



“What Do You Think About Surrogate Mothering?”

written by Dr. Ray Bohlin

My wife is considering acting as a surrogate mother for a friend who is having difficult with in vitro fertilization. Her embryos won't implant. Both of us couples are Christians. My wife and I have 3 kids and although she doesn't want another child for us she is willing to carry one for her friend. What are your thoughts about entering into this relationship?

First, I consider surrogate parenting a very risky venture. Just because your wife is able to intellectually say she will give up the baby to your friends when the time comes, does not mean she will be able to do so emotionally. Carrying a baby for nine months creates a powerful bond that is not easily broken. This is easily seen in teenage mothers who often change their minds about giving their baby up for adoption after birth. The surrogate mom can rationally say and believe “this baby is not mine,” but her emotions find it difficult to believe this after carrying the child for nine months.

Since there is also a relationship among friends here the risk is even greater, because even just a hint of wavering as the time of birth approaches could be interpreted as betrayal. The mother acting as the surrogate would also be faced with seeing this child regularly and having the pain of separation renewed frequently.

Second, there is the sacrifice of the family of the surrogate mother. Her husband and children will need to endure the difficulties of a pregnant mom and wife for a child that is not theirs. How is this explained to her children particularly? Pregnancy always involves risk and this is asking a lot of the family. All parties would need to seek God's peace before proceeding. If anyone is hesitant, I would not proceed.

Third, I am troubled by the implications of surrogacy to the concept of a couple



becoming one flesh through marriage and child-bearing. I would want to be sure of the Lord's leading in this regard because I just have a suspicion that surrogacy may violate this principle by having someone outside the marriage carry a baby from another union.

While I do not see a clear and unambiguous reason to say no, that is my advice due to the number of potential problems and pitfalls. We sometimes have to face difficult decisions with couples dealing with infertility because we seem to say we are unsympathetic to their dilemma. But we must also be realistic to realize that God does not promise that all potential solutions to all our problems are Biblical. Having a child of our own is not promised or demanded. Often a family's unwillingness to adopt is not just rooted in the natural desire to have children but in a selfishness that only wants "our" child.

If it were me, I would not do it.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What Does the Bible Say About Donating Eggs for In Vitro Fertilization?”

written by Dr. Ray Bohlin

A friend is considering giving some of her eggs to another woman to have a baby. Is this a moral issue? What does the Bible say about such a thing?



There is indeed a moral concern with donated gametes. Though some have expressed concern as to whether this can be constituted as adultery, I believe this term is best left for the physical act itself.

The relevant biblical passages are first Genesis 2:24, which introduces the concept of “one flesh.” Many scholars describe children as an expression of a couple becoming one flesh. Even if this specific connection is not accepted, it is clear that a third flesh has been introduced into the marriage relationship with donated gametes, either eggs or sperm. In my mind this is the most pressing moral issue.

A second related passage is Genesis 16 and the story of Hagar and Ishmael. In a sense, Sarai “borrows” Hagar’s eggs to give Abram an heir when she has failed to do so herself. Though God respects and saves Hagar and Ishmael, the union is not blessed by God and Abram’s promised heir is still to come through Sarai later. Also note the emotional trauma this arrangement causes Sarai, Hagar and Abraham. The emotional issues cannot be overlooked. The egg donor will understandably feel a special kinship with the resulting child; after all, she is the genetic mother. This could easily put a strain on the marriage in which the child is raised that can be difficult to anticipate.

I would not counsel the acceptance or donation of either sperm or egg.

A helpful resource on these questions is a series of booklets put out by the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity called the *BioBasic Series*. They have three additional booklets covering suicide, end of life issues, and alternative medicine. Each is offered in a question and answer format. You can purchase them through the Center at www.cbhd.org. I am co-authoring a booklet in the next round of four on genetic engineering. I hope the next four will be released within 2002.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin

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