

birth

extra thought and discussion

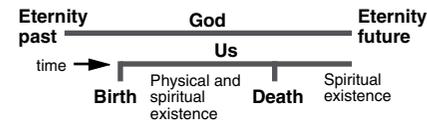
• Spiritual state at birth

Human beings are different from the rest of creation. We are made in the image of God with a capacity for a wonderful relationship with God (Gen 1:26-27). Unfortunately, our original perfect state has been damaged by sin (Gen 3:1-24) and at birth we inherit the sinful nature and a tendency to sin (Gen 5:3, 8:21, Ps 51:5, Rom 5:12). It is not long before we sin ourselves (Ps 58:3, Rom 3:23). The Christian gospel is God's solution to this basic problem.

• Our existence

We did not exist in any form before our conception. We were created during the process from conception to birth. It is true that we were foreknown, chosen by God and even predestined from eternity in the past (1 Pet 1:2, Rom 8:28-30, Eph 1:5,11) but our actual existence extends from conception to eternity in the future (John 3:16).

We only have one life on this earth — not a series of lives with reincarnation (Heb 9:27).



Jesus is the only human being who existed from eternity past as the Word of God. The Word became flesh as he developed in the womb and was born (John 1:1-14, 3:13, 8:58, 17:5).

• A living being?

Each person's unique genetic makeup is determined at the moment of conception.

The Bible teaches that God is involved in our development in the womb and there is evidence for spiritual awareness (see earlier in this unit).

The word soul is used to indicate our life, our being or our personality (Ezek 18:4). The word spirit (or breath or wind) is also used for the life which God gives us (Gen 2:7, 6:17, Ezek 37:7-10). The Bible has an integrated view of body, soul and spirit and so they are not distinguished clearly (Mark 12:30).

Spiritual life is complete when we are born again and have eternal life (John 3:1-16).

• Contraception

There is only one example of contraception in the Bible (Gen 38:8-10). In this episode Onan was obliged to sleep with his dead brother's wife to preserve the family line. He avoided his responsibility by withdrawal during intercourse. This method is not condemned, but his avoidance of his

responsibility is.

In assessing contraception it is relevant to consider whether the method chosen prevents conception (eg condom or pills) or if it initiates a very early abortion after conception (eg coil or morning-after pill).

• Abortion

The fact that abortion is legal does not make it right. Many Christians are opposed to the practice of abortion for several reasons.

- It interferes with the creative activity of God in the womb.
- There is no regard for the rights of the individual in the womb. All have equal rights (Job 31:13-15).
- We have no right to take human life (Ex 20:13).
- Injury to pregnant women is condemned (Amos 1:13).
- There may be psychological damage to a mother who consents to abortion which may show itself in later life — guilt and shame.

• Miscarriage, still-birth, physical and mental abnormality, cot-death

This world is far from perfect. Babies die before, at or after birth, they are born deformed or with serious disabilities. The natural question to ask is "Why?"

The Biblical explanation of imperfection includes the general fallen state of creation caused by the activity of the devil and the sin of human beings. At the moment, nature is spoilt and we see imperfection, disease, death, decay and evil spread around the world, often unfairly, and we see human beings struggling (Gen 3:17-19).

It is significant that Jesus made a stand against this imperfection in his many miracles - on one occasion he healed a man who was born blind (John 9:1-7). Later his followers healed people who had been crippled from birth (Acts 3:1-10, 14:8-10).

Our creator God may still overrule and intervene by his power in response to the cries of his people today. Also we have made great strides medically to improve and preserve life. We look forward to a day when all evil will be destroyed (Rom 8:18-25, Rev 21:1-4, 22:1-5).

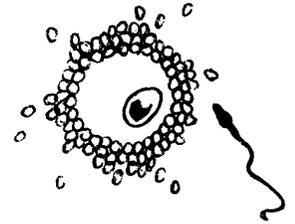
• Failure to conceive

Barrenness caused great distress and sadness in the Bible. Women felt that they had failed their husbands (1 Sam 1:1-16) and went to desperate ends to have children (Gen 16:1-4, Gen 30:1-6).

Childlessness was seen as the hand of God and occasionally as judgment by God. There were several cases of barren women eventually conceiving and we can be encouraged in persevering in prayer for those with this problem.

Bible examples — Sarah (Gen 21:1-7), Rachel (Gen 30:22-24), Samson's mother (Judg 13:1-25), Hannah (1 Sam 1:17-20), Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-7, 23-25).

birth



● In the womb

When you were conceived you began to develop as a unique person in whom God is interested.

* Psalm 139:13-16

What did God do in your mother's womb (v 13)? _____

What else did he do (v 15)? _____

What was David's view of his own body (v 14)? _____



What is your view of your own body?

- it is wonderfully made by God
- it is not very nice it is a problem
- it is an instrument for the service of God
- it is the temple of the Holy Spirit

What do you make of verse 16? _____

* Job 10:8-12 Who gave Job his life? _____

* Jeremiah 1:5

When did God first know Jeremiah? _____

When did God set him apart? _____

What did God call him to do? _____

* Ephesians 1:4-5 * 1 Peter 1:1-2

Has it ever occurred to you that God formed you in the womb for a purpose — he has called you to serve him and has a special job for you to do?

Do you know what God has called *you* to do?



*** Luke 1:26-38**

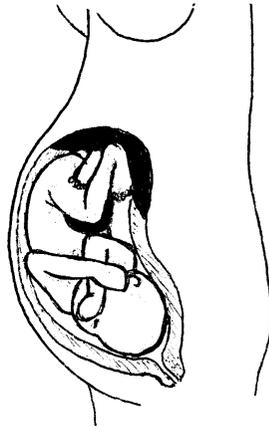
God himself chose to occupy a human body which was formed in the womb of Mary. This birth was unique in that there was no human father and the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

What was the call on Jesus's life?

*** Luke 1:39-45**

What evidence is there of spiritual awareness in the foetus of John the Baptist?

How many months pregnant was Elizabeth (v 26)? _____



● Birth

*** Genesis 3:16**

Why is there pain in childbearing?

*** Psalm 22:9-10, 71:5-6**

When did your reliance on God begin? _____

● Welcoming babies

*** Psalm 127:3-5**

What are children? _____

In the Bible there was great rejoicing at the birth of children. They were a precious gift from God and a reward for serving him (*Psalm 128:1-6*) and there was every reason to celebrate and be thankful. Israelite boys were circumcised on the eighth day and named (*Luke 1:59-60, 2:21*). There is no special ceremony described for babies of Christians in the New Testament but many parents like to dedicate their children to God and give opportunity for prayer and prophecy over them (*Luke 1:57-80*).

Jesus made a point of welcoming babies (*Luke 18:15-17*).



Do you know of special prayers or prophecies over you when you were born?

What were they? _____

● Naming of babies

Names in the Bible were chosen carefully and emphasised the importance and uniqueness of the individual. God has a personal name ("Yahweh" - see *Exodus 3:13-14*). Names were chosen because of circumstances surrounding the birth, in thanks to God, as a prophetic statement, or at the command of God. What do the following names mean?

Isaac (Gen 18:10-15, 21:1-7) _____

Esau (Gen 25:25) _____

Jacob (Gen 25:26) _____

Samuel (1 Sam 1:20) _____

Jesus (Matt 1:21) _____

Do you know what *your* name means?

Some other names

- Isaiah - Yahweh saves
- Ezekiel - God strengthens
- Elijah - Yahweh is my God
- John - Yahweh is gracious

Heartsearch

Memories!

What is your earliest memory?

What is your earliest memory of your parent(s)?

What is your earliest memory of spiritual awareness or anything to do with God?

● Born again - born of God

*** John 1:12-13, 3:1-16 * 1 Peter 1:3, 1:23**

How do you know if you are born again?

1 John 2:29, 3:9 _____ 1 John 4:7 _____

1 John 5:1 _____ 1 John 5:4 _____