

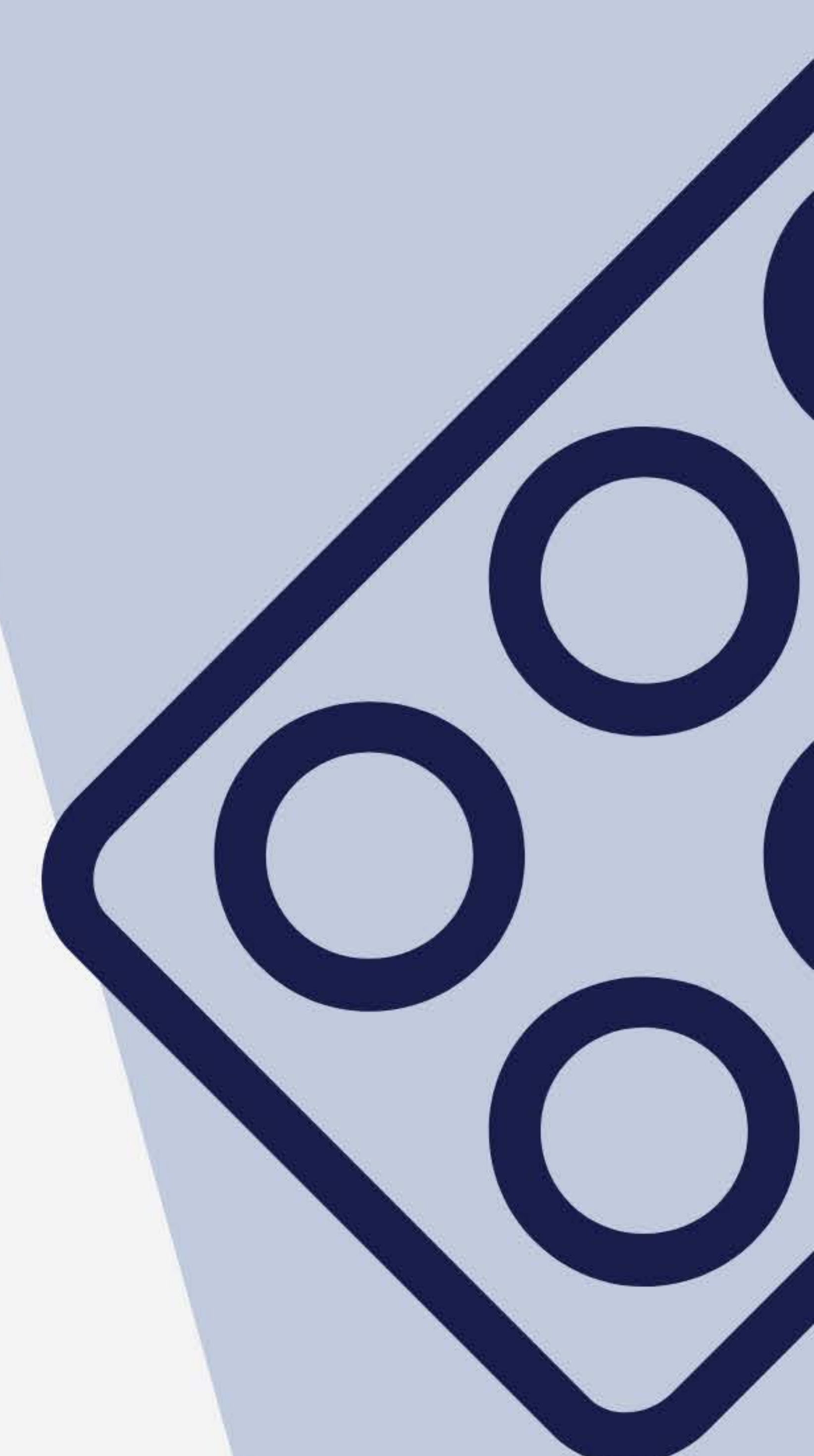
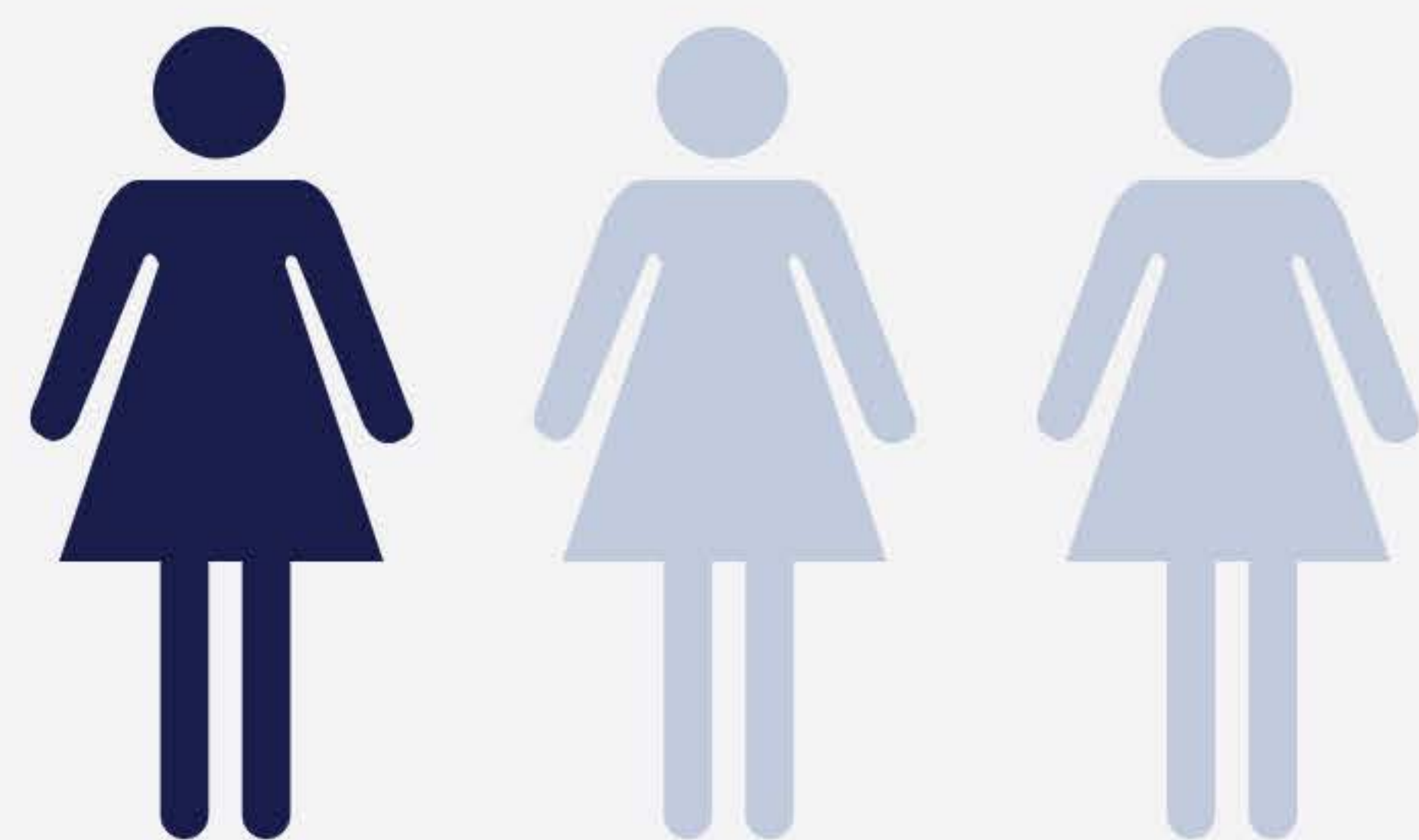
BIRTH CONTROL

What's out there, and is it for me?

Culture pushes birth control at us like it's a no-brainer—the obvious, intelligent choice. Even Christian churches don't seem to teach much against it: A 2012 Gallup poll found that **82%** of Catholics believe birth control is morally acceptable, along with **90%** of non-Catholic Christians.

It's unsurprising then that **65.3% of women** ages 15-49 use some form of birth control.

Although use increases with age, **over 1 in 3 girls (38.7%)** aged 15-19 already use birth control.



Before we adopt the popular attitude toward birth control, we need to understand two things:

1

Children are a gift God desires to give married couples, so preventing that gift shouldn't be taken lightly. It's a decision best approached with prayer and contemplation on God's Word.

2

Not all birth control is the same. Birth control can be placed in two main categories: **contraceptives** and **abortifacients**.

Contraceptives

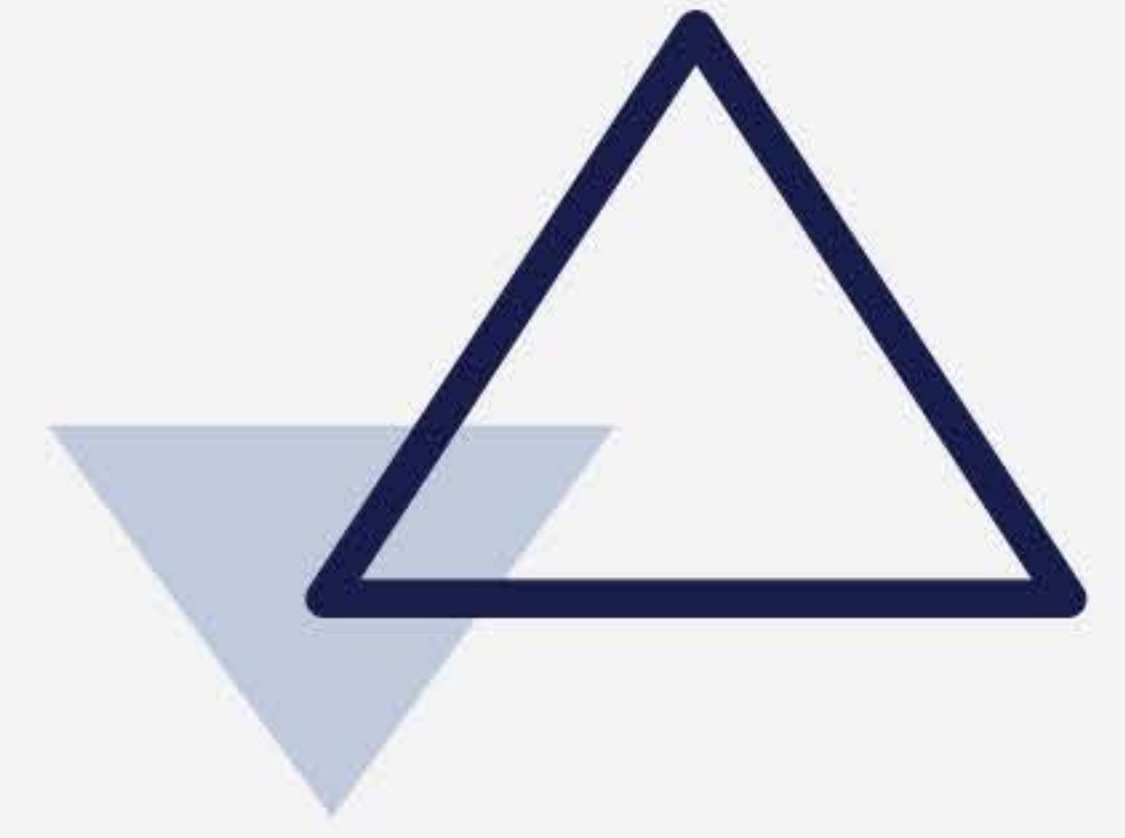
Birth control that is truly **contraceptive** works by preventing the sperm and egg from coming together in the first place so that **no new life is conceived**.

Abortifacients

Birth control that is **abortifacient** actually **ends a newly conceived life** by preventing it from implanting in the uterus. As Christians who treasure the value of each human life, **we reject methods of birth control which end a life.**



So what methods are which type?



true contraceptives

Abstinence: the only acceptable form of birth control outside of a marriage. Sex is a gift given within marriage. Yet within marriage, couples might also choose to abstain during the days of a woman's cycle when she is fertile to prevent pregnancy.

Barrier methods (such as condoms, cervical caps, and diaphragms): keep sperm from reaching the egg through a physical barrier.

Spermicide: kills sperm as they enter the woman by its high acidity.

Natural Family Planning: a blanket term for many variations of tracking changes in temperature, cervical fluid, and other symptoms through a woman's cycle to determine her fertile window. Usually, abstinence or another contraceptive method is employed for the duration of her fertile window to prevent pregnancy.

Lactational Amenorrhea Method: Breastfeeding regularly without introducing other food to the baby to prevent the return of the menstrual cycle.

Permanent Methods (sterilization): Tubal ligation severs and ties off the fallopian tubes so that the ovulated egg cannot be reached by sperm. A vasectomy severs and ties off the vas deferens so that sperm cannot enter semen. Because this act alters the body permanently and causes harm to working organs, this too should be contemplated prayerfully.

probable abortifacients

Intrauterine Devices (IUDs) primarily make the uterus thin and irritated to prevent implantation. By design, they are abortifacient.

One problem that muddies the waters around birth control is how little research is done on the effects of some methods of birth control.

Combination hormonal birth control (“the pill”), progesterone-only pills, emergency contraception (“the morning after pill” or “plan B”), and long-term hormonal implants and injections all list multiple means of stopping pregnancy:

1. They prevent ovulation (true contraceptive),
2. thicken cervical mucus to make it hostile to sperm (true contraceptive),
and
3. **thin the walls of the uterus to prevent implantation (abortifacient).**

Because we lack research, it is impossible to know how often this third means of preventing pregnancy actually takes place. However, we know it happens. People do get pregnant while taking the pill, so sometimes, all three means fail. This means that sometimes, the first two fail, but the third—which actually terminates the embryo—works, **making this method of birth control potentially abortifacient.**

How should I make a decision about using birth control?

1 **Remember that children are a blessing from God.**

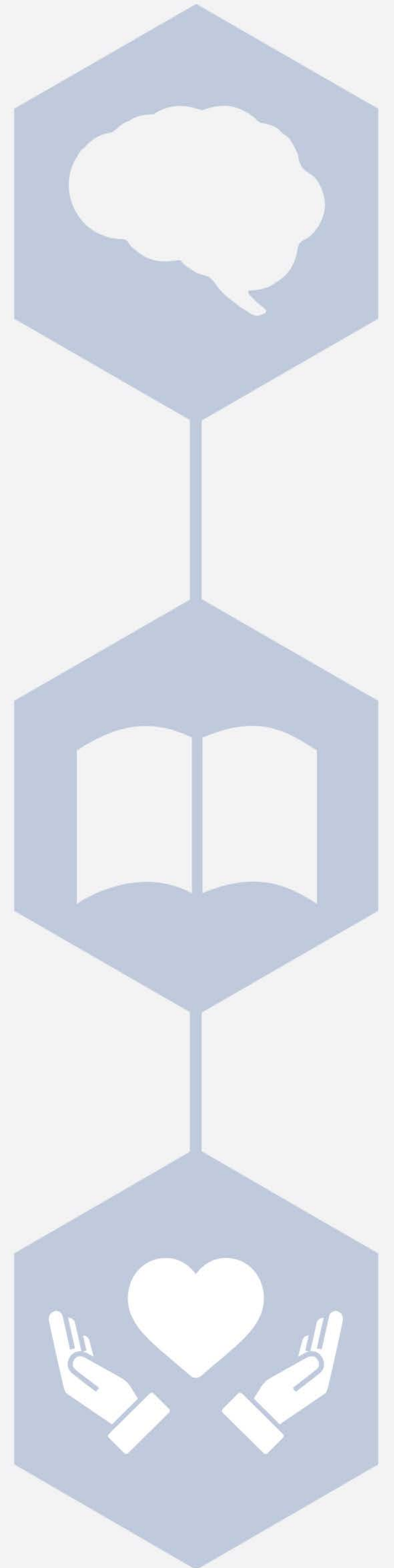
Much of the personal turmoil about the use of contraception can be alleviated if we simply remember that children are a blessing, not a curse. They are also the natural and commanded result of marriage.

2 **Remember that God commands us to be fruitful and multiply.**

The use of contraception by a married couple to prevent ever having kids defies God's design for marriage and is wrong.

3 **Remember that God forbids murder,**

and abortifacient birth control methods end an innocent human life. Abortifacient birth control methods should not be used.



4

Read up on the facts.

The overview given here is by no means an exhaustive list of all specific types of birth control, their effects, and their side effects. It is important that you understand what you are using and how it affects your body.

6

Reflect on your motives.

Are you drawn to contraception because you just don't want children or because you want more time and money to pursue what you enjoy? As Christians, we recognize that marriage is a vocation of service - service to spouse and family. Choosing not to have children for self-serving reasons undermines the purpose of marriage. However, considering contraception because it would best serve one's spouse and family may be a more God-pleasing use of contraception.

5

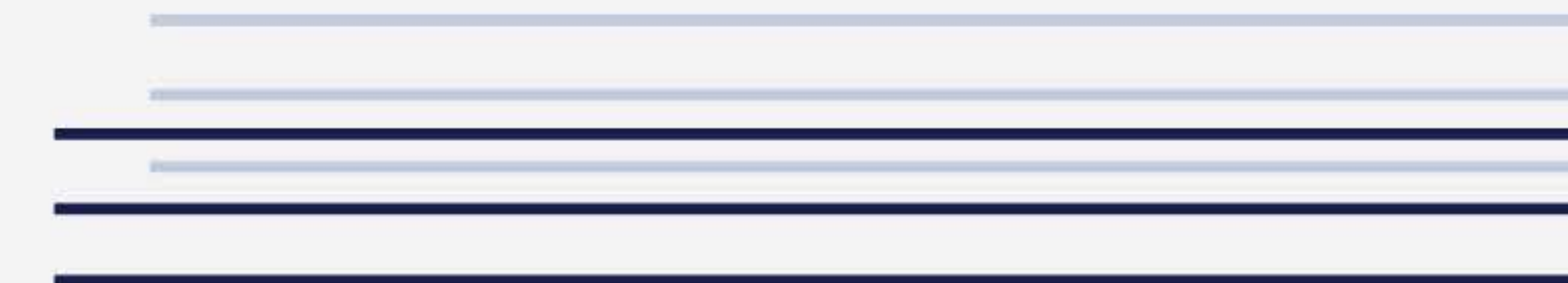
Remember that God does and should determine family size!

Although we might employ our reason in making smart decisions about when to try for children, we should never forget that God both opens and closes the womb. He is in control and can certainly gift us children even at times when we did not "plan" to have them! These children, too, should be welcomed joyfully.

7

Finally, we live in God's grace!

If we have made decisions that aren't life-affirming in the past, we can be certain that God stands ready to forgive and show His mercy to all who wish to receive it.



For more information on birth control and the theology of marriage, visit Y4Life.org or email michelle@y4life.org.