

THE MISSIONAL MARRIAGE STUDY

Session #10: Parenting (Part 1): Birth Control, Having Kids, & Other Issues of Faith

"Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them..."

-Psalm 127:3-5a

Conceptual Ideas to Convey:

- ❖ Children are "gifts" from the Lord & they also represent the future of God's plan on earth
- ❖ Next to choosing a mate, parenting will be the most important decision you and your spouse will make. Parenting is a HUGE decision- and one that should not be taken lightly- especially in light of today's culture. Much prayerful consideration should be made concerning whether or when to have a family.
- ❖ Many factors seek to influence our decision on whether or when to have children. Our stewardship is to ensure that we're allowing God's Word to influence our decision instead of our culture.
- ❖ Since God's Word does not speak directly to the issue of birth control, we need to use wise discernment on whether or which forms of birth control to use. Some forms are healthy and normative, while others can be more dangerous. The point is: we just need to think, pray, and do our research before we hastily grab the first form our world throws at us.
- ❖ At the core of all of these issues is faith & obedience. The real questions to ask in any of these decisions are...
 - Will God be most glorified in this decision?
 - Is this decision stemming from selfish motives, or from God's leading?
 - Do I trust God to take care of me in this situation?

A Biblical View of Children:

- ❖ **Genesis 1:28...** *"God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...'"*
- ❖ **Psalm 127...** *"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep. Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate."*
- ❖ **Genesis 33:5...** (Esau to Jacob...) *"He lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, "Who are these with you?" So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."*
- ❖ **Psalm 113:9...** *"He makes the barren woman abide in the house as a joyful mother of children. Praise the LORD!"*
- ❖ **Deut. 7:13...** *"He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you."*
- ❖ **Psalm 128:2-3...** *"When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your table."*
- ❖ **Psalm 139:13-18...** *"For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand when I awake, I am still with You."*

Cultural Trends:

- ❖ Since 1970, the percentage of families with 5 or more children (21%) has been cut in half today (10%)
- ❖ Since that time, the number of households with 1 or 2 people only, has jumped from 46% to 60%
- ❖ One of the fastest growing portions of our population is single women between the ages of 30-35. This number is tripled from 1970.
- ❖ Factors contributing to the drop in family size:
 - Increased infertility
 - Increase in abortions
 - Rise in career-minded women
 - High rates of divorce (couples aren't staying married long enough to have kids)
 - Increased view of children amongst young married's as a distraction or added expense
- ❖ <http://www.nokidding.net/> is a site that reflects some of the current attitudes in our culture towards kids

Cultural Attitudes:

"I really love children, and once you have two, you might as well have ten. But if I do have more kids it'll have to be soon - before I'm 40. Maybe I have to find a good sperm donor." – **Pamela Anderson**

"There is nothing wrong with kids...I don't know. Maybe I don't want the responsibility. Maybe I'd rather have a more flexible lifestyle... with kids, so many things are just out of reach.... but I want to reach those things. I want to be able to go on some random trip to Paris, because I feel like it. With kids, I can't do that sort of thing." – **Misc. College Student**

"You know, we have a lot of friends who are having children right now. And I see all of the different sides of it now." I mean, even before I knew I was gay, I knew I didn't want to have a child. I knew I didn't want to have one. I never want to have to release it from me. Listen, I love babies. I love children. And I melt when I'm around them. I also love my freedom and I love that I can sleep at night." – **Ellen Degeneres**

"If anything I will adopt. I DO NOT want to bring up a child in this world. I will adopt if I feel the need, as that will be helping a worthy cause. Why have a child when so many need love already? To be honest I don't really like children, and I am in no way maternal..." – **Misc. College Student**

"Since I've been on the pill for years and I'm too paranoid (OK, "paranoid" is a bit harsh...more like concerned") to ever miss one. I have never really wanted kids. I have so many plans for my life and so many things I want to see and do, and a child around me 24/7 would totally cramp my style. Not to mention the fact that I would never want to raise a child in this world today. And don't even get me started on the amount of money it takes to be a parent. Don't get me wrong...I like kids. My 6-year-old niece is my sunshine. But it's just not my thing." – **Misc. College Student**

Questions for Dialogue:

- What are some of the cultural attitudes that are out there concerning having kids and raising a family?
- How do you think the culture has influenced your view of having children and raising a family?
- How has your family upbringing influenced your view of having children and raising a family?
- What is God's view of children and family?
- Where did you first learn about birth control? What were you taught?
- Biblically speaking, what (if anything) does God have to say concerning birth control? Is it ok? When might it not be ok? Is it ok for us to determine the size of our own families?
- Do you think that right now, your decision to have children, not to have children, or when to have children- is more influenced by a biblical perspective or from cultural pressures?
- How do you know if you're ready to have kids? What factors indicate you're not ready?
- What role does "faith" play in this matter? "Obedience?"
- How does all of this play into the mission of God that we've been called to?

Homework:

- ❖ Take some time during the next week, sit down with your spouse and have some dialogue about your thoughts on pregnancy & having a family. Understanding that this is a huge decision in marriage and life, have an honest discussion about your desires, convictions, and goals concerning having a family. Take some time together to investigate those desires, convictions and goals through God's perspective in the Scriptures. Get to the bottom of those motivations and see if they are more influenced & supported by God's Word, or the culture around you. Ask God to give you and your spouse trust and faith in Him concerning whatever it is He lays on your heart concerning whether or not to have a family, or even the timing involved of that.