



**Thank God It's Friday!**

**January 23, 2009**



Following the nationalistic inauguration on Tuesday, President Obama got busy delivering on key CHANGES he had promised people who voted for him. He by-passed the legislative path and chose the fast track by using Executive Orders.

He is about to overturn President Bush's policy which banned using Federal monies to fund stem cell research. This is by far the hottest subject the new President tackled this week. Closing Gitmo was a distant second. Since stem cell discussions will likely be heard from many preachers'

pulpits this Sunday, we thought it timely to update you on this debate which is scientific, medical, ethical and religious. Also, the Bay Area leads the nation in this revolutionary research.

Stem cells are seen by many researchers as having virtually unlimited application in the treatment and cure of many human diseases and disorders including Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer, strokes, etc.

Stem cells come in two general types:

1. Embryonic stem cells are a primitive type of cell that can be coaxed into developing into all of the 220 types of cells found in the human body (e.g. blood cells, heart cells, brain cells, nerve cells, etc). They are derived from human embryos in a process that causes the death of the embryos.
2. Adult stem cells bear some similarities to embryonic stem cells. Research using adult cells has a two decade head start on embryonic stem cells. Thus, potential treatments have already advanced to human trial stage. Unfortunately, adult cells are limited in flexibility but recent research into using adult cells found in bone marrow appear to be as flexible as embryonic cells.

Many pro-lifers believe that human life, in the form of an ovum and spermatozoa, becomes a human person at the time of fertilization. Thus, killing an embryo in order to extract its stem cells is a form of homicide. They are generally opposed to embryonic stem cell research. Others disagree. They believe that an embryo has the potential to develop into a person, but is not a person itself. They note that an embryo is not sentient; it has no brain, sensory organs, ability to think, awareness of its surroundings, consciousness, internal organs, arms, legs, head, etc. They feel that research using stem cells derived from embryos is ethical.

The compromise put forth by many cancer centers (especially ones located at Catholic and Christian universities) is that embryonic stem cells are perfect for research, but once mass production begins, adult cells are more plentiful and will have to be used eventually due to the sheer numbers of cells that production will require.

Tune in next week for more details about this fascinating subject when the actual Executive Order is signed and sealed. In the meanwhile, go out and TRY to enjoy this winter weekend even though there is no football.

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