

The Sanctity Of Human Life

*Tiny wonder, little human,
Lying still, your hands outstretched.
I wonder what you might have been,
I wonder what you might have done.
Sixteen weeks - that's all you lived
Until they wrenched you out of the womb
To lie unattended, gasping, stunned,
A plastic bag to be your tomb.
They weigh your form, record its length;
Perfect tissue, soulless, mute.
Your life, so small, was still too much.
You died without one loving touch.
Spark of existence, now no more,
Snuffed out by those who came before.
I wonder what you might have been,
I wonder what you might have done.*

In the late 1980s, eighteen-month-old Jessica McClure fell into a twenty-two-foot well in the backyard of a West Texas home, sparking a nationwide media frenzy centered for more than fifty hours on freeing "Baby Jessica." But the well was only eight inches in diameter; how were rescue workers supposed to get her out?

People all across the United States prayed for her, wept for her, sent their high hopes for a dramatic rescue to her fear-stricken parents. As a nation, we were determined that the little girl get out alive.

And she did, in the end. Through technology called waterjet cutting, the toddler's body was extracted from the narrow pipe, and with only minimal bruises and injuries to report.

Life is precious, isn't it. There are thousands of stories all around us, testifying to the value of human life. Just as when Baby Jessica was trapped inside that well, something overwhelms us when life is endangered; we fight with all we have to see it spared.

Which is why it was so interesting to me that even as an entire nation begged God all those years ago to protect one toddler's life, we carried out the murders of thousands of babies in their mothers' wombs.

Since the historic Roe vs. Wade decision in 1973, which lifted many state and federal restrictions on abortion in the United States, there have been more than 48 million babies killed in our country—more than one million per year; more than three thousand per day; more than one hundred per hour; nearly twenty abortions every ten minutes.

There have been no trials for these deaths, no jurors gathered to listen to evidence and decide those babies' fate, no one present at all to speak up for them, to save them from certain execution. There was only death—cruel, inhumane death some whose lives were cut short by suction, which tore them limb-by-limb. Some who were surgically scraped from their mother's womb. Others who writhed in agony following a searing salt-solution injection. Still more who were removed from their mothers' bodies and left on a table to die.

This is no "minor surgery" we're talking about. This is the weightiest of all possible procedures because it ends the life of an innocent soul.

Abortion is Legally Wrong

In thinking about the subject of abortion and whether it should be allowed in this country, it is not overstatement to say that abortion is legally wrong. The issue of abortion has never been voted on through a duly appointed process or election in the United States of America. No legislature has ever passed a law for abortion. What has happened, however, is a fair amount of activity at the judicial level, in our country's courts, most notably, in Roe vs. Wade.

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court, understanding that laws may be made independently of the Constitution based on the necessity of the moment, voted seven to two that a mother may abort her child, as long as three requirements were present: the baby must still live inside the mother's body; the mother must desire the baby's abortion; and a doctor must be willing to perform the abortion. Officially, the law

read this way: "A state is forbidden to prescribe or forbid abortion any time before birth if in the opinion of one licensed physician an abortion is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother."

And it is in that last little phrase – "the health of the mother" – that Pandora's box was opened, allowing all sorts of evil to creep out. In defining "the health of the mother," courts have ruled that, "the medical judgment may be exercised in the light of all factors: physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age relevant to the well-being of the patient. All of these factors may relate to the health of the mother."

So, if having the baby might bring stress, distress, psychological difficulty, or trauma of any sort; if having a baby might shroud the mother with the stigma of unwed motherhood; if in some way – any way – the mother's wellbeing could be jeopardized as a result of giving birth, then the abortion may be performed. And so, they are performed.

Women seeking abortions would ask, "Don't I have the right to do with my body whatever I choose to do?" And they have asked the question frequently enough and with sufficient passion that it has singlehandedly shifted the issue of abortion from an ethical, life-and-death consideration to one of personal rights, which happen to be protected by the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.

Part of the challenge to those of us among the "pro-life" camp is that women are human persons who possess rights that embryos or fetuses do not possess until their personhood can be established, which is generally held to be at around 24 weeks' gestation. Several Constitutional Amendments – not just the 14th – protect personhood and well being, and pro-choice advocates are able to stake their claim on them all, in fighting for abortion as a legal course of action in this country.

This is where it is handy to know God's Word – specifically, Psalm 139. Verses 13 through 16 (The Message) read:

*Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You know me inside and out,
you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,
how I was sculpted from nothing into
something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from
conception to birth;
all the stages of my life were spread out
before you,
The days of my life all prepared
before I'd even lived one day.
- Psalm 139:13-16*

We are "fearfully and wonderfully made," some translations say, not upon birth, but beginning in the womb of our mothers. In the human body there are 30 trillion cells, letters of a divine alphabet that spell out unique characteristics of a brand new individual. Even a pea-sized fetus in the womb has everything necessary for determining eye color, hair color, skin type, facial features, personality, and intelligence.

You and I are far more than "products of conception!" We are intricate, holy designs, fashioned by the Creator of the universe. And a baby inside the mother's womb is more than just a part of that mother's body. He or she also is a distinct, unique life, desperate to be born.

Following the landmark Roe vs. Wade decision, Judge Byron White, one of the two dissenting justices, said, "I find nothing in the language or history of the Constitution to support the Court's judgment. The Court simply fashions and announces a new Constitutional right as an exercise of raw judicial power. The Court perhaps had authority to do what it did today, but in my view, its judgment is an improvident and extravagant exercise of the power of judicial review."

He went on to make this strong assertion: "The Court, for the most part, sustains this position: during the period prior to the time the fetus becomes viable, the Constitution of the United

States values the convenience, whim, or caprice of the putative mother more than the life or potential life of the fetus."

To accommodate the culture of the times and the moral flagrancy of a desperate, self-focused people, the Court caved to pressure. We're reaping the awful effects still today.

Abortion is Medically Wrong

Abortion is legally wrong; it is also medically wrong. The backbone of modern medicine is the Hippocratic Oath, an oath all healthcare professionals take that swears them to practice medicine honestly and ethically. The oath itself is filled to overflowing with exhortations against abortion, namely, that practitioners treating patients do them "no harm" that they treat patients' children as their "own brother," and that they refuse to provide a woman a "pessary [or medical device] to provide an abortion."

How far we as a society have drifted from medicine's origins. We simply must find our way back.

What Hippocrates understood was the medical evidence supporting the start of human life. Former United States Surgeon General C. Everett Coop once said, "We can find no point in time between the union of sperm and egg and the birth of an infant at which point we can say, 'this is not human life.' Medical evidence points to the fact that at early conception we have human life."

In a 1968 Harvard Medical School study aimed at determining clinical death, four criteria were examined. First, there must be no response to external stimuli; second, there must be a lack of deep-reflex action; third, there must be a lack of spontaneous movement and respiratory effect; and fourth, there must be a lack of brain activity. It probably goes without saying that a baby in the mother's womb fails the death-test in all four capacities. Life is in the womb!

Medically, abortion is wrong.

Abortion is Psychologically Wrong

Furthermore, abortion is wrong psychologically because it denies the God-given instincts of precious would-be moms. Motherhood begins at conception; there is automatically a maternal tug on the heart. In fact, researcher Anne C. Speckhard, Ph. D, performed a study on the long-term manifestation of stress on women who have had abortions five to ten years prior, in which she discovered the following troubling trends:

- 100 percent of these women reported feelings of sadness, regret, remorse, or a sense of loss
- 92 percent reported feelings of depression
- 92 percent reported feelings of guilt
- 89 percent reported fear that others would learn of their pregnancy and abortion experience
- 81 percent reported feelings of diminished self-worth 81 percent reported feelings of victimization
- 81 percent reported preoccupation with the characteristics of the aborted child
- 73 percent reported feelings of depressed effect or suppressed ability to experience pain
- 73 percent reported feelings of discomfort around small children
- 81 percent reported frequent crying
- 77 percent reported an inability to communicate with others concerning the pregnancy and abortion experience
- 73 percent reported flashbacks of the abortion experience
- 69 percent reported sexual inhibition
- 65 percent reported suicide ideation
- 61 percent reported increased alcohol use

Ms. Speckhard's findings are hardly anecdotal. Trauma, trouble, disturbance, and distress are the unfortunate hallmarks of women who have made the decision to abort a child.

Abortion is Biblically Wrong

Finally, abortion is biblically wrong. All persons are uniquely created by God. All persons – including fetuses of any age.

All people have spiritual capability. All lives are sacred. All babies deserve the right to be born. We must be careful not to play god when it comes

to opening and closing wombs.

The Bible says that we cannot break God's laws without suffering, and Proverbs 6 makes it clear that God hates hands that shed innocent blood. He prizes life and asks His followers to prize life, too. "I set before you life and death, blessing or cursing," Deuteronomy 30 says, "Choose Life."

Righting Abortion's Wrongs

While nothing you and I can do will bring back the millions upon millions of babies who have been senselessly executed through the years, there are plenty of steps we can take to help mothers make a better choice from this point forward, things we can do to choose life over death, to help be a blessing instead of a curse.

We Can Be Informed

First, we can inform ourselves by reading the literature, studying the stats, having the conversations, engaging in this crisis as if it were our problem, too. Because it is.

We Can Work for Change

Second, we can work toward and pray for a constitutional amendment that forbids and prohibits abortion based on the fact that life is viable beginning at conception.

We Can Teach Morality in Our Homes and Churches

Third, we can take an active role in teaching morality in the home and the church. Sex education in most schools is highly biased, leaving out any semblance of moral or biblical teaching, which leaves the educating to us as parents. We must take responsibility for teaching our children to be moral individuals, who understand the purpose and place for sex, as a first step in reducing "unwanted" pregnancy rates and therefore reducing the demand for abortions.

We Can Provide Alternatives

Next, we can provide alternatives for those women considering abortion. It is not useful to pontificate the evils of abortion if we are not willing to propose solutions for the real problems these moms face. Most every geographical area in this country is supported by some sort of

crisis-pregnancy center that accepts either in-person volunteer support, donated supplies, or financial funding. These centers are designed to offer a compassionate response to those seeking abortion, by presenting alternatives, caring for practical needs, and offering support for women who choose to carry their babies to term, such as contact with adoption agencies.

We Can Ask God to Heal Our Land

Finally, we can pray, pray, pray, for God's presence, power, and peace to reign, in the lives of those wrestling with the decision and the aftereffects of abortion. God tells us in His Word that if His people will "humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

This is quite a promise! Complete healing, complete forgiveness, await us. But we must first uphold our end of the deal. We must first humble ourselves as a nation. We must diligently pray. We must passionately seek God's face. We must turn from our wicked ways.

We Can Choose Life Ourselves

Before taking any of the aforementioned actions, though, there is an all-important first step: God's grace is sufficient for any person, regardless of what that person has done, where that person has been, or how many abortions that person has had. But we must receive His grace in order to enjoy it. We must accept Christ's sacrifice for ourselves.

Never underestimate your ability as a Christ follower to usher in hope and peace, joy and life, to one who has made the weighty decision to abort a baby, or to one who is pregnant now and seriously contemplating terminating the pregnancy. As a carrier of God's grace, you may be the single flicker of light in an otherwise very dark situation. Speak with boldness. Love with gentleness. Lead with confidence. Your generosity of spirit might literally save someone's life.

- By Dr. Jack Graham
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