

Genetic Engineering

By Paul Golata

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, students will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Genesis 1:11–27; then read the comments related to Genesis 1:27 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: If sin corrupted everything in the world and brought death (see Romans 5:12ff; 8:20–22; and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22), what, if any, limits are placed on mankind regarding their ability to manipulate the genetic makeup of any species, including humans, in an attempt to improve the species? What are the differences between God as Creator and Sustainer (see Colossians 1:16–17) and mankind as stewards of God's creation created in His image?

Assignment Two

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50–57; then read the comments related to 1 Corinthians 1:56 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Can genetic engineering undo the curse of sin? If death is an enemy, what remedy to sin has already been provided by God? What are the implications of the bodily resurrection of Christ and His followers related to the issue of genetically engineering the human body?

Assignment Three

Read Romans 1:18–32; then read the comments related to Romans 1:18–22 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What happens when mankind suppresses the truth about God and does not honor or give thanks to Him? Mankind must worship God over and above anything He has created. Therefore, what are the implications for genetic engineering when mankind operates as if he were the product of blind evolution?

Scripture to Memorize

“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” Colossians 1:16

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand biblical principles related to genetic engineering.

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He holds an MDivBL from Southwestern Seminary, an MBA from Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, and a BSEET from DeVry Institute of Technology in Chicago. Since 1991, Paul has been married to Dianna, and they have four daughters. When not writing youth curriculum, Paul enjoys playing his electric guitar and riding mountain bikes.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Your family makes their livelihood by farming and ranching and is considering the potential advantages of growing genetically modified corn—in which, by the direct manipulation of the corn's genome, it has been engineered to have high resistance to pests and herbicides. Your father is also talking to the vet about how he can increase his yields for his cattle, pigs, and chickens. Your parents desire more children, and your mother is at great risk of having a baby with Down's syndrome due to her genes. Should genetic engineering be part of your family's planning for children? for crops and animals?

After Their Kind

Read Genesis 1:11–27 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 11, 21, 24, 27

Verse 11. fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them. God is responsible for vegetative genetic design. **Verse 21. God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves . . . after its kind.** God is responsible for every animal's genetic design.

Verse 24. cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind. This includes cattle, insects, and every type of animal that has ever existed.

Verse 27. God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him.

Mankind also produces after their kind. However, mankind is unique compared to plants and animals because only man is made in the image of God. Thus, mankind is more than just a living being; he is also a spiritual being, a being created for the possibility of an eternal relationship with God. Man is different from other living things in that only he is created in the image of God. The image of God is contained in each person's body and soul and is not something that can be genetically isolated or genetically manipulated.

Assignment One Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: If sin corrupted everything in the world and brought death, what, if any, limits are placed on mankind regarding his ability to manipulate the genetic makeup of any species, including humans, in an attempt to improve the species? What are the differences between God as Creator and Sustainer and mankind as stewards of God's creation created in His image?

Discussion Question

In what way is mankind different from all other living creatures? Can man's spiritual nature be manipulated genetically? What is the relationship between man's spiritual nature and his genetic makeup?

On Your Own

Some agricultural crops and animals are genetically modified by man to help them flourish in various conditions. Since God designed creatures to produce after their own kind, what are the implications of mankind genetically modifying creatures to have them flourish? Is flourishing always to be viewed in respect to mankind or also from other perspectives?

Write some of your thoughts below in response to these questions.

O Death, Where Is Your Sting?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50–57 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 50, 55–57

Verse 50. that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Only mankind is capable of inheriting the kingdom of God because people are created in the image of God and are spiritual beings. The kingdom of heaven is not obtainable by means of biology. **Verse 55. O death, where is your sting?** The apostle Paul looked back at Hosea 13:14. The answer is that the sting of death has been removed.

Verse 56. The sting of death is sin. Sin causes the sting of death. **Verse 57. victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.** For believers Jesus Christ's atoning death and resurrection have taken away the sting of death and provided victory. Sin cannot be removed by genetically engineering it away. The cure for sin has been provided to the world through Jesus Christ. Mankind's chief concern should be focused on people's spiritual condition with respect to their relationship to God.

Assignment Two Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: Can genetic engineering undo the curse of sin? If death is an enemy, what remedy to sin has already been provided by God? What are the implications of the bodily resurrection of Christ and His followers related to the issue of genetically engineering the human body?

Discussion Question

Cancer is a devastating genetic defect that strikes many. Christians will be resurrected with a glorified body. How does this reality impact any genetic defects we may carry within our bodies at the present or in the future? How should Christians respond to medically detected genetic defects?

On Your Own

Some want to genetically reengineer the body to increase what they deem to be desirable characteristics. Should they be allowed to do so to their own bodies? to their children? What role does God's plan play? Write some of your thoughts below.

Worshipped and Served the Creature Rather than the Creator

Read Romans 1:18–32 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 18, 22

Verse 18. the wrath of God is revealed. Mankind's rejection of the biblical account of creation, fall, and redemption is an act of defiance against God and is deserving of His wrath. What can

be known about God is plain. God has revealed Himself through history to mankind through both general revelation found in nature and special revelation found in the Bible. God holds people accountable for recognizing that He is their Creator. Since God created you, He has a purpose for you.

Verse 22. Professing to be wise, they became fools. Believing there is no God of the Bible, mankind has latched onto the idea that living creatures are merely the result of natural evolution. The rejection of God as Creator removes any moral limits from mankind as man now recognizes no external authority to constrain his actions. The result is that man ends up worshipping himself. And he worships what he creates through genetic engineering.

Verse 22. exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image. People should not be so captivated by their own creation that they end up worshipping it instead of the Creator. God should be sovereign, and mankind should be in His service. It is a mistake to think that mankind is sovereign and there is no God or that He is our servant.

Assignment Three Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: What happens when mankind suppresses the truth about God and does not honor or give thanks to Him? What are the implications for genetic engineering when people operate as if they were the product of blind evolution?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit says to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

God has charged mankind to be stewards and to care for the creation. To that end man may attempt to reduce and eliminate defects that exist within the biological realm. Likewise, mankind may consider pursuing opportunities to enhance and augment the biological realm.

Genetic engineering is a process in which recombinant DNA (rDNA) technology is used to introduce desirable traits into organisms. The process consists of four major classifications:

1. Somatic (nonreproductive) cell gene therapy: a patient receives healthy genetic material to fight a disease.
2. Germline (reproductive) therapy: a patient's own replicating genetic material is made to reproduce healthy genes.
3. Enhancement therapy: targets a desired improvement in capabilities or characteristics.
4. Eugenic engineering: involves altering the gene pool for supposedly higher ends.

All of these classifications have ethical implications because they interact with God's created order and the nature of the subjects receiving the genetic engineering. Human beings are made in the image of God and are thus spiritual beings, not simply living beings. Mankind is capable of altering the human gene pool and thus creating a situation that is both unintended and undesirable.

Genetic engineering has and will continue to provide many useful benefits to mankind. Such engineering must always be done within the boundaries of what God has established. Mankind should be wary of both destroying old categories and creating new categories of living beings and thus distorting the created order.

Mankind should respect the fact that God has ordered living things to reproduce after their own kind. Because the world is fallen through sin and death, redemption is not to be found in biological means through genetic engineering but rather has been provided by God through His Son Jesus Christ. The sting of biological death has been removed through the work of Jesus Christ. People should never worship their own creations at the expense of worshipping the true Creator.

Parent Question

How is genetics a way God providentially works to bless and grace our families with unique image bearers that show off His creativity and love for us?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to teenagers who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.

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