

A Conversation with Dr. Death

By Scott Rae

Scott Rae:

I appreciate the opportunity to ah, speak on behalf of my colleagues in the philosophy program, um, and to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about what's going on in our field. Ah, we've entitled this time, "Bioethics in the Next Millennium," and we want to focus this morning on ah, bioethics, and the issues at the end of life. Thursday, we'll be talking about families and procreation, in the next millennium, focusing more on issues at the beginning of life, ah. You know when, one, one thing that we are about in the philosophy program is trying to equip students to give rea--, to give, intelligent, articulate reasons for the hope of Christ that we have within us. Two, an increasingly, secular, culture, in which Christian ideas, and institutions, and symbols are increasingly losing their influence. Ah, and our, our goal is to take, eh, the truth of God's word. The truth of the gospel and be able to communicate that effectively and compellingly, to a culture that is increasingly illiterate, when it comes to, ah, religious and specifically Christian, ideas, and bioethics is one of those areas that presents a particular challenge for us. It's not just an academic discussion I've come to discover. What I've discovered in my experience working with ethics committees, hospitals around the area, is that my field, touches life virtually every day.

01:25 An-a, an example of this sometime ago that really hit home to me in a way that I didn't expect. Ah, my family and I were out for dinner, ah, at one of, one of these restaurants where the table, at one of these places the tables are so close to each other that you can't help but have a

conversation with, ah, the people sitting next to you. And we were, we ah, got our food and we're seated and were, ah, we had just been seated for a few minutes, and we did get in a conversation with this empty nester couple, that was sitting next to us, and then we started talking about our families and things like that. They asked me what I did for a living. I said well I'm a college and seminary professor, and I teach ethics. And they said, and that it sort of peaked their interest, and they said well, do you, ah, do you know much about, ah, medical ethics?

[Audience laughter]

I said, well I've, I've kicked it around a bit in my spare time.

[Audience laughter]

Ah, and then they got very serious, and the gentleman, at the table, looked at me and said, ah, my mother has just been diagnosed with a terminal case of cancer. She has less than nine months to live, and she's begun to ask me to see if I would help her get an appointment with Jack Kevorkian. What do you think about that? And so, away we went.

[Audience laughter]

And we, and we had, eh, just a, delightful conversation, where I, told them what I thought, about that idea. Ah, and it was ah, and if, ah, I think a very powerful opportunity, to talk about how

Christian ethics might relate to this couple, that ah, you know, had no clue, what to think, about these issues.

03:00 Eh, this area touches life in some sort of interesting ways. Let me ge-get a show of hands here. How many of you have, had to make decisions, about end of life care or treatment, for a loved one? Hey, look around that's quite eh, that's quite a few. I venture to say that virtually all of us, at some point in our lives will have to face ethical issues at the end of life for a loved one. Virtually all of us will be asked to make those decisions, for somebody that we care very deeply about, and this, eh, this, these are the kinds of things that keep this from being strictly an academic, discussion. And I've often, I've often wondered, what it would be like, if I could sit down over a cup of coffee, and have a conversation with one of the many advocates, of a fairly radical position for physician assisted suicide. What if we could sit down, have a conversation with somebody like, Dr. Death? Wha-what kinds of things do you think he would say to us, that would try to explain what he, what he does? And how would we as, as Christians begin, to answer that? And again then what this conversation with this couple at the restaurant, taught me, is that, these are issues that touch our lives, virtually every day. And there is, there is ah, a growing number of people not just in the general public but in the medical profession in specific, who think that Jack Kevorkian is really on to something. And I mean they may think that he's a little bit, you know a little bit screwy in the head, which I think they might have a point, but that, there's an increasing number of people, who think that physician assisted suicide is really a good idea. Now if we, let me, let me, suggest what this, conversation, with Jack Kevorkian might sound like. If we were to sit down with him, here's how I think a conversation with him, might

go. Use your imagination here for a few minutes then we want to take a chance, to, get a chance to respond, to this.

05:10 Here's how I think this conversation might go. You Christians, are so, uncompassionate. You are so, callous, toward people who are in, ah, i-in a dying process. You have, you have no idea, how people suffer, at the end of their lives. You have no clue, what it's like for somebody to endure, a terminal illness, and have doctors stand at their bedside having done everything they can do to alleviate their pain, and have them be in excruciating, agony, crying out for somebody to do something, anything that will alleviate, their pain. In fact it strikes me that you Christians of all people, should appreciate this more than anyone else because, it seems to me if I, if you're, if I understand your Golden Rule, correctly, you, Jesus taught you to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And I can't imagine any of you, if you are lying, in a hospital bed with a terminal illness and no other alternative, but to have somebody end your life with dignity by offering you assistance in suicide that you wouldn't opt for that. How many of you would choose, to, to die in agony, when you have the opportunity available to you, at least if you Christians would help us, pass the law on this. Ah, have an opportunity available to have, death with dignity, death in a painless, ah, i-in, to ease your way, into, eternity with, your creator. You see, ah, ah, sometimes I don't get it, with th-this Christian community. I don't understand, how, you people can so tenaciously hang on to this life, when you, if I understand your faith have something clearly, to hope for beyond the grave. In fact I've often wondered, if you Christians really believe in eternal life like you say you do. Because you so tenaciously hang on and ask these doctors to do everything, to keep your loved ones alive, and you won't, I mean you won't turn to what is a really obvious merciful, compassionate, thing to do, by offering assistance, for

people who clearly want to take their own life. People who have had enough, they're ready to go and meet their maker, and all they need is a little bit of medical assistance to do that. What on earth could be wrong with that? Mean, after all we do this routinely for animals don't we? Out of the desire to end their suffering. Out of the desire to be merciful and compassionate to them. How much more do we owe this obligation to human beings who you Christians claim are, you know, are sort of at the top of the pile and made in God's image? You mean how much more do we owe that, to human beings? Instead, we treat the average dying person in a hospital much worse than we treat animals, today. So it's, ah, it seems to me that if, you mean, if you were really as merciful, as you say you are, you would stop giving advocates of assisted suicide all of this opposition and jump on the train, that seems to be consistent, with the teaching of, this person you claim to follow.

08:25 But, there's, they're, there's another reason why I, I do this. I'm involved in helping people end their lives and by the way it's not for the money. You know I don't make any money off of this and I'm not in it for the attention. I'm in it really just to help these people, and do things in a merciful and compassionate way for them. But, the, the, there's really another very important reason why I do this, and that is, i-it, this is, this is a decision that should be completely private, for people. The, the Constitution is very clear, that, that, a-all of us have the right to make life's most private and personal decisions apart from the interference of government, and, ah, eh, and again, of all people you Christians should appreciate this. Because you, you are the ones who don't want government telling you, w-what to do in your private life. You're the ones who don't want government to tell you how you should or should not, ah, engage in your religious practices. Ah, the things that y-you, you don't want government telling you how to raise your

children. You want to be able to homeschool your children, and that's [inaudible] public schools, if you, in fact ah, is what you believe is best for your children. They're all kinds of things, where you want the freedom, to make life's most personal and private decisions apart from anybody in ah, anybody in government interfering with you on that. That's a tradition that our Constitution protects. Well, you know, we have the right to do all sorts of private things, without government interference. Ah, th-think about, what could be, what could be more private and personal, than the decision, to end, your life? I mean, what could be more private, than, the timing and manner of someone's death? That reflects deeply held values that people have about suffering. About the afterlife. About what death and dying is about, and there's no, there's no good reason, why government should come barging in and say, that's outta bounds. Why shouldn't that be a private, and personal decision like, like, ah-eh-h, all kinds of other decisions are that government recognizes that, ah, the Constitution recognizes? Why, shouldn't the decision about death and dying be different? Okay, now, I realize, that ah, your religious beliefs may tell you, that ah, you know, th-the timing and manner of your death belongs to God, and that's fine for you who believe in God. Alright, but for the rest of the general public which happens to be the vast majority, ah, who don't have any theological beliefs, why are you imposing your theological beliefs, about, death and dying on to people who don't accept your view of the world? That seems to me to be highly in appropriate, and therefore it seems to me that, that even if you Christians think that this is immoral, that's fine for you, so be it, but the law, ought to, ought not just reflect your own narrow view of the world. The law oughta ref-, oughta reflect the broader right to privacy, autonomy to make your own choices, about the things that matter most to you, without the state, being involved.

11:21 Now I, I admit, I get a lot of grief, from, th-the different medical, communities, and doctors and the, although I mean, I'm greatly encouraged, to know that ah.

[Rea breaks from his conversation with Kevorkian]

You know if somebody walks in here in the middle of this, tell 'em what's, going on, that's if so they don't get confused, ah.

[Audience boisterous laughter]

But hey, for Dr. Cook to walk in, in the middle of this and ah...

[Audience boisterous laughter continues]

...get the wrong idea.

[Audience laughter continues]

[Rea resumes his conversation with Kevorkian]

But, y-you, but you'd be, you'd be surprised there are increasing number of doctors who think I'm on to something. In fact, you know, doctor, doctors in many metropolitan areas for example who treat AIDS patients, who are offering them assistance in suicide, before their bodies begin to fall

apart. Before they go through very, painful agonizing process of dying. Um, and I get it, but I get a lot of grief from doctors, and nurses, for, violating this thing called the Hippocratic Oath. Ah, and I'm not. The Hippocratic Oath was, you know, that's about 5,000 years old and this is, you know, in my view, that's it's just a nice quant little piece of fiction. Um, you know, we, we [inaudible] the Hippocratic Oath says that doctors shouldn't kill their patients, and, in general, I would agree with that. You mean that's, that's a good practice, but the Hippocratic Oath also says that you shouldn't do abortions yet last time I checked there are a million plus of those being done every year and nobody raises any, grief about the Hippocratic Oath on that. Ah, and furthermore, if you think about it, Hippocrates wasn't around, during they, during a time in which they had things like chronic disease. You know that, you know, w-when Hippocrates practiced medicine when you got sick, essentially two things happened. Either you got well on your own, or you died, and, I mean it's, uh, but basically when Hippocrates saw patients, they were in there, I mean, the day before they were quite healthy. They had come down with something, and if the body didn't get them better on their own, they were in big trouble and there wasn't a lot that they could do about it.

13:13 That's not true today. We have all sorts of sophisticated technology, that can keep bodies, functioning, you know well past the time when the mind, is, you know, available to join it. Ah, we can keep people alive for a long time when their quality of life is terrible. And I think that if Hippocrates been around today when we had all this sophisticated technology to do this, he might've thought twice, about this admonition not to kill, their patients. Let me give you one more, reason why I think I, I might be on to something significant. See, the, ah, eh, the most, most people in bioethics and most people in law, believe that it's acceptable, to turn off, life

saving tech--, life sustaining technology. To turn off life support like ventilators and not doing CPR, and, things like that, under certain conditions, when, you know, when a person is clearly dying and the treatment's not gonna do them any good. Or if it's gonna cause more of a burden actually than bring a benefit to them. Then virtually everyone agrees, that we don't have to continue treating these people. We can, we can stop, a ventilator. We can stop a breathing machine. We can stop dialysis, for example, when it's not doing any good, any longer. We, we allow people to die, v-virtually everyday, and yet, I don't think there's a big difference, when you have somebody who is terminally ill, at death's doorstep. There's just not a big difference between allowing them to die, and actually taking more, you know, slightly more aggressive, measures and hastening their death, ah, by assisting them in their suicide. When we've already come along way and everybody agrees that that's okay. This, w-what I'm suggesting is only a, a very small step, in the direction, of, helping people die, with dignity.

15:14 Alright now if you've, if you just, you know, heard that diatribe over, cup of coffee with Kevorkian, what would you say, in response to that? H-how would you, argue, for a Chri-- essentially a Christian position, that's rooted in the commandment against killing innocent people. W-what would you, what would you say in response, to what Kevorkian has said? I mean these are, these are the arguments that are used, predominantly to support assisted suicide. Which by the way, will be on, the table, in the legislature, as of January 1st, of, of the year 2000. It is the bill that would legalize assisted suicide in California, has already passed two sub-committees of the legislature, and will go for full debate in fro-fro--in front of the assembly, ah, the first part of January of next year. So, you know, again, these are not just academic questions. These are questions that need answers, and we need them compellingly in the next few months,

before this bill is, debated. Well let me, let me suggest a couple things by, by way of response to this.

16:25 Ah, Kevorkian's first argument, and by far the most common one in favor of assisted suicide is this argument for mercy, and compassion. Ah, and I, I actually, ah, I've heard, you know, I've heard advocates of assisted suicide use the Golden Rule, in the way that Kevorkian did just a few minutes ago. Ah, and ah, it's, it's, it's unconscionable, to some advocates of assisted suicide that Christians who believe in the Golden Rule would oppose this idea. I think the, the response to this, is, eh, es-essentially that assisted suicide, is a case as I, as I, as I like to put it, case of burning down the barn to roast the pig. Got that? You guys from the farm country would appreciate that.

[Audience laughter]

Ah, it ah, ahh, that's right. Ah, eh, in other words assisted suicide is rarely, if ever, necessary in order to accomplish the goal that the patient wants, and that is to be relieved of their suffering. Wha-what's very clear is that medicine now has the ability to relieve virtually all, pain and suffering that a terminally ill patient goes through. There are, ah, there are very few, I mean, we know, one in, you know, one in 100,000, cases, in which medicine really is not capable of adequately controlling the pain of somebody who is in, the last stages of a terminal illness. Then I've heard, I've heard physicians who are specialists in this say they're actually, no, cases, in which medicine cannot adequately control someone's pain, at the end of life. Now it is true there is no doubt, that far too many people die, in unrelieved pain. Th-that's, that's a statistical reality, and that's, a-and that is, is, that's unethical in itself, because not to relieve someone's pain is an

assault on their dignity. Um, and that's something that needs to be better taken care of. But tha--, a-and that's clearly what's driving this trend toward assisted suicide, because people are seeing that, you know if, if you wanna die peacefully and without pain, you ought not go to a hospital. You oughta take advantage of some other, avenue like a hospice, or, something else where your pain can adequately be treated. But assisted suicide clearly is not necessary. It is, i-it is clearly a case of burning down the barn to roast the pig, and there is, there is no need, for such a drastic measure to accomplish a legitimate goal, that patients clearly have, expressed.

18:51 Alright, a second, argument that is, commonly used, is, is that this argument from autonomy, and privacy, and, and this I think, this is actually where the debate is going. The b- both of these arguments for mercy and autonomy, have the advantage of making for really nice 30 second sound bites when they're portrayed in a, in a, media setting, and you'll, you've, if you watch as the debate becomes more public you'll see both of those, in those, arenas. But the ah, the, argument from autonomy's a little bit different, ah, and in a little bit more complicated. It is true that the Constitution does protect the rights of people to make life's most private and personal decisions, on their own. Whether, whe--, I mean, whether they believe that they are immoral or not is in most cases beside the point. Ah, you know, the, we, the Constitution protects the right of people to have abortions, the right of people to marry, and, and raise their children however they choose, ah, and all sorts of other private and personal and decisions, and it seems on the surface that the decision about death and dying really isn't all that different. Now, of course from, from the theological perspective Kevorkian had it right. There is something fundamentally theologically, very problematic about, in, ah, about, y-you and I, taking that decision about the timing and manner of our death for ourselves. Clearly from a theological

perspective, that is God's prerogative and, ah, that is something that he sets and we really don't have a lot of say in that. The Bible's very clear, that it is appointed, unto men to die once and then comes judgement, and it's very clear from the context who the one is who is doing the appointing, of that, and it's not, you and me. That's clearly God's, prerogative. But the, eh, argument from autonomy is more complicated, than that, and there's, I think there's the sense in which we need to, counter that without, explicit reliance on theological convictions that the general public may or may not share. Let me suggest one way to do that. Typically, we have allowed people freedom in our culture to do, whatev--, w-whatever they essentially, whatever they want according to their own values. Unless there is clear, tangible harm, that comes to someone else or to the community at large by the exercise of that freedom. And when that happens, when liberty is balanced against harm, harm always trumps liberty, or at least in most cases it does. This, this will hopefully will not be an exception to that general rule.

21:27 Now, there's, there is clear, clear evidence, from places, in which assisted suicide has become, legal, that there's a very striking, phenomena that goes with the introduction of this freedom, to, assist medicine in taking your own life. And that is that people who are, either unable, or unwilling to make that choice for themselves, are being administered, assistance in suicide, in some cases without, w-w-without their consent and in many cases without their knowledge. The Dutch for example have coined a term for this, a very interesting term. They call it "[cryptphenasia]", which, to, which was, a-ah, but that chills my soul, to think about that. Um, and the, some of the latest statistics that have come out have shown that roughly 18 to 20 percent, of all cases of euthanasia in the Netherlands have been done without, the patient's explicit consent, and in many cases without their knowledge. I don't know about you but the last

time I checked, assisting someone in suicide without their consent was a pretty clear case of them being harmed. Ah, and it seems to me that this freedom, to, ah, assi--, and to ah, and enlist assistance in suicide has opened the door to a whole class of people, who are now being harmed. Further what I think this does in sort of an insidious way, is it undercuts the right to life that is so, so much a part of our tradition in the United States and the West, and so much a part of our Constitution. See what this does is that if assistance in suicide becomes legal, then, people who, who, might be good candidates for that, will now have the burden on them to justify their own continued existence. And they, they will have to show why they shouldn't, accept assistance in suicide, and, essentially get out of the way, and stop being a burden, to family members. Now I think what you'll find increasingly, is, i-is the elderly and the terminally ill feeling increased pressure, to sign consents for euthanasia, not because they're tired of living, but because they sense that their loved ones, are tired of them living and tired of them, caring for them.

23:51 We, [inaudible], third, ah, Kevorkian, suggested, that he wasn't really violating the Hippocratic Oath. It, it clearly is not true. Ah, and the, ah, that, that seems to me pretty hard to sustain, though his point about the Hippocratic Oath being a moray, sort of quant piece of fiction in medical education today is, is essentially the truth. Um, but I think if we, if we [inaudible] back to Hippocrates' time, and if he knew, that the, the, the technology that was available to control the pain of his patients, if he had that at his disposal I'm sure he would've been even more dogmatic than he was, about the obligation not to kill, their patients. So it, it seem, I mean, seems to me that there is, ah, eh, th-that's, the, the violation of the Hippocratic Oath is sort of bound up with this argument for mercy. And if that goes out the window then I

think, yeah, I think we can say safely, that Hippocrates would never have advocated killing, his patients, ah, if there was a, a-an alternative to control...

24:56 [Recording cuts out abruptly]

24:59 [Recording resumes]

Advocates of assisted suicide set up this false dichotomy that we really, that we need to be very careful of. And they make it seem as though the only two alternatives are assistance in suicide or dying in agony, and if those were the only two options I admit they'd have the compelling case. But they're, they're, only, f-fortunately those aren't the only two alternatives, and there's a lot of space in the middle, where people's pain can be controlled, and what we found very interestingly and not surprisingly, is that when people who are suffering from a terminal illness have their pain controlled, surprise, surprise, they wanna live. You know what, what a shock. Now p-people don't wanna die. They just, they just want to have their pain, under control, and when that's done, they increasingly, want to live.

25:46 Now finally, Kevorkian suggests that there's really no, morally relevant difference between killing someone and allowing them, to die. This is a very common part of the, the debate on assisted suicide, and this claim is just patently untrue. Ah they're two very important, differences. Ah, for one, the intent, is different, and intent makes, a moral difference. There's just no way around that. It's not just the action that counts. The intent counts for a lot, otherwise we'll be unable to distinguish, between otherwise identical actions. I mean for example

if I offer, Mick, ah, an envelope, and say, thank you brother I, appreciate all you've done for me. Ah, we would call that a gift. But if I offer the same envelope to Dr. Flory, and had the expectation, that he was going to provide some sort of good or service to me, in exchange for that we would call that, a bribe. Alright, my, the other identical actions, distinguished only, by, my intent. Intent makes a difference and it makes a difference here. But the other difference is that the cause of death is very different. I mean the cause of death when we allow someone to die, is the disease. The cancer or whatever the underlying disease is that's, that's slowly taking their life. When we assist someone in suicide, it is, the suicide actually that is the, the, immediate cause of death, and those are two very different things. In fact there's greater attempts now, in many of the euthanasia circles to try and mask, that distinction, in places where assisted suicide is legal. Ah, physicians when asked on the death certificate to write in the cause of death, when they've administered, euthanasia they will often write some sort of a natural cause, such as, you know, heart attack, ah, cardiac arrest or respiratory failure, or something like that to suggest that what this person died of really was, a natural cause. So the incidence actually of euthanasia may actually be quite a bit higher, than what we realize.

27:53 Now, ah, I would, ah, my, my hope, is that ah, when this issue, comes, before public debate, the Christian community will have something articulate to say. And I, and I, I commend our, Roman Catholic brothers and sisters who have been at the forefront of many of these bioethics issues and we need, we need, likewise, to ah, to be i-involved in a very public way. I realize that's not, that's not a calling for everyone, um, but all of us need to be educated, because, ah, they're, you know, they're, they're going to be people who, who we come into contact with, especially, as, just as th-those of you who are, eh, ah, in training to be pastors. Ah, you, you will

inevitably have people come into your office, saying, my, my, you know, my, mother, is dying, and the doctors want to do this and I'm the one who's supposed to make decisions. Pastor tell me, what, what do I do? Give me some direction here. Ah, and we will, we will increasingly, be confronted with people at the end of life, who have significant moral questions, about what to do in ways that are consistent, with their faith. And my hope is that we can continue to give reasons not only for, things that have to do with public policy, but also things that touch life, on a daily basis.

29:14 Let's pray together and ask God to, direct us to that end. Lord, we are very grateful, for the opportunity to, think hard about some of these, current pressing, ethical issues. Lord we, you know that the, our culture desperately needs a, an articulate, compelling response that's, consistent with Scripture, and has the, ah, prospects of being persuasive to an increasingly secular culture. Lord we ah, ah our desire is to see, people who are at the end life, cared for with, with dignity because they are, ah, they are made in your image. They are your special creation and they are of infinite value. And Lord, ah, eh, equip us, to engage the, debate on this issue, in a way that's gracious, and persuasive at the same time. And we trust you for this now in Jesus' name. Amen.

30:14 Speaker #1

Thank you Dr. Rae.

[Audience applause with dominant steady clapping in microphone by speaker #1]

30:22 [End of recording]

Bioethics at the Beginning of Life By Scott Rae

30:24 [Recording begins mid-sentence]

Speaker 1:

...be seated.

[Audience applause]

Once again welcome with me Dr. Scott Rae.

[Audience applause with dominant steady clapping in microphone by speaker #1]

Scott Rae:

Well, good morning. I appreciate, ah, number of you had some ah, awfully nice things to say about our little chat with Jack Kevorkian, ah, on Tuesday and I'm very appreciative of that. I want to shift gears a little bit for a few minutes this morning and talk about bioethics at the beginning, of life, eh, again these are, ah, these are some of the areas, of our, program in

philosophy that I think most, eh, explicitly, touch life, and, touch the pages of the newspaper virtually everyday. If you'd been ah, paying attention to the newspaper in things that are ah, published in some of the ah, science and technology areas, some of the things that I'm gonna mention this morning may not come to you as much of a surprise. Though for many people, not, not more than a decade ago, some of the things that we've, that we are convinced are forthcoming and I know already here and would've been a complete surprise. Ah, and many people in the general public I think have been very much caught off guard, by the way in which, families, and procreation have been radically changed, by the, the ah, availability of reproductive technologies. Let me just give you some examples and ah, some of like I say, some of these are already here, some of these will be ah, coming in the next few years, but ah, this is a little bit about where the, where the field of, reproductive technologies and procreation is headed, um.

31:59 One, one of the most recent examples in, in New York City, just in the last year we have ah, things like designer, embryos, for sale, where you can come to an infertility clinic, and ah, purchase, embryos if you are unable to create them yourself. Or, you can for a little bit more money actually have the clinic, do this on a designer basis where you can choose from a catalog, of potential sperm and egg donors the different traits that you want for your child. Literally these have been, these have been up for sale from anywhere from three to fifteen thousand dollars, per, embryo. That's, that's already here, and will be mainstream, in the next millennium. We now have ah, a, m-mechanism, that enables couples with roughly 80 percent reliability to select the gender of their children, and that's already here. In fact you could, you could probably have access to that this afternoon, if you wanted to. Alright, we are, eh, what's, one of the, one of the

things that's coming, we, we were almost, eh, almost the place where we can ah, gestate animals, now in artificial wombs. That's coming, ah, for human beings within the, probably within the next, 20 to 30 years. Ah, human, human cloning has been, we've already really done this for about the last five years with ah, embryos. We've been able to make Xerox copies of embryos since the early 1990s. Now we can, we are getting close. We've done this with animals. We're getting closer now to being able to take the cells from adults, and copy them, and plant them in eggs, ah, implant those ah, those ah, the ferti-fertilized eggs in a surrogate, and give birth to a genetic duplicate, of the adult. That's stuff's only, only a few years ago, that was the stuff of science fiction, but we will probably, we will, ah, we will see that, within our, lifetimes. We have a, eh, eh a little bit closer, I mean, this were, these were no particular order but ah, you, you [inaudible] overwhelmed with the cumulative effect of these. We have gay and lesbian couples, now, who are, attempting to procreate children using these technologies and become mainstream, families. I never thought this would hit so close to home, but literally a stone's throw, from my house in my neighborhood, in nice, conservative, Irvine of all places. A homosexual couple has ah, eh, eh, has h-hired a surrogate mother, and they have, a child, that they are raising, together, and just around the street. Ah, ah, I never thought would happen. Um, we have post-menopausal women, have bearing their own children, through the use of egg donors, and a technology that helps ah, renew the lining of the uterus, ah, here in, in a ah, the pioneering place has been at USC Medical School. A Sixty two year old woman, gave birth, to a child just in the last year. Ah, and they're ah, anticipating more and more of this, coming into the future. Ah, we have embryos, human embryos that are being cloned, that is a Xerox copy, and, a- and intentionally created solely for the purpose of performing research, on them. It's about this time last year, ah scientists were, were, for the first time able to isolate what are called the stem

cells, out of human embryos. Those are the cells, that are ah, they have yet to differ, differentiate into specific types of tissue or organs. Of a, ah, they have been able to isolate those from human embryos, ah, and we're on track to use those to create a wide variety of tissues and organs that are in very short supply. Never mind the fact that the embryos from which they are taken, ah, are, fatally, ah, eh, fatally impacted by that and those that are not are thrown down the kitchen sink, literally, when they are finished.

36:03 Ah, we have women today who are carrying litters, I mean literally, litters, of children, made available by reproductive technologies. And we have that, the, what I think is very tragic scenario happening repeatedly, ah, where you use these technologies to achieve as many, eh, to achieve the best chance of one pregnancy and you get pregnant with more, children than you wish to carry, or can safely carry, and you engage in what is now called "selective reduction." The newest euphemism, for ending the life of the unborn. I've been involved in a, a handful of ethics, consults, in ah, in ah, in these Ca--, you know, Catholic hospitals that I consult with, where we've had women who had been pregnant with far, more, ah, unborn children than they can safely carry, and in fact they make very painful decisions, about what to do, ah. We have, eh, we have th-things like, eh, even s-stuff which, which seems way out there. We have unborn children, who are being used as, egg donors, for women who cannot produce eggs themselves. This happened in England, not, not less than two years ago, where aborted, fetuses, for having their eggs, taken from them and being used as donor eggs, and those being given to infertile couples. And now fortunately, the, the British government, I think they have more sense than ours, had to, had the good sense to stop the practice, until there could be some sort of moral

assessment done on, ah done on that, I'm not sure actually what that moral assessment might look like except to say, no, we shouldn't do that.

37:46 Some of these, s-some of these are actually coming into, Chr--, the Christian community, as well, in ways that you might not expect. Ah, when I, when I was a pastor, this was, you know, this was beginning some ten, eleven years ago when I was, I was a singles pastor in Newport Beach area. And I had more than one person in the ministry that I was working with, who had got more than one woman who had gotten tired of waiting for Christian men to get with the program, and had decided to s-sort of, chart out their own course. And they, they were considering and some had, going to infertility clinics, to be artificially inseminated with donor sperm so they could have their own children, and quote, "fulfill their dream," of being mothers. Increasingly, Christian single women who feel their biological clock ticking, are, utilizing this particular option, uh, as a way to have a child. In just, just last week, I was talking with ah, two women on a radio, program and said, that ah, I was doing it by phone here is being broadcast in San Diego. Two women, one of whom was, both Christian women. One of whom was, had been contracted as a surrogate mother and the other had actually contracted the services, of a surrogate mother, to host, thought this was all a wonderful idea. Ah, and when it, when I, when I suggested that, you know that th-the Bible might have something to say that might want us, to would encourage us to put the brakes on that. They looked at me, I mean I, they, eh, they thought, you know, what, what planet have you come from? I mean, how could you, a-ah, I mean, how could you be so, so crass and uncompassionate? In their view, the, the u-utilizing a surrogate mother for a Christian, was ah, a totally appropriate way for having children and the surrogates themselves saw this as a ministry, giving the gift of life, to infertile couples. Um, now w-what,

yeah, in, I mean in essence what we, what we have, ah, w-where we've come in the last few years through what's called in vitro fertilization or the test tube babies, we have, we have been able to accomplish procreation without sexual relations. Hundreds of thousands of couples every year, ah, conceive children through these technologies.

40:03 Once human cloning, is perfected we will be able to have procreation without, men, because a woman could clone herself, and, h-have, and have the uh, the, the clone gestated, in another woman's body. But with artificial wombs, we'll be able to have procreation without women, as well, and, the, the whole idea of, procreation, families, nature, ah, is being, reevaluated. In fact one, ah, molecular biologist has written a, ah, ah very provocative title. Ah, his book is called, "Remaking Eden," and that's precisely what he thinks is science and technology, is doing and ought to be, doing. Now, we've, we, we can, we could talk, at length about genetics and I mean the whole world of genetic testing, and, genetic technologies. Um, you know, that's becoming, quite a mainstream part of, prenatal care for pregnant women. Ah, but we, we know now that there are hundreds, of diseases for which we have identified a genetic component, and for which people are being tested, today. Ah, many, many things that are there, where there are direct links, ah to genetic disease others simply give you a higher risk factor. And when people are tested today or have their children tested in utero, ah, there's a wide variety of things that they can find out, that their child might be susceptible to. And with the, wh-what I call the abortion assumption, that is inherent in a lot of prenatal genetic testing which, which essentially says if you get bad news on your test you will automatically without much critical thinking about it, ah, end the pregnancy. Ah, if, ah, I'm familiar with pregnancies that have been ended for things, ah, I would consider to be as insignificant as a cleft palette, ah, and other types

of things. Ah, I think we run, we run the risk of couples, using this kind of genetic testing, ah, as a preemptive, way, to abort children who are, not genetically perfect, and has a funny way of ah, undermining unconditional love, which we oughta be showing for children. It's as though we're saying to our children in utero, I will love you unconditionally and accept you, *if*, you pass all the genetic tests that you are supposed to. Ah, has a funny way of, ah, eh, funny way of undercutting our desire to love our children unconditionally, and that's, that's a lot of, you know, a lot of speculation about what will become mainstream. All of these things are, or most of them, are except for human cloning, are being done, today, and we have the capacity to do all of these things.

42:52 But what I think, what I think is more pressing, and what I'd like to spend the rest of our time on, today. Of greatest, concern, to those of you who are heading to a local church for ministry, or some other type of ah, vocational ministry, is a scenario something like this. An infertile couple, comes to your office. They have been trying to have a child for, on their own for the last three years. They've tried every, you know, they've tried all the ah old wives' tales ah, ah solutions for infertility, and nothing has worked. They've been to their doctor. They've found, that ah, you know, all the systems are functioning like they're supposed to. Ah, the physicians are baffled of as to why they can't have a child. And they've just been to their, into their local infertility clinic and they had been presented with a dizzying array of options, that are now available to them technologically. All of the way from, things that are fairly simple, like artificial insemination, to things that are very complex and very expensive such as the use of surrogate mothers. These clinics don't, uh, I mean, they just sort of throw the options out there. They throw the success rates out there and the amount of money that it costs, but that's all they, that's all they

tell them, and as far as the clinic goes, all of these options are morally acceptable. Yet, they have this sort of uneasy feeling, as they come into your office, and, they want to know, what you think the Bible teaches, about the use of these technologies. Which ones, if any of them, are appropriate. Now if, ah, eh, ah think about, think about what you might, tell a couple, who is sitting across the desk from you, wanting your advice, eh, and they're going, they're going back to the infertility clinic in a few days, to make decisions about what they oughta do. And they, they're looking, to you to provide them some parameters from Scripture, about what's appropriate. And that, that's, what's coming, into the local church, and that's what I think we need to be prepared for, as, men and women who are, not only, concerned about the cause of Christ but, compassionate, for these infertile couples. Because in the, eh, in the general population, of couples who are of child bearing age, one in six, fits the definition of infertility. So the chances are, that in the church that you attend or the church that you, in which you minister, you know, there are, more than a handful, of couples, who, are wrestling at present, with infertility.

45:43 See my wife and I had this, conversation, with, a member of our pastoral staff, 'cause we had tried for three years, to have a child, without any success. Our physician was completely baffled, as to the reason why, and we had, and this was just before I started thinking about a lot of this, and we had no clue, as to what might be appropriate, and you know what? Neither did our pastor. And my wife actually as a result of this started doing, leading some support groups, for infertile couples, and what she found, was that, the vast majority of Christian, couples, who were looking for some help in infertility, cared a-ah only about two things. Success rate, and the cost. They weren't even asking, these questions. They weren't even talking about some of the moral and theological things, that they needed to be thinking about. Okay, so what would, what

would you tell this couple? They're sitting across the table from you. Would, would you, say something like this, "Well, um, you know, God, God is the one who opens and closes the womb, and, your, your only option, is to either continue trying naturally, or, adopt, or, accept, childlessness, as, God's gift." Hey now, I think the, the average infertile couple, ah, that would be a big adjustment, to see childlessness as a gift, at least at this point. That would take some work, to be able to see that, ah, for what, for what it is. Ah, what, what you may, what you may not realize I think what, what most pastors don't realize, what they didn't when they were talking to us, is how deeply infertility strikes, at the, at the heart of your identity as a man, and as a woman. I, I've never, ah, I've never, never caught a grip of this, and I realized that people who have not experienced infertility, generally don't have any idea how painful it is. My wife and I quit, we quit going to church, on ah, Mother's Day and, Father's Day and, you know, Thanksgiving, and, Christmas holidays because it was just too painful, to be around those family celebrations, when we desperately wanted to be family but, biology wasn't cooperating. And we quit, we quit our joy, we quit being able to rejoice with our friends, ah, who seemed at that time to be multiplying like rabbits.

[Audience laughter]

And we were simply, ah, we simply were unable to rejoice with them, and it broke our heart, but it was, it was just too painful, to be around that. And I think, in general, the, the first thing that I want to, want to encourage an infertile couple with is to admit, and, acknowledge that the pain, of infertility is real. I mean in the biblical accounts of infertility it is this, I mean, it's this emotionally gut wrenching thing, that women dealt with, primarily. Well we don't hear a lot

about is how this effects men, too, and it effects men very deeply. So wha-what, what, would you tell this couple, that ah, their, really their only options are, non-technological, this day. So, you would say in essence to, stay away from the clinic, you know, cancel your next appointment, and ah, simply, continue trying, naturally, adopt, or accept voluntary childlessness. That's, that's certainly an option, and this is, this is what I, I tend to call the, Catholic, option. Ah, because most, you know, Roman, Roman Catholics have thought very deeply about this, ah suggest that essentially that's what an infertile couple oughta do. That God set the process of procreation up and creation it's natural, because God ordained it that way and therefore you ought not tamper, with that process.

49:50 But does Scripture support that? Does, does Scripture give us, some alternatives, that might involve, technology, and I think generally, they do. I think the Scripture opens the door, for couples who were in our position to go a step further, technologically, and I think it's, it's based on this, theological underpinning. It's very clear, seems to me, that ah, as a part of, God's, ah, giving human beings dominion over the creation, that he gave us the tools, to help us best accomplish this. Specifically, through general revelation and through common grace, God has, God has invested in human beings the gifts, the tools, the intelligence, the creativity, in order to best, subdue the creation. And clearly ah, a part of that, is, ah, doing, doing what human beings can do to help, ah, if not reverse, temporarily alleviate the effects of the entrance of sin, into the world. And generally speaking I think we can make a good case that, technology, that helps human beings do that, that generally improves the lot, of the human race, and, specifically helps ah, at least temporarily alleviate the effects of the entrance of sin, can be seen as a part of God's general revelation. And a part of God's good gift, enabling human beings to further subdue, and

have dominion over the creation. And if that's, if that's true, and I think medical technology particularly, ah, fits this category that God has given human beings, you know, wonderful gifts to, ah alleviate heart disease, to stop ah kidney failure, to do, I mean, to do all kinds of things from which 100 years ago people died routinely. That's not a, the fact that human beings have developed this technology from, from a theological perspective is not an accident. It's not a coincidence, and God's not up there, you know, somehow biting his nails thinking, you, couldn't I, would, you know, what are they gonna think of next? You know, God has invested, human beings as a part of, general revelation as, and as a part of the creation mandate with the tools and the skills, necessary to, to, develop these technologies.

52:14 Now of course all the uses of these technologies needs, biblical and moral assessment, no doubt. But I don't think that I, I don't think we can say, that, we, ah, you, we ought not go down the technological road, in order to alleviate, infertility. It seems to me that, ah, if we're gonna be consistent with that, then when you have a heart attack you not go to a cardiologist. Or that if you have ah, you know if you have kidney disease you ought not see a nephrologist. Or if you have ah, eh, if you a broken bone you ought not go get it put in a cast. Ah, if we can, if we're gonna be consistent with that it seems to me we ought to be Christian Scientists, about the use, of medical, of medical technology. So I mean, I think that, I think theologically there's an open door, to use, technology, ah in general. Alright, now that's not a blan--, it's not a blanket endorsement. Ah, but I think as, you know, a-as the technological train keeps moving I think it's appropriate, for us to jump on. Question is where do we jump off? And, and if we accept the use of some of these technologies in general for procreation, then that raises I think a much more complicated question. And that is, what about the, the, what about using, technologies, that

require what I call third party contributors, to procreation, such as, sperm donors, egg donors, or, womb donors, which, w-which we generally call surrogate mothers. Hey, that's a little tougher, question, and let me, let's think, let's think about that, for just, for just a moment. Why? I, I think w-what's clear from the genesis account of creation, is that if we had a little bit more time, we'd go, we'd go through verse by verse, through that, but I think, you know we, to sketch the outlines of this and we can, talk further if you have some questions on that. But I think in general, the genesis account of creation sets up, the command to procreate children within the context, of God establishing, heterosexual marriage, and I think if you look at the, the broad panorama account, of creation in Genesis 1 and a more specific, complimentary account, of creation in Genesis 2. It's very clear, that the command to procreate follows, the creation of male and female and in what ah, what I view as the formal institution of marriage, in Genesis 2:24. So it seems to me that God has clearly set, procreation in the context, of monogamous, stable, heterosexual, marriage. Ah, you can't just say in the context of marriage, today. Unfortunately you need to qualify it, a little bit more than that.

55:04 Ah, now, that, that being said, that that doesn't rule out things like adoption, per se, because adoption is clear, would clearly be a violation, of that, of that model. Adoption is seen, throughout the Scripture as an emergency rescue situation that clearly is not, the norm, okay, so, that's and I don't think a problem, um. Now, if, but if you interestingly, but if you look at the Old Testament though, well I think we have to admit, that there are some pretty novel ways, of having children. Right? And there, there are some, things that God allows, in the Old Testament that are clear deviations from this model, that was set up at creation. Right? For, for example, ah, surrogate motherhood, ah, we see both in Genesis 16 and in Genesis 30. I think we can make a

good case that when it's, when ah, Abraham goes to Hagar. That's a disaster of unprecedented proportions which we are living with to this day. Ah, and I think, I think you could probably make a good case that simply the outcome, is all we needed to make a negative judgement about the practice, but you don't see the same disastrous outcome when Jacob, employ, "employs", a surrogate in Genesis 30. That seems to be treated in a much more matter of fact and a more neutral way. Alright, and you also see divorce, allowed. Divorce is clearly a violation of that creation, norm. Ah, but divorce as we know is allowed for, rea-, you know for reasons that ah, in the Old Testament may not be entirely clear, ah, but that, that seems to be allowed. Levirate marriage was if, you know, was sort of an unusual way to procreate children, ah, in the Old Testament. So I mean, wha-what are we to make of that? Well clearly, just because, you have something that appears historically in a text that, you know, that's not, uh, y- you know that, ah, you know, that's just a historical appearance, it's not hermeneutically anything, that establishes a norm or anything quite that. But it is, it is, interesting, that you have this model for, marriage, family and procreation set up in Genesis 1 and 2. Yet there are, there do seem to be some exceptions to the general rule, that God allowed, in the Old Testament. Why, right now, whether God continues to allow exceptions to the general rule, today, I think, is a different question, and without expla--, and without more explicit biblical authority for that I'd be very reluctant to, to expand the category, of ah, exceptions to the general rule, ah, that some of these reproductive technologies might involve. But if you look at the New Testament I think you've, you find a, a very serious and sober treatment ah, of the, of the model that God set up at creation. Think about all times that the New Testament authors appeal to Genesis 1 and 2 to support their argument.

58:08 And in virtually all of those cases, they consider, appeal to the norm of creation, enough to end the discussion. For, for example when Paul-- when Paul appeals to creation, ah in Genesis, ah, or in, ah, Romans 1, in his discussion of homosexuality. That's, I mean he does, talk about some of the negative consequences that come from that, but that's essentially, all the, all the, the data that was needed, to support the idea that homosexuality was wrong. It violated the norm that, that God set up at creation. End of discussion. Likewise, in ah, 1 Timothy chapter 2, when Paul's addressing the issue of women in their role in the church. In, in, in however you understand, ah, Paul's notion of Genesis 1 which I don't want to get into here. Ah, I think that the point is, the point I want to make seems clear. That Paul considered, appealed to Genesis 1 and 2, to be the trump card, in his discussion of the place of women in the church. There was really no, there was no other discussion that was necessary. So it seems, it seems to me that the New, the New Testament authors take the model of creation very, very seriously and it, and it, and they placed great weight on it. And it seems to me that in our discussion of reproductive technologies we ought to place similar weight, on the norms set up at creation as opposed to, these exceptions to the general rule. We ought to see those as a, as ah what they are. Simply exceptions, to the general rule, the reasons for which may not be entirely clear, but exceptions nonetheless. So you, you, the upshot of this is that, I think you can make a good case that, when the Bible talks, about, procreation, what they intend, what, what the biblical authors intent, is that procreation take place within the setting of heterosexual marriage. That as children are procreated into, stable heterosexual marriages, and children are procreated out of the genetic materials of, husband and wife. I think that the biblical data suggests that we oughta be very skeptical, a-about using any kind of third party contributors, to procreations. So that any technology that involves the genetic material of husband and wife, would seem to be morally, acceptable.

1:00:32 Right, now there are, I'm gonna put some other, guidelines on this in just a moment. Any technologies, that is what I would tell if I were talking to an infertile couple. Any technology that involves, a use of third party contributors I would be, I would be very careful, about using those, and I think the Scripture's very skeptical, about using those. But what about th-those that involve just the genetic materials of husband and wife? Now that, they aren't, exempt from problems either. And I think in general, w-when we, when we are involved creating embryos, in a laboratory for use implanting, in infertile couples we oughta have as a general principle, that there are no, no embryos are destroyed in the process. Ah, if you, if through in vitro fertilization ah, have, eight embryos created and you implant three and get pregnant with triplets your child bearing days are clearly over. You have five left. Ah, it is morally unconscionable and the equivalent of abortion, to destroy those embryos, as is routinely done, in infertility clinics, throughout the country. That's, I thi--, what's really important, about this is that, when we talk to infertile couples and we think about these technologies, to think it through, before we get involved using these. Ah, most couples don't do that. In fact, most couples end up likes, very, close friends of ours, who came to us after they had given birth to triplets, and after the infertility clinic had called them, asking them if they wanted to continue paying to have their remaining embryos stay, in cold storage. You know they had no interest, in having any more children, and they, sort of, th-they said you know, could you tell us what we oughta do? And I, this, this ah, this gentleman he's a very dear friend. He's an elder in our church, and, and I ch--and I, I was, I chided him for not having knowing better. Um, but they just hadn't thought about it. They got caught up, in, having a baby, and didn't think about some of these other complicating factors. They said, what are our options, here? I said, well, ah you have six embryos left in storage, and,

ah, wh-what are, what are your choices? And he says, well, here's what he, what he wanted to do, was actually to discard them, but he knew he couldn't, 'cause that's, equivalent of abortion. Well, the other option was to allow them to die a natural death, which, I said is okay, that's, okay to do in some cases if you can't do anything to save someone. Ah, then, I mean to allow someone to die, when you, when, saving them is actually quite a simple proposition, ah is unconscionable. The other option was to put them up for adoption, and he, he wasn't, wild about that idea. As he put it, ah, you know, I don't want my progeny running around all over America without my knowledge.

[Audience laughter]

You know, and I don't blame him, for that, but of the options that he had left, th-that was the best. And there are now, embryo adoption agencies that have sprung up to, they're two, three of 'em here in southern California, that place, embryos, that would be headed for destruction, with Christian couples, insuring that they not only get implanted, and a chance to be born, but also get, a good home. And I said that, you know, that's, you know, that may not be the best, option, or the one that you're the happiest with, but of all the ones that he had left, that clearly was, the most acceptable one.

1:04:15 Now that, w-what I think all of these, bioethics issues is raise, is ah, a need to be, theologically informed, but also to be, informed about what the issues are that people in the general public are dealing with. Ah, you know, this is, this is not an area where we could simply, preach to the choir, ah, and hope that we'll continue to have an impact. I mean this, these are

things that we desperately need to be engaged in a secular, with our secular culture in. Um, and answer them in their specific questions that our brothers and sisters will continue to have because of these technologies that we need to be equipped to answer, but also we need to be equipped to give an answer to where these trends are headed, in the general culture. Ah, and I, and I commend you for your interest in some of these areas. Ah, these are very gray, very difficult. Ah, they don't admit well of black and white answers, and if you, you know if you have a personality that has a high need for closure, or you love black and white kind of things, ah, I'd encourage you to give that up, before...

[Audience laughter]

...enter, entering this field.

1:05:22 Alright Let's, let's pray together. Lord we could go on all day, with this, um, still barely scratch the surface. We're so grateful that you've, given us the opportunity to reflect on some of these issues, that are, I admit are very complicated. I'm grateful that ah, this, despite all of the, technological advances we've made at the beginning of life, that, what, what you gave us in the psalms is still true that the womb is still the secret place, over which you have ultimate sovereignty. Lord we confess that this morning. We acknowledge that despite all of our technological advances, there's still a great deal of what takes place in procreation that is, a huge mystery, and so we come, eh, a-acknowledging that before you our awesome God and the creator of life. Thank you for, the, time we've had to reflect on this and we ask that you would continue to, use us to equip each other to be more, faithful to your word, or faithful to the theological

principles, and also more faithful in bringing in, in a Christian ethic to an increasingly secular culture. We trust you to that end. In Jesus' name. Amen