

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

+ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. +

VACCINES: To Take Or Not To Take?

by Rev Sylvester Herbert

Vaccines contain dead or weakened viruses or bacteria which, when injected into the body, stimulate your immune system to fight a particular infectious disease. Should people take them? Not everyone agrees. Not all Christians think this is the right thing to do. To be clear, vaccinations are not mentioned in Scripture since they were not available when the Bible was written. We should not assume, however, that there are no biblical principles to guide our decision-making in this very important area. Here are some things to consider that would help us to make an informed decision consistent with the teachings of Scripture:

1. *We are stewards of our bodies, just as we are stewards of all other things that God has given to us (1 Cor. 4:2). Ours is the responsibility to care for it and to take preventative medicine when necessary.*
2. *Vaccination serves the public good. Choosing not to vaccinate puts others unnecessarily at risk. We should ever remember that we are our brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9).*
3. *Christianity is a healing religion. It is difficult to conceive of Jesus opposing vaccines when He devoted so much of His time ministering to the sick (Matt. 4:23-24). Vaccines have accomplished much good for humanity. There is a long list of diseases which has been brought under control through the use of vaccines: diphtheria, tetanus, chickenpox, polio, measles, and mumps to name a few. Some of these diseases cause deafness, sterility, paralysis,*



pneumonia, nervous system disorders and in some cases death. The statistics are there to show how much the world has benefitted since vaccines for the aforementioned have been developed. The words of Texas pediatrician Justin Smith are worthy of note: "The basic science of vaccines is sound and proven. They are chemicals that are found in nature. Your child will get more mercury from a tuna fish sandwich, more aluminum from breast milk or formula and more formaldehyde from a pear than they will receive from vaccinations."

4. *There are some individuals and religious groups that believe that vaccines are associated in some way with the mark of the Beast (Rev. 13:15-18). They often push anti-immunization conspiracy theories which make people fearful and reluctant to access available medical help. This is a gross misinterpretation of Scripture. This much is clear concerning the mark of the Beast: it will be an end-times identification mark that will be required in order to buy or sell. That mark will be given only to those who worship the Antichrist, the dominant ruler on the world's political stage. The history of vaccines shows no connection with the Antichrist and current calls to vaccinate show no connection either.*
5. *Vaccines are not totally without side effects, but these are often minor. They pose minimal risk of causing serious harm or death. Studies linking vaccines to autism in children have not proven conclusive. When all things are considered, the benefits far outweigh the risks.*

Significantly, much of modern healthcare emerged out of a distinctively Christian worldview. The first vaccination was developed in 1798 by Dr. Edward Jenner, a devout Christian. Many scientists of his day saw the scientific enterprise as another expression of God's grace for the blessing of humanity. Those who decide not to take vaccines should present compelling reasons for not doing so. If neither informed scientific research nor careful biblical interpretation supports the anti-vaccine position, then one has every reason to question whether such a position should be held at all. As children of God we should act responsibly by saying 'No' to at-risk behavior and 'Yes' to choices that promote the well-being of humanity and ultimately the glory of God.

