of the pill, and in so doing, aren't most informed in their decision making regarding their family planning. Because the doctors are unclear, we can't be dogmatic and legalistic. But we would say it's an issue of prayer, research, fasting, conscience, and the couple coming to a mutually agreed upon decision and love with Jesus.

Need to be careful on this one. You'll see that as we move along the scale from 1 to 4 – we're now at 4 – it becomes a little riskier and a little less clear. But, we would not say it is a sin.

Abortion, Number 5, however, we would say is a sin. I'm not sure I've ever just clearly declared where Christianity that is Bible believing, and Mars Hill, and the elders, and myself are at on this issue. We are clearly, unapologetically, and continually committed to the pro-life position. And in this, I am not saying that there is not such a thing as an ethical dilemma – there are some minority cases where the mother's life is at stake, and the child needs to be considered, and who's gonna live, and who's gonna die. Look, I understand there are some minority cases that are very complicated. And as a pastor I have to counsel on those kinds of cases, and I don't want to diminish them, but I want to speak of abortion in its majority sense. And that is that someone has sex and doesn't want a baby, and so they kill it.

That is a sin, because it's murder. Murder is one of the Ten Commandments. This would include procedures – surgical procedures for abortion. This would include chemical abortion, like RU46, which is also called the Morning After Pill, IUDs – intrauterine devices – and Norplant. The purpose of all of them is to take a fertilized egg and to get it out of the mother's body to cause an abortion. I heard at least ten ads on the radio this week from Planned Parenthood saying, "If you think you may be pregnant, come in for the, you know, emergency contraception pill," which as I understand it, is a high dose of birth control pills to abort the child.

Now, in saying this, I know that many of you disagree with me. You would have certain arguments that you would use. Some of you may also wonder why I would bring this up under the auspices of birth control. Here's one. Focus on the Family reports that one in six abortions is performed by an Evangelical Christian woman – one in six. That means that 5.6 million Christian women have aborted – killed their children – since abortion was legalized. That means that this year, statistically, 250,000 Christian women will abort – kill their own child, 250,000. Forty percent of women, ages 15-44, have had an abortion, and 50 percent – here is the devastating statistic – (This comes from secular research that was picked up by Focus on the

Family) – fifty percent who have an abortion say it is their only form of birth control.

“We have sex, we do nothing, if we have baby we kill it.” Even our medical system sometimes encourages that. When my wife was still working, before she came home to raise our children, her medical coverage stated, “We will pay for an abortion, but not birth control.” Legally, we have bizarre understandings, such as, if I walk up to a pregnant woman, hit her in the stomach and she miscarries, I can be charged with murder. But if I’m a doctor, we call it a procedure. We have people in this city, who I completely do not understand, who oppose war because you don’t want hurt the terrorist, who oppose capital punishment because you don’t want to hurt the criminal, but have no problem murdering children. It’s just completely illogical.

Christians and Jews alike have always opposed abortion. The Didache, which is an ancient manual for the church says this, “You shall not commit murder. You shall not procure abortion, nor commit infanticide.” Don’t murder a living person. Additionally, don’t murder a baby. And if a baby is born, don’t toss it out with the trash, which happened oftentimes to the girls. That’s infanticide. The Epistle of Barnabas, likewise, says, “Thou shalt not procure abortion. Thou shalt not commit infanticide.”

Now, some of you would say, “I disagree with you and I’m a Christian.” What I would say is this, “You are wrong. You are in sin.” Some of you would say, “Well, apparently I need to find another church that agrees with me.” No. You need to change your mind and your heart. You’re wrong. You say, “Well, isn’t this a secondary issue?” No. Murder is not a secondary issue. “Well, I thought we didn’t stress politics in this church.” This is a theological issue with political implications, but it is not primarily a political issue. You say, “Well, I don’t expect Christians and non-Christians to think alike.” Well, neither do I, but I expect Christians to think biblically to set an example for those who are not Christians. And for those who are not Christians, we don’t want to argue with them all the time over issues; we want to introduce them to Jesus. You know what he’ll do, he’ll change their mind on everything, because once they get the Holy Spirit, everything looks different.

I know that this is incredibly unpopular. Some of you will say, “But, I was told that when a woman is pregnant, it’s tissue in her belly.” And I would say, “So are you – tissue. Might I point out the obvious?” Someone would say, “Well – but there’s a difference between the baby in the belly and the baby outside of the belly.” Really? A few layers of skin completely changes the existence of a life? Come on. Biblically, and all Scripture is God breathed and profitable – in Luke Chapter 1, Verses 41 and 44, it says that there’s a woman, Elizabeth, who has a child in her womb. Do you know his name? John the Baptizer. The Greek word there is child.

Next chapter, Luke Chapter 2 Verse 12, there’s a woman named Mary related to Elizabeth. She’s got a baby in her belly, his name? Jesus Christ. Later in Luke 18:15, when Jesus is a grown man, they bring all the kids to him so they can all sit on his lap and get hugs and kisses and be prayed for. And all those children are spoken of using the same Greek word as was used of John the Baptizer and Jesus in the bellies of their mothers. Because in the Bible, whether a child is in their mother’s womb or playing on a little league team, it’s still a child. The same word is used, because it’s the same life.

I’m gonna get in a lot of trouble for this. This is trouble I’m willing to get into. This crowd has a lot of people who would say, “Jesus is God, but I have sex with whomever I want, and I can kill my child if I like.” And I would say, “You’re insane.” And when you stand before God to give an account for your whole life, you will have no excuse. And unless I tell you the truth, when I’m standing there before God with you, because I must also give an account for you, I don’t want that blood on my hands.

Now, the good news is this, that baby, Jesus, was born. Thank God Mary didn’t end up at Planned Parenthood as a teenaged pregnant girl who was single. He lived a life without sin. He’s God. He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. He rose for our salvation and there’s not one person, that if they ask Jesus for forgiveness, he won’t forgive them, love them, save them, renew them, transform them. And there’s not one sin he can’t forgive, including murder. And we see that even on the cross, as he has being murdered, he’s cries out for those who are murdering him, “Father, forgive them.”

Now, I will close with this. I’m a guy, who prior to meeting Jesus was Malthusian, Eugenic, committed. I believed in sterilization, forced population birth control. I was arguing for it, as the President of my High School, debating the issue, very supportive of the cause. In College, I was also debating, very convincingly, in classes and doing very well. I was not just pro-choice, I was pro-abortion, and then I met Jesus. And I started reading my Bible and the Holy Spirit convicted me of sin, and reminded me that life is a great gift, and I’ve sure appreciated it. And my heart changed, and my mind changed, and my life changed. And rather than arguing with me, you should go to Jesus. And you should spend time in prayer and humility and scripture, and let him change your heart and your mind and your life.

He will cause you to be born again, which means that you get a brand new spiritual life as a new person, in relationship with a living God, who is your father. Adopts you into his family through the personal work of Jesus. I tell you this, because I absolutely love you. And I tell you this, because it is absolutely true. And I tell you this because I fear you will not hear it anywhere else. I’ll pray for you.

Father God, I pray for us. James 1:5 says, “If we lack wisdom to ask for it and you’ll give it in abundance without finding fault.” God, we are a perverted, selfish, addicted, murderous culture. God, I pray that we would not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but we would be transformed through the renewing of our minds. Would you please send us the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and regenerate us, to instruct us in Scripture? God, for those women who have murdered their children, I pray that they would be honest, that they would seek counsel in this church with women who have done the same, but experienced the transforming power of Jesus.

I pray, Lord God, for those men who have encouraged and supported the murder of their own children, that they would come to deep and sorrowful and heartfelt repentance. I pray for those who have a negative view of children. I pray for those who don’t want children, for selfish reasons. I pray for a heart and mind change. I pray for the perverts, Lord God, who want sex, but no children or obligation. I pray, Lord God, as well, for the men who are idiots in destroying their wives in the name of biblical religion, which is nothing but demonic legalism. I pray, Lord God, for the infertile women who

desperately want children, that you would open their womb.

I pray as well, Lord God, for these matters, because it's serious. We're deciding how many people will be born in Mars Hill Church. How many people will be in the City of Seattle? How many generations the Gospel might ring through people with our own last name? Lord God, give us wisdom. I thank you, as well, for each child that is entrusted to our care, including my five and the one that is with you. And, Lord God, I thank you that you save us from ourselves. And, Lord Jesus, I thank you that you came as a baby. Amen.