

## **“Defending Life: An Argument against Abortion”**

**August 9, 2015**

**Brian Watson**

*Proverbs 31:8–9 (ESV)*

<sup>8</sup> *Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute.* <sup>9</sup> *Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.*<sup>1</sup>

Today, I’m taking a break from our current study of the book of Galatians to talk about something that is very important. I want to talk about abortion.

I want to say three things before I even really begin. One, I don’t talk about this with any joy. I wish this issue didn’t even exist. If you’re visiting here today, please know that I don’t usually pick a controversial issue each week and discuss it. That being said, I’m not afraid to talk about controversial issues because the Bible touches on them all. And that shouldn’t surprise us. If God made the world, and the Bible is God’s Word, then the Bible should have something to say about everything in the world.

Two, the issue of abortion is too big and too important not to talk about. It’s been in the news lately because there have been several undercover videos released by a group called The Center for Medical Progress.<sup>2</sup> They have conducted a 30-month-long investigation of Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest provider of abortions. According to their latest annual report, they performed 327,653 abortions in 2013.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence that suggests that Planned Parenthood has been illegally selling the organs of some of these aborted children. There is plenty of evidence that, by any reasonable standard, they are engaged in unethical behavior. Whatever happens with this investigation, it is bringing the issue of abortion back into the public eye. So it’s important to talk about it.

It’s important to talk about abortion because ever since January 22, 1973, when the United States Supreme Court decided *Roe v. Wade*, approximately 57 million abortions have been performed in this country.<sup>4</sup> Though the number of abortions have been declining since a

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.centerformedicalprogress.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Planned Parenthood 2013-2014 Annual Report, <[http://issuu.com/actionfund/docs/annual\\_report\\_final\\_proof\\_12.16.14\\_/0](http://issuu.com/actionfund/docs/annual_report_final_proof_12.16.14_/0)>, accessed August 5, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> This figure is based on information provided by the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute. National Life to Right, “Abortion Statistics,” <<http://www.nrlc.org/uploads/factsheets/FS01AbortionintheUS.pdf>>, accessed August 7, 2015.

high of 1.6 million abortions in 1990, there were still 1.06 million abortions in 2011, the last year we have statistics for.<sup>5</sup> Twenty-one percent of all pregnancies in America end in abortion. Each year, 1.7 percent of women aged 15-44 have an abortion.<sup>6</sup> That's about one out of every sixty women in that age range. So, obviously, this is a big issue. And it's one that we often ignore, because it's not easy to think about, let alone talk about.

Three, there is forgiveness for women who have had abortions. That's important to say because so many women have had abortions. At 2008 abortion rates, 25.1 percent of women of child-bearing age would have had an abortion by age 30. At those rates, 30.1 percent of women of child-bearing age would have had an abortion by age 45.<sup>7</sup> These figures used to be even higher. Since abortion has been legal in America for over forty years, it's likely that we know someone who has had an abortion. These women need to know that they can find forgiveness for what they've done. The Bible doesn't condone abortion, or anything else that is wrong. But the Bible also teaches us that each one of us has done many wrong things and that we are all deserving of condemnation. Each one of us is a sinner who deserves to go to hell. But God forgives those who run to Jesus and put their trust in him. We call that grace. It's a gift. It's not something that can be earned. If you want to know more about the good news of Jesus, you can talk to me, or you can go to our website and listen to other sermons I've given.

Abortion is a sin, but it's not an unforgivable one. Many of the biggest figures in the Bible did awful things. Moses killed a man, but he is saint. David had a man murdered and he tried to cover it up, but he is also known as being a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). Paul persecuted the early church, but God changed him and he was forgiven. Thirteen books of the New Testament bear his name. If these men can be forgiven, so can women who've had abortions. So can men who have pushed them into making that decision.

So here's what I want to do today. My main point is to show why abortion is wrong. Here's the basic argument: the intentional killing of innocent human life is wrong; abortion is the intentional killing of innocent human life; and therefore abortion is wrong. To back up that argument, I first want to look at what the Bible has to say. Then I want to look at a competing

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Guttmacher Institute, "Fact Sheet: Induced Abortions in the United States," <[http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb\\_induced\\_abortion.html](http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html)>, accessed August 7, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Rachel K. Jones and Megan L. Kavanaugh, "Changes in Abortion Rates between 2000 and 2008 and Lifetime Incidence of Abortion," *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, June 2011, <[http://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/Fulltext/2011/06000/Changes\\_in\\_Abortion\\_Rates\\_Between\\_2000\\_and\\_2008.14.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/Fulltext/2011/06000/Changes_in_Abortion_Rates_Between_2000_and_2008.14.aspx)>, accessed August 7, 2015.

worldview, one that supports abortion. Next, we'll look at some scientific and philosophical arguments against abortion. We need to know *why* abortion is wrong, not just *that* it is wrong. We also need to know how to communicate that message to others. Then I want to address some of the common objections to the pro-life argument that are out there. And finally, I want to give us some things that we can do.

Let's look first at what the Bible says. Genesis 1:27 says that God created men and women in his image. I think that means a lot of things, but one thing is clear: human life is uniquely and inherently valuable. Because human life is valuable, it is wrong to murder. That's why God said this to Noah after the flood, in Genesis 9:6: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." Of course, the sixth commandment is "You shall not murder" (Exod. 20:13).

But what does the Bible say about the unborn? Rather famously, David writes in Psalm 139:13-14:

<sup>13</sup> For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup> I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

The Bible doesn't address all these issues in modern-day scientific terms, but we see here that God makes life in the womb. David didn't say, "You made me a zygote (or embryo or fetus), which later became a person that I am." He said, "You made me." The Bible shows that the unborn child is a person, and it shows that God is the primary and ultimate cause behind all of life.

The Bible always treats the unborn as a child, as a human being. For example, in the first chapter of Luke, Mary, carrying Jesus in her womb, meets her cousin Elizabeth, carrying John the Baptist in her womb. This is what we read in Luke 1:41-44:

<sup>41</sup> And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, <sup>42</sup> and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Notice the text says "baby." The Greek word for baby is βρεφος (*brephos*), which is the same word used for baby Jesus—now out of the womb—in Luke 2:12 and 16. It's also the word

Luke, who was a doctor, used in Acts 7:19, when he talks about Pharaoh's attempt to kill the Hebrew babies.

Speaking of Exodus, we see that the Law protected the unborn. This is what Exodus 21:22-25 says:

<sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, <sup>24</sup> eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, <sup>25</sup> burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

The passage is not about abortion. It's about a fight between two men, with a pregnant woman caught in the crossfire. It would seem that as a result of being hit, the woman either miscarries or gives birth. It's a bit unclear who is harmed in this scenario. Is it the unborn child, or the mother? If it's the child who is harmed, and perhaps killed, then the penalty is most severe: life for life. But even if it's a miscarriage, and the harm is the harm done to the mother, there is still a penalty for hitting a pregnant woman. Why would there be a special penalty for a pregnant woman (and not just any woman) unless this law was trying to protect the unborn? At any rate, the Hebrew word translated here as "children" sometimes refers to babies (Exod. 1:17-18), sometimes to children (Gen. 21:8, 14-16), and sometimes to young men (Gen. 4:23).<sup>8</sup> So even though this passage is not explicitly about abortion, it supports the basic argument that the Bible treats the unborn as children, and that their lives should be defended.

Let's consider one more bit of Biblical evidence, this time from the New Testament. In Galatians 5, beginning in verse 19, there is a list of vices, what Paul calls "the works of the flesh." These things are against the Holy Spirit (vv. 16-17). Among the items listed is "sorcery" (v. 20). The NIV says, "witchcraft." We might think, "What in the world is that?" The Greek word is φαρμακεία, which sounds a bit like *pharmacy*. This is what Timothy George says about this word:

These words correctly convey the idea of black magic and demonic control, but they miss the more basic meaning of drug use. In New Testament times *pharmakeia* in fact denoted the use of drugs with occult properties for a variety of purposes including, especially, abortion. . . . In the early church both infanticide, often effected through the exposure of newborn babies to the harsh elements, and

---

<sup>8</sup> The Hebrew word is יֶלֶד (yělēd).

abortion, commonly brought about by the use of drugs, were regarded as murderous acts. Both are flagrant violations of Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>9</sup>

One of those early church writings was something called the *Didache*, a catechism for recent converts to Christianity. Part of it says,

The second commandment of the teaching is: "You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery"; you shall not corrupt boys; you shall not be sexually promiscuous; "you shall not steal"; you shall not practice magic; you shall not engage in sorcery; you shall not abort a child or commit infanticide. "You shall not covet your neighbor's possessions . . ."<sup>10</sup>

We see that the command not to commit sorcery—using that word *pharmakeia*—is next to the command not to abort a child, so perhaps Paul had abortion in mind when he used that word in Galatians 5:20. At any rate, abortion and infanticide were also condemned by many of the Church Fathers, theologians in first few centuries of Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, the Bible states that murder is wrong, that the unborn are babies, and that killing them is equivalent to murder. But we might want to ask a deeper question: Why do people abort babies? Let me suggest that this is nothing less than spiritual warfare. We know the Prince of Peace, Jesus, but there's another spirit at work in this world. He is called "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4) and "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). Jesus says that Satan is a "thief" who "comes only to steal and kill and destroy." But Jesus says of himself, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

When the unbelieving Jewish leaders confronted Jesus, he said to them, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). John also says in 1 John 3 that people who do not practice righteousness and love their brothers and sisters are of the devil (1 John 3:7-10). Those who murder and lie are under the influence of Satan.

---

<sup>9</sup> Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 394.

<sup>10</sup> *Didache* 2.1-2, in Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 253.

<sup>11</sup> For specific citations, see Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 132-33.

Evil is real and Satan is real, and he has a lot of children in this world. I believe there are various types or reflections of Satan in the Bible, such as Pharaoh, who wanted to kill the male Hebrew babies (Exod. 1:15-22). People such as Haman, the Persian, who wanted to “annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children” (Esth. 3:13). People such as Herod, who killed the male children in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16-18). The book of Revelation says this was the work of “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).

The point is that lies and murder come from Satan, and there are many people who have been blinded by him and do his work. Abortion is Satanic and it is godless. Frankly, I don’t know how else to explain why people would think that killing an unborn child is morally permissible.

In order to kill the life growing inside a woman, I think one needs to have two views: one needs to believe that there is no God, or at least that there’s no personal God who forbids certain things absolutely; and one needs to have a low view of human life. I say that because in Christianity, God forbids the killing of innocent human beings, and he does so because humans are special—they are made in his image. In the Christian view of humans, we are special not because we do anything, or have certain talents; we’re special because we’re made by God.

Yet there are worldviews that deny the existence of God and that believe that humans are not particularly special. The worldview that denies the existence of God and anything supernatural is naturalism. In naturalism, there is no God, no Satan, no miracles, no heaven, and no hell. One form of naturalism is called materialism, which has nothing to do with shopping a lot and consuming material goods. Materialism believes that the only reality is matter: the stuff that we can see and touch and experiment on. We might also call these views scientism. I don’t mean they are scientific views. They are really philosophical beliefs masquerading as science. A person who believes in scientism says that since science doesn’t prove there’s a God, God must not exist. Which makes about as much sense as saying that since science cannot measure or define love, love must not exist.

Most of us are more familiar with the term “Darwinism.” This is the belief that all of life has evolved from a common ancestor by way of undirected forces. We have to be careful when we use the word “evolution.” The word “evolution” can mean many things. All of us believe in evolution if we understand it to mean “change over time.” And most everyone believes in

evolution in the sense that species can adapt to their environments over time. But Darwinism is evolution on the largest scale. It's a godless view of how we got here. There are Christians who believe that this large-scale evolution is the way that God created things, but I don't think that's consistent with what we find in the Bible, and most Darwinians would say it's not consistent with their beliefs, either.

Naturalists not only deny the existence of God, but they also deny the life has any real meaning and purpose. (Instead, they might say we have a sense that there is meaning to life, or that we create our own meaning.) They usually deny that there is an objective, absolute, eternal moral law. Darwinism also assumes that random mutations plus natural selection got us here. Therefore, humans are not essentially different from other species. We are more complex animals.

Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) most famous book is *On the Origin of the Species* (1859), but he wrote another work called *The Descent of Man* (1871), in which he proposes theories about human evolution. His encounters with the natives of Tierra del Fuego, off the southernmost tip of South America, led him to believe that civilized humans evolved from lesser "savages," as he called them. These are Darwin's own words about "the civilised races of man"—in other words, white Europeans—and "savages":

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world.<sup>12</sup>

It's not surprising that Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, was a pioneer in eugenics, a term that he himself coined. Eugenics was a pseudoscience that claimed that the human race could be improved by controlling who had children. In other words, better breeding could lead to a better human race. This is how one author described eugenics:

Because eugenics was based on Darwinian theory, many eugenicists feared that modern institutions, such as medicine and social welfare, were spawning biological degeneration among humans. By softening the struggle for existence, modern society allowed the

---

<sup>12</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, <<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2300/pg2300-images.html>>, accessed August 7, 2015. It's worth noting that the full title of Darwin's earlier book is *The Origin of Species, by means of Natural Selection; or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*.

“inferior” to reproduce. The purpose of eugenics was to reverse this degenerative trend so humans could foster evolutionary progress instead.<sup>13</sup>

So, in order to advance human evolution, it was proposed that some people, such as the mentally handicapped, should be sterilized. Some people took it further; Hitler praised eugenics, forcing people to be sterilized and killing two hundred thousand disabled people by the end of World War II.<sup>14</sup>

Eugenics was also embraced by Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), who founded Planned Parenthood in 1916. She was a large proponent of birth control, including sterilization. Though she was advocating birth control and sterilization, and not abortion, it’s not hard to see a connection between her beliefs and the abortion industry. Planned Parenthood is the single largest provider of abortions in America, performing over 300,000 abortions a year. Our government gives this organization over 500 million dollars each year. Though this money doesn’t go directly toward abortions, Planned Parenthood wouldn’t survive without it.

Sanger had some very interesting ideas. She thought an entirely different human race could be achieved through birth control. She referred to reproductive rights as “voluntary motherhood.” This is part of what she wrote in *Woman and the New Race*:

Voluntary motherhood implies a new morality—a vigorous, constructive, liberated morality. That morality will, first of all, prevent the submergence of womanhood into motherhood. It will set its face against the conversion of women into mechanical maternity and toward the creation of a new race.<sup>15</sup>

Here’s another choice quote:

Birth control itself, often denounced as a violation of natural law, is nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, of preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will become defectives.<sup>16</sup>

She continues:

The relentless efforts of reactionary authority to suppress the message of birth control and of voluntary motherhood are futile. The powers of reaction cannot now prevent the feminine spirit from breaking its bonds. When the last fetter falls the evils that have resulted from the suppression of woman’s will to freedom will

---

<sup>13</sup> Richard Weikart, “Science, Eugenics, and Bioethics,” in *Evidence for God*, ed. William A. Dembski and Michael R. Licona (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 97.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race* (1920), Chapter 18, “The Goal,” <<http://www.bartleby.com/1013/18.html>>, accessed August 8, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

pass. Child slavery, prostitution, feeble-mindedness, physical deterioration, hunger, oppression and war will disappear from the earth.<sup>17</sup>

And here's the grand finale:

In their subjection women have not been brave enough, strong enough, pure enough to bring forth great sons and daughters. Abused soil brings forth stunted growths. . . . When the womb becomes fruitful through the desire of an aspiring love, another Newton will come forth to unlock further the secrets of the earth and the stars. There will come a Plato who will be understood, a Socrates who will drink no hemlock, and a Jesus who will not die upon the cross. These and the race that is to be in America await upon a motherhood that is to be sacred because it is free.<sup>18</sup>

Take a moment to process that. Margaret Sanger believed that through her controlled “breeding”—to use a word she often used—we could create a world where Jesus didn't have to die on the cross. Elsewhere, she says that we could attain the kingdom of heaven through birth control and through self-expression and self-realization.<sup>19</sup> Margaret Sanger's worldview was not scientific. And it was religious, though it is not of God.

I share all of these things because I want you all to see how these ideas are connected. Ideas have consequences, and once certain beliefs are embraced, it is natural for other beliefs and actions to follow. I think it is necessary to have the kinds of beliefs that Charles Darwin and Margaret Sanger had in order to justify abortion. I don't it's sufficient to have those ideas. What I mean is that not everyone who believes in large-scale evolution or the use of birth control will support abortion. But these things are connected. Why do you think that as many as 90 percent of unborn babies with Down syndrome are aborted?<sup>20</sup> This is just what Sanger would want. After all, she referred to people she disapproved of as “human waste”<sup>21</sup> and “human weeds.”<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization*, Chapter 9, “A Moral Necessity,” <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1689/1689-h/1689-h.htm>>, accessed August 8, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> There's some evidence that the prenatal tests that are supposed to determine whether an unborn child has a handicap can be wrong. Women therefore are sometimes aborting fetuses with no chromosomal abnormalities. See Beth Daley, “Oversold Prenatal Tests Spur Some to Choose Abortions,” *The Boston Globe*, December 14, 2014, <[http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2014/12/14/oversold-and-unregulated-flawed-prenatal-tests-leading-abortions-healthy-fetuses/aKFAOCP5N0Kr8S1HirL7EN/story.html?s\\_campaign=email\\_BG\\_TodaysHeadline](http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2014/12/14/oversold-and-unregulated-flawed-prenatal-tests-leading-abortions-healthy-fetuses/aKFAOCP5N0Kr8S1HirL7EN/story.html?s_campaign=email_BG_TodaysHeadline)>, accessed August 9, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> This phrase, referring to people, appears a few times in *The Pivot of Civilization*.

<sup>22</sup> Owen Strachan, “Margaret Sanger Wanted to Eliminate ‘Human Weeds’,” November 4, 2011, <<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/thoughtlife/2011/11/margaret-sanger-wanted-to-eliminate-human-weeds/>>, accessed August 9, 2015. See also <[https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Margaret\\_Sanger](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Margaret_Sanger)>, accessed August 9, 2015.

The idea that we could kill a million or more unborn children a year comes from the idea that there is no God above us, and that we are our own kings. We make up the rules as we go. We determine what we do with our bodies. You may think that's a bit much, but in a Supreme Court ruling that concerned abortion, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), Justice Anthony Kennedy said, "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." In other words, according to him, we're all free to define whether something is a life or not. Is this not playing God?

I want to point out a bit of a paradox in this view. (Whenever people hold an unChristian worldview, there are bound to be contradictions in their beliefs.) On the one hand, this view denies the existence of God, or at least the God of the Bible. In other words, in this view there is no God who is Lord, who created the world and is the authority over all. Yet in this view, we all have rights. We have a right to this and a right to that. Yet if there is no Creator God, where do rights come from? Why should we believe in human rights? Darwin didn't seem to believe those "savages" had rights—you know, the ones that would be exterminated. Sanger didn't believe everyone should have the right to procreate. So if their views are correct, we have no reason to believe we have an objective basis for human rights.

That is so important to see. People who say abortion should be legal claim a woman should have a right to do whatever she wants with her body. Yet on this view, there is no real reason to respect that so-called right. Now, we as Christians do believe that humans should be treated in certain ways. But we don't have a right to do whatever we want. We have certain obligations to God and we have obligations to love one another. The idea that we can do whatever we want destroys society. And it's ultimately self-destructive.

Another problem with the "get your laws off my body" mentality is that when it comes to abortion, the concern is not the mother's body. The concern is the body inside the mother. The real question we should ask when it comes to abortion is, What's in the womb? Is it a human life? A person with rights? Or is it just a clump of cells, a blob of tissue?

When it comes to this question, science is our friend. Leading embryology textbooks affirm that human life begins at conception. This is what one embryology textbook says:

Human development begins at fertilization when a male gamete or sperm (spermatozoon) unites with a female gamete or oocyte (ovum) to form a single

cell—a zygote. This highly specialized, totipotent cell marked the beginning of each of us as a unique individual.<sup>23</sup>

When sperm fertilizes egg, it is no longer sperm or egg, but a new human life. The zygote, even one cell, is distinct, living, and whole. Normally, each person has forty-six chromosomes, which contain all our DNA, our genetic information. Each sperm and egg has twenty-three chromosomes, which join together to produce the forty-six chromosomes of the new human life. In other words, the baby has his or her own DNA at the moment of conception. The zygote is not an extension of the mother's body, but a new human body.<sup>24</sup> This new human body doesn't grow by adding parts. Rather, it grows from within. It is not a part; it is a whole.<sup>25</sup>

As soon as twenty-one days after fertilization, the heart starts beating. Roughly one month after fertilization, the brain starts developing very rapidly.<sup>26</sup> At nine weeks, a baby is able to suck his or her thumb and do summersaults. Science shows that a baby in the womb is alive.

Abortion choice advocates know this, of course, so they try to say that the unborn baby is a human life, but not a human person. That argument may sound absurd, but it was part of how *Roe v. Wade* was decided. Some say the unborn baby doesn't have the rights of a person. They will often say that a person only has rights when he or she is self-aware, or conscious. This distinction is somewhat arbitrary—how do we know when someone possesses these traits? It is also very dangerous, because it redefines personhood.

We must argue that a human being has rights not because we possess certain properties like self-awareness, but because we are humans, made in the image of God. If we define personhood by what we do, it's easy to keep redefining what a person with rights is. Do people in comas have rights? What about infants or the elderly who have decreased capabilities? What about the handicapped and the disabled? We have rights because of who we are—living beings

---

<sup>23</sup> Keith Moore and T. V. N. Persaud, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* (Philadelphia: Saunders/Elsevier, 2008), 15, quoted in Scott Klusendorf, *The Case for Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 35.

<sup>24</sup> Dianne Irving, Ph.D., "When Do Human Beings Begin? 'Scientific' Myths and Scientific Facts," <http://catholiceducation.org/articles/abortion/ab0027.html>. This information was presented in Wayne A. Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 161-62.

<sup>25</sup> For more information on the idea that life begins at conception, see Sarah Terzo, "Life Begins at Conception, Science Teaches," January 13, 2013, < <http://liveactionnews.org/life-begins-at-conception-science-teaches/>>, accessed August 8, 2015. See also "Medical Testimony," Abort73.com, < [http://www.abort73.com/abortion/medical\\_testimony/](http://www.abort73.com/abortion/medical_testimony/)>, accessed August 8, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> "Prenatal Development," Abort73.com, < [http://www.abort73.com/abortion/prenatal\\_development/](http://www.abort73.com/abortion/prenatal_development/)>, accessed August 8, 2015.

made by God to reflect his image. That's the essence of who we are. Other capabilities, like the ability to think and speak, are accidental and not essential.

To help us understand that there is no difference, philosophically, between the embryo we once were, and the human beings we are today, we'll look at an acronym called SLED. It stands for Size, Level of development, Environment, and Degree of dependency.

As for *size*, yes, there is a difference between the unborn and those outside the womb. But is our personhood really based on size? Toddlers are bigger than infants. Are toddlers more fully human than infants? Do adults have more rights than children because they're bigger? Human value and rights are not based on size.

With respect to *level of development*, yes, the unborn aren't as fully developed as we are. But the same is true of infants and children. Do the more fully developed have more value and rights than those less developed? And if we are basing our definition of personhood on consciousness, what happens to those who are unconscious? Can we legally kill them? If self-awareness is the deciding factor, can we kill people who are sleeping? Can we kill people with dementia? No, of course not.

The unborn are in a unique *environment*, in their mother's womb. But what does environment have to do with personhood? Is an infant in her mother's arms less of a human?<sup>27</sup>

Finally, the unborn have a high *degree of dependency* on their mothers. But the same is true of infants and even toddlers. And all of us are dependent on others for survival.

If we focus on size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency, we can show that there is not much of a difference between the unborn human person and the infant human person. Both deserve to be protected.<sup>28</sup>

I'm presenting this information to you so that you can talk to other people about this issue. If you do get into a debate about the morality of abortion, try to remember some of the scientific information. Remember the acronym SLED. You can always go online and view the text of this sermon, or visit the websites listed in the bulletin insert.

Now let's look at some common objections that people have. One objection is this: mothers whose pregnancies risk their own lives should have the right to abort. No one objects to

---

<sup>27</sup> One pro-choice advocate states rather bluntly, "It seems absurd to suggest that the only thing that makes us fully human is the short ride out of some lady's vagina." Mary Elizabeth Williams, "So What if Abortion Ends Life?" *Salon*, January 23, 2013, <[http://www.salon.com/2013/01/23/so\\_what\\_if\\_abortion\\_ends\\_life/](http://www.salon.com/2013/01/23/so_what_if_abortion_ends_life/)>, accessed August 5, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> For more on SLED, see Klusendorf, *The Case for Life*, 28.

this, but we must say two things. One, it is very rare that the mother's life is at stake. This is true in perhaps less than one percent of all cases.<sup>29</sup> In one survey, 2.8 percent of women said they had an abortion because of risk to their health—and that's what they said, not what is actually the case.<sup>30</sup> There are some cases, such as ectopic pregnancies, where the mother's life is in danger, but in the case of ectopic pregnancies, there's no way the unborn child can survive. Most of the reasons for having an abortion have to do with not wanting more children, not wanting to be a single mother, or not being able to afford another child. Two, if the mother's life is at risk, doctors will perform an operation to save the mother's life, not necessarily to abort the baby. That's an important distinction. The intent should never be to kill the innocent life. In a fallen world, sometimes we have to make difficult decisions.

Another objection involves rape and incest. Only one percent of all abortions are due to rape.<sup>31</sup> Rape is a horrible crime. But rape is not grounds for abortion. It is as simple as this: two wrongs don't make a right. The baby is not guilty and should not be executed for the father's sin. Deuteronomy 24:16 says, "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin." Rape is awful, but murder is worse. And God can turn something bad into something good. I know of people who have adopted children who were the products of rape, and those children are precious. Less than one half of one percent of women who have abortions say they did so because the child was the product of incest.<sup>32</sup> There have been people who were the products of incest who have given testimonies of how they are thankful that they were not aborted.<sup>33</sup> It is true that incest increases the odds of birth defects, but we shouldn't judge in advance who has a right to live. In the case of rape and incest, the unborn child is innocent and should not suffer because of how he or she was conceived.

---

<sup>29</sup> Alcorn, *Why Pro-Life?*, 76.

<sup>30</sup> Akinrinola Bankole, Susheela Singh, and Taylor Haas, "Reasons Why Women Have Induced Abortion: Evidence from 27 Countries," *International Family Planning Perspectives*, vol. 24, no. 3 (September 1998), <<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/2411798.html>>, accessed August 8, 2015. The 2.8 percent figure was from the United States in 1987-88.

<sup>31</sup> Lawrence B. Finer, Lori F. Frohwirth, Lindsay A. Dauphinee, Susheela Singh, and Ann M. Moore, "Reasons U. S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, vol. 37, no. 3 (September 2005), <<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3711005.html>>, accessed August 8, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Nancy Flanders, "Woman Conceived in Incest: Please Don't Kill Children Like Me in Abortion," LifeNews.com, June 4, 2013, <<http://www.lifenews.com/2013/06/04/woman-conceived-in-incest-please-dont-kill-children-like-me-in-abortion/>>, accessed August 8, 2015.

Another objection focuses on women's rights. Lately, abortion choice advocates have said pro-life advocates are waging a "war on women." That's clever. It's effective, powerful rhetoric, but it's wrong. Women's rights have nothing to do with abortion. If men could get pregnant, they would be wrong to abort babies. It's not about reproductive rights. People have the right to reproduce, but not the right to murder. Abortion should not be a choice between a woman and her doctor. Really, it should be a choice between the mother and the father, and they should keep the will of God and the interests of the unborn child in mind when they make that decision. We're not against choice; we're against wrong choices.

If you want to know what the real "war on women" is, think about this: each year, roughly 500,000 unborn women are killed. Planned Parenthood murders roughly 160,000 unborn women each year. And in different parts of the world, particularly in China and India, it's not uncommon for people to abort a female fetus, because males are more preferable. There are as many as 200 million "missing" females in the world, which means that if all things were equal, we would expect to have 200 million more females in the world than there are right now. Most of these missing females have likely been aborted.<sup>34</sup>

Both women and men should have choices regarding their bodies, but no one is free to choose to harm or kill another with his or her own body.

Another statement you'll hear from people is something like this, "I'm personally against abortion, but I don't think it should be illegal." That's the line of the cowardly politician. Another line is similar: "If you're against an abortion, don't have one." That's like saying, "If you're against rape, don't rape anyone," or, "If you're against bullying, don't bully," or, "If you're against terrorism, don't be a terrorist." I could go on and on. No one says, "I'm personally against murder, but I don't think it should be illegal." If what is in the womb is a human person, then it's murder and it shouldn't be legal.

A lot of people will try to distract you from the main issue. A friend of mine said he was personally against abortion, but he thought that pro-lifers didn't care about those who were born. In his view, pro-lifers don't care about the poor because many of them don't believe the government should take care of people from the cradle to the grave. I think there are many problems with this way of thinking with respect to political philosophy. But his comment is a

---

<sup>34</sup> "Sex-Selection Abortion," LiveAction, <<http://liveaction.org/gendercide/>>, accessed August 8, 2015. See also Mara Hvistendahl, *Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

non sequitur. Literally, it doesn't follow. Those who are pro-life should be consistently pro-life, but we are talking about preventing the murder of innocent people. According to the Bible, the government exists to protect innocent lives from harm. It doesn't exist to provide everything we need.<sup>35</sup> Don't let people distract us away from the key issue: What is in the womb?

I could go on and on. There is so much to say about this topic and I can't say it all right now. However, I do want to tell us some things that we can do.

One, get informed. If you look in the bulletin, you'll find an insert that has several websites listed. Each website has a lot of information about the issue. In particular, I would recommend [www.abort73.com](http://www.abort73.com). I also have a few copies of Randy Alcorn's book, *Why Pro-Life?* available if anyone is interested. I would encourage you to watch the videos that are being released by The Center for Medical Progress. There is a bit of graphic footage in some of the videos, but I think it's important for us to see what abortion actually looks like. Pictures are very powerful. They have a way of waking us up. I would also encourage you to share those videos online.

Two, I would encourage you to pray. And don't pray in some vague sort of way. Pray that God would use these videos that are being released to draw more attention to the issue of abortion. Pray that God would bring an end to Planned Parenthood. Pray that somehow *Roe v. Wade* would be overturned within our lives. Pray that God would change the hearts and minds of people so that they wouldn't want to have abortions. After all, there were still many abortions performed even when it was illegal. And pray that God would give us wisdom to know what to do, even if abortion remains legal in this country.

In the Roman Empire two thousand years ago, it was not uncommon for people to practice abortion. People would also leave unwanted children outside. This practice was called "exposure" because the infants would be exposed to the elements. Often, they would die (sometimes because they were eaten by wild animals). Sometimes these children would be taken and raised to be prostitutes. Christians spoke out against this practice,<sup>36</sup> but they also adopted children who were abandoned. Christians were unwavering in their opposition to child

---

<sup>35</sup> For more on this position, you hear or read a sermon I gave called "Jesus and Politics," May 31, 2015, available at <<http://wbbaptistchurch.org/sermons/who-is-jesus/>>.

<sup>36</sup> See Justin Martyr's *First Apology*, 27: "But as for us, we have been taught that to expose newly-born children is the part of wicked men; and this we have been taught lest we should do any one an injury, and lest we should sin against God, first, because we see that almost all so exposed (not only the girls, but also the males) are brought up to prostitution."

abandonment and infanticide. Eventually, the Roman emperor Valentinian declared those practices illegal in the year 374 (*Code of Justinian* 8.52.2).<sup>37</sup> What could we do to help women who are pregnant? Could we invite a pregnant woman to live in our home, and help them make the right choice? I really don't know how we could do this as a church, but I pray that God would direct us. Pray that God would raise up a pregnancy resource center in this area, a place where pregnant women could get counseling, get an ultrasound, and get help.

Finally, we can act. We can vote for candidates who are opposed to abortion.<sup>38</sup> We can contact our elected officials. I've provided you with the contact information for our Senators and our Representative. Consider writing them a letter or an email or calling them to let them know your views. Perhaps if we all do this now, while the issue is being raised, we can help make a difference. You may want to donate money to a pro-life organization.

And don't be afraid to talk to others about this issue. When we talk to people about this issue, it's a good way to talk about what matters most. We can talk about life and death issues. We can talk about what is right and wrong. We can talk about how we know what is right and wrong. And all of this can lead us to the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's where we need to arrive when we talk to people. Let them know that with God, certain things are absolutely wrong. But let them know that there is forgiveness in Jesus. Let them know that rejecting God leads to death and despair. Let them know that Jesus came to give us life, and to give it abundantly (John 10:10).

---

<sup>37</sup> Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 53. See his whole section on abandonment and abortion on pp. 52-60.

<sup>38</sup> That doesn't mean you have to love Republicans or consider them to be the "party of God." They are far from perfect. Sadly, a lot of them say they are pro-life and do almost nothing to prevent abortion.