



## Watermark Community Church

### Statement on In Vitro Fertilization, Cryopreservation, and Genetic Testing

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In vitro fertilization (IVF) is a medical procedure where eggs are removed from a woman's ovaries and fertilized in a laboratory setting using sperm collected from a man. When fertilization happens, the egg and sperm join together to create the first cell of a new, unique person. Once the egg is fertilized, it begins to develop into an embryo, and this embryo is then placed into the woman's body where it can attach to the uterus and continue to grow and develop.

Science confirms life begins at conception (the moment an egg is fertilized by a sperm). Scripture teaches the dignity and value of life at the earliest stages (Exodus 21:22-25, Psalm 139:13-16). A fertilized egg, also called a zygote, is the first complete cell of a new human. Once this single cell begins to divide into a larger group of cells, it is called an embryo. In these developmental stages it is appropriate to use terms like zygote and embryo; but we must remember that we are talking about a unique human life created in the image of God – a life that must be treated with the dignity Christ-followers ascribe to life outside the womb.

The Elders of Watermark see nothing in Scripture that would forbid fertilization of an egg outside of the woman's body. Therefore, we see no reason to discourage couples from participating in IVF in order to conceive a child. However, because life begins at conception, the embryos produced through the process of IVF should be immediately transferred into the woman's body instead of being placed into long-term storage through the process of cryopreservation. Scripture does not support the suspension nor delay of life. There are necessary limitations on the number of embryos that can be safely transferred into a woman's body. Therefore, we would advise against creating more than the number of embryos that could be safely transferred or carried to term by the mother.

Genetic testing and the grading of embryos by medical professionals are methods typically used to advise couples on which embryos should be transferred. Because all life is precious and should be allowed to develop (Psalm 139:13-16), it is against biblical principles to condone the termination of those lives for any reason. Therefore, it is our position that the termination of a fertilized egg, frozen embryo, or any stage of a developing human is abortion. This includes cases where there is evidence there is a genetic abnormality or the opinion of a medical professional is that the embryo is of "low quality."

The issue of IVF is a sensitive one affecting many couples. We understand many couples who read this position on cryopreservation will already have embryos frozen through this process. Our intent is to provide clarity, pastoral counsel, and support to those considering IVF, not to bring guilt and shame to those who have already undergone the procedure. Considering the reality that fertilized eggs are life created by God for us to cherish, honor, and steward for His glory, couples with embryos currently in cryopreservation are urged to fight for the lives of their children, as they would a child at any age. As methods change or develop, evaluating new approaches and attitudes toward reproduction must always be measured in accordance with the biblical mandate to promote and protect human life.

Sincerely,

Watermark Elders