

Honoring Life, Choice, and Grace

Brad Bailey – June 7, 2015

Introduction: Transcending the political...for the personal.

I. The Truth About Life

What Scripture Declares

Psalms 139:13-16 (CEV)

You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body, and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me. Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt. Nothing about me is hidden from you! I was secretly woven together deep in the earth below, but with your own eyes you saw my body being formed. Even before I was born, you had written in your book everything I would do.

1. Life begins at conception

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Emmanuel." (meaning 'God with us.') Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:31; Matt. 1:23.

2. Human life reflects the image of God, our Creator, in a unique way.

"Then God said "Let's us make humankind in our image.- Gen. 1:26-27 So God created humankind in His image."

...The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being." Gen. 2:7

The value of human life is _____, not developed. The value of human life is _____....not achieved.

The Scriptures speak consistently of God' relationship to life in the womb.

- "Thy hands made me and fashioned me." Psalm 119:73
- "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart." Jeremiah 1:5
- Samson's mother was told not to eat unclean foods "for the boy shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb" Judges 13:3-5
- Paul writes that God had set him apart "from my mother's womb." Gal. 1:15

3. Destruction of life in the womb is the loss of sacred life. Exodus 21:22-23 (cf. Amos 1:13; 2 Kings 8:12; Hosea 9:14-16.)

What the Fathers of the Faith Declare

What Science Declares

Matthew 5:21-22

Proverbs 31:8-9 (AMP)

Open your mouth for those unable to speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are left desolate and defenseless; Open your mouth, judge righteously, and administer justice for the poor and needy.

II. Forming a Voice that Chooses to Honor Life

Let us find and form a voice that honors the _____ of human life

Let us find and form a voice that _____ of ourselves to serve those in need.

Luke 11:46

III. Finding the Grace to Go Forward

Romans 5:20-21 (MSG)

The Hope of Heaven

2 Samuel 12:19-23 / Matthew 18:10

We deeply value the opportunity to offer a safe place to engage further on this topic. We hope you will come talk...email...or call as helpful. For those interested in some further thoughts in writing, you may pick up a copy of "Responses to Some Common Questions Regarding Abortion" at the Information table.

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Today I want to invite us **to come** before the value of human life...and consider what it means to honor such life.

The Scriptures begin with the **grand testimony** that **God created life**...in fact...it is the culmination of all creation.

C.S. Lewis, stated so pointedly [1],

“There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.

Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”

At the **start of the year** there was a Sunday many set aside as **Sanctity of Life Sunday**...and we chose to make today a day we would **honor that call**.

To consider the sacred value of life... relates to a topic that is **very sensitive** both **politically**...but also **personally**...which is **abortion**.

To speak about abortion can elicit lots of reactions.

So I want to help us **check some of those more political reactions**...for the sake of what is **more personal**.

The way that we so easily approach social and political issues can leave us in a **self-righteous** posture that is as dangerous as any.

I want to encourage all of us to be aware of how easily we **can become so focused** on having the **right position** that we **don't face** that we're **becoming the wrong kind of person**. As I have often said about various social issues...that become politicized... we can become blind to the fact that we **equate having the “right” position** as that of becoming the right kind of person.

In truth, having the **right position** can be a **cheap substitute** for what it means to be a righteous person... a person **whose heart and nature is right**.

When we allow ourselves to think that we are the “right” people against the “wrong” people....we are no longer the church.

While it's an issue that has a history of dividing people... often across political lines... my trust is that we can come together with a **spirit of humility before God**.

The issue of abortion has a history of becoming **polarizing**...difficult to have conversations about... because it's often reduced to slogans and simplistic assumptions about “the other side.”

One side views the other as having no convictions, and the other side views the opponents as having no compassion.

Commercial media is rooted in the need to create conflict...it's **not about helping you** to understand the other side...it's about provoking...and stirring...and usually to feel better about the “side” that you are already on. In fact it is all about defining such sides.

As such, we have **two sides** called **“Pro-Life” and “Pro-Choice”**... that seem to define everything. But in truth...most people who identify with the pro-life position...and not without very deep

concerns for women ...and those who identify with the pro-choice position are not without concerns for life.

Similarly... We have to **transcend** allowing this to be an **abstract social issue**. For too many of us...and for too long... and too easily...we relate to abortion primarily as an abstract social issue. Real souls have endured real anguish over it. We must seek to understand their painful stories before we speak into their struggles. The more we know, the more compassionate will be our truthful response.

I think that the way we approach social and political issues can become I have found that while I am **deeply interested** in the **implications of politics**...because it is the **primary context of public conversation** about **many big questions in life**....I've found myself less driven by the goal of winning political positions. Something seems to get lost when the emphasis is on winning a political position...or legislation. **Whether the issue is abortion... same sex marriage...Bruce Jenner's gender identity...or immigration**...while I believe that there is good value in how we shape the legal backdrop...it's just a backdrop. When we believe that putting the right laws in place settles everything...we're going to be a bit off track. It brings the unspoken sense of trying to control people from the outside in...and we don't ultimately control anyone...and in fact...outward control generally creates inward opposition.

When I let the **political battles** take the **forefront**...I find that **I end up in a different conversation** than what I sense I want... and more importantly...what God wants. I sense that God wants me to hear what one is really dealing with on a personal level...and seek how God may minister on that personal level.

I am well aware that we gather with potentially very **different backgrounds** and perspectives and experiences. So let me offer a few words to some of those backgrounds.

If you are one who has tended to **identify politically** with the **Pro Choice position**... or perhaps uncertain ...I want to be up front with communicating that I am **rooted** in the **basic convictions** that are **pro-life**, but **the political position will never be a banner** here. You're **not only welcome here**...I value what you may wrestle with. If we disagree...my invitation is to come and dialogue... even challenge you to come **and lets reason together**.

If you are one who has tended to **identify politically** with the **Pro-life position**... **I want to challenge you to face the need to realize that it's** not just about **positions** but **people**; not just **convictions** but **compassion**.

Which brings me to a **third audience**...**those who have been through the choice that led to an abortion**.

You know better than I, the **real struggle of conscience**...the **hard choices** that **may never have been settled peacefully with God**.

I believe that those who have been a part of choosing an abortion in the past **may be served most** by bringing considering the **truth and grace at hand**.

As we look to God...we look for not only truth... but grace.

With that, I want us to engage the value of human life...and how we can honor life.

First...

I. The Truth About Life

What is the value of human life...and when is that value given?
Let's consider first what the Scriptures declare.

What Scripture Declares

The Scriptures are a **living testimony**... revealing the work and will of our Creator.
They begin declaring that God is the creator of all...AND the giver of life.

This is what **King David** described so personally in **Psalm 139**...

Psalm 139:13-16 (CEV)

You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body,
and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me.
Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt.
Nothing about me is hidden from you! I was secretly woven together deep in the earth below,
but with your own eyes you saw my body being formed.
Even before I was born, you had written in your book everything I would do.

The Psalmist **recognizes God's hand on life**.... and **notably...at it's very start**... life in the womb.

David describes God as involved from the very innermost formation in the womb.

What no one could see was **not hidden from God**... the whole of one's existence is ordained by God.

Some might note the metaphorical nature of the Psalms...but metaphor uses non-literal images to declare literal truth. (Cf. Psalm 23) And in fact we find, Scripture confirms and expands what the Psalmist recognizes about life in the womb.

1. Life begins at conception

The "seed" is understood as the sacred and spiritual means of passing on life. (Eve and Serpent-Genesis 3:15;38:9; David's throne - 2 Samuel 17:12-16.

Some **forty times Scripture refers to conception** and life in the womb in referring to the beginning of life. [2]

Every Christmas we hear the declaration...

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Emmanuel." (meaning 'God with us.' cf. Isaiah 7:14; cf. Luke 1:31; Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:39-43.) When God chose to enter humanity...He did so not as an adult...not as a young child... but as an unborn child.

When Mary had just conceived life by God's Spirit...she visits Elizabeth...and refers to the unborn child as "the Lord"...in only the first couple days of pregnancy!

If life begins at conception what value does God give to such life?

2. Human life reflects the image of God, our Creator, in a unique way.

"Then God said "Let's us make humankind in our image...Genesis 1:26-27
So God created humankind in His image."

...The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being.” Gen. 2:7

“breath of life” = plural, “lives”; God created life in his image with the capacity to create this life in an ongoing manner through conception.

Ex seeing new parents Carrie & Memege – with their newborn...with no sense they were the apriori creators of this child...but more the co-producers...of something profound. Beyond the biology...there was a being.

...The bearing of God’s image is **not connected to mere biological qualities...but to the very being themselves.**

God’s Word maintains that...

The value of human life is derived, not developed. The value of human life is endowed....not achieved.

The Scriptures speak consistently of God’ relationship to life in the womb.

- “Thy hands made me and fashioned me.” Psalm 119:73
- Not only in developing but in calling and purpose. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart.” Jeremiah 1:5
- Samson’s mother was told not to eat unclean foods “for the boy shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb ...” Judges 13:3-5
- Paul writes that God had set him apart “from my mother’s womb.” Gal. 1:15

None of us are an accident.

YOU are not an accident.

God holds a place for every life...with plans and purpose.

Let that truth declare deeply in your soul that **your existence is intended**, and let it declare value to every life conceived.

3. Destruction of life in the womb is the loss of sacred life.

Exodus 21:22-23

“If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take a life for life, eye for eye...” (cf. Amos 1:13; 2 Kings 8:12; Hosea 9:14-16.)

Here is the ancient law of retribution...that set the legal boundary of only allowing retribution equal to what was taken. And it’s striking that if the child not yet born is harmed...it is life for a life. [3]

Now there are issues in which while the Scriptures may seem clear... we do well to consider how those who were closest in the time and culture understood them... as sort of a check on our way of understanding. As such we do well to consider....

What the Fathers of the Faith Declare

The practice of abortion first came into public discussion in ancient Greece, during what many refer to as the first “age of enlightenment.” A rampant sense of freethinking was in the air and abortion was given place for many of the same life style reasons as today. Along with the practice of abortion came preferential treatment to male babies and abandonment of babies who were undesired.

The early church fathers remained opposed... Tertillian, Origin, Ambrose, Augustine...all maintained every life was sacred. [4] This conviction eventually won the day and was adopted following the emperor’s conversion to embrace Christ or at least the teachings and worldview. This conviction has stood throughout Catholic history, and was held strongly by every reformer of Protestant tradition. (Calvin, Luther, later Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and Bonhoeffer.)

Finally, we find that the truth about life...is found in ...

What Science Declares

Until recently, little was known of the development process so there was more freedom to imagine something that would seem far from human in nature was in the womb. But technology has now revealed just how complete life is.

- At conception... the **entire makeup on the unique life is already there** in what we call **DNA**
- Since the third week the lobes of the brain have been distinguishable and organs begin to form.
- Since the **4th week** the **heart is beating**, the head and face are distinguishable, and arms and legs begin budding. *All this has developed even before many would know that they are pregnant.*
- At **eight weeks**, babies will suck their thumbs. We see they **respond to sound**. There is **evidence** building that they're **dreaming**. They **recoil from pain**.
- By approximately the **tenth week**, the **nervous system is transmitting messages** to and from the brain; skin is responsive and the child will move if touched. Sonograms have shown babies at eight weeks will pull its heel up, will pull back in away from the needle. Just weeks ago...there was a huge breakthrough discovery at Oxford University...that found that babies just days old have been experiencing pain just like adults...and in fact likely more. [4b]
- The brain itself has approximately the same overall structure as it will have at birth.
- **Scholar Jerome Lejeune**, a professor of fundamental genetics in Paris testified to a Senate committee.

“Life has a very long history, but each individual has a very neat beginning, the moment of its conception.”

The result of such knowledge has shifted much of the debate surrounding abortion; shifting to higher qualities of life. Few are trying to deny the humanity of the unborn, now a distinction is being made using terms such as...

- human life vs. human being
- biological life vs. personhood.

The debate is whether human life is endowed or achieved.

Some have proposed that there is a unique quality of **viability outside the womb**...but no child can survive more than a few minutes outside the womb on their own. Some have proposed that the quality that distinguishes a life as worthy of value is the **social-relational quality** that uniquely comes after birth. But such a distinction negates the relationship that every mother knows before birth. And such a distinction would question the value of every life which has mental disabilities.

It's difficult to find any inherent quality that distinguishes a qualitative difference in nature between a child before and after birth. [5]

Human life is endowed with a value that is fundamental...not merely functional.

I want to ask you to stop with me and really sit before this truth...

Life is given by God... it bears His image....reflects His image.

A disregard for life.... is a disregard for God.

That should cause all of us to pause... to bow... as we all "use" life for our good and gain... speak disrespectfully.... Have moments of contempt... lacked care for those with needs.

There is so much more than simply the destruction of life by abortion.

Jesus said...

Matthew 5:21-22 (ESV)

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

We do well to realize that to honor life... isn't something we settle merely on a political position. To be truly pro-life is about more than voting.

Here is God's call...he is calling us to find our voice...to form our voice.

The Lord would remind us of his calling in Proverbs 31...

Proverbs 31:8-9 (AMP)

Open your mouth for those unable to speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are left desolate and defenseless; Open your mouth, judge righteously, and administer justice for the poor and needy.

It's about finding and forming a voice that sees human life as valuable...and speaks out...and acts out of that desire to honor. [6, 7]

II. Forming a Voice that Chooses to Honor Life

Here is a beautiful call to open our mouths to speak out for those who can't; lives with no public voice...fitting of the unborn child. But notice we are also called to the cause of the poor and needy, a reference fitting so many for whom the option of abortion has beckoned...and beckons even now.

Let us find and form a voice that honors the whole of human life

God calls us to find and form a voice for ALL who are vulnerable... all who are in need. That bears a deep challenge to what being "pro-life" involves. Too often it becomes reduced to **being pro-birth rather than pro-life. To desire protection for life in the womb with integrity also calls forth a commitment to care and dignity for all human life. All whose dignity can be oppressed—women and children, the old and the disabled, the poor and persecuted. The greatest challenge for those of us who are pro-life is to truly be and consistently respect the value of human life. When the cause of fighting against abortion seems to matter more than caring for the loss of life in war...the weight of life for the poor...then I believe that we have become committed to a cause more than a deeper honor for life.**

The same holds true for finding ourselves connecting with the causes of war and poverty and not the choices related to the very start of life.

Mother Teresa knowing perhaps better than any other how far disrespect for human life can go spoke painfully and pointedly to America stating
“When a nation encourages its mothers to kill their children, there is nothing that won’t be done.”

Albert Schweitzer once said,
“If a man loses reverence for any part of life he will lose his reverence for all of life”

When we grasp that life is not ours to use...but to care for....we will grasp the connection across all of life.

Let us find and form a voice that gives of ourselves to serve those in need.

We can hear in God’s call that which transcends mere voting. Forming a voice may include voting...but we are called to “administer justice”...to help meet the needs of all who are “poor and in need.”

We do well to hear what Jesus said...

Luke 11:46 (NIV)

Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

Jesus knows that the only real voice is a voice that is ultimately involved.

Two great examples...

The recently released documentary film entitled...The Drop Box – For those who aren’t familiar with this film...and the movement it represents...

A 21-year-old undergraduate film student at the University of Southern California (USC), by the name of Brian Ivie read an article about a Korean pastor who saved disabled babies abandoned on the streets of Seoul...by creating a drop box in the side of his place...where they could be left without anyone knowing. [8]

The result... THE DROP BOX is a feature that tells the story of a pastor who built "a mailbox" for abandoned babies. It's a story about the man who gave everything to protect them.

That young director discovered in that pastor’s love...the love of Christ.

We are excited that in three weeks... We will be hosting a showing RIGHT HERE on **Saturday night...June 27**...and not only be hosting a showing of this feature film...but the director, Brian Ivie, will be coming to share his story as well.

Another is **Harvest Home**. As many know, Harvest Home is a residential home for women in crisis pregnancy, which we as a community help support.

III. Finding the Grace to Go Forward

Romans 5:20-21 (MSG)

All that passing laws against sin did was produce more lawbreakers. But sin didn't, and doesn't, have a chance in competition with the aggressive forgiveness we call *grace*. When it's sin versus grace, grace wins hands down.²¹ All sin can do is threaten us with death, and that's the end of it. Grace, because God is putting everything together again through the Messiah, invites us into life—a life that goes on and on and on, world without end.

Here the apostle Paul describes the great spiritual reality in which we live; that there are **two realms or powers** at work in this world - the power of sin and the power of grace. > **AND THE POWER OF GRACE IS GREATER**.

This is not some false cheap grace that simply denies the significance of life...and turns away from our failures to honor it. This is the divine grace that meets all who face their failures... and a grace that can meet any failure.

To those who have participated in the choice of an abortion...

If you realize the significance.... it won't serve you to deny it.

Jesus gathers us...ALL of us...to realize we are not some group that can be distinguished as either good or bad. We are all adulterers and murderers... who he calls out into the light... where we can surrender to the face of grace.

I want to invite up someone who worked in the life movement for a couple of years...who God has called to care for those who have been through the process of participating in an abortion ...

Johnny Blandford [Comes to share his story...]

I. 1 in 3 stat, experientially many more in the church have actually had an abortion. The point is "you are NOT alone"...cuz there are at least 2 of us, since I had an abortion (will restate that for those in the audience who don't believe a guy can have an abortion). You are NOT alone. And, oh yeah, this applies to almost all of us in here, not only because we assuredly know someone whose walked this road (even though they haven't told you), but because many of us have stuff in our closets that we haven't fully RECEIVED God's forgiveness and experienced His healing love.

II. So, God's grace covers you. There is now NO condemnation for those in Christ.]

III. My story. More healing than I knew after I had received His forgiveness. Forgiveness in 2001. Healing last fall.

IV. Healing led to grace, as in me extending grace. I'm not casting stones (which I used to do internally) at (almost:) anyone any more. Healing is beautiful, its certainly God's will for your life.

V. Romans 8:1 again. "In Christ" is the key. If not in Christ, and you're here today exploring this Jesus...if I could sum up the Gospel, the Good News, in one word it would be "forgiveness". Everything wrong or bad you've ever done, every stupid thing you'll do today, and every mistake you'll ever make was all erased, all completely forgiven by God, if you'll simply trust in Jesus and believe on His Name.

[Back to Brad]

I believe that there is **also a grace that receives the littlest lives lost so early**. Whether through abortion...or the loss experienced in miscarriage... the Scriptures suggest that the eternal heavenly realm receives such lives in a special way. [9]

We have the hope of heaven....and it comes not by denying the sanctity of life, but by declaring it, as well as the healing and hope that awaits all who seek God's forgiveness...even the forgiveness of having allowed a sacred life to be taken.

CLOSING / MINISTRY

Notes:

1. The Weight of Glory (HarperOne, 2001), pp. 45-46.

2. In the Old Testament, the Bible uses the same Hebrew words to describe the pre-born child, infants, and children. In the New Testament, the same Greek words also describe the pre-born child, infants and children which implies a continuity from conception to childhood and on into adulthood. God speaks in a consistent way about the pre-born and born in a way that reflects no distinction between potential life and real life, or in delineating stages of personhood—namely, between a pre-born infant in the womb at any stage and a born infant or child. Further, God Himself relates to the unborn as persons. Some further passages of Scripture which reflect a belief or teaching that life is deemed to start in the womb... as human God bearing and with a spirit. "Did not He who made me in the womb make him, And the same one fashion us in the womb? (*Job 31:15*)

Yet Thou art He who didst bring me forth from the womb; Thou didst make me trust when upon my mother's breasts. Upon Thee I was cast from birth; Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb. (*Psalms 22:9-10*)

Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, `Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. (*Isaiah 44:2*)

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, (*Isaiah 44:24*)

Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb. (*Psalms 22:9-10*)

"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*)

"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb." (*Luke 1:15*)

3. [Catholic Answers notes](#) this applies the lex talionis or "law of retribution" to abortion. The lex talionis establishes the just punishment for an injury (eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life, compared to the much greater retributions that had been common before, such as life for eye, life for tooth, lives of the offender's family for one life).

The lex talionis would already have been applied to a woman who was injured in a fight. The distinguishing point in this passage is that a pregnant woman is hurt "so that her child comes out"; the child is the focus of the lex talionis in this passage. Aborted babies must have justice, too.

This is because they, like older children, have souls, even though marred by original sin. David tells us, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5, NIV). Since sinfulness is a spiritual rather than a physical condition, David must have had a spiritual nature from the time of conception.

The same is shown in James 2:26, which tells us that "the body without the spirit is dead": The soul is the life-principle of the human body. Since from the time of conception the child's body is alive (as shown by the fact it is growing), the child's body must already have its spirit.

4. Information about the positions of the early church and Church Fathers can be found at <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/abortion>
<http://www.bible.ca/H-Abortion.htm>
<http://www.bible.ca/H-Abortion.htm>

References include:

The Didache

"The second commandment of the teaching: You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. . . . You shall not procure [an] abortion, nor destroy a newborn child" (Didache 2:1–2 [A.D. 70]).

The Letter of Barnabas

". . . . Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born" (Letter of Barnabas 19 [A.D. 74]).

The Apocalypse of Peter

"And near that place I saw another strait place . . . and there sat women. . . . And over against them many children who were born to them out of due time sat crying. And there came forth from them rays of fire and smote the women in the eyes. And these were the accursed who conceived and caused abortion" (The Apocalypse of Peter 25 [A.D. 137]).

Tertullian

"In our case, a murder being once for all forbidden, we may not destroy even the fetus in the womb, while as yet the human being derives blood from the other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. That is a man which is going to be one; you have the fruit already in its seed" (Apology 9:8 [A.D. 197]).

"Among surgeons' tools there is a certain instrument, which is formed with a nicely-adjusted flexible frame for opening the uterus first of all and keeping it open; it is further furnished with an annular blade, by means of which the limbs [of the child] within the womb are dissected with anxious but unfaltering care; its last appendage being a blunted or covered hook, wherewith the entire fetus is extracted by a violent delivery.

"There is also [another instrument in the shape of] a copper needle or spike, by which the actual death is managed in this furtive robbery of life: They give it, from its infanticide function, the name of *embruosphaktes*, [meaning] "the slayer of the infant," which of course was alive. . . .

"[The doctors who performed abortions] all knew well enough that a living being had been conceived, and [they] pitied this most luckless infant state, which had first to be put to death, to escape being tortured alive" (The Soul 25 [A.D. 210]).

"Now we allow that life begins with conception because we contend that the soul also begins from conception; life taking its commencement at the same moment and place that the soul does" (ibid., 27).

"The law of Moses, indeed, punishes with due penalties the man who shall cause abortion [Ex. 21:22–24]" (ibid., 37).

4b. Babies feel pain 'like adults': Most babies not given pain meds for surgery; April 21, 2015
Source: University of Oxford

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/04/150421084812.htm>

The brains of babies 'light up' in a very similar way to adults when exposed to the same painful stimulus, a pioneering Oxford University brain scanning study has discovered. It suggests that babies experience pain much like adults.

The study looked at 10 healthy infants aged between one and six days old and 10 healthy adults aged 23-36 years. The findings suggest that not only do babies experience pain much like adults but that they also have a much lower pain threshold.

This is particularly important when it comes to pain: obviously babies can't tell us about their experience of pain and it is difficult to infer pain from visual observations. In fact some people have argued that babies' brains are not developed enough for them to really 'feel' pain, any reaction being just a reflex -- our study provides the first really strong evidence that this is not the case.' The researchers say that it is now possible to see pain 'happening' inside the infant brain and it looks a lot like pain in adults.

Our study suggests that not only do babies experience pain but they may be more sensitive to it than adults,' said Dr Slater. Dr Slater added: ... this could enable us to test different pain relief treatments and see what would be most effective for this vulnerable population who can't speak for themselves.'

5. Regarding any possible distinguishing element that defines "life" from the Scriptures, most see the consistency of view as being from the point of conception...and modern knowledge of DNA adds weight to the basic fact that conception is the point at which a new life has begun with all it's unique nature. The only other idea draws upon the significance of blood. The following is drawn from: http://www.thewordout.net/pages/page.asp?page_id=56637

"Even before God gave Moses the law, when He gave Noah and his family all the animals for food (in addition to the plants), He told them, "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood" (Genesis 9:4). At the same time, God gave the law and penalty for murder (described as the shedding of "man's blood").⁷ Therefore, God considers blood to be the basis for life and the shedding of human blood, which results in death, to be murder. Science tells us that the heart of the human fetus begins to form 18 days after conception.⁸ There is a measurable heart beat 21-24 days

after conception.⁹ Since blood is flowing at this point, it is likely that blood formation begins well before day 21 (I could find no reference for the date at which blood formation begins). Therefore, this represents the latest date at which we must consider the fetus to be human (according to biblical standards), which is only 7-10 days after a woman would expect to begin her menses. Most women have cycles that can vary by this amount, and therefore do not discover they are pregnant until after this point. For all practical purposes, from a biblical perspective, abortion at any point must be considered murder by Bible-believing Christians.”

6. Americans more likely to credit President Obama when asked about this source of the verse on justice than Bible (Prov 31:8–9).

A majority of US adults wrongly believe that a Bible verse on caring for the poor and the oppressed was first coined by celebrities, politicians or other prominent figures including President Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Bono and Angelina Jolie.

Only 13 per cent of Americans surveyed for the American Bible Society were able to correctly credit the Bible as the source of Proverbs 31:8-9, the Contemporary English Version of which states: “You must defend those who are helpless and have no hope. Be fair and give justice to the poor and homeless.”

Fifty-four per cent, meanwhile, credited the passage to other sources, with President Obama cited as the most likely author by Americans (16 per cent). Behind Obama, the Dalai Lama was cited as the most likely author by survey participants (nine per cent), followed by Martin Luther King Jr (eight per cent), Oprah Winfrey (four per cent), and U2 frontman Bono (three per cent).

The survey also found that one in four men (23 per cent) do not think it is their responsibility to help the poor though there are more teachings on poverty and justice than on heaven, hell, adultery, pride or jealousy.

On the web: The Poverty and Justice Bible at www.justicebible.org Source: by Joshua A Goldberg, Christian Post / Posted: Wednesday, November 25, 2009, 5:34 (GMT)

7. The language in Proverbs has led to various translations as to the meaning of those ‘desolate’ in verse 8. A couple other translations include:

Proverbs 31:8-9 (NLT)

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.

Proverbs 31:8-9 (NKJV)

Open your mouth for the speechless, In the cause of all *who are* appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, And plead the cause of the poor and needy.

8. It’s notable that the movement captured in The Drop Box is not about seeing more babies passed on to others, but to see life honored. As they note, “in the end, building more “baby boxes” is not the answer. Rather, we must work toward a day when they are no longer necessary, when all human life is embraced for its inherent value and purpose.”

Pastor Lee says: “I always pray that there will be no more abandoned babies in this country and no more in our baby box. That’s all I want.”

9. Regarding the belief that per-born lives, whether lost by abortion or miscarriage, may be in heaven...many have believed that the Scriptures suggest being received into eternity... and as such...will one day be met by those who lost them.

The following is taken from http://www.net-burst.net/hope/baby_in_heaven.htm

Although it is true that babies are conceived tainted with original sin (Job 14:4; 15:14-16; Psalm 51:5; Proverbs 22:15; Romans 5:12) – and it is because of this that all of us suffer physical death – it is also true that Scripture recognizes that little children have a degree of innocence that distinguishes them from those of us who live longer ([Scriptures](#)).

Despite the Bible's teaching on original sin, it also says:

Ezekiel 18:20 The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him. ([Related Scriptures](#))

Other Scriptures speak of us being judged according to our own misdeeds ([Scriptures](#)). And still others speak of being judged according to the light one has been given ([Scriptures](#)). Obviously, the very young would breeze through this judgment.

It is a divine principle that to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48; John 15:22).

Again, the very young do superbly by this spiritual measure. The contaminating effect of original sin is real but Christ died to undo that curse and to save not only those able to put their faith in him, but equally to save some who died too early to specifically believe in him. Let's see what makes this a scriptural certainty.

We know by biblical revelation that salvation is through no one but Jesus (Acts 4:12) and no one can come to God except through him (John 14:6). We also know that the spiritual power of Jesus' sacrifice is so mind-boggling that it reaches both forward and backward in time (Hebrews 9:25-27; Revelation 13:8) and extends beyond those able to consciously place their faith in him. The crowning proof of this biblical truth is that Old Testament saints will be in heaven (Luke 13:28; Hebrews 11:5) despite never specifically placing their faith in Jesus, nor knowing the details of his atonement. Does the atoning power of the cross likewise extend to those too young to consciously reject Christ or put their faith in him? Was Jesus hinting at this when he said of little children that "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14 and the other synoptic gospels)?

Jesus uttered the words just quoted when the disciples had tried to prevent mothers [and fathers](#) from bringing their little children to Jesus for a blessing. In the original Greek, Luke 18:19 specifically states that those brought to Jesus were babies and Mark 10:16 also indicates how small they were by saying "he took the children in his arms." In commenting on this incident, John Calvin said that when infants who were too young to desire Jesus' blessing were presented to Jesus, he tenderly received them and dedicated them to the Father "by a solemn act of blessing". Calvin concluded, "It would be too cruel to exclude that age from the grace of redemption. It is an irreligious audacity to drive from Christ's fold those whom He held in His bosom and to shut the door on them as strangers when He did not wish to forbid them" ([Source](#)).

It would be nice to make much of Jesus saying little children have angels (Matthew 18:10). Whilst this is quite possibly true from the moment of conception, in this particular instance Jesus seems to be speaking of those old enough to have at least rudimentary faith – ". . . these little ones who believe in me . . ." (Matthew 18:6).

In his famous *Systematic Theology*, Angus H. Strong concludes that since Christ "died for all" (2 Corinthians 5:14,15 – see also Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2), no one is exempt, no matter how young. And since salvation is appropriated by faith in those old enough to do so, there must be some other way in which the saving power of Christ's death is transferred to those too young to have personal faith.

This is consistent with another line of evidence: the Holy Lord relates intimately with babies: Psalm 22:10 . . . from my mother's womb you have been my God.

Psalms 71:6 From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. . . .

Isaiah 46:3 Listen to me, O house of Jacob, . . . you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth.

God's covenant with the Israelites was ratified by circumcision, which usually focused not on those old enough to believe or commit themselves to God, but on eight day old babies (Genesis 17:10-14; Leviticus 12:3).

If the Old Testament speaks of tiny babies having a special relationship with God, we find something even more startling in the New Testament. Of John the Baptist we read:

Luke 1:15 . . . he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

Luke 1:41,44 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. . . . As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Yes, John had a spiritual call on his life, but he was still human. For most of us, God is embarrassingly bigger than our theology. How could the Holy Spirit of God remain in someone not cleansed from the stain of original sin? For baby John to be Spirit-filled while still in the womb, God must have some way of counteracting the effect of original sin in those too young for saving faith. Let's not forget that all salvation is underserved and by grace.

Responses to Some Common Questions Regarding Abortion

The following is intended to offer some response to the common questions that arise as we consider abortion.

How can I resolve feeling trapped between a proper respect for human life as well as a respect for freedom and choice?

Our culture, more pointedly our generation since the 60's, has tried to make "choice" the highest value...a value unto itself...the absolute value above all others. But neither logic nor the laws we hold dear are consistent with such a position. We respect freedom from totalitarianism because we respect the dignity of human life. We value certain freedoms because we declare, "all are created equal" with inalienable rights given by God.

Choice as a human right does not precede the right to life itself but rather proceeds from it. Therefore, along with rights to privacy, rights to personal choice have always been held as secondary and limited by the rights and protection of other lives. Even privacy laws are limited to protect the rights of lives which can't protect themselves...child abuse being the most obvious. "Life" and "choice" are simply not an equally level set of values.

Doesn't abortion serve the cause of respect for women?

Contrary to popular belief, being pro life is not about oppressing women. In fact, many early feminist leaders such as Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Gage and Elizabeth Cady-Stanton were staunchly pro life, regarding abortion as an act which devalues human life and in doing so, hinders the progress of women. In a compassionate society, no one, male or female, has the right to use their body to harm an innocent person.

Aren't rights concerning a women's body and reproductive potential basic human rights which should be protected?

Absolutely. The right for a woman to choose whether to reproduce is absolute. Any force used to violate her body should be passionately protected against; including laws against incest, rape...even by her husband. However, the practice of abortion is more accurately one of "post-productive rights" than "reproductive rights." Abortion is about a life already reproduced, and in over 99% of all cases reproduced by choice.

When my wife and I discovered that she was pregnant...life had been reproduced...and the choice at hand is not one of reproduction but of our responsibility with the life we had already created.

The consequences of untimely pregnancies is not easy...but only holding up the role of choice afterwards is neither honest nor helpful in developing responsibility. Something seems fundamentally false in denying all responsibility for the choice to create life, and then assuming absolute rights to choose to destroy that life once created. Such a way of speaking about "choice" seems we have our God given responsibility backwards.

If there is a level of "choice" that individuals must make, how can the quality of such a choice be strengthened in its integrity?

True choice requires an "informed choice"...being truly informed about what an abortion is doing. Many so called "choices" reflect not the 'choices' of those who really understand what's involved, but rather simply decisions made by those unprepared. There is a natural tendency to limit what one knows in order to reduce the tensions.

As one women shared with me, with a mixture of pain and shock she told how the only question that was pressed upon her was, "Cash or insurance?" That's not to say that all of those involved with abortions are greedy. Far from it. Many are among the most compassionate people we could hope to know. The point is simply that the idea of "choice" is often ultimately undermined.

What's the broader meaning and message at hand when considering the moral implications of abortion?

The moral issue at hand with abortion reflects the underlying ethical debate about what determines the value of human life...and therefore to far broader implications surrounding life. With increasing technology (such as, genetics) and an increasing desire to control our responsibility in life, the implications for the life of the young and old alike are equally before us. To accept that respect for life is to be achieved rather than endowed leads to a devaluing with no end.

Albert Schweitzer once said, "If a man loses reverence for any part of life he will lose his reverence for all of life"

Mother Teresa knowing perhaps better than any other how far disrespect for human life can go spoke painfully and pointedly to America stating "When a nation encourages its mothers to kill their children, there is nothing that won't be done."

We may be wise to remember that this is not the first time a profound moral shift was sanctioned by the circumstances of its time. We can think of slavery...of the Holocaust. In each case comfort and

convenience carried people into that which would later shock their moral sensibilities. And in each case God's people would have to reckon with their own susceptibility and silence.

Doesn't a commitment to the value of human life imply a commitment beyond the issue of abortion?

Yes. Too often the debate on abortion can lead us to simply being pro-birth rather than pro-life. We must see the broader call of honoring God's image in all human life. We must question whether we are committed to a cause (i.e. protesting against abortion) or truly caring about all whose dignity can be oppressed—women and children, the old and the disabled, the poor and persecuted...and those vulnerable to war.

Even if I have personal convictions regarding abortion, is it really right to use political means and legislation to dictate what others must do?

The Gospel is a clear declaration that laws can provide a valuable backdrop for human conscience, but they do not have the ultimate power to change lives. As such, legislation has a legitimate but limited role. We cannot legislate morality, but we can legislate an affirmation of morality. (i.e., legislation bears the symbolic significance of sanctioning our corporate responsibility.)

What Jesus teaches us about the Law of God as given to Moses has some insight into how we should view the role of legislating laws in our own nation. As Jesus explained, he didn't come to abolish the Law but to fulfill the Law in a way that we never could. Jesus takes us to the heart of the matters which the Law addresses... even that of murder... and shows we can all be murderous in heart. The Law only exposes our hearts. He brings the transforming grace of God, offering forgiveness and His indwelling life to change us from the inside out as we are reconciled to God. In the same way our hope should never be in the Law but in His power to change hearts. The laws we choose as a nation, to the degree they reflect the Law of God, cannot change us and make us 'righteous' people, but they can provide a backdrop for our human conscience.

Does a belief that abortion is wrong necessarily become a partisan political statement...and define one's political affiliation? Life is an issue which transcends political parties and agendas. It flows from the Republican party's message of family values and personal responsibility. It flows from the Democratic Party's emphasis on equality and compassion for the needy and oppressed. It flows from the Libertarian philosophy of individual rights and non-aggression. There are pro life groups within most major U.S. political parties. (Republican National Coalition for Life, Democrats For Life, and Libertarians For Life)

Honoring Life, Choice, and Grace

Brad Bailey – June 7, 2015

Home Church Study

This week we are engaging the value of human life and what it means to honor such value. What is often referred to as the “sanctity of life” relates to many of the moral questions and social issues of our day...including abortion. This is a very sensitive subject ...both politically...and personally. As such, any group which considers such a discussion...must pause to consider if they are prepared to consider both the political perspectives of others...as well as the personal history that others carry.

1. Possible opening question...just for 2 or 3 to answer: What do you know about the circumstances your parents were in when they were pregnant with you...or if you are parents...you could also share challenges which you faced when discovering a new life had been conceived.

2. In addressing the topic of the sanctity of human life...and the related topic of abortion...it was noted that such a topic raises the very important challenges related to all such social-political topics. Read and discuss the following:

The issue of abortion has a history of becoming polarizing...difficult to have conversations about... because it's often reduced to slogans and simplistic assumptions about “the other side.” One side views the other as having no convictions, and the other side views the opponents as having no compassion.

Commercial media is rooted in the need to create conflict...it's not about helping you to understand the other side...it's about provoking...and stirring...and usually to feel better about the “side” that you are already on.

The way that we so easily approach social and political issues can leave us in a self-righteous posture that is as dangerous as any. We must become aware of how easily we can become so focused on having the right position that we don't face that we're becoming the wrong kind of person. We can become blind to the fact that we equate having the “right” position as that of becoming the right kind of person. In truth, having the right position can be a cheap substitute for what it means to be a righteous person... a person whose heart and nature is right. While it's an issue that has a history of dividing people... often across political lines... we must come together with a spirit of humility before God.

This cannot become an abstract social issue. This is about real people...and real pain. We must seek to understand people's stories before we speak into them.

3. Have the following Scriptures read one by one...pausing for a quiet moment between each. Then discuss what strikes you.

“Then God said “Let's us make humankind in our image...Genesis 1:26-27
So God created humankind in His image.”

...The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being.” Gen. 2:7

Psalms 139:13-16 (CEV)

You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body,
and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me.

Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt.

Nothing about me is hidden from you! I was secretly woven together deep in the earth below, but with your own eyes you saw my body being formed.

Even before I was born, you had written in your book everything I would do.

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Emmanuel.” (meaning ‘God with us.’) Isaiah 7:14; cf. Luke 1:31; Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:39-43.)

“Thy hands made me and fashioned me.” Psalm 119:73

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart.” Jeremiah 1:5

“for the boy shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb ...” Judges 13:3-5

4. Is the value of any life dependent or derived from the intent of the parents?

5. Does the value of any life depend upon what it “proves” itself to be?

6. How do Jesus’ words speak to us about what it means to honor or dishonor life?

Matthew 5:21-22 (ESV)

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.