

Bioethics and the Christian Mind

Cultural shift throughout Europe has led to Judeo-Christian values being jettisoned and a secular humanist worldview and values increasingly imposed. The toxic cocktail of scientific materialism, consumerism, moral relativism and radical autonomy has opened the lid of a Pandora's box of new biotechnologies including artificial reproduction, pre-implantation diagnosis, embryonic stem cell research, DNA editing, three-parent embryos, and animal-human hybrids. In addition economic recession and demographic shift provide a serious threat to vulnerable people (those who are disabled, elderly, sick or unborn) through legalised euthanasia and abortion whilst there are pressures on Christian healthcare professionals who are forced to conform as part of their 'public duty'. These threats will increase in the coming decade. This seminar will provide a biblical framework for a Christian response on these complex issues and outline principles of engagement through dialogue and advocacy.

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I. What is happening?

'Men of Issachar' (1 Chronicles 12:32) and 'double listening'

- A. Abortion
- B. Artificial Reproduction
- C. Prenatal Selection
- D. Genetics
- E. Stem Cells, cloning, and animal hybrids
- F. Contraception

G. Euthanasia

II. The Medical and Philosophical background

A. Medical Background

1. Technological advance
2. Media influence and consumerism
3. Financial constraints
4. Moral vacuum

B. Philosophical Background

1. Darwinism and Higher Criticism
2. Secular Atheism replaces Christian Theism
3. Worldview shift reflected in changes in ethical codes
4. Secular Bioethics emerges as a new specialty
5. Deontology, Consequentialism, and Virtue
6. The politicisation of Darwinism
7. 'Cost effectiveness' takes precedence

III. Developing a Christian Ethical Framework

A. Sharing the mind of Christ

1. A Christian worldview – *creation, fall, redemption, consummation*
2. Christian Ethical Principles – *stewardship, sanctity of life, chastity, veracity, justice, compassion, grace and mercy*

B. Keeping the commands of Christ

The 'law of Christ' (Jn 13:34-35; 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2; Mt 22:37-40)

C. Showing the character of Christ

Gal 5:22-23; 1 Cor 13:4-6

D. Carrying the cross of Christ

Mt 10:38; 2 Tim 3:12; Gal 6:2; 2 Tim 2:3,10

IV. Application of principles to practice

A. Abortion

B. Artificial Reproduction

C. Prenatal Selection

D. Genetics

E. Stem Cells, cloning, and animal hybrids

F. Contraception

- G. Euthanasia
- V. **Public policy principles**
 - A. Dialogue
 - B. Advocacy
 - C. Social Justice as a Christian responsibility
 - D. Co-belligerence – Christian duty or compromise?
 - E. Renewing the strongholds of civilization
- VI. References
 - A. Books on Christian Bioethics
 - John Wyatt, *Matters of Life and Death* (IVP, 2009)
 - John Stott, *Issues facing Christians Today* (Zondervan, 2006)
 - Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics* (Baker Academic, 2010)
 - Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A primer for Christians* (Eerdmans, 2004)
 - John Kilner, *Why the Church needs Bioethics* (Zondervan, 2011)
 - B. Christian Bioethics Websites
 - www.cmf.org.uk – Christian Medical Fellowship
 - <http://www.cmf.org.uk/publications/cmf-files/> - CMF Files
 - www.carenotkilling.org.uk – Care Not Killing Alliance (Secular language)
 - pjsaunders.blogspot.co.uk/ - Christian Medical Comment
 - <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/secondhandsmoke/> - Wesley Smith
 - http://www.mercatornet.com/issues/bioethical_topics - MercatorNet

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