

THE STEWARDSHIP PAPERS

What Do We Hold on To?

I've heard it said that "death is only the beginning," and nowhere have I seen this exemplified more clearly than in the study of embryology.

Take the human hand, for instance.

It's used to hold things, pull things toward one...or push them away. The hand of a newborn infant is truly a wonder: small precise little fingers, tiny little nails...a reduction on an incredible scale. But this hand did not just "come to be."

"For everything there is a season." [Ecclesiastes (Ec.) 3:1]

And just as all things grow to maturity in their own time, so too did this hand...not beginning as the hand that we see, but, rather, beginning from something that possessed the capabilities of becoming a hand.

Long before the baby was ready to be born, its "hands-to-be" began as tiny buds, eventually growing into something that looked very much like flippers.

And then, something amazing (and little understood) began to happen. Well-defined areas of this "hand" had to die (cellular death) in order for the separation of the digits to

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take place. Without this death, there would have been no tool for this baby to later use over and over again in its explorations of the beauty and perplexities of life.

If we had somehow wanted to...and had been able to...save the life, the lives of these cells (not fully understanding the purpose of their deaths), we would have taken away that child's ability to "hold life," in its much broader sense, later on.

"For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" [Lk. 9:24-25]

Therefore, let it be known that there is

"...a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die." [Ec. 3:1-2]

but they don't necessarily come in that order.

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