



Biblical Ethics

Abortion

January 28, 2024
Adult Sunday School
Lewis Lake Covenant Church

Abortion

Case Study:

Carrie and her husband have five children, and now Carrie is pregnant with their sixth. She has just been diagnosed with a highly aggressive brain/spine cancer. Doctors say with aggressive chemotherapy she might survive five years. However, this treatment will kill her baby. Untreated, she will die before the baby comes to full term, though she will likely live long enough for the baby to survive.

Her doctors are urging her to have an abortion so she can begin treatment immediately. Her husband supports her either way.

What should she do?

I. Preface: The Certainty of Damnation and Forgiveness

II. Historical Considerations

A. In favor of Abortion

1. “The earliest reference to any form of fertility control appears to be a prescription for an oral abortifacient written by the Chinese Emperor Shen Nung in the period 2737-2696 B.C.”
2. Plato/Aristotle
3. Spartans

4. Romans

B. Against Abortion

1. Hippocrates in his oath for physicians: “I will not give a woman a pessary to cause abortion.”
2. Code of Hammurabi (1728B.C.) “contained prohibitions against abortion.”
3. *Didache* (early church manual or book of order): “Thou shalt do no murder. . . thou shalt not procure abortion, nor commit infanticide.”
4. Athenagoras (apologist, 2nd century): “How can we kill a man when we are those who say that all who use abortifacients are homicides and will account to God for their abortions as for the killing of men? For the fetus in the womb is not an animal, and it is God’s providence that he exists.”
5. Tertullian (late 2nd century/early 3rd): “As homicide is forbidden, it is not lawful to destroy what is in the womb while the blood is still being formed into a man. To prevent being born is to accelerate homicide, nor does it make a difference whether you snatch away a soul which is born or destroy one being born.”

Tertullian saw abortion as the worst murder – the murder of a blood relative.

6. Council of Ancyra (314) denounced women who “slay what is generated and work to destroy it with abortifacients.”
7. Augustine: “Speaking of the married who avoided having children, he noted, ‘Sometimes this lustful cruelty or cruel lust comes to this, that they even procure poisons of sterility, and if these do not work, they extinguish and destroy the fetus in some way in the womb, preferring that their offspring die before it lives, or if it was already alive in the womb, to kill it before it was born.’”
8. Jerome: “Some (Christian women) go so far as to take potions, that they may insure barrenness, and thus murder human beings almost before their conception. Some when they find themselves with child through their sin, use drugs to procure abortion, and when (as often happens) they die with their offspring, they enter the lower world laden with guilt not only of adultery against Christ but also of suicide and child murder.”
9. “From 1859 until the end of the century, the AMA campaigned vigorously to outlaw abortion... spurred by new scientific discoveries in human

embryology, which clearly established that a new human being was in existence from the time of conception.”

10. Billy Graham, 1961

“Abortion is as violent a sin against God, nature, and one’s self as one can commit.”

III. Moral Arguments in Favor of Abortion,
or, “Why abortion is a moral necessity.”

A. History: Waves of Feminism

1. First wave: Late 19th-early 20th century

Issue: Suffrage

Major moral argument: Women are morally superior to men, thus their voice needs to be heard if we are to have any hope of solving society’s problems.

Moral Conclusion: For a just society, women must have the right to vote.

Wave’s end: Success. Passage of 19th Amendment, 1920

2. Second wave: 1960’s-2000’s

Issue: Social equality

Major moral argument: Men and women are fundamentally equal, and this means both must be able to enjoy the same opportunities in all aspects of society.

Moral Conclusion: For a just society, women must have the right to not be pregnant – even if they already are.

Technological Factor: Approval of “the pill” in 1960. Separation of sex and reproduction.

Wave’s end: Success and the rise of the transgender movement confusing the notion of womanhood.

B. Moral Justification

1. Presupposition that every person possesses fundamental rights. But where do they come from?
 - a. From God (Declaration of Independence).
The state must acknowledge and not infringe upon human rights.
 - b. From the State
The state grants rights that shall not be infringed upon by other people.

- c. From oneself
Autonomous selves
have rights over
themselves that shall
not be infringed upon
by other people.

“No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother.” – Margaret Sanger, founder, Planned Parenthood

2. Presupposition that every inequality of outcome assumes an inequality of opportunity. (Marxism)

- A woman remains oppressed [by men] until she has achieved total equality with men in every aspect of society.
- “Women need free access to abortion in order to achieve full political, social, and economic equality with men.”
- “Women need the right to abortion in order to have the same freedoms as men.”

Note: The greatest, most obvious threat to this presupposition is sports. The transgender revolution has only amplified this.

3. Justification given in *Roe*

“A pregnancy to a woman is perhaps one of the most determinative aspects of her life. It disrupts her body. It disrupts her education. It disrupts her employment. And it often disrupts her entire family life... And we feel that, because of the

impact on the woman, this ... is a matter which is of such fundamental and basic concern to the woman involved that she should be allowed to make the choice as to whether to continue or to terminate her pregnancy.”

Sarah Weddington in *Roe v Wade*

Note: Assumes the right of self-determination, and the right ‘not to be disrupted’ in pursuing one’s goals.

4. Justification given in society

a. What’s aborted is a part of the mother

- Every human being has the right to own their own body
 - A fetus is part of a woman's body
 - Therefore, that woman has the right to abort a fetus they are carrying
- note* the emotional, linguistic argument underlying the logical argument.

This argument has slowly lost its influence

- “Viability” has proven to be quite arbitrary
- Ultrasound technology and photographs unmistakably do *not* show “a clump of cells”
- Pregnant women always refer to “my baby”
- Everybody knows pregnancy isn’t a virginal act.

b. An unborn baby is human, but not yet a person

- “Personhood” requires a certain level of consciousness.
- Unborn babies have not yet attained this level of consciousness.
- Therefore, abortion is killing a human, but not a person.

This argument appeals to certain academics and philosophers, but has not achieved broad popularity

- “Certain level of consciousness” is undefined; where is that level?
- It can clearly justify infanticide
- It creates massive unanswered questions: What about a person who is asleep? Knocked unconscious? In a coma? Severely mentally disabled?

c. A woman’s rights trump baby’s rights

- A woman has the right to decide what she can and can't do with her body
- The fetus exists inside a woman's body
- A woman has the right to decide whether the fetus remains in her body
- Therefore a pregnant woman has the right to abort the fetus

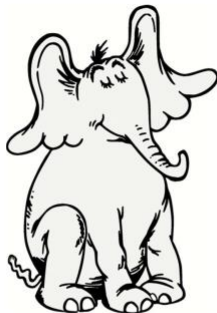
d. An unwanted baby is oppressing a woman

- Like rape, a baby’s body has invaded a woman’s body without her consent.

- An unwanted baby is “punishment” (Barack Obama)
- A baby violates a woman’s rights by keeping her from pursuing her own goals and dreams.

IV. Moral Arguments Against Abortion

- A. At conception, a new, individual, eternal human person has come into existence.
- B. Every person has the right to life, and that right must be protected by all members of society.
- C. Mothers *and Fathers* are morally obligated to care for their children.
1. To God
 2. To society
- D. Every human life has objective value.
1. Extrinsic: Human life is valuable because God put his image upon it (Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9)



**“A person’s
a person,
no matter
how small.”**

- Dr. Seuss, *Horton Hears a Who!*

2. Intrinsic: The value of human life is in its humanity.
 3. As opposed to secular (no transcendent basis for value), utilitarian (useful vs. useless), or subjective value (ie. wanted/vs. unwanted)
- E. God made male and female different in form and function, but equal in value.
1. The God-designed differences between men and women create a beautiful interdependence.
 2. “Success” in society need not be measured by social influence or economic accomplishment – in fact, for thousands of years it wasn’t!
- F. God commands humanity to bear children
- G. According to the biblical record, wanton slaughter of babies is Satanic; embracing them is Christ-like.

For you formed my
inward parts; you
knitted me
together in my
mother's womb.

- Psalm 139:13

