

What's the most breathtaking experience you've ever had in life? Flying? Bungy-jumping?! For me, right at the top would be something that happened over 22 years ago. I was in Grand Rapids, MI. Sherry and I were all alone in an examining room at Blodgett hospital. In walked Dr. Stryck. He turned off the light switch, and his nurse turned on a small TV, like black and white monitor. And then, taking a wandlike connected to the monitor, he began his search. He scanned back and forth with care and precision. He was looking for something, for someone. And then, to our amazement, up on the monitor came the shadowy, yet clearly discernable image of a tiny baby. We stared in wonder as we saw the hands and feet, the head and bone structure. And then we were startled as we saw movement. The unborn infant turned and twisted and flipped. And then our eyes noticed something pulsating in rapid, rhythmic fashion. It was the heart of the child, beating at some 140 beats per second. We breathlessly praised God that day as we left the Dr.'s office. For the first time, we had enjoyed the privilege of seeing our yet unborn child. Several months remained until we would hold the child in our arms, and yet in those few moments, through the help of an ultrasound, we were touched with the amazing reality that we had seen a human life.

Today, the 18th day of January, has been designated as "Sanctity of Human Life" Sunday. This marks the anniversary of the infamous "Roe vs. Wade" Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in 1973. Thousands of churches across our land have joined together today in proclaiming reverence for unborn life.

There was a time in our country when the sanctity of human life was a *given*. In a recent blog (dated January 9, 2009), Al Mohler explains:

Most Americans would probably be surprised to know that Sen. Edward Kennedy, Jesse Jackson, and former Vice President Al Gore all were once solidly anti-abortion. That seems almost incomprehensible now, but the record is clear -- and the pattern is chilling.

By the time Jesse Jackson and Al Gore came onto the national stage, abortion rights represented a major plank in the Democratic Party platform. Jackson had actually written attacks on the abortion culture, pointing to the disproportionate number of aborted African-American babies as evidence of racism. Al Gore ran for both Congress and the U.S. Senate on a pro-life record. When both men launched campaigns for the presidency, they changed positions on the abortion issue.

As for Ted Kennedy; he was pro-life as late as 1971, after New York had already legalized abortion. As Anne Hendershott documents in her article, "[How Support for Abortion Became Kennedy Dogma](#)," in 1971 Sen. Kennedy wrote to one of his Massachusetts constituents with these words: "When history looks back to this era it should recognize this generation as one which cared about human beings enough to halt the practice of war, to provide a decent living for every family, and to fulfill its responsibility to its children from the very moment of conception." [\[2\]](#)

While there was a time the sanctity of human life was seldom questioned, that's certainly no longer the case. You've heard the statistics. Since 1973 an estimated 50 million American boys and girls have been deliberately and legally killed before they were ever born. And the number keeps going up, at the rate of 1.5 million per year. One baby dies every 28 seconds from an abortion in the U.S. The number of babies that are killed in one year accounts for the loss of more lives than in all our U.S. wars combined. Or to put it another way, in the year 1982, for every 1000 babies allowed a birthday, 426 preborns lost their lives!

According to Loren Cunningham, "The safest place to be in this country, per population group, is on Death Row." It has also been said that the most dangerous place on earth to be is in your mother's womb where you have a 60% chance of surviving! Indeed, an ice-trapped whale elicits more sympathy than an unwelcome baby!

Is abortion merely a political matter? Is it a private matter, that's the business only of a woman herself? Should the church be silent concerning it?

Before we can address the issue, we need to define the problem. What is at the root of this debate? There are several key questions: When does life begin? When does an unborn baby become a "person"? After 3 months in the womb? At birth? Or at conception? There's little question, even among abortion advocates, that what is in the womb is a living organism--it's "alive." But the question is, "Is it a person? Does it have a soul?"

What makes human life sacred? For the Christian, it boils down to this one question: What is God's attitude towards life?

To answer that question, we can't take a Gallup poll. We need to hear from God Himself. Our opinions don't matter. Our feelings are irrelevant. Our political party is not an issue in answering this question.

What is God's attitude toward human life? What does God think about unborn children? Does His Word have anything to say about the sanctity of human life?

Here's our aim tonight. As with any subject or area in our lives, we want to come to God's Word to find out what God thinks, and to determine to think His thoughts after Him.

A Survey of Key Scriptures Concerning God's View on Life:

Does God consider the unborn to be a person? If the answer is "no," then what would be wrong with disposing of a fetus? If it's no, then the fetus is nothing more than an appendix, a tumor. But if the answer is "yes," then how we treat the unborn has eternal consequences.

Does God consider the unborn to be a person? Let's see...
(adapted from Baptists for Life handout, "Key Scriptures Concerning Abortion")

In the Old Testament:

Psalms 139 is the classic text, one which we have studied in the past on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. In Psalm 139, we learn that before a child is ever born, God has had direct involvement with the child. The Psalmist mentions 6 things that God did for us before we ever left our mother's womb:

- I. God formed our inward parts (13a).
- II. God fashioned us in our mother's womb (13b).
- III. God made us when no one could see us (15a).
- IV. God wove us together (15b).
- V. God saw us while we were developing (16a).
- VI. God ordained our days (16b).

Yet Psalm 139 is not the only place we learn what God thinks of the unborn. In Jeremiah 1:4-5, God spoke to Jeremiah the prophet. Here's what he said, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified (consecrated) you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations."

In 2 Sam 11:5 we read, "And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with CHILD."

The prophet declares in Isaiah 49:1, "Listen, O coasts, unto me...The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the body of my mother hath he made mention of my name."

Someone might object, "Well, that's the Old Testament. Does the New Testament say anything about this matter? Indeed, it does."

In the New Testament:

The NT calls that living being in the womb, not a fetus, but a "baby". For instance:

Luke 1:41 "And it came to pass that, when Elisabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the BABE leaped in her womb..."

Key: The Greek word for "babe" (brephos) used in the Greek scriptures is used in Luke 2:12, 16 to denote a baby, in Lk 18:15 to refer to an infant, and in II Tim 3:15 to depict a child. In those passages we see that no distinction was made between born and unborn children.

Luke 1:15 Concerning John the Baptist, it was foretold, "he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb."

Does God consider the unborn to be a person? In case you're still not convinced, think of Jesus Christ Himself. Jn 1:1, 14 says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

When did Jesus Christ become a person, a human being--at conception, or at some later point? Heb 2:17 says, "Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest." From the moment He entered the world, at conception, to the day He died on the cross (and beyond?), He lived in humanness like you and I. There is no question of Jesus' personhood before birth. Jesus Christ is God's

answer to when life begins.

But let's take a closer look at one particular text...

Key Text: Job 10:8-12

Job was a quite a man. You remember his story. He had everything--a nice family, a secure business, plenty of possessions. He was coasting along.

Satan accused Job before God. He said that if God took away the blessings, Job wouldn't be such a righteous person. God permitted Satan to test Job. Job lost everything--his family, his business, his home, his health. Everything, except his wife (and she wasn't much help, you'll recall).

And remember, Job had no explanation of what was going on. He felt like God had what? Abandoned him.

What does Job's story have to do with the sanctify of life? Turn to Job 10.

One day, when Job was down, he reflected. He couldn't figure out what went wrong. His life had become unbearable, a "weary burden" (10:1). So he called out to God. Not for healing, but for an explanation--10:2, "Show me why Thou contendest with me."

Job couldn't understand how God, the Creator, could turn his back on the work of His hands (3). It didn't make sense to him when he thought of what God did for him, even back in his mother's womb.

READ vv 8-12

Here's Job's point, "God, you took such care to form me in the womb. Why have you forgotten me now?" Of course, God had not forgotten.

Notice what Job said happened in the womb. List the activities Job said God did for him before he was born:

v 8 Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me round about.

(NIV, "Your hands shaped me and made me")

v 9 Thou hast made me as the clay.

v 11 Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh

v 11 and hast fenced me (NIV "knit me together")with bones and sinews

Key: v 12 "Thou has granted me life and favor {When? In the womb!}, and thy care hath preserved my SPIRIT {When did God preserve Job's spirit? In the womb}. NIV, "You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit."

When did we get our spirit? When did we become a person? Listen, according to Job and all the entire message of Scripture, I was a person in God's sight before I was ever born. Job teaches me that I had value in God's mind while I was still in the womb. I am not the result of chance. I am the very handi-work of the Creator God. And so are you (Eccl 11:5).

What makes life sacred? Human life is sacred because man is created by God, in the very image of God.

Let's talk about the implications...

Application: Several years ago I recall watching one prominent public figure on TV. He was asked a question as to why he held a "pro-choice" position. His answer went something like this, "The issue you've raised is a delicate and complex issue. There's no question that 'life' begins at conception, but the question is when does that life become a person with a soul. Good theologians debate and differ over the answer to that question. Therefore, I believe it's best to leave the decision up to a woman and her doctor, not the State."

Discuss: Having considered the evidence of Scripture, how would you respond to such reasoning? Use your Bible to support your answer...

What's really at stake in America? The answer is authority. God's authority. In America today, we have what Gary Butler calls "a 51% view of morality" (Abortion's Assault on America, 11). We settle everything by taking a Gallup poll. Should Pete Rose be inducted in the Hall of Fame, even though his conduct violated standards? Take a poll. Is it Ok for gambling to be legalized on riverboats? Put it on the ballot, and let the majority decide.

We are in serious trouble when we decide moral issues by consensus. Back in 1989, a Senator (who was pro-choice, George Mitchell) wrote this about the anticipated veto of federally funded abortions for victims of rape and incest by then President Bush. In the DesMoines Register, the senator said this (Butler, 12), "The president's position is WRONG. It is harsh--terribly harsh--on the poorest, most vulnerable American women...It contradicts...the majority position of the House of Representatives, Democrat and Republican, and the United States, and the American people as well."

Did you catch what he said? Why did he say the president was wrong? Was he wrong because he violated an absolute standard? No, he was "wrong" because the bottom line for authority on abortion (or any other decision) is the majority opinion.

Morality is up to the will of the people. Who's left out? God.

Conclusion:

I'd like to close by reading from an article written by a Michigan judge, Randall J. Hekman (taken from "Salt Talk", Fall 1988). He responds to the fact that since 1973, millions of unborn children were killed:

"Ah, but you say, 'these were only fetuses, not real children, and the method of killing was through abortion before birth. That's not so serious.'

Time and space do not permit me to show beyond any doubt that, in the immortal words of Dr. Seuss, 'a person's a person no matter how small.' Medical science can detect the active brain waves of unborn children, physicians can perform surgery on these tiny humanoids, and we know that they feel intense pain when poisoned, burned or savagely dissected through the abortion procedure.

Regardless of one's feelings about unborn children, it is obvious that if left to develop, each of these tiny children would grow and ultimately be born with all the potential that any new life brings to his or her family and the world. Instead, this massive throng of children has been literally discarded like so much refuse, garbage of waste. Out of sight, out of mind.

Why do we have abortion in this supposedly Christian nation? Why do we permit this barbaric practice of killing the most fragile members of our human race?

As a Christian, the more deeply I ponder this important question, the more concerned I become. For I am increasingly persuaded that the United States has legalized abortion primarily because we Christians have done little to oppose the abortion juggernaut and have actually encouraged the spread of abortion in many ways...

...It is self evident that people have abortions not because they love to kill their children, but because they have other priorities than bearing and raising a child. The growth of abortion in our nation parallels the use of the adjective 'unwanted' and 'unplanned' to apply to what God considers precious children.

I have yet to meet a person who thrills to kill unborn children. But at the same time, the vast majority of citizens in our country now feel a woman shouldn't be obligated to bear and raise an 'unwanted' child...We therefore tolerate abortion in our nation as a necessary evil."

He's right.

What should we do about it? What is the church's responsibility when human life is violated? We ought to support ministries like CRADLE with our finances and time. That's a given. But there's something we can and ought to do even tonight, and that's *pray*. Let's spend time praying for the helpless unborn. Let's pray that God will change the hearts of people in our country toward the helpless unborn.

PRAYER: Praying for the helpless unborn

[1] Adapted from an earlier message delivered at WBC on 1/23/94 PM.

[2] Taken from <http://www.albertmohler.com/blog.php>.