



## Genetic engineering: What is the greatest risk?

*Some are pointing to possible use of genetic engineering for creating weapons of mass destruction, but as the church shouldn't we be considering both the spiritual and generational risks of trying to "fix" God's creation?*

A recent article<sup>1</sup> from MIT Technical Review reported James Clapper, US Director of national intelligence, has 'genetic editing' to a list of potential WMDs (weapons of mass destruction). The author raises concerns that genetic engineering may be used as a WMD by terrorists.

One paragraph stands out to me because it points toward the another risk—one that gets closer to the heart of the sheer foolishness of humans believing we can somehow improve or 'fix' God's incredibly complex and intricate formation of human life—the risk being unintentional inheritable consequences for generations.

"The intelligence assessment drew specific attention to the possibility of using CRISPR to edit the DNA of human embryos<sup>2</sup> to

1 <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/600774/top-us-intelligence-official-calls-gene-editing-a-wmd-threat/>  
2 <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/535661/engineering-the-perfect-baby/>

produce genetic changes in the next generation of people—for example, to remove disease risks. It noted that fast advances in genome editing in 2015 compelled "groups of high-profile U.S. and European biologists to question unregulated editing of the human germ line (cells that are relevant for reproduction), which might create inheritable genetic changes."

A number of years ago, PPL wrote a position paper on stem cell research. The paper deals with the immorality of the creation of human embryos for research or for treatment of disease in a process that ultimately destroys one human life to help another. Here is an excerpt from PPL's position paper that is applicable.

[T]he life that is being destroyed may appear, to our examination, to be just a collection of cells. But it is no ordinary group of cells. At the time of fertilization, when the 23 chromosomes of the sperm merge with

the 23 chromosomes of the egg, a new human life comes into existence as a single, 46-chromosome cell called a "zygote." The zygote is just one cell, but already the genetic characteristics of that

future human adult -- gender, blood type, hair and eye color, and all other genetic characteristics -- have been determined.

Even more remarkable,

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Passionately  
Pro-Life?  
*Lead with  
LOVE!*

How we go matters more than all the eloquent things said

here. Kelly Rosati (V.P for Community Outreach at Focus on the Family) challenged around 500 people at the Evangelicals for Life conference in Washington D.C. with those words. She read I Cor 13 with a pro-life twist. "If we have the perfect pro-life argument *without love* we are a clanging gong. If we know exactly how to make everyone value life *but have no love* we are nothing. If we have faith for a day where children are protected, cherished, but proclaim that faith *without love* we have nothing. If we give all we have *without love* we gain nothing. I can even surrender my body to flames, be martyred, but I will gain nothing *without love*."

Does this love characterize the pro-life movement? Are we patient, kind, not envious or boastful, not

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contained in that zygote are all of the instructions for how and when that cell will divide, which genes will be turned on and off at what times, and what types of specialized cells will be created in what locations in order to produce the more than 200 types of cells that are needed. The cells are not randomly produced and distributed, but rather are organized into the appropriate organs. For example, astrocytes, oligodendrocytes, and neurons are located in the brain while the insulin-producing cells reside in the pancreas. The various organs and tissues assemble into a complex structure, the human body, with head and trunk, arms and legs, right and left, front and back all in proper position. The cells in the brain capable of sight extend forward in the face forming eyes, a beating four-chambered heart connects to a network of blood vessels, propelling blood, delivering nutrients and oxygen to every cell of the body and removing toxic cellular waste products. The nervous system, digestive system, reproductive system are all intricately formed to provide for life. As in post-natal life, programmed cell death is part of the process of life.

In utero, this means that instead of webbed fingers and toes, certain cells destroy themselves so that fingers and toes develop as separate structures. [i]



The zygote and early embryo may not be impressive to the human eye, but given the opportunity to implant in the uterine wall, in nine months that group of cells -- that embryo -- will be a baby, capable of independent life.

King David had a proper humility when he contemplated God's formation of him in the womb (Ps. 139). He was filled with wonder as he reflected on God's care from generation to generation: "What is man that you are mindful of him, *and the son of man* that you care for him?" (Psalm 8:4) Christians ought to encourage serious reflection on the complexity of our creation in the scientific, medical and political communities. The Church needs to be part of the conversation. Decisions to implement genetic engineering have implications for future generations that even the most intelligent among us cannot comprehend or predict. If God is truly the Sovereign Creator of all things—and I believe that he is—we human beings should not be mucking around experimentally thinking we can improve what God has created in human kind.



"Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?"

(Isaiah 29:16)

<sup>[1]</sup> *Stem Cells: Scientific Progress and Future Research Directions*. Appendix A: Early Development. Department of Health and Human Services. June 2001. <http://stemcells.nih.gov/info/scireport>

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rude or easily angered, not self-seeking, not delighting in evil, but protecting, hoping, trusting?

When women see the church loving one another and loving our neighbors they will know they can depend on us to help them and will be more likely to choose life for their babies. When the world sees us loving our enemies, they will be drawn to Jesus. When we pray for those who persecute us they will begin to believe Christ died for them. Love is not a tactic to win a political war. Love is a way of being that shows Christ to the world. Being truly pro-life means loving others as Christ has loved us.

ERLC Evangelicals for Life conference took place January 21-22 in Washington D.C. All conference videos have now been posted online (<http://erlc.com/videos>).

Here are several highlights:

A Conversation with the Man Behind the Undercover Planned Parenthood Videos

The Future of the Pro-Life Movement

How the Gospel Shapes the Sanctity of Life

Jesus Loves the Little Children: Connecting the Sanctity of Life & the Great Commission

Seasoned with Salt: Reshaping the Tone of Pro-Life Evangelicals

**Good News in poll results**

**Human Life Alliance ([humanlife.org](http://humanlife.org)) recently sent an email reporting the following:**

Brand new survey results confirm that 84% of U.S. citizens "Would Ban Abortion After 3 Months of Pregnancy."

Knights of Columbus have posted a new poll conducted by the Marist Institute for Public Opinion. It confirms the vast majority of Americans oppose abortion.

Other findings show the same 84% believe laws can protect both a mother and her child in the womb. In addition, at least 60% say all abortion is morally wrong, compared to 38% of those who support abortion. You can read the press release at <http://bit.ly/1TnKzis>.

**Zika a threat to unborn children**

**PPL recommends the following articles for your information and to help you educate others:**

**Zika is a "battle for life,"** by Carmen Fowler LaBerge (<http://bit.ly/1Vk2cxf>)

**Zika Virus and Unborn Children**, Parliamentary Network for Critical Issues (PNCI) (<http://pncius.org/update.aspx?id=144>)

**Pro-Abortionists Use Zika as "Traction",** Life Issues Institute (<http://bit.ly/1ol8Us5>)

**Zika virus: What do we need to know?** Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (<http://bit.ly/1KnDYSv>)