

Defending the Sacred Gift of Life

Introduction

We just recognized the twentieth anniversary of 9/11. On that day, 2,996 people lost their lives as a result of a terrorist attack on our own soil. Twenty years later, we still see and read the memorials: “Always remember,” and “Never forget.” But what if I told you that same year, one million Americans were killed on our own soil by abortion, which factors out to be 2,700 per day. I’m not trying to be controversial or disrespectful, I’m simply trying to put the numbers into perspective and show our country’s inconsistency. Only in a post-Christian, postmodern culture where there is no absolute truth and no absolute morality could these two incongruent responses exist. On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court of our Land codified abortion as a legal right. In the past five decades since, 63 million babies have lost their lives. If that’s difficult to comprehend, that is the equivalent of the total populations of CA and NY State combined.

The attacks of 9/11 happened in broad daylight and were witnessed by all on TV. Abortion occurs in the darkness unseen and unheard. Its victims remain nameless, faceless, abstract statistics; but that doesn’t make it less real. This is the biggest moral dilemma of our age. **We have paid for our sexual revolution with the blood of 63 million children.** This literally puts the Holocaust to shame. It is a slow and steady genocide. R. C. Sproul writes, “The most dangerous place in the United States for a human being is inside the womb of a woman. For millions of unborn babies, the womb has become a cell on death row. The inmate is summarily executed without benefit of a trial or a word of defense.”¹

It would be ignorant to think that this is a clear-cut issue for most Christians. More than half of abortions performed in the United States are obtained by those who identify as Christians. Last week, a pro-life display was vandalized by students at a Christian college in our county. Also, recently a Presbyterian minister, a Christian ethicist, a professor of religious studies, and a wife and a mother of two, wrote an article for USA Today where she admitted to having two abortions. She further explained that her Christian faith informed her that it was morally good to do so.²

It’s a complex issue at the intersection of men, women, children, health care, science, ethics, religion, government, and politics. **But before it is a political issue, it is a theological issue.** This morning I will speak clearly and confidently on this issue because I am convinced that God has. From the beginning to the end, Scripture speaks with one consistent voice to the sacred gift of life, even life in the womb. My goal this morning is to help us, as a local body of Christ here in this community, to have a more holistic and persuasive pro-life ethic. We must defend the sacred gift of life.

We Need Hearts Postured in Compassion

As we come to grips with this reality, our hearts break with mixed emotions—anger, frustration, grief, disgust, bewilderment. Jesus certainly expressed his indignation to his disciples in Mark 10 who were sending the children away. All of these emotions are appropriate, but we must seek to be like Christ who was gentle and lowly toward sinners (Matt 11:29). An older, wiser woman encouraged me to always talk about abortion as if someone in the room has had one. Because this issue involves real people, it must be approached not from a posture of judgment and self-righteousness, but of compassion and empathy, with authentic humility and concern.

¹ R. C. Sproul, *Abortion* (Reformation, 2010), 116.

² Rebecca Todd Peters, “I’m a Christian Minister Who’s Had 2 Abortions. Here’s How Faith Informed Those Decisions,” in USA Today, 10/10/2021, www.usatoday.com

Compassion for Victims

There's tension here that we must be sensitive to. Women bear full responsibility of pregnancy, of birth, and of childcare. And that is only compounded when fathers are deadbeat and delinquent. Even after abortion, women carry the full weight of the guilt and shame, loss and loneliness. Women live in a culture that promotes commitment-free sex and hides the consequences. Fatherlessness and poverty combine to form a dire situation for a single mother facing an unplanned pregnancy. Both the pregnancy and termination resulted from their actions and decisions, yes, but they live in a culture that makes abortion not only an acceptable, but a very accessible option—a convenient lie which suppresses the truth. Termination is a tempting, practical solution, a way of escape. **She is a victim of her circumstances and a victim of the culture.** The choice to terminate is always driven by fear and followed by shame. A 2004 study in the Medical Science Monitor revealed that 64% of women felt pressured, 54% were unsure about decision at time, 50% felt it was morally wrong, 78% admitted that they felt guilt after, 56% reported feeling sadness and loss.³

Grace for Sinners

But let me be clear, **abortion is not the unpardonable sin.** If you are here this morning as a woman who's gone down this road or a man who's pressured someone to, or if you've played a role in abortion in any way, I'm not trying to heap on the guilt and shame. One wise woman asked, "It is true that abortion stops a beating heart, but who will care for the hearts that remain beating but broken?"⁴ Jesus welcomed women despised as sexual sinners and women deemed unclean by the religious culture. He ate with tax collectors and thieves. No one is throwing stones. If you are in Christ, there is no condemnation (Rom 8:1). If you have confessed, you have been forgiven and cleansed (1 Jn 1:9). The record of debt that stood against you was nailed to the cross (Col 2:14). If you're struggling with voices of guilt, shame, fear, know that Jesus' voice speaks louder. Even further, King David had a child die as a direct result of his sin. Yet even in his heartache, he had hope that he would be with his child again. I believe you can have as well. I'm thankful for the CPC that does post-abortion counseling.

We Need Minds Informed by the Scriptures

Every time we enter or observe this debate, we are witnessing a clash of worldviews—man's revolution v. God's revelation. **Politics is fallible, but God's Word is infallible.** Political language is intentionally ambiguous because it has an agenda. It obfuscates, confuses, and conceals relevant information. It is tactical language meant to deceive and mislead. It is a "convenient lie," offered as a simple compassionate solution, but it is the opposite. Satan is a liar. He is a cunning foe, the master of deceit, and he hates God's image. He suppresses the truth with political ideology and semantics—

- "Pro-choice"—conceals what is being opposed: life
- "My body, my choice"—conceals the reality that there is another distinct body in the equation
- "Women's rights"—conceals the fact that it is a human rights issue
- "No uterus, no opinion"—obfuscates the fact that men bear some responsibility
- "Abortion as healthcare"—conceals the fact that an innocent human is killed in the process
- "Safe, legal, and rare"—Assumes that killing another can be legalized and not dangerous

³ Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body* (Baker Books, 2018), 66.

⁴ Lizzie Ling, *Talking Points: Abortion* (The Good Book Co, 2020), 58.

Our society dehumanizes the unborn. We deny them personhood and rights. Life is no longer life; so death is no longer death. Parenting is considered a vice and killing a virtue. Isaiah 5:22: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil.” **But the biblical evidence for value of life in the womb is incontestable.** Although, you won’t find abortion in the index of the back of your Bible or find a verse that explicitly addresses it, the Bible speaks to the dignity and sanctity of life with a consistent witness—both in the Old and New Testaments. To try to make it say otherwise is intellectually dishonest. The Scriptures speak with resounding clarity.

1. The Inherent Value of God’s Image

Gen 1:27-28—“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Living Souls. In the very beginning of the story, we learn that humans are created in God’s image and are therefore embodied souls—eternal, unique, precious, valuable. This means that every single person—regardless of their location, background, age, sex, ethnicity, health, etc.—has infinite significance. Life is a gift given by God at the moment of conception. When we abandon this objective reality, we are left with our own subjective, inconsistent standards for what constitutes life. The definition of life is not debatable and no one has the right to reckon one life more valuable than another—not a doctor, nurse, lawyer, politician, or parent, certainly not any human court. God’s Word is supreme. Because of the inherent value of God’s image imprinted on human kind, the shedding of human blood is considered murder—an attack on God himself (Gen 9:6).

Ps 139:13-15—“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately in the depths of the earth.”

Jer 1:5—“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart and appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Is 49:1—“The LORD called me from the womb.”

Lk 1:41, 44—“And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb . . . ‘For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.’”

Continual Persons. The incarnation is a significant movement in the Bible’s story and it witnesses to the humanity of the unborn. The Son of God incarnate, in his mother’s womb, was recognized as the Messiah by another infant in his mother’s womb. The implications of this for personhood are astonishing. God recognizes the baby in the womb as a distinct person. R. C. Sproul writes, “Scripture assumes the continuity of life from before the time of birth to after the time of birth.”⁵ If this is true of David, and Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and John the Baptist, and Jesus, it is true of every unborn child. Nancy Pearcey writes, “A Christian concept of personhood depends not on what I can do but who I am . . . Our dignity is intrinsic, rooted in the fact that God made us, knows us, and loves us.”⁶

⁵ Sproul, 46.

⁶ Pearcey, 55.

2. The Counter-cultural Defense of Children

Deut 18:9-10—“When you come into the land that the LORD God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering . . .”

Lev 18:21—“You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.”

Ps 106:38—“They poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.”

In the Ancient Near East, child sacrifice to false gods was common in pagan worship. The Canaanites surrounding Israel regularly practiced it. God called his people to come out from among them and be different. He called them to avoid these abominable practices and to value the sanctity of life. **We sacrifice for what we love.** Our hedonistic, therapeutic, psychologized culture values comfort, ease, and pleasure above all else. We are only responsible for our own wellbeing and nothing else. What’s going on today is not much different. We sacrifice our children to the spirit of the age, on the altar of self, convenience, and mental health.

Mk 10:13-16—“And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.’ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.”

In Roman culture, children were viewed as property, not persons. Both abortion and infanticide were common. Exposure was the acceptable practice of throwing your infants and toddlers out into the street to die. Girls were more likely to be killed than boys because they were seen as less valuable. Sex selective abortion is common in our day. The gender gap in China is 35 million and 25 million in India.⁷ Babies with disabilities were discarded. Iceland has recently eradicated Down Syndrome; they committed genocide through prenatal screenings. Jesus rebuked his own disciples in righteous anger because they imbibed the culture’s treatment of children. They were formed by the culture and not by the Scripture. They thought Jesus was too important and too busy for infants and toddlers. Jesus welcomed them, embraced them, blessed them. The early church took a stand and radically changed the culture. God’s people have always defended life in various cultures of death.

3. The Communal Consciousness of the Unborn

Ex 21:22-25—“When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

⁷ McLaughlin, 76.

This verse is simply applying the prohibition against murder related to a specific scenario—when a premature birth is caused by the violent quarrel between two men. If a man unintentionally slams into a pregnant woman causing a premature birth and there is no harm to the child, he can be fined. But if that altercation causes any harm to the child or results in a miscarriage, the punishment is eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life—the same penalty for the murder of an image-bearer (Gen 9:6).

Matt 22:37-40—“And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’”

In the early church, the unborn child was seen not as a part of its mother, but as a neighbor. Abortion was rejected as contrary to other-centered neighborly love. Michael Gorman writes, “Violence against the fetus is violence against one’s neighbor, and the shedding of the blood of the fetus is murder of one’s neighbor, the ultimate lack of love.”⁸ The second greatest commandment does not only have implications for the surrounding community, but for mothers. Biblically, a mother must see the child in her womb as a separate person—dependent upon her, yes, but a distinct individual, created in God’s image, their neighbor. Becoming a parent, in any circumstance, requires you to stop being primarily concerned with yourself and start being primarily concerned with someone else. You must become fundamentally other-person-oriented.⁹ This kind of love is challenging in our culture.

Proverbs 14:25 says, “A truthful witness saves lives.” As Randy Alcorn wrote, “We must show the men and women who have been indoctrinated to believe that abortion is the best choice, that while the alternatives are challenging, only abortion kills an innocent person.”¹⁰ At the 2020 Golden Globes, actress Michelle Williams recently romanticized her abortion as a means to make it to the top. On the other hand, Allison Felix, the most decorated U. S. Olympic track athlete ever, broke a world record 10 months after giving birth and went on to win her 10th and 11th medals this past year. Abortion does not empower women, the truth does. The truth will set you free.

We Need Hands Actively Engaged in Service

There’s a criticism launched against the pro-life movement that goes something like this: “Christians only care about babies while they’re in the womb, but not after they are born.” And we have to look around and admit that there is some credibility to that statement. We can’t just be **AGAINST** abortion; we must be **FOR** life. Before I was involved in foster care, I would often get the question from friends, “But what have you actually done to support women and children?” **Judgment begins with the house of the Lord.** There is a potential for hypocrisy here. Unless our convictions transfer to conduct, they are completely worthless. Faith without works is dead and cold. If all you do is argue online behind the safety of the screen and vote behind the safety of a curtain, you’re probably not doing enough. Rebecca McLaughlin writes, “To solve the problem of abortion, we don’t need one law reversed. We need a loving revolution . . . We must fight hard with the weapon God has given us: self-sacrificing, unrelenting love.”¹¹

⁸ Michael Gorman, *Abortion & the Early Church* (InterVarsity, 1982), 49, 89.

⁹ Mc Laughlin, “Why Having Babies in 2021 is Controversial,” by Morgan Lee, 5/14/21, Christianity Today

¹⁰ Randy Alcorn, *Why Pro-Life?* (Henrickson, 2012), 7.

¹¹ McLaughlin, 78, 107.

Ps 82:3— Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.”

Mic 6:8—“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Js 1:27—“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

These verses are a call to action. This is not an issue we can ignore. This is the biggest moral tragedy of our age. Millions of lives are at stake. **As Christ’s body, we must be his hands and feet. As the church, we must be salt and light.** We must be dead-set against abortion both in principle and in practice. Otherwise, our pro-life ethic will remain inconsistent, unpersuasive, less than compelling, and of no practical help. 63 million can be an overwhelming statistic. But instead of wringing our hands in fatalistic indifference, let’s do something. Our country is not a battle ground, it is a mission field. There is a time for critically thinking and healthy debate, but actions speak louder. We need to rescue and care for women and children. Women who feel trapped and helpless will come to the church rather than the clinic only when they know and see that we will care for them and their children. We want the world to know there are no unwanted children. Men especially need to step up and lead in this fight.

What can we do? Everyone can do something.

1. Engage in thoughtful reflection

- Search the Scriptures regarding God’s image
- Study the theology personhood
- Read resources on the topics of abortion and adoption
- Watch pro-life movies

2. Stand for the truth in the public square

- Social media
- School hallways
- Public hearings
- Vote for pro-life policies and politicians

3. Become involved in tangible social action

- Christians should be lawyers, social workers, scientists, and healthcare professionals
- Volunteer at the local pregnancy center
- Financially support the pregnancy center
- Become a foster and/or adoptive parent
- Support adoptive parents in your church and community

4. Ardently commit to personal purity and prioritize family

- Our greatest defense of life is found in our sexual ethic
- Train your children see the blessings of marriage, family, and children
- Warn your children of the consequences of pornography and the hook-up culture
- Tell your children that you will always love them unconditionally through all their mistakes
- Promise to love their children despite the circumstances of their conception

5. Pray for God to end abortion

- Grieve and Lament the loss of life
- Pray for eyes to be opened to truth
- Pray for justice for the unborn

6. Preach the Gospel

- To the self-centered and hopeless culture
- To those considering abortion as a solution to their problems
- To those who've had abortions

Resources for further study:**Books**

R. C. Sproul, *Abortion: A Rational Look at an Emotional Issue* (Reformation Trust, 2010), 234 pgs.
 Michael J. Gorman, *Abortion & the Early Church* (InterVarsity Press, 1982), 120 pgs.
 Randy Alcorn, *Why Pro-Life? Caring for the Unborn and Their Mothers* (Henrickson, 2012), 172 pgs.
 Dr. Lizzie King and Vaughn Roberts, *Talking Points: Abortion* (The Good Book Co, 2020), 80 pgs.
 Todd Chipman, *Until Every Child Is Home* (Moody, 2019), 240 pgs.
 O. M. Bakke, *When Children Became People* (Fortress Press, 2005), 358 pgs.

Movies

Bloodmoney, documentary (2010), Not Rated.
 180, short documentary (2011), Not Rated.
 7 Reasons, short documentary (2019), Not Rated.
 Bella, drama (2006), PG-13.
 October Baby, drama (2011), PG-13.
 Roe v. Wade, docudrama (2019), PG-13.
 Unplanned, docudrama (2019), R.
 Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer, docudrama (2018), PG-13.