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What Is the Christian View of Surrogacy?

November 13, 2023



#STRask - Stand to Reason

Question about how Christians should view surrogacy.

* My sister is considering surrogacy, and it makes me feel uncomfortable as I don't know what God's stance would be. What is the Christian view of surrogacy?

Transcript

Greetings, Greg. Amy's been sitting here silent for 60 seconds trying to figure out how to start, and that's what you came up with. I just wanted to try something different today, Greg.

Greg, you did. Greetings. This is the hashtag, SDR.

Whatever the season happens to be. Alright, Greg, let's start with the question from Michaela. What is the Christian view of surrogacy? My sister has had years of infertility and a few failed IVF.

They are considering surrogacy. It makes me feel uncomfortable as I don't know what God's stance would be. I'm already unsure on IVF as it is, but I don't struggle with infertility.

Actually, there's probably probably be ambitious to say there is a Christian view of it since there. This hasn't been a factor for ages where Christians have developed a point of view that seems consistent with scripture. Even since surrogacy has been a possibility, which has been probably 20 years, I don't know, it became more popular about 10 years ago as a way of providing a child for a couple that is infertile for whatever reason is not able to have their own children.

The objections in a certain sense are going to be more philosophical. This I learned from Scott Ray over at Talbot, philosopher there in ethics, and I think he's got an important point. He is not in favor of surrogacy.

What surrogacy does, there's a number of different, maybe liabilities or concerns. This would be somewhat kind of a wisdom assessment. What surrogacy does is it takes something that's a vice and turns it into a virtue.

Think of it not this way as if this is a twist on it, but this is what it is. A woman gets pregnant for the purpose of giving her baby away. A woman gets pregnant for the purpose of giving her baby away.

I'm choosing my words advisedly here because even though in vitro fertilization of some sort was involved, maybe it's not even her egg. To me, that's largely inconsequential. The baby, she has been building and forming that baby based on someone else's genetic code and someone else's, I guess, as I go.

It's not like it's all hers in one sense. I understand that, but the disconnect is somewhat inconsequential. What she gets is a living human person that's at a cellular level and then implanted at her as if from her perspective that had been created by her husband and herself.

Then that baby begins to grow there. She nurtures it, cares for it, bonds with it, provides for it that baby gets used to the body of that baby's mother, functional mother, not genetic mother, but de facto mother in all other ways. Then after the baby is born, the mother severs that relationship with the child that she has created.

Now, when I see created, of course, you can make the distinction and it would be accurate that in fact the human, she did not create the human, particularly if this is not her egg that was incriminated. But what she did is she was the domicile, the place where that human grew and developed in a very intimate way. It's not even like adopting a little baby.

You know, we have two daughters that were, we adopted within 48 hours of their birth, but there is clearly, especially in one case, a kind of psychic connection to their birth. And I don't know any other way to put it. There's a deep bond and connection there.

And others have noted this too. Even people who are children who are adopted early who don't even know who their birth parents are, it is not unusual for them to feel like they're in an alien family. And they have this sense about it.

I don't know how they do that. Just go figure, but it's a dynamic. And I've even noticed it with my own children.

All right. So what you and I'm also aware because these are open adoptions, we knew the mothers and still do know the mothers, the birth mothers of our children and know the cost that it was to them to give up the child that they've carried. All this time.

And I honestly don't think it makes that much difference. If they knew that the child that

has been forming in their womb for nine months wasn't initially created in their womb, but was created in vitro and that immediately planted their womb. I think that in terms of the sense of attachment and motherhood, this is inconsequential.

And so what is required then, and this is another part of the problem, it's an economic problem, if you will. Maybe that's not the right word. But oftentimes when you have mothers who are donors of babies, they don't want to give the baby up according to contractual agreement after the baby is born and because of that bonding.

So the way Scott Ray puts it is you take something that is a virtue and that is being bonded in protective and desiring of your child that you have born and turns that into a vice because now that's getting in the way with you fulfilling your contractual agreement of why you carry the baby in the first place. And in terms of vice into a virtue and the vice is that a mother can be disregard her maternal attachment to her child and just deliver this child to someone else. Okay.

And I understand the motivation. The motivation is to help out another couple, but look what you're doing. You have a natural, for lack of a better word, institution or a feature of the natural world, which is motherhood.

And you are turning the whole thing on its head. You have noble motivations for doing it, but just turning it on its head, nonetheless. And think of a woman who gives birth to a child and does not want the child, sever all emotional attachment with the child and gets rid of the child.

I mean, this has happened, of course, and there's been some movies that are traded on this notion. Do we think of this woman in a noble way because of what she's done? No, we think, gosh, there's something wrong here. If your attitude is get that thing away from me, go away, get it out of my life.

Now, of course, the characterization there isn't exactly what we see in surrogacy, but, but it is, in fact, what's going on. I am carrying this child for nine months, and then I am severing my relationship with it and giving this child to the parent willfully and purposefully giving it away. And in fact, I got pregnant through a vitro for the reason of giving this child away.

To me, that's just obviously trying to think of the best way of putting it. The word that came to mind is twisted, but it's not a nice way of putting it, but I can't think of another way of identifying it. Now, again, I understand the motivation.

And even if there is a deep data satisfaction on behalf, on the part of the, excuse me, surrogate mother, in surrendering that child, which she has formed and created, formed and sustained, not created, formed and sustained, in her room for nine months, even if she feels good about that, and that she's even maybe a little conflicted still, this is a

great good she's doing to other people. The easier it is for her to do that, to me, the more problematic it becomes, because that's the baby she carried and formed in her room for nine months. So that's the concern.

You have this practical concern of turning things up. I should say you have this, I'm not sure, arguably moral concern of turning this relationship upside down. And then you have the practical concern of maintaining contractual agreements.

And it's also on another level, it's baby selling. Okay, you're going to give me money to produce a baby to sell to you. How is it not that? I don't see how it could not be construed otherwise.

Now, if some people, obviously some women cannot carry for whatever reason, which means then that they are, again, I'm trying to think, look, it's unfortunate. And there are ways around that that are morally acceptable. I think it'd be a chosen example.

If that person carries, but surrogacy, in my view, is completely off the reservation for the reasons I mentioned. I think there are two problems here. One of them is the problem with surrogacy in itself, which you described very well there, Greg.

The second problem concerns the consequences, the unintended consequences of the industry as a whole. And these are the same issues I have with IVF. And so we might disagree.

And I am not for IVF either. And if you are interested, we've written some on in vitro fertilization on our website. And Alan and I did a podcast a few years ago after someone called in and said that they had 20, I think it was 25 embryos, and they didn't know what to do with them.

So check out that podcast. I'll just leave IVF aside for a second. But the farther you get from the natural order, the way that God set things up, the more unintended consequences you will have.

And in this case, and you touched on this, Greg, one of the biggest problems with supporting this industry being part of this industry is that you're commodifying human beings. So what you see out there, I mean, you can look on social media. You can find posts from usually a gay couple because they're not able to have their own children.

So they'll say, well, we wanted this and this we picked out all these traits that we wanted. And then we hired this woman who matched those traits to give birth to our babies. So they're treating a baby as a commodity that they build and choose rather than something that's received a human being.

And so you also see all sorts of problems. Like, if they decide they don't want, I've seen somebody and I can't remember what was wrong with the baby or if there was

something wrong with the baby. But they ordered this surrogate to kill the baby.

And she didn't want to. And I think ultimately the law did force her to do it. But it's there are also.

Because it wasn't her property. It was the property of the other couple that arranged for the surrogacy. Right.

And I can't remember what was the reason. Maybe the baby had Down syndrome. I can't remember what it was.

But that's a thing. You find something isn't quite what you ordered. And then you discard the human being.

And this loss of human dignity. And it's training us to think of human beings in a certain way. And that's going to have all sorts of effects on all sorts of things in our society.

And the lower that we think of human beings, the worst human beings will be treated. So even if you could overcome some of the problems of it in itself, if you are contributing to this whole system, you're contributing to a big problem. Now, it's not just the babies are being commodified.

Women are being commodified. People are paying women to use their wombs to create babies. So you have these baby farms basically in other countries where women in Third World countries are just acting as incubators for people in the West who don't want to have babies or can't or whatever it is.

That they're ordering these babies and paying women to use their bodies. I mean, none of this is a good thing. Well, you use the word industry and that I think helps us to see actually what's going on here.

Sometimes I've gone through the grocery store, you know, and I've joked with somebody because they're pushing a cart down the aisle and there's a cute little kid in there. Right. I say, hey, which aisle do you get that one on? I want to go over there.

That's a good one. And of course, it's just a joke and they're chuckling because I'm actually saying something nice over at the baby. But this is actually the reality though, is the idea that you can go to a market that represents an industry in which you could just handpick, so to speak, your own baby.

And then if it turns out, oh, wait a minute, this isn't what I wanted. It's amazing to me. I'm just going on your memory and what you said that then this baby can be terminated.

And the mother who carried the baby has no recourse to keep the baby because the baby doesn't belong to her, even though virtually every cell in that baby's body came from her and her support and her nurturing in the womb. The sperm and the egg belong

to somebody else. Therefore, they have ownership.

They have ownership of that human being that allows them to eliminate the human being in virtue of the fact that that being is chattel property of the people who made the arrangement. And of course, chattel property is this was the problem with slavery, ownership of a human being. But I don't know how you could cast it any differently.

All kinds of things could be said about the nobility of helping and caring and all that other stuff. Incredibly sanitized with appeals to good intentions and look at all the satisfaction and fulfillment that's going to come out of this. So the in that line of argument, essentially saying, look at the end that is accomplished or we think is going to be accomplished.

We intend to be accomplished. Therefore, it justifies this means that we have put in place. And part of what I'm saying is the means, the end doesn't justify this means.

What you're saying is there are different ends to keep in mind, different consequences of these behaviors that a lot of people are not considering. And boy, that was really great. And the other thing that I thought of, it's great what you said, Amy.

And the other thing that I thought of there, what's reflected kind of in this mentality is that adults are owed a child if they want one. That's why you can have single women who are well off actresses, for example, who don't need a man, but they still want to adopt a child. I'll get a baby, or I'll have a surrogacy or something, but I'm just for myself because I want to have a child.

Notice whose interests are centered there. It's that woman's interests, not the child's interests, because what that woman is guaranteeing is that child will be bereft of a father, which that child needs. That's the natural order for a reason.

And most ordinary folk can see that. So this is often driven by this, not just a desire to have children, but this sense that I am owed a child, and therefore I can fulfill my right to have a child through some kind of other means than the ordinary way. And think about another thing that's behind this, another worldview idea, and that is where does our value come from? Is our value intrinsic because we're made in the image of God, or is our value instrumental such that we gain value by having certain characteristics or certain abilities? If it's the case that our value comes from being made in the image of God, then the idea that you would maybe even create a bunch of embryos and pick out the ones you like the best and use the other ones for research because they don't meet your standards.

They don't have that instrumental value that you're looking for. I mean, that's the whole idea of the worldview behind the idea that you can just say, hey, we don't want that baby because of X, Y, or Z, so therefore you can just kill it. Well, you must kill it.

Yeah, or yes, you're required to kill it because its value is only in what it gives to us. That's right. And if it meets our standards, I mean, this is a very dangerous idea.

And every time this happens, you're building that idea into our culture and there will be consequences in many different areas, not only in this area. That's right. We'll put it.

All right, Greg, we're out of time. One question today. We haven't done that in a while.

So I... An important issue, though. And a lot of particulars here. What I like about us being able to talk about this together is to help people see, here's an issue that seems in a certain sense one-dimensional.

Well, what's wrong with this? We're trying to help other people out. And this is what Thomas Sowell calls, I think, level one thinking. You're just thinking about this immediate intention that you want to fulfill and the intention seems noble.

So that's all you have to worry about. But what Thomas Sowell says is you have to think of the horizontal impact, the impact in other areas that this decision is going to have. And he's usually talking about a cultural policy issue here and the long-term consequences of it.

If you just stick with level one thinking, you're going to make all kinds of... You're going to do things with good intentions and create all kinds of destruction as a result. And this is what we want to help our listeners to do, to be able to think beyond the immediate concern. What are the ramifications long-term and also the ramifications short-term but in other areas of a decision like this? It's really hard to think that way when you are in a situation that is so painful and has so much grief.

And this seems like it's a way to resolve it. And that has to be so tempting. And my heart goes out to people who are struggling with this, but I just urge you not to give into that, to put the child ahead of yourself and to put children ahead of yourself and to not play into this whole industry that will ultimately harm children and all human beings, I think.

All right. Thank you, Michaela. If you have a question, you can send it to us on Twitter with the hashtag STRS or you can go to our website at str.org. Just look for our hashtag STRS page and you'll find a link there.

You can send us your question. Just keep it to maybe two or three sentences at most and we'll consider it for the show. Thanks for listening.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Cogle for Stand to Reason.