

Christians and Birth Control, Part 1, by Stephanie Gray

When I present about abortion, I'm sometimes asked about birth control. There are those who think that if one is against abortion one should surely be in favor of birth control; after all, wouldn't increasing the latter decrease the former? Actually it does not, as I address here (<https://loveunleasheslife.com/blog/2015/12/2/does-birth-control-prevent-abortion-by-stephanie-gray>). I think a more fundamental question, though, is not "Will birth control decrease or increase abortion?" but rather, "Is birth control morally acceptable?"

That came up at a recent presentation I gave at a Christian church in my home city of Vancouver, Canada. This topic is often framed as a Catholic-Protestant debate, with the Catholic church teaching contraception is morally wrong and many Protestant churches accepting some forms of contraception. This difference, however, is a new phenomenon. And by "new" I mean the last 90 years. The history of churches of various denominations claiming to follow Christ for the previous 2,000 years has been one where contraception has been rejected—until the Anglicans first embraced it in 1930. I therefore believe a solid, Biblical case *can* be made for objecting to birth control—appealing to all people who claim to follow Christ, regardless of denominational differences. This series will endeavor to do that.

After my aforementioned presentation where, during Q & A, I briefly tackled the topic of birth control, a Christian audience member e-mailed to ask me about permanent birth control such as vasectomies. Here is what I wrote:

Like with birth control in general, I would disagree with it. I think it's helpful to articulate "The Why" behind such a belief, so here is my explanation:

What do we know about God's designs for human nature?

Genesis tells us that God made man in His image (Genesis 1:26). God also made man male and female (Genesis 1:27). And after being created, Adam and Eve--who were creatures--were "blessed" by God (Genesis 1:28) and given the command and power to be creatures who create: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). We know biologically that Adam and Eve's power to create new image-bearers was something to be achieved together, and that this is a profound good ("Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." -Psalm 127:3-5).

But even when Adam and Eve would come together in a "one flesh" (Genesis 1:24) union, new life would not necessarily be guaranteed. God designed males so that it is stamped in their nature to generally always be fertile, whereas with females God designed them to only have fertility a short time each month (and for only a season of their lifetime).

How ought we treat our bodies?

In 1 Corinthians 6:19 we are told, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?" Since we are image-bearers who are temples of the Holy Spirit, we ought to treat our bodies well and strive to maintain them as they were designed to be. For example, if there is an ailment or pathology, it is good to treat it so as to restore the body to health. Indeed, in the Scriptures we see Jesus healing peoples' physical ailments: the man blind from birth who Jesus gave sight to (John 9:1-11), the Centurion's servant lying paralyzed who Jesus healed (Matthew 8:5-13), and Peter's mother-in-law who Jesus removed a fever from (Matthew 8:14-15), to name a few. In Matthew 9:35 we are told that "Jesus went about all the cities and villages...healing every disease and every infirmity."

What distinguishes a married relationship from other kinds of relationships?

The only relationship in which we are permitted to have sex is a married relationship between a male and female with the person we commit to until death do us part. Parents and children are extremely close and can have profound connections and knowledge about the other, as can siblings and even friends, but none of those close relationships may include sex. These other relationships can include sharing secrets, struggles, hopes, and dreams, even living under the same roof and sharing income (all of which marriage also has), but not sex.

When I was reading Westside's website [the Christian church where the audience member heard my pro-life presentation] I noticed that they address this in their Statement of Faith: "Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women..." (<http://www.wchurch.ca/OurBeliefs>).

What do God's designs for human nature and how we ought to treat our bodies, as well as the nature of marriage, tell us about God's designs for sex?

The daily fertility of a man and the monthly fertility of a woman is, first of all, a sign of the male and female bodies working correctly—as they were designed. A man's fertility or a woman's fertility, by itself, will not produce offspring though. It is through the male and female coming together in an act of sex during a fertile time that the next generation can be produced. Given the command to be fruitful and multiply and given that sex is how nature will produce babies, leads us to conclude that one of God's purposes for sex is to create offspring. Nature tells us something else important: The hormones oxytocin and vasopressin are released when a couple has sex, which helps them bond to each other in a way that makes them feel more connected than if the hormones hadn't been released (which is why oxytocin is also released in childbirth and breastfeeding—to help mom and baby bond). So we could also say that the nature of our bodies reveals that God designed sex to bond, to unite, the loving spouses in an act where they both give and receive of each other.

Which leads to the next point: God has commanded us to love, to will the other's good. We are told, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). Marriage and sex are a very specific way of expressing love to one's spouse, which we see in Ephesians 5:21-32:

"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.' This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church."

Indeed, Westside echoes this in its Statement of Faith that I again noticed on its website: "...marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching

ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord" (<http://www.wchurch.ca/OurBeliefs>).

Since God has taught us through His Word that marriage is to be a picture of Christ's love for the Church, we ought to reflect on how Christ's love for His Church was expressed? Through Christ's life, death, and resurrection we see a love that was total (He gave all of Himself, laying down His very life), faithful ("I am with you always to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20)), free ("...I lay down my life...No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (Jn 10:17-18)), and fruitful ("I came that they may have life, and it abundantly" (Jn 10:10)).

Since sex is a distinguishing feature of the married relationship, it makes sense that the very act of sex ought to be a physical manifestation of reflecting Christ's love for the church, a type of "body language": a love that is total (giving and receiving all of oneself/one's spouse), faithful (only with one's spouse, in a permanent union), free (consent, not coercion), and fruitful (life-giving, literally and spiritually).

How does all of the above lead to the conclusion that birth control, whether temporary or permanent, is wrong?

By destroying, withholding, or rejecting the good and healthy function of fertility, birth control maims the body or the nature of the sex act. Fertility is not a pathology or a sign of the body working wrong—it is a sign of health, of the body working correctly. So consider, then, a story I referenced in my talk about the young woman with Body Integrity Identity Disorder (BIID) who intentionally blinded herself with drain cleaner (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-woman-who-put-drain-cleaner-in-her-eyes-wanted-to-be-blind_us_563af2cce4b0411d306fb1de): Most people are horrified that someone whose eyes were doing exactly what they should be doing (seeing) would intentionally destroy the capacity they were designed to have. We consider it shocking, yet that's exactly what birth control, whether temporary or permanent, does: it destroys the capacity the reproductive organs were designed, by God, to have.

Consider it this way: Such maiming does not treat our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, nor does it follow Christ's example of being healer (we already looked above at Jesus restoring people to the healthy state they were lacking (e.g., giving sight to the blind or taking away a woman's fever)). In fact, it does the exact opposite of Jesus: Where He takes sick body parts, or functions, and restores them, birth control takes healthy body parts, or functions, and destroys them.

Moreover, while both fertility and sight are functions a healthy body has, there is something about fertility that sets it apart from other functions: Fertility allows creature to work with Creator to make new image-bearers. ***This is not to be taken lightly*** and is worth stating again: Fertility allows creature to work with Creator to make new image-bearers. It is a profoundly beautiful power entrusted to us by our Heavenly Father. To suppress one's fertility is to communicate to God that there is something wrong in how He made the human person.

Furthermore, consider the aforementioned teaching about married love being an illustration of the love between Christ and His church. Since a husband is to represent Christ, it should come as no surprise that, unlike women whose fertility is limited and will eventually dissipate, a man's fertility is maintained through time (even if changing, his body still makes sperm). The husband has the capacity to continually pour forth into his bride his life-giving seed, just as Christ does; however, vasectomies, withdrawal, or condoms would suppress this, making the man act in the opposite way of Christ: Jesus does not sterilize His life-giving love for his bride, the church.

Or consider the wife who, like the Church, is to be a receptive vessel receiving her spouse's life-giving love and allowing it to bear fruit. If a woman blocks a man's sperm or suppresses her eggs from releasing, she acts in the opposite way of the church: Christ's bride is not to be closed to her bridegroom's seed; instead, the church is to welcome the seed of Christ's love so it produces fruit.

Recalling what was mentioned in the last answer, that Christ's love for his church was total and fruitful, we see how birth control is the antithesis of this: it is not totally giving of oneself, nor is it totally receiving one's spouse. It is also actively stopping the fruitfulness of offspring. And yet, because the couple using birth control still engages in sex, it's as though their body (through body language) is "speaking" a lie—they are going through the actions of what should reflect the love between Christ and His church but not meaning it because they've rejected or suppressed part of its nature. We ought to speak truth, and not lie, with our bodies. Consider the actions of Judas: when he brought the crowd to arrest Jesus he lied with his body: He kissed Jesus (Mark 14:44-45), and in doing so he "spoke" with his body an action of affection and friendship, but because he did not mean that (he actually meant to betray) he lied with his body. So it is with using birth control and having sex—it is having our bodies go through the motions of what should express the love between Christ and His church, but then to distort its very nature and therefore not mean it.

Does this mean a couple can never avoid getting pregnant?

A good starting point with this answer is to ask, "How ought people view sex?" Because sex is very good, because it is a powerful expression of love, because it bonds two people together who have committed to each other for life (when that is not always an easy thing to do), because it produces new life God has told us to create, because children are good (Psalm 127:3-5), because we should be selfless and not selfish, and because the only relationship sex is allowed in is marriage, sex (with all that it brings about, including children), should be viewed as a very important element in marriage. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 7:5 we are told, "Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer."

There may be times where a couple prayerfully discerns that they have serious reasons to avoid getting pregnant. It's possible one spouse is sick, or they've recently had a child, or they're overwhelmed with their responsibilities caring for their other children, etc. In such cases, it is understandable that such a couple would try to avoid getting pregnant. Just because that "end" is acceptable, though, it doesn't follow that every "means" to get to that end is acceptable. To use an analogy, it is good for a student to pass a test, but there is a very important distinction between passing the test by the means of studying versus passing the test by the means of cheating.

We have already gone through why the means of birth control to achieve the end of avoiding pregnancy is not consistent with how God made humans and sex. There is another means to avoid pregnancy when a couple has discerned a good reason for doing so, and that is to work *with* God's designs to choose when to have sex. It is helpful to again look at how God made us: He specifically designed men to always be fertile; He specifically designed women to have limited fertility. Modern, scientific, research-based methods of natural family planning (See here: <http://nfp.marquette.edu/> and here: <https://www.rrmclinic.com/> and here: <https://femmhealth.org/> and here: <http://www.fertilitycare.org/>) allow couples to determine precisely when in a given month God has made a woman fertile versus infertile. The couple may then choose to avoid sex at times when they discover they are fertile.

"How is that different from birth control?" some might ask. It is different by the means. In one case a couple simply chooses not to have sex (and there are many times in any given day that a couple does not

have sex). In the other case a couple engages in sex that is supposed to reflect Christ's love for the church (total, faithful, free, and fruitful) but their actions say otherwise. And here's the key point: **One means works *with* God's designs; the other means maims God's designs.**

Christians and Birth Control, Part 2, by Stephanie Gray

After a Christian audience member read my message in the last post, she raised some objections, which prompted me to dive deeper into making the Christian case for sex free of birth control. Here's my reply to her:

Thanks so much for taking the time to read my e-mail, and to share your thoughts and ask questions. Regarding your questions, I'll start with your second one first. You ask, "...If condoms allow couples to be intimate together at any point, could this not help limit the temptation to turn elsewhere?"

An important starting place is reflecting on the moral principle that the ends does not justify the means. In other words, just because an action produces a good result doesn't make the action itself good. To provide an analogy, let's imagine my sister needs a heart transplant. I love her and wish to save her life. Let's imagine I'm so desperate to save her that I kidnap a stranger and arrange for black market doctors to remove the stranger's heart and transplant it into my sister. While I might celebrate the "end" result of my sister being saved, we cannot overlook that the "means" I used to get there was not ethical—nor do those means become ethical just because something good comes from the action.

From that analogy we can see that bringing about something good does not justify the original behavior. So instead of asking, "Could condom use bring about good results in marriage?" we instead need to ask, "Is condom use consistent with God's designs for marriage?" If the answer to that second question is yes, *then* one could consider what good results could come from such use. But if the answer is no, then there is no point in moving to the question about whether good results could come. The matter becomes moot; if something violates God's laws we simply cannot do it.

So that's where I would recommend going back to my previous remarks. Consider again the example of the woman with Body Integrity Identity Disorder (BIID) who maimed her eyes—we know it's fundamentally disordered to do that. She is stopping her eyes from doing what they ought to be doing, and the man, by using a condom, is stopping his body from giving what it's supposed to be giving. The man, who is to reflect Christ, is taking his life-giving seed that has the potential, in the right conditions, to create a new image-bearer and is depositing it into a piece of latex instead of his wife's body. Would Christ ever sterilize His love for His bride? Would He ever hold back?

When a couple has sex their bodies are communicating something—a coming together, a communion of persons, but to put on a condom is to say with one's body (even if the person isn't conscious of communicating this): "I don't want all of you. I don't want to give all of me." Go back to Judas' kiss: kisses, by their nature, *mean* something, but when we go through the motions of that act of affection but actually mean harm for the other, we are lying with our bodies. Likewise, to go through the motions of sex, an act of total self-gift, is to mean something, but then to not totally give, or to not totally receive, is to also lie with one's body.

Even if we think about the practical aspects of it, condoms are disruptive to what should be a natural flow of intimacy. One of my married friends spoke candidly about how her and her husband's intimacy would have to be paused, interrupted for him to put on a condom, and how this was a challenge for her. Moreover, I don't think we should overlook how a man's body is designed to typically not release sperm until the moment of orgasm—think about that in light of condoms: When a man is at his height of

sexual arousal and intimacy with his wife, his body is designed to release life-giving seed and instead he withholds it from his wife's body to later throw it in the garbage.

An analogy could be made here to eating: God designed food consumption to be a source of nutrients for our bodies, in order to sustain them. Would we consider it disordered if someone ate food but then intentionally vomited because they didn't want the effect the food would have on their bodies? I think so. We would say food was designed to be consumed, not purged, and it's wrong to avoid the nutrients God designed eating to provide. Or consider this thought experiment that, while not real, helps illustrate the point: Imagine someone wants to lose weight but they don't want to diet, so imagine there was such a thing as a stomach condom for people who wished to eat in a social setting with friends, but not receive the nutrition and calories such eating was designed to give their bodies. They also didn't want to have to vomit the food up in public places, so the stomach condom was developed as a solution: Each time food passed through the stomach, the stomach condom would surround the food and prevent the nutrients from being absorbed by the body. Instead, the food would pass through the body in the protective sac so as to not allow the food to achieve its purpose. Would we say that's disordered? Wouldn't we say if someone wants to be more careful about the amount of calories they intake, that they should eat healthy and not have excessive portion sizes—that they should work with God's natural designs for their body rather than go against its nature? Wouldn't we say that dieting requires self-control and the stomach condom requires none? How is using a condom in sex substantively different to this thought experiment?

In fact, we see violating nature in this regard to be very displeasing to God—consider Onan: In Genesis 38:8-10 it says, "Then Judah said to Onan, 'Go in to your brother's wife, and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother.' But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife he spilled the semen on the ground, lest he should give offspring to his brother. And what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord, and he slew him also."

Notice that it was what he "did" that was displeasing—and what he did was spill his seed. God's displeasure is not merely in Onan not fulfilling the Levirate law, which called for him to produce a child for his brother. How can I say this? Because the consequence for that violation was not death, as Deuteronomy 25:7-9 outlines: The widow is to complain to the elders who are to speak to the unwilling brother-in-law and if he doesn't change the widow is to "go up to him in the presence of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot, and spit in his face; and she shall answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.'" God's punishment of death for Onan was more severe than what the law called for, which indicates God wasn't merely displeased that Onan did not create offspring for his brother as much as he was displeased (to the point of inflicting death) that Onan intentionally spilled his seed in an act of sex.

John Kippley, in "Covenant, Christ and Contraception" (New York: Alba House, 1970, page 19), explains it this way:

"Onan went through the motions of the life-giving act but refused to accept the consequences. He withdrew in order that the act could carry no reproductive consequences . . . [H]e went through the motions of the Levirate covenant, but he denied the reality of that covenant."

An article analyzing this very subject highlights the fact that this interpretation was the common one among various denominations until the 20th century:

"That Onan's unnatural act as such is condemned as sinful in Gen. 38: 9-10 was an interpretation held by the Fathers and Doctors of the Catholic Church, by the Protestant Reformers, and by nearly all celibate and married theologians of all Christian denominations until the early years of this century, when some

exegetes began to approach the text with preconceptions deriving from the sexual decadence of modern Western culture and its exaggerated concern for 'over-population.' Sad to say, these preconceptions have since become entrenched as a new exegetical 'orthodoxy' which can no longer see even a trace of indignation in this passage of Scripture against intrinsically sterile forms of genital activity as such." (Source: <http://rtforum.org/lt/lt67.html>)

Furthermore, I would go back to the very beginning of the creation of man where we are told to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). These are the first words the Scriptures show God saying to the male and female. A man's body is designed to be fruitful through ejaculation—*in other words, without ejaculating, he cannot bear offspring; this means that to ejaculate into a condom instead of his wife is to violate the very first command God gave us.* It is to take the one way the man is fruitful when it comes to having offspring and to intentionally deprive that fruitful act of its very nature of multiplication.

I realize I have gone on long enough, but I want to briefly address your other question, "Where do we draw the line on what is acceptable to avoid pregnancy and what is not?" In reference to 1 Corinthians 7:5 it says, "I say this by way of concession not of command." (1 Cor 7:6). Ultimately there is no specific prescription given in the Scriptures for frequency of sex in marriage. What it does say in 1 Corinthians 7:4, though, is telling: "the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does."

In each case, the spouse is tasked with being focused on the other, so I would say a simple prescription when it comes to sex and pregnancy is for the spouses to ask, "What is the most loving thing to do?" And given that the couple, not I, know the intricacies of their relationship, family life, etc., they are the ones to prayerfully answer that and seek counsel about their specific circumstances as they need it. To give a general example though, certainly when a wife has just given birth and one asks, "What is the most loving thing to do [in terms of having sex or not]?" that analysis will easily lead to the answer of postponing sex (and I'll note that the suggested time of abstinence of 4-6 weeks post-birth is much longer than the abstinence required for Natural Family Planning).

I hope this has been help for you. I know that for me to think through and explain all of this is helping me understand it more deeply. I welcome your feedback!

Christians and Birth Control, Part 3, by Stephanie Gray

My invitation for feedback on the last post was responded to, and this next part was my answer to her:

You said, "As far as the story of Onan goes, I am still researching this as it seems the Catholic church and Protestant [church] have different views on how this story relates to birth control. You argue that what Onan DID that was displeasing was spill his seed but others would argue that was he DID was refuse to raise an offspring for his brother and the means for that was spilling his seed."

Although in the present-day it appears the interpretation of Onan is a Catholic-Protestant difference, this is a new phenomenon. The article I mentioned previously (<http://rtforum.org/lt/lt67.html>) states, "That Onan's unnatural act as such is condemned as sinful in Gen. 38: 9-10 was an interpretation held by the Fathers and Doctors of the Catholic Church, **by the Protestant Reformers, and by nearly all celibate and married theologians of all Christian denominations until the early years of [the 21st] century**" (emphasis added). The major turning point for many Protestant churches to begin embracing birth control was only in the last 90 years—beginning with the Anglican's Lambeth conference in England in 1930 (<http://bound4life.com/history-of-contraception-in-the-protestant-church/>). This means that for almost 2,000 years the general practice was for Christian churches to reject contraception.

Consider Reformer John Calvin who wrote, “It is a horrible thing to pour out seed besides the intercourse of man and woman. Deliberately avoiding the intercourse, so that the seed drops on the ground, is doubly horrible...” (Calvin's Commentary on Genesis, vol. 2, part 16).

There’s also Martin Luther who declared, “Onan must have been a malicious and incorrigible scoundrel. This is a most disgraceful sin. It is far more atrocious than incest or adultery. We call it unchastity, yes, a Sodomitic sin. For Onan goes into her; that is, he lies with her and copulates, and when it comes to the point of insemination, spills the semen, lest the woman conceive. Surely at such a time the order of nature established by God in procreation should be followed” (Luther’s Works 7, 20-21).

Moreover, if we return to the passage in Genesis, it’s important to emphasize that death was not the prescribed consequence for Onan’s failure to produce a child—public shaming was (see Deuteronomy 25:7-9). The fact that God struck Onan down tells us there was something *more* to what he did than not produce offspring. What else was it? It was spilling his seed—the withholding of the life-creating force that was ready to be given. Onan engaged in sexual activity to the point of bringing forth his life-giving seed but then he intentionally divorced the transfer of such seed from the union of two persons. He engaged in the act of sex but changed how God intended that act to be completed.

That brings me to this other point you made:

“And I agree, that God's good and beautiful design between man and woman did not include any barriers or birth control. It was intended to be total, faithful, fruitful and free as Christ's love is to us. On that note, however, God's good design also didn't include humans eating animals, or people damaging and polluting the earth with motor vehicles. There is so much that was not part of God's good and perfect design that has been tainted by sin. We live in a broken and fallen world and we as Christians have to navigate within this. As we await the day when this world will be made new and perfect once again, can the love between a man and woman truly be perfectly faithful, total, fruitful and free as God intended?”

We certainly are living in a broken world tainted by sin—an ongoing reminder of our need for Christ; after all, if we were not sinners we would have no need for a Savior. Does our sinful and imperfect reality change the question of how we *ought* to live? In Matthew 5:48 Jesus says, “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” When we fail at doing this our responsibility is to repent and strive for change, not to embrace our fallen nature. Consider that people fail at The 10 Commandments all the time and yet as Christians we embrace the Commandments, teach them, live them—and then repent when we fail at following them, striving to re-embrace them moving forward. Correspondingly, even if people fail at following God’s designs for sex, we have a duty to embrace such designs, teach them, live them—and then repent when we fail at following them, striving to re-embrace them moving forward (because we cannot undo the past).

As for meat, it’s helpful you brought that up because I think it sheds further light on this topic. When I looked into this issue, I noticed that God *did* allow humans to consume animals as food (there is a great explanation of that here: <https://answersingenesis.org/christianity/christian-life/what-would-jesus-eat/>). Interestingly, whereas God’s instructions to Noah and his sons seem to *expand* what humans could eat (“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you” (Genesis 9:3) versus to Adam and Eve he said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food” (Genesis 1:29)) God’s instructions *stay the same* when it comes to peoples’ sexual behavior. God says “Be fruitful and multiply” to both Noah and his sons (Genesis 9:1) *and* to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28). Where the Scriptures explicitly introduce consuming meat, they do not explicitly introduce using contraception. Moreover, even *if* someone were

to respond that God's lack of explicitly introducing contraception does not mean He condemns it, all that I have laid out in this message and previous ones does provide that rationale.

You also wrote, "You argue that when a man ejaculates into a condom he is withholding his life-giving seed. Is not he also withholding his life-giving seed when he remains abstinent over a few days to avoid a woman's ovulation? Both models are stopping fruitfulness in marriage no matter how you word it. Both have the intent to not create a baby. In neither example is the couple fully free to love one another as God intended. There are barriers whether it is plastic or time."

You raise a good point that—on the surface—there seems to be little difference between the barrier of latex and the barrier of time; that is, if we just look at the end result (no pregnancy). With a little digging I think we can discover a more substantial disparity does exist:

We need to distinguish between actions and intentions. It is possible to commit a bad action with good intentions (e.g., have an abortion to avoid a child growing up in an abusive home). And it is possible to commit a good action with bad intentions (help a stranger in front of others so they praise you for being kind). I would suggest that when it comes to morality, we should have both good actions *and* good intentions.

When it comes to the action of condom use (I'll address intentions in a moment) versus waiting for time to pass before having sex, in brief I'd ask this: Isn't there a major difference between changing how God made something and using something as God designed it?

In the case of contraceptive sex, a couple is engaging in the very act of bringing forth seed and then stopping it from achieving its end. In the case of time, since the man is not aroused, there is no seed to give.

In the former case a couple is saying, "If we do what God created, it could make a baby; since we wish to avoid that, we will do what God created but stop God's act from completing its design."

In the latter case a couple is saying, "If we do what God created, it could make a baby; since we wish to avoid that, we will not do what God created because we don't wish to thwart its design. Moreover, God created this act to not always produce life, so we will work with God's designs and come together at another time."

Let's be clear: God has created sex so that it isn't always life-creating (as pointed out earlier, either at certain times of the month or certain times of life). But with condoms we are talking about taking the time God *has* made to potentially result in another image-bearer and to intentionally disrupt that.

I once asked a married friend, who sometimes uses condoms with her husband, "If you knew there was a 100% chance, with or without birth control, that you absolutely would not get pregnant at a particular time you have sex, would you still use a condom?"

"You mean," she clarified, "If we didn't use a condom we would still have a full guarantee of not getting pregnant?"

"Correct," I said.

"No," she responded, "Of course we wouldn't use a condom then."

“So basically,” I said, “If you do use a condom it’s only because there is some possibility that that particular act of sex might result in you and the image-bearer you love more than any human alive creating another human made in the image of God and you’re trying to stop that?”

Couples in monogamous relationships don’t typically use condoms to enhance sexual experiences—they use condoms to *change* a sexual experience from being life-creating to life-avoiding. Does that sound like it’s consistent with God’s designs?

Getting to your point about intention, some might object and say that a couple may have good reason to avoid even the great good of creating new life made in God’s image: Maybe someone is ill or maybe they are exhausted caring for their other children. At times like this, the *intention* of avoiding pregnancy is good. And it’s possible such a couple would use birth control. If so, the issue here would not be their heart (or intentions), but rather their *action*.

Contrast that with another couple who may have selfish reasons to avoid pregnancy and use knowledge of their fertility to avoid sex at fertile times. The issue here would not be their lack of sexual activity (for there are many times a couple is not sexually active) but instead would be the *disposition of their heart*.

There’s a third option: We strive to have good intentions and good actions—if good reasons demand avoiding pregnancy, we ought to work with God’s designs to have sex when He designed it to be infertile, rather than change how God designed sex.

Finally, to address another point, you said, “I also am uncertain about comparing self-control in food and comparing self-control within a marital sex life. I would argue that while yes, we are called to live self-controlled lives—not letting our bodies master us, marital sex and food are quite different from one another and treated differently within Scripture. I would be hesitant to use that analogy.”

I appreciate you bringing this up because it allows me to clarify: My ultimate point in the analogy to food was *not* to focus on self-control (although I made a passing reference to it as it is an important virtue). Instead, it was to focus on the nature of something—on the importance of using things as God designed them. Our bodies are meant to digest nutrients, not have food purged to avoid that. Sex is meant to be a communion of persons, not withholding or pushing away the life-giving seed inherent to the act.