

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Did God Really Say?

PART

2

TITLE

From The Womb To The Tomb

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:24-27; Jeremiah 1:5



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Imagine a perfect world, a world without guilt, strife or sickness, a world where everything functioned in harmony. For a time, the world was at peace, diversity was appreciated, and love was uninterrupted. This was God's beautiful design. God's critic, Satan, entered the story in desiring to destroy our confidence in God's word. He asked, "Did God really say?" Man, began to question God's intentions for authority, humanity, race, sexuality, injustice. Out of love, and at the fullness of time, God sent Jesus into the world to rescue his beautiful design from sin. We simply won't flourish unless we yield and agree with God. The question remains, Did God Really Say?

Well, Providence family, it is good to see you. If you are in this room or if you are over in Prisms, let me just say thank you for those who are in that space to make room in this space. I'm thankful for you and for those of you who are guests here at Providence, welcome, we're glad that you've joined us. If you have a bible in your hand, turn with me to, well, to the very first page of the Bible. That's where you need to turn, okay? To the very beginning, that's where we will be today. It is really good to see you and I hope and pray that this morning, even in the heaviness of the realities, what we'll talk about, we'll be encouraging to you. We're in a series called, Did God really Say? Those are the first words that evil is spoken in the whole Bible.

Satan came and he tempted and he began that whole temptation of the words, did God really say? Questioning God's goodness and his truthfulness and his justice in the world. And so what we're doing over the first two months of the year is simply looking at, first of all, what is God's design for life for it to flourish? And in doing so, we're looking at several areas where we find confusion and brokenness, such as in the areas of authority, the sanctity of life and race and gender, sexuality, personal responsibility, justice, and salvation. And in each what we're looking at is how would God and His grace and love enable us to find restoration so that we could flourish again?

My notes, if it would be helpful for you to see what I'm about to say, you can find my notes at pray.org/say, all the notes for the series will be stored there as well as several things that we're writing to help various folks within our church with different issues that we're facing right now in our nation. There you're going to find a sermon that's called Life in the Womb into the Tomb. So let me pray. Father in heaven, we bow before you our maker. We thank you for the gift of life. We thank you for the privilege to be alive. We know that every breath, every day is a gift. And we believe that you have made life worth living, that a relationship with you is pivotal to our flourishing.

Thank you for Jesus who makes that possible. We confess to you that we see brokenness in our own lives, in our homes, in our relationships, in our culture, we see that. And we also see within the word, your word, that there is guaranteed floods of brokenness that come to cultures when there's a famine of your word in that land. And we do not want to contribute to that famine. In our own hearts or our own lives or our culture, and so we ask God, that you would help us as we open up your word to find that you have authority over life and that you are good to the core, that you are good for us and to us. So would you speak through weakness? And in particular, I pray for those in the room who are hurting. I pray for those in the room who are pregnant.

I pray for those in the room who don't know what to do. I pray for those who already feel a tinge of discomfort, frustration. Would you be gracious and help us to be amazed at your goodness in life? We pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, this weekend marks the 50th anniversary of the court's Roe v. Wade's decision that legalized abortion in America. It also marks the 40th anniversary of us remembering and honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. It was President Reagan who designated a day of remembrance, a day to honor and to think about each of these realities. So when you think about each is worthy, both of these two things are worthy of remembrance. They're both worthy of our attention and they are both realities that are surrounded by terrible, sad human realities that in addition to honoring certain things about these days and individuals, it should cause a measure of grief in our heart over the disregard of human life, whether it's old or young, whether it's Black, brown or white.

I am very aware that there's lot of emotions surrounding these things. And so today we're going to look at sanctity of life, primarily, we're going to start early. It applies all the way to the tomb. Most of our time is going to be thinking about in the womb. And next week we're going to look at race, racial injustice, racial harmony, God's path for restoration in both. And tonight we're going to pray earnestly for each. Six o'clock we gather to pray and worship tonight, and I want to ask you to participate. I know that for many in the room and those who will hear my voice outside of the room, the issue of abortion is not theoretical, it's not philosophical, it's not cultural, it's personal. There are many in our church family, many in our culture, many in this room right now who have either had an abortion, who have paid for an abortion, or who have forced someone, whether it is a wife, a girlfriend, a friend or a daughter to have an abortion.

And over 25 years, I have heard many, many, many people cry in pain. There was something that sometimes has happened even decades before because they were unable to completely resolve the grief within their own heart over previous decisions related to life. I admit that addressing the issue and the ideologies behind abortion and at the same time trying to love and protect people that I deeply care about is really hard. And so I want to point all of us to grace. Let me begin by saying I don't know anyone in the whole world who has as many routine inclinations to sin as me. I don't know anyone who needs more grace in life than me. As a result of that, I rejoice in the gospel, and I can say that if you have trusted Jesus Christ as your savior and confess your sin to him, whatever the sin is that on his authority, you are forgiven.

And as a church family, we see that you are forgiven and therefore you are loved, you are forgiven, you are a valuable part of this church family. And if you have not put your faith and trust in Jesus, I invite you to do so because he can restore and forgive your soul just as he has restored and forgiven our soul. I have read that when federal agents are trained in spotting currency that is counterfeit, that they spend very little time in training looking at money that is fake. Instead, they spend an inordinate amount of time looking at the real thing, covering every nuance of a dollar bill or a \$5 bill or all the rest, and in doing so, what we're told is that they become so absorbed in what it looks like that they become ever discerning about any counterfeit money on the basis of the impression that is left in their consciousness.

And similarly, what I want to do this morning is not focus so much on the ideas and ideologies, in any other place, I want to lead you to look at the Bible, God's word, the source of truth, authority from God himself. And the hope that by spending time there and looking at these ideas there, that it would form such an impression over our own consciousness that we would be able to quickly spot counterfeit ideas that would raise themselves up against God's perfect word. To do that we begin at the beginning. No matter what you're feeling in this moment, let me encourage you to try to imagine this morning the goodness of God in planning dignity into life, including your life. The Bible begins with pretty popular words, "In the beginning God created the heavens in the earth." God was there in the beginning. He was there when the beginning began.

He's eternal and he's self-existent. And according to his own initiative, he began forming a world that would be fit for human habitation. So we get to Genesis chapter three, I'm sorry, chapter 1:25, and this is what we read. This is day six, it says, "And God made the beast of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good." Then God said, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness. And let them have full dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock, over all the earth, over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And so God created man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him, male and female, he created them."

Well, you fast forward many years, many, many years and pages in the Bible deep into the story of redemption, and you find a man, his name was Jeremiah, and this man named Jeremiah had a very difficult task in front of him. God called him to be a prophet to a people in a culture that was utterly devastated and ravaged by sin. There was chaos and confusion and death and immorality and every sort. And God had risen this man named Jeremiah up and called him to speak words to the culture on his behalf. And he was anxious and fearful and God wanted to tell him something that was significant that happened before that moment when he was called in order to give him confidence within his heart that God had the power in his life to accomplish these things and that power had actually been given to him early, even in the womb.

What God says to him in order to fortify his confidence of his own value in life is deeply pertinent to the issue of life in the womb to the tomb. In Jeremiah chapter 1:5, we read, "Before I formed you in the womb, this is God speaking, I knew you, before you were born, I consecrated you, I appointed you a prophet to the nations." So what I want to do is I want to show you four things right now of how does God plant dignity into human life? This should not be offensive to any of us because we are one of those human lives. The first thing is that God creates us in his image. He creates us in his image. We saw this in the first page of the Bible. Now the first page of the Bible, as well as most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew.

And one of the unique traits about Hebrew language is it uses repetition specifically for a purpose. And that is that when the repetition ends, it's supposed to mark in our attention something that has meaning, something that is significant. In other words, when you find something in the Old Testament where there's a sequence and that sequence and there's a sequence and a cadence, the words are used over and over and over

and over and then all of a sudden the words change, the sequence changes. We're supposed to pause and say, now, what's the significance of that? What's the meaning of that? And so you find in Genesis chapter one, when God is creating the world, this sequence, this phrase that keeps talking up and it's according to their own kind. So you go back to verse 12 and it says this, this is where he is.

He's like, all right, he has trees. And he says, "The earth brought forth vegetation plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed each according to its kind." You fast forward and you get to verse 21. And there we find God created the great sea creatures and everything living all these living creatures that moves with which the waters swarm according to their kinds. And every wing bird according to its kind. You get to verse 25, we've already read it one time and it says that God made the beast of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds and everything that creeps in the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And then suddenly the sequence ends in verse 26 when God said, "Let us make man not according to their kind, but in our image, in our likeness." In other words, according to our kind. You see, you look at a puppy and you learn something about a dog, you look at a human being and you learn something about God.

We are all uniquely relational, spiritual, moral, intellectual, and valuable. And the reason is because the God in whose image we have been created is also spiritual, relational, immortal, intellectual and supremely valuable. We talk different than all created things. We discuss differently. We remember differently. We have emotions that are different. We reason differently than all created things. We pray and we worship different than all other living created things. We feel guilt when we sin against the law that God wrote upon our heart because we are different than all other created things. We all wonder about the origin of life, our purpose, what I'm supposed to be doing with my life, what happens when I die differently than all other created things. We count and number our days and feel fit to designate significance to certain days that we'll celebrate, which is different than all other created things.

Every single human being possesses unique and equal dignity as image bears of God and as such, Genesis nine, God says, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed." And then he tells us why. The word four can also be translated because God made man in his own image, you are special, unique, equal in value, personhood and dignity, and the reason is because we're created in his image. The question then is when does the significance begin? Who wants to know when does it begin? And Jeremiah chapter 1:5 tells us three more truths about how God plants dignity into the life of a human being that gives clarity to that issue. The second truth we learn is that God forms us in the womb. His sovereign hands are forming in this special space. That's what Jeremiah 1:5 says. "Before I formed you in the womb," listen, God says, I formed you in the womb.

I formed you in the womb. This is echoed in Psalm 22, Job 31, Isaiah 49, Psalm 139, verse 13 says, "You formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb." God, in his grace is forming every single one of us at all parts of our development. A cell within the first two weeks of it being fertilized, let me

say the egg, in its first two weeks, it becomes a cell, that cell, 46 unique chromosomes, 23 from mom, 23 from dad. The 46 will never be and never have been replicated, utterly unique.

18 days from conception, the heart begins to beat pushing blood. In 22 days there's muscle, there's the beginning of the spinal cord, there's the head, there's cavities for the eyes. The eyeballs are beginning to form the nose and the mouth and the ears. 42 days from conception, there's brain activity, skeletal structure, organs, fingers, and toes, at eight weeks fingerprints are engraved on the skin. We should want to know this life that God is forming. The third truth is that God knows us in the womb. Jeremiah 1:5 echoes this, that he knows us personally inside this special space. "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." In the womb, God has intimate knowledge of us and he desires that we grow to have intimate knowledge of him, which means that our first thought of God was not his first thought of us, he knew us. He knew us.

This speaks of personhood. And so you know people, it's interesting that the word new or the word no, it's a fascinating word because we use it in different ways. We can say, hey, I know that's a chocolate cake, but someone who eats that chocolate cake knows that chocolate cake a little differently, don't they? Which is why the same word I knew there's a verse in Genesis chapter four, not to weird you out too much, right? But it says, an Adam knew his wife Eve again and she gave birth, same word. That's not indicating that there's some sexual relationship between God and humanity. What he's saying is this, is that he is saying that, of course we would all know this to be true, right? Is that there's different kinds of knowing somebody, there is different levels of intimacy.

And knowing someone and what God is saying by using this word, he's saying, I know you intimately, your dreams, your hopes, your future, your purpose, your destiny, I know you. I know what you're going to look like. I know what you're going to struggle with. I know you and we should want to know the life that God knows. And forth, God has plans for us in the womb. He creates us in his image, he forms us in the womb, he knows us in the womb and he has plans for us in the womb. He appoints a life purpose in this special space, which is why he goes on and he says, before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

The word consecrate we don't use a whole lot today, translate it, dedicate, he dedicated a life purpose to each one of us that he knew about in the womb, and then he went about knitting us together with a unique array of abilities, intelligence, aptitudes, interests that would align with that life purpose that he had assigned to us of how we are to glorify him. And all this takes place in the womb and we should want to know what those plans are. Now, these four truths that we are all created in his image, that he forms us, he knows us, and he gives us a purpose, that's good news all by itself. It means that you have dignity, the person who's sitting next to you has dignity. No matter what we look like, doesn't matter what we're wrapped with in terms of skin color, doesn't matter how old we are, how young we are, it's amazing, amazing truths that we should all be very, very happy about.

But what I want to show you is where these truths are found. I know they're found in the Bible, but the Bible is a story, it's a story. It tells lots of different stories, but all of those stories are intentionally designed and put together to tell one story of redemption from the beginning to the end. And here's the hook. You're in the story. So why? I know the Bible is long, but I want to tell you the story. I won't be able to tell you the whole story though, so I encourage you to read it. It begins with creation and the Bible says that there's perfect peace and inside this perfect peace, there is unity, there's relationship, there's no strife, there's no death, there's no guilt, there's no shame, there's no insecurity, it is fulfilling. And then we look last week at what took place and what we saw last week was the Satan after a failed attempt on the throne, he was an arc angel of God named Lucifer and he left heaven, he was sent out.

We know him as Satan. He came into this perfect world and he began tempting the man and the woman who were living in the garden, and how he did so is he began questioning God's goodness, his truthfulness and his justice. And confronted with the temptation and the uncertainty, if God in that moment, in his restriction over them was good, trustworthy, and just they sinned against God's one restriction and suddenly there was this flood of devastation. They began to fight and experience pain. They died spiritually. They knew guilt, they felt naked, they were insecure, they were hiding from God and each other. And one day they would die physically. In this moment of bleakness, God does something so remarkable. He promises a rescuer. Now, the first time you're reading through it, when you get to chapter 3:15, it may not signal to your attention.

That's the verse that's talking about a rescuer. But if you keep reading through the story, what you keep finding is this idea of this seed, the seed would be a son. This promised seed would be passed from generation to generation. This promise that one day the promise of the rescuer was that God was going to send a special son and the special son would come to the earth and Satan, there would be a war between the serpent and the son. And Satan would strike and bruises heal, but the son would crush Satan's head, restore us back into a relationship with God that would allow us to flourish again. And so the answer in the beginning of the book to our sin problem would be a war between the serpent and this special son that would ultimately be won by the son. And then you get to Genesis chapter four.

In chapter four, Adam and Eve have two sons. We're like, okay, it's got to go through one of them and Cain kills his brother Abel. And the Bible tells us in one John chapter 3:12, "We should not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother." In other words, his intent from Satan. So follow along. God declares war between the serpent and the son and the serpent fires the first shot by killing a son. Of the two sons that are alive, I should say, they are possibilities of being the seed, this hero, one of them is dead, and the other one has blood on his hands. A sinner cannot be the savior of the world. So we get to the end of chapter four and it says Adam knew his wife again and they had a son, his name was Seth. And all of a sudden the story traces from Seth's line forward.

Well, you get the chapter five, chapter five, we find the first genealogy, 10 generation genealogy. Many Chris-

tians when they read the Bible and they get to one of those are like, all right, move on, they're just people's names. No, they're not people's names. Well, they are people's names, but there's more than just people's names and what's happening in every genealogy, what you're finding is this, God is helping our eyes trace the promise seed who is the son that we're supposed to be following and it's the last son in the genealogy typically. So in chapter five, there's a 10 generation genealogy from Adam to a man named Noah. And this is really important because God is about to flood the whole earth and he wants us to know that his promised seed is going to survive the judgment of the earth. Noah lands on dry ground.

He has three sons and we're like, oh, great, three of them, how are we supposed to know? And there's a genealogy leads us to Shem, from the word Shem where we get the word semite or antisemitism, the line of the Jews, one of his ancestors were led to follow his Abraham and then Isaac and then Jacob. We get to Judah and all of a sudden this family is growing and they're populating. This nation is growing and they end up in Egypt. When they get to Egypt, they're enslaved. You get to the book of Exodus, one of the first tragedy things that happened, not only are they enslaved, but Pharaoh orders the killing of all Jewish baby boys as evidence of Satan's war on the son. God saw to it however that the seed survived. God led this people out of Egypt into the promised land and gave them a law that included a law that said the forbidding of shedding innocent blood.

The heart of man, however is sinful. And you read through the stories of the Old Testament, just devastation after moral devastation, blood was spilled all over the place and unjust wars and in murders and in infant sacrifices to idols. So much devastation, such a famine of the word in the land and still the promise of this special son was passed from generation to generation through judges and kings and prophets and priests, all the while calling us the readers to hope in the promised seed, the son to come.

Then we get to Matthew, the New Testament, and what does Matthew begin with? A genealogy and it traces seed in Genesis three all the way to Jesus Christ. And then Jesus is born, and what happens next after he was born in Bethlehem? Herod orders the killing of every baby boy as evidence of Satan's war on the son. God protected his son and Jesus grew up. He lived without sin. He loved people, he taught people, he cared for people, and then he went to Jerusalem and he died for people. He gave up his own life on the cross, he was buried in a grave and he rose from the dead.

He is the promised seed. He is the promised son who was sent to the earth to seek us and save us and to rescue God's design from our sin and for all who put their faith in Jesus Christ. He forgives us of our sin, he gives us his righteousness, he gives us his spirit who teaches us how to love in such a remarkable way that allows us to flourish again. And yet the battle rages on you get to the end of the Bible, you get to a book called Revelation, a book that uses symbolism to tell us about the victory, the final victory over of the son over the serpent. And what do we find there from John, he describes a woman who's about to give birth to a son whom Satan, who is depicted as a dragon or a serpent he wants to devour.

In other words, from Genesis to Revelation, there's a spiritual war between the serpent and the son that is reflected in the mistreatment and extermination of human life made in the image of God both inside and outside of the womb. Friends our life is part of that story. How we apply these truths about how we look at other people, whether they're young or old, whether they're in the womb or close to the tomb, whether they're healthy or young or Black or brown or white, male or female, how we treat people is an expression, it's an overflow of this war. We are behaving like the serpent who mistreats people in order to defame God or we treat people like Jesus with remarkable love and care and protection for the weak and the strong.

Jesus did more than provide salvation. You notice the story also vindicates the sanctity of life from conception until death. And you say, well, why is that? Because Jesus, the son of God could have come in any way he desired, he could have lived in any way he desired and he could have left in any way he desired, and he chose to be conceived in the womb of an unmarried teenager. He chose to live and grow as a baby. He chose to suffer on the earth and he chose to experience real death, and in each case what he did was he validated the sanctity of life at every stage from the first moment he knows us until the moment when we are with him. Every doctrine, every belief in Christianity has a corresponding action. For example, we believe God is holy, so we worship. We believe that God hears and cares and so we pray, we believe that Jesus is the only way, so we tell people the gospel. So if we believe that God forms life in the womb, how are we to respond? What is the corresponding action? So let me close here with a number of applications. First, let me encourage us to yield the God's word as the authority. Let me encourage you to yield to God's word as the authority on life. Every side of this issue loves to tell compelling stories, and the reason is because compelling stories raise sympathy and money. You go to any banquet that is highlighting the significance of what we call choice or the significance of what we call life, and they will put somebody who has a compelling story in order to affirm and raise sympathy, awareness, and money.

My sister, beautiful sister was adopted at birth. Her birth mother was a very young teenager. And yet my sister's life and my love of my sister does not make her story the authority on the value of life. God's word is the authority on life. How important it is that Christians would pray, feel sympathetic, support, and give on the basis of hearing God's story as opposed to someone else's. We live in a culture where lived experience is said to be authoritative of all issues of life, which is why some of you are even questioning whether I should talk about the morality of abortion because I have no lived experience with pregnancy. But the value of life is not determined by our thoughts, it's not determined by our life experience, it's not determined by the circumstances surrounding conception, the value of life is determined by God, and whether we are male or female, young or old, brown, Black or white, you open up this and you're reading authority.

It is his words and his story, not our words and our story that is the authority on the value of life. And so as a church, we first, we say this is our authority. Second, we see abortion as sin that can be forgiven by Christ. Abortion is taking a life while it is being formed in the womb by God. Abortion neglects God's goodness in forming life, disregards God's truthfulness about the value of life, and denies God's justice and how we treat

life, all of which to take place in the womb. I've already told you that I don't know anyone as sinful as me who has inclinations, as sinful or as routine constantly thinking about myself all the time. I don't know anyone who needs grace more than me. My sin is so deep, all of our sin so deep, but it's not as deep as the grace of Jesus Christ.

And when we look to Christ with contrition, he says to us, "I am he who blots out your transgressions." Though the wage of sin is death. And so for holy God to acquit us, me as a guilty man and remain just, he sent Christ to die in my place. Someone had to die for my sin and he did it. You place your faith and trust in him, he forgives you of your sin and he gives you his righteousness, which is why there is now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ. Is that not good news? And this grace that applies to our life, I believe it even applies and covers the baby and the baby's place in heaven. As I tried to show I won't have time right now to show you in a sermon last Mother's Day called What All Kids Need.

A third thing may encourage us in response to the truth is to speak in love for the cause of life. In Proverbs 31, we're told to open our mouth for the mute, meaning those who cannot speak for themselves, for generations we've been taught as a nation and we have been doing the teaching of evolutionary theory as the origin of man, friends of random matter and energy gave rise to life. We have the authority to remove disruptions from our life and holding to this view when people have competing desires against one another might typically makes right and the stronger prevails. But this world needs to know that God gave rise to life, that he determines what is right, that he provides answers for life in the Bible, and we have a responsibility as his people to share them.

The vast majority of the cases of abortion in America, not all, but the vast majority come because humanity has first rejected God's plan and placement of human sexuality and we get to a place and we don't know what to do. Everything that I've talked about thus far is how I would seek to answer somebody in that situation. But what about the really difficult areas that are outside of those exceptions? Let me try as best I can very briefly to talk about just three. What about a baby that's conceived by rape? I cannot imagine a more horrible reality than what takes place in sexual assault. As such, I know that my heart in its fallen state could never generate a sufficient level of sympathy that is needed in that case to care and to speak to somebody who has experienced that. I personally cannot imagine the strain of carrying a baby that was conceived in that manner. But my perceptions about life and what I can imagine isn't the authority.

So in addition to sympathy, does the Bible say anything? And the Bible does. Let me just tell you two things that should weigh into our decisions. Number one would be is the Bible tells us that the father in that situation should be punished justly. But then the second tells us that children should not be put to death because of the sins of their father. The mother is hurting beyond measure, beyond what I can imagine, but the baby is innocent and that should be factored in our decision. What about a baby with a disability? No small challenge to be a parent in that case, and there's no easy answer, although my experience is not the authority on

this. I can tell you how my experience leaned on a passage in John chapter nine. We had three sons and one of our sons was born with spinal bifida and we weren't sure if he'd ever be able to walk.

He had surgery when was two months old, half his back in order to remove a tumor that was from the outside of his body all the way it wrapped around the spinal cord. And I remember Jeremiah 1:5 in those days saying, "I formed him in the womb" and he was born that way and wrestling with that. But I found tremendous comfort in John chapter nine when Jesus was speaking of a man who was born blind. And he said that God's permissions in this man's life and allowing him to be born blind is not out of punishment, but ultimately to show the glory of God in his life.

I have loved watching the first steps of all three of my sons, but there was one that was sweeter than the rest. And many of us know personally or a friend who have found such amazing blessing that has come from the difficulty of raising children with special needs. What about women's health? This is a very popular argument. It's applied to all abortion, but it really only fits a tiny fraction of pregnancies, but it does fit a fraction of pregnancies. What about an ectopic pregnancy where a fertilized egg doesn't implant in the uterus, but instead somewhere else in particular, if it plants into the fallopian tube, then the baby is destined to die. And as the baby continues to grow, we know medically that the tube breaks and mom bleeds out and she's destined to die. So what about those situations where the death of a mother?

I obviously can't talk about all of the different situations, but I would simply give you one principle. There's a rule of reason that can be applied to complex ethical issues, it's called first principles and applied here it simply says that in pregnancies where the baby cannot survive and the mom can only survive by removing the fertilized egg, it is morally right to provide the intervention to save one life instead of to lose both. Now, that is a very short answer, too short of an answer to talk about all the complexities of that and all the diagnosis of that and how doctors can be wrong and all kinds of different things that are there. However, I do believe that God in his grace and his mercy would have us protect one if we knew for certain that two would die.

Let me encourage us as a church in addition to distinguish ourselves by love. I know many pregnant moms in life agree with many of the things that I've said this morning, but feel in the moment that they have no other option. For many, even at our own church and other churches, the guilt of abortion is preferred over the shame of an unwed pregnancy within a community of faith. We can help by having a track record of care by distinguishing ourself as a track record, as a place where people who are in those places can come and instead of being condemned, they can be cared for. We can calm their fears with our presence and our acceptance by proclaiming forgiveness over them when they put their faith in Jesus. We can support single moms through their pregnancy and beyond by helping in practical ways. We can look into adoption, foster parenting, and serving and giving at the 89 Crisis pregnancy centers throughout North Carolina.

And I know that many are doing that. Before I get to the very last point, which is really simply to appeal

that you have put your faith and trust in Jesus, let me talk to two particular groups of people. I don't believe that it's impossible, in fact, I believe it's entirely possible and most likely that this is the case, is that there is somebody in the room who is deciding on a pregnancy. There's somebody I imagine who's listening to this right now who's pregnant, who's walked in here, didn't know what we were going to be talking about and are thinking, what am I supposed to do? Let me just encourage you. Let me encourage you, you can come talk to me or come talk to somebody at Providence. Or if you think I don't know if I can trust, could I encourage you to talk to somebody at Gateway?

It's a faithful pregnancy center in Raleigh, they provide sonograms and counseling and care information about pregnancy, they would simply want to be able to help. And then there's another group, and that is for those who are hurting because of a past decision related to abortion. I would not only encourage you to call Gateway, but one of our second partners Love Life, they have a ministry called Restored Life that's specifically aimed at helping people find restoration after making that choice and feeling regret or pain. In fact, these ministers are even led volunteer by many within our own church family, and they simply want to be able to help. Finally, let me encourage you to put your trust in Jesus. And the reason is because he did the hard work to make reconciliation with God and peace with one another possible by living without sin and dying for ours.

He made it possible rising from the dead. Providence, we always, as people mistake symptomatic divisions in society is the primary cause of the brokenness instead of the fault lines of our understanding and relationship with God through Jesus. And as a result of us doing that, we typically try making the fixing of societal divisions our ultimate hope, which has no lasting power over a long period of time. But when Jesus comes into our heart, he not only gives us instruction on how to live, he forgives us and he gives us His spirit who mobilizes us to love in such a way that we're able to flourish again. Would you put your faith and trust in Christ today? If you're not quite ready, you think, but I would love an opportunity to talk with people about my questions about Jesus, there's a group starting in two weeks for skeptics, for starters, or for people who were just have questions, we're just looking.

We would invite you to go to pray.org/explorer and you can learn more about that group. So let me pray. Father in heaven, we bow before you and we ask that you would give us grace as we consider these difficult realities. I pray again for people in the room who may be pregnant, scared, terrified. I pray for people in the room who feel guilty or feel hurt or grieved. God, I pray for your grace to just wash over us. Would you remind each one of us that you love us and there's nothing that we can do so long as we put our faith in trust that can separate us from your love in Christ?

Would you please help us? Would you help us as a church family to distinguish ourselves along with many other church families in our city and around the world as places where people who are hurting can come and find compassion instead of condemnation? So we look to you and ask for help and strength, and we sing to you

about your love because we believe it's the hope of our life. And we pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.



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