



Christian Reflection  
A Series in Faith and Ethics

**Christian Reflection**

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## Study Guides for Cloning

These guides integrate Bible study, prayer, and worship to help us explore the moral issues surrounding reproductive cloning and research cloning for embryonic stem cells. Use them individually or in a series. You may reproduce them for personal or group use.

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- Making Difficult Decisions** 12  
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### Focus Article:

📖 The Cultural Geography of Cloning  
(*Cloning*, pp. 11-20)

### Suggested Article:

📖 Beyond Minimalist Bioethics  
(*Cloning*, pp. 81-85)

### What do you think?

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# The Cultural Geography of Cloning

As we gain knowledge of the human genome and the power to clone, do we have the wisdom to use this knowledge and power for human flourishing? Or will we simply take the course of least resistance, the course determined by the cultural geography, the social enthusiasms, of our time?

## Prayer

O God, you have given us the breath to sing your praise,  
you hold the power of life in your hand.

**Keep us mindful of our creation in your image,  
the privilege we share as co-creators with you,  
and our responsibility as bearers of hope in an ever-  
changing world.**

Awaken us to your presence, O God, that we might hear your  
voice amid our shared reflections and the words we speak.

**Give us wisdom and discernment to be faithful followers of  
Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Amen.**

## Scripture Reading: Genesis 11:1-9

### Midrash on this Scripture Reading

“When a person fell, the work went on,  
but when a brick fell, all wept.”

## Reflection

In the puzzling story of Babel, what is so wrong about building a city with its tower reaching to the heavens? To understand the builders’ motives and evaluate their ambitious project, the context is essential. The first stories in Genesis have a recurring theme: though God blesses humans with the divine presence and gives them every good thing, they fail to trust God and enjoy the good God provides. The tower builders epitomize this pattern of rejecting the creator.

Their ancestor, Joktan, had divided humankind by moving to the east, away from his brother Peleg (see Genesis 10:25-30 and 11:16). This is an ominous beginning—for Adam and Eve (3:24) and Cain (4:16) had moved eastward after being cast from the presence of God, and later Lot, after clashing with his uncle Abram, would journey eastward toward Sodom (13:11). “Let us make a name for ourselves,” brag these people who build their tower “east of Eden.” How different are they from Peleg’s descendants, especially the couple that gladly and humbly receives new names—Abraham and Sarah—as a gift from God (17:5, 15)!

It is not the people’s brick-making technology (11:3) about which Scripture warns, but how they used this knowledge and power to reject God. How will we use the technology of the Human Genome Project? Allen Verhey critiques how these “cultural maps” orient us toward our new knowledge and power:

- ▶ *genetic reductionism* portrays the human genome as a “code of codes” that determines a person’s life. This “map” is behind the misguided promises of ‘copying’ a person, or ‘preserving’ a life through its clone. It fails to recognize, however, that



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“not even the body may be reduced to genes,” for “persons and bodies have histories, not just genetic fates.”

▶ *the Baconian project* celebrates genetic knowledge as “practical” – the only form of knowing that is valuable, because it gives us power. This map denies any other sources of wisdom than technology-producing science, and it “sets humanity not only over nature but against it,” Verhey says. “The fault that runs through our world and through our lives must finally be located in nature. Nature may be, and must be mastered. Technology becomes the faithful savior.”

▶ *the project of liberal society* is to maximize personal freedom. As attractive as this map appears, it is not a complete moral view because it tells us nothing about what goods to seek or what personal virtues to develop. If used alone, this map distorts the moral life. “It reduces covenantal relationships (like the relationships of husband and wife, or parent and child) to matters of contract,” notes Verhey, and may lead to public policy that ironically “leaves the weak still more vulnerable.”

Andrew Lustig, in “Beyond Minimalist Bioethics,” shows how this minimalist account of the moral life, which values freedom but ignores deeper questions of meaning, purpose, and human identity, might be enriched by a Christian view.

▶ *the project of (re)producing perfect children*, which flows from our trust in technology and celebration of personal options, tempts us to view our children as human achievements rather than gifts from God. Verhey warns this map “may finally reduce our options to a ‘perfect child’ or a dead child.”

▶ *the project of capitalism* transforms scientific knowledge into a marketable commodity. “The beneficiaries of genetic knowledge and power, both economically and medically, very likely will live in the developed nations and be among the relatively well off within those populations,” Verhey predicts. “It is hardly accidental that the most common worry is that companies that hire people or that provide health insurance will use this knowledge and power to serve their own financial interests rather than the interests of the sick poor.”

### Study Questions

1. According to the rabbinical midrash quoted above, what moral issue was at stake in building the tower of Babel? How is it depicted in the biblical story? Is it still at stake in developing technologies of human cloning?
2. Give specific examples of how each cultural map discussed by Verhey could mislead us to morally misuse genetic knowledge and power.
3. How does each cultural map either support or discourage the appeal to religious perspectives for guidance in using genetic knowledge and power?
4. Discuss Verhey’s view that sometimes maximizing freedom may harm the weak and disabled members of society, increase our bondage, or limit our options (*Cloning*, pp. 15-16). Do you agree?

Departing Hymn: “God Who Searches, God Who Knows”



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### Focus Article:

📖 Cloning Facts and Fictions  
(*Cloning*, pp. 21-28)

### Suggested Article:

📖 Repeating Realities  
(*Cloning*, pp. 58-59)

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# Cloning Facts and Fictions

The heated debate over reproductive cloning, as well as therapeutic cloning to obtain embryonic stem cells, has been fueled by misconceptions and hyperbole on both sides. We need to separate the facts from the popular fictions about human cloning.

### Prayer

Scripture Reading: Psalm 8

Responsive Reading: based on Psalm 119:64, 66

The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love;  
**teach us your statutes.**

Teach us good judgment and knowledge,  
**for we believe in your commandments.**

### Reflection

Psalm 8 boldly celebrates human beings' creative power and authority within the creation, proclaiming that we have been "crowned...with glory and honor" and "given...dominion over the works of [God's] hands," the creatures of the land and air and sea. Yet the psalm reminds us that our kingship is by *appointment*—our authority is derived and our glory is mirrored from the creator's. Appropriately, this song of celebration begins and ends with wonder and praise: "O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

What a rich view of our humanity is offered in this psalm! Our dignity, glory, and dominion are balanced with a keen awareness of our creatureliness and dependence on God's guidance. With this perspective in mind, let us consider the central issues that are raised about human identity by cloning.

"Two types of cloning are prevalent today in the biomedical sciences," James Marcum explains. *Reproductive cloning*, where an adult organism is duplicated to make a "delayed genetic" twin, raises issues for human identity like "Are we reducible simply to our genes, or are there dimensions of our existence not reducible to the genome?" In a second type of cloning, *therapeutic or research cloning*, a cloned embryo is dissected to obtain embryonic stem cells for medical treatment or research. This raises questions about the moral status of the blastocyst or embryo.

Since "the debate over human cloning involves a tremendous amount of hype," Marcum dispels three misconceptions:

- ▶ *Cloning is a simple process.* While easy to explain, it is difficult to achieve. The success rate for reproductive cloning is very small, and cloned organisms often die prematurely, suffer poor health, and have defective genes. "These problems may result from the enormous stress placed upon both the cell and nucleus during the cloning process," Marcum writes, or from asking the nucleus from "a specific somatic or adult cell, suddenly to direct the development of an embryo."

Since it's hard to control cellular growth, therapeutic cloning has a dismal success rate too. When embryonic stem cells are successfully harvested and placed in a patient, they often do not relieve the disease, or they may produce tumors or



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unwanted tissues. A final issue involves the supply of eggs; supplementing the human supply with eggs from other species, such as cow, raises technical problems of tissue rejection.

- ▶ *We can 'copy' a loved one.* No, for a clone will have the donor's genes, but a different appearance and personality. Many cellular factors control how an organism's genes are expressed. "Human personhood is not reducible to a genetic code," because we are shaped by historical, contingent relationships.
- ▶ *There is no viable medical alternative to embryonic stem cells.* There are options to creating and dissecting embryos, for "adult tissue from almost every organ in the body, umbilical cord blood, and the placenta contain stem cells...[that] may rival the pluripotency of embryonic stem cells." Adult stem cells, because they avoid the problems of embryonic cells, may be better suited for therapeutic purposes.

### Study Questions

1. How are reproductive and therapeutic (or research) cloning similar? How are they different?
2. The success rate for cloning is very low. What factors in the early stages of human development make cloning so hard?
3. Therapeutic cloning to treat human disease on a commercial scale will require a large supply of eggs. What options are available? What ethical issues would each option raise?
4. Discuss Marcum's view that "In regard merely to protecting human identity, then, there is no reason in principle why humans should not be cloned." Why, then, does Marcum oppose human reproductive cloning?
5. What is your initial response to Joshua Smith's sculpture, *Found Wasp Nest* (on the cover and p. 58)? How does Smith deal with these central fears about human cloning: "Who or what exactly are we? Are we reducible simply to genes?"

### Departing Hymn: "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.  
Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;  
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above  
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.  
To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;  
in all life Thou livest, the true life of all;  
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
and wither and perish—but naught changeth Thee.  
Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;  
all praise we would render; O help us to see  
'tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!

Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908), alt.  
Tune: ST. DENIO



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### Focus Article:

📖 Cloning Promises, Profits, and Privilege  
(*Cloning*, pp. 29-36)

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# Cloning Promises, Profits, and Privilege

Who is funding cloning research, and who will reap the benefits? We should make sure that the common good, solidarity among rich and poor, and the justice of health care and health research economics become central in debates about reproductive cloning, research cloning, and stem cells.

### Prayer

In peace we pray to you, O God.

For those who set government policy with regard to human cloning and stem-cell research, who draw the line between what we *can* do and what we *should* do, (*silent prayers*), Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those in desperate need of basic health care, who will rarely benefit from sophisticated medical technologies and whose voices are lost in debates about cloning, (*silent prayers*), Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen.**

### Scripture Reading: Wisdom 7:1-6

I also am mortal, like everyone else,  
a descendant of the first-formed child of earth;  
and in the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh,  
within the period of ten months, compacted with blood,  
from the seed of a man and the pleasure of marriage.

And when I was born, I began to breathe the common air,  
and fell upon the kindred earth;  
my first sound was a cry, as is true of all.

I was nursed with care in swaddling cloths.

For no king has had a different beginning of existence;  
there is for all one entrance into life, and one way out.

### Reflection

Most hotly debated questions about human cloning involve the status of the clone. In reproductive cloning, would the parent or parents have too much control over a genetically planned child, and could a clone develop nourishing relationships with his or her parents and siblings? Also, cloning is "too unpredictable and dangerous," Lisa Cahill notes, and "to improve human reproductive cloning through experimentation on human embryos and infants would be unethical." Therapeutic (or research) cloning raises other questions about the moral status of an embryonic clone: would it be permissible to destroy one to obtain stem cells, or even to create one with the purpose of so destroying it?

However, "an ethical issue that is still below the surface of public consciousness is the economics of cloning, especially cloning for stem cells." Cahill urges us to consider:

- ▶ *Who is funding cloning research?* Since unregulated "for profit" companies generally support cloning research in the U.S., we should be concerned about "fairness in accessing future therapies...[and] the pressure of profit motives on research directions." Some states may follow California in funding cloning research "to increase business opportunity," but no federal



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guidelines apply to such ventures. For instance, what will prevent “the exploitation of poor women who might submit to the invasive procedure of egg extraction for a fee”?

- ▶ *Who will reap the benefits?* If reproductive cloning becomes an infertility option, only the wealthy will be able to afford it. And while we pour billions of dollars into therapeutic cloning to cure Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s, Cahill observes that “millions die around the world, and at a young age, from treatable causes like malaria, anemia, and tuberculosis.”

She proposes, as a compromise on stem cell research, having “one law, applying to both federally and privately or state-funded research; a ban on the creation of embryos for research; permission to use donated, spare IVF embryos; a ban on patents deriving from work on embryo research; and advocacy for more aggressive and better financed research on adult stem cells.”

### Study Questions

1. What are the key moral issues, according to Cahill, raised by reproductive cloning? By therapeutic cloning? Do you agree?
2. How might the insights and perspective in the scripture reading, a speech ascribed to King Solomon in the Apocrypha, apply to the key moral issues raised by human cloning?
3. Discuss Cahill’s concluding proposal for stem cell research. How is it a compromise among competing views today? Would it promote social justice?

### Departing Hymn: “O God of Life, Your Healing Touch” (verses 1, 2, and 4)

O God of life, your healing touch  
brings wholeness and salvation!  
In you, this world you love so much  
becomes a new creation.  
Through Jesus Christ you blessed the poor,  
unleashed your gifts of healing.  
You gave new sight, new strength, new life—  
to all, your love revealing.

O Christ, the loving healer still,  
you gather us for mission  
to serve your people who are ill,  
whatever their condition.  
You send us to the suffering  
with medicine and caring;  
now make our lives an offering  
to those who are despairing.

How long, Lord, shall we serve the poor—  
a week, a month, a season?  
We ask the question, hoping for  
a limit to our mission.  
But open wide our hearts anew  
and show us, as we’re giving,  
your lifelong call to serving you  
in daily, generous living.

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (2004)

*Suggested Tunes:* KETY or ST. COLUMBA



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### Focus Article:

📖 A Theologian's Brief  
(Cloning, pp. 37-48)

### Suggested Article:

📖 Are We Asking the Right Questions?  
(Cloning, pp. 86-91)

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# The Human Embryo in Christian Tradition

"The Christian churches teach not that the early embryo is certainly a person, but that the embryo should always be treated *as if* it were a person," says *A Theologian's Brief*. How have Christians interpreted Scripture over the centuries to clarify the moral status of the human embryo?

### Prayer

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139:1-17

Responsive Reading: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
**test me and know my thoughts.**  
See if there is any wicked way in me,  
**and lead me in the way everlasting.**

### Reflection

Should society restrict, or even prohibit, human embryonic stem cell research? Scientists claim these stem cells may help us understand and treat degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, heart disease, and cystic fibrosis. Yet the research is morally controversial because the stem cells must be harvested from human embryos, either spare embryos originally created for *in vitro* fertilization or newly cloned embryos made specifically to be dissected. As the research develops and therapies are tested, extensive cloning will be required to produce the needed human embryos for dissection.

What is the moral status of a human embryo, even in the blastula stage (before it is 14 days old) when its stem cells can be harvested? This was the issue before the United Kingdom's House of Lords Select Committee on Stem Cell Research in 2001, when a group of theologians from the Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, and Reformed traditions put forward in *A Theologian's Brief* "five principal considerations which should inform any Christian evaluation of the moral status of the human embryo":

- ▶ *Though penalties have varied, the Christian tradition has always extended the principle of the sacredness of human life to the very beginning of each human being, and has never allowed the deliberate destruction of the fruit of conception.* The *Didache*, a Christian ethical manual from the first century, teaches: "Do not murder a child by abortion, nor kill it at birth" (2.2). Though early Christians differed on when a fetus becomes a human being, the *Brief* observes, they agreed "abortion was gravely wrong, an offense against God the Creator and either the killing of a child, or something very like the killing of a child."
- ▶ *The origin of each human being is not only a work of nature but is a special work of God in which God is involved from the very beginning.* Describing in the fetal stage, the psalmist declares, "I was...woven in the depths of the earth," in a clear echo of God's forming Adam from the topsoil in Eden (Psalm 139:15; cf. Job 10:8-12; Ecclesiastes 11:5; Ezekiel 37:7-10). "It reveals





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the creative act of God bringing about the reality of *this* person...in an analogous way to the creation of the entire cosmos.”

- ▶ *The Christian doctrine of the soul is not dualistic but requires one to believe that, where there is a living human individual, there is a spiritual soul.* For centuries some Christians—accepting the theory of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) and Galen (A.D. 130-200) that a fetus gains its soul, or is “formed,” only after 40 days—placed lower penalties on aborting an unformed fetus. In the eighteenth century, Christians followed modern medicine in moving away from the unformed/formed distinction. The soul—“what makes each individual human person unique, and gives each one the ability to know and to love”—is “not a splinter of God that is trapped in a body. The soul is the natural life of the body, given by the life-giving God.”
- ▶ *Each human being is called and consecrated by God in the womb from the first moment of his or her existence, before he or she becomes aware of it. Traditionally, Christians have expressed the human need for redemption as extending from the moment of conception.* God calls prophets before they are born (Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5) and cares for each human being in the womb (Psalm 139:13-16; Job 10:8-12). “Such passages do not establish *when* human life begins, but they establish God’s involvement and care from the very *beginning*, a concern that is not diminished by our lack of awareness of him.”

The doctrine of original sin (based on passages like Psalm 51:5 and Romans 5:12-21) says each of us is bent by sin from conception, though we are not personally responsible for it.

- ▶ *Jesus, who reveals to Christians what it is to be human, was a human individual from the moment of his conception, celebrated on the feast of the Annunciation, nine months before the feast of Christmas.* In the feast of the Annunciation on March 25, we celebrate the beginning of the Incarnation when Gabriel visited Mary (Luke 1:26-38). “Jesus was a human being from the moment of conception: therefore, it seems, every human being must come into existence at the moment of conception.”

### Study Questions

1. How do the authors of *A Theologian’s Brief* appeal to Scripture to discern the moral status of the human embryo?
2. Discuss the significance of this statement by St. Basil the Great (A.D. 329-379): “The woman who purposely destroys her un-born child is guilty of murder. With us there is no nice enquiry as to its being formed or unformed” (*Letter 188*).
3. How would you describe the moral status of a human embryo? Does an embryo’s status change during its development, or is it the same from conception to birth?
4. Is there a moral difference between dissecting a spare IVF embryo and cloning an embryo specifically to be dissected?
5. What themes from Psalm 139 does Terry York develop in his hymn, “God Who Searches, God Who Knows” (*Cloning*, pp. 49-51), to help us discern the moral limits to human cloning?

Departing Hymn: “God Who Searches, God Who Knows”



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### Focus Article:

📖 Faith and Infertility  
(Cloning, pp. 65-74)

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# Faith and Infertility

Facing the fact that one will never bear children is not just an experience of profound disappointment, but a kind of “dying,” a loss of a longed-for relationship. Can we develop a Christian spirituality for growth through infertility? Can worship become a context for acquiring the grace to live into involuntary childlessness with hope and dignity?

### Prayer

In peace we pray to you, O God.

For our friends and neighbors whose lives are touched with sorrow as they yearn for a child but cannot conceive, (*silent prayers*), Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen.**

### Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 1:1-20

### Responsive Reading†

We shall walk through the valley and the shadow of death,  
we shall walk through the valley in peace.

**If Jesus Himself shall be our leader  
we shall walk through the valley in peace.**

We shall meet God’s children there,  
and there’ll be no weeping there.

**If Jesus Himself shall be our leader  
we shall walk through the valley in peace.**

### Reflection

“If we are to say that there are limits to what ought to be sanctioned in the pursuit of parenthood (either limits to the sort of technologies we allow or limits to the medical resources we commit to addressing infertility),” Maura Ryan asks, “how are we to respond to the very real losses experienced by those who are infertile or unable to carry a child to term?” Too often we are tongue-tied and unable to help infertile believers cope with their suffering. Or, trusting in a loving God, we may simply confess with them that infertility is “a mystery to be lived obediently.”

Though this may be all that we say to infertile couples in church, the culture seductively lures them to believe “suffering is not something to be understood but rather something to be conquered,” Arthur Greil fears. “Explanations that rely on such concepts as ‘God’s will’ cannot be convincing when we believe as strongly as we do in the human ability to pull ourselves out of our condition through technical knowledge.”

To offer a healing spirituality to infertile believers, we should

- ▶ *Provide a worship context in which they feel visible and significant.* “Attention to the language and symbols we use in the public rituals and sermons marking religiously important moments of family life...and an effort to listen from the perspective of those who are currently struggling with some aspect of family could go far in easing the pain of those who experience those events as excruciating,” Ryan writes. Some churches even make a day for a special blessing for infertile couples. “Although many people come to such a service to pray for a miracle, it also provides a context for exploring the challenge of living faithfully in the absence of miracles.”



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► *Help them move from spiritual crisis to spiritual quest.* Healing will begin with reconceiving the self. The object is not to deny their suffering or distract themselves with other activities, but to “tap into the vital energy which all human beings possess and of which the ability to impregnate or give birth is only one small manifestation.... From denying and hating a body that will not make babies, they come to embrace a body as rich as ever in capacities for love, recreation, passion, and courage, only grown wiser now through suffering.”

► *Reframe the place of procreation in our theology of marriage.* We should (1) highlight “mutual self-giving of the partners” rather than procreation as central to marriage; (2) see not only family life, but also “single life or marriage without children as a unique and valuable context for ministry”; and (3) stress caring for children rather than acquiring them so that “we can commend adoption or other ways of relating to children as attractive paths to resolving the infertility crisis.”

We owe those struggling with infertility “an inviting witness to the ‘something more’ that lies beyond the limits of their loss.”

### Study Questions

1. Scripture mixes “judgment, blessing, and mystery” in stories about barrenness. How can Hannah’s story (1 Samuel 1:1-20) seem insensitive to infertile couples? How can it be helpful?
2. “Infertility is an invisible reality in most congregations,” Ryan notes. How can it be visible and significant in worship?
3. Discuss Ryan’s view: “When hope is...an awareness of God’s redeeming work within our experiences of illness or loss or despair, when it is not mistaken simply for a commitment to a certain outcome, infertility [can] be the catalyst for a new and deeper relationship with God and the community.”
4. How would Ryan’s ideas for reframing our theology of marriage help infertile believers be more included? What specific steps should your congregation take to carry out each idea?

### Departing Hymn: “O Love That Will Not Let Me Go” (verses 1, 3, and 4)

O Love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
that in thine ocean depths its flow  
may richer, fuller be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to thee;  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
and feel the promise is not vain,  
that morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust life’s glory dead,  
and from the ground there blossoms red  
life that shall endless be.

*George Matheson* (1882), alt.  
Tune: ST. MARGARET (Peace)

<sup>†</sup>From “We Shall Walk Through the Valley,” traditional.



## Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

### Focus Article:

📖 Making Difficult Decisions  
(Cloning, pp. 75-80)

### What do you think?

Was this study guide useful for your personal or group study? Please send your suggestions to:

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### Christian Reflection

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# Making Difficult Decisions

Not every medical “advance” deserves our unquestioning acceptance. In deciding whether and how to employ new technologies, we must draw upon our religious values. Clearness committees can help us do this in a positive and helpful way.

### Prayer

In peace we pray to you, O God.

For one another as we seek divine guidance on difficult medical decisions—awareness of our place in your creation, compassion toward your world, justice in medical and financial ethics, humility in our convictions, and unity in our confession, (*silent prayers*), Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen.**

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

### Responsive Reading<sup>†</sup>

We shall walk through the valley and the shadow of death,  
we shall walk through the valley in peace.

**If Jesus Himself shall be our leader  
we shall walk through the valley in peace.**

We shall meet God’s children there,  
and there’ll be no weeping there.

**If Jesus Himself shall be our leader  
we shall walk through the valley in peace.**

### Reflection

When medical procedures raise thorny moral issues, doctors can describe technical options, family members offer support, and friends give advice, but to whom do we turn for wisdom? Stuart Sprague laments, “Most people do not seek advice from members of their religious communities, especially in a formal way.”

Discovering what to do and how to live in morally puzzling situations requires what Scripture calls the “wisdom from above [that] is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, [and] willing to yield” (James 3:17). A truly wise person is willing to listen to and learn from other members of the community of faith.

A long-standing way of communal moral discernment is the Quaker practice of calling together a clearness committee. Other congregations could adapt this practice to help members make difficult medical decisions, Sprague says. This is how it works:

- ▶ *Determine the committee’s role.* One type of committee judges whether “clearness”—a thoughtful and spiritually mature decision—is reached by the person requesting the committee. A second type of committee doesn’t make that judgment, but serves as a resource during the person’s decision making.
- ▶ *Prepare the committee members.* “Several church members, clergy or laity, must commit themselves to the education and discipline necessary to function in this role,” urges Sprague. “Before they are called together for clearness, members should establish the boundaries of appropriate practice, learn how to ask questions in a helpful way, and commit themselves to confidentiality and respect for one another and the decision-maker.”



## Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

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► *Keep reflection 'close to the ground.'* We are guided by general norms, virtues, and exemplars, but not in any simple or mechanical way. These guides need "testing and applying...in a variety of contexts and scenarios. Sometimes a norm must be balanced against another norm or further specified according to the details of the case." Committee members can help decision makers "identify and overcome any personal biases or prejudices that would distort their understanding of the moral norms and their reflection on the particular case."

"This process assumes that the person has already developed morally within a faithful community that has been shaped by the reading of Scripture," notes Sprague. "Now the person is seeking, with the assistance of some respected advisors in that community, to *clarify* how these norms, virtues, exemplars, cases, and so on, can guide her or him in the current situation."

### Study Questions

1. What morally puzzling decisions about medical procedures or technologies might be brought to a clearness committee?
2. How have Quakers used clearness committees in the past? Of the two types of committees, which would be the best sort for persons who are facing difficult medical decisions?
3. List the key qualifications for clearness committee members.
4. Gaining clearness is not automatic, even with a good committee. What traits might help a person to reach clearness?
5. Quakers believe that a clearness committee helps the requesting person "discern the inner light." How do you understand this doctrine? Do you agree with it?

### Departing Hymn: "If You Will Only Let God Guide You"

If you will only let God guide you,  
and hope in Him through all your ways,  
whatever comes, He'll stand beside you,  
to bear you through the evil days.  
Who trusts in God's unchanging love  
builds on the Rock that cannot move.

Only be still, and wait His leisure  
in cheerful hope, with heart content  
to take whate'er the Father's pleasure  
and all discerning love have sent;  
nor doubt our inmost wants are known  
to Him who chose us for His own.

Sing, pray, and swerve not from His ways,  
but do your part in conscience true;  
trust His rich promises of grace,  
so shall they be fulfilled in you;  
God hears the call of those in need,  
the souls that trust in Him indeed.

Georg Neumark (1621-1681);  
tr. Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878), alt.  
Tune: NEUMARK

†Based on "We Shall Walk Through the Valley," African American spiritual.

# Appendix: Optional Lesson Plans for Teachers

For each study guide we offer two or three optional lesson plans followed by detailed suggestions on using the material in the study guide:

- ▶ An *abridged lesson plan* outlines a lesson suitable for a beginning Bible study class or a brief group session.
- ▶ A *standard lesson plan* outlines a more thorough study.
- ▶ For some guides a *dual session lesson plan* divides the study guide material so that the group can explore the topic in two meetings.

Each lesson plan is for a 30- to 45-minute meeting, with about one-third of the time being set aside for worship.

# The Cultural Geography of Cloning

## Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>
Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading
Midrash Reading	Midrash Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)
Questions 1 and 2	Questions (selected)

## Teaching Goals

1. To sketch some cultural maps, or powerful social assumptions, which are influencing decisions about how to use genetic knowledge and power.
2. To critique each cultural map as a source of wisdom about how to use biomedical technologies generally and human cloning specifically.

## Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 2-3 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cloning (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested article before the group meeting.

## Begin with a Story

“Cc is a healthy and beautiful kitten by all measures --sleek, curious and playful, and sporting a striped gray coat over white. So how did Cc become a disappointing speed bump on the fast-lane rush toward a brave new world? The story is in her name, ‘Cc,’ which was speculatively assigned by bio-technicians filled with pecuniary hopes, not lovingly bestowed by an adoring caregiver. Cc is a clone, built on speculation, not begotten.

“Her ‘parent,’ a corporation called Genetic Savings & Clone (this is no joke), hopes to make a lot of money from producing carbon copies of our favorite pets. Unfortunately, Cc is quite unlike her original, Rainbow, who is a rather chunky, temperamental, and reserved calico. Cc is adorable, but not a copy. Nothing we value, it seems, from her color to her personality, is ‘just’ in her (or Rainbow’s) genes. Genetic Savings & Clone promises it will be going back to the drawing board, rather than down to Fuzzy Friends, for a replacement cat....

“Cc’s story is a sobering contemporary parable, rather than a minor curiosity, because it reveals a tragic irony. In our extreme trust of biotechnology, old taboos become prescriptions. We cross the line we once would not have dared to cross, then we pencil in another line. Cloning once seemed abominable, but we made an exception to improve farm animals. Today we’re copying desirable pets. Tomorrow will we try to improve our children, or our neighbors’ children? We never intend to cross the next line. After crossing the previous line, however, *we are changed*” [adapted from Robert B. Kruschwitz and James A. Marcum, “Facing the Challenges for Bioethics,” *Baylor News* 13:3 (March 2003), 5].

## Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently and then ask members to read responsively the prayer in the study guide. The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

## Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Genesis 11:1-9 from a modern translation.

## Midrash on this Scripture Reading

Ask the group to read the midrash aloud together. A midrash is a brief rabbinical guide to the interpretation of a biblical passage. This one comes from a collection of midrashim on the book of Genesis which dates from the sixth-century A.D.

## Reflection

To follow Paul's counsel to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2), we must expose how "this world"—the myriad ways of living counter to God—influences our decision-making. We can't resist what we don't even notice.

Allen Verhey exposes and criticizes five of the "social enthusiasms" that are shaping how we develop and use the technology of human cloning. These social enthusiasms, or "cultural maps," are so widely accepted and socially powerful that he calls them our "cultural geography"—they are part of the intellectual landscape that we inhabit and rarely question.

The first three maps are reductive, taking something that is true in part and stretching it into an entire account of the matter: (1) we are partly, but *not totally* shaped by our genes; (2) practical knowledge is a valuable, but *not the only valuable form* of knowledge; (3) freedom is an important, but *not the sole or highest* moral value. The fourth map, (re)producing perfect children, flows from the first three maps as a specific instance related to cloning. With the final map, the project of capitalism, Verhey introduces the issues of social justice and the common good that Lisa Sowle Cahill explores in "Cloning Promises, Profits, and Privilege" (*Cloning*, pp. 29-36).

## Study Questions

1. Success in the project was more important than the common good or the lives of individuals. This issue is implicit in how the tower builders' describe their goal: "let us make a name for ourselves." Another aspect of their goal, to avoid being scattered across the whole earth, may seem like a concern for the common good. Yet in this story "the whole earth" refers to the place where humans have dwelled in unity of language and from which the tower builders have fled (11:1), so their goal may be to thwart God's design.

Encourage members to discuss whether the cultural maps of the Baconian project, liberal society, or capitalism might lead someone to value the success of the project of human cloning over the common good or the lives of individuals.

2. Most scenarios, of course, result from a convergence of cultural maps—e.g., the attempt to clone pets (like Cc) is based on genetic reductionism, the Baconian project, and capitalism. Even so, members might select one cultural map and "dream" from its perspective about the use of genetic knowledge and power. Many of these dreams will never be realized since they would have to overcome serious technical obstacles or societal resistance, but it is instructive to consider where these maps would lead us if they met no resistance.
3. *The Baconian project*, which says we should guide our lives by "practical" knowledge alone, explicitly devalues religious wisdom. *Genetic reductionism* ignores how our character and personality are shaped through interactions with other people and God. *The project of liberal society* marginalizes and privatizes appeals to religious wisdom—e.g., in public debates, we must appeal to a minimalist ethic of freedom, rather than a rich Christian conception of human flourishing and the common good. *The project of (re)producing perfect children* departs from religious understandings of the family and children, while *the project of capitalism* values efficiency over religious accounts of the common good. Encourage members to discuss whether Christians can use these cultural maps in a limited way that is consistent with their deeper understanding of God's purposes in the world.
4. When we focus on maximizing personal freedom, we will ignore other moral concerns. The freedom to (re)produce perfect children, for instance, puts disabled persons in a negative light and may undermine our commitment to their full inclusion in society. Parents may feel pressure to have a genetically perfect child. And a cloned child will have a history against which the child will be measured. These outcomes might not occur, but again it is helpful to consider where this map will lead us if it meets no resistance.

## Departing Hymn

"God Who Searches, God Who Knows" is on pp. 50-51 of *Cloning*. If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.



# Cloning Facts and Fictions

## Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>
Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading
Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)
Questions 1, 2, and 3	Questions (selected)

## Teaching Goals

1. To understand the basic process of reproductive and therapeutic (or research) cloning.
2. To dispel some of the hype and baseless fears regarding human cloning.
3. To clarify the moral issues based on the technical difficulties and obstacles faced by human cloning.

## Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 4-5 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cloning (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise,” locate the tune ST. DENIO in your church’s hymnal or on the web at [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org).

## Begin with a Comment

James Marcum describes the recent and quick advance of cloning technology: “Although animal cloning was first conducted successfully in the 1950s—the first animal cloned by nuclear transfer was a tadpole—biologists commonly held that mammals could not be cloned. They believed that the adult mammalian body cell’s nucleus is too specialized or differentiated to provide the genetic information needed to direct an organism’s development. That is, the information necessary to guide an organism’s growth is locked up too securely to be accessed or, simply stated, the cell’s nucleus is just too old to be born anew. Of course, that position changed with the cloning of the sheep ‘Dolly,’ who was born on July 5, 1996. Since then other mammalian species, such as cows, pigs, mice, and cats, have been cloned successfully. Some biologists believe it is only a matter of time until humans are cloned” (*Cloning*, pp. 21-22).

## Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently. Conclude by praying that as members grapple with the challenging issues of cloning, God will lead them to understanding.

## Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Psalm 8 from a modern translation.

## Responsive Reading

The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

## Reflection

In this study James Marcum briefly explains the two types of cloning—reproductive and therapeutic (or research) cloning—and the basic technology, called somatic cell nuclear transfer, that they share. He also introduces the terminology used to describe the early stages of human embryonic development. Take time to review this information and answer members’ questions. Understanding these key facts about cloning and human development will help members resist the hype and dispel the myths coming from all sides of the debate about human cloning.

Psalm 8 beautifully balances two dimensions of our humanity. On the one hand, God gives us dominion over many aspects of the creation, and this authorizes our developing genetic knowledge and power.

Yet we exercise our dominion under the majestic lordship of the creator, and this places limits on how we develop genetic knowledge and use its power. Psalm 119 views these limits—God’s statutes and commandments—as reflecting God’s steadfast love for the world and as guiding us toward developing good judgment and knowledge. We fully express our humanity not when we discover everything we can and do anything we want, but when we develop our knowledge and exercise our dominion with good judgment, with love that echoes God’s love for the world.

Encourage the group to discuss Marcum’s responses to three common misconceptions about human cloning: (1) the process of cloning is not only conceptually simple, but it is easy to use and to achieve satisfactory results; (2) we can “copy” individuals because a clone will be identical to its donor; and (3) there are no promising medical alternatives to therapeutic (or research) cloning in order to harvest pluripotent stem cells.

### *Study Questions*

1. All cloning shares a technology called somatic cell nuclear transfer. After the nucleus is removed from an egg, another donor nucleus—generally from an adult body cell—is transferred to the enucleated egg. The reconstituted egg is stimulated by a specific chemical or an electric shock, placed in an artificial environment, and then stimulated by other chemicals that promote growth and cell differentiation.  
In reproductive cloning the embryo is placed into a womb and brought to birth as a clone, which is usually called a “delayed genetic” or “spaced” twin. In therapeutic cloning, the embryo is maintained in the artificial environment for several days until it reaches the blastula stage, after which it is dissected for the embryonic stem cells.
2. “Cloning today is more art than science,” Marcum says. “Success often depends more on the tacit skills of the investigator, like riding a bike, than on the techniques employed. We understand little about the processes involved in the development of an organism, and without an answer sheet on the subject we cannot gauge our progress in mastering those processes.” Problems occur at each stage of the delicate procedure: (1) in removing the nucleus from the egg, substances that direct the early stages of development may be inadvertently removed; (2) the donor nucleus, which is taken from an adult cell, may not switch over to its new task of directing the egg’s development; (3) (in therapeutic cloning) chemicals in the artificial environment may not stimulate the embryo properly, resulting in damaged genomes or differentiation into the wrong kinds of cells; and (4) (in therapeutic cloning) the organism into which the harvested stem cells are placed may reject them as “foreign” tissue. Some researchers hope that using adult stem cells from the patient will resolve the last problem.
3. Eggs might be harvested from humans for other species, such as cow. Using human eggs raises issues such as the health risks to the donor, the probability that poor women will be tempted to sell eggs to researchers, and that the price will be high because of the limited supply. The use of non-human eggs raises issues involving the generation of hybrid-species organisms, and the added risk of patient’s rejection of the stem cells.
4. Marcum says it is hype to think humans can be “copied.” He is concerned about the high risk of unfortunate results in clones, and the terrible destruction of many embryos, which are much “more than a ball of cells.” He also mentions the “reduction in genetic variability in the human population, if reproductive cloning were conducted on a grand scale.”
5. “[Smith] plays with ideas in his sculpture and expects his audience to do the same,” Hornik reports. This sculpture leads some viewers to think of abortion in connection with cloning, of how they feel about being identified by numbers, or of society’s interest in faux objects.

### *Departing Hymn*

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

# Cloning Promises, Profits, and Privilege

## Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>
Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)
Questions 1 and 3	Questions (selected)
Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn

## Teaching Goals

1. To outline the hotly debated moral issues concerning reproductive and therapeutic (or research) human cloning.
2. To spotlight the justice of health research and health care economics of human cloning, by asking “Who is funding cloning research?” and “Who will benefit from it?”
3. To discuss Lisa Cahill’s proposal for stem cell research.

## Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 6-7 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cloning (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article before the group meeting. Download the departing hymn “O God of Life, Your Healing Touch” paired with the lovely tune KETY from [www3.baylor.edu/christianethics/hymnGillette.pdf](http://www3.baylor.edu/christianethics/hymnGillette.pdf). Or adapt the familiar tune ST. COLUMBA, which is in your church’s hymnal or on the web at [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org), by repeating the tune for each four lines of the hymn text.

## Begin with a Story

“In July 2001, President George W. Bush paid a visit to Pope John Paul II. In relation to Bush’s impending policy decision about stem cell funding and policy, the pope reminded the president that the creation of research embryos was, in his view, ‘an assault on innocent life.’ This warning was widely reported in the secular press. Much less frequently noted was the pope’s opening call for the U.S. to exercise leadership in helping those who suffer from economic marginalization regarding the essential goods of life. ‘Respect for human dignity and belief in the equal dignity of all the members of the human family demand policies aimed at enabling all peoples to have access to the means required to improve their lives....’ A serious moral issue is whether proposals to clone for stem cell research are aimed at access for all people, or at prestige, profits, and products for the privileged” (*Cloning*, p. 34).

## Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Using the prayer in the study guide, pray silently not only for who develop government health policies, but also for the poor whose voices rarely are heard when those policies are created. The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

## Scripture Reading

Ask group members to read Wisdom 7:1-6 in unison. The book of Wisdom in the Apocrypha presents this text as a meditation by King Solomon on his equality with all human beings.

## Reflection

Lisa Cahill introduces two distinctions to help us sort out the key moral issues raised by human cloning: (1) the goal of the procedure is either reproductive or therapeutic, and (2) the alleged wrong of the procedure is either it mistreats the clones or it does not serve the common good. Therefore, four types of moral problems are associated with human cloning:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. (Re)producing children by cloning harms or does not respect the clones. | 2. Embryonic stem cell research intentionally destroys clones (embryos). |
| 3. (Re)producing children by cloning does not serve the common good.       | 4. Embryonic stem cell research does not serve the common good.          |

The moral issues that involve the alleged mistreatment of clones (types 1 and 2) are hotly debated. Yet these debates have followed different paths because (a) reproductive cloning is many years away, while embryonic stem cell research is underway, and (b) a high moral status for cloned children is generally accepted, but the moral status of cloned embryos is disputed.

Cahill urges us to broaden the public debate to include moral issues concerning the common good (types 3 and 4). Human cloning would not serve the common good, for example, if it were to further distance the rich from the poor, distort priorities for health care and health research, or undermine the bonds of family life.

### Study Questions

1. Moral problems arise with reproductive cloning when it is used to address infertility. (Because physical and personality traits cannot be determined solely by genes, Cahill dismisses as “highly unlikely” the prospect of cloning “whole classes of elite or subservient humans.”) She worries that reproductive cloning (1) “might give the parent or parents of a clone too much control over the child,” (2) “would seriously challenge the meaning of intergenerational relationship and parenthood,” (3) is “too unpredictable and dangerous to be used in humans,” and to develop cloning procedures “through experimentation on human embryos and infants would be unethical,” (4) will be an expensive service available only to the rich, and (5) will further the trend toward the “commercialization of family and parenthood.”

Research (or therapeutic) cloning to produce embryonic stem cells (1) intentionally destroys embryos; (2) will lead us to create new embryos with the purpose of destroying them; (3) will encourage “the exploitation of poor women who might submit to the invasive procedure of egg extraction for a fee”; and (4) is diverting health care resources from alleviating deadly but treatable diseases like malaria, anemia, and tuberculosis.

2. Wisdom 7:1-6 beautifully speaks to both the *equality* of human beings (they are descendants “of the first-formed child of earth” with a common “entrance into life”) and their *solidarity* (they “breathe the common air” and live on “the kindred earth”). The implied speaker, the great King Solomon, identifies himself with people of all ranks and classes. This perspective encourages us to support the common good and address the needs of the poor.

The passage provides insight into the *moral status* of each human being, even when one is merely an embryo or newborn child, and regardless of one’s abilities and accomplishments. God cares for each human being, for within a mother’s womb one is “molded into flesh” in a manner that repeats God’s creation of Adam, “the first-formed child of earth.” Parents also care for their newborn baby, who is “nursed with care in swaddling clothes.” The *context of birth* is a family cooperating with God to welcome a child’s “entrance into life” – for the person is “compacted with blood from the seed of a man and the pleasure of marriage.”

3. Cahill’s proposal is a compromise in that it allows embryonic stem cell research, but limits it to using spare embryos that have been created for *in vitro* fertilization and donated to researchers by the parent(s). The dignity of the human embryo is respected by (1) banning the creation of new embryos for research and (2) encouraging research on adult stem cells.

The proposal directs stem cell research toward the common good by (1) providing legal oversight of all research and (2) limiting commercial abuse with a ban on patents derived from embryo research. The ban on creation of embryos would eliminate pressure on poor women to undergo risks to provide eggs for embryonic stem cell research.

### Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

# The Human Embryo in Christian Tradition

## Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>	<i>Dual Session (#1)</i>	<i>Dual Session (#2)</i>
Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading	Luke 1:26-45
Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)	Reflection (skim all)	Discuss moral limits on research cloning
Questions 1, 2, and 3	Questions (selected)	Questions 1 and 5	Questions 2, 3, and 4
Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn

## Teaching Goals

1. To review how Christians have appealed to Scripture over the centuries to discern the moral status of the human embryo.
2. To clarify the traditional Christian view of the human embryo.
3. To discern the moral limits which should be placed on therapeutic (or research) cloning in light of the moral status of the human embryo.

## Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 8-9 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cloning (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested article before the group meeting.

## Begin with a Observation

Mark Cherry notes that there has been “a profound shift in moral commitments within the dominant intellectual culture of the United States and Western Europe. Where the destruction of human embryos once was understood as the spiritual equivalent of murder, it has become more-or-less routine. The practices of in vitro fertilization with embryo wastage and abortion are legally protected as a part of a secular understanding of procreative liberty.... [M]uch of medical research and healthcare decision-making has been divorced from traditional Christian commitments” (*Cloning*, p. 91). What are those traditional Christian commitments, and how are they grounded in the church’s reading of Scripture?

## Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently. Conclude by asking God to examine members’ hearts and guide their thoughts as they examine the witness of Christians through the centuries.

## Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Psalm 139:1-17 from a modern translation.

## Responsive Reading

The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

## Reflection

*A Theologian’s Brief* is endorsed by twenty-four theologians drawn from a range of Christian communities in the U.K. and North America. They include the current Archbishop of Canterbury, the Roman Catholic Primate of Ireland, and leading Orthodox theologians in the U.K. and U.S. The *Brief* was written in response to earlier testimony by the Rt. Rev. Richard Harries, who is the Lord Bishop of Oxford and the chairman of the House of Lords Select Committee on Stem Cell Research. Bishop Harries’ testimony ([www.oxford.anglican.org/page/325/](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/page/325/)) and the Committee’s final report ([www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld/ldstem.htm](http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld/ldstem.htm)) are available online.

Bishop Harries disagrees with the authors of the *Brief* about the significance of Aristotle's view that a fetus has a human soul, or is "formed," only after it begins moving inside the womb on about the fortieth day. The Committee's final report summarizes this difference of opinion:

For many Christians [like the authors of the *Brief*]..., with the outmoding of the Aristotelian concept of delayed ensoulment, fertilisation is the point at which human life emerges and, as vulnerable human life, it is particularly worthy of protection....

For other Christians, however, the fact that the Christian tradition, for so much of its history, made a distinction between the moral status of the unformed and the formed embryo, and thought of the human person in the full sense coming only with a delayed ensoulment, remains significant: it reflects a valid moral distinction which needs to be affirmed even with the outmoding of the Aristotelian philosophy on which it was once based (*Report from the Select Committee on Stem Cell Research*, appendix 4, February 27, 2002).

Your group may want to extend its discussion of this material. In the first session, you might review Psalm 139 and the *Brief*. In a second session, use study questions 2, 3, and 4 to clarify your view of the moral status of human embryos and to apply this view to stem cell research.

### Study Questions

1. The authors of the *Brief* use Scripture in several ways, listed here from the more to the less direct ways. (1) They *generalize* from Psalm 139:13-16 and passages that mention God's concern for specific individuals in the womb (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Job), that God knows and cares for each human being from the moment of conception. (2) Several biblical descriptions of the womb allude to the story of God personally molding Adam from dust and breathing life into him. The authors *interpret this recurring allusion to creation* to mean that God is active in the conception of each person. (3) The natural reading of the Annunciation, as well as the church's celebration of this event on March 25, suggests the Incarnation began at the moment of Jesus' conception. The authors *give a theological argument* that Jesus' life is a model of each human being's life in this detail as well. (4) Finally, a less direct appeal to Scripture occurs when the authors *draw an implication from the church doctrine of original sin*, which over the centuries was fashioned in part from various scriptural passages. The doctrine says that after the Fall each person takes on, at the moment of conception, a brokenness or disease for which that person is not responsible. This implies a new human being is present from the moment of conception.
2. St. Basil the Great, the leading fourth-century theologian in the east, suggests the moral status of an embryo does not depend on its abilities (in this case, self-movement) or stage of development. (See [www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202188.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202188.htm) for a translation of *Letter 188*.)
3. Certain descriptions of the embryo—e.g., "person," "potential person," "formed," "unformed," etc.—point to some abilities or capacities that it possesses. As these abilities or capacities develop over time, the embryo's status will evolve. Other descriptions—"human being," "unique individual," "offspring of these parents," etc.—refer to the embryo's biological reality as a unique organism. This uniqueness is present from conception to birth. A third set of descriptions—e.g., "human child," "baby," "child of God," "son" or "daughter," etc.—mark the embryo's relationship to a human parent or God, which is unchanging from conception to birth. Encourage members to discuss which sort of designation—of abilities, biological uniqueness, or relationships—should be the basis of the embryo's moral status.
4. Spare IVF embryos probably are abandoned by their parent(s). Should they be treated like abandoned, dying, or deceased infants? The researcher is not responsible for their creation.
5. Members may mention that God's Spirit, the "Breath of Life" who enlivens us at birth, is also present to guide us in discerning the truth. God's Spirit, who searches and knows us, will judge our intentions and actions "as we join with [God] in knitting future generations."

### Departing Hymn

"God Who Searches, God Who Knows?" is on pp. 50-51 of *Cloning*. If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

# Faith and Infertility

## Lesson Plans

Abridged Plan	Standard Plan	Dual Session (#1)	Dual Session (#2)
Prayer Scripture Reading Responsive Reading Reflection (skim all)	Prayer Scripture Reading Responsive Reading Reflection (all sections)	Prayer 1 Samuel 1-20 Responsive Reading Discuss Hannah's story and <i>spiritual quest</i>	Prayer Psalm 113 Responsive Reading Discuss congregation's response to infertility
Questions 2 and 4 Departing Hymn	Questions (selected) Departing Hymn	Questions 1 and 3 Departing Hymn	Questions 2 and 4 Departing Hymn

## Teaching Goals

1. To consider why many infertile believers find little solace and usable wisdom in church.
2. To outline a Christian spirituality for growth through infertility.
3. To discuss how congregations can make infertility more visible and infertile couples more included in church life.

## Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 10-11 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cloning (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go," locate the tune ST. MARGARET (Peace) in your church's hymnal or on the web at [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org).

## Begin with a Story

Bill Shiell writes, "'We do not choose our families,' as the old saying goes, or what our families will be like. We welcome the gift of creation in God's image and enjoy the relationships that are provided for as long as we have them. We see the pain that accompanies the limits of our humanity not as a difficulty to be managed or a problem to be avoided, but as a part of life to be received. Our problems—caused biologically or otherwise—are stations along the journey that will draw us even closer to the one who suffered for us and suffers with us today...."

"In *The Cloister Walk*, Kathleen Norris describes a visit to see her physician for treatment of her bruised knee. In the waiting room she meets a group of monks who are also awaiting appointments and have their fair share of broken limbs. When two eighty-year-old monks notice Norris walk in with a cane, they begin telling stories about the various accidents they have suffered in life. They have fallen off roofs, out of trees, into quicksand, and into lakes. As their stories keep growing in a game of one-upmanship, the men correct one another about the facts behind them. Soon a younger monk interrupts to ask Norris if she is all right. 'Look at the company I'm in,' she replies, 'I'm not only fine; I'm in heaven.'

"Norris understands the grace of the Christian life. We share life with individuals who have fallen so often, and we are grateful for the ways that God continues to sustain us on the journey" (*Cloning*, pp. 63-64).

## Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Using the prayer in the study guide, pray silently for friends and neighbors who grieve because they cannot conceive children. The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

## Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read 1 Samuel 1:1-20 from a modern translation.

## Responsive Reading

The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

## Reflection

After reviewing why many Christians who are struggling with infertility feel invisible and marginalized in church life, Maura Ryan suggests three steps toward a Christian spirituality for growth *through* infertility: (1) to stop ignoring infertility in our worship; (2) to help infertile believers reconceive themselves as on a spiritual quest from which God can bring redemptive good from their suffering; and (3) to present the Christian view of marriage in a way that is more sensitive and helpful to infertile couples.

Ryan's essay is in the *Cloning* issue because human reproductive cloning has been promoted as a medical response to infertility. We would be amiss to deal with the morality of human cloning, but ignore the deep suffering of infertile couples who have been promised so much from this technology. Nevertheless, since your study group may want to discuss this important topic independently of the morality of cloning, the study guide does not stress the cloning issue, which was the immediate context of her remarks.

Your group may extend its discussion of this material. In one session, review the layers of meaning within Hannah's story (1 Samuel 1-20) and passages like Psalm 113 that mention barrenness, and use this as a springboard to discuss Ryan's view that we can help infertile believers re-envision their suffering from a spiritual crisis to a spiritual quest. In the other session, discuss her ideas to make infertility more visible in worship and to reframe our theology of marriage.

## Study Questions

1. Peninnah taunts Hannah by saying that her infertility is a judgment, for "the Lord had closed her womb" (1 Samuel 1:5). From Peninnah's perspective (which totally ignores the mysterious nature of God's blessing), Hannah is 'rewarded' with a child only because she prays 'fervently enough.' If we were to adopt uncritically Peninnah's theology and rather wooden interpretation of the situation, we would be insensitive to infertile believers.

Scripture's realistic depiction of Hannah's suffering, her husband's tender love for her, and the compassion of the priest Eli, can help infertile couples make sense of their suffering.

2. Regularly in worship, but especially in services that emphasize families and family life, a prayer or song or sermon might lift up those who are struggling with infertility. The biblical passages associated with barrenness can inspire new worship materials. Some churches set aside certain days—like Presentation Sunday, which celebrates the presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:21-40)—to invite "those who were suffering infertility or pregnancy loss to come together to pray and to experience the support of the community." Encourage members to review the worship practices, good and bad, that they have experienced.
3. Two ideas in this passage may help infertile believers move from a *spiritual crisis* to a *spiritual quest*. First, Christian hope means we perceive that God's presence in the midst of our suffering can draw us into deeper relationships and new ministry. This hope does not deny our loss and pain, and is not reducible to a platitude like "Suffering builds character."  
Second, hope is not reduced to a longing for a biological child. This keeps us from distorting prayer into "a relentless expectation of a miracle," Ryan says. "It also becomes possible to bring realistic expectations to medicine. Stopping treatment is 'abandoning hope' only when success or failure is measured as the achievement of a certain result. When the experience of infertility is lived as an invitation to experience the mystery of God's care for us, God's infinite 'motherhood' and 'fatherhood,' God's desire for our flourishing, it is not necessary to pursue 'success' at the expense of the self. Indeed, it does not even make sense."
4. Infertile believers may experience marriage as more rewarding and complete within the Christian life, hear God's call to special service as a couple, and discover new ways to care for children by adoption or through friendships in the church family. How are marriage, Christian calling, and care of children celebrated in worship in your congregation? Are infertile couples encouraged to lead in worship, care for children, and develop ministry gifts?

## Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.



# Making Difficult Decisions

## Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>
Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading
Responsive Reading	Responsive Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)
Questions 1, 2, and 3	Questions (selected)

## Teaching Goals

1. To understand how Quakers use clearness committees for communal moral discernment.
2. To suggest how other congregations might adapt clearness committees to help members make difficult medical decisions.
3. To discuss the theology behind the practice of calling together clearness committees.

## Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 12-13 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cloning (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn “If You Will Only Let God Guide You,” locate the tune NEUMARK in your church’s hymnal or on the web at [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org).

## Begin with a Story

“Penelope Yungblut has described to me how a [Quaker] clearness committee helped her husband, John, make a difficult medical decision,” writes Stuart Sprague. “In 1994, his surgeons gave John only five days to decide whether to have a radical operation—the amputation of his hip and what remained of his leg—to remove the cancer which had recurred. He knew the surgery would be a disabling procedure, but the alternative was death from the cancer in a short time. To assist him in making the decision, he called together a clearness committee composed of friends. As a result of this meeting, he decided to have the surgery. John lived about a year after the procedure and, though he was disabled, he felt he had made the right decision.

“When believers today face decisions about whether to use medical technologies like in vitro fertilization, reproductive cloning, or stem cell therapy, and when they consider using extraordinary life-extending measures for loved ones with chronic illnesses, they find themselves in morally puzzling situations just as John Yungblut did. Too often, unfortunately, their congregations do not offer resources for communal discernment analogous to the clearness committees for Quakers” (*Cloning*, pp. 76-77).

## Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Using the prayer in the study guide, pray silently for friends and neighbors who are facing difficult medical decisions. The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

## Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 from a modern translation.

## Reflection

Today we tend to think of decision-making as a private affair, and of practical wisdom—the ability to make spiritually mature decisions about what to do and how to live—as a virtue possessed and practiced by an individual. Yet James 3:13-18—in a clear echo of the Old Testament wisdom tradition (e.g., Proverbs 9:8-9; 12:15; 13:1; and 15:31)—describes the wise person as being open to correction and willing to learn from others in the community of faith.

Various practices of mutual correction and communal discernment have developed in the church to help members deal with puzzling moral issues. Bioethicist Stuart Sprague recommends that congregations make available to members something analogous to the Quaker practice of clearness committees.

Sprague's essay is in the *Cloning* issue because congregations need practices to help members make difficult medical decisions related to in vitro fertilization, reproductive cloning, and stem cell therapy. Nevertheless, since your study group may want to discuss this practice of communal discernment independently of the morality of cloning, the study guide does not emphasize the cloning-related medical decisions that were the immediate context of his remarks.

### **Study Questions**

1. In the context of their study of human cloning, members might mention medical technologies like in vitro fertilization, reproductive cloning, and embryonic stem cell therapy for diseases like Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, heart disease, or cystic fibrosis.

Members may have faced other difficult medical decisions about using extraordinary life-extending measures for loved ones with chronic illnesses, committing a parent to long-term care, undergoing radical surgery, accepting another round of painful chemotherapy, committing financial resources to pay for expensive procedures, aborting a fetus, adopting a mentally disabled child, caring for a loved one with severe mental illness, and so on.

2. Quaker meetings, or communities, called clearness committees to determine whether an engaged couple was making a wise decision about marriage or an individual was making a good choice about joining the community. Individual Quakers might call a clearness committee to help them clarify a calling to ministry or make a difficult moral decision.

The committee asks helpful questions and allows the person to explore the puzzling situation. Some committees will determine if the person has reached clearness; others leave that judgment to the person. Sprague recommends we use the second type of committee for making personal medical decisions. Do members agree, or can they think of certain cases in which the committee should be the judge of whether moral clearness has been reached?

3. Sprague says the committee members should be (1) "practiced at asking helpful questions," (2) not prone to "impose their own answers to these questions or give advice to the person, either directly or indirectly," (3) not prone to "dominate group discussions," and (4) trustworthy to keep the discussions confidential. You might discuss other qualifications like being (5) a careful listener, (6) well grounded in knowledge of the Bible, (7) a careful thinker, and (8) well respected both by the one who requests the committee and by the congregation.
4. The person who calls the committee together would benefit from traits like being (1) honest and forthcoming about the situation, (2) humble and open to instruction, (3) a careful thinker, (4) well grounded in biblical knowledge, and (5) one who trusts in God's guidance.
5. "In Quaker theology each person is believed to have the inner light, a source of divine guidance in making important decisions," Sprague reports, though he admits "an entire theological treatise would be needed to address our concerns about the existence of such a light; its grounding in God; how it gives specific direction to a person; and how it interacts with our emotions, rational thoughts, and desires.... Christians within the free-church tradition (like me) may resonate with how this notion can be adapted to a theology of the Holy Spirit, soul competency, and the priesthood of believers."

If this approach sounds too individualistic and arbitrary, keep in mind that it assumes the Holy Spirit is active in the process and "that the person has already developed morally within a faithful community that has been shaped by the reading of Scripture."

### **Departing Hymn**

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.