

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

### VOLUME 1

### H. ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

## Birth control

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In this statement the term **birth control** means control in the sense of 'planned parenthood' or 'responsible parenthood'. It does not mean control in the sense of the prevention of all conception.

1. The question of whether it is right and proper for married couples to use contraceptives is closely bound up with another question: is having children the sole purpose of sexual intercourse in marriage? The answer depends on our understanding of the scriptural purpose or purposes for marriage.
2. According to the bible, the purpose of marriage is to enable husband and wife to
  - provide mutual help and encouragement (Eph 5:25; Gen 2:18)
  - have children (Gen 1:28)
  - avoid sexual immorality (1 Cor 7:2)

So procreation (having children) is not the only purpose of marriage. It is, therefore, right and proper for a married couple to have sexual intercourse without necessarily intending to have children.

3. It is God's will that under normal circumstances a married couple should have children. This will of God for marriage is expressed in the divine blessing: 'Be fruitful' (Gen 1:28). Children are a gift of God (Psalm 127:3).
4. However, the Bible nowhere teaches that married couples should produce as many offspring as they possibly can. The church has never taught this either.

5. It could be a violation of the law of love to bring children into the world without considering
  - the welfare of the mother
  - the welfare of the children. For example: will the children be fed, clothed, sheltered and otherwise cared for in such a way that they will not suffer perhaps irreparable harm to their physical, mental, moral, and spiritual life?
  - the welfare of the community and the nation.
6. In short, parenthood will be responsible parenthood. It will be undertaken joyfully, prayerfully, and with a keen sense of responsibility to God and human beings.
7. It is up to the Christian conscience of parents to decide how many children they will have, under the blessing of God, and how the births will be spaced. These decisions will be made in full responsibility toward God, themselves, the children, and the nation.
8. The means used to bring about such limitations and planning must not be in violation of the will of God. Thus abortion as a means of limiting the family is prohibited by God's Word [see the statement on abortion, DSTO I H2]. Abstinence, for a period of time and by mutual consent, is a God-pleasing means of birth control. But abstinence can create so many problems (1 Cor 7:5) that it cannot be regarded as the only solution. Married couples should consult trusted medical advisers to learn what is the best method of birth control for them.
9. It is wrong to seek to avoid parenthood for purely selfish reasons, such as being unwilling to assume the responsibilities and sacrifices involved in bearing and rearing children. We warn especially against the self-indulgent use of contraceptives. The problem is not so much the use of birth control, but its *abuse*.
10. We express our deep concern at the alarming increase in extra- and pre-marital sexual relationships. This seems to have been encouraged by the easy availability of contraceptives. Such relationships are not in keeping with God's will for how men and women are to relate to each other. The wide use of contraceptives has, we believe, contributed to the general decline in sexual morality. We believe that the whole matter should be addressed not only in private counselling but also in public teaching and preaching.