

**NVF**

# What is it?

## F $\Rightarrow$ Fertilisation

- Union of male sperm & female ovum
- Conception of human life
- Formation of embryo

## IV $\Rightarrow$ Not In-Vivo

- Not in a living being (in the womb)

## IV $\Rightarrow$ In-Vitro

- In glass (in the “test-tube”)

# Who is doing it?

- 1978 – Louise Brown (Lancashire, UK)
- 5 million couples worldwide  
↓  
1 million babies worldwide

# What are Churches saying? <sup>IVF</sup>

- Roman Catholic:

*“Human procreation must always be the fruit of a conjugal act with its dual unitive and procreative significance.”*

Pope Paul VI, *Humanae vitae* (1968)

*“Such fertilization is in itself illicit and in opposition to the dignity of procreation and of the conjugal union.”*

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger Prefect (1987)

# What are Churches saying? <sup>IVF</sup>

- Uniting Church

*The Uniting Church of Australia has no formal position, leaving worshippers to make their own decision.*

A question of life (Nov 2006)

# What are Churches saying? <sup>IVF</sup>

- Baptist Church

*“We may prayerfully regard IVF as an honest option for Christian parents, under the conditions I want now to suggest ...”*

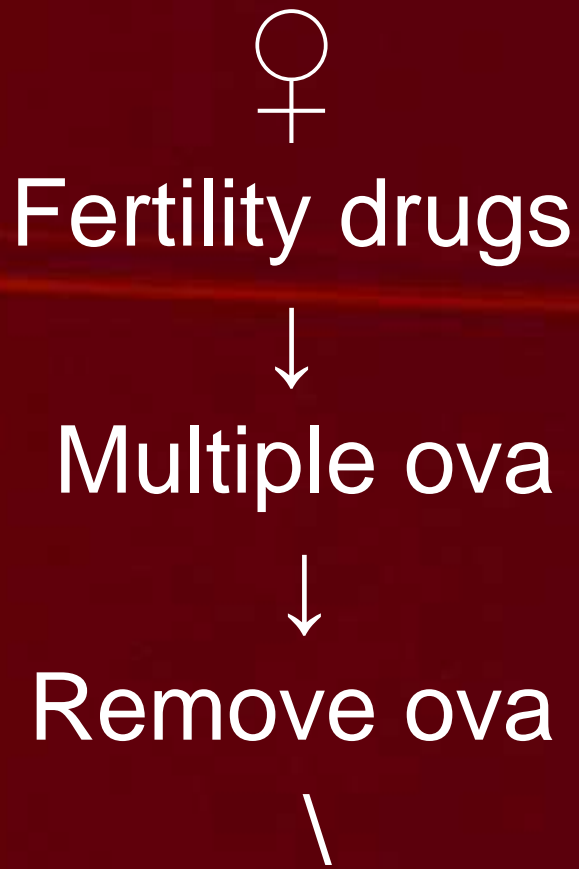
Rev. Paul T. Harrison (Melbourne, Brisbane)

- Presbyterian Church (PCA)

*“Christians would be wise to avoid IVF procedures because of the moral, human and financial costs involved.”*

Dr Douglas Milne (2003)

# How is it done?

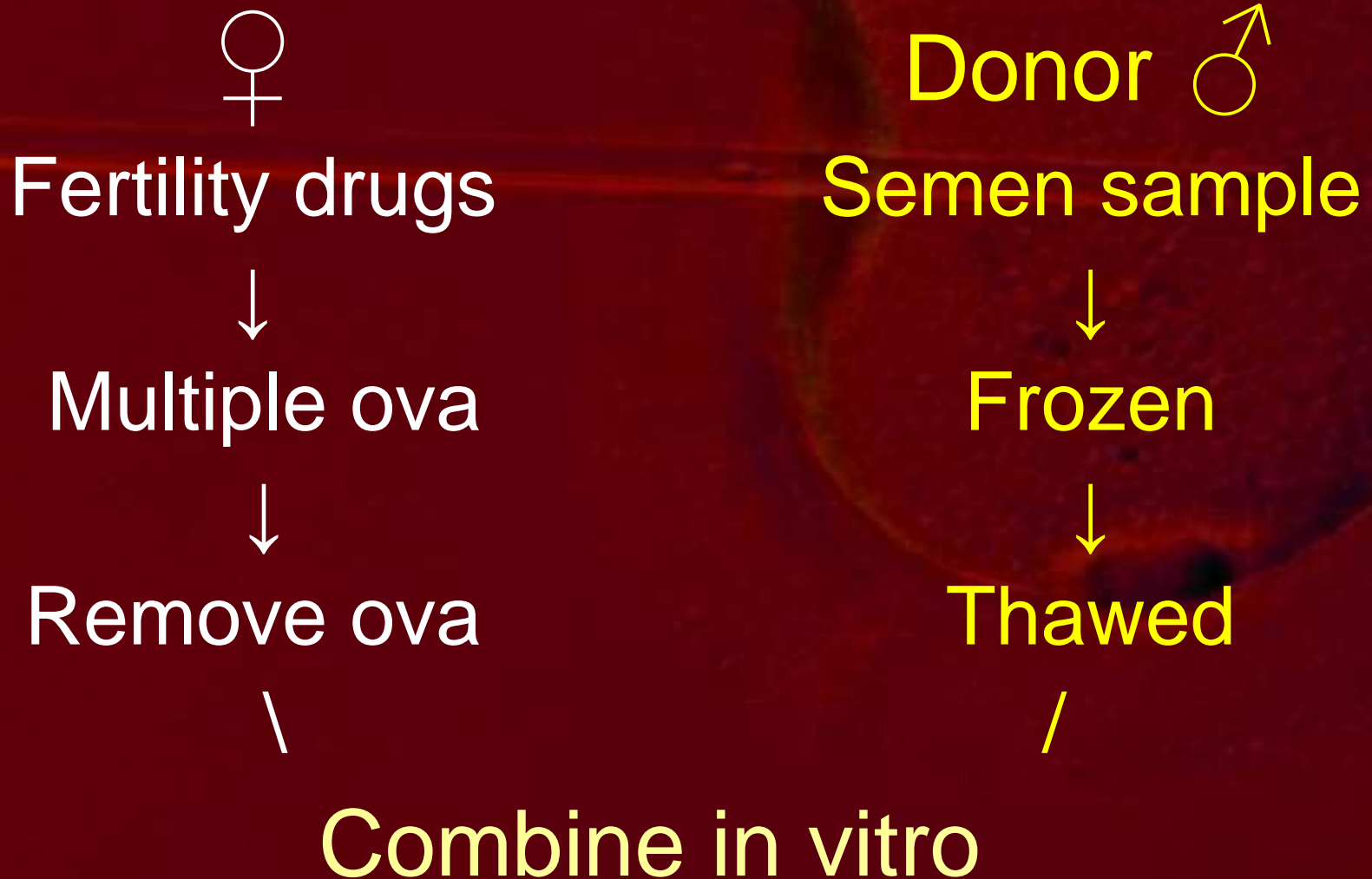


Combine in vitro

# What if it won't work?

IVF

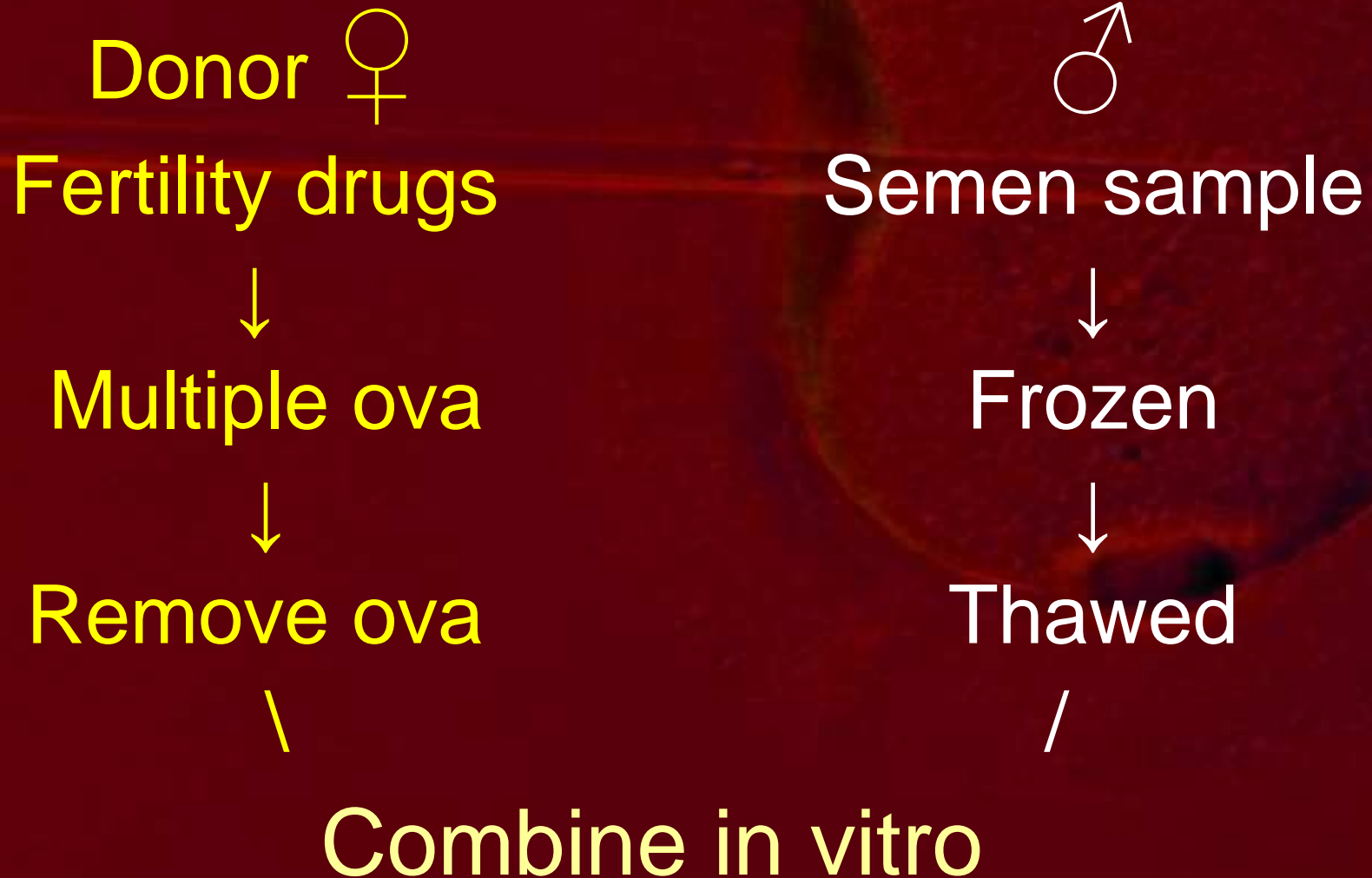
- the man's the problem!



# What if it still won't work?

IVF

- the woman's the problem!



# What happens next?

Multiple embryos created  
(usually 7-15)



“Best” embryos inserted into uterus  
(usually 1-3)



Baby  
(18%)

# Issues to consider ...

- Is it right to artificially cause conception when God has not done it?
- Should “spare” embryos be created?
- Should “spare” embryos be stored?
  - For how long?
- Should “spare” embryos be used in research?
- Should “spare” embryos be destroyed?
- What should happen when one dies?

# More issues to consider ...

- Who should be eligible?
  - married male / female couples only?
  - de facto “couples”?
  - homosexual “couples”?
  - single people?
  - elderly people?
- Are children a fundamental human right?

# Even more issues ...

- Is it OK to select embryos?  
On what basis?
  - Condition
  - Gender
  - Compatibility with sibling
- Are we encouraging a “designer baby” mentality?
- Have we dehumanised procreation?

# What does the Bible say?

- Children are a gift from God

Psalm 127:3

*“Sons are a heritage from the LORD,  
children a reward from Him.”*

⇒ Not an inherent right

# What else does the Bible say? <sup>IVF</sup>

- Children are God's gift to married couples as a fruit of their relationship

Hebrews 12:8

*"If you are not disciplined ... you are illegitimate children and not true sons."*

⇒ Unmarried couples who have children are stealing that gift

# What else does the Bible say? <sup>IVF</sup>

- Homosexuality is an abomination to God

Leviticus 18:22

*“Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.”*

⇒ Homosexual couples should be denied access to IVF

# What else does the Bible say?

- Sin & suffering has intruded on God's perfect world.
- Man has a mandate to relieve suffering.  
Matthew 10:8  
*"Heal the sick ... Freely you have received, freely give."*
  - ⇒ Medical treatment for aspects of man's fallen condition is legitimate
  - ⇒ Artificial means to facilitate fertilisation are legitimate (when something is wrong)

# What else does the Bible say? <sup>IVF</sup>

- Life begins at conception

Psalm 51:5

*“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*

- Human life is made in the image of God

Genesis 1:27

*“So God created man in his own image ... male and female He created them.”*

- Life begins at conception
- Human life is made in the image of God

## So what does this mean?

- ⇒ The life of every embryo is sacred, protected by the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment.
- ⇒ Embryos should not be destroyed.
- ⇒ Embryos should not be stored indefinitely.
- ⇒ “Spare” embryos should not be created.
- ⇒ All embryos should be inserted – when?
- ⇒ Natural death does not justify murder.

# What else does the Bible say?

- Contentment is a matter of personal faith  
1 Timothy 6:6  
*“Godliness with contentment is great gain.”*  
Romans 14:22 (NKJV)  
*“Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.”*  
⇒ Contentment with childlessness as God’s will.  
⇒ Contentment with medical intrusion as God’s provision.

# The bottom line

IVF is Biblically legitimate

**if & only if**

an IVF doctor can be found  
who will implant all embryos  
(regardless of quantity or quality)

# What about adoption?

Adoption is a beautiful emulation of God's ways

- Adopting in of babies is legitimate and to be encouraged
- Adopting out of babies (by Christians) would only be legitimate in exceptional circumstances
- What about adopting in of embryos?
- What about adopting out of embryos?

# What about donors?

Is it artificial adultery?

- Is there lust?
- Is there a breaking of the marriage bond?
- Is there intrusion of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party into the intimacy of the marriage bond?

# What about donors?

Is it like Levirate marriage?

Deuteronomy 25:5-6

*“If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.”*

⇒ If IVF was available, would donor sperm be acceptable?

# What about donors?

Is it like Abraham taking Hagar?

Genesis 16:2

*“Sarai said to Abram, ‘The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.’”*

⇒ Why was this wrong?

⇒ If IVF was available, would donor ova be acceptable?

# What about donors?

Is it like adoption?

Ephesians 1:5

*“He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will”*

What is different?

- Related to one parent only
- Could create tension between parents but not necessarily ...

# What about donors?

## Is it like a step-parent relationship?

- Only related to one parent
  - Blended families are common these days
  - They can work really well
- 
- Some arise from man's sin
  - Some arise from God's providence  
& His permission to remarry (1 Cor 7:8-9)
- 
- ⇒ Not necessarily wrong

# So what about donors?

- No Christian should choose widowhood!
  - But once imposed,  
God sanctions remarriage, and step-children.

## Can we say:

- No Christian should choose to create a step-child?

## Or can we say:

- No Christian should choose to be infertile!
  - But once imposed,  
God sanctions donor IVF, and step-children?

# Back-tracking from donor IVF

If donor IVF is OK

⇒ Is artificial insemination by donor OK?

Why or why not?

⇒ Is natural insemination by donor OK?

Why or why not?

Where do we draw the line?

# What can we do?

in our society today

to exalt God,

to declare the gospel,

and promote godly

Faithfulness

Fulfillment

Contentment

Hope

especially as they relate to marriage & children

# Comments & Questions ...

IVF

