

Abortion and the Bible

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There is no specific passage of Scripture that says, “Thou shalt not have an abortion.”¹ However, the Bible does say a great deal about the value of each human life. Allan Moseley summarizes the approach I will take when he says, “As we read the Bible, the point is not to find words of disapprobation against the medical procedure of abortion; the point is the nature and origin of the fetus, and the biblical perspective on ending that kind of life.”² So, while the Bible does not address abortion per se, Scripture does speak about pre-born human life in enough detail that God’s thinking on the moral status of such life can be discerned. The following survey addresses some of the significant Biblical themes and corresponding passages that inform a Biblical/Christian response to abortion. A Biblical response begins with the truth that God is the author of life and concludes with the value of pre-born human life demonstrated in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Ancient Near Eastern Background

The practice of abortion was not unknown in the Ancient Near Eastern world. While abortion is not mentioned in some of the earliest legal codes of the Ancient Near East (e.g., Hammurapi’s Code), later legal codes did begin to recognize a certain legal status for the pre-born fetus. Middle Assyrian Laws (Circa 1400 – 1200 B.C.) prohibited self-induced abortion and make the crime a capital offense.³

¹ The only time the word “abortion” is used in the New Testament is in 1 Corinthians 15:8 when Paul uses the self-deprecating term *εκτρωμα* to describe himself prior to his conversion. This is a term that refers to a fetus being expelled from the womb before being fully formed and could be used to describe an aborted fetus.

² N. Allan Moseley, *Thinking Against the Grain: Developing a Biblical Worldview in a Culture of Myths* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), 218.

³ C. Horn, III and A. E. Hill, “Abortion,” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., Walter Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 16.

Prior to the rise of modern medicine, the most common method of abortion was through abortifacient potions or suppositories. The extinct plant *Silphium*, native to ancient Cyrenaica of the carrot and parsley family, is often suggested to have had abortifacient properties. Surgical abortions were hardly possible and always dangerous in antiquity, though ancient writings do indicate a certain familiarity with various means for attempting surgical abortions. When surgical abortions were attempted, it was frequently the case that the death of the mother was simultaneous with the death of the child. Most ancient abortifacients were simply poisons administered to pregnant women in hopes that the poison would shock the woman's body into miscarriage. These potions attempted to achieve a delicate balancing act: Give enough of the poison to induce premature labor without killing the woman. This procedure has been compared "to playing Russian Roulette with three bullets in the chamber." Infanticide was also very common in pagan societies and this act was specifically condemned in Scripture (Leviticus 18:21). While "abortion" is not specifically mentioned in the Bible, the practice was not unknown in the Ancient Near East.

Most cultures in the world place some value and respect on human life, but human life is not valued equally by all. In contrast, the Biblical emphasis on the sanctity of innocent human life differentiates Biblical ethics from its competitors. In order to justify abortion, one must argue the pre-born baby either is not a human life or it is a human life of lesser value and therefore can be disposed of at will. A rigorous interaction with Scripture reveals that prenatal human life has the same moral status as postnatal human life.

Developmental personhood is the philosophical idea that only human persons deserve protection but human life does not deserve human protection. Developmental personhood argues that when life begins, one does not possess personhood but develops into a

“person” with moral rights at some later point. At the end of life, one may subsequently lose the status of being a “person” as certain cognitive abilities deteriorate. Developmental personhood is the major idea in competition with the Judeo-Christian viewpoint regarding the moral status of prenatal life. With this in mind, I am quite bothered that Evangelical author Arthur Holmes suggests the fetus “advances toward actual personhood.”⁴ Holmes’ seems to accept the concept of developmental personhood which I strongly reject.

In contrast, Christians affirm the sanctity of human life. From a Christian perspective, the phrase *sanctity of human life* is a shorthand way of referring to the value God gives to all human life along with its inherent preciousness. The concept begins with an affirmation of the beauty and richness of biological human life itself.⁵ The word *sanctity* means human life has ultimate importance and is not to be violated. The principle of the sanctity of human life demands that a human being, regardless of prenatal stage of development, age, health, gender, or race, is always treated with respect and that a person’s life not be ended prematurely, unduly, carelessly, without Biblical warrant, or merely for reasons of utility.⁶ The sanctity of life is theologically grounded in our belief that God is the creator of human life and that humans are made in God’s image. As such, the right to life is the basis of all other human rights, natural and legal, and the foundation of a civilized society.⁷

⁴ Arthur Holmes, *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 94.

⁵ This definition is my revision of Thomas A. Shannon, *An Introduction to Bioethics*, 3rd ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 46.

⁶ I’ve modified and expanded this sentence from Stanley J. Grenz and Jay T. Smith, *Pocket Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 71.

⁷ Thomas Wood, “Life, Sacredness of,” *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, James F. Childress and John MacQuarrie, eds. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 353.

I. God is the Author of Life

The debate about abortion reflects more fundamental debates about the origin and nature of humanity. Are humans merely accidents of evolution or have we been created by God?

A. Genesis 1:26

Genesis 1:26: Then God said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to our own likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

1. A theistic view of human origins substantiates the sanctity of human life.

The Christian doctrine of the sanctity of human life is based on the fact humans are made in the image of God. Genesis 1:26 - 28 is the definitive passage of Scripture for Christian anthropology. Mankind is unique from the rest of creation because people are made in the image of God. This should give us reason to pause anytime that human life is in danger of destruction. The Bible teaches that there is an inherent dignity to every human simply because they bear the image of God. The Bible elevates man above animals. Each human being is a morally significant entity (a person), and every human should be treated as such.

2. Atheism and its cognate theories of human origin devalue human life.

Theistic theories of human origins entail a certain respect for human dignity. In contrast, purely naturalistic theories of origins inevitably lead to a devaluation of individual humans. Koop and Schaeffer emphasized this point in their landmark work, *Whatever*

Happened to the Human Race? They said, “Within this worldview [humanism] there is no room for believing that a human being has any final distinct value above that of an animal or of nonliving matter. People are merely a different arrangement of molecules.”⁸ Indeed, abortion advocates seem determined to lower mankind to the level of beasts. For example, Peter Singer, now of Princeton, has said, “If we compare a severely defective human infant with a nonhuman animal, a dog or a pig, for example, we will often find the nonhuman to have superior capacities, both actual and potential, for rationality, self-consciousness, communication, and anything else that can plausibly be considered morally significant.”⁹ Singer makes clear the connection between the rejection of the image of God, acceptance of naturalistic Darwinism, and devaluing human life when he says:

The intellectual upheaval sparked by the publication of the theory of evolution, once the weight of scientific evidence in favor of theory became apparent, meant practically every earlier justification of man’s supreme place in creation and his dominion over animals had to be rejected. . . . Human beings now know that they were not the special creation of God made in the divine image and set apart from animals; on the contrary, human beings came to realize that they were animals themselves.¹⁰

Noted atheist Richard Dawkins also demonstrates the way weak and vulnerable baby humans are devalued in the atheistic worldview. In a Twitter exchange, a person from New York expressed concern about the moral dilemma of a baby diagnosed with Down Syndrome in utero. Dawkins responded on August 20, 2014, “Abort it and try again. It would be immoral to bring it into the

⁸ C. Everett Koop and Francis Schaeffer, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, in *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, vol. 5 (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 356.

⁹ Peter Singer, “Sanctity of Life or Quality of Life?” *Pediatrics* 72.1 (July 1983), 129.

¹⁰ Peter Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), page #?

world if you have the choice.”¹¹ Dawkins later added, “If your morality is based, as mine is, on a desire to increase the sum of happiness and reduce suffering, the decision to deliberately give birth to a Down's baby, when you have the choice to abort it early in the pregnancy, might actually be immoral from the point of view of the child's own welfare.”¹²

The Abortion debate reflects the deeper debate about worldviews. If humans are, as materialists say, only chemicals in motion with no real purpose, then there is no logical reason to oppose abortion. However, if God exists, and He does, then we are held morally accountable for our actions. Bruce Waltke captures the worldview implications when he says, “The replacement of biblical theism with materialistic evolutionism lays the foundation for trade in aborted body parts, genocide, and eugenic engineering. The resulting ethical consequences of the biblical versus modern worldviews cannot be overemphasized.”¹³ A secular worldview views moral autonomy as the supreme individual right. In this way, abortion is the most violent expression of this autonomy. For many people, children are a burdensome infringement on autonomy – a burden that can be acceptably lifted by killing the child.¹⁴

B. Job 12:10

Job 12:10: In whose hand is the life of every living thing. And the breath of all mankind? (NKJV)¹⁵

¹¹ “Richard Dawkins: ‘Immoral’ Not To Abort if Foetus Has Down’s Syndrome,” *The Guardian* Thursday, August 21, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2014/aug/21/richard-dawkins-immoral-not-to-abort-a-downs-syndrome-foetus>.

¹² “Richard Dawkins Apologizes for Causing a Storm With Down’s Syndrome Tweet,” *The Guardian*, Thursday, August 21, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2014/aug/21/richard-dawkins-apologises-downs-syndrome-tweet>.

¹³ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 173-174.

¹⁴ My language here comes directly from Ted Olsen, “Partial Reversal: The Supreme Court’s Abortion Decision Shows That The Arguments Have Changed,” *Christianity Today* 51.6 (June 1, 2007): 22.

¹⁵ I used to include Isaiah 44:24 at this point: “Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, “I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself and spreading out the earth all alone.” (NASB) In context, Yahweh is talking to corporate Israel,

II. The Sixth Commandment and the Right to Life

The Sixth Commandment clearly says: You shall not murder (Exodus 20:13). What relevance, if any does this command have to moral debates regarding abortion? The Sixth Commandment is quite relevant because it establishes the principle of the sanctity of innocent human life and that humans have a *fundamental right to life*. The right to life is the primary and most important human right because if someone is not allowed to live, he or she doesn't get to exercise any other right.

A. The Sixth Commandment

Exodus 20:13: You shall not murder.

The Hebrew word translated “murder” in both Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17 is רצח (*ratzach*) and it can be defined as murder or the intentional taking of innocent human life. For example, the word *ratzach* is used in 1 Kings 21:19 to describe Ahab's actions when he killed innocent Naboth.¹⁶ Murder is the more precise reading than the much too general KJV, “Thou shalt not kill.”¹⁷ In the sixth commandment God declares the sanctity of innocent human life as a timeless principle. This commandment protects innocent humans such as babies. Dietrich Bonhoeffer commented on abortion and used language reminiscent of the Sixth Commandment, saying, “To kill the fruit in the mother's womb is to injure the right to life that God has bestowed on the developing life. Discussion of the question whether a human being is already present confuses the simple fact that, in any case, God wills to create a human being and that the life

and not to an individual person. With this in mind, I chose to remove Isaiah 44:24 from my notes about abortion. While the imagery certainly affirms the over-arching idea that God values pre-born human life, the specific application is to the entire nation and not an individual.

¹⁶ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1283.

¹⁷ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 860.

of this developing human being has been deliberately taken. And this is nothing but murder.”¹⁸

The command not to murder here in the Pentateuch is grounded in the creation narrative: Because humans are made in the Image of God, innocent human life is not to be taken. The Sixth Commandment does not hang in the middle of space suspended from nothing, it is the practical application of ethics in a world where human life has inherent dignity as the pinnacle of God’s creation. I contend that the Bible does make allowances for taking human life in cases of capital punishment by a legitimate state authority, just wars, and self-defense. But in each of these cases, the taking of human life is only permitted because *innocent human life is in danger (self-defense, just war) or has been violated (capital punishment)*. For example, the moral reasoning for capital punishment is grounded in the image of God in Genesis 9:6. The Bible places a premium on protecting innocent human life, a principle expressed clearly in the Sixth Commandment.

B. Attempts to Circumvent the Sixth Commandment

Some Christians contend the Sixth Commandment cannot help us answer the abortion question. Notably, Richard Hays of Duke University said:

To cite [the Sixth Commandment] against abortion begs the question. No one in the debate is arguing in favor of murder. The issue is one of definition: Is abortion murder or not? There is nothing in the context of the Decalogue, or indeed anywhere in the Torah, that offers an answer to this question.¹⁹

¹⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 6 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 206.

¹⁹ Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York; HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 446. Hays is a pacifist and would reject the allowances I make for taking human life.

It is interesting the Hays mentions the *context* of the Torah to dismiss the relevance of the Sixth Commandment for abortion debates. *In the context of the Torah*, the Sixth Commandment is grounded in humans made in the Image of God, and Hays gives no attention the creation texts in his discussion. Hays also quite incredulously misses the primary issue: What is the moral status of the preborn human being. Merely redefining the moral status of some humans does not change the fact of murder. For example, if some strange turn of events a radical group emerged in North Carolina which declared elite professors at major universities to be non-humans and a threat to happy living, then such a radical group might indeed engage on an extermination campaign of such professors. By declaring these professors non-humans, such evil people will certainly insist they have not committed murder, but *redefining whether or not someone is human does not mean one hasn't committed murder, it only means one has engaged in vicious word games to justify killing other innocent humans.*

Secular advocates of liberalizing abortion laws attempt to circumvent the sixth commandment by one of two tactics. First, like Blackmun in *Roe*, they define the pre-born child as a “non-person,” therefore society is free to destroy any pre-born. Second, the pre-born child is described as a threat in order to justify its destruction. Andrew Lester, former director of pastoral care at North Carolina Baptist Hospital, used this second approach in a 1971 article 1971 titled “The Abortion Dilemma.” According to Lester, the “conceptus, by its very presence, occasionally becomes a menace to the rights of others – the mother’s mental and physical health, the welfare of a family, the survival of a society – and in that sense must be dealt with as a threat.”²⁰ He vilifies the child in order to justify its destruction.

²⁰ Andrew Lester, “The Abortion Dilemma,” *Review and Expositor* (1971): 230.

C. Should we use the language of “murder” when discussing abortion?

Should we use the language of murder when discussing abortion? If we do so, are we then saying that abortive parents or abortionists are murderers? Some consider such language too harsh and caustic an unhelpful in moral discussions with people either considering an abortion or wrestling with the consequences of having caused an abortion. Karen Swallow Prior, who is pro-life and supportive of the ethical stance I advocate, uses the analogy of talking to someone who is dangling a child off of a bridge. If we simply yell at the person, “Hey, that’s murder! Don’t do it!,” this will probably not stop them. Instead, we would want to talk to the person in calm tones in an effort to de-escalate the situation and reach a resolution which saves the child’s life.

Most evangelicals land at a stance that says something like this: “Yes, abortion is a form of murder. No, we do not want to prosecute the woman who aborts for murder. Under laws prior to *Roe*, it was the abortionist who was prosecuted and something like this still reflects our stance.” The following extended quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer gives helpful perspective:

To kill the fruit of the mother’s womb is to injure the right to life that God has bestowed on the developing life. Discussion of the question whether a human being is already present confuses the simple fact that, in any case, God wills to create a human being and that the life of this developing human being has been deliberately taken. And this is nothing but murder. Various motives may lead to such an act. It may be a deed of despair from the depths of human desolation or financial need, in which case guilt falls often more on the community than on the individual. It may be that on this very point money can cover over a great deal of careless behavior, whereas among the

poor even the deed done with great reluctance comes more easily to light. Without doubt, all this decisively affects one's personal, pastoral attitude toward the person concerned; but it cannot change the fact of murder. The mother, for whom this decision would be desperately hard because it goes against her own nature, would certainly be the last to deny the weight of guilt.²¹

One reason why many Christians want to extend mercy to abortive mothers is our awareness that many pregnant women are placed in duress and experience a degree of coercion to abort. An irresponsible boyfriend may say, "I will pay for an abortion, but I will not help you support this child." In other cases, a teenage girl still living at home may be threatened with expulsion from home if she does not abort. Threatened with being homeless and pregnant, she feels she has no other options.

III. The Unique Value of Each Human Being

Since all humans are made in the Image of God, all humans have innate value regardless of the disabilities any particular human may have.

Pro-Abortion advocates often mention the tragedy of birth defects as occasions in which abortion should be allowed, if not mandated. For example, Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty make this sort of argument in their influential 1974 book, *All We're Meant to Be*. As part of freeing women from the chains of patriarchy, Scanzoni and Hardesty address abortion in the cases of fetal deformity, saying:

Yet, at the same time, is abortion entirely out of the question for a Christian couple faced with an unplanned pregnancy at a

²¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 6 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 206 – 207. Ken Magnuson brought this quote to my attention.

time when it would be detrimental to the whole family? Or what about an unmarried coed who was carried away in the emotion of a moment she later regrets? What about a Christian couple who learn through genetic counseling that tests show their baby will be a mongoloid, or the wife who contracts rubella early in her pregnancy and knows her child is likely to be malformed? Does Christian morality insist that these pregnancies be carried through, even though bringing the child into the world may cause extreme emotional distress and financial hardships for the family? We think not. A decision to have an abortion in such a case can free the couple to have another child, a healthy, normal child that might otherwise never be born.²²

What does the Bible say about children who are born with birth defects? How are they to be treated? In the Bible, one finds an approach much different from the authors above.

A. Exodus 4:10 – 11

Exodus 4:10-11: Then Moses said to the LORD, “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” The LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?”

Moses evidently was born with some physical impediment that he felt precluded him from service. In response, God declares his sovereignty in the matter of birth defects. God chose Moses in order to glorify himself. In a similar way, children born with birth defects today can bring glory to God. This is a complete contrast to the

²² Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We’re Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women’s Liberation* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974), 143.

parents of “Baby Doe” who did not feel that the Down Syndrome children they had observed experienced an adequate quality of life.

B. John 9:1 – 3

John 9:1-3: As He [Jesus] passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned or his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

Jesus Christ affirms the dignity and worth of a person born with a congenital birth defect: blindness. Christ teaches that this man was born blind in order that God might display His power in the blind man’s life.²³

IV. The Person Conceived and the Person Born are One and the Same

A. Genesis 4:1

Genesis 4:1: Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD.”

The individual conceived, Cain, and the individual who was born, Cain, are the same person. This is in contrast to many pro-choice arguments that claim the conceptus has no moral standing.

²³ Previous generations of Christians were well aware of birth defects and children born with deformities, many of whom were stillborn in the eras prior to modern neonatal care. For example, Jonathan Edwards commented, “The body of one that was born a perfect child, may fail of exact proportion through distemper, and the weakness and wounds of some of its members; yet the disproportion is in no measure like that of those that are born monsters.” Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, John E. Smith, ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 365.

B. Job 3:3

Job 3:3: Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night which said, “A boy is conceived.”

Job 3:3 also demonstrates continuity between the person who was conceived and the person who was born.

V. A Fundamental Continuity Between Prenatal and Postnatal Life²⁴

The Bible asserts a fundamental continuity exists between prenatal and postnatal life: The person conceived and growing in the womb is the person who is born and subsequently grows to adulthood. Prenatal life is viewed as fully human and, thus, the moral prescriptions against killing innocent human life apply to prenatal human life. This section is very important for establishing the value of pre-born human life. As noted above, the Bible does not address the specific act of abortion. Thus, our moral argumentation attempts to find out what the Bible does say about the moral status of pre-born human life and the implications of willfully destroying that type of life.

A. The Hebrew word בן (*ben*) in the Genesis Narrative

Genesis 25:22 (NASB): But the children [בָּנָי] jostled each other in the womb so much that she [Rebekah] exclaimed, “If it is like this, why go on living!” She went to consult the LORD.”

The Hebrew word translated *children* in Genesis 25:22 is בָּנָי (*ben*). This term is used in Genesis 25:22 to refer Jacob and Esau in utero

²⁴ I have taken this wording directly from a statement on abortion adopted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1971. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, “Report of the Committee to Study the Matter of Abortion,” Presented to the thirty-eighth assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, May 24 – 29, 1971.

and is the same term used in Genesis 5:4, 7, and 10 when referring to adult, living sons. The use of the same term for babies in the womb and adults indicates the same moral status for both.

B. Psalm 51:5

Psalm 51:5: Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae offer a summary of the relevance of Psalm 51:5 to the abortion debate:

David here is confessing not only his specific sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite (see 2 Sam 11 – 12), but also his innate inclination to sin. This is a characteristic shared by all persons, and David’s claim is that he possessed it from the point of conception. Thus, an essential attribute of adult persons – an inclination to sin – is attributed to the unborn, underscoring the continuity of identity from conception to adulthood. The same sinful adult began as a sinful embryonic person in the womb.²⁵

C. Psalm 139:13 – 16²⁶

If asked to preach a sermon on the sanctity of human life, I believe Psalm 139:13 – 16 provides the best opportunity for an expository pro-life sermon.

Psalm 139:13-16

You formed my inward parts;
You wove me in my mother’s womb.

²⁵ J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 233.

²⁶ *Ethics for a Brave New World* does not include an extensive discussion of Psalm 139 in relation to abortion. This omission is a weakness in the textbook.

I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;
Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in your book were all written
The days that were ordained for *me*,
When as yet there was not one of them.

Psalm 139 praises God for his omniscience and omnipresence. In the middle of this celebration of God's power, the Psalmist uses God's knowledge of his prenatal life as an illustration of these divine attributes. Several descriptive words are used to describe the growth and development of the unborn child.

1. God creates life in the womb.

Psalm 139:13 (NIV): For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Inmost being / Inward parts. The phrase translated "inmost being" by the NIV or "inward parts" by the NASB is the Hebrew word *kilya* (כִּלְיָה) which can be literally translated as "kidneys." The kidneys were sometimes viewed as the seat of one's emotions and moral character (cf. Pss 7:9; 26:2).²⁷ The word *kilya* was used to describe the inward parts of person where grief is experienced (Job 16:13), where the conscience exists (Psalm 51:6), and where deep spiritual distress is sometimes felt (Psalm 73:21).²⁸ In this way, the language in Psalm 139:13 means God has formed David's deepest being, an attribute of personhood.

²⁷ NET Bible translator notes, accessed February 1, 2011, www.bible.org/netbible.

²⁸ C. Ben Mitchell and Joy Riley, *Christian Bioethics: A Guide for Pastors, Health Care Professionals, and Families* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2014), 57.

Knit Together. The Hebrew verb סָכַךְ (*sakhakh*, “to weave together”). An alternate form of the verb is used in Job 10:11, which says, “You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews.” God is pictured as a master-weaver at work.

2. Life in the womb evokes wonder at God’s power to create.

Psalm 139:14 (NIV): I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

The Hebrew of Psalm 139:14 can legitimately be translated, “I am awesomely wonderful!” In contrast to worldly approaches that place value on people based on subjective concepts of beauty or value, the Bible affirms here that each baby should cause us to be amazed at God’s ability to create in the womb.

3. God is present even in the womb.

Psalm 139:15 (NIV): My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Frame. The word “frame” can be translated “bones.”

Woven Together. This phrase picks up on the idea introduced in verse 13. The HCS simply translates this term as “*formed* in the depths of the earth.” While “formed” is not a wrong translation, it misses the vivid imagery of the Hebrew and the intended parallelism with verse 13.

Depths of the earth. This phrase is a metaphor for deepest concealment, i.e., the hiddenness of the womb.²⁹ The growth of a

²⁹ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries Psalms 73 – 150* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 466. The NET Bible offers this comment and says, “The phrase *depths of the earth* may be metaphorical (euphemistic) or it may reflect a prescientific belief about the origins of the embryo

child was mysterious and awe-inspiring to the Psalmist. Yet even in this most unknown place, God is present.

4. God has a plan for unborn children.

Psalm 139:16 (NIV): Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Unformed Body. The phrase translated “unformed body” by the NIV “unformed substance” by the NASB is the only occurrence of the Hebrew word *golem* (גֹּלֶם), the Hebrew word for embryo or fetus. The NET Bible tries to capture the personal interest of the Psalmist and translates Psalm 139:16a as follows: “Your eyes saw me when I was inside the womb.”

All the days ordained for me. Derek Kidner says the Hebrew of Psalm 139:16 is somewhat cryptic and may mean either that “the days of my life” were mapped out in advance, or that “my embryonic members” were likewise planned and known before the many stages of their development. Kidner says, “In either case the stanza so far has laid its main emphasis on our pre-natal fashioning by God . . . a powerful reminder of the value He sets on us, even as embryos, and of His planning our end from the beginning.”³⁰

It is of some interest to note that Psalm 139:19 – 20 includes a cry to God for justice against evil, “bloodthirsty” people. We should pray for God’s mercy and justice.

deep beneath the earth’s surface (see H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 96-97).” This comment is needless and misses the obvious poetic imagery of Psalm 139 and assumes an unproven level of stupidity among people in the ANE. As the case of Onan in Genesis 38 reveals, ancient people were quite aware that sex resulted in babies.

³⁰ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, vol. 14b, *Psalms 73 – 150*, 466.

5. Continuity between prenatal and postnatal life.

Me / Me / My. The repetitive use of personal pronouns accentuates David's identification with himself as the pre-born child. A fundamental continuity between prenatal and postnatal life is asserted. Moreland and Rae capture the significance of this passage for a Biblical approach to the moral status of pre-born human life when they say, "Psalm 139, which is often cited in the abortion debate, strongly suggests that King David is the same essential person from conception to mature adult."³¹

6. Summary

Psalm 139 engages in powerful poetic imagery. God is described as a master weaver knitting together a new human life in the womb, a theme captured in the NIV translation of verse 15, "I was woven together in the depths of the earth." Taken as a whole, Psalm 139:13 - 16 underscores God's activity in forming the entire pre-born child, including both the child's organs (*kilya*) and skeletal frame. Most significantly, this passage shows a significant personal continuity between prenatal and postnatal life.³² John Stott comments on the relevance of Psalm 139 to the morality of abortion and says, "Though not intending to give a scientific account of fetal development, the biblical authors are nevertheless affirming (in the familiar imagery of the ancient Near East) that the process of embryonic growth is neither haphazard nor even automatic, but a divine work of creative skill."³³

Taken as a whole, Psalm 139 presents strong evidence against a moral stance favoring abortion, especially pro-abortion arguments

³¹ Moreland and Rae, *Body & Soul*, 232.

³² I have borrowed this phrase from "Report of the Committee to Study the Matter of Abortion," Presented to the Thirty-Eighth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, May 24-29, 1971; in John Frame, *Medical Ethics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988), 93.

³³ John Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming Revell Co., 1990), 315.

based on the premise that the pre-born human has no worth or is not “a person.” John Stott offers a helpful outline of Psalm 139 for preaching:

The Psalmist was **created** by God.

The Psalmist’s **continuity** between prenatal and postnatal life.

The Psalmist **Communion** or **Covenant** with God.

D. Jeremiah 1:5

Jeremiah 1:5: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.

Jeremiah 1:5 makes clear that *God* formed Jeremiah in the womb. The verse emphasizes relational identity (God *knew* Jeremiah) as precedent to physical development, and a social/vocational destiny (as prophet) that applies before birth. In popular vernacular we can truly say, “God doesn’t make any junk!” God had a plan for Jeremiah *before* he was born. One can then infer God has a plan for children before they are born and abortion destroys that plan. Jeremiah 1:5 does not infer the pre-existence of Jeremiah prior to his conception. Instead, God in His sovereign foreknowledge already set Jeremiah apart as a prophet before he was born. In Jeremiah 1:5, there is a fundamental continuity between the prenatal and postnatal life.³⁴

³⁴ Commenting on Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 1:5, Richard Hays says, “Such statements cannot be pressed as a way of making claims about the status of the fetus as a “person”; rather, they are confessions about God’s divine foreknowledge and care.” *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 448. Indeed, the passages do teach God’s omniscience, but omniscience about what? God is not claiming knowledge of a mindless blob, God is declaring he already knows these pre-born children as *persons*. Hays’ comments are sloppy, maddening, and reflect a fundamental inability to wrestle with the moral status of the pre-born human as human.

E. Same Hebrew Term Used for Prenatal and Postnatal Life

Genesis 25:22 (NASB): But the children [הַבָּנִים / *hab-bā-nîm*] struggled together within her [Rebekah]; and she said, “If it is so, why then am I *this way*?” So she went to inquire of the LORD.

Nehemiah 9:24 (NASB): So their sons (הַבָּנִים / *hab-bā-nîm*) entered and possessed the land. And You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, And You gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, to do with them as they desired.

I referenced the use of the Hebrew word בֶּן (*ben*) earlier and I return to it here. The same Hebrew term -- *hab-bā-nîm* – is used in Genesis 25:22 to refer to Jacob and Esau as babies in the womb and in Nehemiah 9:24 to refer to the adult descendants of the Israelites. The use of the identical term for children in the womb and adults points to a fundamental continuity in the moral status of prenatal and postnatal life in Scripture. I concur with Scott Rae and Paul Cox when they say, “If it is true that there is a continuity of personal identity between conception and adulthood . . . then embryos do not differ qualitatively from adults, only developmentally. That is, as they develop, embryos and fetuses do not become something different from what they already are. Rather they mature into what they already are.”³⁵

VI. Infanticide is Categorically Condemned

Though abortion is not mentioned in Scripture, the ancient practice of infanticide is mentioned and is condemned in the strongest possible terms.

³⁵ Scott B. Rae and Paul W. Cox, *Bioethics: A Christian Approach in a Pluralistic Age* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 132.

A. Exodus 1 and the Hebrew Midwives

Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill Hebrew babies. The midwives are praised for *not* killing the babies. This points to the moral status of newborn human life. If newborns are accorded moral status in Exodus 1, it seems logical that preborn children had moral standing as well.

B. Leviticus 18:21

Leviticus 18:21: You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.

The precise identification of the Molech worship condemned in the OT is a debated issue. Students are sometimes confused because the same word can variously be translated as “Molech,” “Molek,” “Moloch,” “Milcom,” or “Milkom.” The most common opinion is that Molech was a pagan Canaanite deity whose worship was connected to a cult of the dead involving divination and to some extent child sacrifice.³⁶ Evidence indicates that children were incinerated as part of worship to this god, though it is not clear if they were killed first.³⁷

Whatever the nature of Molech, child-sacrifice was condemned in Leviticus 18:21. This is analogous to modern abortion because in both Molech worship and abortion an innocent child is killed. It should be remembered that in Molech worship, the child was sacrificed so that so purported good would ensue to the parents in the form of better crops, fertility, or general prosperity. In this way, Molech worship is somewhat analogous to modern abortion when

³⁶ E. Ray Clendenen, “Religious Background of the Old Testament,” *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, Dockery, Matthews, Sloan, eds. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 298.

³⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus in New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 259.

children are aborted so that a purported good will ensue to the parents (generally, a better financial standing if the child is not born).

C. Jeremiah 19:4 – 5

Jeremiah 19:4 – 5: Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers or the kings of Judah had *ever* known, and *because* they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it *ever* enter My mind. (NASB)

Note that in both Leviticus and Jeremiah, infanticide is irrevocably tied to a pagan worldview. Is pagan child-sacrifice analogous in any way to modern abortion? Allan Moseley argues that it is. First, Moseley points out that both pagan child sacrifice and modern abortion have to do with the intentional killing of children. Second, child sacrifice in ancient paganism was related to the worship of fertility gods or goddesses. The goal of the worship was to ensure the prosperity of the worshipper. In a similar way, many children are aborted today for financial reasons related to material prosperity.³⁸ The forthright Biblical injunctions against infanticide support the inference that a Biblical ethic will be opposed to abortion.³⁹ Koop and Schaeffer affirmed that ancient infanticide was somewhat analogous to abortion because, “People who destroy their own children and others’, so that they can maintain their life-styles, are also sacrificing to the gods – the gods of materialistic world-view and practice, and the god of the “self” as the egotistic center and measure of all things.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Allan Moseley, *Thinking Against the Grain*, 230 – 231.

³⁹ Horn and Hill, “Abortion,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., 16.

⁴⁰ Koop and Schaeffer, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, 347.

A resurgent paganism is at the heart of at least some pro-abortion arguments. Ginette Paris is one example of someone who grounds pro-abortion arguments in a pagan worldview. In *The Sacrament of Abortion* she argues that women should abandon a Christian worldview and worship Artemis instead. In fact, she considers abortion a sacrifice to Artemis. She boldly states, “Our culture needs new rituals as well as new laws to restore to abortion its sacred dimension. . . . What if my religious beliefs are pagan?”⁴¹

D. Amos 1:13

Amos 1:13: Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of the sons of Ammon and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their borders.

Amos critiques the Ammonites and deplors the heinous nature of murdering the mother *and* the child.

VII. The Incarnation Leads to The Sanctity of Pre-born Life

Examining the birth narratives of Jesus Christ leads to a pro-life moral stance regarding pre-born human life. In particular, the doctrine of the incarnation informs a Christian stance in opposition to the developmental view of personhood common among secular thinkers.

A. Matthew 1:20-21

Matthew 1:20 – 21: But after he [Joseph] had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to

⁴¹ Ginette Paris, *The Sacrament of Abortion* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1992).

a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

This passage clearly emphasizes that the Jesus was the Messiah at conception. Jesus did not *develop into* the Messiah. This strikes at the developmental view of personhood related to most pro-abortion arguments. As the Messiah, Jesus possessed personhood at conception. If it is true that Jesus possessed personhood at conception, it seems to follow that this would be true for other preborn children as well.

B. Luke

1. When did the Incarnation Begin?

Luke 1:30-31: The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

The crucial question here is: “When did the incarnation begin?” The text makes clear that the child in Mary’s womb was already the Messiah at conception. If Jesus was fully human and the Messiah at conception, the conclusion follows that the rest of humanity is fully human at conception.

2. The term *bréphos*

Luke 1:41 – 44 (NASB): When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the **baby** [*bréphos*] leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to

me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby [*bréphos*] leaped in my womb for joy.⁴²

Luke 2:16: So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the **baby** [*bréphos*] as He lay in the manger.

The same Greek word, *bréphos*, is applied both to John the Baptist while in the womb of his mother Elizabeth and to Jesus in the manger after he was born. This indicates that pre-born human life and postnatal human life have the same moral value from a Biblical perspective.

Furthermore, when Mary comes to visit Elizabeth, Mary is perhaps at two weeks of pre-natal development for Jesus. Yet, even at this early stage of pregnancy, Elizabeth calls Mary the “mother of my Lord.” Jesus was already considered the Lord and Messiah prior to his birth, both attributes of “personhood.” This strikes against the secular notions of developmental personhood central to secular arguments for abortion.

⁴² Richard Hays notes that some pro-life Christians have based arguments for personhood of the preborn the fact Elizabeth referred to John the Baptist as a child and that the baby leaps because of the presence of the preborn Messiah. Hays disparages such remarks and says, “To extrapolate from this text – whose theological import is entirely Christological – a general doctrine of the full personhood of the unborn is ridiculous and tendentious exegesis; indeed, it should not be dignified with the label “exegesis.”” *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 448. Yet, Hays does not interact with the fact the text recognizes Jesus as the Messiah *In Utero*, which is most definitely a claim to personhood. Neither does Hays engage the fact that *brephos* is used in reference to a child both *in utero* and as a neonate. Much of Hays flawed argumentation flows from failure to interact with the fact that the moral status of preborn human life is the very issue in question. He does not interact with the creation passages nor the doctrine of the Image of God. In much of his discussion, he seems to assume some sloppy and ill formed concept of developmental personhood, which can only be substantiated from Scripture by bringing modern ideas to the text, something which most certainly *should not be called exegesis!*

VIII. Biblical Ethics Calls for Care for the Weak and Vulnerable

A. Exodus 23:6 – 7

Exodus 23:6 – 7: Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.

B. Amos 2:6 – 7a

Amos 2:6 – 7a: This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed.

It is difficult to imagine a human more poor and defenseless than a pre-born human or a newborn human. Furthermore, they are innocent of any crime since they are only here because of other people’s choice. A consistent Biblical theme is that one can gage the moral health of a culture by the way that culture treats the weakest and most defenseless people. A culture with a callous disregard for destroying innocent human life tends to be less egalitarian, less democratic, and more likely to declare some people “expendable” for the sake of the greater common good (utilitarian ethics).

C. The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25 – 37

In the famous story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus teaches that we are to become neighbors to those who are helpless. The man who had been attacked was in dire need and could not help himself, much like a preborn child. I disagreed with Richard Hays quite strongly in discussing the Sixth Commandment, and I find his overall approach to abortion unsatisfying, but he does make a good point regarding

the way the story of the Good Samaritan can inform Christian thinking about abortion. He said, "When we ask, "Is the fetus a person?" we are asking the same sort of limiting, self-justifying question that the lawyer asked Jesus: "Who is my neighbor?" . . . To define the unborn child as a nonperson is to narrow the scope of moral concern, whereas Jesus calls upon us to widen it by showing mercy and actively intervening on behalf of the helpless."⁴³

IX. God's Forgiveness

Proclaiming the evil of abortion can leave people feeling broken and guilt-ridden with no chance of hope. Preaching the full counsel of God means we also urge people to ask Christ forgiveness, fully confident that Christ shows mercy to sinners.

A. God can cleanse even the sin of abortion.

Isaiah 1:18 (KJV): Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

B. Confession and Repentance

1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God can and does forgive the sin of abortion.

⁴³ Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 451.

X. Other Passages of Interest

A. Exodus 21:22 – 25

Exodus 21:22-25 (NKJV): 22 “If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely (וַיִּצְיֵן יְלֶדֶיהָ), 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. 23 But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Exodus 21:22 – 25 (RSV): 22 “When men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that there is a miscarriage (וַיִּצְיֵן יְלֶדֶיהָ), and yet no harm follows, the one who hurt her shall be fined, according as the woman’s husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. 23 If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

There are some religiously-motivated people who attempt to argue in favor of abortion. Some pro-choice advocates claim that Exodus 21:22 – 25 places a higher value on the life of the mother than the life of the unborn child. The Feinbergs call the pro-choice argument the “miscarriage” interpretation. The pro-choice interpretation of Exodus 21:22 - 25 rests on two interpretive keys.

1. According to Pro-abortion advocates, Exodus 21:22 describes an incident when two men are fighting near a pregnant woman. Inadvertently the two men strike the pregnant woman causing a miscarriage: the child is lost, but the woman lives. Central to the Pro-Choice interpretation is that when verse 22 says that “she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury,” the reference is only to injury to the mother. Whether the child lives or dies is not important. A

miscarriage that results from an accidental shove or push only merits a fine. The RSV favors this approach and translates verse 22 as “there is a miscarriage, but no harm follows.” Several other English translations mention the “miscarriage” translation in footnotes.

2. According to Abortion advocates, verses 23-25 discuss a case where not only is there a miscarriage, but the mother is injured as well. If the mother dies, then the death penalty is imposed.

3. Pro-Abortion Conclusion: Based on these interpretive keys, pro-choice advocates infer that aborting an unborn child must not carry the same moral approbation as taking the life of an adult since the miscarriage only merits a fine but death of the mother merits the death penalty.⁴⁴

B. A Response to the Pro-Abortion Interpretation of Exodus 21:22 – 25

I believe the Pro-Choice interpretation of Exodus 21:22 – 25 is wrong on four counts.

1. The key Hebrew terms point to a pro-life interpretation

The Hebrew phrase in debate is וַיֵּצְאוּ יְלָדֶיהָ . It can be somewhat woodenly paraphrased as “they come out children of her.” The central Hebrew noun in the debate about the correct understanding of Exodus 21:22 – 25 is *yeled* (יָלֵד) which is the word used in Exodus 21:22 – 25 to describe the child that issues from the womb. Walter Kaiser says *yeled* is the normal word for “child,” making it clear that a

⁴⁴ In 1971 Evangelical author Norman Geisler advocated a similar interpretation of Exodus 21:22. Commenting on the passage, he said, “the unborn baby was not considered fully human and, therefore, causing its death was not considered murder.” Norman Geisler, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1971), 218. In the rest of his discussion, Geisler clearly takes a dim view of abortion, but he basically arrives at a position allowing for abortion of pre-viable children. In later works, Geisler took a decidedly hard turn away from this position.

human being is in view here.⁴⁵ The Feinbergs add, “This word [*yeled*] is never used elsewhere for a child who lacks recognizable human form or cannot exist outside the womb.”⁴⁶ For example, in Genesis 30:26, Jacob asks Laban to give him the “wives and *children* (plural of *yeled*) that I have worked for.” Furthermore, Walter Kaiser also points out that that Hebrew does have a regular word for miscarriage (שבל), which means “to be bereaved [of children] or to be childless. In the *piel* participle, this verbal root [שבל] is used in Exodus 23:26 to refer to women who miscarry: “And none will miscarry in your land.”⁴⁷ This word *is not* the word used in Exodus 21:22 – 25. Since the Hebrew text uses a word normally used for live births and does not use the word normally used for miscarriages, it seems Exodus 21:22 is referring to case when a baby is born prematurely, but has no further injury.

We have seen the main noun in the debate about Exodus 21:22 normally refers to a living child, but what about the central verb in the debate? Again, a literal translation of verse 22 is something like “so that her children go (or come) out.” The Hebrew verb for “goes out” is *yatza* (יָצָא), which is the verb used ordinarily for live births. Compare two different translations:

NKJV	“gives birth prematurely”
RSV	“there is a miscarriage”

In short, verse 22 is referring to a live birth. Just as verse 22 has the mother *and* the child in mind, so do verses 23-25. Feinberg and Feinberg offer a good summary of this passage when they say: “When the baby is born prematurely, but unharmed, a fine is assessed. When there is harm to either mother or baby, the law of retaliation is required. And both stipulations apply in a case where

⁴⁵ This is the opinion of Walter Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 170.

⁴⁶ John S. Feinberg and Paul Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2nd ed., 107.

⁴⁷ Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 170.

what happens is totally *accidental*. In fact, this is the only place in the Mosaic Law and Scripture as a whole where the death penalty is required for *accidental* homicide."⁴⁸ Archer concurs: "There is no second-class status attached to the fetus under this rule; he is avenged just as if he were a normally delivered child or an older person: life for life."⁴⁹

Evangelical author Peter Enns takes a somewhat mediating position between that of pro-abortion advocates and pro-life proponents in reference to Exodus 21:22-25. Though I disagree with some of his conclusions, he is probably right when he says, "Although this law is clearly meant to maintain the dignity and worth of human life, it is ambiguous in its details."⁵⁰ Granted that a certain amount of ambiguity may in fact exist, I suggest that the non-ambiguous truth found in this passage be affirmed: Human life deserves protection. When both the central noun and verb in question are considered together, pro-abortion arguments based on Exodus 21:22 – 25 are quite weak and flawed.

2. The Text points to some harm towards the baby involved in the first clause.

Exodus 21:22 says, "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." The pro-choice interpretation attempts to say the "no harm follows" phrase refers only to the woman and has no reference to a child who is miscarried

⁴⁸ Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 108.

⁴⁹ Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 248. John Calvin also affirmed that this passage was referring to the death of *both* the mother and the baby. See John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 3, *Calvin's Harmony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 42.

⁵⁰ Peter Enns, *The NIV Application Commentary: Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 447. Stassen and Gushee reflect a similar opinion and say the passage is "murky" and should not be foundational for any particular view on abortion. See Glen Stassen and David Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 218.

because of a scuffle. But if a woman has been hit so hard that she miscarries, she has already suffered harm! Thus, it is more logical to say that the phrase “no harm follows” refers to the child who is delivered prematurely (but still lived) because the mother was struck.

3. In either interpretation, the text still places some value on the baby in Verse 22.

Even if one grants the pro-choice interpretation, the text still places some value on the pre-born child. Pro-Abortion advocates do not even do this! The unborn babies that are aborted are treated in a most ruthless manner. As Beckwith notes, at a minimum the text indicates the unborn are worth *something*, while modern pro-abortion advocates seem to say that the unborn only have value that their mother’s place on them.⁵¹ I contend, along with others including John Frame, that the interpretative choices for Exodus 21:22 – 25 are not between a “pro-life” versus a “pro-abortion” interpretations, but between a “pro-life” versus an *even stronger pro-life* position.

4. Accidental Death and Abortion are Not Morally Equivalent

The Feinbergs rightly note that even if the pro-abortion “miscarriage” interpretation of Exodus 21:22 – 25 is correct, the passage describes the *accidental* death of a child while abortion is the *intentional death* of a child. The two circumstances – and accident as opposed to an intentional death – are not morally equivalent.⁵²

C. Joshua’s Holy War

Joshua 6:20 – 21: When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout,

⁵¹ Francis Beckwith, *Politically Correct Death*, 142.

⁵² John S. Feinberg and Paul Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 106.

the wall [of Jericho] collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city. They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it – men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

This passage is typical of several places, particularly in Joshua, in which God commanded a Crusade against the Canaanites, including the killing of innocent children. Some pro-abortion advocates point to these passages and say, “See, even God allows the killing of children on occasion. The Bible is more ambiguous on this topic than you admit.”

It is beyond my purpose here to offer an extensive response to the ethical problems presented by the divinely-sanctioned Crusade in Canaan. I will give a brief response:

1. The Crusade in Canaan was a unique command and not a universal one. For reasons ultimately known only to Himself, God authorized this action for a specific place at a specific time. It seems clear that most Christians have approached these passages as a unique command for the children of Israel and not as an ongoing and universal command for Christians to exterminate non-believers (The Crusades of the Middle Ages are a sad exception).
2. In the passages of Scripture which are clearly didactic, God instructs societies to protect children and condemns the killing of innocent children.
3. It makes sense to interpret less clear passages (i.e., Joshua’s crusade) in light of more clear passages (i.e., The Sixth Commandment).

D. Imprecatory Psalms

Psalm 137:8 – 9 (KJV): O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

The emotion expressed by the Psalmist when considering the enemies of Israel point to the sadness of seeing his nation destroyed and the deep frustration against God's enemies. Frequently, the wisdom and poetic literature of the Bible is full of raw human emotion, such as we see in Psalm 137:8 – 9, but this expression of human frustration and anger with evil nations does not mean God is therefore authorizing the wholesale holocaust of preborn human life by modern abortion methods.

E. Acts 15 and Strangled Meat

The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 is one of the most significant moments in Church history. Most early Christians were Jewish, so when Gentiles began responding to the Gospel, new problems emerged in the church regarding how Jewish and Gentile Christians should interact with each other regarding OT dietary practices and issues of ceremonial cleanliness. In a remarkably conciliatory letter to Gentile believers, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem gave very simple guidelines which satisfied Jewish and Gentile believers. They said:

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." (Acts 15:28 – 29)

How wonderful if we can solve disagreements among Christians today in such a succinct manner and with consideration for each other!

British New Testament scholar David Instone-Brewer, a research fellow at Tyndale House, has argued the prohibition of “things strangled” in the Jerusalem Council’s decree is actually a reference to infanticide. He uses this to substantiate opposition against abortion in our day. Is Instone-Brewer correct? Did the Jerusalem council forbid infanticide?

1. Infanticide in Ancient Rome

To understand his claim, it is important to understand how common infanticide was in the Roman Empire. The most common form of infanticide was child abandonment, also known as child exposure: Unwanted children were simply abandoned and left to die. In other cases, children were smothered or drowned. Ancient Jewish author Philo, a Jewish author living in Egypt from around 15/10 BC to 45/50 A.D., described the common practice of infanticide in the Roman Empire, and said:

And as for their murders and infanticides they are established by the most undeniable proofs, since some of them slay them with their own hands, and stifle the first breath of their children, and smother it altogether, out of a terribly cruel and unfeeling disposition; others throw them into the depths of a river, or of a sea, after they have attached a weight to them, in order that they may sink to the bottom more speedily because of it. Others, again, carry them out into a desert place to expose them there, as they themselves say, in the hope that they may be saved by someone, but in real truth to load them with still more painful suffering; for there all the beasts which devour human flesh, since there is no one to keep them off, attack them

and feast on the delicate banquet of the children, while those who were their only guardians, and who were bound above all other people to protect and save them, their own father and other, have exposed them. And carnivorous birds fly down and lick up the remainder of their bodies, when they are not themselves the first to discover them; for when they discover them themselves they do battle with the beasts of the earth for the whole carcass.⁵³

The first century Stoic philosopher Seneca (circa 4 BC – 65 AD) commented on infanticide as if it were a common occurrence, saying, “We knock mad dogs on the head, we slaughter fierce and savage bulls, and we doom scabby sheep to the knife, lest they should infect our flocks; we destroy monstrous births, and we also drown our children if they are born weakly or unnaturally formed; to separate what is useless from what is sound is an act, not of anger, but of reason.”⁵⁴ It is quite sinister that Seneca says the weak as well as the deformed were killed, for the category of the weak could be very large and based on someone’s subjective opinion.⁵⁵

Rome's foundational myth involves twin boys, Romulus and Remus, who were abandoned to die by their mother, but are saved by wild animals. Of course, the myth also says Romulus later killed his twin brother Remus in an act of fratricide. The ancient Twelve Tables of Roman Law said, “A notably deformed child shall be killed immediately.”⁵⁶ Infanticide was woven into the fabric of the Roman Empire’s view of itself.

⁵³ Philo, *Special Laws*, III.114 – 115.

⁵⁴ Seneca, *On Anger*, 1.15, http://www.sophia-project.org/uploads/1/3/9/5/13955288/seneca_anger.pdf. In *Politics*, Aristotle had argued for eugenics and said “let there be a law that no deformed child shall be reared.” Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 7, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:abo:tlg,0086,035:7:1335b>.

⁵⁵ My thoughts here influenced by W. V. Harris, “Child-Exposure in the Roman Empire,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994): 12.

⁵⁶ The Twelve Tables are no longer extant, but reproduced from other sources. Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, “The Twelve Tables,” https://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/twelve_tables.asp.

Why did Romans abandon their children? W.V. Harris of Columbia University suggested four reasons Roman children were left to die: 1) Deformity or other physical inadequacy of the new-born infant; 2) Its illegitimacy;⁵⁷ 3) Perceived economic need; 4) Evil omens and despair.⁵⁸ What is striking is how these parallel modern reasons for abortion. The fourth reason, evil omens or despair, included people who believed a child was born under a bad sign or women who killed a child who was born after she had been divorced by the child's father.

2. Strangled meat

The Greek adjective translated “things strangled” (NASB) in Acts 15:29 is πνικτῶν, a plural form of πνικτός / *pniktos*. The word is rare and only occurs in the Book of Acts in the NT and does not occur in the LXX. *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, the standard reference work on New Testament Greek, says πνικτός “plainly means strangled, choked to death of animals killed without the blood drained from them, whose flesh the Israelites were forbidden to eat.”⁵⁹ In context of early Jewish Christians, there was a concern to remain faithful to dietary laws such as Leviticus 17:10 – 16. Keep in mind that in Acts 15, the words for “blood” and “strangled” occur side-by-side, stressing the probable reference to Levitical laws. This is likely a reference to what happens to sacrifices or meat for meals among the Gentiles; The animals were strangled in some cases and the result was the blood was not properly drained from the animal.⁶⁰ Such a meaning of πνικτός fits with the context of debates among Jewish Christians

⁵⁷ Plautus' play *Cistellaria* tells the story of a woman who abandoned a child conceived when she was raped. See Plautus, *Cistellaria*, I.3, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0098%3Aact%3D1%3Ascene%3D3>.

⁵⁸ W. V. Harris, “Child-Exposure in the Roman Empire,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994): 11 – 12.

⁵⁹ *BDAG*. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 838.

⁶⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 506.

raised under OT law and Gentile Christians not raised under the OT law.

Instone-Brewer rejects the interpretation *πνικτός* based on the OT background. Instead, he argues that it was hard to strangle animals so he thinks improper killing is in mind. He then claims a review of the uses of the term prior to the third century AD shows it is a special culinary term meaning something like “smothered meat.”⁶¹ He then argues that if “smothered meat” is the correct translation, then the text would be merely rejecting a popular culinary delicacy, which he thinks would make no sense. Instone-Brewer then says, “In context of the other three mortal sins [in the Jerusalem council’s decision], this prohibition [*πνικτός*] is clear: “Do not smother babies.””⁶² Instone-Brewer then says the Jerusalem council’s decision became the source of early Christian opposition to infanticide and should inform modern Christian opposition to abortion.

While Instone-Brewer’s reconstruction of *πνικτός* is interesting, I find it unconvincing. First, the early church fathers strongly opposed infanticide, but none of them cited Acts 15 as a reason for doing so, a startling omission if Instone-Brewer’s reconstruction is true. Second, *πνικτός* does not occur in isolation. He downplays the degree to which “blood” and “strangled” occur side-by-side in a list of guidelines meant to ease tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers. Taken together and considering the context, some form of violation of Levitical codes makes sense. Third, the verb for “to strangle” (*pnigō*) does occur in Mark 5:13 in reference to pigs that drowned. This points to some form of improper killing of animals in mind. Finally, a word needs to be said about Instone-Brewer’s logical flow. He hastily dismisses the Levitical concerns on the minds of the

⁶¹ David Instone-Brewer, *Moral Questions of the Bible: Timeless Truth in a Changing World* (Bellingham, WA; Lexham press, 2019), 42.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Jewish believers, notes that infanticide was common in the Roman Empire, says πνικτός means “smothered,” and then asserts in Acts 15 it means infanticide. But surely this is moving too fast with the evidence. In fact, Instone-Brewer himself does not cite one instance when πνικτός was used in reference to infanticide, a point which would surely strengthen his argument if such an occurrence existed.

Instone-Brewer’s suggestion that πνικτός refers to infanticide gives us a good opportunity to think about the use of the Bible in moral debates. Taking abortion as the issue at hand, there is no Bible verse which specifically says, “Thou shall not abort babies.” Arriving at a sound, Biblical stance on the issue requires the hard work of defining the moral status of preborn human life, studying what happens in an abortion (it is a violent act), and then arriving at a conclusion about the morality of aborting preborn human life. The most robust handling of the Scripture leads to the conclusion that preborn humans deserve protection from the point of conception and that we should not abort children.

Of course, it would be much easier if we could just find a Bible verse which forbids abortion. It appears Instone-Brewer has a well-meaning desire to find something very close to such a verse. A stronger case can be made that Leviticus 18:21’s condemnation of child sacrifice to Molech informs a Christian view of abortion. But we do not help our case in the long run by making tenuous lexical arguments which cannot be sustained. There are any number of issues in our culture which are not specifically addressed in Scripture, such as puberty-suppressing drugs, in vitro fertilization, or human cloning. The Bible gives us the necessary worldview and the essential principles needed for thinking through these issues with the right perspective. Humanity’s creation in the image of God, the gift of gender, and the sanctity of human life are all important starting points for the hard work of Christian ethical reflection.

XI. What Should the Church Do?

When an individual Christian, a church, or a denomination argues in favor of abortion, it signals a departure from Biblical authority and worship of human autonomy. More than just rejecting abortion, there are several pro-life steps a church can and should take.

A. The Pro-Life Stance and Church History

In ancient Roman, pre-born and newborn children were afforded very little protection. In the early Roman Republic, the powers of the father were theoretically unbounded and the oldest living male in a family had immense power. A *paterfamilias* [male head of household with no living father or grandfather] held *paterpotestas*, powers of life and death over all family members, including his slaves and most of his freedmen. The *paterfamilias* retained the key right to accept or occasionally reject – if the baby was deformed or of dubious paternity – every newborn child laid at his feet.⁶³ Di Berardino comments:

Together with abortion, abandonment and exposure were common more or less everywhere in antiquity – except in the Jewish world – esp. of deformed or illegitimate babies, or those whose birth was accompanied by unfavorable omens. The two actions were different – although both frequently led to a horrible death of the newborn – in that exposure took place in specific places and with certain precautions (e.g., a medal around the neck) so that the baby might be taken in and raised, whereas abandonment implied greater disinterest in the

⁶³ Nigel Rodgers, *The Roman World: People and Places* (London: Lorenz Books, 2005), 218.

newborn's fate. Girls were more readily exposed than boys, and even more so the children of slaves.⁶⁴

The Latin term *alumnus* (*alumna*), among other meanings, was used in reference to an abandoned child that has been taken in and raised (a foundling).

The church must take an unashamedly pro-life stance. The Bible upholds the unique value of pre-born humans and affirms that violence towards the weakest and most defenseless is particularly heinous. Respect for human life has always been at the heart of Christian ethics. For example, the *Letter to Diognetus* (100-150 A.D.) says, “[Christians] marry like everyone else, and have children, but they do not expose their offspring.”⁶⁵ Another Second Century Christian document known as *The Didache* contrasts the way of life with the way of death. One aspect of the way of life is that Christians do not “abort a child or commit infanticide.”⁶⁶ Justin Martyr criticized the common practice of exposing children, so very similar to modern abortion, and said, “But as for us [Christians], 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 girls, but also the males) are brought up to prostitution.”⁶⁷ Furthermore, the *Letter of Barnabas* 19:5 says, “You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not abort a child, nor, again, commit infanticide.”⁶⁸ For early Christians, “thou shall not abort” becomes a sub-commandment of

⁶⁴ A. Di Berardino, “Abandoned and Exposed Children,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 1.3.

⁶⁵ Michael W. Holmes, ed. and trans., *Diognetus*, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 703, 3:6.

⁶⁶ Michael W. Holmes, ed. and trans., *The Didache*, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 347.

⁶⁷ Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995 reprint), 172.

⁶⁸ Michael W. Holmes, ed. and trans., *The Epistle of Barnabas*, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 435.

the sixth commandment, “Thou shall not murder.”⁶⁹ When we stand for the sanctity of human life, we stand in the rich tradition of Christian ethics.

The Christian church simultaneously opposed abortion while recognizing the danger women experience in childbirth. The death of both the mother and a child in delivery was not uncommon. The act of sex between a husband and wife, while no less romantic than today, carried with it greater risks. *The English Book of Common Prayer* included this prayer for new mothers, “Forasmuch as it hath pleased almighty God of his goodness to give you safe deliverance, and your child baptism, and hath preserved you in the great danger of childbirth: ye shall; therefore give hearty thanks unto god, and pray.” (BOCP, XIII, “Purification of Women”)⁷⁰ In spite of the danger, Christian women *did not* embrace abortion. In our day an age when modern health care makes delivery much safer, should Christian women do any less than those who came before them?

B. Conception is the only non-arbitrary starting point for defining when human life begins.

Conception is the only non-arbitrary marker of personhood; theories of functional / developmental personhood lead too naturally to infanticide and involuntary euthanasia. If the moral status of a preborn human has any real meaning it can’t be defined by the constantly improving ability of medical science to reduce the age of viability.

C. Proactively Pro-Life

A multitude of factors leads people to choose an abortion. Sexual promiscuity contributes to out-of-wedlock pregnancies which

⁶⁹Michael Gorman, *Abortion and the Early Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998, 1982), 50.

⁷⁰ I modernized the spelling for my students.

compounds the abortion dilemma. The answer to widespread abortion begins with a comprehensive approach to sex education. Furthermore, the data available indicates that a disproportionate number of women seeking abortions are poor. Therefore, the church must offer tangible and real support for these crisis situations. This calls for a response that does two things: One, our stance should affirm that sex outside of marriage is wrong and, two, our stance should affirm that children conceived outside of marriage have a right to live.

While Christians should advocate significant changes in abortion laws so that public policy will affirm the value of human life, we must understand that there are limits to the amount of change that laws can bring. During the nineteenth century, abortion laws did become more rigid, but abortion still took place. We must not deceive ourselves into thinking that a transformation of law will eliminate abortion as a problem. Olasky's comments are helpful here when he says, "A pro-life activist who believes a change of law will eliminate abortion ignores the late nineteenth-century lesson that law by itself avails little unless programs emphasizing prevention and offering true compassion are in place and effective."⁷¹

The ERLC offers another proactive way to plead on behalf of the unborn via the "Psalm 139 Project." Financial gifts to the Psalm 139 project are used to place sonogram machines in crisis pregnancy centers around the United States. If women considering an abortion are given the opportunity actually to see their unborn child, many of them will choose not to abort the baby.

⁷¹ Marvin Olasky, *Abortion Rites*, 283.

D. It takes money

Being pro-life takes money: It costs money to adopt children, it costs money to support crisis pregnancy centers, it costs money to encourage a young couple with an unplanned pregnancy, it costs money to support a Christian Life Home for women with crisis pregnancies. If we are really pro-life, then we will donate to pro-life ministries. Do pro-life ministries have a prominent line-item in your church budget? The way we spend our money demonstrates what is really important to us.

You should be aware that secular companies which offer help to not-for-profits will often exclude pro-life services. This is an example of how pro-abortion groups have so mainstreamed abortion that groups that do not offer abortion are marginalized as “out of the mainstream” and, thus, not worthy of financial support. Rachel House, a pro-life ministry near MBTS, received the following communication from Intuit in 2017:

After reviewing your primary mission, we have determined your organization's type to be a pregnancy center, which is not eligible for Intuit donations. Pregnancy centers provide educational and counseling services related to conception, delivery, and care of infants. Pregnancy centers, also known as "crisis pregnancy centers" and "pregnancy resource centers," cannot be classified as reproductive healthcare organizations because they do not provide a full range of healthcare and gynecological services for women facing both planned and unplanned pregnancies.

In other words, if you don't agree that little babies can be aborted, we don't want to support you.

E. Pastoral Counsel Concerning Abortion / Crisis Pregnancies

Before I begin my pastoral counsel, I am struck by the degree to which advice about how to address out-of-wedlock pregnancies always begin with the girl in question and hardly ever addresses the male. But apart from modern ARTs, no girl ever got pregnant without the help of a teenage boy or man. To this degree, I fear we sometimes subtly and unintentionally support the wrong-headed idea popular among many guys in a dating relationship which says “smart girls should practice contraception and if she gets pregnant, then it’s all on her.” Such an attitude treats women as objects good only for male sexual gratification and in a way is a form of coercion regarding abortion. I have heard of a few stories of young women who became pregnant out-of-wedlock being placed under church discipline, including public confession to the congregation. I have never heard a story of a young man who *fathered* the child ever being placed under similar church discipline.

I once received a phone call from a young man who claimed to be a Christian. It was around 3 PM on a Friday afternoon. About two months earlier he asked me about the morality of abortion and I explained from Psalm 139 that abortion destroys an innocent human life. Sadly, earlier that Friday morning, he had taken his ex-girlfriend to an abortion clinic and he paid for her to have an abortion. Suddenly, the awfulness of his deed encompassed him and he called me in desperation. My advice was this: “You are in the pigpen and you need to run home to the Father.”

A young woman in your church who has an out-of-wedlock pregnancy has four choices: Abort the baby; raise the baby by herself; marry the father of the baby and raise the child together; place the baby with a Christian adoption agency.

Around 1% of pregnancies wind up in adoption. Abortion has depleted the number of adoptable babies in the United States. As a

result, many couples adopt children from outside our country (a very noble thing).

In your appeals to young women, you might encourage them to consider that abortion and adoption both have many of the same results. Both abortion and adoption save a young woman from the financial burden of raising a child. Both abortion and adoption allow a young woman to continue her education and career. Both abortion and adoption allow a young woman to start a family with a man she will marry someday. Both abortion and adoption relieve the young woman's family from the stress of raising a grandchild. Both abortion and adoption relieve the father of the child from financial responsibility. The major moral difference is that *only adoption is a choice that honors and celebrates life!*

I advise that a young woman who has an out-of-wedlock pregnancy to think very carefully before marrying the father. To quote Dr. Richard Land, "A lot of people who have sex together shouldn't get married! It's like painting yourself into a corner. Then, after painting yourself into a corner, you apply a second coat!"⁷² At the same time, we want to challenge young men to marry (and stay married!) the women who bear their babies. The decision to marry or not marry depends a great deal on the age, maturity, and stability of the boy and the girl.

There are no easy choices in a crisis pregnancy: but there are right choices and wrong choices. Choosing life is always right.

F. Ministries in Times of Crisis

1. Crisis Pregnancy Centers

⁷² Class lecture on January 18, 2011 at MBTS.

Crisis pregnancy centers offer an option as opposed to Planned Parenthood centers which want women to abort. Does your community have a crisis pregnancy center? Does your church support it?

2. Christian Life Homes

Christian Life Homes are church-supported ministries that offer a place for pregnant women to stay if they have a crisis pregnancy. The Life Homes can help women determine if they should raise the child or place the baby for adoption.

3. Children's Homes

Children's Homes / Orphanages are ministries to provide a safe place for children to stay if their parents do not want to raise them. Thus, Christians can encourage the sanctity of life and tell parents, "We will take care of your baby."

All three of these ministries are an important part of being pro-life.

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