

A 4 Life View of IVF

Infertility is often difficult for a couple to bear, and Christians are called to respond with compassion to those who are suffering. For this reason, the goal of this brochure is twofold: to share facts that could prevent future suffering and to speak with sensitivity, compassion, and hope about the issue of infertility.

Desiring the gift of children is both God-pleasing and life-affirming. And Christians believe that every child, no matter how he or she is conceived, is a gift from God Himself.

But does the belief that every child is a gift justify every action that begets a child? The simple answer is no. Some actions lie outside the boundary that God sets for life.

This brochure will look closely at the practice of IVF – the methods employed during the procedure, the inherent assumptions tied to IVF, and the ethical realities well-meaning parents eventually faced with.



What is IVF?

Invitro fertilization (IVF) is a procedure that involves fertilizing an egg with sperm outside of the human body. The term “in vitro” is Latin for “in glass.” In this case, a baby at its earliest stages is formed outside of the mother’s womb in a Petri dish.

Who typically uses IVF?

Couples struggling with infertility might pursue IVF as an option for conceiving their own biological children. IVF is also commonly used by those who want to screen for genetic abnormalities, plan to employ a surrogate, are attempting to preserve their fertility and postpone pregnancy, and same-sex couples who do not have the genetic material necessary to create, carry, and birth a baby.

FACT

2% of all babies born today are the result of IVF.^[1]
Since the first successful IVF birth in 1978, it is estimated that over 8 million children have been born through this method.^[2]
Because of its frequency, it is very likely that you know someone who was conceived through IVF.

How does IVF work?.....

1

Egg & Sperm Retrieval

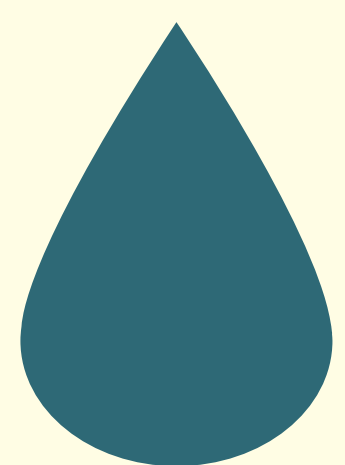
To increase the chances and success of conceiving through IVF, ten or more mature eggs are typically harvested, depending on the woman's age.^[3] (Older women produce fewer eggs; therefore, not as many can be harvested.)

To prepare a woman for egg harvesting, she is given synthetic hormones to help her body ovulate many eggs at once (rather than just one per cycle). This allows multiple eggs to be harvested and used to create embryos.^[4]

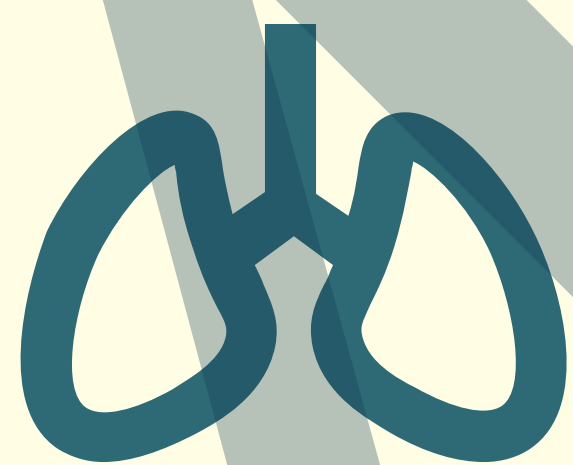
After the eggs have been collected from the woman, sperm is collected from the man.

WARNING!

Introducing synthetic hormones can be potentially dangerous to a woman. In fact, over 5% of women undergoing this treatment develop ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome, a condition which, in serious cases (1%), can lead to a variety of problematic health issues including; ^[5]



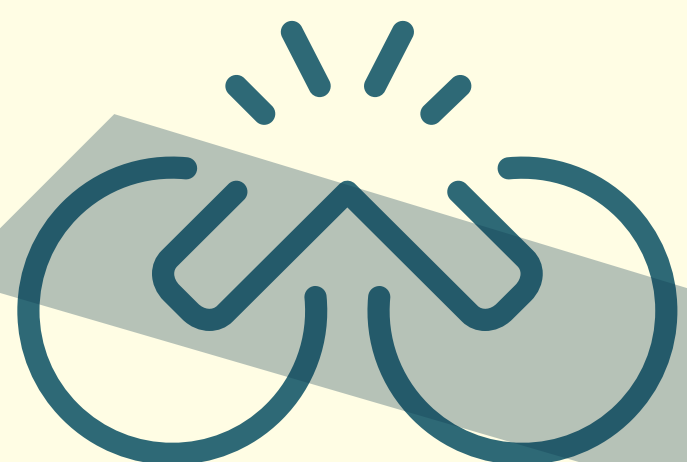
blood clots



respiratory distress



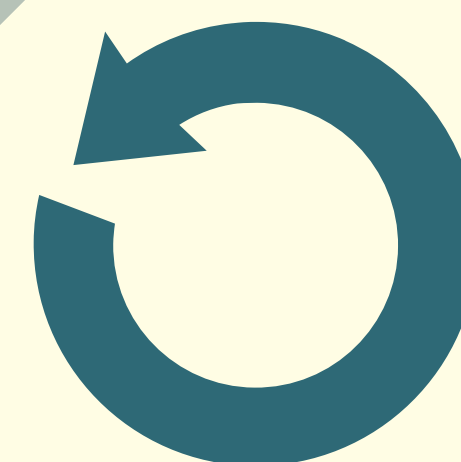
kidney failure



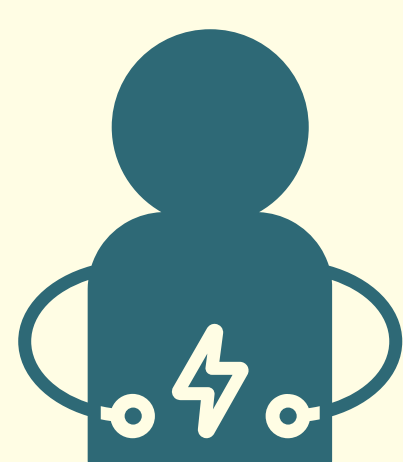
hemorrhaging from ruptured ovarian cyst



electrolyte imbalances



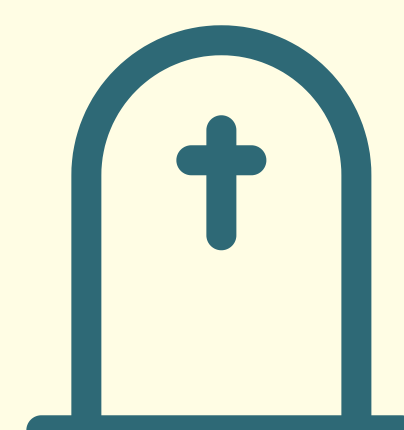
twisting of the ovary



fluid collection in the abdomen



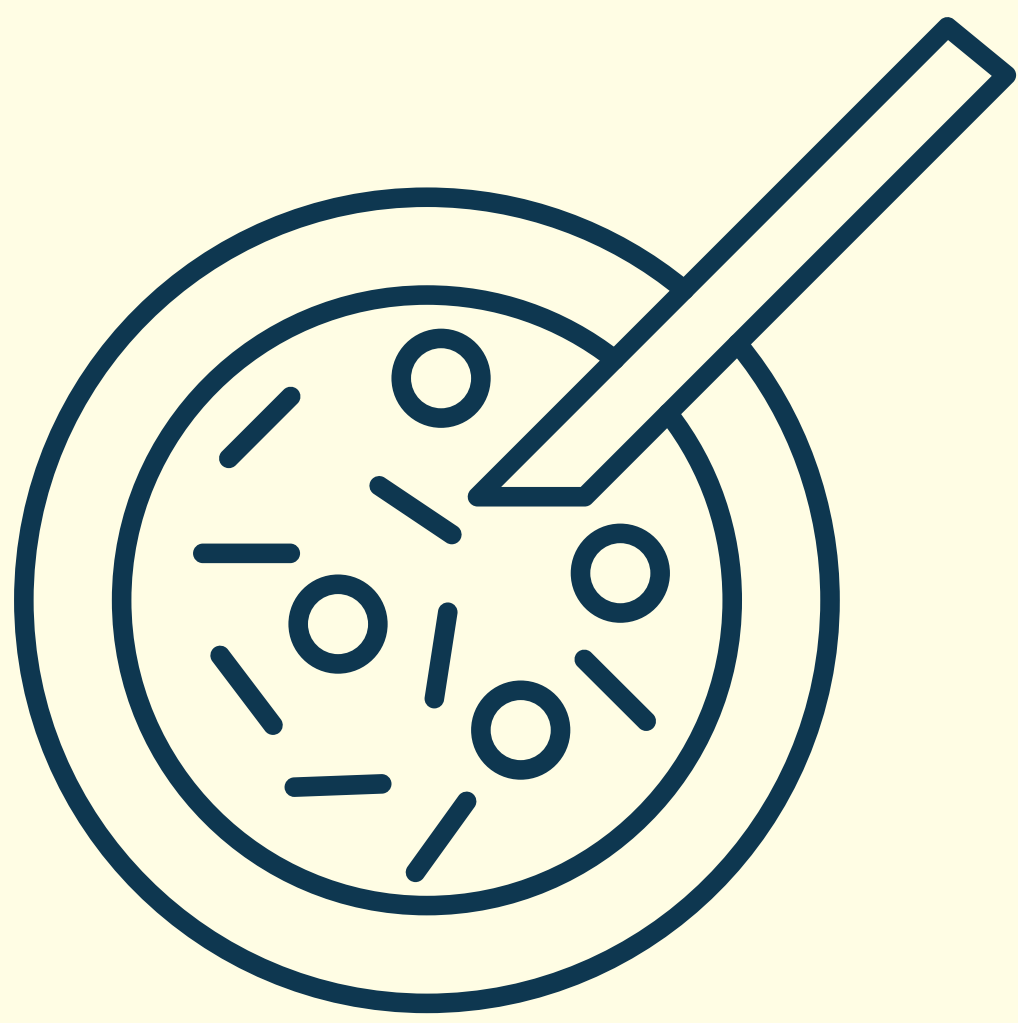
subsequent miscarriage



... and even death

2

Embryo Creation & Selection



The sperm and eggs are brought together in a Petri dish and incubated. A number of embryos result.

Once the embryos have been created, an embryologist grades each of them from A through D, based on how “normal” they look. Those that make the grade (literally!) will be selected for transfer. Other healthy-looking embryos may be cryopreserved (see next point), and those with low grades may simply be discarded.



Genesis Fertility describes the grading this way:

“To determine whether an embryo has good potential or not, all of the components of the embryo must be taken into account. While an A grade is better than a C grade, embryos continue to develop. Because of this, their grading can change, eventually making lower graded embryos candidates for embryo transfer or freezing.”^[6]

FACTS

Approximately 2.3% of embryos created for IVF procedures will result in live births.^[7]

The cost of one IVF cycle can range from \$15,000 to \$30,000, and many fertility centers recommend that couples plan to undergo up to four IVF cycles.^[8]

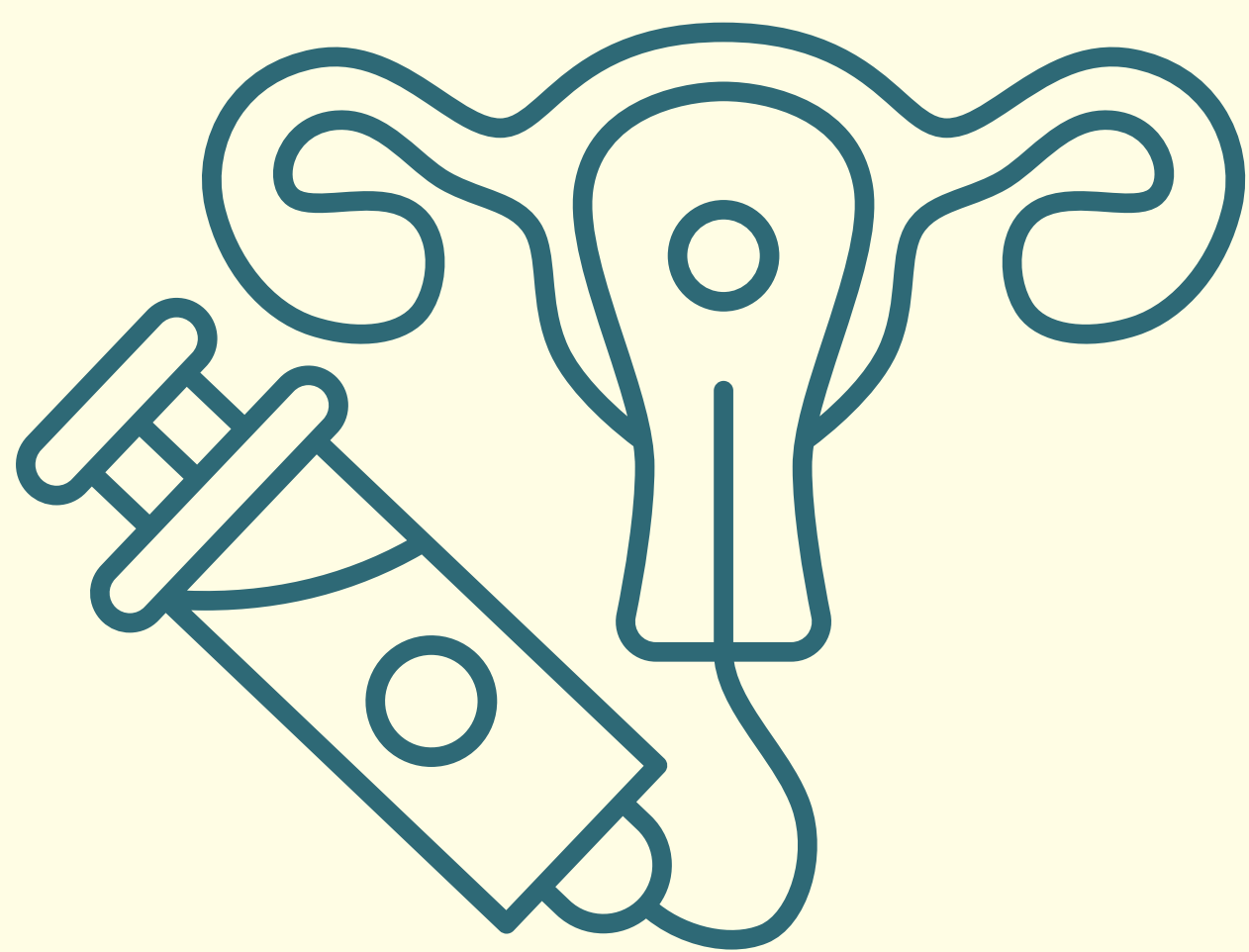


—WARNING!

Embryo grading is not an exact science; an embryo that wouldn't be an IVF candidate initially may turn out to be a strong candidate days later.^[9] Just as some babies are aborted based on faulty prenatal genetic screenings, embryos may be discarded as nonviable when they would have actually continued to grow and thrive.

Even more importantly, we know these embryos are already tiny living human beings, loved by God and redeemed by Jesus; allowing some to live and others to die based on whether they have “good potential” is ableist and devalues life. God has assigned value to all human life by creating and redeeming it, not by how much “potential” we may see in it.

3 Transfer



The chances of embryo survival are relatively low, and the cost of IVF is relatively high; this is why multiple embryos are often introduced, or transferred, to the womb. The couple then waits to see if any embryos will implant in the uterus.

WARNING!

Couples undergoing fertility treatments like IVF are 11 times more likely to have a multiple pregnancy than the general population. This increases the likelihood that a doctor may recommend multifetal pregnancy reduction (MFPR) to reduce the chance of complications for the mother and potential health risks for the other baby.^[10] What does this mean? If multiple embryos implant, a doctor will recommend that one or more babies be removed, thus ending the life of the unborn child or children.

Increasing the Odds of Success

The following are procedures and practices commonly used to increase the effectiveness of IVF or suit the couple's desires.



Cryopreservation

Gamete Donation

Surrogacy

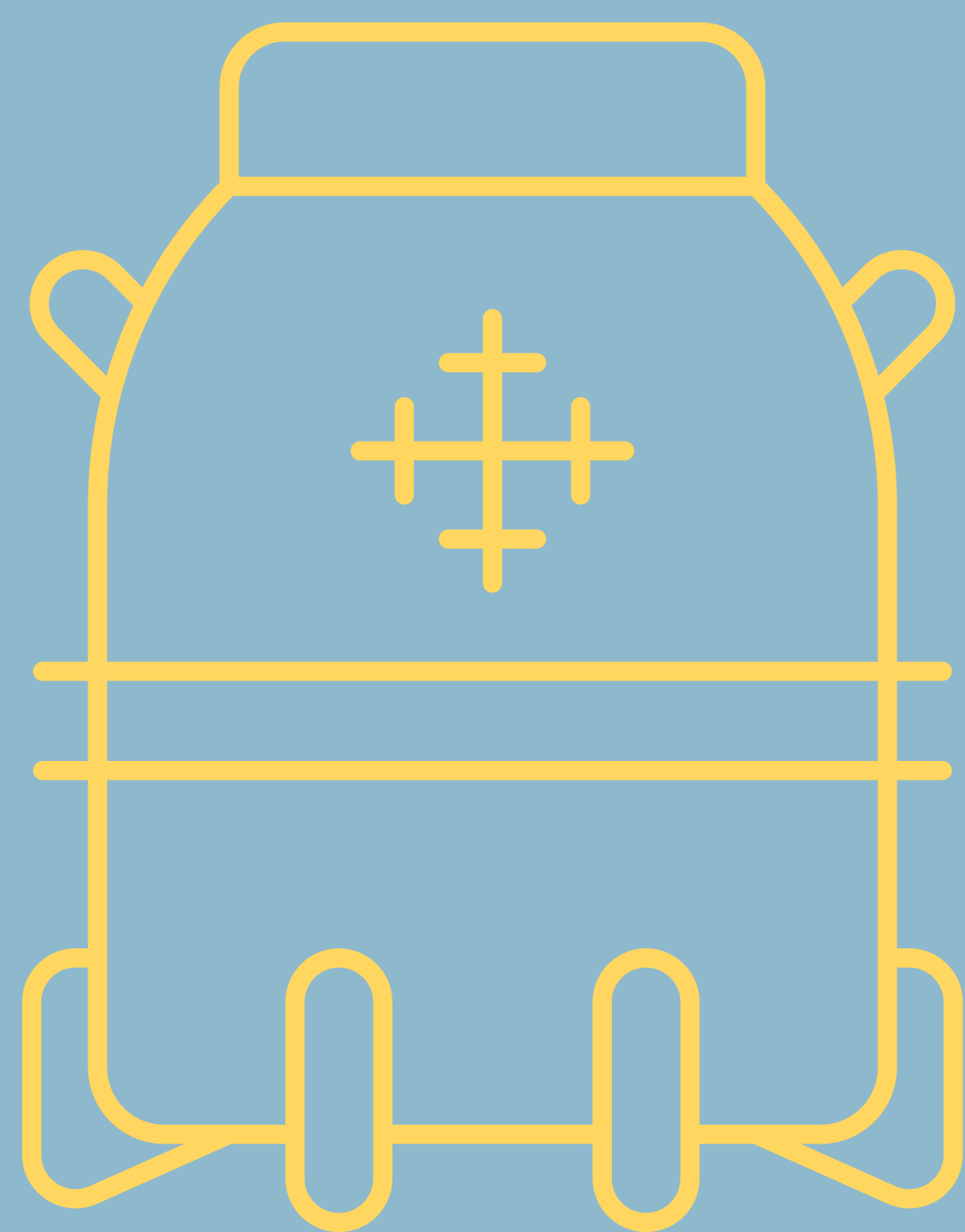
Preimplantation Genetic
Diagnosis (PGD)

Cryopreservation:
a special freezing process that
halts the embryo's development
while keeping it alive.^[11]



The survival, or implantation, rate of embryos is relatively low through IVF. To increase the chances that the procedure results in pregnancy, many eggs are harvested; many embryos are created. Those babies not scheduled for immediate transfer are cryopreserved. If the first IVF attempt does not result in a pregnancy, the couple can have the preserved embryos thawed and try again.

! WARNING!^[12]



Parents must pay a storage fee for their embryos. If they decide they no longer want to pay to store the embryos, the embryos are thawed and die.



There is a chance the freezing process will kill an embryo; whether or not death has happened becomes apparent only after the embryo is thawed.



FACTS

There are over 1.5 million embryos frozen in the United States right now.^[13]



Unwanted cryopreserved embryos may also be donated to research. Their bodies will be used for experiments that will result in their deaths. Because human bodies are formed by God and redeemed by Jesus, the handling of a body, even after death, should convey its sacredness. The practice of donating embryos for experimentation, thus exposing them to inhumane treatment that will result in their deaths, stands outside of God's command to uphold life.

Ethically speaking, then, the practice of IVF should be concerning for Christians. None of these options affirms and upholds life.

Embryo storage can cost parents between \$350 and \$600 a year.^[14]

Gamete donation:
using eggs or sperm from someone
other than the intended parents to
facilitate fertilization. ^[15]

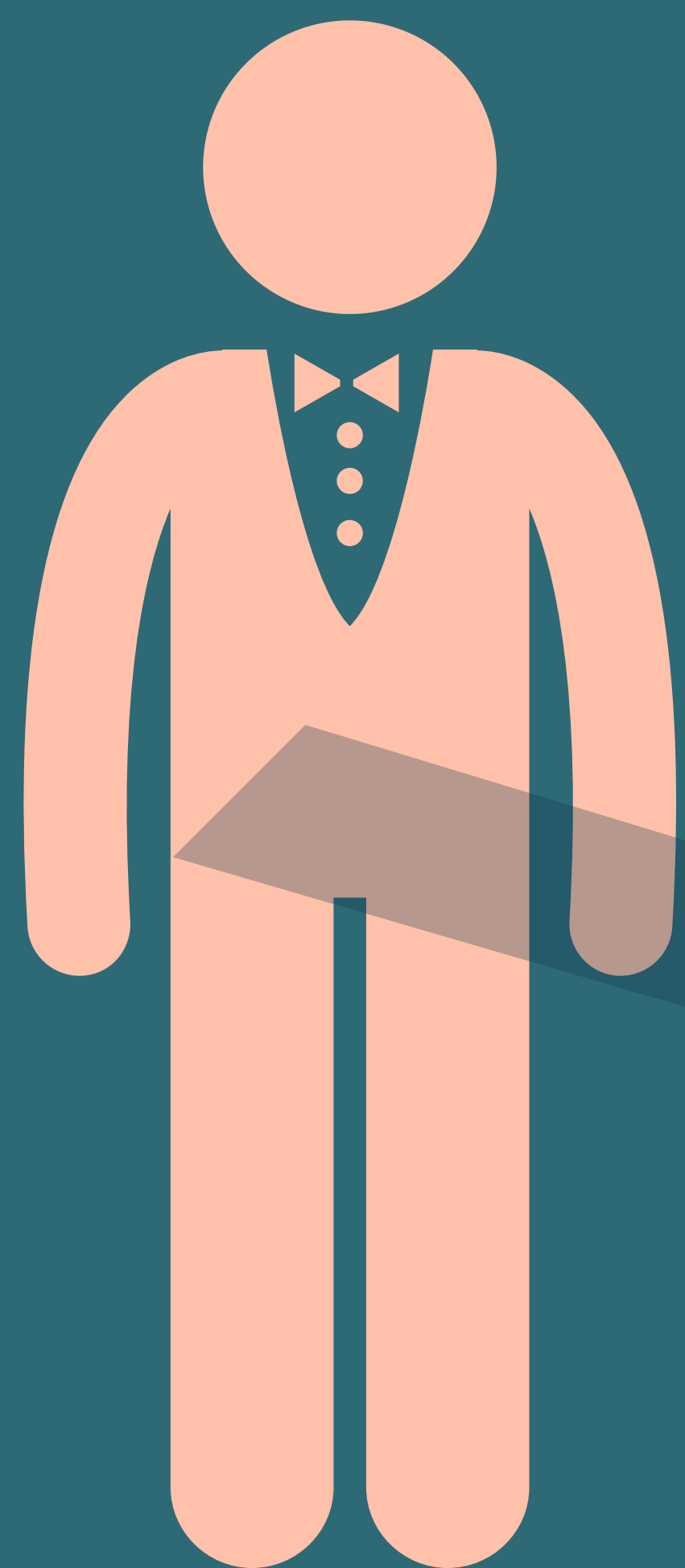
Sometimes a “donor” will give their
sperm or egg(s) for the
fertilization process. The DNA of
the resulting child will thus have
half the donor’s DNA. This
technique is used by couples who
cannot provide eggs or sperm on
their own.



⚠️ WARNING!

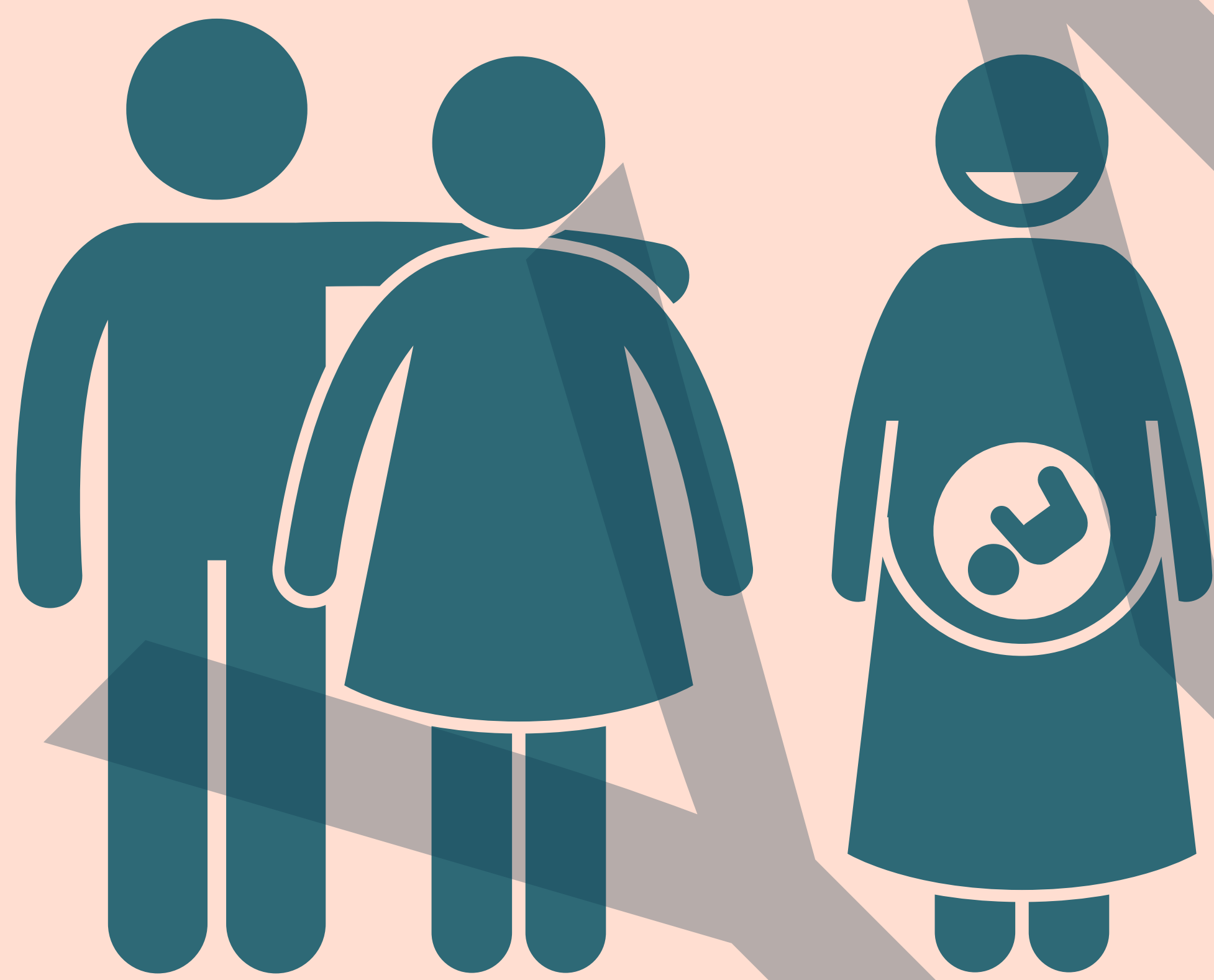
Gamete donation **breaks the fidelity of the marital union** by introducing another party. As Rev. Dr. Richard Eyer explains,

“It has been argued that since no physical contact is made between the woman and the sperm donor (other than the sperm itself), there is therefore nothing immoral about achieving pregnancy in this way. But God did not intend procreation to take place in a vacuum, that is, outside of marriage. The fact that it often does cannot make it acceptable. Rather, God intends procreation to be the giving of a child...through the love-making of a husband and wife. In the Christian’s worldview, children are begotten, not made. They are the summation of their parents’ substance, and not another’s, as part of the mystery of conception.” ^[16]



Surrogacy:

an agreement where a woman other than the intended mother carries and gives birth to a child for other people who will be the child's parents after birth.^[17]



This option is often pursued by a couple when the woman who desires the child does not have a uterus suitable for a fetus or does not want to undergo the process of being pregnant. Surrogacy can be done in combination with gamete donation, where the surrogate also gives her eggs to be fertilized. Usually, the surrogate is paid for her service.

! WARNING!

Surrogacy creates deep ethical concerns for Christians. Like gamete donation, surrogacy **fractures the bond between husband and wife**, as well as the **bond between parents and child**.

In addition, as the surrogate carries the child throughout the pregnancy, she not only **forms a bond** with the child, but also, in very real ways, **provides the food, shelter, and protection** a parent is called to provide. As her blood carries nutrients to the baby and her body supports the child's life, she becomes a mother to the child, **forming an attachment that may be difficult to end.**^[18] Her body also prepares for the child's coming, producing the hormones necessary for milk production and the continuation of the newborn life.

Motherhood is not meant to last nine months; rather, it is designed to last a lifetime. Though a child is always a blessing, the means through which a child comes to be can be contrary to God's desire and design. As God's people, we acknowledge that His ways are always the best ways, and surrogacy has never been God's way of gifting children to His people.

Preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD):

testing done to detect specific genetic abnormalities that a couple's children are known to be at risk for.^[19]

This genetic testing is done to determine which embryos are best to introduce to a woman's uterus. PGD is intended to prevent embryos with genetic abnormalities from actually being used in IVF so that a couple's child(ren) does not have genetic diseases.



! WARNING!

This practice **discriminates** against those with genetic disabilities. Embryos are already living humans. Genetically abnormal embryos and genetically unhealthy embryos are **equally loved by God** and have an **equal right to life**. Unfortunately, PGD within the context of IVF is used as a tool for **eugenics**.



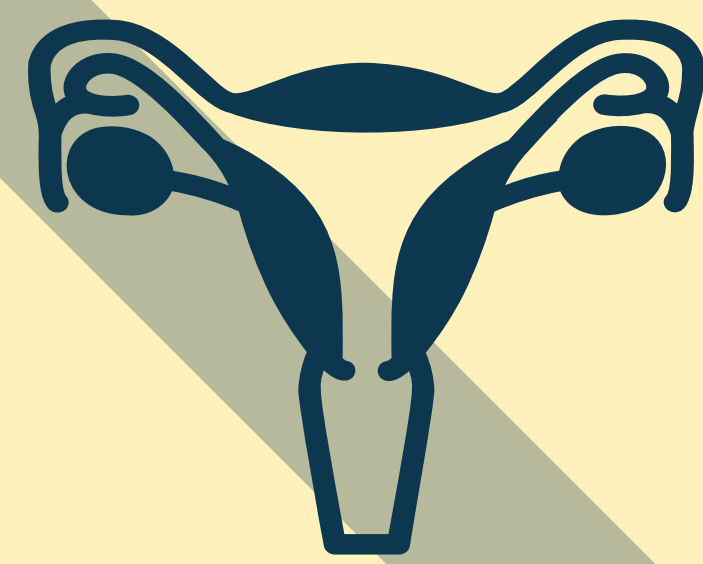
Risks of IVF?

As people of life, we recognize that engaging in behaviors that risk our own health and life is not preferable or ideal, nor is potentially harming the lives of unborn babies.

IVF possess many risks for both mother and baby(ies):^[20]



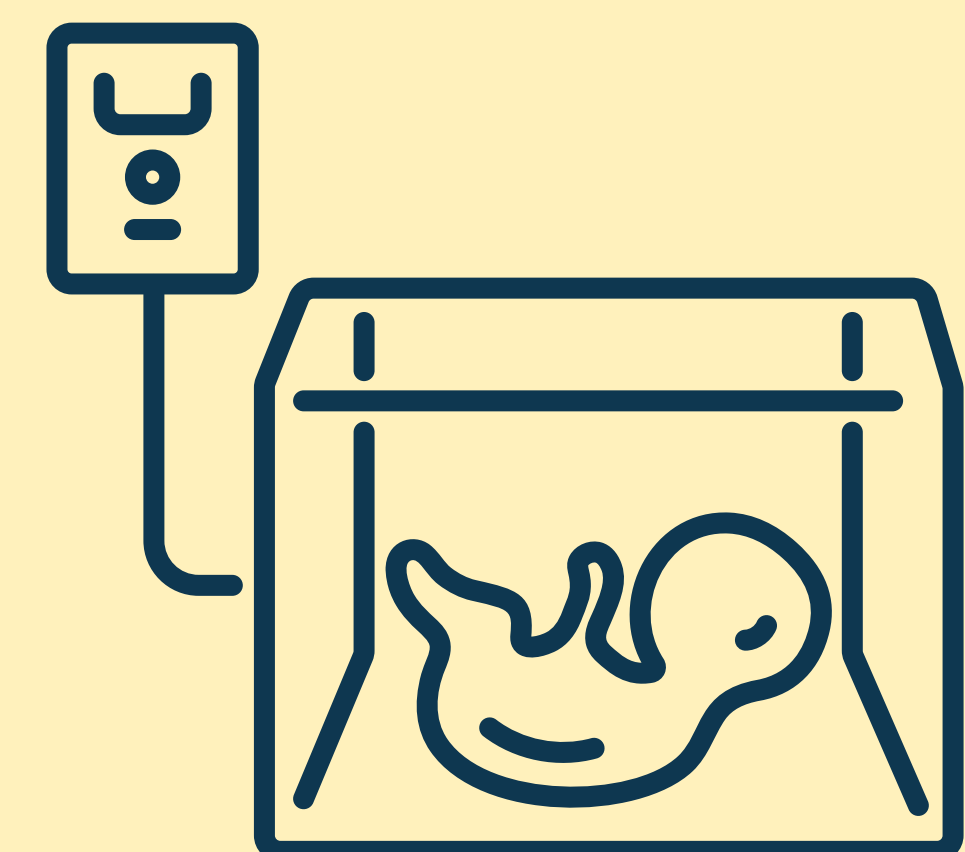
Blood transfusions during delivery^[21]



Ectopic pregnancy (when an embryo implants in an area other than the uterus)

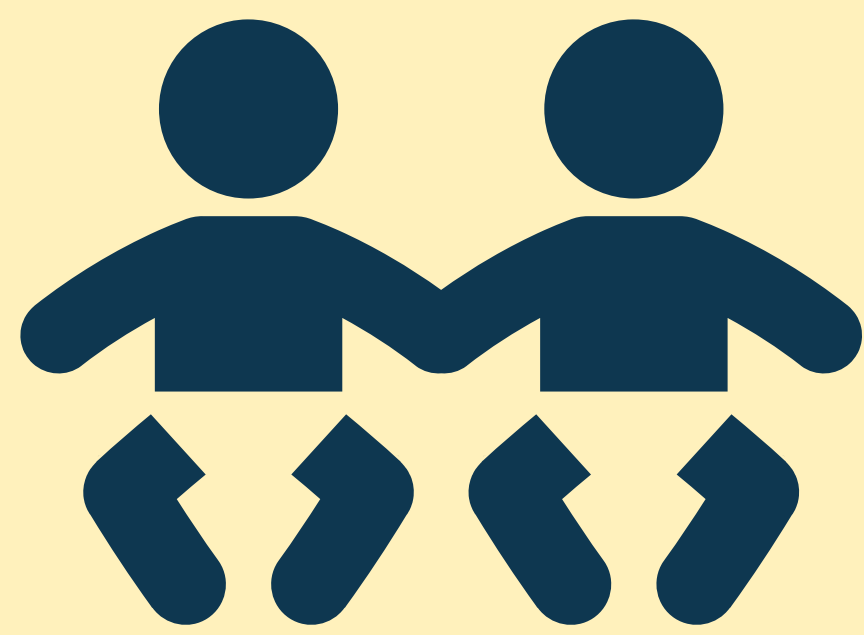


Miscarriage



Premature delivery

In addition, step one of IVF – harvesting of gametes – often completely **overlooks any process of detecting, diagnosing, or treating underlying disorders** that the father or mother (or both!) may be experiencing that is causing infertility. In other words, other life-affirming remedies get ignored because IVF promises live birth.



Multiple births (i.e., twins, triplets, etc.) which increases the general risks for mother and child in pregnancy



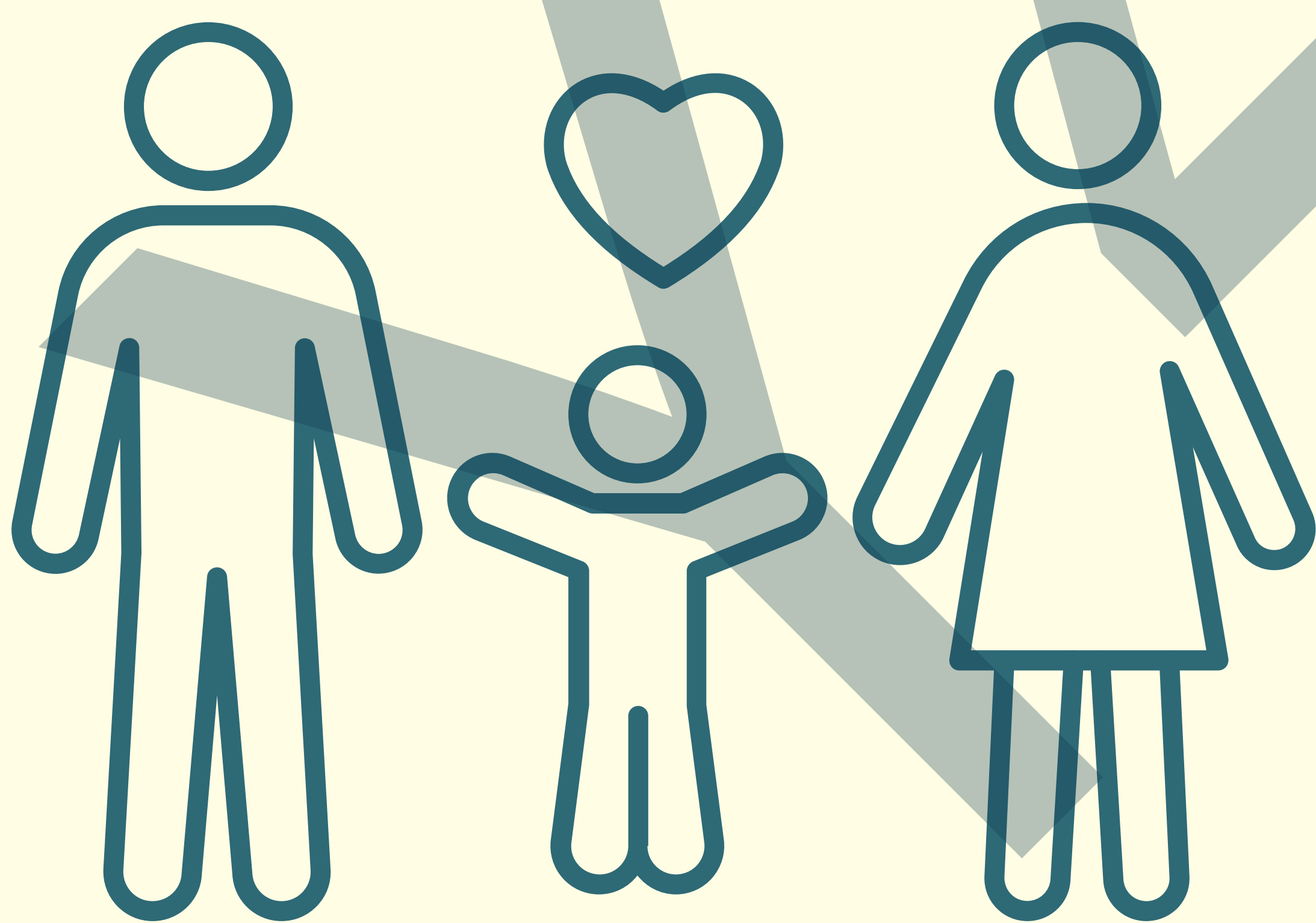
and possibly cancer ^[22]

Furthermore, unexplored disorders might have other repercussions upon a person's health and welfare, and they likewise might interfere with implantation and pregnancy when IVF fertilizes and introduces an embryo to the mother's womb (thereby endangering – perhaps unnecessarily – the embryo's survival).

What does this mean for us?

When the procedures and practices associated with IVF are clearly explained, Christians recognize that IVF, as a method for conceiving children, has inherent ethical problems. Though the desire for children within marriage is godly, IVF is not only potentially dangerous to the mother, but it also ends the lives of unborn children and intervenes in the marriage union that God intended for life. Because of these realities, IVF cannot be considered a life-affirming practice.

Sadly, God does not grant the gift of children to all married couples. The heart-breaking cross of infertility can be deeply difficult to bear. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we pray that God would bless all married couples with children, and we mourn with those who cannot conceive a child, welcome them into our families, and support them in other life-affirming pursuits like adoption and foster care.



What if I was conceived through IVF?

You can be certain that you were handmade by God and redeemed by Jesus.

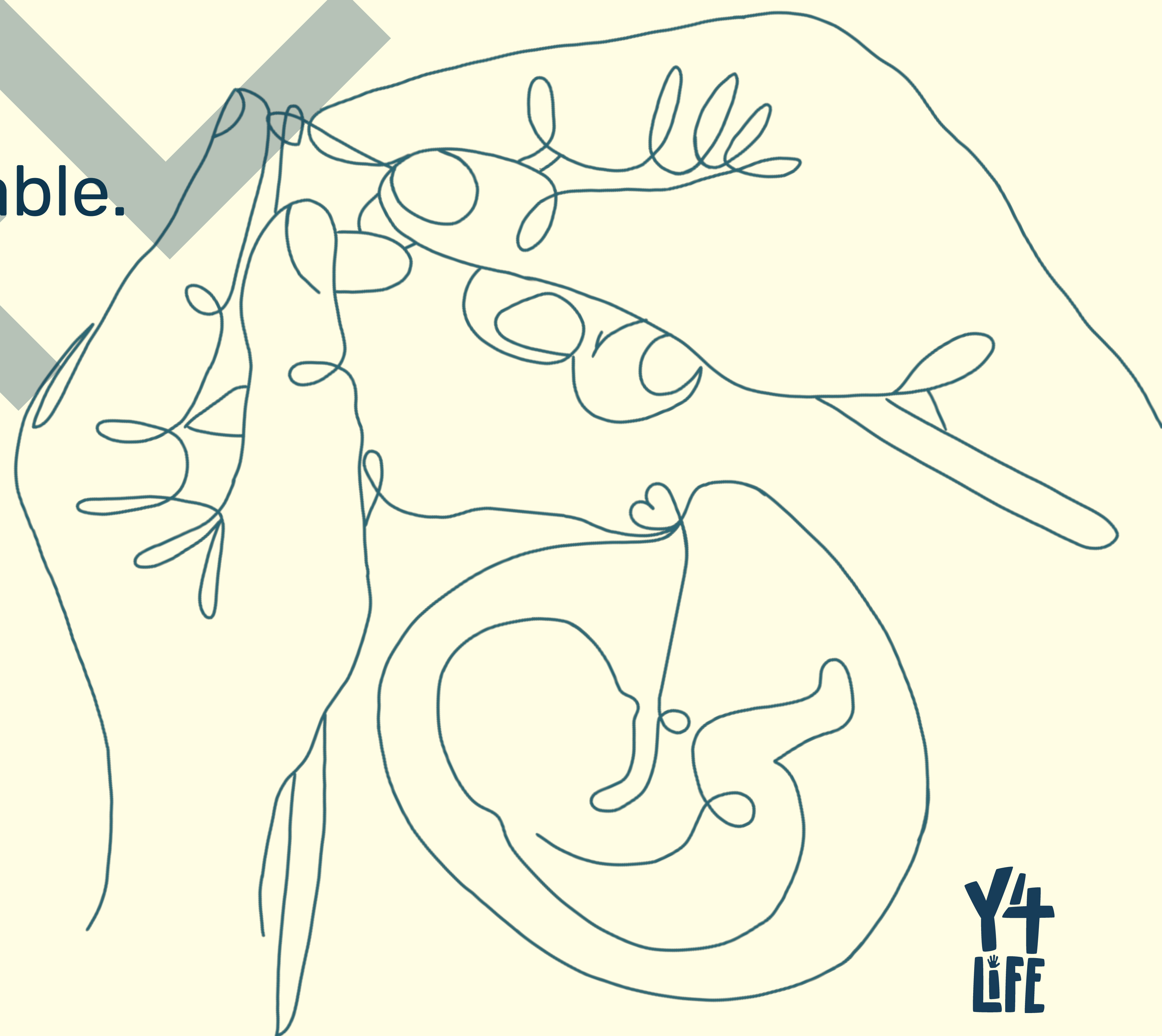
God knit you together in your earliest moments; He knew you before you were born. You are fearfully and wonderfully made! (Psalm 139:13-16 says so!) The circumstances of your conception and birth do not give your life value; God does.

No matter how you were conceived, you are indispensable.

Your life is no less valuable because you were conceived through IVF.

You are loved.

You are a gift to the world.

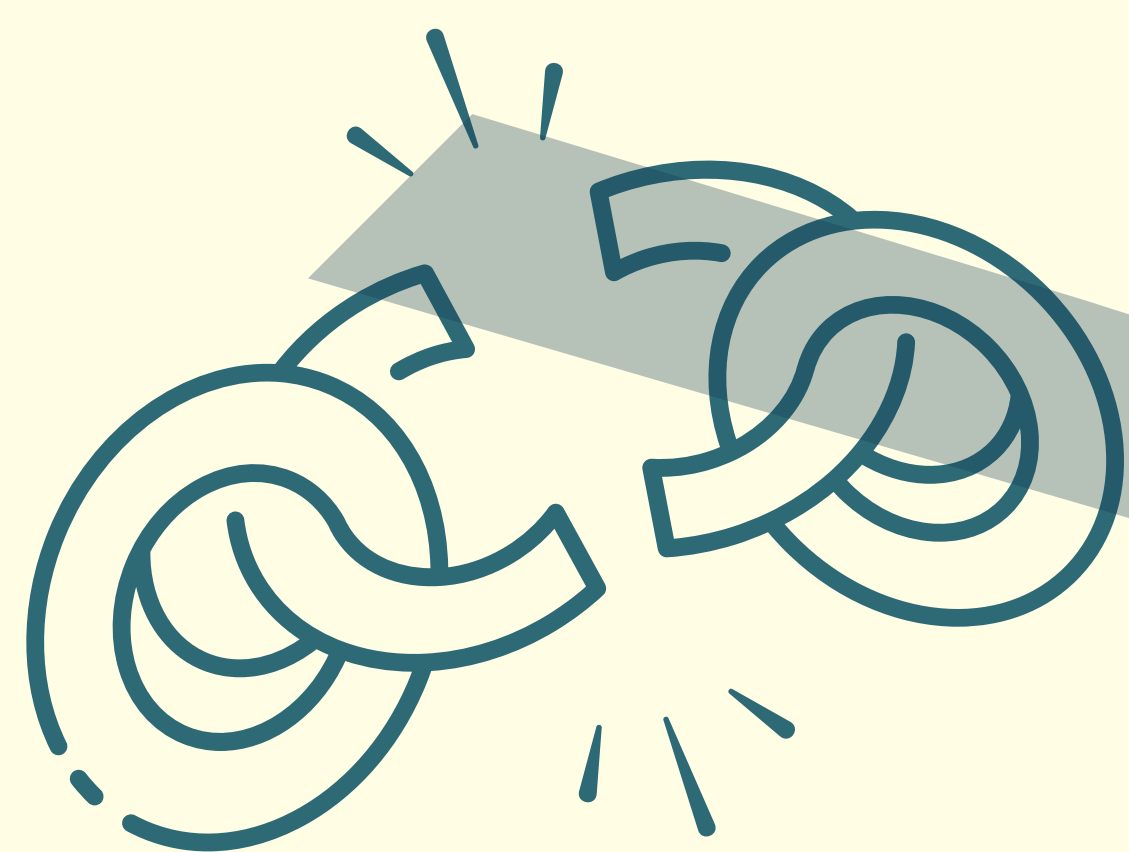
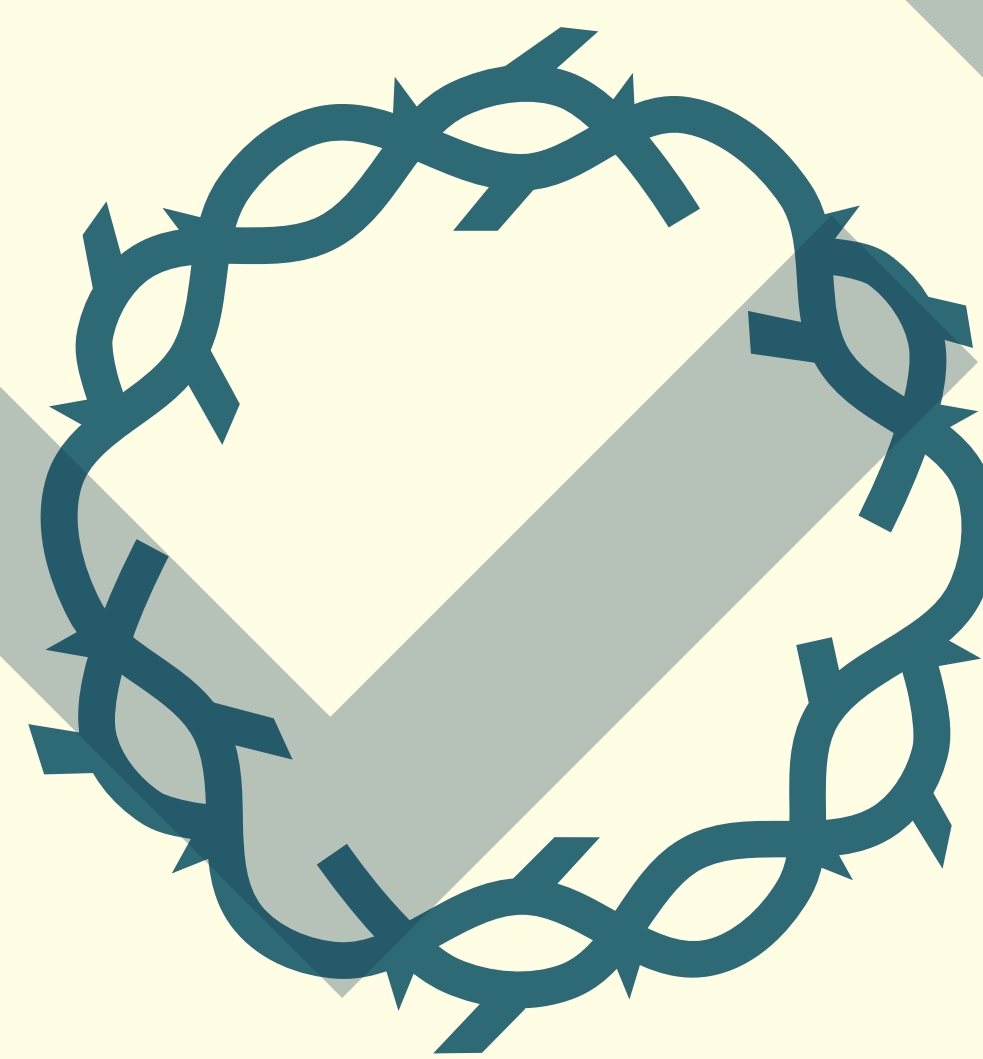


What if I used IVF to conceive children?

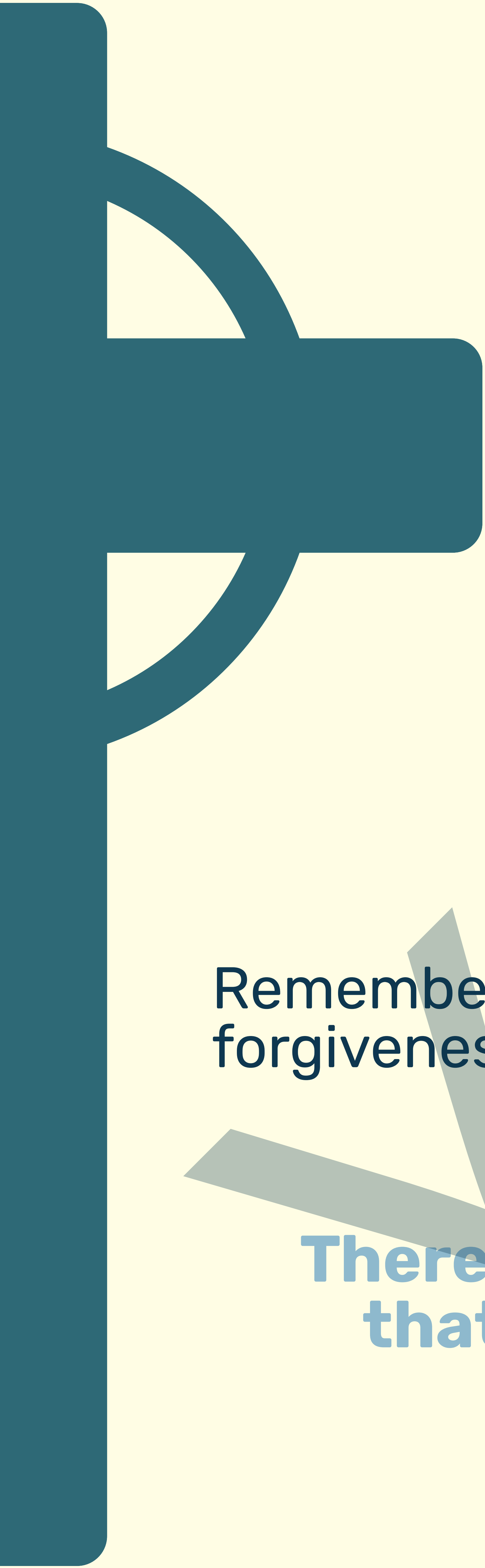


Know that you are **forgiven**.
As a baptized child of God,
you have been covered in the
blood of the Lamb.

Christ's death paid for all sins,
even those associated with
conception.



If learning this information has caused you
to feel guilt, find solace in the promise that
your **guilt** has been **taken away**.



Christians don't use IVF out of spite for human life; instead, they are often motivated by a love for it! They have a godly desire to have children within marriage. Unfortunately, doctors and fertility clinics may not present detailed information on embryo grading and the effects of cryopreservation, nor do they discuss IVF from a Biblical perspective. It can be easy to miss the ethical and theological factors at play in IVF. This is why discussion about IVF within the Church is so important!

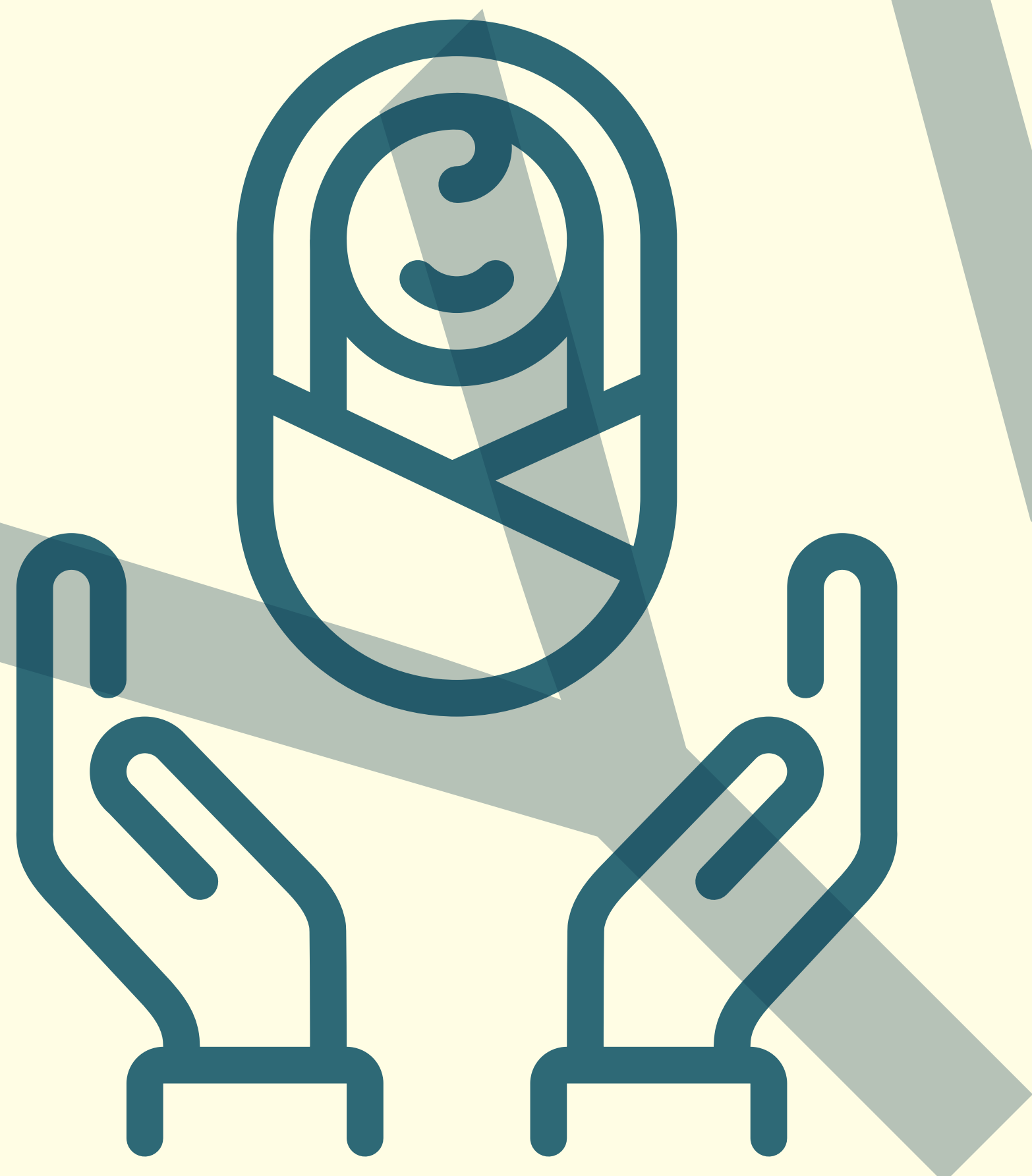
Remember, if you have participated in IVF, forgiveness is always found in Christ.

There is no sin -- with any guilt and shame that might accompany it -- that Jesus cannot forgive and wipe away.

What about the frozen babies?

God is the Creator and Sustainer of all life; His love for human beings is so great that He sent His Son Jesus to die and rise for all humans that they might be saved. This same love applies not only to you but also to the unborn. Unfortunately, the practice of IVF has resulted in more than 1.5 million untransferred embryos, children who need food, shelter, home, and clothing. Children who need to be loved and cared for.

Since 1999, it has been possible for couples to adopt embryos who are undesired by their biological parents by transferring them into an adoptive mother's womb. This act of adoption has resulted in more than 8,500 children who have been born alive and brought to faith through Baptism.



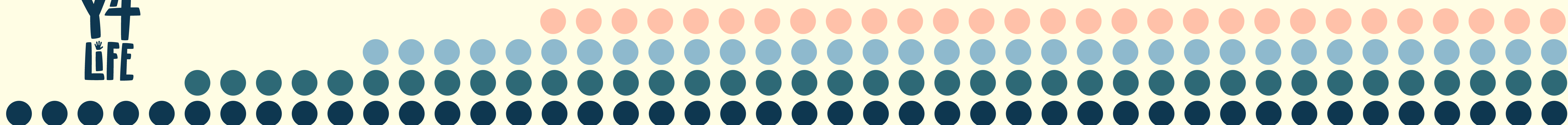
Embryo adoption is a loving and life-affirming work in the lives of children who have been forsaken by their parents.



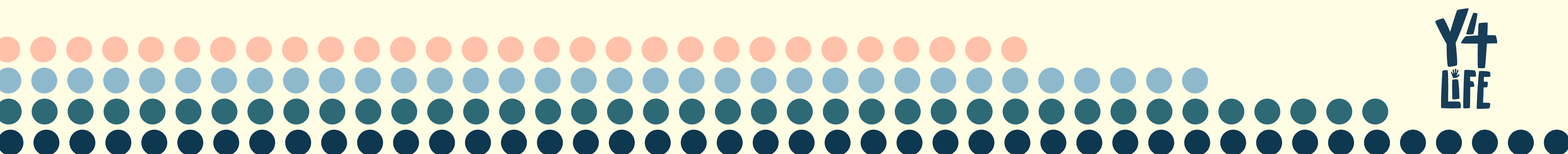
If you are interested in finding out more about embryo adoption or would like to read LFL's position statement, head to lutheransforlife.org. If you have a desire to love and care for one or more of these unborn children, we encourage you to pray, seek the counsel of your pastor, and work through a Christian agency such as Lutheran Family Service of Iowa.

Sources

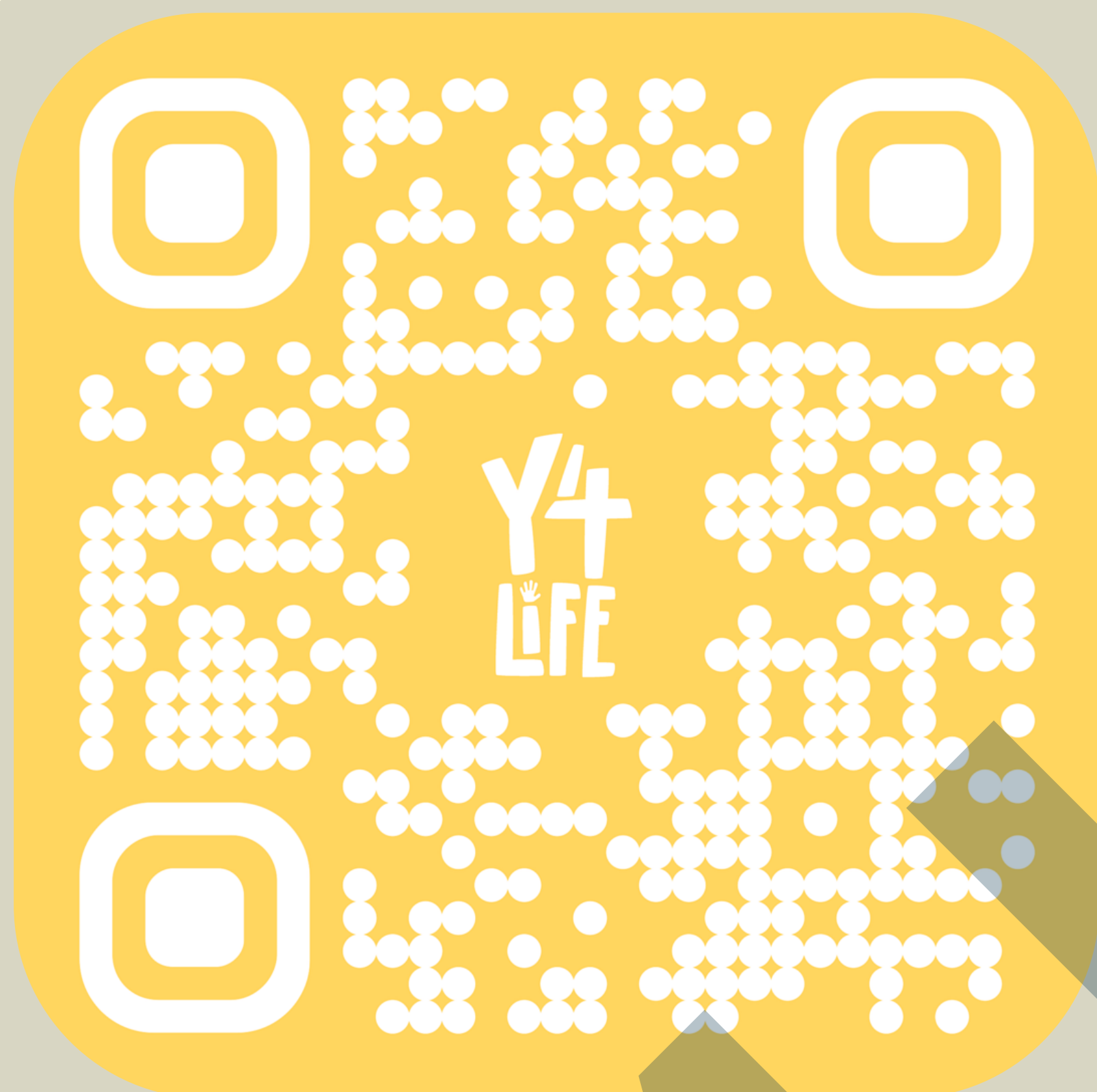
- [1] <https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/21/health/ivf-egg-freezing-explainer-wellness/index.html>
- [2] [https://www.fertstertreports.org/article/S2666-3341\(23\)00075-2/fulltext](https://www.fertstertreports.org/article/S2666-3341(23)00075-2/fulltext)
- [3] <https://www.cnyfertility.com/average-number-of-eggs-retrieved-ivf-by-age/>
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- [5] <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/ovarian-hyperstimulation-syndrome-ohss/symptoms-causes/syc-20354697>
- [6] [9] <https://www.genesisfertility.com/blog/understanding-embryo-grading/>
- [7] <https://www.heritage.org/life/report/why-the-ivf-industry-must-be-regulated>
- [8] <https://y4life.org/contemplating-ivf-from-a-4-life-perspective/>
- [10] <https://www.profemina.org/en-us/abortion/selective-abortion>



- [11] [12] <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/15464-embryo-freezing-cryopreservation>
- [13] <https://nightlight.org/snowflakes-embryo-adoption-donation/what-is-embryo-adoption/>
- [14] <https://www.forbes.com/health/womens-health/how-much-does-ivf-cost/>
- [15] <https://www.reproductivefacts.org/news-and-publications/fact-sheets-and-infographics/gamete-eggs-and-sperm-and-embryo-donation/>
- [16] <https://lutheransforlife.org/article/in-vitro-fertilization-moral-or-immoral/>
- [17] <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/23186-gestational-surrogacy>
- [18] <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2021/02/74041/>
- [19] <https://www.ucsfhealth.org/treatments/pre-implantation-genetic-diagnosis>
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Youth4Life Podcasts on IVF and Beginning of Life



Beginning of Life
Bioethical Issues



Embryo Adoption



Surrogacy



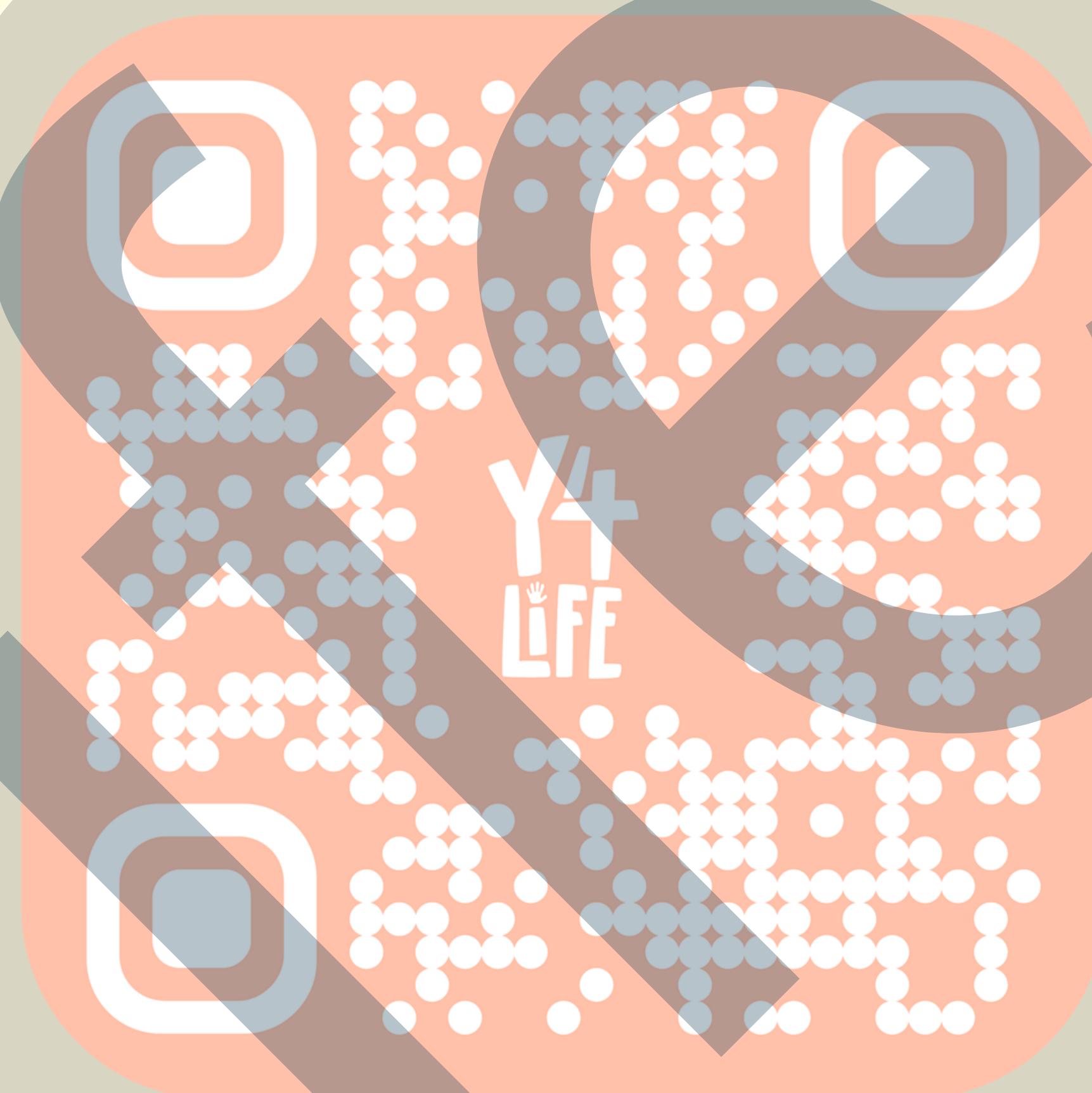
IVF and the
Alabama Ruling



More to Consider



Embryo Adoption
Presentation



Created 4 Life
- Lil' Lutherans



Human
Development
Infographic



Blessed in
Longing
Presentation

