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Should We Object to People Storing Embryos Indefinitely after IVF?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how we ought to respond to the indefinite storage or death of human embryos after IVF, whether pregnant women should be able to use carpool lanes, and whether it follows that we ought to forgive Satan if we ought to forgive our enemies.

* If life begins at conception, and all life is valuable, how do we respond to those who create human embryos and then leave them to die or remain in storage indefinitely following IVF?

* Should pregnant women be able to use carpool lanes since their unborn babies are separate individuals?

* If Jesus commanded us to forgive our enemies, does it follow that we are to forgive Satan?

Transcript

#STRask Should We Object to People Storing Embryos Indefinitely after IVF? This is the #STRask podcast. I'm Amy Hall and with me is Greg Koukl. Welcome, Greg.

Hey. Welcome listeners. All right, Greg, this first question comes from Patrick Dunn.

How do we reconcile the death or unused of fertilized embryos following IVF? If life begins at conception and all life is valuable, how do we respond to those who fertilize and then do not use embryos to become children? More than the IVF clinic fire scenario, is that not murder as we have defined life? Well, first of all, the foundation there is sound. Life does begin at conception. That's not Bible, that's science.

And the life is the life of an individual human being. And human beings are valuable in virtue of being made in the image of God. So all human beings, regardless of stage of development, are made the image of God.

So that includes the earliest stage of development. That's not science, of course, that is philosophical theology. But these are givens in the question.

Now, this raises a question. What are the status of looking for the right term here? Embryos that are created as a result of in vitro fertilization that are not used. Well, the status of them is that they are human beings, valuable human beings.

Okay, that is, they have the same intrinsic value. They don't have the same instrumental value as say, mom, or dad, or kids already born. And all I'm saying there is, is that there are two ways of having value.

If you're a human, we all have intrinsic value. But later on, as we develop, we increase our value in an instrumental way by relationships that we have and things we do for others, etc, etc. So at this stage, there's no instrumental value to an embryo, but there is intrinsic value being made the image of God.

Okay, now what? Well, there is a cavalier attitude a lot of people have who create a lot of embryos that they have no intention of well, let me back up. They don't create them without intention to implant them and give them a chance at a full life. But at some point, their own designs for having children have been met and they have extra embryos.

If they destroy them, then they are in fact destroying valuable human beings. And that would be wrong. If they die automatically, and the word murder was used in there, remember, murder is the intentional taking of a valuable human life in an unjustified way.

All right, it isn't just that of valuable human dies. Okay, so it may be, and I can speak from experience here because my wife and I had in vitro fertilization. And the first one we had, I think there were three, we had three eggs fertilized.

And those three were implanted. So we're giving every one of a shot, and none of them survived. Well, we were given a shot and they did survive.

They had a natural death. Okay, then we adopted embryos that another said, a Christian parents had made for their own children, they had a child, and then another and they were, okay, done, we've got these extras. So we want to find a home for them, which I think is appropriate.

And we were that home for some of those embryos, and none of those embryos survived either. Now notice that we were making a moral choice to implant the number of embryos my wife could reasonably carry. So we don't plant 10 embryos.

And if six survive, then you have what's called selective reduction and knock out five or knock out four or something like that. No, that would be a problem. The key here is that

whatever one plans to do with the extra embryos, they have to treat them as valuable human beings, because that's what they are.

And that's what guided the decisions that my wife and I made regarding our own in vitro fertilization attempts. Now, we weren't able to, my wife wasn't able to carry. And so we ended up adopting Antibethaniva.

But that was the way we did it. We pursued this issue because of the fact that the unborn or the fetus or the embryo is fully a fully valuable human being, and not just a commodity that we can get rid of when we no longer need it. Does that make sense, Amy? Yeah.

Alan and I actually, Alan Schleman and I actually did an episode of the show. It was a few years ago on the topic of IVF because occasionally we will get emails here at Santa Horizon from people who have gone through IVF and have created way more embryos than they should have. And I think this one that this show we did was as a response, because I think someone had said something as much as 25.

They had 25 embryos, and now they didn't know what to do. You have to remember that the doctor's incentive is to get somebody to make sure they become pregnant, to make sure that they give birth eventually. So they have every incentive to create way more way more embryos than they plan to use so that they can choose from them.

They have an incentive to implant more or transfer more into the woman than they plan for her to give birth to. And that leads to the issue of selective reduction, Greg, which a lot of people do, where they will choose one to kill and then remove so that the others can survive in the womb. So for many years, and I don't know if everybody here at STR agrees with me, you might not even agree with me on this, Greg, but I no longer recommend IVF, because for many years, I agreed, all right, I think it's fine if you create as many embryos as you're willing to transfer into the woman, and if you transfer as many as you're willing to give birth to at once.

Because that way you're not treating them badly. You're treating them like human beings, like valuable human beings. But what I found as time has gone on, what I've seen happening is that this whole industry is causing real damage to our society in a lot of different ways.

First of all, there was an article just in the UK. There are over a million embryos frozen just in the UK that are not going to be used, or they're going to be used for medical experiments. Or they're either going to be destroyed or they're going to be used in some way for other people's purposes.

And what's happening, what I see happening is a change in the way that we view not only children. I mean, it's bad enough you're treating these children as commodities. But

it's changing the way we view human beings.

There means to an end, there means to our own what's the word I'm looking for. Yeah, our own fulfillment. Yeah.

Now, I am not saying this is how every Christian, because many Christians have had IVF. And I'm not saying that this is in any way saying that they were treating children as commodities. Because many Christians I know who thought ahead of it, thought ahead in time, like you, they did it the right way.

But my concern is that that's not how the industry is being run. And I don't think we should be contributing to that anymore, because I see the damage that it's causing and all of these children left frozen or used in medical experiments. And changing the way that we look at these things.

Now, I think adoption is a wonderful opportunity. I have friends. Inbrío adoption.

Yeah. And I have friends who are doing that right now. And if anyone of you out there is looking to adopt, I think that's a great option because these children are just sitting there.

I think the organization is called Snowflake or something like that. And there might be other ones. That's one I know.

That one comes to mind. But anyway, I encourage you, again, I'm not saying that if you've had IVF, that you didn't do it the right way. And there are many who didn't realize this ahead of time and had these things happen.

But there are other problems too. Like if I freeze some embryos and I plan to use them later, and then my spouse dies or I die, you just don't know what's going to happen in the future and where your children will be left abandoned. So I mean, I guess there are ways to you could provide for that in your will or whatever have other people adopt them.

But but the point is, even if we as as Christians who are being very careful about this are doing it the right way, that's not how the industry is being run. And I think other countries have much stricter rules about transferring or creating embryos and transferring embryos. So then we do hear.

So it's worse here, I think than elsewhere. But if anyone's interested in more on this, you could look for that podcast episode that Alan and I did a few years ago, three or four years ago. Let me let me add a parting thought here because I know obviously when pro-choice folk hear this kind of talk and just the way you described it a few moments ago, Amy, you said their children that they're going to scoff that they're going to sniff at this and wave their hands.

Are you kidding me? This little bitty thing is a chill is their children. And here's what I want you to think about. Being human is not a look like kind of thing.

It is a be like kind of thing. It is the nature of the thing itself that grows through different stages and looks different at different times in their lives. Look at the photographs when you were a baby, then when you were in high school, then when you're 30 something and then when you're 60 something and then when you're 90 something, I mean, it's hard to even see the continuity sometimes because we look so different at different stages of life.

And that all that to say is that this is the way living things are. They look different at different stages of development. And so to dismiss as human this little bitty speck that is a egg that's been fertilized, now an embryo or zygote even, as not being human is to dismiss it not on what it is but on what how it looks.

It doesn't look human enough to the critics or the skeptics I to qualify as being treated as a human being. Well, where is that line then? Because certainly an embryo doesn't look that way. And a fetus begins looking human actually nine ninth week, you know, fairly quickly.

But it begins looking the way humans that we are familiar with look. It still looks like all human beings do at that stage of development. And that's true of an embryo.

And it's true of a zygote. It looks exactly like a human being at that stage of development. So I just want to warn against a kind of a dismissal of a just a multi-celled thing that's so smart you can't hardly see it with a naked eye as being a bonafide human being.

Go watch the movie Honey I Shrunk the Kids. But because there is a I mean size is not what determines human value. It's not what a human being looks like.

Let me back up and put it the way I did initially. It's humans are not look like kinds of things even looking even though human look looking like a human at a certain stage alerts us to the kind of thing we are. It is what makes us what we are.

We are not look like kinds of things we are be like kinds of things. And because we're human we are going to go through very specific stages of development from the earliest stage to the latest stage even though we remain ourselves through every stage looking different than the other. All right Greg let's go on to a question from Lindsay.

How do you respond to the argument that pregnant women should be able to use carpool lanes by themselves since their unborn babies are separate individuals? Okay I think carpool lanes are stupid. Okay so just saying and it's interesting that in the state of California if you are pregnant you can use a carpool lane because it is separate individual. That's why these yeah yeah that's my understanding okay and and that's why

carpool lanes are stupid.

The idea of a carpool lane now you can get on a rant here but the the idea of a carpool lane is to reduce the amount of traffic people carpool okay sometimes they're called HOV they're called HOV high occupancy vehicle really high occupancy is that like a 20 passenger van? No it's two people high occupancy is two people then you qualify. I do not think anybody in Southern in California decides to drive with somebody else because that will get them and carpool with them because that that will get them in the HOV lane because the HOV lane is just as slow much of the time or even slower than all the other lanes in California you can't get out until designated areas okay. So if what is required to satisfy the HOV requirement is two human beings in the vehicle well then pregnant women would qualify so would women with a bunch of kids but but a bunch of kids isn't they don't drive so they're not taking any more vehicles off the highway so why should that a person with a bunch of kids be allowed to drive in the HOV lane it's silly I think what it does is actually increases the amount of pollution that decreases it but that's that's another issue.

Well I'm gonna have to look that up because I don't I don't think I've heard that so I'm gonna have to look and see if if you can if you're pregnant if you can drive in that lane but to me it seems like the problem with having that on the books is how can a policeman tell how how laws have to be enforceable they have to be you have to be able to tell that first of all the the policeman needs to be able to tell by looking in the window whether or not there are two people. Secondly when he pulls her over and she says I'm pregnant what's he gonna say? Well prove it I mean I know this is just another reason this is a really stupid law and then if you have an electric vehicle then you can drive over there but you got to put these stupid ridiculous looking stickers in California at least on two parts of your vehicle to show that this is electrical and you qualify for writing really please it's nonsense it's virtue posturing that's all it is it causes a bigger problem more pollution I get guaranteed I did a rant once I just I got to get this off my mind and I did a whole commentary on it so if you want to check that commentary out wherever it is you can get all my reasons why this is dumb dumb dumb but in any event I didn't know I was hitting a nerve with this question but just in terms of principle the the principle is laws have to be enforceable and they have to be they have to be reasonably enforceable so if a state wants to say that's not allowed even though they are separate individuals because we cannot tell if you are telling the truth about it that's fine with me I don't think that denies their the humanity of the unborn I think it's just it's just practical and now men can get pregnant so even if you're a band driving you can say I'm pregnant you could I'd like to see somebody try that all right um Greg here here's actually here's another one from Brad from Australia yeah he was in the last episode I think Jesus commands us to forgive our enemies does it follow that we are to extend any form of forgiveness to Satan my intuition says no but I can't explain why um because well this this actually raises a larger issue about the requirements for forgiveness and arguably at

least and I've read different people on this and when I respect a lot Doug Givitt and a philosopher and that talk about forgiveness is only required when the when he circumstances or the criterion are met like repentance confession and repentance now that's a requirement for our forgiveness at least the state of our forgiveness before God we have to come before God and and confess and and have a complete change of mind about things we're going in a different direction here in order for forgiveness to apply to us that's that's inherent in putting faith in Christ and that's a requirement for God so the idea that we are forgiving a bunch of other people especially those that didn't even harm us um just as a blanket thing I do not think that's taught I still have to work out some of the details of this and there is a element of forgiveness and you know who it talks about this distinction is Kevin DeYoung in his new book on the Lord's Prayer that sometimes we focus in there is a debt that needs to be released that people owe us and we release them of the debt I don't know that Satan has any debt to us he's a scoundrel obviously but he isn't oh was anything but there's also what he calls you know a psychological therapeutic kind of forgiveness that he he's somewhat dismissive of DeYoung is because that's not real biblical forgiveness although I think there's maybe a role for that I've talked about it here like how do you let go of crimes committed against you by somebody who's dead you know Jesus talked about forgiveness 70 times 7 if they come to you and repent seven times he says no 70 times 7 so I think there's some criteria there are just in the standard of forgiveness that need to be taken into consideration and certainly don't apply to the devil also I don't think he ever commands us to forgive our enemies he commands us to forgive those who repent but he he commands us to love our enemies which is different but but that's always in the context of human beings and I think the reason is the human beings we're actually in the same boat we're all we're all you know we're all born of Adam and Eve we're all we're all the same kind of being we're all sinners we're all looking for forgiveness and for that reason we are commanded to not look at them as our ultimate enemy but we are commanded to look at the devil you know what we do not fight against flesh and blood flesh and blood but against the devil and and the powers you know all those things powers so we're actually told that's where we're supposed to focus our fighting not on the people and so I think there's a good distinction there yeah plus who's our model for love and forgiveness Jesus okay how did he deal with demons get out of here shut up yeah go into the pigs be gone there there is a real you're gonna get yours there there is a real distinction between us and the devil that matters here um you don't think we're commanded to love Satan do you I think we had this maybe that's great for those who persecute you no it's not it's human beings all right well hopefully that answers your question Brad um I'm trying to think if there was anything else I'm my memory is terrible if you say I feel like there was something else I know half the time Greg I leave this show and I think oh man I forgot to say ABC your your cup overflows with wisdom that's so you have so much to offer you listener all we ever knew how many things I thought of later that I wish that it said oh well maybe that question will come up again another time all right well I think later are the things I shouldn't have said that I did say that's the difference between you and me Amy well

thank you so much for your questions send us those questions on twitter with the hashtag #strask or go through our website just go to our podcast page choose hashtag #strask and then you'll find a link you can send us a question just make sure you keep it short the link the bit tweet is only 280 characters just a couple of sentences and we will consider your question for #strask this is Amy Hall and Greg Coco for a stand to reason

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