



Abortion

THE DEBATE OF LIFE: ABORTION

CRAIG AND JANET PARSHALL

(Psalm 139:16)

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Perhaps no issue in our culture has elicited such emotion as abortion. It has alienated friends, divided churches, and devastated individuals. That's because abortion is about people. It's about those who have perished and those who were responsible. It's about those who have stood fast for God's truth in the midst of an opposing culture and those who were silent. It's also about those who have sinned and yet still have the promise of redemption, forgiveness, and healing through Jesus Christ. They are our neighbors, our church members, the strangers we have never met, and our friends. The debate is about lives.

WHY SANCTIFY LIFE?

Christians who oppose abortion do so because of the sanctity of human life. It's not merely speculation or personal philosophy; the sanctity of life stands as a fundamental biblical principle. How people approach the matter of life and God's sovereign hand in its creation affects every other aspect of their relationship with God and with each other.

Psalm 139:13-16 gives a powerful, poetic look inside the wondrous world of the pregnant womb: "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret. . . . Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed, and in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them." Obviously, human life is no accident of biology. God, the grand Designer of the universe, forms the "inward parts" and works to "weave" together a masterful conception. Genesis demonstrates God as the Creator of life. "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). A

personal God personally created life so that people could have a personal family relationship with Him. God brings life into the world purposefully and deliberately. He has the compassion of a Father who yearns for His children.

God not only creates life, but He also blesses it. His creations are "fearfully and wonderfully made." The lives He creates are not inconveniences or problems—they are the highest expression of His moral goodness. In the Garden of Eden, immediately after the creation of human life, the Bible explains that God "blessed them" (Gen. 1:28). God creates and blesses life itself and, therefore, deems it sanctified.

HOW IS SANCTITY OF LIFE COMMUNICATED?

In ancient Egypt, Pharaoh gave a terrifying edict to the Jewish midwives. During the delivery of every Jewish baby, the midwives were to immediately kill the boys. They refused to comply, and God blessed their obedience (Ex. 1:17-21).

In the same manner, many Christians not only refuse to participate in or support abortion, they also exercise their right to lawfully denounce this practice. Yet in what way should Christians let their voice be heard? Scripture provides the principle of

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speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). This same precept also describes God's nature as having both mercy and truth (Ps. 89:14). To speak the truth in love means to speak gently with Christ's confidence behind one's words.

The truth is that abortion is a corrupt practice that is protected by the courts. The Bible denounces corruption "which devises evil by law" and seeks to "condemn innocent blood" (Ps. 94:20, 21). We should communicate this hard truth, however, with the kind of gentle love that reflects the compassionate essence of God. The point is not to win the debate. The point is to win people over to the truth and to the Lord Jesus Christ. When love is our motivation for communicating truth, we can be more effective in gaining people's attention.

WHO CAN WE BLESS BY THE SANCTITY OF LIFE?

One of the most remarkable facts about the current crisis of our nation is the way that God has brought people who were deeply involved in the practice of abortion to understand the truth of God's Word. Abortionists, abortion clinic owners, and others who have had abortions have been transformed through the power of Jesus Christ.

Women who have had abortions need the healing touch of the great soul physician, Jesus Christ. An angry crowd once brought to Jesus a woman who had been caught in flagrant sin. Certainly she was morally guilty. Yet Jesus focused on her restoration, not her moral consequence. As the Son of God, He was able to forgive her and give her healing and wholeness (John 8:11).

The abortion issue is not just about death, it is about life. It is about the divine source of life, God Himself. Jesus said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have

it more abundantly" (John 10:10). God's tender mercies are awesome and available for all our needs. No one is beyond hope. No one is beyond the reach of the gospel. No person is exempt from Christ's ability to lovingly communicate the truth about the sanctity of all life.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of abortion include:

- > Exodus 20:13; 21:22, 23
- > Proverbs 28:13
- > Isaiah 44:2; 46:3
- > Jeremiah 1:5
- > Matthew 18:1-6
- > Luke 1:44
- > 1 John 1:9

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on abortion at Psalm 139:16 on page 788. See also the personality profile of Herod on page 1231.

- When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest
parts of the earth.
- 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet
unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When *as yet there were* none of them.
- 17 How precious also are Your thoughts to
me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
18 If I should count them, they would be
more in number than the sand;
When I awake, I am still with You.
- 19 Oh, that You would slay the wicked,
O God!
Depart from me, therefore, you
bloodthirsty men.
- 20 For they speak against You wickedly;
Your enemies take *Your name* in
vain.^a
- 21 Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate
You?
And do I not loathe those who rise up
against You?
- 22 I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
- 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
- 24 And see if *there is any* wicked way in
me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

PSALM 140

PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL MEN

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- 1 Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men;
Preserve me from violent men,
- 2 Who plan evil things in *their* hearts;
They continually gather together for
war.
- 3 They sharpen their tongues like a
serpent;
The poison of asps *is* under their lips. Selah
- 4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the
wicked;
Preserve me from violent men,
Who have purposed to make my steps
stumble.
- 5 The proud have hidden a snare for me,
and cords;
They have spread a net by the wayside;
They have set traps for me. Selah
- 6 I said to the LORD: "You *are* my God;
Hear the voice of my supplications,
O LORD.
- 7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my
salvation,
You have covered my head in the day of
battle.

139:20 ^aSeptuagint and Vulgate read *They take your cities in vain.*

KEY PASSAGE



Abortion

A NEW LIFE

(139:16)

God knows each person from the moment of conception. His eyes see the unformed body in the mother's womb, and all of the child's days are already written in His book. The prophet Jeremiah wrote these words from God, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jer. 1:5). Many claim that a child in the womb is no more than a mass of tissue, but the Bible makes it clear that God sees the tiny embryo as a new life with a future already prepared. How sad that many children will not live beyond the womb because of abortion. To abort a child is to end a human life unjustly—in short, to commit murder. Every child conceived is a child of God.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about abortion on pages 786, 787. See also the personality profile of Herod on page 1231.

seph in Egypt, ²⁰saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." ²¹Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. ²³And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

3 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"^a

⁴Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him ⁶and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, ⁹and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to

3:3 ^aIsaiah 40:3

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Abortion

HEROD: WHEN A CHOICE IS DEADLY

(MATTHEW 2:16-18)

Among the Herods of Scripture, Herod the Great comes first in line. His title of "Great" refers to his ventures in grand building schemes. His legacy included fortresses, palaces, and even the refurbished temple in Jerusalem. Herod displayed no greatness in dealing with people, however. The children of Bethlehem stood little chance against this suspicious and scheming king. A man guilty of killing at least three of his own grown children apparently had no hesitation over killing perhaps several dozen little boys in his effort to eliminate a potential rival for his throne.

Herod displayed the eventual soul-destructive mindset that values individual plans, pleasures, and purposes above the very lives of others. Such thinking seems to rule as the hidden basic assumption during conversations about abortion. Although the arguments over abortion almost always use the language of agonizing choices between two lives, the practice of abortion almost always comes down to the choice between a life and convenience, or between a life and other plans or between a life and a lifestyle. The thinking that makes an unborn child disposable doesn't have to change much in order to consider the elimination of unwanted living children.

Kings like Herod were the original defenders of the right of choice. Some even called it the divine right of choice. They believed they could make any choice they wanted and that it was right because they had made it, not because it agreed with an external standard to which even they were accountable. Choice may be a human right, but every choice isn't a right one. There is an absolute standard in the character and revelation of God. All choices we make will be measured against that standard, and we will be accountable for them.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about abortion on pages 786, 787. See also the key passage note at Psalm 139:16 on page 788.

seen that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³You shall not make *anything to be* with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. ²⁴An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. ²⁵And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. ²⁶Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.

THE LAW CONCERNING SERVANTS

21 “Now these *are* the judgments which you shall set before them: ²If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. ³If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he *comes in* married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. ⁵But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ⁶then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

⁷“And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. ⁸If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. ⁹And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. ¹⁰If he

takes another *wife*, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. ¹¹And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without *paying* money.

THE LAW CONCERNING VIOLENCE

¹²“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. ¹³However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered *him* into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.

¹⁴“But if a man acts with *premeditation* against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.

¹⁵“And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

¹⁶“He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.

¹⁷“And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

¹⁸“If men contend with each other, and one strikes the other with a stone or with *his* fist, and he does not die but is confined to *his* bed, ¹⁹if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff, then he who struck *him* shall be acquitted. He shall only pay for the loss of his time, and shall provide for *him* to be thoroughly healed.

²⁰“And if a man beats his male or female servant with a rod, so that he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished. ²¹Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he *is* his property.

²²“If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges *determine*. ²³But if *any* harm follows, then you

SOUL NOTE



Choosing Life (21:22) What kindness God shows! The list of laws in Exodus 21:1–32 provide an important statement of human rights. This verse shows God’s protection of the most defenseless people on the planet—children in the womb.

Even causing a premature but otherwise healthy birth was a punishable offense.

If either the mother or the baby was harmed or killed, punishment was served by a strict proportionality: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. God is the champion of life, and has always protected women, children, and the weakest members of society. **Topic: Abortion**

1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, ²to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. ³It came also in the days of Jehoia-kim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

THE PROPHET IS CALLED

⁴Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;
Before you were born I sanctified you;
I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

⁶Then said I:

“Ah, Lord GOD!
Behold, I cannot speak, for I *am* a youth.”

⁷But the LORD said to me:

“Do not say, ‘I *am* a youth,’
For you shall go to all to whom I send you,
And whatever I command you, you shall speak.
Do not be afraid of their faces,
For I *am* with you to deliver you,” says the LORD.

⁹Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me:

“Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

¹⁰ See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms,
To root out and to pull down,
To destroy and to throw down,
To build and to plant.”

¹¹Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?”

And I said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.”

¹²Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.”

¹³And the word of the LORD came to me the second time, saying, “What do you see?”

And I said, “I see a boiling pot, and it is facing away from the north.”

¹⁴Then the LORD said to me:

“Out of the north calamity shall break forth

On all the inhabitants of the land.

¹⁵ For behold, I am calling
All the families of the kingdoms of the north,” says the LORD;

“They shall come and each one set his throne

At the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem,

Against all its walls all around,
And against all the cities of Judah.

¹⁶ I will utter My judgments
Against them concerning all their wickedness,

Because they have forsaken Me,
Burned incense to other gods,
And worshiped the works of their own hands.

¹⁷ “Therefore prepare yourself and arise,
And speak to them all that I command you.

SOUL NOTE



What Might Have Been (1:5) One of the tragic, unanswered questions in cases of abortion is “What might have been?”—not only in the lives of the parents or even the baby, but in the world. God makes it clear that He is well-acquainted with every individual from the time each person is conceived and that He has plans for each one. God knew Jeremiah before he had been formed in his mother’s womb, and He planned for Jeremiah to be a prophet. God knows everything, so He knows that some young lives will end all too soon. But how sad that so much potential will never be realized. **Topic: Abortion**

sixth month for her who was called barren.
³⁷For with God nothing will be impossible.”

³⁸Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

MARY VISITS ELIZABETH

³⁹Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

THE SONG OF MARY

⁴⁶And Mary said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
 For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.
⁴⁹ For He who is mighty has done great things for me,
 And holy is His name.
⁵⁰ And His mercy is on those who fear Him
 From generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm;
 He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He has put down the mighty from their thrones,

And exalted the lowly.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things,

And the rich He has sent away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped His servant Israel,

In remembrance of His mercy,

⁵⁵ As He spoke to our fathers,

To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

⁵⁷Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. ⁵⁸When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

CIRCUMCISION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

⁵⁹So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. ⁶⁰His mother answered and said, “No; he shall be called John.”

⁶¹But they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.” ⁶²So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called.

⁶³And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, “His name is John.” So they all marveled. ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. ⁶⁵Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, “What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him.

SOUL NOTE



Leaping Baby (1:41) The baby in Elizabeth’s womb leaped for joy when he heard the voice of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This passage shows that unborn children are alive and have a spiritual identity. Many advocates of abortion insist that a fetus isn’t a real person until birth, and that therefore abortion isn’t murder.

The Bible shows, however, that life begins at conception, because God knows all about people and knows all the days of their lives before they are born (Ps. 139:16). All people—even those still in the womb—are precious to God. **Topic: Abortion**