

Text: Various

Title: Guidance about the COVID-19 Vaccine

Truth: Biblical principles guide us about taking the COVID vaccine.

Date/Location: Sunday April 11, 2021 at FBC

Introduction

To the best of our knowledge, COVID has not been shared around the church, though several of our people have had it and have it presently. God has placed us in Michigan, which is not doing well right now with more cases than almost anywhere else in the USA.

But there is a newer issue for many of us, and that is that the State of Michigan has recently opened up vaccinations for those ages 16 and up. I suspect that most people in our church plan to take the vaccine. Some have already gotten it. But I am getting a lot of questions about it, so I thought some one may be interested in my take on it as a pastor, and to see what the Bible might say about this issue.

I. The Vaccine is Actually Three Different Vaccines in the United States

1. Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna use a new technology called mRNA.¹ It is interesting because it teaches the body how to recognize a virus by a “signature” without actually implanting a weakened form of the virus into you. In other words, there is no live virus and the disease cannot be caused by the vaccine. Ill feelings *may* follow the vaccine because it activates your immune system, but the disease itself is not the cause.
2. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine is the third one in the US. It is a more traditional design like vaccinations that most of us have been given since childhood. It conveys instructions to your body’s immune system through a disabled adenovirus. The vaccination is one-shot and is easier to handle because it does not require super-cold storage.
3. There are other vaccines in other parts of the world. AstraZeneca and Janssen Pharma have vaccines in Europe. There is also CureVac and Sanofi-GSK. China offers the SinoVac to other countries.

II. Deciding Whether to Take the Vaccine

Scripturally, there are several matters to consider.

1. Taking the vaccine is another of **matter of conscience**. Like the mask issue, the church will not be mandating either position. When I explained

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/mrna-vaccine-basics.html>

that position, I used Romans 14:5 to justify that each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. I am not your mind! It is not necessary for us as a church leadership to wade into the matter at that level of specificity. Information and parameters to make such decisions reside with the individual.

To give concrete examples: we are not planning to require a vaccination before working with children or being in the nursery or ministering in VBS. We have never required or checked vaccinations before. That is not our business! In fact, I am not convinced—without doing more research—that a church could legally inquire of this sort of medical information with the HIPAA privacy laws. We minister to all without consideration for a vaccine. We do require you to be well and, if symptomatic or genuinely exposed to a disease, to be prudent to stay away until you are sure you are not sick and cannot pass any disease to others in the church. We do this because of the principle of *love for one another*, not a legalistic requirement.

2. It is a **matter of others**. I have other considerations: missions travel, hospital visitation, comfort of older members of the church, etc. It is not just about me. It is about others. And *that* is yet another principle. I am taught to serve others, to esteem others better than myself, to look out for the interests of others (Phil. 2:4), etc. I am obligated to consider what my choice does to not only myself, but also what it does to my wife, children, church members, extended family, society, etc.
3. The decision to take the vaccine is also a **matter of submission** to government (1 Peter 2:13). Obviously, we must be wise about submission instead of blindly obeying. We cannot submit if it is sinful to do so, for instance, or unlawful. But all else being equal, if the government *were* to require you to take a vaccine and you do not fit into one of the exemption categories like a health or religious exemption, then you should take the required vaccine. It may be that you are only required to do so if you are in certain jobs or are traveling overseas or across state lines or whatever. I can illustrate that with overseas travel for Christian ministry. Since travel and specific jobs are optional to life, you would have to either take the vaccine or forgo the travel or specific job. Outside of those kinds of cases, it is my understanding that there is not such a requirement, so it is not an issue for us to worry about now.

Also, the government does, at the direction of scientists, desire that we reach at least 70% vaccination for herd immunity. I believe that is sensible, although I would say you should add vaccinated people to those

who have been “naturally vaccinated” with the disease, and when that reaches herd immunity levels, be happy! My approach as to this matter is that I’m not particularly fond of getting vaccinations, but if it seems fairly safe and might help the wider populace, then I would do it.

4. It is a **matter of wisdom**. The Bible is much concerned about wisdom (Prov. 1:2), which is the skillful application of God’s truth to daily life. Is it wise for me to take the vaccine? If I am pregnant, should I take it? I would say at this point absolutely not. It is not necessary. If you are pregnant, that means you are young and fairly fit, so you are at very low risk. You can patiently wait until after the pregnancy is over to eliminate any potential for birth defects. Also, if you are young and strong and there are many people older and at more risk than you, let them get ahead of you in line. If you have had dangerous allergic reactions to similar vaccines in the past, obviously it is unwise to take this one.
5. It is a **matter of patience**. Some people are desperate to get a vaccine. Remember that God protects you, not the vaccine (Psalm 91:5-6). If you are alive today, God has preserved you for over a year of this pandemic. He can sustain you a few more weeks or months until vaccine supply trickles down to you, you can find an appointment, or whatever. There is no need to panic. Be calm. Trust the Lord. You will not be going anywhere until the Lord says so, and when He says so, no vaccination will forestall His plan. Science does not save. God does.
6. It is a **matter that relates to abortion**. Yes, that is true. An aborted fetus cell line is used in testing and development of many vaccines. You have probably had a vaccine that was “touched” by some aborted fetal cell line in some way. Ignorance of it is not good, but I believe that at this point, particularly if only used in testing, taking the vaccine does not implicate you in the abortion of the child. I am personally not comfortable with the J&J vaccine for this reason because as I understand things, it used the cell line in the production of the vaccine, not just testing. But theologically there is no way I could say that you are in sin if you take the vaccine because it is many steps removed from the issue of abortion. The baby is gone and cannot come back. The cells cultured from him or her have gone on to help many people to be saved.
7. It is a **matter of tradeoffs**. Any vaccine has risk. Doing an overall statistical analysis, a vaccine may have side effects that kill a few hundred people. But on balance, it is supposed to save lives. Consider our present situation:

	Number of...	Deaths from...
COVID cases	31 million	560,000
Vaccinations	112 million people at least 1 dose	
	66 million fully vaccinated	862 Pfizer and 992 Moderna, as of 4/9/2021. Undoubtedly, some of these people had other conditions.

This means that $560,000/31,000,000 = 1.8\%$ of people who have gotten COVID have died. But $(862+992)/66,000,000$ gives a conservative estimate for the adverse vaccination events at 0.0028%. That is 642 TIMES less deadly than COVID itself. That is approaching three orders of magnitude safer than getting the disease. If over the course of the next few years several thousand are lost due to vaccine accidents, but several hundred thousand are saved from dying prematurely, that seems like a good tradeoff. Of course, it would be great if you could vaccinate only those people who would in the future get the disease. But since we have no such prediction machine, the vaccine has to be given to more people. The expectation is that the virus will touch a large portion of the population. It has already been caught by about 10% of the nation.

The above comparison is why vaccines are beneficial. On balance, they save lives. If you are one of the few “unlucky vaccine recipients” and get an adverse reaction, that is very bad for you. But if the vaccination saves 500,000 lives over the next year, scientists consider it worthwhile on balance. I am thankful to the Lord that we do not have polio, smallpox, diphtheria, etc. almost anywhere.

8. Is it a **matter of moral obligation**? Some say that it is a moral obligation to take it, like it has become to wear masks. Morality is defined by health of society. Anyone who does not wear a mask or take the vaccine therefore gets blamed for the deaths of others, even those that cannot be proven to be connected to them. I believe this is an overstatement made by zealous left-wingers who have a morality informed by their own intellect instead of God’s word. I demonstrate: some of these people say “it is a moral obligation *not to go to church*, because if you do, you will spread the virus and people will die.” That cannot be true because God obligates us to gather for worship regularly, regardless of whether we might die or not. Gathering as a church is a moral obligation; COVID isolation is therefore *not* a moral obligation. Being prudent *is* a moral obligation. But being perfect in preventing the spread of the virus is impossible. Considering what we have said above, being vaccinated can

help us, and it can help others. But it is not a moral obligation for someone to violate their conscience or to take a vaccine if it is potentially harmful in a particular case, etc.

9. It is a **matter of humility and impartiality**. “You are crazy if you don’t get the vaccine.” “You are crazy if you do get the vaccine.” Where do I start?! To go back to the beginning, you each must be convinced in your own mind. It appears that a majority of people will soon be vaccinated. Unhappily, it is not clear how long the vaccine will provide protection. Thankfully, as long as it does last, if you are vaccinated and encounter someone who is not, the vaccination still provides help. Still, however, it provides no guarantee. Humbly recognizing these things will help us to interact with people without partiality as to vaccination status.

III. Dealing with Conspiracy Theories

Each of the following quotations are hypothetical objections to the vaccine.

1. “These vaccines are experimental.” Testing of vaccines has been extensive, if not complete. At this point to suggest that we are guinea pigs in the largest human vaccination trial in history is hyperbole. The objection is that it was quickly developed, so it could likely be unsafe. True—anything can be unsafe either in the big picture or in your individual case. We cannot eliminate risk (remember that mantra I kept saying a year ago?). But if you consider the advancements in medical technology, computation, etc. you should expect that vaccine development should be faster than it was 100 years ago.
2. “I will never take the COVID vaccination.” Here is a litmus test. Take such a statement that you are thinking or saying about the COVID vaccine and change COVID to another disease, like small pox, polio, measles, diphtheria, pertussis, or rabies. Do you make the exact same statement about the COVID vaccine as you would those vaccines?

Example: “I will never take the COVID vaccination.” Replace COVID with “rabies.” “I will never take the rabies vaccination.” I would recommend you not make a rash oath that you will come to regret later (Eccl. 5:2). Just listen and learn and wait and be patient. Maybe you do not need the vaccine now. Maybe you have already had the disease and have natural immunity—ok. But suppose you become 80 years of age and COVID comes around again. Will you take the vaccine then? “Well, they will have it better tested by then...” Right! So do not say never!

“I won’t take the COVID vaccine until it has been tested for 5 years.”

“I won’t take the annual flu vaccine until it has been tested for 5 years.”

Do you take that position? If you take a flu vaccine, just know this: COVID will probably be part of the flu vaccine in the future!

3. “They are using our people group to test this vaccine.” Please, use objective facts. That is what the Bible means when it says to speak the truth (Prov. 8:7, Zech. 8:16, Eph. 4:25). To overcome this kind of conspiracy theory, simply ask yourself if it is objectively true. Are they only giving the vaccines to black people, or Asians, or whites? Obviously not. It is being given to everyone that they can get their needles into!
4. “Bill Gates is using this to kill us all.” It may well be true that Bill Gates wants to reduce the human population because of some perceived threat to the environment. But obviously the earth can sustain a population well over 7 billion people. It is presently doing so, and we most certainly have surpassed some of the early estimates of population when human extinction would supposedly occur. But just because someone believes in population control does not mean they want to kill the living. Maybe they just want to reduce the population growth or total numbers in the future.

Population control has birth control and abortion and education as key planks in their platform. It is a real doctrine, but it is a false doctrine. It is an evil doctrine. God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. You may question whether that applies to every individual, as if you are in sin if you do not have 10 children (maybe you cannot have children or cannot afford 10, or maybe you just do not have strong faith). I believe societally or corporately, the human race is responsible to do this to propagate itself and to honor God’s command. To go against this is no better than what the pre-Babelers did in gathering to build a tower to Heaven instead of filling the earth.

5. “The vaccine is actually how they are implanting chips in all of us.” Don’t be ridiculous!
6. “The COVID vaccine will change your DNA.” Check your facts by doing some basic research. The mRNA vaccines do not do that. Regular “old style” vaccines do not do that either. You might say, “What Bible verse tells you that?” Proverbs 18:13 tells me that if I answer a matter before I hear it (understand it), it is foolishness. Be careful what you authoritatively spout off. If you don’t know what you are talking about, don’t talk! Learn the facts first. Learn some immunology and microbiology and the rest of it.

7. “The COVID vaccine contains luciferase. It is the mark of the beast!”
Again, check your facts. Such a luminescent material is not in the vaccine, and that kind of substance is not Satanic!²
8. “Vaccine companies are in it for money.” I know what you mean—but practically everyone is in everything for the money! Logically speaking, do you believe that the scientists at the pharmaceutical companies are trying to help people or hurt people? Are they trying to kill us? Is everyone of them in on a super-secret plan and there are no whistle-blowers who would expose that they are trying to poison us to death? It does not make sense. Unbelievers want to live; they do not want to die!
9. “COVID is not real. It is a hoax.” I do not believe that for a second. This type of thinking comes from reports of inflated numbers and all the hype from panicked people in the media and all the overreaction of certain authorities. I am convinced that some of that is true, and the real relevant numbers may not be as bad as those cited. BUT...even if the real numbers are half of what they are stated to be, that is still a whole lot of people who have died from a virus. Pandemics do exist. Just because you have not experienced one before means nothing. The last major one was 100 years ago. It was real then, and it is real now. The reaction of people may be unrealistic, but the virus itself is the real deal.
10. “When you get the virus, they inject aborted baby cells into you.” That is simply false. Don’t repeat that debunked statement.
11. “If I get vaccinated, I may not be able to have children because of it.” That doesn’t seem to be borne out by the evidence. Is it possible? Yes. Likely? No.
12. “I cannot trust the government.” Good! You should not place your trust in the government, because it is a group of sinful people who have power. It is bad enough that they are sinful people...but they also have power! Our trust must be squarely in the Lord. We can see the evidence of government corruption and incompetence all around us. But some

² “Luciferase is a real thing but it’s not in Covid-19 vaccines and, despite the potentially alarming hellish connotations of its name, has less to do with Satan than with bioluminescent clams. Luciferase is the name for naturally occurring enzymes which glow when they oxidise, and which are found in [various animals](#), including fireflies and [glow worms](#). They were named as such by French scientist [Raphaël Dubois](#) at the end of the 19th century, who extracted the enzyme from clams. They were presumably named this because lucifer literally means “[light-bringing](#)” in Latin and refers to the morning star (Venus).” <https://fullfact.org/health/nottingham-conspiracy-theories/>

things the government does do well. And note, the government did not produce this vaccine. Big corporations did.

“I do not trust big corporations.” That is good too. But what if the only vaccine choice came out of some guy’s garage laboratory? We must evaluate the situation realistically, calmly, in an educated manner. We cannot just go on our emotions (see Matt. 11:17).

Conclusion

I think you have seen in what I said above that I am not against the COVID vaccine or vaccines in general. I have taken many vaccines; others I have not—for example, with diseases that are a non-issue for me. But I have not said exactly how or when or if I plan to be vaccinated for COVID. That is not my point today. The point today is to give you some food for thought and perhaps correct some irrational and fleshly thinking about the whole matter. It is to prevent you from saying rash things that you will have to take back later, or uninformed things that are false.

COVID may not be as bad as some of the numbers say. But it is real. A vaccine is one important tool in dealing with the problem. But you have to decide, with all of these factors in mind, whether you are able to take it or whether you should, and when. You should do

I would expect as the vaccine rollout continues that we will see a decline in serious cases amongst the elderly, and we will see a rise in cases among the young. The pandemic simply has to run its course. We cannot stop it. We may slow it down, but it will only come back to bite us later by “making up for lost time.” That is just the nature of highly transmissible viruses.

MAP

Data for vaccination adverse reaction data in the table on page 4:

The screenshot shows the CDC WONDER VAERS Results page. At the top, there are navigation links: Request Form, Results, Map, Chart, Report, and About. Below these are links for Dataset Documentation, Other Data Access, Help for Results, Printing Tips, and Help with Exports. There are also buttons for Save, Export, and Reset. A Messages section contains three items: VAERS data is updated every Friday, results for the same query can change from week to week; these results are for 1,790 total events; and rows with zero events reported are hidden. The main table displays vaccine manufacturer, events reported, and percent of total events. The total events reported are 1,854, representing 103.58% of the 1,790 total events.

Vaccine Manufacturer	Events Reported	Percent (of 1,790)
MODERNA	992	55.42%
PFIZER\BIONTECH	862	48.16%
Total	1,854	103.58%

Note: Submitting a report to VAERS does not mean that healthcare personnel or the vaccine caused or contributed to the adverse event (possible side effect).