

the promise of a “Sabbath-rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9). Jesus is preparing a place (John 14:2-3), an eternal home. It is a place so eternally wonderful that the troubles of this present time will seem but “light and momentary” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

In the reality of the meantime, however, we also trust in another promise. “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32) Our God who bought us with the price of His very own Son will not leave us to fend for ourselves. People who have a new life of faith have a new way of looking at life and its problems and troubles. Since the cross of Jesus assures us of God’s love, there is nothing that can separate us from that love (Romans 8:35-39). Problems in our lives remind us of the presence of sin in this world and in our flesh but do not indicate the absence of God and His love.

When does life begin? It is as simple as the 3Bs. **Biology** and the **Bible** tell us that life begins at the moment of conception. **Baptism** marks the beginning of new spiritual life. These are inseparably linked. **Baptism** and faith enable us to see the truth of what God has revealed in the **Bible**. That truth enables us to see all human life as valued by God from the moment of conception. That truth enables us to live our lives trusting in promises rather than being overwhelmed by our circumstances.



This new life of faith has three important practical implications:

1. When faced with difficult situations, we do not have to turn to the solutions offered by the world. Abortion is not the answer to a crisis pregnancy. Embryonic stem cell research – research that intentionally destroys a tiny human life for his or her body parts – is not the answer to treating devastating diseases. Assisted suicide is not the answer to chronic or terminal illnesses. Jesus, the Lord of Life is the answer. He has promised to be with us, to get us through, to help us endure what we cannot get through, and to use it all for our spiritual welfare (Romans 8:28, Hebrews 12:7-11).

2. The Holy Spirit who gives us faith produces the fruit of faith in our lives that motivates and influences the choices we make (Galatians 5:16-25). Being pure sexually is a choice that we can make inside and outside of marriage. We can help carry one another’s burdens rather than treating people as if they are burdens. We can humbly bow to God’s will rather than arrogantly asserting our own. Those who have the new life baptism gives can renew that life daily as they recall the promises God makes in baptism.

3. When we do make mistakes, Jesus stands ready and willing to forgive (1 John 1:8-9). Sin need not lead us to despair and hopelessness. Jesus’ forgiveness brings newness to the new life and challenges us to better things (John 8:1-11).



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Biology, Bible, and Baptism

The 3Bs of



When Life Begins

“When does human life begin?”

That question comes up in connection with cloning and embryonic stem cells and genetic testing and the “morning after” pill. Physicians, scientists, politicians, philosophers, and theologians offer a variety of complex and differing answers. Does anyone really know when life begins?

Is it really all that complicated?

Let’s get back to some basics. If the “3Rs” are the basics of education, the “3Bs” are the basics of when life begins – **Biology, Bible, and Baptism.**

Biology

The field of biology that deals with when life begins is embryology. It is embryologists, not those professions listed above, that we should turn to with the question of when life begins. Embryologists and every major textbook of Human Embryology states that a new individual human life begins at conception. An international committee called *Nomina Embryologica* recognizes and approves this definition as correct.

When the sperm and egg come together, a new and unique human being exists. This is true whether this union takes place in the normal way inside a woman’s body or if it takes place in a petri dish. Embryologists speak of this as the beginning of life’s continuum. **It is not something developing into a human being. It is a developing human being.** He or she will continue to develop through the various stages of life. There is no other point where you could say biologically or logically “This is where life begins.” To do so would be arbitrary, subjective, and contrary to established scientific fact.

Nevertheless it is done frequently. Terms like “pre-embryo” and statements like “It’s not human until it is implanted in the uterus” or “You are not pregnant until the embryo is implanted”



have been used, not to express scientific reality, but to justify the dehumanizing of human embryos. Such dehumanizing is necessary if you are going to favor cloning or embryonic stem cell research or “morning after” pills that may prevent a developing human being from attaching to the uterus.

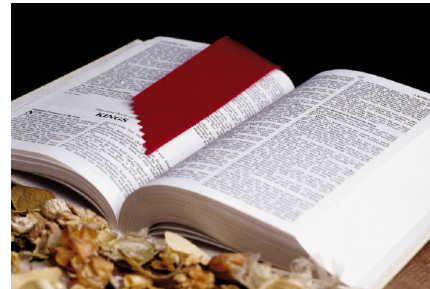
When it comes to biology, the answer to the question of when life begins is not complicated. Embryologists tell us unequivocally that there is a new and unique human life at the moment of conception.

Bible

Before we look at how the Bible affirms what biology tells us, it is important to understand that such affirmation is not absolutely necessary before other Biblical principles apply. Since it is a fact of biology that human life begins at conception, then how the Bible tells us to treat human life begins at that moment. At the moment of conception, the embryo becomes our neighbor to love (Matthew 22:39). He or she is life to be protected (Exodus 20:13). Since human embryos are so vulnerable, they need our defense (Proverbs 31:8-9) and are to be treated as we would treat Jesus Himself (Matthew 25:40). Christians need to be consistent in their treatment of human life. Just as it is inappropriate to designate a beginning to human life wherever we choose other than conception, so it is inappropriate to value human life wherever we choose along life’s continuum.

Now to what the Bible says about the beginning of human life. The Bible does not use language that is as specific as sperm and egg coming together in a fallopian tube. Biblical language expresses the idea that God is intimately involved in our being formed from the very beginning. Psalm 139:13 says, **“For You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.”** The word “knit” expresses a personal “hands on” involvement from the very beginning. It is interesting to read this verse picturing the intricacies of a DNA molecule. It is almost as if it is “knit” together!

The word “womb” used here is not as specific as “uterus.” It has the idea of “inside” and can be used of the entire lower abdomen. We know



that life does not begin in the womb (uterus) but in the fallopian tube. This new little boy or girl has developed for six or seven days before establishing residence in the uterus. The word “womb” as used in Psalm 139, does not restrict God’s action to the uterus and thus does not contradict biology.

The fact that Jesus’ human life began when He was “conceived by the Holy Spirit” affirms that human life is present at the moment of conception. Elizabeth and her unborn son John acknowledge Jesus as already existing within Mary (Luke 1:39-45). Since Mary left to visit Elizabeth immediately after the message from the angel, Jesus may not even have been implanted in her uterus when this encounter took place! To accomplish our salvation, Jesus shared in our humanity (Hebrews 2:14). He became like us in every respect except He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Since we are sinful from the moment of conception (Psalm 51:5), we are human beings in need of salvation from the moment of conception. Jesus had to begin as we did.

Embryologists have discovered the Biblical truth that human life begins at conception.

Baptism

It is critically important that we discuss “When does life begin?” in the spiritual sense as well. Paul says that we are “dead in our transgressions and sins” (Ephesians 2:1), that we are “by nature objects of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3). Therefore, we need to be “made alive” (Ephesians 2:5). Jesus says that we need to be “born again” (John 3:3). Baptism is a means to this new beginning of life.

“We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:4).

This new life is a life of faith. It is a life of trusting in promises. The preeminent promise that grounds this life of faith is

