

## THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH

The Bible tells us that in marriage the two become one flesh (Mark 10:8). This may be more literal than many realize. Recently there has been much research being done on microchimerism, a word reflecting the coexistence of two cellular populations in one individual. In short, it has become a term to describe the fact that male DNA is found inside a woman who has had children or sexual relations. This male DNA has been found in pregnant woman as early as 15 weeks. While it is believed that the placenta keeps the baby completely separate from the mother, this isn't entirely true. Yes, it does separate blood and keep the two mostly separate, however, we know that things like alcohol and drugs do pass through that protective barrier. It seems as well that certain DNA can also pass through. Research has shown that this ability may be enhanced by breastfeeding and also may protect the baby from infections (such as HIV) from the mother.

It isn't just from child bearing that this occurs though. Women who have never been pregnant with sons also have male fetal microchimerism. Where does this presence of male DNA come from? One study done in 2005 reported a higher rate in women who had abortions but there were still women who had never had an abortion, nor male children with male DNA in them. The answer was it came simply from sexual intercourse. It has now been suggested that "fetal" DNA be called "exogenous" DNA because it isn't always coming from a baby but rather the male sperm. The question becomes, why does this happen and what affect does it have on the woman?

A 2012 study by Bandoli and Johnston has shown there is a significant risk of pre-eclampsia or toxemia for women who have had multiple sexual partners and thus multiple sperm donors. In fact, first time pregnancies or first pregnancies after a woman changes sexual partners have the highest risks of pre-eclampsia and low birth rates. The reason is a "one night stand" or multiple partners, does not allow the woman's immune system to be properly exposed to the sperm for a long enough time for her immune system to "adapt" or accept this foreign material. Long or repeated exposure to the sperm causes her immune system to accept it and it is beneficial for the embryo that is genetically half mother and half father. This also means that protected sex by condoms or withdrawal can lead to eclampsia as well because there isn't that exposure of sperm to the woman's immune system. In Genesis 38:9 we see a man named Onan who, "spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. What he did was wicked in the Lord's sight; so he put him to death also." While we know part of the sin was disobeying the command to pass on the dead brother's name, it may be that the fact of spilling the seed was also a no-no.

Medically, this DNA transferral has both blessings and curses, mostly dependent on ones obedience to Scriptural principles. The Bible clearly warns us to "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body" (1 Cor 6:18). It is interesting that the sin of sexual immorality has unique consequences against the body. We know that there are many sexually transmitted diseases that wouldn't be around today without this sin. In fact, today's society has all but expected people to be sexually immoral. Women as young as 11 years old today are encouraged to get the HPV vaccinations but this is a disease contracted by sexual activity. If one would "keep the marriage bed pure" there is no need for this vaccine but it is pushed upon parents to give their

children this vaccine without most even being told this is what it is for. It is clear that following God's commandments from His word regarding sexual behaviors results in better health for women. When the sanctity of marriage is followed good things happen. One study by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada showed that an immune tolerance is built up from unprotected sex with a husband and results in successful and complication free pregnancies. Repeated sperm exposure from one person facilitates implantation rather than attacking the foreign cells. This also explains why there is a higher risk of pre-eclampsia and miscarriages in pregnancies from in-vitro fertilization or IVF because the mother still treats the baby as foreign material. This, and the fact that many children are usually aborted in "selective reduction" using in-vitro fertilization, should raise ethical and moral questions for Christians today using this process. A one man and one woman scenario is God's plan and most beneficial.

This raises another interesting question when viewed in terms of donated embryos. Since the fetus delivers its DNA into the mother's body, the mother is actually receiving DNA from the non-spouse father as well, in essence, becoming one with her. Likewise lesbians using donor sperm may not be aware that the male donor DNA will be embedded in them and, like it or not, the need for a male and a woman for procreation as defined in Scripture is an unavoidable necessity. Dr. Scarnecchia writes, "The man whose embryo implants in a woman literally becomes one flesh with her as fetal chimeric cells bearing his genetic heritage differentiate and colonize her organs and tissues, for better or worse, till death do they part." Interestingly, however, while the female can take on the male DNA, the male does not take upon the female DNA. Thus, a woman who has had an abortion is inextricably biologically linked to her aborted baby as well as to the father of that baby since their DNA remains in the woman's body, what may seem to be for the rest of her life.

There are still more problems associated with non-Biblical living. A 2013 study has shown that microchimerism has shown to be a reliable marker for women at risk of breast cancer. Women with less male DNA had a higher risk of in situ breast cancer showing multiple children is healthier and the Biblical mandate to be fruitful and multiply has physical advantages as well. Also, studies have shown that fetal microchimerism impacts maternal health. Dr. Olsen showed that "women who had children with more than one partner had a higher relative mortality rate." He also said, "Reproducing with several partners seems to be a risky matter . . . Microchimerism could have causal importance for several diseases, which could lead to death after several years of follow-up time." Another Danish study (Campi) showed there was more than a 50% higher rate of cancer for women that had children by more than one partner. We read in Revelation 9:21 that though God warns and even brings about judgments that the ungodly refuse to repent: "Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts." Therefore, I suspect that even knowing these risk factors won't change one's mind about sexual behavior. Only a relationship with the Lord Jesus can bring about this kind of change.

The Bible has a lot to say about things of which we may not understand fully, but have consequences (or sometimes blessings) unknown to us even today. In fact Leviticus 19:19 speaks against mixing seed: "Keep my decrees. Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material." While it may be easy for us to dismiss these because we place our understanding above God's

Words, perhaps we would do well to pay closer attention to this Word. Just as a child may not always understand why his/her parents tell them to do something, the parents often have good reason. We now know today that many of the killer viruses have come about by mixing genes from diverse kinds. Influenza A that caused the Spanish flu, came from horizontal gene transfer of birds to mammals like pigs and humans. Bird flu was a result of combining genes from water fowl and quail and there is also evidence swine have been involved by providing an environment for human influenza. If one would paraphrase Leviticus 19 it may say, “Don’t mix your domestic livestock (pigs) with wild birds (ducks) or they may become virulent.” A Scientific paraphrase may read: “Farmers don’t let livestock intermingle with wild birds and keep human and animal habitations clear from each other.” To this we may add that when God tells us not to mix seed with more than one partner there is indeed a physical consequence (as well as moral) that He was protecting us from. Deuteronomy 11:26-28 tells us of God’s commands, “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.” Today, we turn to Christ who has forgiven us of all our sins. While those sins have no more power to send Christians to hell, they still have earthly consequences. We give thanks to God for His deliverance but we also respond to His love by obeying Him. This is why Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:15-17). Thanks be to God for His presence in us for “I can do everything through Him (Jesus) who gives me strength” (Phil 4:13). If you struggle with sexual sins (or other sins) know that there is One who has paid the price of those sins and He wants to live in you, to strengthen and live through you. Call on Him and He will answer. In the meantime know that the two have become one flesh in a literal sense and this is also a picture of Christ literally in us as well. Ephesians 5:31 tells us, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and **the two will become one flesh.**’ This is a profound mystery— **but I am talking about Christ and the church.**” Thanks be to God through Christ Jesus our Lord who lives in us.

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