

## Think about Having Children : A Study on Childbirth and Parenting

Jeung Gwan Lee (Professor, Anyang University)  
arame@anyang.ac.kr

---

### Abstract

---

This study attempted to find a Christian religious alternative to the seriousness of the problem of low birth rate which has become a national and social problem, and its alternative. Korea is a low birth rate country. The phenomenon of low birth rate and childbirth avoidance is a reality that not only are national problems but also Korean churches are experiencing serious problems, and will continue to affect them. It will affect the church in four major ways. First, is a sharp decline in the number of members. Second, is the decline of Sunday schools. Third, various family problems and generational conflicts will arise. And it brings problems such as a crisis of faith among members.

Young people living today have an unconventional attitude toward marriage, childbirth, and parenting. But for Christians, childbirth is a way of living in that God blessed us to "be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth." In other words, childbirth must be recognized as a blessing from God, not a human decision. Therefore, we must know how precious the fetus is in front of God and that it is a precious life. Thus, we should be interested in how to nurture the life God has given. To do so the church's role is education is to shape the value of life from a biblical perspective.

Therefore the church needs to see how the Christian faith of young and married couples who are about to marry, give birth, and raise children, affects the childbirth and rearing of children. And it is necessary to study what the role of church and Christian education is to solve the problem of low birth rate and to suggest alternatives. For this study, we will first identify the factors of low birth rate. Then we will confirm childbirth and the

blessing of God through the Bible. Finally, the role of the church in low birth rate and educational alternatives will be presented.

〈 **Keywords** 〉

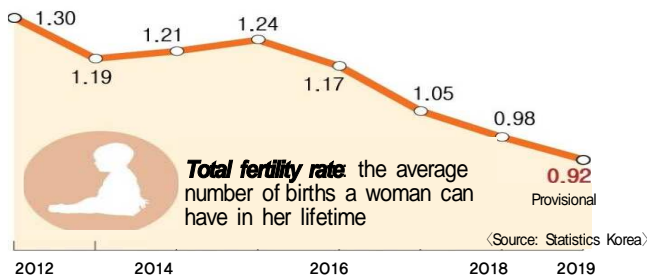
Childbirth, Children, Christian faith, Education, Fertility rate, Parenting, Low fertility

## I. Introduction

Korea is a low birthrate country. As of 2019, Korea's total fertility rate was 0.92, the lowest among 35 OECD countries. The population growth of 8,000 in 2019 is expected to shift to a natural decline starting in 2020. The National Statistical Office announced the population trend in March 2020. According to the National Statistical Office's announcement, the number of births in the first quarter of 2020 (January to March) also fell by two digits. The number of children born in the first quarter of 2020 was 7,450, a decrease of 9,179 (-11.0%) from the first quarter of 2019. The total fertility rate in the first quarter of 2020 was 0.90, down 0.12 from the first quarter of 2019 (Baby News, 2020. 5. 27). Likewise, today's low birth rate in Korea is a social and national issue. It is also a matter of the church.

It is predicted that the total fertility rate in 2020 will be around 0.8 for the first time ever. The number of marriages also dropped sharply due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The age of population cliffs has come in earnest. According to statistics on population trends, the total fertility rate from the first quarter of 2020 to the third quarter is calculated as a simple average of 0.86. Accordingly, 2020 is expected to be the first

year of the “population cliff era” when the annual population growth rate turns to a decline. Along with the fewer births, the number of deaths played a part. If this is the case, 2020 will be the first year to record a decline in the annual natural increase in population(Herald Corporation, 2020. 12. 17) ‘Population Cliff’ is a concept proposed by American economist Harry Dent in his book “The Demographic Cliff.” Population cliff refers to a phenomenon in which the proportion of the population aged 15 to 64, referred to as the workable population, is rapidly decreasing(Dent, 2015).



[Figure 1] Total fertility rate trend (unit: persons)

If our society cannot escape the problem of low birth rate, it is difficult to expect the continued development of the country and the happy life of the people. The phenomenon of low birth rate and childbirth avoidance is a reality that not only are national problems but also Korean churches are experiencing serious problems, and will continue to affect them. It will affect the church in four major ways. First is a sharp decline in the number of church members. Second is the decline of Sunday schools. Third, various family problems and generational conflicts will arise. And it brings other problems such as a crisis of faith among members.

Therefore, the church needs to see how the Christian faith of young and married couples who are about to marry, give birth, and raise children, affects the childbirth and rearing of children. And it is necessary to study what the role of the church and Christian education is to solve the problem of low birth rate and to suggest alternatives. For this study, we will first identify the factors of low birth rate. Then we will confirm childbirth and the blessing of God through the Bible. Finally, the role of the church in low birth rate and educational alternatives will be presented. This study can be said to be meaningful in the birth and rearing of children today, in the era which is called the age of the population cliff.

## II. Low fertility

Today's low birth rate has become a very serious social problem. There are various causes such as social culture, economy, the aging of marriage and childbearing age, the family planning movement and personal values of the 1970s and 80s. As a result of these factors, unmarried single families have increased, and the number of infertile couples due to late marriage, the avoidance of childbirth by married couples, and the birth of one and two children can be seen as the cause of the low birth rate problem today(Park & Yeo, 2014). Park and Yeo viewed the problem of low birthrate as the following. First is the increase in parenting and education costs. Second is the expansion of women's educational opportunities and the rise of employment opportunities. Third is the dissolution of the traditional family system and changes in the mood of traditional and cultural values. Fourth is religious belief. In addi-

tion, the reasons for the low birth rate were the expansion of individual and public pension and social security systems, legal contraception and abortion, increased marriage and childbirth age, and infant mortality.

## 1. Factors of Low Fertility

In a report titled “The Causes and Economic Impacts of Low Fertility in Korea” issued by the Budget Office of the National Assembly, two factors were announced. First, the demographic factor of Korea's low birthrate is the declining population in the age group at which pregnancy is possible. These include an increase in the age of full marriage and first birth, and a decrease in the average number of births in married households. The female population in their late 20s and early 30s, the age group with the highest total fertility rate, declined the fastest among the 15-49 year olds. The female population in their late 20s and early 30s decreased from 2.21 million and 2.17 million in 1995, respectively, to 1.55 million and 1.65 million in 2017(Kim, 2018).

Second, there are reasons for choosing employment and marriage. First, low birth rates and declining fertility rates are mainly caused by a decline in the marriage rate. Discontinuation and delay in marriage affect the couple's choices about childbirth, and thus cause the fertility rate to decline. The proportion of children born in Korea in 2014 to married households was 98.1%. In addition, when workers give birth to children taking into account the retirement age, an increase in the age of first marriage decreases the period of childbirth planning. An increase in the age of first marriage leads to an increase in the age of first birth, which results in a relatively

lower chance of pregnancy, and it is difficult to give birth to additional children(Kim, 2018).

Third, it affects working hours and childbirth. As a result of analysis using the data from the female manager panel survey, the increase in working hours of women negatively affects the fertility rate of married women. If the total working hours per week of married women increases by one hour while the age, education level, and women's wages are controlled, the probability of becoming pregnant within one year decreases by 0.3%. It was found that those with a position below the proxy level(0.4%) and those with the first child had a greater impact(1% decrease). On the other hand, the increase in working hours did not have a significant effect on the marriage decision of unmarried women(Kim, 2018).

Fourth, the macroeconomic ripple effect of the decline in the fertility rate is great. If low fertility persists, it is analyzed that the GDP of 2060 will fall 3.3~5.0% from the expected GDP of 2060 when the population of Korea is realized according to the median population estimate of the National Statistical Office(Kim, 2018). The high cost of parenting can be thought of as a sacrifice or as an investment. If we think too much about what we give up, we will think of sacrifice. If we think of what wonderful results come from our efforts, we will think of investment. We must put our time and money in something, and what we put it in reveals our priorities. John 12:24 is a good verse about parenting and its investments: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Parenting is dying to lesser concerns and living to greater ones. It is not expiring, but expanding. As we invest ourselves in our families, we see something wonderfully creative and

life-fulfilling happening before our eyes. Then we are glad we made the choices we did(Beers, 1986).

Fifth, if the low birth rate persists, various social problems are expected, such as a decrease in the labor force, a decrease in labor productivity, an increase in the burden of social security spending, a deterioration in the national fiscal condition, an increase in the national debt ratio, an insufficient number of college quotas, and a lack of military resources.

Sixth, the low fertility rate is attributed to the rise of the marriage age and the expansion of celibacy. If so, it is necessary to revitalize it by institutionalizing marriage preparation programs for young people preparing for marriage. Marriage preparation programs should expand opportunities to teach marriage vows, marital love, and responsibility for childbirth and parenting.

## **2. Artificial birth control and parental procrastination**

In traditional societies, it was natural in marriage to have children and become parents. However, in modern society, marriage gives birth to children, parents have to be born, and the role of parents is not taken for granted. Indeed, many couples delay parenting or give up childbirth. Therefore, there is an increasing number of families of only couples who do not have parent-child relationships. And economic growth and an increase in the employment rate of women are among the reasons for giving up on childbirth. In modern society, childbirth is an economic burden.

One of the important events that have had a great influence on the recent family change is the increase in the participation of married women in economic activities. This is a

form of the phase change. In an agricultural society, the family and the workplace were not separated, so the couple jointly participated in the maintenance of livelihoods. Later, under the influence of the Industrial Revolution, men went to work and took on the role of livelihood supporters. Women were engaged in housework and child rearing at home. Thus, married couples had separate areas of life. As the living areas were separated, the roles they performed were also clearly identified. However, as industrialization progressed, the need for a female labor force increased. Therefore, changes in life structure such as improvement in education level, decrease in the number of children, and decrease in the amount of housework were made. The number of dual-earner families where couples go to work will continue to increase. Despite these changes in the social situation, the role division and policy support for domestic housework and child-rearing are insufficient. Still, most of the responsibilities related to housework and child-rearing are left to women. Women in dual-earner families play the role of superwomen or give up their jobs halfway through. Korea's low fertility rate is in line with this reality(Chung · Chung · Hong, 2005). In other words, the problem of low birthrate is that the lack of institutional awareness of the family and society forced women to choose between work and marriage, work and childbirth. The childbirth avoidance phenomenon was also caused by the excessive education fever of parents. Having children involves not only feeding and raising children, but also education(Lee, 2019).



### 3. Younger generation's perception of marriage and childbirth

Young people living today have an unconventional attitude toward marriage, childbirth, and parenting. In a study by Chang woo Park(2018) on the subjective perception of marriage, childbirth, and parenting of female college students, it was found that marriage was not taken for granted. It was confirmed that female college students value self-actualization rather than childbirth and parenting. It was possible to confirm why female college students were not interested in marriage, childbirth, and childrearing. Such a phenomenon is not irrelevant to the recent appearance of the YOLO(You Only Live Once) tribe. The Yolo are people who don't sacrifice for the future or for others and don't spare on consumption and investment for the happiness they can enjoy now(Park, 2018). The reason for this comes from anxiety and uncertainty about the future, and dissatisfaction with the society that does not change even with effort. In addition, the Yolo group, which was created by the intensification of individualism and dehumanization due to the development of information technology, is the reality of the young people living today. Young people living today find happiness in their present satisfaction, hobbies, and self-development. Therefore, no matter how much financial support and childcare services are provided to young people, they will not show interest in marriage and childbirth(Park, 2018).

There is a need for faith education to change the perception of childbirth for the YOLO tribe seeking self-realization and non-marriage. Faith education must be transformed into a paradigm that redefines the meaning of humans, life, and happiness through the Word of God. That is, through Bible edu-

cation, the first child should be recognized as a gift and blessing from God. Second, we must renew our awareness of the dignity of life. Third, it is necessary to reflect on what kind of being a human is. Fourth, through Bible education on what true happiness is, what the meaning of childbirth and nurture is to be confirmed. And it is necessary to realize in the Bible that the meaning of difficulties, suffering, and sacrifice through childbirth and nurture is a blessing from God.

Furthermore, changes in the view of marriage, view of children, and values of gender roles can be seen as important factors affecting childbirth. As today's view of marriage and children's view are changed to a negative position, it can be a direct cause of low birth rate(Chung, 2009). Conversely, positive changes in the values of marriage and childbirth can be a factor that increases the fertility rate. Therefore, efforts are needed to change the values of marriage and childbirth. There will be many factors in the change of values. There are government policy change and support, economic support, and educational support. And there will be education, support, and strategy through the Word of God, the source of life.

### **III. God's blessing, childbirth and parenting**

As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it(Genesis 9:7).

#### **1. God's blessing, childbirth**

Family will always remain one of God's greatest ideas, and we are privileged indeed when God allows us to participate in

it. For Christians, childbirth is a way of living; what God blessed us to “be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.” In other words, childbirth must be recognized as a blessing from God, not a human decision. God blessed Abraham in Genesis 22:17: “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies.” And Elizabeth visits Mary in Luke 1:41-42 and declares that it is God's blessing to be pregnant. “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb(Luke 1:42-43).” Thus, the Bible proclaims that childbirth is a blessing from God.

On the other hand, God closed the door of the womb. It was God who closed the door of the womb so that Hannah could not give birth(1 Samuel 1:5-6). It is also God who closed all the wombs of the house because Abimelech thought that Sarah was the sister of Abraham and took Sarah(Genesis 20). Saul's daughter Michal saw that her husband David had won the victory and entered with the ark and danced joyfully before God as a child, and it was God who did not give her children until the day she died because of ridicule(2 Samuel 6:23). Obviously, children before God are blessings and have led to the source of blessings(Chung, 2009).

Mention children, and many parents will think of Psalms 127:3 “Children are a gift of the Lord.” Still others may think of trouble and feel pain. Catherine Brown states the case realistically: “As all parents and non-parents know, life with children can be hell(Brown, 1976). Because of this, some parents

wish they had no children. Therefore parents badly need assurance about their parenting practices. Giving them that assurance may be the greatest contribution that parent training can offer. Brown observes, The change that excites them most is that they find themselves able to love, even enjoy, both their kids and themselves(Brown, 1976).

## **2. Life from a biblical point of view**

Viewing the reality of life with Christian values is to have a critical attitude rather than unconditionally complying with the government's rosy policy or unilaterally agreeing(Moon, 2006). Siyoung Moon(2006) emphasizes Christian responsibility for bioethics. "The church's role in convincing bioethics as a social discourse is really important. The church is responsible for proposing responsible ethics and leading social discourse through civil society. The church should, through a responsible approach, provide a place of reflection for God's sovereignty to life and human dignity(Moon, 2006)."

In the mother's womb, the fetus is created, held by, and protected by God. The psalmist is proclaiming a remarkable divine intervention in the fetus. God's intervention in the fetus is not just a message of alert and warning to young couples living at the age of 21. This explains that God's wonderful providence is specified in the Old Testament(Chung, 2009). "For you created my innermost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days or-

dained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be(Psalms 139:13-16).” Therefore, if Christians accept the biblical teachings about the fetus, abortion should also have a new perception and values. The Bible does not directly teach intentional abortion. God gave the commandment, You shall not murder(Exodus 20:13) in the sixth of the Ten Commandments. He said You shall not murder, the Israelites believed in the child as a gift from God. That is why the Israelites could not think of abortion because they regarded it as a shame without children. The Bible is firm about abortion. God organized and formed in the mother body(Psalm 139:13-16; Job 10:8-11; Proverbs 30:16). Also, God gave a call from the mother's womb(Isaiah 49:1, Jeremiah 1:4-5). And God regarded the born child and the unborn child alike(Gen. 25:22; Luke 1:14,44, 2:12,16; Acts 7:9). Therefore, we must know how precious the fetus is in front of God and that it is a precious life. Thus, we must be interested in how to nurture the life God has given him. To do so, the church's role is education to shape the value of life from a biblical perspective(Chung, 2009).

### 3. Parenthood

Being a parent makes a difference in life. And being a parent is the most difficult thing. However, it is the most meaningful and most important. There are no greater responsibilities and challenges than raising children in a parent's life. Nothing is more satisfying than this. Among newlyweds, they are reluctant to become parents because they are too concerned about the difficult role of parents. On the other hand, some couples consider their parents too romantic for compensation

for the role of parenthood. However, in reality, raising children is a very difficult and difficult task that requires a great deal of time, money, and energy. However, raising children is one of the most interesting and fulfilling experiences in life(Olson · DeFrain · Olson, 2007). No one is ever fully equipped to be the perfect parent. It is a little like marriage in this respect you're never quite sure what you're going to encounter. You have to take a leap of faith, but part of the excitement of both marriage and parenthood is the adventure. Fortunately, you don't have to be a perfect parent to be a good parent; and though there are no perfect families, there are many strong families(Swihart, 1986). Therefore, the young people who live today should recognize that having children and parenting and being parents are valuable and precious things in life.

We should not try to become good parents all on our own, however. Couples need all the help can get, and help is available from many sources. First, books can be of great help as prepare for parenthood. Second, speakers are another valuable source of inspiration and wisdom. Then the Bible instructs us to learn from each other. Those who are younger and less experienced should seek the advice of the older and wise. Young couples should be willing to seek help from parents and grandparents as well as from friends and acquaintances. It helps to remember that parenting is a lifelong process, not on instant achievement. Your concern and involvement as a parent will extend throughout the child's entire life. Parenting is work, an exciting, full-time responsibility. But if prepared for it properly and have given it the high priority it deserves, the Lord will help make it the most rewarding career can ever have(Suderman, 1987).

#### 4. The composition of the Christian family

The difference between a Christian family and a secular family is that the Christian family has one goal and purpose - to bring glory to God. In the secular view, the family is only a human institution made for the mutual benefit of the members. Individual family members are at the center. In the Christian view, by contrast, the family is a divine institution. Christ is at the center; He is the Lord of the family, the One around whom the family revolves. Therefore the Christian family has a stability that the secular family may lack, because the Christian family is always living by a power and a reality beyond itself. Before entering into marriage, men and women need to have a basic understanding of the purpose of the family. They need to have a common goal and commitment to the Lord. They need to be open to the possibility of having children. It is sometimes popular among secular marriage couple to choose not to have children. Christian families, however, know that God values children highly. The whole tenor of Scripture indicates that children are a fundamental purpose of marriage. Malachi 2:15 says that God made us on flesh because He wants godly offspring. The psalms also indicate that children are a special blessing from God to the parents(Psalms 127-128). Christian families are an expression of God. "God created man in His own image... male and female He created them"(Gen. 1:27). Man and woman together embody God's image, and a family is a high expression of the reality and nature of God's love. Christian families are an expression of God (Christenson, 1986).

Have you ever asked yourself why God made human beings

to live together in families - male and female, old and young, all under the same roof? Did He say to Himself, this is the way men and women, boys and girls can be secure, productive, and happy? The Bible show us that one of God's purposes in creating the family was to reveal Himself to us through it. In Scripture, God's relationship to man is consistently taught by family relationships. Since the family is so closely tied to God's beautiful relationship with His children, it cannot be taken lightly. There is a great deal more to love than sex, and there is mush more to parenting than conception. We need to know how to make our families the wonderful, creative, fulfilling, and insightful creations God intended them to be(Kesler · Beers · Neff, 1987).

#### **IV. The church's role in low birth rate and parenting**

The government's policy to raise the fertility rate requires economic support for childbirth and parenting, and a couple-centered parenting culture. In addition, a policy is needed to disperse the burden of parenting concentrated on women through the establishment of a child-rearing system in which the state is responsible. However, there is a limit to finding a solution with an approach through economic support and system construction. The reality is that the government's support policy was not greatly expected. Therefore, Christian countermeasures and alternatives should be prioritized prior to a national policy. Park Sang-jin(2014) describes church education in two ways to deal with the problem of low birth rate and aging population. The first is an effort to transition to church



education suitable for the age of low birthrate and aging, and the other is an effort to change the phenomenon of low birth-rate and aging itself(Park, 2014).

## 1. The role of the church

In a study by Yeo Han-gu(2013), in order to solve the problem of low birth rate in Korean society, Christianity has relatively higher religious beliefs and devotion than other religions. And religious socialization between generations is relatively well established. Therefore, it is expected that Christianity can take the lead in solving the problem of low birthrate(Yeo, 2013). Hyun Jeong-hwan(2017) analyzed the effect of the Christian view of childbirth on the childbirth will of parents in a study of “A Study on the Effect of Christian Perspective Childbirth on Childbirth Intention and Number of Children.” It was found that Christian parents have a high degree of willingness for childbirth. In addition, it was found that the Christian view of birth is a factor that influences the final and ideal number of children. These results suggest that Christians' religious view of birth is a significant factor influencing parents' willingness to give birth and the actual number of children. It shows that there are high expectations for the role and mission of the Korean church in solving Korea's low fertility problem. This result is a religious interpretation of multi-child birth as one of the strategies for solving the problem of low birth rate in Korea. In other words, it is said that childbirth is a blessing of God and that Christianity has a great role and mission to strengthen the Christian view of faith, which is the duty of believers(Hyun, 2017). In other words, in order to solve the problem of low birth rate in our society, the Korean church

must provide proper faith education so that Christian youths can have Christian values for marriage, childbirth and parenting.

## **2. Confirming preparedness for having children**

In deciding whether or not you are ready to have children, ask yourselves some important questions. First, do you have a growing, maturing relationship with God? This is vital for both husbands and wives. Second, do you have a growing relationship with each other? Are you communicating? Then consider economic and emotional factors. Can you support children? Are you prepared to give them the attention they deserve when they come into your home and into your lives? Are you emotionally, physically, and financially ready? What are your plans for them when they arrive? Do you just want to give birth to children, or do you want to pour yourselves into them and help disciple them to become useful, fruitful servants of the Lord? When you can answer these questions positively, it is more likely that children will be a joy and experience joy in your home. Therefore children should be the by-product of a loving husband and wife relationship. It is extremely crucial that the husband recognize that the most important person in his life, apart from God, is his wife's life. That is also true of the wife for her husband(Bright, 1987).

## **3. Church educational role**

Our society has a sense of crisis about low birthrate. The church is also aware of the crisis of low birthrate. However they lack the willingness and ability to solve problems with a sense of crisis. The solution to the problem of low birthrate

must be found through church education. This is because God blessed us to be fruitful and multiply. Therefore there is a need for churches to conduct church education on childbirth and parenting. However the church lacked the willingness to seriously discuss this issue or reflect it in the curriculum. The willingness to solve the problem of low birthrate through Bible-based education is more important than anything else. First, we need to set goals for church education to overcome the low birth rate. Second, it is necessary to establish Christian values based on the Bible for low birthrate and parenting. Third, it is necessary to educate them to form and practice values and attitudes to understand and overcome the low birthrate problem.

To implement this, Sang-jin Park(2014, 101) states the following specific educational goals. ① Respect for life: Realize the value of respect for life in the Bible and have an attitude that follows God's will to make life prosper. ② Family love: Knowing the importance of the home and family created by God, helping them understand the importance of childbirth and parenting, and fulfilling the role of Christian parents. ③ Succession of faith: Recognizing the importance of inheriting the Christian faith, helping to spread the Gospel through children and expanding the kingdom of God.

#### **4. Education program to solve the problem of low birth rate**

In the era of low birthrate population cliffs, a shift in educational paradigm is needed. What is the role of Christian education in a low birth rate situation? And in the low birth rate situation, the importance of Christian education needs to be

emphasized more than ever. The church should provide educational pastoral care to solve the problem of low birth rate. In other words, it is necessary to provide programs for the value and importance of childbirth and parenting. The program should emphasize the value and importance of family life and establish strategies for fostering healthy and happy families. And in order for the church to overcome the crisis of low birth rate, education on the importance of the value of marriage and childbirth should be provided. Finally, it is necessary to establish a healthy and correct family culture through value recovery for children and parental training. Specific pastoral countermeasures must be established for this(Seol, 2005).

The church must recognize the importance of family life and provide support and specific family life education to protect the family. Family life education should be lifelong education. Family education programs through lifelong education include family economy and pre-marriage education, education for newlyweds, prenatal education, abortion prevention education and seminars, marital growth school, parental education, pregnancy and childbirth education, and child education. We must protect our families by understanding their values and importance. The family and the church should be responsible for parenting together. This should be a major paradigm in the response to low birthrates, in which church interest and responsibility for parenting should be expanded. Parenting is not a task only for parents. It is a sacred task given to all of the faith community. If the church actively participates in parenting of parents, the current low birth rate and childbirth avoidance will be greatly reduced. The church must also activate a family support program. Promote marital relationships and foster a healthy family culture through family support

programs. In particular, the marriage culture, which is expensive, should be simplified. And it is necessary to reduce unmarried men and women through the creation of a healthy marriage culture. In addition, education for marriage preparatory schools should be strengthened so that the rate of family breakup and divorce do not increase. Furthermore, parents' consciousness and values should be changed. We must make them realize that having children and raising children is a blessing and precious work of God. And it is necessary to educate them so that they can have a sense of pride and responsibility as parents(Seol, 2005). Moreover, we must recognize that life is from God and is more precious than anything else. In addition, active measures and education should be implemented to prevent artificial abortion and serious life-threatening situations. What is the role of Christian education in a low birth rate situation? And in the low birth rate situation, the importance of Christian education needs to be emphasized more than ever.

## V. Conclusion

The first blessing from God to humans was in Genesis 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And in Psalm 127:3, children are an inheritance of Jehovah. He says that the fruit of the womb is his reward.

The government will continue to implement a childbirth policy. These policies will alleviate the burden of parenting children, invest money and set social norms. The church must teach Christian values from a biblical perspective so that children can understand and accept that children are gifts and

blessings from God at the Christian level. And the church must teach that abortion of a fetus is a crime before God. Therefore, it is necessary to educate young people to be able to give birth and nurture with Christian values without being held by the world's values. The church is responsible for ensuring that young people make biblical standards for childbirth and parenting and establish a Christian worldview in the home.

In Genesis 2:7, it is said that God breathed life into man's nose and became a living spirit. Therefore, the master of life is not man, but God. Human beings are stewards of God-given life. Therefore, man has the duty and responsibility to protect and manage the precious life God has given as a gift as a steward. This duty and responsibility is given to the church. The church should continue to conduct research to play an educational role in low birth rate and parenting.

## Bibliography

- Baby News (2020, 5, 27). Retrieved from <https://www.ibabynews.com>
- Beers, V. G. (1986). Parenting: Sacrifice or investment?. ed by Kesler, Jay., Beers, Ron., & Neff, LaVonne. *Parents & Children*, Wheaton: Victor Books.
- Bright, B. (1987). Think before you have children. ed by Kesler, Jay., Beers, Ron., & Neff, LaVonne. *Parents & Children*, Wheaton: Victor Books.
- Brown, C. (1976). It changed my life. *Psychology Today*, 10, 47-57.
- Christenson, L. (1986). What makes a family Christian?. ed by Kesler, Jay., Beers, Ron., & Neff, LaVonne. *Parents & Children*, Wheaton: Victor Books.
- Chung, G. (2009). Low birth rate and the role of the church. *The Journal of Chongshin University*, 29, 24-61.
- Chong, O., Chung, S., & Hong, G. (2005). *Marriage and understanding of family*. Seoul: Sigma Press.
- Dent, H. (2015). 2018 *Population cliff is coming*. Tr by Kwon, S. H. Seoul: Cheonglim Publishing.
- Herald C. (2020, 12, 17). Retrieved from <http://news.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud=2020121700453>.
- Hyun, J. H. (2017). A study on the effect of Christian perspective child-birth on childbirth intention and number of children. *Theology and Mission*, 51, 129-157.
- Jea, S., & Suk, C. (2007). A Christian social ethics review on population policy for low fertility. *Christian Social Ethics*, 13, 63-88.
- Kesler, J., Beers, R., & Neff, L. (1987). *Parents & children*. Wheaton: Victor Book.
- Kim, K., Huh, G., Kim, Y. & Kim, S. (2018). *The causes of low fertility and economic impact in korea*. Seoul: National Assembly Budget Office.
- Lee, S. (2019). Shifting educational paradigms for the era of the demographic cliff. *Theology and Praxis*, 63, 45-482.
- Moon, S. (2006). *Ethics invited to debate-Christian social ethics*. Seoul: Book Korea.
- Olson, D. H., DeFrain, J. & Olson, A. K. (2007). *Building relationships, family life 21* tr. Yangseawon, Pajoo.
- Park, C. (2018). Female college students type of subjective perception on marriage, childbirth, child care. *Journal of Critical Social Welfare*, 59, 265-295.

- Park, H. Y., & Yeo, Y. G. (2014). An analysis of the causes of low-fertility rate and the directions of future child-care policies in Korea. *Korea Journal of Child Care and Education, 85*, 69-95.
- Park, S. J. (2014). Church education in the era of low birth rates and aging. *A Journal of Christian Education in Korea, 40*, 77-109.
- Seol, E. (2005). Let's create a place for lifelong education. *Christian Thought, 49*, 46-59.
- Suderman, S. (1987). Will we be good parents?. Parents & Children, ed by Kesler, Jay., Beers, Ron., & Neff, LaVonne. *Parents & Children*, Wheaton: Victor Books, 35-36.
- Yeo, H. (2013). Pastoral design in the age of low fertility and old age. *The Gospel and Praxis, 29*, 118-146.



## 한글 초록

## 자녀 출산과 양육에 대한 고찰

이정관 (안양대학교/교수)

본 연구는 국가적, 사회적 문제가 되고 있는 저출산 문제의 심각성에 대한 기독교 종교적 대안과 대안을 모색하고자 하였다. 대한민국은 저출산 국가이다. 저출산과 출산 기피 현상은 국가적인 문제뿐 아니라 한국교회에도 심각한 문제가 발생하고 있는 것이 현실이며, 계속해서 영향을 줄 것이다. 크게 네 가지로 교회에 영향을 미칠 것이다. 첫째 교인 수의 급격한 감소이다. 둘째 이로 인해서 교회학교의 쇠퇴이다. 셋째 다양한 가족 문제와 세대 갈등이 생길 것이다. 그리고 교인들의 신앙 위기 등의 문제를 가져온다.

오늘을 사는 젊은이들은 결혼과 출산 그리고 자녀 양육에 대해 겁먹이지 않으려는 태도를 가지고 있다. 그러나 기독교인에게 자녀 출산은 하나님께서 '생육하고 번성하며 땅에 충만 하라.' 축복하신 것을 삶으로 실천하는 것이다. 즉, 자녀 출산은 인간이 결정할 수 있는 것이 아니라 하나님의 축복임을 인식해야 한다. 따라서 태아가 하나님 앞에서 얼마나 소중한 존재로 귀한 생명인 줄 알아야 한다. 그리하여 주신 생명을 어떻게 잘 양육할 것인지 관심 갖도록 해야 한다. 그러기 위해서는 성경적 관점에서 생명의 가치를 형성하도록 교회의 역할은 교육이다.

그러므로 결혼과 출산 그리고 자녀 양육을 앞두고 있는 청년과 기혼 부부의 기독교 신앙이 자녀의 출산과 양육에 어떠한 영향을 미치는지 확인해 볼 필요가 있다. 그리고 저출산 문제를 해결하기 위해 교회와 기독교 교육의 역할은 무엇인지에 대해서 연구하고 대처 방안을 제시할 필요가 있다. 이 연구를 위하여 먼저 저출산의 요인들을 확인해 볼 것이다. 그런 다음에 자녀의 출산과 하나님의 축복임을 성경을 통해서 확인할 것이다. 끝으로 저출산을 교회의 역할과 교육적인 대안들을 제시하게 될 것이다.

## 《 주제어 》

자녀, 자 출산, 기독교 신앙, 교육, 저출산, 출산, 자녀양육

- Received: 02/08/2021
- Evaluated: 02/20/2021
- Accepted: 03/29/2021