

Think-Pair-Share Activity

Answers will vary. These are possible answers for the three readings.

Group 1: John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* #22-23

Question: How might the loss of a sense of God lead to abuses of biotechnology?

- *When God is forgotten, people are no longer viewed as being unique and created in the image and likeness of God/having human dignity. Therefore, life itself becomes just another thing and people feel they have complete ownership/autonomy over life and can manipulate it as they see fit. This leads to the development and use of biotechnology in whatever way people want without the consideration of moral implications.*
- *Without a sense of God, people are no longer concerned with the truest meaning of their existence, but only with doing and doing whatever is possible — not necessarily ethical. This could lead to the misuse of biotechnology.*
- *“By living “as if God did not exist”, man not only loses sight of the mystery of God, but also of the mystery of the world and the mystery of his own being.” In losing sight of this, autonomy becomes the core of any sort of bioethical discussion pertaining to biotechnology.*
- *The eclipse of a sense of God will lead human beings to materialism and individualism, which will ruin interpersonal relationships and lead to people only thing of each other as a means to an end. If that is the case, human dignity will no longer be upheld and biotechnology can do what it may.*

Group 2: John Paul II, *Address to the World Medical Association* (Oct. 29, 1983) #6

Question: How can genetic manipulation violate human dignity, and how can it uphold it?

- *If genetic manipulation is used for strictly therapeutic intervention to heal various maladies and upholds the personal wellbeing of the individual, it will be considered to promote the human dignity of the person. If the genetic intervention, however, infringes on the procreative union of the married couple or modifies the genetic inheritance of human beings, it will violate human dignity.*
- *Genetic manipulation never upholds human dignity if it reduces the person to an object or aims at creating some sort of “Superman.” It does uphold human dignity if it aims at correcting an anomaly, such as a hereditary illness.*
- *“The biological nature of each person is untouchable in the sense that it is constitutive of the personal identity of the individual throughout the whole course of his history. Each human person, in his absolutely unique singularity, is constituted not only by his spirit, but by his body as well. Thus, in the body and through the body, one touches the person himself in his concrete reality.” To respect the dignity of the*

person, the identity must be preserved. Therefore, any sort of enhancement for untherapeutic reasons would not uphold the human dignity of the individual.

Group 3: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Dignitas Personae* on Certain Bioethical Questions #25-27

Question: What are the various ways gene therapy and genetic engineering can be used? Which of these ways uphold human dignity and which do not?

- *“Gene therapy commonly refers to techniques of genetic engineering applied to human beings for therapeutic purposes, that is to say, with the aim of curing genetically based diseases, although recently gene therapy has been attempted for diseases which are not inherited, for cancer in particular.”*
- *“Somatic cell gene therapy seeks to eliminate or reduce genetic defects on the level of somatic cells, that is, cells other than the reproductive cells, but which make up the tissue and organs of the body. It involves procedures aimed at certain individual cells with effects that are limited to a single person.”*
- *“Germ line cell therapy aims instead at correcting genetic defects present in germ line cells with the purpose of transmitting the therapeutic effects to the offspring of the individual. Such methods of gene therapy, whether somatic or germ line cell therapy, can be undertaken on a fetus before his or her birth as gene therapy in the uterus or after birth on a child or adult.”*
- *Somatic therapy for therapeutic reasons is considered morally permissible, but germ line therapy is still very new. The effects of this sort of therapy are still unknown and to do anything that would harm future progeny is not morally permissible, as this would not uphold the human dignity of those individuals. Using genetic engineering to improve or strengthen the gene pool (to create a super-human) is never morally permissible, because this looks at humans as objects and not as individuals created in the image and likeness of God.*